

# [Journal entry #1](https://assignbuster.com/journal-entry-1/)

How Religion Affects Employees Roles and Performance in a Multicultural Workplace The world is shrinking, and now more than at any time we find ourselves in close contact with people of different cultural orientations and persuasions. It is fortunate that with the modern conveniences of daily living such as the internet, satellite and cable television, and other electronic devices, we find easy access to news, programs, and shows that feature the culture in other countries – the language, songs and dances, manner of dress, story plots, games, current events, histories, and so forth, the frequent exposure to which provides us with a growing sense of familiarity and, subsequently, understanding.
This being said, there is one aspect of culture that is particularly contentious even in our multicultural setting, and that is religion. This should not be surprising, since even within a single culture the topic of religion is a sensitive one. There was a time when the American forefathers did not find any unusual issue with the phrase “ In God We Trust” so as to embellish it in the nation’s currency. Recently, however, even the invocation of God in inter-denominational prayer and the singing of Christmas carols in public places have come under attack – because it seems that the disbelief in God itself has become a religion to be respected. Religion is so ingrained in the very core of people’s beliefs and aspirations that an attack upon it is taken as an affront against the Supreme Being (or non-being, in the case of atheists) that demands defense and, at times, militant vindication.
The workplace is a particularly delicate place to have problems of religious intolerance. This is because we most likely spend more time at work than at home – at least the greater part of our waking hours. Work demands of us our skills, concentration, creativity, and dedication to the organization’s goal, which is why any irritant to disturb the peace in the workplace will tend to be counterproductive for both the individual and the firm.
The situation becomes complicated when individuals in the workplace would be followers of mainstream or radical religious teachings which draw an opposition to other religions, the followers of which may be their co-workers in the firm. Or, it may also be that actions that appear perfunctory to some may, without their knowledge, be offensive to others or denigrate what they conceive to be sacred and holy. Furthermore, the fact that religious teachings have been imparted by the family to the individual at a tender age may have also impressed upon him the stereotypes and biases that build intolerance to other faiths or races.
If these were the case in the workplace, management must understand two things: that cultural differences do matter to the individual, and thus should matter to the firm; and, that it is important to comprehend the dynamics of these cultural differences and how to turn it into an advantage (Egan & Bendick, 2008: 387). Many businesses now are involved in diverse markets, or providing goods and services targeted at a variety of customers. A multicultural firm can thus turn the diversity of its employees into a company strength to address these demands.
Before it could do this, however, management has to get the employees to work together harmoniously and even happily (since happiness in the workplace is a requisite for employee satisfaction and productivity). Diversity management is a craft comprising the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve success (R. R. Thomas, 2006). Management should aim to develop in their people personal competencies such as flexibility, resourcefulness, tolerance for ambiguity, and vision, as well as cultural self-awareness, cultural consciousness, and multicultural leadership. (Cant, 2004 in Egan & Bendick, 2008). In order to bring this about, no less than total commitment must be shown by top management to the acceptance of diversity, within the framework of a unified organization with a common goal, teamwork, and esprit de corps. Leadership should try to change prejudiced mindsets by assuring people of the security of the practice of their religion while fostering an atmosphere of tolerance for others. This is done by exhibiting not only intellectual acceptance but real, gut-level adherence to religious diversity in the organization (Association Now, 2009).
Personally, I feel that ultimately, all that people want in order to get together is to be secure in the knowledge that they will be accorded the respect and freedom to follow their faith, even as they afford others this same respect and freedom. I think that it is not an accident that in the United States, a Muslim, a Jew, and a Christian may all sit together and discuss their differences in an orderly manner, whereas in other parts of the world they would be pointing guns at one another.
In the spirit of mutual deference and amiable tolerance, I believe that a workplace will be productive and successful, and a powerful agent of change in the lives of the workers that populate it.
References:
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