

July Diversity Tip Sheet: Celebrate July - Tell the Story of Your America

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July provides a day of Independence that we count on each year. It's a great day to celebrate the inclusive foundation of this country. Yes, the founding leaders were starting a nation of strong individuals but they knew we needed a statement of equality and inclusion. What better than "all men are created equal"?

Take advantage of this break in the routine and get to know the people around you. In the bustle of daily life, we can neglect to celebrate our own stories and where we hail from and what we feel makes us unique.

America offers stand-alone ideals but they hinge on working together. What better way to enhance our togetherness than by listening. Take the time to learn more about a co-worker or that neighbor you always meant to speak with. The July challenge is to start a conversation.

We have a chance in the month of July to make new friends.

Not only did our early leaders give us a day we celebrate with fireworks and outdoor fun, sun and food, they established the foundation for the first opportunity for inclusion with the Declaration of Independence, signed on Thursday, July 4, 1776.

We celebrate life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and we display this document in the hand of the Statue of Liberty in the east-facing harbor where many of our first freedom seekers stepped ashore.

We also continue to share our freedoms by welcoming neighbors from the north, south and west. While many of our first guests were brought here without choice, we recognize that we are not perfect. The Declaration of Independence is a foundation for the tolerance we still need to read to remind us of the oppression we fought against and the freedoms we still enjoy.

Inclusion and Equality are privileges and a right in this country.

Another significant July event is the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act signed on July 26, 1990. It wasn't that long ago that we began the initial efforts to provide more inclusive opportunities for fellow Americans who were not able-bodied. Some of our disabled are also those who returned as heroes from the armed services. These fellow citizens supported American ideals often outside this country to keep the beacon of freedom available to Americans.

Celebrate July by planning a Veteran's Job Fair. Find out who in your firm has served in the military or National Guard and celebrate them as you celebrate the birthday of this nation. Learn their stories and make them welcome.

Find out more about who is already in your midst. Ask for volunteers to tell a story about themselves. Whether it be how they came to this country or how someone in their family was the first to complete college or what brought them to your company or another country where they lived or vacationed; we have much achievement and heroism in our midst.

Consider inclusion as a way to learn more about those you see every day at work.

Challenge your firm to celebrate themselves and our abundant differences while working together toward common business goals. Welcome families to your summer events and enjoy different summer recipes that others contribute for all to enjoy. Tell the story of our country, wave the flag, and revel in the warmth of summer that is often too brief.

Take the time to declare the independence of everyone by sharing stories and listening as stories are shared. Best of all, introduce yourself to a co-worker and expand your horizons by telling your story. Telling a story is nearly as great as hearing one.

Suggestions for July Conversations

Upcoming Veteran Job Fairs: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/upcoming-fairs>

Hiring Our Heroes: <http://www.hiringourheroes.org/hiringourheroes/events>

Understanding Returning Veterans: <http://www.gamesforchange.org/play/family-of-heroes/>

Stories about July Fourth: <http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/july-4th>

Statue of Liberty survives Hurricane Sandy:

<http://www.nytimes.com/video/nyregion/10000002320577/liberty-on-independence-day.html>

Talk to a Stranger: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/26/opinion/sunday/hello-stranger.html>

Recipes: <http://allrecipes.com/recipes/holidays-and-events/4th-of-july/>