

CORPORATE RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AS COVENANTAL PLURALISM

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Today's corporate workplace provides a powerful example of covenantal pluralism in practice. Increasingly, companies are embracing employees' faith and belief as an integral part of their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, which in turn have experienced dramatic growth and gained significance within the larger field of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a self-regulating business model that helps companies act in ways that advance general welfare. To that end, companies that embrace CSR apply accountability measures to ascertain and measure the impact of their operations on their employees, their partners and suppliers, the communities in which they operate and indeed, all aspects of society, including economic, social, and environmental.

Programs and policies to foster DEI are an important aspect of CSR. Almost all major corporations and employers charge their human resource officers with promoting and ensuring DEI within the company. Often, companies seek to influence their business partners, suppliers and even their customers to embrace the goals of DEI, as they do with other parts of their CSR efforts.

One example of corporate social commitment to DEI is the widespread company responses to the police killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, that led to national and global protests against racism in more than 60 countries, and in more than 2,000 cities and towns in the United States alone (Burch et al. 2020). In the midst of these events, global corporations pledged more than \$66 billion to support programs aimed at addressing systematic racism (Fitzhugh et al. 2020).

Race is, and has been, corporate America's primary DEI focus (Grim 2021). However, as the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation's groundbreaking research has shown (RFBF 2020b), religion is also starting to become an accepted part of DEI programs. Indeed, religion is being added to the DEI agenda because employers are coming to realize that, for many workers, their core identity is rooted in their faith. As Julia Oltmanns, a top executive with the risk management and commercial insurance company Zurich America, puts it:

Over the years, the companies I had worked for had recognized my identity as a woman, but my identity in my faith is more important to me than my gender. Once

the organization recognized that importance and supported my expression of my faith at work, I felt encouraged to be an integrated, aligned, values-driven leader in the company, allowing me to reach my full potential.

(Oltmanns 2020)

Several of America's best companies have come to understand the strategic benefit of allowing people to bring their "whole selves" to work, including their faith, and have expanded their DEI initiatives to include faith and belief-oriented Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Some have also adopted other faith-friendly initiatives, such as corporate chaplains. These forward-looking companies include American Airlines, American Express, Texas Instruments, Intel, Target, Tyson Foods, Coca-Cola Consolidated, Google, Apple, Salesforce, Accenture, PayPal, and Walmart.

The common rationale for fostering these faith-oriented ERGs is summarized by Craig Carter, an executive at Intel: It positively impacts the three "Rs" of business: Recruiting, retention, and revenue, i.e., the ability to attract and retain diverse talent, and get that talent fully engaged, which leads to enhanced innovation and productivity (RFBF 2020c).

The rationale for corporate faith-inclusion on an even-handed basis across all faiths and worldviews is especially strong as companies increasingly globalize. Having employees who understand how faith and belief are manifested in private and public life helps avoid costly missteps and helps better tailor products and services to customer needs in particular contexts (France 24 2014). In light of the fact that religious populations worldwide are outgrowing non-religious populations 23-to-1 (Grim and Connor 2015), it should be clear that a sensitivity to religious diversity will be an important enabler for global competitiveness in the coming years. And the appeal of the religious diversity focus extends beyond individual companies' financial competitiveness. As discussed below, it's also increasingly acknowledged to be helpful for strengthening mutually respectful relationships across the world community, in a time when rancor and distrust seem to be prevalent.

Several significant commonalities between DEI and covenantal pluralism emerge from the core goal of faith-oriented DEI initiatives, which is to free employees to bring their whole selves to work, and, in so doing, to facilitate the achievement of their full potential, to the benefit of all. The following section explores these commonalities.

DEI and covenantal pluralism commonalities

First, DEI and covenantal pluralism are similar in that both provide a framework to facilitate fairness and flourishing for all. Ellen Barker, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer of Texas Instruments, captures this framework as she explains that the company's faith ERGs have the same purposes as the company's other diversity initiatives to: (1) Promote a collaborative and respectful culture, (2) recruit and cultivate talent, (3) stimulate innovation and engagement, and (4) give back to their communities, believing that stronger companies create stronger communities and stronger communities build stronger companies (Barker 2020).

Second, both corporate DEI programs and covenantal pluralism embrace a clearly stated principle of equal rights and responsibilities applicable to all employees and citizens, a principle that individuals are committed to engage, respect, and protect the rights of the other—even where they don't agree with or ascribe moral equivalence to the beliefs and behaviors of the others. In the United States, DEI programs are seeking to put into practice the spirit and letter of equal employment law and constitutionally protected rights. The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces Federal laws¹ that "protect employees and job applicants against discrimination involving:

- Unfair treatment because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, or genetic information;
- Harassment by managers, co-workers, or others in the workplace, because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, or genetic information;
- Denial of a reasonable workplace accommodation that the employee needs because of religious beliefs or disability;
- Retaliation because the employee complained about job discrimination, or assisted with a job discrimination investigation or lawsuit.” (EEOC n.d.)

These legal principles have defined the minimum requirements for accommodation of religion and protection against oppressive work environments. As corporate America has become increasingly focused on creating environments where people can bring their whole selves to work regardless of their backgrounds, many companies are embracing diversity practices that meet and exceed those minimum legal requirements for accommodation. Their strategic focus on religious diversity comes in the wake of overwhelming research and evidence showing that a company’s bottom line grows when it values each employee’s uniqueness and equitably welcomes diverse perspectives in the workplace.

Third, DEI, like covenantal pluralism, moves beyond mere “tolerance.” Faith and belief-oriented DEI initiatives seek to foster the kind of mutual engagement that strengthens mutual respect, interpersonal connection, mutual reliance, and an enduring trust that produces resiliency, without seeking to impose uniformity. By way of example, in 2017 Salesforce launched its tenth employee resource group, Faithforce. Since then, it has become the company’s fastest growing ERG in the company’s history, with nearly 3,000 members and 17 regional hubs all around the world, from Mexico and Brazil to Australia, New York, and London, and all across the United States. Sue Warnke, the founding President of the Faithforce at their San Francisco headquarters, lays out what Faithforce is and is not (Warnke 2019). The list bears a framework similar to covenantal pluralism:

What Faithforce isn’t:

- Proselytizing: We don’t try to change others’ beliefs;
- Political: We don’t take official stances on political topics;
- Argumentative: We don’t debate theology;
- Homogenizing: We don’t merge faiths into one, but rather honor the distinctions of different faiths and worldviews;

What Faithforce is:

- Educational: We learn about different traditions;
- Philanthropic: We give back to our communities (10,000 volunteer hours last year alone);
- Celebratory: We celebrate each other’s holidays.

Fourth, the ethos of faith-oriented DEI initiatives resonates with the normative essence of covenantal pluralism. These initiatives share a spirit of humility, patience, empathy, and responsibility to engage, respect, and protect the other. Kent Johnson, former senior counsel at Texas Instruments, points out visionary gaps when companies remain silent about faith:

Something fundamental is missing when DEI is promoted without a faith and belief component. Today, conferences and courses abound on the topics like how to connect with employees’ “hearts and minds,” and how to make sure employees are “fully

engaged” in their work, and how employees should be feel free to “be their authentic selves,” and how to “lead with purpose” . . . yet few of them speak of people’s spiritual lives. The core set of beliefs and principles that defines many employees’ lives is left outside in the cold. In the very midst of impassioned appeals for diversity and inclusion, the silence regarding spirituality sends a message: When it comes to faith and belief, maybe we really don’t mean it.

(Johnson 2020)

Whether management speaks openly of it or remains silent, employees’ faith is a powerful motivational factor behind CSR programs that seek to enable employees to “do good,” to serve a “higher purpose,” and to promote human welfare beyond the profitability of the enterprise, even when nobody’s looking. Faith and belief often motivates and inspires employees to avoid unethical behavior and cover-ups, to humbly accept and even seek correction and promote others’ ideas; to appropriately speak truth to power and to promote frank and authentic communication at all levels. Many benefits flow when employees are free to speak of such core principles and beliefs—and their spiritual origins. When one openly and authentically expresses a belief that principles like these are absolute truths that govern her life, and that she is personally and authentically committed to follow them, she engages with an uncommon vulnerability and accountability. Those who hear such open expressions are also affected. They get to know and relate to their colleagues on a deeper level. And whether they ascribe to the particular faith or not, they can hold their colleague accountable to the standards she professes.

It’s not that religious people are more ethical than non-religious people. There are plenty of religious people who lie, cheat, and steal. But religious people have resources, beliefs, and practices, such as practicing the Cardinal Virtues, that help them on the path towards humility, patience, empathy, and respect.

The faith-at-work movement that is being fostered by DEI in some of the world’s most successful companies is far from “a thin-soup ecumenism or vague syncretism.” Rather, it’s a movement characterized by a positive, practical, “non-relativistic pluralism.” It is a more holistic paradigm of “civic fairness and human solidarity, global neighborliness; one with a balanced emphasis on both the *rules* and *relationships* necessary to live peacefully and productively in a world of deep differences” (see Chapter 2 in this *Handbook*, by Stewart, Seiple, and Hoover).

Kent Johnson’s Authenticity & Connection blog (Johnson 2021) provides an example of the kinds of topics faith-oriented ERGs discuss as they seek to advance civility and connection in the workplace. His blog discusses topics like:

- Authenticity at Work—Why it’s sorely needed today; and how to influence your workplace culture to promote it;
- Foxhole Relationships—How workplaces are a strategic launchpad for civility;
- Anemic Friendships—The positive impact of deep friendships on employee retention and engagement; and what’s missing today;
- Today’s Need for Greater Empathy and “Thicker Skin”—and how to achieve both in your workplace;
- Convivencia—What human resource professionals can learn today from the Middle Ages in Cordoba Spain, where Jews, Christians, and Muslims advanced civility together;
- Suppression of Individuality—How atheists and people of faith often feel “dissed” in the workplace, and why this should matter to companies;
- “Command and Control”—How to decentralize and equip diverse people to solve complex problems;

- Corporate Social Responsibility—Why and how individual workers’ diverse faiths and worldviews should be engaged to help advance good in the world;
- Navigating Ideological/Philosophical Conflict at Work—How to maximize harmony without compromising individuals’ core beliefs;
- Freedom of Expression, Faith, and Belief in Colleges and Universities—Why many schools stifle expression and drive people of faith “underground,” and signs of hope;
- Lawyers and Religious Expression at Work—Why some company lawyers are worried about religious expression at work while others are strong advocates.

Most of America’s Fortune 100 companies have well-developed DEI programs, sometimes headed by a senior C-suite director. Many also include company-sponsored employee resource groups (ERGs) that support people from these protected categories; but many haven’t yet embraced faith and belief. For many employees, it is their faith, more than any other single factor, that defines their core identity. When corporate culture constrains them from referring to their faith at work, they feel devalued, and forced “under cover.” They feel they can’t “be themselves.” They can become alienated from their work. Yet, many business leaders have no idea how to approach the topic of faith and belief in the workplace. They wonder: What are the best practices in this area? What are the pitfalls to avoid? What can/should be done? How can/should diverse employees relate with one another at work? To begin to address these kinds of questions, we’d offer the following thoughts.

Nine principles for building covenantal pluralism through faith-oriented DEI

This being a *Handbook on Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement*, we offer and then unpack nine coaching points for companies interested in constructively opening the door to religious expression and embracing covenantal pluralism:

- (1) Make faith and belief part of a larger emphasis on valuing ALL individuals for who they are;
 - (2) Consider how freedom of religion and belief dovetails with your business priorities;
 - (3) Clearly define your intentions—why you’re doing this;
 - (4) Begin at the “grassroots”;
 - (5) Persuade your leaders. Don’t force it;
 - (6) Document a vision;
 - (7) Define reasonable processes;
 - (8) Help people of various faiths equip their own constituents;
 - (9) Seek expert advice.
- (1) From the outset, make clear that adding religion to DEI is part of a larger emphasis on valuing ALL individuals for who they are.

The big idea is that the right to “be yourself” at work extends to people of all faiths and beliefs, including atheists and others with no religious belief. A corollary to this principle is that faith-oriented communication will always be entirely voluntary. It’s up to the individual. This sounds simple, but it’s hugely important to make this clear right at the beginning.

- (2) Consider how freedom of religion and belief dovetails with your business priorities.

For example, PayPal issued a statement when it launched its interfaith ERG called “Believe.” The statement (quoted in RFBF 2020a) includes several key affirmations and objectives:

We believe all employees have the right to bring their whole self to work. Faith and worldviews are core to who we are – our values and beliefs – and to how we conduct business. The mission of Believe is to foster an inclusive work culture and to promote holistic wellbeing by providing a forum to openly exercise and celebrate all faiths and worldviews while working. Believe exists to create awareness and understanding of faith, hope, love, empathy, respect for one another, and service toward our customers, communities, and co-workers.

Believe's core objectives include creating safe environments where employees' faiths and worldviews are intrinsically valued and supported, as well as increasing understanding, awareness, and cultural sensitivity to these diverse faiths and worldviews. Activities include sharing employees' traditions and holidays, always in a way that people of all faiths and worldviews feel free to bring their whole self to work.

Becky Pomerleau, a founding member of Believe, captured the spirit of Believe on its launch (Pomerleau 2020):

Beyond grateful and blessed to work for a company that values #faithinclusion and #faithdiversity. I believe #PayPal is [well positioned to solve problems including religious and belief intolerance]. My hope is that through Believe, our employees can freely bring their source of peace, hope, love, empathy and resilience to work.

The essential point is that the focus on religious diversity should be seen as part of a bigger objective. Religious diversity and mutually respectful engagement is not about an isolated hobby horse project. It's not about stocking the freezer with chocolate ice cream because many employees like that flavor. The mutually respectful engagement essential to covenantal pluralism is core to the company's passion for its most valuable asset: Its people.

When embarking on this process, remember that it is not just about what's happening in a company. In focusing on religious diversity at work, you're building a culture of civil engagement that has legs. Companies are producing cultural byproducts that impact the world outside their workplaces. People are learning how to connect more respectfully and civilly as they work side by side. In a world wracked with bias, tribalism, and distrust, this point cannot be overemphasized. It is at the core of what CSR and DEI are all about.

(3) Clearly define your intentions.

Advocates should explain why they're enabling religious expression at work. There shouldn't be any hidden motives. In addition to the business cases just mentioned, many companies express purposes like these: (a) to support company values like personal integrity, goodwill, employee well-being, and psychological and spiritual wellness; and (b) to foster bridge-building across cultures. Adding religion to DEI is not just about making religious people comfortable; it's also about fostering cross-cultural relationships, and this bridge-building goes beyond mere tolerance.

In defining intentions, it is also important to explain what this focus on faith and belief is *not*, as seen in the previous example from Salesforce. In addition to that list, we would add that this is not a Trojan Horse designed to enable a particular group to dominate. At the same time it is not an effort to push employees to say that all beliefs are equal. DEI isn't about making everyone alike. It is about creating a culture that enables diverse employees to engage, to learn deeply about one another, to remain true to their core beliefs, and to disagree civilly.

(4) Begin at the grassroots.

Often, this focus on spiritual identity starts with informal, unofficial, grassroots events that emerge spontaneously from your employees. If you think there's no grassroots interest in faith expression, the silence of your workers on this topic may well be caused by an impression that your culture would frown on any discussion of faith at work. You'll probably be surprised to learn that behind-the-scenes religious and spiritual "skunkworks" are already underway in your companies. It's far better to have this going on out in the open than to have it take place in the shadows, as if it's something to be ashamed of.

While beginning at the grassroots is important, there's also a lot that top management can do to nurture this movement toward authenticity. Business leaders and faith leaders can officially free people to engage openly with anyone who is interested to learn about their core identity and beliefs. But the enduring and most impactful work of building trust and civility takes place outside the C-suite—in thousands upon thousands of personal interactions that are characterized by a humble desire to learn about one another's ultimate "why." The grassroots are where this transformative change happens.

(5) Persuade corporate leaders, don't force it.

It's often counterproductive to try to force leaders to permit religious expression by citing the minimum legal requirement of "reasonable accommodation" for religions, or by threatening disciplinary actions. Compulsion in this area can lead managers to "check the box" by doing the bare minimum to meet the requirement. It's far more effective when leaders are persuaded of the benefits of religious expression within a covenantal-pluralist framework, and genuinely advocate it.

So, how do persuade your leaders? Use real-life, personal examples, preferably firsthand accounts of bridge building and what that's meant to co-workers at your company or elsewhere. Real-life, personal experiences are transformative. There are countless examples of this (Grim 2020), including: Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Buddhists within companies joining together as one to help communities torn by sectarian violence; people of various faiths who joined the company, or stayed, because they felt the company cared about them enough to let them live out their faith openly; and friendships across sectarian lines and political lines, such as the example of the warm friendship between the late Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Antonin Scalia (Hitz 2020).

(6) Document a vision of what it would look like, day to day, to openly enable and encourage employees to integrate spirituality into their work.

Include specific proposals, not just generalities. This can be approached in a variety of ways such as joint outreach activities among faith-oriented ERGs to the community (such as tutoring, food for poor, outreach in times of crisis), or a unified multifaith voice on topics of commonality, supporting, for instance, the rights of those who are under-appreciated, regardless of their religion, or belief system, or race, or status, or sexual orientation, or spot on the organizational chart. The point is that vision needs to be communicated with practical and visible activities that make that vision a reality.

Hosting in-company educational programs concerning relevant faith doctrines that are shared by many established faiths is another common activity. Topics of recent in-company seminars hosted by faith-oriented ERGs include:

- Integrity/ethics, truth telling, forgiveness, compassion. One faith-oriented group focuses on what they call "Integriosity"—blending both integrity and generosity;
- The "golden rule"—treating others the way you'd want to be treated;

- A high view of the value of all human beings, and human dignity;
- Principles of humility and openness to listen to constructive criticism—especially from people who are not like us;
- Holiday observances; including the rationale/history behind significant days on various religious calendars. This is not trivial;
- Invited speakers from NGOs that show how religious doctrines relate to work such as the Productive Muslim Company or Coco-Cola Consolidated's t-factor.²

(7) Define reasonable processes.

Before officially embracing religion as a component of your company's larger diversity focus, follow a defined initial decision-making process to help management weigh the issues and make appropriate plans. It is essential to consult people in companies or other experts that have experience in this arena, and who have done this well over time such as American Airlines, American Express, Intel, and Texas Instruments. It is important to consult internal company stakeholders and encourage them to raise questions and concerns early in the process, looking specifically for leaders who might be apprehensive about religious expression. Don't bypass them! Urge them to meet regularly with those who are advocates, to build relationships with one another as they wrestle with this.

Many people have had bad experiences with "organized religion." They've been hurt, felt put down, and condemned. It's crucial to listen to them, and to be careful not to offend. This vetting process is crucial. It isn't necessarily easy. Among other benefits, it serves as a demonstration of the need for a focus on religious diversity. It also serves as a demonstration of the feasibility of a focus on religious diversity. When people of different beliefs and perspectives come out the other side in unison with a proposal, that is transformative!

Be cognizant of processes governing internal communications. You need to carefully craft internal communications about the idea especially when announcing a new policy or approach or diversity emphasis. Don't just announce that your company is launching a new "faith-friendly" program. That can be misinterpreted as "open season" on so-called unbelievers. It is very important to understand that people without a particular faith, and especially those who are committed atheists, feel like they live in a world bombarding them with religious messaging, which religious folks take for granted, ranging from church steeples defining townscapes, radio stations offering preaching, and so forth.

Although this must fundamentally be a grassroots activity, success depends on having ongoing executive sponsorship and guidance. This is not to police and restrict. Executive sponsorship reinforces the fact that this is an important strategic effort for the good of the company.

(8) Help people of various faiths equip their own constituents to interact well when communicating about spiritual matters at work.

This fits well within the skill set argued for by Seiple and Hoover in the Introduction: Skills in negotiating the interconnected web of relationships between and among religious (and non-religious) people, as well as the skill of evaluation (i.e., the capacity to assess and analyze the various dynamics at play); and the concomitant skill of communication (i.e., how something is said, or not said, is often more important than what is said). Don't impose thought police; help them coach their own. Among other things, encourage them to be careful about religious jargon which is only understandable to the in-group. The ability to communicate one's deepest beliefs to someone who comes from another orientation is no simple matter and is best facilitated by being curious and interested in the beliefs of others.

For example, Sue Warnke, an evangelical Christian, tells a story she shares with anyone who is skeptical about the value of Salesforce's Faithforce (Warnke 2019):

A manager at Salesforce noticed that an employee was looking tired. So he just asked him, "What's wrong?" The employee looked down and mumbled under his breath, "I'm fasting for Ramadan." The manager said something very important: "Tell me more about that." And the employee looked up, shocked, for the first time in his career somebody cared; somebody was curious. And he said, "I'm fasting for the purpose of gaining compassion for those in need." The manager was fascinated; he didn't know about Ramadan. And then he said something even more important: "How can I support you?" They came up with a plan to change a couple meeting times for prayer, and then to tell the whole team about this so they can all learn about Ramadan. It made this person feel so seen and validated that he now brags about his manager, brags about Salesforce. He's on Twitter recruiting people to join Salesforce.

And very importantly, these processes and communications should be done in the open. Secrecy can lead to unwarranted suspicions about ulterior motives. For example, the Christian Discipleship Mentoring program at Texas Instruments was open to all, and several people of other faiths who attended gave it huge kudos (Johnson 2020).

(9) Finally, seek expert advice.

Look for guidance from companies and experts that have done this well. For an example of one resource, the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation has collected voices from across corporate America, voices of people of many faiths and backgrounds and compiled them into the conference proceedings, "2020 Faith@Work Conference" (Grim 2020). The principles identified are:

- I. It's organic, not just a program;
- II. It's good for business;
- III. It's a mosaic focused on service;
- IV. It enhances overall diversity;
- V. It's more than just ERGs, it includes chaplains at over 1,000 US companies;
- VI. It's humbly coming out of the closet, inclusive of all, cutting across all other diversity categories;
- VII. It adds ethical resources;
- VIII. It promotes authenticity;
- IX. It's good for our health, as science shows;
- X. It will not go away: Religion is one of the few social institutions that accompanies people from cradle to grave. It marks rites of passage in youth, such as baptisms and bar/bat mitzvahs, and it is present in last rites and (in most religions) the hope of resurrection – that all is not done at death.

Also, a helpful training program on "Cross-Cultural Religious Liberty" has been developed at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies.³

To be competitive in today's and tomorrow's marketplaces, companies need to set this force for good free, by including religion as a full-fledged part of their DEI commitments. Companies that do this well will bolster their competitiveness and enrich the lives of their employees. Those that ignore this important facet of their employees' lives will be at a disadvantage.

The religion dividend

There is evidence that embracing religious inclusion of the sort we've described also benefits overall inclusion. In other words, when people of faith practice covenantal pluralism at work, they are taking steps that often result in a more inclusive workplace overall.

As part of the initial launch of the Corporate Religious Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (REDI) Index, the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation (2020a) analyzed the level of attention Fortune 100 companies place not only on religion, but also on the following categories: race/ethnicity, women/gender, sexual orientation, veterans/military, dis/ability, age, and family. The study calculated scores for each category by summing the mentions of each topic on the companies' diversity and inclusion webpages along with the weighted score for the number and diversity of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) related to each category.

The study then calculated the average score for each category among the 48 companies that do not acknowledge religion on their diversity and inclusion or ERGs landing pages as well as for the 53 companies that have some acknowledgment of religion (including images or videos) on their diversity and inclusion or ERGs landing pages. This then allowed a calculation of a "religion dividend" (an indication of the positive association of acknowledging religion with the company's commitment to the other categories of diversity) by subtracting the average category score for the 48 companies not acknowledging religion from the average score for the 53 companies that have some acknowledgment of religion, as shown in Table 17.1. Note that the range of diversity category scores reflects the amount of attention companies pay to each. Therefore, the better gauge of the religion dividend is the percentage increase in the category score.

The level of focus companies place on each of the seven diversity categories is higher among companies that acknowledge religion than among companies that do not. For example, companies focusing on religion score 69% higher on age inclusion, 63% higher on veterans/military inclusion, 60% higher on dis/ability inclusion, and 47% higher on race/ethnicity inclusion. Sizable "religion dividends" include companies acknowledging religion scoring 35% higher for women/gender inclusion and 31% higher on family inclusion. While the smallest religion dividend is for sexual orientation (scoring 4% higher), it is still notable that the relationship is positive. This also coincides with global research showing that religious freedom fosters a positive environment for LGBT people, and that LGBT rights are increasing in countries with higher levels of religious freedom (RFBF 2019).

Table 17.1 The religion dividend

	Age	Veterans/ military	Dis/ ability	Race/ ethnicity	Women/ gender	Family	Sexual orientation
Companies acknowledging religion (avg. score)	2.9	5.6	5.1	15.8	8.6	2.0	4.8
Companies not acknowledging religion (avg. score)	1.7	3.5	3.2	10.8	6.3	1.5	4.7
Religion dividend (raw)	1.2	2.2	1.9	5.1	2.2	0.5	0.2
Religion dividend (percentage)	69%	63%	60%	47%	35%	31%	4%

Source: Religious Freedom & Business Foundation analysis of website landing pages of Fortune 100 companies

Best corporate practices, and self-assessment for workplace religious inclusion

We close by listing best practices in the area of workplace religious inclusion, and introducing a groundbreaking online self-assessment tool—the Corporate Religious Diversity Assessment (CRDA)—which enables companies to maximize those best practices.⁴ Today’s global corporations have many tools for measuring success as they pursue more respectful, inclusive, and diverse workplaces. Efforts around religious diversity, equity, and inclusion, however, may seem more difficult to evaluate than other diversity topics. The following practices provide a checklist which all companies can use—regardless of whether they consider themselves far along in their diversity, inclusion, and equity journeys or as just beginning to proactively address the topic of religious diversity and inclusion in the workplace, workforce, and marketplace—to benchmark and shape practical policies and programs. The four measurable areas assessed by the tool can be roughly summarized as follows (greater detail is provided in the tool itself):

1. *Religious non-discrimination and non-harassment*

- A company should not discriminate against a job applicant if the applicant includes religious experience on a resume;
- A company should integrate its religious non-discrimination and non-harassment policy with its general non-discrimination and non-harassment policies. This should include establishing a safe, anonymous reporting system for employees who feel they have been discriminated against or harassed, including for reasons related to an employee’s religion or belief.

2. *Religious accommodation and inclusion*

- A company should consider freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) when implementing other policies and programs. For example:
 - Ensure that its dress code policy allows an employee to request a reasonable accommodation if the employee’s religious beliefs require certain grooming and dress practices;
 - Ensure that its cafeterias provide menu options for employees whose religious beliefs require certain dietary restrictions;
 - Allow employees to take a “floating holiday” that may be used on a date of the employee’s choice, which may include a religious holiday.
- A company should welcome inclusiveness in religion and belief, without making religion or belief a matter of coercion. For example:
 - Permit employees to form religious or faith-based employee groups, provided that the company does so on a non-discriminatory basis;
 - Where feasible without undue hardship, create designated spaces that employees may use for prayer or other religious devotional practices;
 - Take all reasonable steps, including training, where appropriate, to assure that employees don’t feel compelled or pressured to participate in religious or faith-based observances or activities. For example, if a group of employees in a religious or faith-based group chooses to have a prayer meeting on company premises, other employees should not be implicitly or explicitly pressured to attend the meeting.

3. *Protecting and promoting FoRB in our communities*

- A company should integrate its FoRB policy with its corporate social responsibility (RFBF 2014) program. For example:

- Where feasible, make FoRB protections part of contracts for organizations that are part of the supply chain;
 - Where feasible, pull direct foreign investment out of countries that abuse human rights, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion;
 - Provide resources and fundraising for NGOs that promote religious freedom;
 - Approach governments about creating social or political situations that are more favorable to expatriate employees who will be religious minorities.
- A company may consider making religious freedom initiatives part of its disclosures in its annual statements.
4. **Promoting sustainable and innovative business through protecting workplace freedom of religion or belief**
- A company should affirm that FoRB is a fundamental right;
 - A company should recognize that FoRB promotes sustainable and innovative businesses, contributes to human flourishing, and results in peaceful and stable societies;
 - A company should strive to be a leader in promoting and protecting FoRB in its workplace and communities, in order to enable innovative and sustainable economies where FoRB and diversity are respected.

By focusing on these best practices, the CRDA provides a strategic opportunity for companies to advance covenantal pluralism by pursuing the goals of faith-oriented diversity, equity, and inclusion, and measuring their progress toward those goals.

Notes

- 1 These laws apply to all private sector and state/local government employers with at least 15 employees. Religious corporations, associations, educational institutions, or societies are exempt from the federal laws that EEOC enforces when it comes to the employment of individuals based on their particular religion.
- 2 The Productive Muslim Company focuses on helping professionals live the best version of themselves spiritually, physically, and socially through six-week online live masterclass and other programs (<https://productivemuslim.com>). Coca-Cola Consolidated's t-factor was born out of the desire that the leadership at this publicly traded corporation had to share their approach to building a God-honoring, purpose-driven corporate culture. They offer training and partner with other companies whose leaders have a desire to build a purpose-driven corporate culture (<https://t-factor.com>).
- 3 See the program's website at <https://jsis.washington.edu/religion/international-policy-institute/>.
- 4 See <https://crdatool.com/>.

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