

RAMADAN

Supporting your Muslim Employees during Ramadan

Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic calendar, a time for spiritual connection and engaging more deeply with faith and spirituality. Many observe it through abstaining from food and drink from dawn until dusk.

1 Plan ahead and raise awareness



Ramadan comes along every year. Plan ahead for this. Don't wait until your Muslim employees inform you. Remove that burden from them. Ensure management or HR does the work of informing the whole organization about the month. Awareness is a building block for inclusion. Here are some ways to raise awareness.

Examples:

- Send out an internal email to the company informing staff about the upcoming months. Include information about the month, and how people can support their colleagues.
- Commemorate the month with a public post on LinkedIn, with links to resources employees can use to understand the month better.
- Provide a platform for Muslim employees to share their Ramadan experiences if they wish, by hosting a fun engagement session.

2 Support an ERG

Create and support an Employee Resource Group (ERG) for Muslim identifying employees to gather and feel included. Ensure you are not burdening them with the job of educating, but delicately draw from the group the information needed to share with the whole organization. Provide ERGs with the support necessary to be successful. Provide a point person to act as a champion for the ERG.



3 Offer Flexible and Paid Time Off



Offer flexible working hours and locations to staff. This will help ensure fasting Muslims can observe the month as they like, while maintaining productivity. Organizations should offer paid time off, not just Eid (celebration after Ramadan), but also for the day after Laylat Al-Qadar, which translates to the Night of Power. For many Muslims, this is the holiest day of the year, and many choose to stay up all night praying. Having the option of taking the next day off would help Muslims feel valued in the workplace.

4 Assumptions are dangerous

Muslims look diverse and practice in different ways. Check your assumptions of who looks like a Muslim. There is a growing population of white Muslims of European origin. Don't assume you know who is or is not observing Ramadan. Don't assume that all Muslims will be fasting. Some can't or don't. Some can fast one day and not another. Please don't ask why a Muslim employee is eating.



Reasons for not Fasting:

- Might not choose to fast
- Medical conditions/illnesses
- Menstruating, pregnant or breastfeeding women

5 Identify and dismantle Islamophobia



Lack of awareness of Muslim employees' needs can lead to Islamophobia. Questioning a fasting person's performance implies a negative impact, but fasting only changes appearance, not productivity. Non-company social events scheduled during fasting can be exclusionary and should be rescheduled to accommodate everyone. Suggested alternatives include postponing events to holding them in the evening when everyone can eat.

6 Celebrate in the workplace

Celebrate your employees by holding an Iftar and invite all employees to attend. Hold a celebration for Eid, to raise awareness on both Ramadan and Eid. This is a great practice for all faiths, and is a way to build a sharing culture and open dialogue.



Although it may be well meaning, oftentimes comments made to fasting people comes off as insensitive and is a type of microaggression. Here are some examples of things you should avoid saying to a fasting person, and things you can say instead.

Things NOT to say

Not even water?

You must feel so thirsty the whole day!

Do you ever eat when no one is looking?

Is this even healthy?

What you CAN say

Ramadan Mubarak!

I admire your dedication.

What are you doing for Iftar?

What are your goals this Ramadan?

Where to go for more resources:

- <https://yaqeeninstitute.ca/ramadan>
- <https://islamonline.net/en/about-ramadan-interesting-facts-to-know-about-ramadan>