

ASSUME THAT I *can*



Assume That I Can

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In today's dynamic workplace, assumptions often operate beneath the surface, influencing decisions that impact company culture, productivity, and individual job satisfaction. While some assumptions may serve as helpful shortcuts, they often lead to misunderstandings and misjudgments that can ripple through an organization.

Understanding Human Assumptions

As humans, our inclination to make assumptions is deeply rooted in our cognitive processes, acting as a mechanism to streamline decision-making and conserve mental energy. Sound familiar? Like thinking skills or mental tasks. This tendency to jump to conclusions can originate from personal experiences, cultural conditioning, or social interactions, which unconsciously shape our perceptions and judgments. While assumptions might seem like a reliable tool to fill in gaps where information is missing, they don't always accurately reflect reality and can lead to miscommunication or conflict. By recognizing this natural inclination, we empower ourselves to pause, question our assumptions, and pursue deeper understanding and empathy in our personal and professional relationships. This approach not only enriches our interactions but also fosters an environment of trust and openness.

Assumptions in the Workplace

Assumptions in the workplace can have far-reaching effects on both organizational outcomes and individual well-being. For instance, assuming that a team member is less capable due to seniority or lack of experience can lead to missed opportunities for innovation and growth. Such assumptions not only limit the potential contributions of individuals but can also discourage diversity of thought, stymying creative solutions and progression. Moreover, assumptions about communication preferences or work styles can breed frustration, thus eroding trust and cooperation among colleagues. Acknowledging the existence of these biases requires not only self-awareness but also a commitment to continuous learning and development, promoting a more empathetic and understanding work environment. Organizations and individuals alike can cultivate a more effective and harmonious workplace by addressing and recalibrating these assumptions.

The Impact of Assumptions on Individuals with Disabilities

Assumptions in the workplace can be particularly challenging for employees with disabilities, often leading to significant barriers in communication, accessibility, and professional development. When there are preconceived notions about a person's capabilities based solely on their disability, it can result in a narrow view of their potential and contributions. For instance, assuming that an employee with a physical disability is incapable of handling certain tasks without considering their individual skills and experience not only limits their opportunities for involvement but can also undermine their confidence and motivation. Additionally, assumptions about required accommodations might lead to either neglecting necessary support or offering inappropriate solutions, contributing to unintentional exclusion. It is vital for organizations to develop a culture of open communication and inclusivity, where individual needs are addressed respectfully and proactively. This involves not only recognizing and valuing the diverse abilities team members bring to the table but also ensuring that policies and practices support an equitable and accessible work environment for all.

Linking Inclusion to Assuming a Person Can Do the Job

Embracing inclusion in the workplace goes hand in hand with fostering the belief that everyone is capable and competent in their roles. Assuming that a person can perform and excel in their job responsibilities lays the foundation for an empowering environment where employees are encouraged to leverage their strengths and skills. By expecting competence rather than questioning it based on backgrounds or personal characteristics, organizations promote a culture of support and capability. This positive assumption fuels self-confidence and motivation among team members, empowering them to explore new ideas, take initiative, and drive innovation. Offering opportunities for growth and providing access to professional development further reinforces this belief, demonstrating trust in each employee's potential. Through inclusive practices that focus on abilities and potential rather than biases, companies can cultivate an atmosphere where every individual feels equipped and eager to contribute meaningfully to their collective success.

Strategies for Reducing Assumptions

So, what can we do to tackle assumptions head-on? Let's start with communication—a key player in preventing misunderstandings. One effective strategy is to encourage open dialogue. By simply asking questions and actively listening, we can gain a clearer understanding of our colleagues' perspectives and needs. This approach not only minimizes guesswork but also fosters a sense of trust and collaboration. Inclusion means to include, right? Try including those with a disability by simply asking. You might be surprised.

Next, consider empathy and education as your go-to tools. By putting ourselves in someone else's shoes and continuously learning about the diverse experiences and strengths within our teams, we can break down those pesky stereotypes. Workshops, training sessions, and open forums can make a huge difference in broadening horizons and counteracting biased thinking. Let's learn more and talk more.

Lastly, let's make it personal. Everyone's different. So why not tailor your interactions and environment to suit individual needs as much as possible? Whether it's offering flexible working arrangements or creating accessibility solutions, or by asking... these personalized touches show that every team member is valued and supported.

With a little effort and a lot of kindness, we can move beyond assumptions and shape a workplace that's welcoming, supportive, and incredibly dynamic for everyone.

Conclusion

Creating an inclusive workplace doesn't just happen overnight, but it's definitely worth the effort. Imagine a workspace where people feel comfortable being themselves, leading to a more engaged, productive, and happy team. Sounds great, right?

To get started, it's all about keeping the conversation open and genuine. Encourage folks to talk about their experiences and show empathy to truly understand different perspectives. This way, you'll begin to break down assumptions that can creep in.

If you're a manager or part of the HR team, don't hesitate to bring in some experts who know the ins and outs of building a more inclusive environment. They can offer practical advice and insights to shape policies and practices that resonate with everyone. Ultimately, when each of us works to dismantle assumptions, we create a workplace where everybody has a seat at the table, all talents shine, and people are excited to come to work each day.

And remember, inclusion...means including ME.

