



22 edits for 2022

by Workplace Edit

Over at **Workplace Edit**, we are big fans of editing the workplace so people don't have to edit themselves to fit in at work. For the workplace editors out there who share this belief, we have built this resource with you in mind. This compilation of 22 actionable edits will support you in building a diverse workforce, inclusive workplace and an adaptive business in 2022 and beyond.

Let's start editing!



About Gemma

I am parent of two, a queer woman and I love short walks with my lazy rescue Greyhound... preferably around a local farmers market.

I have almost two decades of experience in human resources spanning talent acquisition, diversity & inclusion, employee experience, employer branding, and workplace culture and I combine my practical experience with a employee experience design lens to codesign best-fit diversity, equity and inclusion solutions.

I was previously a Senior Executive at Medibank, am a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and I'm a current board member of Minus 18. I've been listed in HRD's Hot List and nominated in the diversity champion and inspirational role model categories at the Australian LGBTI Awards.

People describe me as a humble, curious, authentic and progressive leader.

I am on a mission to redesign workplace experiences so they genuinely work for more people and more organisations. I have led game changing overhauls to parental leave policies, flexible working and talent acquisition models resulting in sustainable change and multiple awards. This goal is what inspired me to start Workplace Edit which focuses on changing the workplace practices, systems and behaviors so workers get the best from their workplaces and workplaces get the best from their workers.

To date I have partnered with global technology companies, ASX listed businesses, start-ups, B-Corps, fin-techs and Government Business Enterprises in Australia.





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Hiring and onboarding edits

1. Let employees *pick* more than one box

People identify as more than one thing, particularly when it comes to ethnicity, nationality and race. Asking people to only select one part of themselves during forms, surveys and processes ignores the fact that people are layered and full of many identities.

Edit: Check your surveys and forms and ensure people can self-identify in more than one way. Having a free-text “self-describe” option can be useful.

2. Stop asking for *salary information* during hiring

If your reason for asking this question prioritises the collection of “market information” over fostering equitable pay practices, you should start exploring other avenues for ascertaining market data.

Some organisations have shifted to asking people for their salary expectations which is a step in the right direction however this approach still presents challenges.

When there is no explicit statement that salaries are negotiable, women are more likely than men to signal their willingness to work for a lower wage. This becomes more problematic when considering intersectionality i.e., an older woman who has been out of the workforce for a period of time.

Edit: If you are serious about equality, start sharing the salary information with candidates and ask them how this aligns with their expectation. Remove questions in forms, phone screens and interviews that ask for current salary information and replace it with a practice that offers up the information upfront.

Anticipate gendered behaviour in negotiation practices. Get clear on whether you are likely to enter negotiations or not.

When we determine how much someone should be paid in their next role based on what they were paid in their previous role, we are at risk of inheriting a legacy of pay inequity.

3. Data rules: Only ask for *what you need*, when you need it

A common barrier that stands in the way of meaningful measurement in diversity, equity and inclusion work is a lack of data collection, analysis and use or in some situations, a lack of purpose and story behind the approach.

Edit: Build an approach to collecting data across three components;

- How and when is it relevant to collect data on how people identify? Look at privacy and legal considerations and consider where you want (optional) and need data.
- How do we measure our engagement and experience via data-disaggregated data based on identities? It's not enough to know the mix of people, you need to understand how they are experiencing your company.
- How do we tell people why we are collecting this information and how we will use it? How will we share our progress of how that dataset is changing and why? We have to build trust and understand why people might be reluctant to share or engage in diversity & inclusion data.

4. Change your interview questions; recruit for *inclusive behaviours*

As hiring managers and talent acquisition teams focus on presenting a broad range of candidates to support organisational diversity targets, the focus on recruiting inclusive behaviours needs to go hand in hand. If you haven't defined the capabilities and behaviours for inclusion in your organisation, you can start by making some suggestions.

As a workplace editor and change agent, you can start making the shift with the questions you/your team uses in hiring.

Edit: To inspire your thinking, here are some interview question examples we have seen our clients adopt;

- Tell us a time when you had to access experiences, thinking and operating styles that were different to yours? What was the situation? What was the outcome? What did you learn?
- Tell us a time when you changed your mind based on new information? What was the situation, what did you do and what was the outcome? How did others experience this?
- Tell us how you use your power, privilege and influence to benefit others?

5. Encourage *diverse ideas* during onboarding

A vital ingredient in the recipe for inclusive teams is seeking to understand a wide range of perspectives, acting on these insights and appreciating each person's contribution.

Honing in on this via onboarding allows you to encourage this early in the employee experience.

Edit: Ask employees to capture their questions, thoughts and ideas during onboarding and do something with their insights. Ask them to keep a journal and arrange a catch up with a leader after their first few weeks.

If you use Slack or internal social networking platforms, create a forum/channel for new starter ideas. Ask a few leaders to join the channel and take on the ideas by responding, actioning and celebrating the contributions.

6. Show *respect and dignity* by responding to every applicant

Imagine putting yourself out there and committing your energy and time into an application for a brand you love only to hear nothing after hitting the apply button. This can create a huge confidence hit in addition to hindering DEI progress not to mention the risk it poses to your brand and reputation

Steve Gard leads the *Circle Back Initiative* which is a commitment by a collection of employers to respond to every candidate. Steve reminds us that 'so much hope' hangs on every job application.

Our view is that employers have a significant part to play in treating the applicant with respect, and provide a candidate experience that counts, by responding to every applicant." Put simply, It's respectful, good for business and good talent management.

Edit: The first step is to focus on your mindset. Consider why this is important as opposed to being stuck in the thought pattern of why it's difficult to do.

Commit to this simple action and leverage your applicant tracking system/HR technology to create meaningful communications throughout the hiring experience.



Flexibility and accessibility edits

7. Move your *mugs*



There are many ways that ableist assumptions feed into the way workplaces are designed and used.

Edit: One simple thing you can do is to move the mugs, cups and tools (wall panels for audio and visual room systems) to a height that would be accessible to a person in a wheelchair.

There are more considerations to start ensuring there is dignified access for people with disabilities within your workspaces so please take the next step and engage with disability advisors and people with disabilities to conduct a systemic review of accessibility and inclusion in your workplace.



8. Make your *flexibility approach and ways of working fit for purpose*

Just because something is trending (*whether that's hybrid working or something on TikTok*), it doesn't mean it's right for you. Employees expect you to come up with a story that makes sense.

Telling employees they have to do a minimum of 3 days in the office by talking about buzz words such as 'adapting to the rise of the hybrid model' isn't going to cut it. 2022 will see some impressive flexibility propositions in the market and if your story doesn't make sense, your people will have plenty of choice with job availability on the rise.

Edit: Redefine your flexibility value proposition by addressing what employees and potential employees want to know:

- **What data, context and insights informed your decision? Did they have a say via employee surveys, focus groups etc? Did you map the key work styles and assess where work is best produced? Did you use customer insights?**

- **How does this help us achieve our business strategy and goals? Will this produce a reduction in management expenses?**
- **Will this allow us to be more flexible with work schedules as we expand into new geographies (and timezones)?**
- **How does this help me achieve my goals (as an individual and as a team)? Will this help me be more productive? Will I be able to be more creative and collaborative? Will I get to connect with people in meaningful ways?**
- **What does success look like for the company and how will you measure success when it comes to engagement and productivity of staff? Will you be measuring how employees experience this new way of working? When will you know it's operating successfully?**
- **How will this affect me personally? Will I need to change gyms or childcare facilities? Will I have to stick to fixed office days or will I be provided a choice based on my deliverables and personal commitments?**



9. Shift towards *height adjustable desks*

Another observation when engaging with people with disabilities, chronic health conditions and temporary accessibility needs (i.e., broken bones) is the positive impact that a sit-stand/flexible height desk can offer. Beyond supporting these with specific requirements, it can also help support employee wellbeing for all.

Edit: Whilst removing static/fixed desks in favour of adjustable desks might incur a small cost, you can start to build this into your future workplace and facilities planning activities and even start with a trial of 10% of desks to generate employee feedback.

10. Gather with *purpose and beware of assumptions*

In the workplace there are common gatherings where we tend to skip to form and forget to ask ourselves what the purpose of that gathering truly is. From group induction or a farewell event for a colleague. It's an invisible structure that we follow and we need to be more conscious and intentional in asking what the purpose really is and what biases are present in our auto-pilot approaches to workplace gatherings.

This impacts DEI progress in many ways, from celebrating women who introduce new babies into their worlds (and not celebrating this equally for male colleagues) to ignoring how dominance, privilege and power play out in a group talent assessment process.

Edit: Simply be more intentional and at every point ask yourself how might you design these moments and gatherings so they feel purposeful, fresh and inclusive? What is the deepest need for the people who are gathering right now?

Empower your people and create some gathering principles that allow you to make the most of synchronous communication time (gatherings) whilst working asynchronously to support flexible working.

*Taking inspiration from Priya Parker's book **The Art of Gathering** allows us to examine how our workplace gatherings might be holding back inclusion and belonging.*

People practices & policies edits

11. *Challenge the norms in every role design / requisition*

Every newly approved role ready for hiring presents an opportunity to disrupt bias and challenge the status quo. Most roles default to full-time and aren't shaped or designed with flexibility in mind.

Edit: Even if you don't have an established flexibility strategy, you still have a window to ask "how can this role be done flexibly?" or "what are the most likely flexible work options in this role". "Is there flexibility with regards to the start and finish times" or "is it possible for this role to have a combination of remote and office-based working?" Whatever your question, start discussing it at this vital stage.

12. *Disrupt bias via performance and talent calibration practices*

If you are using performance and talent practices to make decisions based on pay, reward and opportunity, you'll need to manage the biases that stifle pay equity and equal opportunity to career advancement.



Edit: If you have data on gender, age, location, working status (i.e., part-time or flexible work) and other attributes, add these to your identification and calibration practices.

This allows implicit biases to be surfaced and challenged. If all your top performers are full-time, head office located and of the same gender, you may want to challenge your biases. It's hard to do this if you don't have it staring you in the face.

13. Examine your travel policies

As borders open up, the company travel policies will start to come into question from an equitable perspective. Travel policies are likely to be challenged when the class of travel is linked to someone's seniority in the hierarchy. If this is how your policy works, ask yourselves why a lower paid employee on the same trip as someone more senior in the organisational hierarchy should experience that flight differently?

Edit: Update your approach to base the class of travel on the trip duration or similar parameters meaning that the determining factor behind the economy or business class ticket isn't linked to the hierarchy.

This is important as an inclusive and equal practice and also because we know that the business class lounges are usually filled with men and shifting the policy will shift who occupies the spaces.

14. Reconsider how holidays are celebrated inclusively

It's likely that your colleagues will all celebrate different holidays, festivals and place significance on certain days of the year based on their religions and cultures. Sometimes the decisions around what gets celebrated and acknowledged across the company can be based on the dominant community at work. This can lead to some people feeling like they need to hide parts of their identity.

Edit: Engage with your colleagues and understand what matters and how to respectfully embrace or support colleagues during these periods. For some, this might mean creating ways for all holidays, days of significance and festivals to be recognised and celebrated from adjusting shifts during fasting or holding an event.

You may also want to introduce the concept of floating public holidays whereby employees can make a day-off trade: work on a day that is a public holiday in the country where you are employed, and then take out another workday as a holiday instead when it fits your values, beliefs, and celebration calendar better.

15. Re-evaluate your *dress codes* and uniform policies

Have you considered the link between your dress code and uniform policies and diversity, equity and inclusion? These policies and the behaviours and norms experienced by employees can be based on unhelpful assumptions.

Many organisations are moving towards a more empowering 'dress for your day' policy which encourages individuals to make choices on their attire based on the activities they are engaging in at work on that day.

Edit: Re-consider your dress code policy with safety, respect, trust and inclusion in mind. If you have a uniform policy, ensure it's not prescriptively gendered. Employees of all genders should be provided with a range of choices and encouraged to select from the broad uniform selection.

Uniforms should be inclusive and offer options and guidance for people who wear hijabs, turbans and other options that are inclusive of a wide range of religions and cultural practices.

16. Remove *outdated labels*

In many ways, the workplace of today is still designed on a 1950's breadwinner model, but as research shows, we are now parenting, working and living differently.

Parental leave policies are evolving to reflect that all genders should be supported to take paid and unpaid leave when a new child enters their world. When we say "primary" carer, we usually think of women and when we say "secondary carer" we usually think of men. There is a gendered assumption underpinning this policy framing and it plays out in the uptake of leave, with fewer than 5% of men in Australia taking paid, primary carers leave.

Edit: Remove the gendered assumptions and language in your policies. Simply adopting a parental leave policy that doesn't rely on the need for an employee's partner (if they have one) to be employed in order for them to access decent paid leave entitlements is a good start. If you are skeptical, turn to those who have made the move for inspiration.

Example: Medibank had 2.5% of male employees taking parental leave for a period of longer than two weeks. This shifted to 28% within a year of removing the gendered labels.



17. Be more *compassionate* with your compassionate leave

Many workplace policies hold assumptions about family structures. Compassionate leave policies tend to be highly prescriptive with regards to who qualifies for an employee's grief. Dictating who qualifies for someone's grief isn't an organisation's role. Another simple way to show you trust your people and support diversity is to make this small but meaningful edit to your policy. Guess what, it's also FREE.

Not everyone would describe those in your policy as the ones closest to them. Especially those who have become distant from parents because they found it hard to accept their child's gender identity, sex or sexuality or those who have had to distance themselves from family for their own safety and wellbeing.

Edit: Update your policy and communicate the change and reasons behind it. Simply state the paid leave entitlement and allow employees to determine when they need to access the leave based on who they determine is closest to them.



Language & communication edits

18. Flip statements into *questions*

A powerful technique for driving change in the everyday interactions at work can be to simply turn a comment or statement into a question.

Edit: Next time you are about to make a comment, apply more curiosity and ask a question instead. Instead of saying “I think we are an inclusive company”, ask your colleagues, “is this company a place that creates a sense of belonging for you?” and explore their experiences.

19. Ask every vendor and provider to *do the work too*

Technology stacks in organisations are growing by the day. Technology vendors and other suppliers present a huge opportunity to generate broad, systemic change.



Edit: When running a request for tender or proposal process, establish some key diversity, equity and inclusion questions as part of your supplier assessment and selection criteria.

These can include asking for the company to provide information on their policies, practices and data in addition to asking them how their product or service has been designed with equity, accessibility and inclusion in mind.

20. Stop calling individuals “diverse”



Individuals aren't diverse. Teams and businesses should be diverse. Diversity is a relational concept and while a person is not “diverse,” they will bring a variety of experiences like their identities and experiences.

Edit: Stop calling individuals “diverse” and stop referring to individuals as a “diversity hire”. Who isn't labeled “diverse” at your organisation and what do you call them? If you wouldn't refer to someone as a “conformity hire”, you probably know that using the term “diversity hire” isn't relevant.

Efforts to build diverse and balanced teams should remain the focus. A simple and vital shift in this language will also shift how people engage with these efforts

21. Make your online content *accessible*

If you profess or aspire to have a “diverse workforce and an inclusive workplace” as many organisations claim on their websites, you better start making it accessible.

Edit: Investigate website content accessibility guidelines and adopt practices that support accessibility. Some initial edits to start with include;

- Image descriptions
- Captioning your video content (great for accessibility and anyone who engages with content without audio)
- #HashtagCapitalisation which supports people who use screen readers

22. Don't be *complicit*

One of the most powerful things you can do to advocate for equality and change is to use your voice. As employees speak up, they advocate for equity and in turn create the ground swell that starts to impose accountability.

Edit: Prepare some techniques that you are confident in deploying when you see, hear or experience something that compromises equality, equity and inclusion. If a colleague makes a comment and you know it's not appropriate or inclusive, start by asking them what they meant by that or asking them to explain it.

This technique does two things. It creates accountability on them to be more self-aware and it encourages self-reflection and accountability. It also creates distance between you being activated by the comment and gives you time to think and respond to the situation with more thought.





We hope this compilation of workplace edits equips you to start making changes within your workplace in 2022 and beyond. If you're inspired to go further, feel free to reach out for a chat.

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