

# Religion in the workplace

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



When looking at religion in the workplace I found that there were two different companies, faith-friendly companies and faith focused. Every company typically falls under one or the other because no company would admit to not accepting individuals who show their faith.

Faith friendly companies create a culture in which various faiths aren't just tolerated, they are valued. Faith-friendly entails considering non-Christian religious holidays when scheduling meetings, events, and training, and creating room for employees to meditate or hold small gatherings.

The goal of a faith-friendly company is to recognize the centrality of faith in many employees, inclusive, and affirming of all traditions. Similarly, faith focused describes any organization or government idea or plan based on religious beliefs, specifically Christian beliefs.

Before researching religion in the work place I didn't realize that it was such a big issue and that the consequences were so severe. The first company I researched was Chick-fil-A they were for expressing your faith in the work place. The owner and CEO Cathy was never shy when it came to expressing his Christianity in his company. They even go as far to mentioning God in their mission statement, "Glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us."

The employers and employees were always doing things to show that they were open about practicing their faith. One of their most famous and well known practices is to close their establishments on Sunday for a day of rest. This was questioned and repelled against by the gay community because they felt as if the company was "anti-gay."

(William-Ross) Christians (along with many other religions) are against same sex marriage, the gay community protested and tried to nail Chick-fil-A with discrimination. I thought that this lawsuit was completely ridiculous and there was no need for it, Chick-fil-A never failed to serve or hire someone who was gay; just because of their religion the gay community assumed they were discriminating.

When being questioned on this Cathy stated, " While my family and I believe in the Biblical definition of marriage, we love and respect anyone who disagrees."

Along with closing on Sundays they print bible verses on the bottom of their drinking cups. I respect Chick-fil-A for their dedication and I think that more companies should be faith focused. Their donations they are given to many organizations not only shows their faith but it proves that they are socially responsible. Overall, I believe that Chick-fil-A is successful not only for their great services but because of the help of God. (Bhasin)

Another large company that is faith friendly is the Coca-Cola bottling company. Just like Cathy, the CEO J. Frank Harrison believes that the true owner of the company is God. This company shows how faith focused they are by asking, but not requiring, that their employees say grace before eating and continually thank God for their great success. Over the years, Harrison brought the first chaplains to Coca-Cola plants.

Now there are 40 to 50 chaplains working at Coke bottling plants nationwide. (Hilman) Harrison believes that implanting individuals with strong faith will allow the company to grow and it will bring more success to the company.

Along with having a tight knit staff, Coca-Cola also provides trained counselors and ministers who help employees strengthen their marriages, work to prevent suicides and assist with a number of family issues.

(Mississippi College) Although Coca-Cola has been faced with discrimination law suits, discrimination in relation to religion was never an issue. Harrison takes faith in his business very seriously in such a troubled world.

In opposition there are some companies that do not respect people and their rights to express their religion in the workplace. There aren't companies that will come out and say, " No we will not condone or allow people to show their symbols of faith in the workplace."

That is both unethical and illegal; however they show their disapproval with the actions that they implement. The first company that I stumbled across while doing my research that had many issues with their employees and the fact that they were showing their faith was Abercrombie and Fitch. There were so many cases were they were being sued for religion discrimination, it was hard to just pick one or two to discuss in my presentation.

The majority of the cases were filed by individuals of the Islamic religion. One young Muslim was let go by a visiting district manager for refusing to remove her hijab after being told by her employer that she was allowed to wear it as long as it was the company colors (Navy blue, grey, and white.)

In 2009, Two months following this suit, a 17-year-old girl in, said the company didn't hire her because she wore a hijab and it didn't follow the look policy. This case was explained in more detail and gave opinions of attorneys, management, and other employees.

I thought it was interesting because when first researching it I thought it was wrong for her not to be hired. Later on my feelings changed when they compared it to another company such as Hooters. I could understand fully why she would not be a good candidate at that restaurant; it's the same concept with not being hired at Abercrombie and Fitch.

Abercrombie has been the target of numerous discrimination lawsuits, including a federal class action brought by black, Hispanic, Asian, Jewish, Islamic, and Christians employees and job applicants that was settled for \$40 million in 2004.

The company admitted no wrongdoing, though it was forced to implement new programs and policies to increase diversity. Subsequently, the company Pliant, Corp. (now known as Berry Plastics Corp.) engages in the manufacture and sale of value-added films and flexible packaging for food, personal care, medical, agricultural, and industrial applications also faced a lawsuit for wrongfully going about a situation that dealt with one's religion.

The employees were required to wear a sticker with a number on it that expressed how many days they had been accident free. On the 666th day Billy E. Hyatt (an employee of 7 years) was fired for refusing to wear this number because it represents Satan. When the number of accident free days rolled into the 600's Hyatt spoke to the manager about not wearing 666 if they were to reach it, his manager joked around with him about it but then proceeded to say that it would not be an issue.

When the day came he said that Hyatt was being ridiculous and he was expected to wear the number. He refused and was quickly let go. I found this

case to be utterly ridiculous, it's a sticker, not anything more or anything less. However, I do believe the company should have excused him from wearing it to avoid bad publicity and court fees. In order to deceive between what is right and what is wrong when it comes down to cases that are revolved around religion, employees refer to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

This document prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals because of their religion in hiring, firing, and other terms and conditions of employment. It also requires employers to reasonably accommodate the religious practices of an employee. In other words, a company is required to make adjustment to the work environment that will allow the employee to practice his religion.

Employees should not inquire about an applicant's future availability at certain times, maintain a restrictive dress code, or refuse to allow observance of a Sabbath or religious holiday.

However, an employer can claim undue hardships when allowing such practices: requires more than ordinary administrative costs, diminishes efficiency in other jobs, infringes on other employees' job rights or benefits, impairs workplace safety, causes co-workers to carry the accommodated employee's share of potentially hazardous or burdensome work, and if the proposed accommodation conflicts with another law or regulation.

In an ideal world the religious beliefs of a given employee, or of the employer, do not create conflicts.

Overall, I really enjoyed researching this topic, I found a lot of things that I agreed with but I also found a lot of things that I didn't think was morally or

ethically acceptable. Being a devoted Catholic I couldn't imagine not being able to express my faith in the workplace, the majority of decisions I made are made based on faith.

I was excited to see that more companies are a lot more faith based than I thought, some of which I visit frequently. When I enter the business world I don't intend on leaving my faith at the door because that would mean I wasn't being myself. However, I do see both sides of the arguments and I can see why some companies try to avoid religious practices but I still don't agree with it.

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