



Let's Make Pr ~~Non~~ Anti-Racist

Answering all your unanswered questions on anti-racism in the PR industry

October marks the start of Black History Month in the UK. A time that celebrates and explores the often-forgotten vibrant nature of Black history, heritage and culture. Here at Cision, we've been reflecting on how we can play a vital role in insuring that our industry is inclusive and truly reflects the rich, diverse make-up of British society.

In an industry first, PRWeek launched a special edition magazine, taking an in-depth look at BME issues, initiatives and voices associated within the comms industry. We were recently joined by the guest editors in a [webinar](#) to discuss practical steps to making PR non anti-racist.

We caught up with webinar panellist and PRWeek guest editor, Jennifer Ogunleye to answer some of your most pressing and unanswered questions from the session.



What is the best way to call out racism within the industry or a campaign?

If you see a brand or campaign lacking in diversity or perpetuating insensitive stereotypes, calling them out on social media, engaging with trade media, membership or industry governing bodies – can all be effective methods to highlight and question problematic process and actions. Social media in particular is a natural platform for PR pros to showcase their work and brand identity, so directly commenting on offensive content is an efficient way to get your point across.

What should I do when leadership dismisses any diversity and inclusion initiatives?

Many organisations that are doing well might not see the need to change or engage in initiatives. Have some meaningful statistics and hard-hitting evidence at hand when you run into buy-in problems. When possible, link the issue with business objectives too and make sure you have a seat at the table to continue banging the drum at a senior level.

How do I tackle indirect racism in the industry or at work?

It may feel uncomfortable calling out covert racial discrimination, but many offenders are blissfully unaware of the impact of their actions or words and if we are going to see change, we need these behaviours to be called out. If you notice practices in place that are putting those of BME heritage at a disadvantage, speak up. It's not always on us alone as BME practitioners to call it out – the more voices that speak up, the more weight is added to the issue.

What can an organisation with little ethnic diversity but a desire to effect positive change do to help?

Look inwards first. Challenging your recruitment process to understand why there is a lack of diversity in the team is a good place to start. We often hear that there is no BAME pipeline – challenge this – that sentiment is not reflected in the PR university courses across the country nor on the pages of the PRWeek BME special edition. Consider working with a diversity consultant to help make your workplaces more inclusive. See other ways to support below.

As a white male/female, how can I openly support BAME people, groups and campaigns without it being misconstrued as virtue signalling?

Your stance may be met with derision and accusations of virtue signalling or jumping on a bandwagon but being authentic and owning what it is that you stand for is the best you can do. Of all the bandwagons to jump on, jump on this one, be an active part of making anti-racism the norm.

What is the best way for people to sensitively find out how they should be pronouncing a name? With the view of getting it right and without making the individual feel picked on?

Honestly, just ask! That's what I do.

How can I be anti-racist?

Be open to learning – topical reading, podcasts, movies, make an active decision to diversify your personal following and circles. Network with or socialise with people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds to expose yourself to different cultures and perspectives. If you don't feel that your place of employment is doing enough, whether that might be on training, recruitment or corporate responsibility – say so, do some digging, see what your competitors are up to in this space and suggest that your organisation does the same! Brands and individuals can always support charities, schools with large cohorts of students of minority ethnic backgrounds, internal employee programmes, Black-owned businesses and more. The options are endless – you just have to go looking.