

Simple Steps to Infuse Your HR Practices with the Platinum Rule

Resource Type: Articles

Topic: HR Risk and Employment Practices

An often-cited maxim for how to treat people is the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. But in our diverse workplaces, our colleagues might want to be treated very differently than we do. Bring a more inclusive approach to your human resources practices by applying the Platinum Rule: Do unto others as they would want done to them. Here are some strategies to do that.

The Platinum Rule, popularized in a [1998 book by that name](#), divides behavioral preferences into four styles: director, relater, socializer, and thinker.

To work well with directors:

- Be organized
- Get to the point
- Appeal to their sense of accomplishment

To work well with socializers:

- Give them personal recognition
- Support their ideas, goals, opinions, and dreams
- Don't rush them into tasks before they've had a chance to chat

To work well with Thinkers:

- Be mindful of their time
- Give them data
- Give them the opportunity to make decisions and work independently

To work well with Relaters:

- Don't rush them
- Support their feelings
- Show sincere interest in them
- Give them time to solicit co-workers' opinions

The following tips will help you apply the Platinum Rule to your HR practices across all behavioral styles.

Don't get to the end before the beginning. Organizations expect managers to come up with solutions to problems. But don't make up a solution and settle on it before you walk into the meeting to discuss it. Keep an open mind. Elicit a variety of opinions and see where the team's thoughts lead the group.

Listen. Let team members share their thoughts without interruption. Make eye contact (with the camera, for remote workers) to show you're listening. Pause before you respond, to give your brain a chance to truly take in what's been said without leaping to unconscious biases. If you're not sure of the person's point, repeat what you heard to make sure you got the gist.

Acknowledge people's contributions and individuality. When you talk with a colleague, look for opportunities to touch on something they said in a meeting that resonated with you, or ask about a family member or friend they mentioned.

Practice flexibility in management. You must treat all employees fairly, but you don't have to manage everyone the exact same way. If one employee responds best to deadlines and another finds motivation by receiving the autonomy to prioritize their tasks, don't try to squeeze each one into the other's box.

What if someone doesn't know how they prefer to be managed? Observe. Try different management and communication approaches with them, watch how they respond, and ask questions later about how those approaches worked for them.

Communicate clearly, but allow as much flexibility in communication as you can. Spell out any unavoidable communication requirements for your team (customer service staff must be logged in from X am-X pm, for example; emails from clients should be responded to within 48 hours; voice mails should be returned that day or the next, etc.). Beyond those requirements, honor each person's communication preferences (text, email, phone, instant messaging) as much as possible.

Don't react—learn and unlearn. At some point, you will do or say something a team member finds offensive or hurtful. For many of us, the natural reaction would be to get defensive. Pause, breathe, and listen before you speak. The person in front of you has trusted you enough to let you know you got something wrong. Listen and learn where you went off course, so you don't make the same mistake again.

Consider cultural differences. Don't assume you know your team members' cultural needs. Give them a chance to share those needs with you. For example, when choosing a restaurant for a staff outing, give people the option to share any dietary restrictions or preferences with you. People in recovery from alcohol abuse might avoid happy hours, and employees of the Muslim or Jewish faiths who avoid pork might not find many food options at a barbecue.

Additional Resources

- [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives: Practicing the Platinum Rule to Meet People Where They Are - MGMA](#)
- [Tools and Techniques for Effective Communication: The Platinum Rule - SmartBrief](#)
- [The 'Platinum Rule' to Managing Staff - HRD](#)
- [5 Ways to Use the Platinum Rule at Work - InHerSight](#)