

CASE STUDIES

Managing corporate social responsibility

Diversity and inclusion
in the workplace



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CASE STUDY 1

CAFÉ TRAINING

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of a public crisis at Dublin Brews, sparked by an employee's discriminatory actions leading to the arrest of four black men, this case study delves into critical thinking where business operations intersect with matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Through examining the responses of various stakeholders, we explore the complexities of addressing implicit bias, varied effects of diversity training, and the broader implications of fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for all within the café.

Competences gained by participants after covering the case study material:

- **Critical Thinking:** Analysing the effectiveness of one-day training programmes requires critical thinking to assess the complexity of issues related to diversity and inclusion. Participants will develop the ability to question their own assumptions and explore the what is required to create meaningful change.
- **Cultural Competency:** Considering the impact of the situation on employees, customers and the wider community, this case study involves understanding diverse perspectives and emotional implications of such incidents. Respondents will develop cultural competency needed to navigate sensitive issues.
- **Awareness of Social Issues:** Reflecting on the incident and its broader implications fosters an increased awareness and understanding of social issues. Participants will deepen their understanding of the impact of such incidents on individuals, communities, and the organization as a whole.
- **Ethical Decision-Making:** Recommending transparency and accountability, requires a commitment to ethical decision-making. Participants will develop a sense of responsibility for the ethical implications of their suggestions and their potential impact on the organizational culture, as well as the community surrounding the café.

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THE COMPANY

Adam, co-owner, is the hands-on manager of the café, overseeing the day-to-day operations, staff management, and customer relations.

Liam takes on the role of a silent investor, providing financial support and strategic guidance without involvement in the day-to-day operations.

Adam continues to manage the day-to-day affairs of the café, ensuring smooth operations and a welcoming atmosphere. Whereas, Liam focuses on the financial aspects, budgeting, accounting, and supply chain management. While he is not directly involved in daily operations, he offers strategic input during decision-making processes.

The commitment to supporting local businesses remains strong, with a continued focus on sourcing locally produced ingredients, such as milk and butter from the local farmers. Dublin Brews actively engages with the local community through frequent events and support for local charities, managed by Adam. Liam, as a silent investor, participates in community initiatives through strategic planning and financial support.

The café upholds its commitment to sustainability, implementing eco-friendly practices and promoting environmentally conscious choices in packaging and sourcing. The café maintains a strong online presence through social media: sharing updates and connecting with customers through giveaways and posts. Adam takes the lead in communicating the café's mission and its daily activities online.

MISSION

At Dublin Brews, the mission is to create a strong coffee community in the heart of Dublin, with interwoven Irish culture. They strive to provide a warm and inviting space where community, creativity, and caffeine are combined. Dublin Brews holds a commitment to quality excellence, sustainability, and local engagement. The aim is to be more than just a café; a gathering place that reflects the spirit of Dublin and leaves a lasting impression on every visitor.

CAFÉ AIMS

- 1. Exceptional Coffee Experience:** Deliver a consistently excellent coffee experience by sourcing high-quality beans and maintaining high standards in brewing and presentation.
- 2. Community Connection:** Foster a sense of community by hosting regular events, supporting local artists, and collaborating with nearby businesses to create a vibrant atmosphere.
- 3. Local Sourcing and Sustainability:** Prioritize local sourcing for ingredients, promoting sustainability in packaging, and implementing eco-friendly practices to minimize the carbon footprint of operations.
- 4. Cultural Celebration:** Celebrate and promote Irish culture through themed events, collaborations with local artists, and a menu that reflects the richness of Irish traditions.

By embodying this mission and pursuing these aims and goals, Dublin Brews aims to be a dynamic and integral part of Dublin's cultural and culinary landscape, leaving a lasting impact on the community it serves.

THE STORY

One day, Adam gets a phone call that the café has encountered a public crisis. An employee makes the decision to call the police on four black men waiting for a friend inside without placing an order, which has led to their arrest. Videos capturing the incident have gone viral on social media, sparking outrage and claims of discrimination against Black minorities by the café.

In a state of concern, Adam immediately contacts his business partner, Liam, to discuss the gravity of the situation. Liam suggests a proactive response: shutting down the café for a day to undertake racial bias training. The goal is to address implicit bias, prevent discrimination, and ensure everyone feels safe. He believes that this temporary closure and training would be sufficient, allowing the café to resume operations as normal afterward.

Feeling the urgency to address the issue, Adam decides to seek guidance from an expert in diversity and inclusion. After explaining the situation, the expert explains that research shows one-day training often fails to produce even short-term results. The complexity of implicit bias and discrimination requires a more comprehensive and sustained approach to truly effect change. In light of this insight, Adam recognises the need for a deeper and more lasting commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion at Dublin Brews. Closing the café for a day and conducting a brief training session is seen as a necessary first step, but it's not enough.

The expert recommends the following approach which includes:

- **Extended Training Programs:** Implementing a series of ongoing training sessions that cover not only racial bias but also inclusivity, cultural competency, and sensitivity training. This should involve all staff members at various levels of the organization, even Liam.
- **Policy Review and Revision:** Reassessing the café's policies to explicitly address discrimination, implicit bias, and the proper procedures for handling situations involving customers, ensuring that these policies are communicated clearly to all employees.
- **Diversity Hiring:** Actively promoting diversity in hiring practices. This involves recruiting a diverse staff and offering equal opportunities for professional growth.
- **Continued Community Engagement:** Actively engaging with the local community to rebuild trust and demonstrate the café's commitment to inclusivity. This may involve collaborating with other local organizations committed to diversity, hosting community forums, and participating in events that promote unity.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Being transparent about the steps the café is taking to address the issue and holding individuals accountable for discriminatory actions. This includes ongoing monitoring and open communication channels to address concerns promptly.

Understanding the need for a comprehensive and sustained effort, Adam decides to communicate this approach to Liam business partner, emphasising the importance of not only a temporary fix but a long-term commitment to fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment. The goal is not only to rectify the current crisis but also to contribute to positive change within the broader community.

THE TASKS

- 1 Why do you think that one-day training fails to produce even short-term results?
- 2 Is there a bigger issue here than diversity and inclusion in the workplace?
- 3 How might employees and customers be affected by this incident? How can such incidents be avoided in the future?
- 4 Write your own recommendations on how to prevent this occurring in the future within your organisation. Share your ideas and discuss them with your peers.

CASE STUDY 2

INTRODUCTION

MINORITY TRAINING

In the dynamic business of Quantum Tech Solutions, a new IT company committed to innovation, a tricky challenge surfaces as employees express concerns about perceived preferential treatment in the workplace. The issue gains prominence when a staff member, granted additional accommodations for religious observance, prompts annoyance among colleagues who in response are seeking equal treatment.

Led by CEO Anna, the company navigates this delicate scenario by initiating open dialogue, conducting policy reviews, and launching comprehensive diversity and inclusion programs, aiming to foster a workplace where every team member feels valued and heard.

Competences gained by participants after covering the case study material:

- **Communication Skills:** Engaging with the case study requires participants to articulate their thoughts on the effectiveness of the strategies employed by Quantum Tech Solutions, refining their communication skills.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Participants can gain insights into conflict resolution strategies within the workplace, understanding how effective communication, open dialogue, and proactive measures can address employee concerns and foster a positive work environment.
- **Change Management:** Participants will develop an understanding of change management as they observe how Quantum Tech Solutions adapts its strategies to address workplace concerns and foster a culture of inclusivity. They will give their own views on what the company can do to create meaningful change within the company.
- **Cross-Cultural Communication:** Participants can enhance their cross-cultural communication skills by understanding how effective communication plays a crucial role in addressing concerns related to diversity and inclusion.

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THE COMPANY

Quantum Tech Solutions is dedicated to pushing the boundaries of innovation in the IT industry. Their business strategy revolves around the use of cutting-edge technologies to deliver unique solutions to clients. With a focus on excellence, sustainability, and community engagement, Quantum Tech Solutions aims to not just meet but exceed the evolving needs of clients in the digital era.

Anna Smith, the CEO, leads the company's vision and strategy, ensuring alignment with industry trends and client demands. Michael Brown serves as the Chief Technology Officer (CTO), driving the technological direction of operations and innovation within the company.

The management team, under Anna's guidance, oversees departments including Operations, Human Resources, Marketing, and Project Management. The Human Resources department plays a pivotal role in recruiting top talent, fostering a positive work culture, and promoting professional development.

The Development and Innovation department, led by Michael, focuses on staying at the forefront of technological advancements, exploring new solutions, and enhancing existing products for the benefit of their clients.

The company has been in operation for only two years, but has grown and is advancing rapidly. Over the past 6 months, there have been 15 additional employees recruited in the D and I department.

MISSION

At Quantum Tech Solutions, the mission is to be at the front of technological innovation, delivering transformative IT solutions that empower clients to thrive in the digital world. Quantum Tech Solutions is committed to fostering a workplace that nurtures creativity, values diversity, and embraces sustainability, while building lasting relationships with clients and contributing to the betterment of the global IT community.

TECH AIMS

1. **Innovative Solutions:** Quantum Tech Solutions aims to develop and deliver cutting-edge IT solutions that anticipate and address the evolving needs of clients.
2. **Talent Development:** The company aims to attract and retain top-tier talent by offering a conducive and inclusive work environment, promoting continuous learning, and providing opportunities for career growth.
3. **Client Satisfaction:** Quantum Tech Solutions aims to ensure client satisfaction through unparalleled customer service, efficient project management, and the delivery of high-quality solutions.
4. **Sustainability and Responsibility:** The company aims to integrate sustainable practices into operations, products, and services, prioritizing environmental responsibility and ethical business conduct.

Through this strategic framework, Quantum Tech Solutions aspires to not only navigate the dynamic landscape of the IT industry but also to shape its trajectory, fostering innovation, sustainability, and positive community impact.

THE STORY

One afternoon, some employees express a sentiment that special treatment is being afforded to certain staff members belonging to minority cultures, a perception that threatens to undermine the harmonious work environment the company strives to maintain.

The issue gains prominence when a staff member, observing a religious holiday, is granted both time and access to a designated room for prayers several times a day. While the intention behind accommodating religious practices is rooted in respect and inclusion, a group of employees, not observing the same holiday, raises their voice in discontent. They approach the company leadership with demands for equal treatment, seeking extra breaks even though they do not partake in the same religious observance as the other employee.

This scenario poses a delicate challenge for Anna, the CEO, and the leadership team. The need to balance the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion with the concerns of those who feel disadvantaged requires a thoughtful and strategic approach.

Recognising the complexity of the situation, Anna initiates an open dialogue with the concerned employees. She schedules a meeting where employees are encouraged to express their thoughts and concerns openly. This provides a platform for constructive conversation and allows the leadership team to gain deeper insights into the diverse perspectives within the company.

The team also work to communicate the importance of diversity and the company's commitment to fostering an inclusive culture. They emphasise that accommodations made for religious observances are rooted in respect for individual beliefs and are intended to create a workplace where everyone feels valued and understood.

As Anna is busy with some new clients, she has asked Michael to advise the HR department on her behalf. However, Michael is unsure what to advise HR. He does not really understand the situation and has reached out to you, a friend who creates Diversity and Inclusion policies for SMEs.

THE TASKS

- 1 Identify the assumptions and biases found in the scenario above. Why are they problematic?
- 2 What would be your course of action in terms of explaining to employees that equal treatment in this scenario is not appropriate? Why do you think this would be an appropriate solution?
- 3 How might the employee who has access to prayer time be affected by the request of their colleagues?
- 4 Write your own recommendations you would share with Michael. Share your ideas and discuss them with your peers.

CASE STUDY 3

ASSUMPTIONS

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic environment of Lumina Marketing, a young and talented intern identifying as a person of color, found themselves at the centre of an unsettling encounter during a business meeting. Entrusted with the lead role on a new project, the intern faced inquiries about their leadership capabilities from business representatives, coupled with unwarranted questions about their place of birth and a seemingly patronising compliment on their language proficiency.

Disturbed by the incident, the intern turned to Lumina's leadership, expressing their upset and seeking guidance on the appropriate course of action. This scenario brings light toward potential biases within the workplace, prompting Lumina Marketing Solutions to respond with empathy, strategic intervention, and a renewed commitment to fostering a truly inclusive environment for all team members.

Competences gained by participants after covering the case study material:

- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Readers can assess Lumina's CSR practice, understanding how the company responds to incidents affecting employee well-being, and how it aligns with broader societal expectations for responsible business conduct.
- **Professional Development:** The scenario explores the need for ongoing professional development, with Lumina Marketing likely implementing training programs to enhance awareness of cultural sensitivity and unconscious biases.
- **Empathy and Emotional Intelligence:** The scenario prompts participants to empathise with the intern's experience and consider the emotional impact of microaggressions. This enhances their emotional intelligence, a crucial skill in team management.

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THE COMPANY

Lumina Marketing, based in the city of Limerick, uses a dynamic business strategy centered on leveraging creativity, data-driven insights, and cutting-edge technologies to propel clients to the forefront of the competitive marketing landscape. The company thrives on fostering a collaborative and innovative work environment, prioritising lifelong learning, and embracing diversity in perspectives to deliver creative marketing solutions.

Jessica Pack, the Founder and CEO, leads the company's vision and strategic direction, bringing a wealth of experience in marketing and a passion for innovation. Alex Murphy, Chief Creative Officer (CCO), focuses on the creative vision, ensuring marketing campaigns are not only effective but also visually captivating and engaging.

Lumina is composed of specialised teams in digital marketing, content creation, social media management, and analytics, each led by experienced and new professionals alike, believing that experience is not everything.

The company has been in operation for five years now. It was a small four team business before the Covid pandemic, after moving remotely it has continued to expand its team. Now, the total employee count is 12 after moving back into office work full time, including 2 interns.

MISSION

At Lumina Marketing, the mission is to illuminate brands, guiding them to shine in the complex and evolving marketing landscape. They are dedicated to creating innovative, and sustainable marketing strategies to not only meet but exceed the expectations of clients. Commitment to excellence, creativity, and a culture of lifelong learning positions Lumina as the leading company in Ireland's marketing community.

Sustainability is integral to the mission. Lumina is dedicated to pioneering eco-conscious and green marketing practices, ensuring that strategies not only elevate brands but also contribute positively to the environment, fostering a future where marketing and sustainability are combined.

LUMINA AIMS

- 1. Marketing Excellence:** Use data analytics and creative ingenuity to deliver strategic marketing solutions that meet clients' goals and maximise impact and return on investment.
- 2. Client-Centric Approach:** Put the needs of clients first by adopting a client-centric strategy, encouraging open communication, and creating enduring alliances founded on cooperation and trust.
- 3. Innovation and Creativity:** Foster an innovative and creative culture within the team, stay abreast of current marketing developments, and offer clients cutting-edge approaches that help them stand out in their respective fields.
- 4. Environmental Stewardship:** Including socially conscious and sustainable practices in marketing plans. The objective is to minimise the environmental impact, maintain high moral and ethical standards, and support constructive effects on the environment and society in accordance with the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) responsibility principles.

Lumina Marketing Solutions aims to be a beacon of creativity and innovation within the city of Limerick.

THE STORY

A young intern, just 23 years old and on the verge of completing a master's degree, was entrusted with the lead role on a small business project. However, during a pivotal meeting with business representatives, the intern, who identifies as a person of colour, found themselves at the center of an uncomfortable situation. The representatives, seemingly taken aback, questioned the intern's role as the project lead, inquired about their place of birth, and delivered what seemed like a backhanded compliment on their linguistic proficiency.

Post-meeting, the intern approached Alex, expressing their distress over the encounter and seeking guidance on how to navigate the aftermath. The situation raises concerns about potential biases and microaggressions that may have occurred, prompting a thoughtful and strategic response from Lumina's leadership team.

Alex recognises the gravity of the incident and immediately schedules a private meeting with the intern to discuss their feelings and perspectives. The company does not have an HR department, as it is Jessica who creates the policies and deals with any issues. Alex asks Jessica to initiate an investigation into the incident, ensuring a thorough understanding of what transpired.

Alex decides to provide additional support to the intern, offering resources for managing stress and promoting a healthy work environment. Jessica also reinforces the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion, emphasising a zero-tolerance policy for any form of discrimination. This scenario becomes a catalyst to strengthen the company's actions in creating an inclusive workplace, reinforcing the dedication to diversity, equity, and respect for all employees.

However, the business representatives do not seem remorseful of their comments, stating they do not see the issue. Jessica is unsure how to react as nothing similar has ever occurred.

THE TASKS

- 1 Identify the assumptions and biases found in the scenario above. Why are they problematic?
- 2 What do you think of the way Alex reacted? Were his decisions helpful?
- 3 What would be your course of action in terms of the business representatives?
- 4 What would you advise Jessica? Why do you think this would be an appropriate solution? Share your ideas and discuss them with your peers.

CASE STUDY 4

INTRODUCTION

TRAINING PROGRAMME

SkillCraft Technology recognises the critical need to enhance the skills of its workforce to stay competitive in the growing technological landscape. As part of a strategic initiative, the company aims to implement a comprehensive training programme, aimed at recognising and improving both soft and hard skills to empower its employees for future challenges and opportunities.

However, it has been difficult to get employees on board with this new programme. Matilda Craft, the CEO, is struggling with empowering the team into participation. How can the benefits of soft and hard skills be conveyed effectively?

Competences gained by participants after covering the case study material:

- **Change Management:** Participants can learn about change management principles as SkillCraft Technology adapts to emerging industry trends and implements training programmes.
- **Professional Development:** The case study highlights the need for ongoing professional development, with SkillsCraft Technology implementing training to enhance awareness of soft and hard skills of the team.
- **Life Long Learning Culture:** Participants can understand the importance of fostering a continuous learning culture within their organisation, encouraging them to take ownership of their professional development.

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THE COMPANY

SkillCraft Technology was founded in 2013 by Matilda Craft. She has worked with the same team of five people who she met at Dublin University, all having studied and progressed together. No new employees have come into the company since it was founded.

Apart from Matilda, the company has a technology and innovation leader who focuses on staying ahead of technological trends, conducting research, and implementing innovative solutions. Also, an operations and project management leader who manages project workflows, timelines, and ensures the seamless execution of client deliverables. Lastly, two software developers focusing on various programming languages, and one data analyst.

SkillCraft Technology has a commitment to fostering innovation for their clients through talent development. The specialised employees aim to cater to the company's goals of delivering high-quality technological solutions while prioritising the continuous growth and well-being.

MISSION

At SkillCraft Technology, the mission is to pioneer excellence in technology consulting. They are driven by their strong relationships with clients in delivering cutting-edge solutions which allow them to maintain a competitive edge on the market. The company's dedication to innovation is paired with the importance of creating a culture that values inclusivity and continuous learning.

SkillCraft Technolgoey strives to cultivate an environment where each team member is inspired to push boundaries, embrace challenges, and contribute fueling creativity. Collective expertise of each specialist and a forward-thinking mindset can create true impact in the technological industry in Ireland and beyond.

CRAFT AIMS

1. **Technical Mastery:** Assist staff members in staying abreast of industry developments by providing them with up-to-date technical skills and knowledge pertinent to the company's focus areas.
2. **Leadership Development:** To improve employees' capacity to lead and manage teams, cultivate their leadership traits by offering them training in effective communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution.
3. **Innovation Mindset:** Foster an innovative mindset through instruction in problem-solving techniques, creative thinking, and flexibility in order to overcome obstacles and spot new opportunities.
4. **Lifelong Learning:** By giving people access to a variety of learning resources, training courses, and mentoring programmes, you can empower them with ongoing opportunities for both professional and personal growth. You also acknowledge that knowledge is a journey that knows no boundaries.

SkillsCraft Technology holds a commitment to lifelong learning as not only a strategic objective but a testament to the belief that sustained success is grounded in the ongoing pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of a workforce that thrives on curiosity, innovation, and adaptability.

THE STORY

SkillCraft Technology, founded a decade ago, has grown rapidly and is now at the forefront of delivering technology solutions to mainly Irish, but also European businesses. However, Matilda has identified a potential gap in the workforce's skills, encompassing not only technical proficiencies but also interpersonal and leadership abilities. Matilda acknowledges that a holistic approach to employee development is essential for sustained success.

Building stronger leadership, teamwork, and communication abilities is essential for creating a supportive and effective work environment as collaboration becomes more and more important in complex technology projects. In order to foster a culture of innovation and adaptability, SkillCraft Technology will need to implement training programmes that foster an adaptable mindset and creative problem-solving techniques.

Therefore, Matilda wishes to place all employees on a soft and hard skills training programme.

All of employees are not happy, as they feel they are already competent, as all have Master Degrees. They participate in other training courses such as conflict resolution or diversity and inclusion and feel a soft and hard skills programme will not be useful to them.

Matilda has held two meetings with the team already but they are reluctant and have become unsupportive of the idea of future trainings. Unsure on how to motivate her team, she confides in you about this, believing there are many benefits to this training.

THE TASKS

- 1 What are soft and hard skills? What can they be in relation to each of the team members at SkillsCraft? Do they differ?
- 2 What are the potential benefits of developing soft and hard competences Matilda can share to encourage the team?
- 3 How would the training fit with the company mission and aims?
- 4 What would you advise Matilda? Share your ideas and discuss them with your peers.