



Diversity's About More Than Just a Simple "Happy Holidays" Greeting Card

Guess who's not celebrating Christmas this year? Millions of people in the United States.

That's right. Tens of millions of Americans don't celebrate Christmas religiously, either as followers of non-Christian religions (Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Jews) or as individuals with no religious affiliation. Because many stores tap into the cash value of Christmas with their plethora of Santas, ornaments, and Christmas fanfare at your nearby mall, we can easily overlook the depth of the diversity present in America during this season. In reality, many different events, both spiritual, religious, and tradition based, are being celebrated in many different ways during these times.



It used to be that being inclusive meant sending out politically correct "Happy Holidays" greeting cards and changing Christmas office parties to "holiday parties." Today, inclusiveness and diversity is about more than just changing labels and titles.

Diversity and inclusiveness is about using the holiday celebration time to be with friends and family to build understanding and awareness about others.

Three Ways to Build Your Awareness of Diversity and Create an Inclusive Holiday Environment

- 1. Learn about other religious or holiday celebrations.** Carve out some time from online shopping or a holiday TV show to learn about another culture's celebrations during this time. Watch a TV special about other celebrations, do a Google search on a holiday, or check out books at your local bookstore while gift shopping. Share your learning with others, and use it as a chance to expand the conversation at parties and at the dinner table.
- 2. Make no expectations about other religious or holiday celebrations.** Realize that people celebrate a variety of holidays during this time of year, and some people choose to celebrate none. Be respectful of these differences by taking interest in other people's traditions and making them feel welcome. Don't be afraid to ask people what holidays they celebrate. Find out what they do during this time of the year that is special. Let it be an opportunity to learn about different cultures and religions and the traditions that accompany them.
- 3. Mark your calendar and your address book with other scheduled religious or holiday celebrations.** If the calendar or PDA you use does not list holidays like Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Ramadan, and Diwali, find out the dates and record them as reminders. Many programs like Microsoft Outlook allow users to add calendar dates for celebrations from different parts of the world automatically, making

this task quick and effortless. Take a few minutes to mark your address book with the holidays that people celebrate. When writing holiday cards, recognize their holiday, and include a little hand-written note acknowledging their celebration.

A Note for Employers about Religious or Holiday Celebrations



Here are a few extra things employers can do to make their workplaces more inclusive during the holidays.

- Make sure your holiday party isn't a Christmas party in disguise. Decorations and food should be general, and not specific to any religion.
- Consider having a New Year's party instead of a holiday party. This type of party can get everyone on board with the company's mission and vision for the New Year.
- Post holiday greetings on your webpage and Intranet for many religious holidays.
- Be respectful of these special dates, and plan events and meetings around various holidays.
- Display a multi-cultural calendar to help all employees stay aware of important cultural events for the rest of the year.
- Be flexible with the needs of different employees about religious or holiday celebrations.
- Encourage employees to share their celebrations through stories, decorations, and foods that they can bring to their workplace.

Source: Lieberman, Simma. (n.d.). Diversity's about more than just a simple "Happy Holidays" greeting card. Retrieved April 7, 2006 from About.com: http://humanresources.about.com/od/diversity/a/holiday_diverse.htm.

About MINES & Associates

For over 25 years MINES & Associates has been a nationally recognized business psychology firm that provides a variety of services to corporate employers including employee assistance programs (EAP), managed mental healthcare, organizational development and psychology services, wellness programs, behavioral risk management, disease management, PPO services, and a number of other technology based services. MINES & Associates is divided into two main divisions, Organizational Psychology and Health Psychology, and currently serves a diverse portfolio of clients in all 50 states, Canada, Mexico, and the UK. Please log on to <http://www.minesandassociates.com> for the latest news and information on MINES & Associates.