We come in all sizes...

Understand it.
Support it.
Accept it.

www.naafa.org

We come in all sizes...
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NAAFA’s Board of Directors wishes to acknowledge and thank the individuals listed below for their contribution to the NAAFA Size Diversity Toolkit. Without their efforts this toolkit would not exist.

Our intent is that the tool kit be used to help build a weight neutral environment through education and awareness. We are committed to adding size diversity to the equation ensuring that all people across the size spectrum are valued and respected. To read NAAFA’s complete statement on diversity, please visit our web site at www.naafa.org/

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Harness the Power of Size Diversity...
Successful organizations today recognize the importance of harnessing the power of diversity both to further business goals and to minimize the risk of litigation. At the same time, some take an overly simplistic approach to diversity thereby missing many of the benefits of a well-rounded program.

One frequently overlooked category is weight and height diversity. Simply put, if your diversity or unlawful discrimination training omits height and weight issues, your program is incomplete.

Weight and height diversity is extremely important both by itself and also in connection with more traditional diversity categories like race and sex/gender. The failure to understand and include weight and height diversity allows weight and height to be used as a loophole for other discrimination. Did you know that some of the laws prohibiting weight/height discrimination originated because of race discrimination? For example, minimum height requirements have discriminated against people of certain races because of the disproportionate impact on those groups. Weight functions similarly.

There are several ways an organization may suffer when their employees are not trained in weight and height diversity.

- Prejudice in hiring and promotion robs the organization of its most important asset – the ability to hire and strategically promote the best and brightest employees to crucial positions.
- Settlement costs result when weight/height discrimination occurs in those places in the U.S. where such conduct is unlawful.
- Litigation costs result when weight/height discrimination results in lawsuits under the Americans with Disabilities Act or other disability statutes.
- Employees’ performance suffers due to low morale and high turnover, resulting in ongoing training and retraining expenses.
I am pleased that NAAFA has prepared a Size Diversity Tool Kit that can help supplement existing diversity education programs that overlook these categories. This toolkit provides important tools that can foster understanding of weight-related issues and help create an inclusive workplace environment. As an attorney, diversity trainer, subject matter expert and Adjunct Professor of Law, I recommend this Tool Kit be used, at a minimum, to provide education and training for all Human Resources workers, all managers and supervisors with the ability to recruit, hire, train or promote employees, individuals responsible for implementing health and wellness programs, and also for all managers and directors with responsibility for coordinating the development of products or services to understand the experience and needs of clients and customers of all sizes. It is wonderful when organizations have the opportunity to do well while doing good. Incorporating an understanding of size diversity into existing education programs is a true win-win – it is good for employees and good for business.

-Sondra Solovay, Esq.

Sondra is a member of the NAAFA Advisory Board, which is comprised of individuals who are subject matter experts. She is the author of Tipping the Scales of Justice: Fighting Weight Based Discrimination
The Business Case for Size Diversity

Today’s companies are realizing that the world is rapidly changing and in order for them to survive and thrive they need to stay ahead of the trends. Employers can no longer ignore that diversity and inclusion adds value to the bottom line. Customer loyalty and satisfaction can be linked to satisfied employees.¹

According to a recent survey conducted by the Gallup Organization, the results regarding employee engagement were sobering, only 31% of the employees surveyed were fully engaged in the workplace. They considered themselves passionate about their work. An engaged workforce breeds innovation which equals productivity and profits. Reversely, those employees not engaged in the workplace made up 52% of the survey. They are considered the ‘sleep walkers’, they do just what is required. The final 17% of employees surveyed are actively disengaged, are extremely unhappy and as a result unproductive.² It is an established estimate that it costs a minimum of two times an employee’s salary in replacement costs when they leave the organization.

Although much work still needs to be done for race and gender diversity, at least it is on the radar. The dimensions of diversity have expanded to include thought, style, perspective and approach. Still one dimension remains to be addressed, size diversity.

Individuals come in all sizes, similar to other dimensions such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Discrimination against individuals based on size is prevalent in our society. In March of 2008 a study was conducted by Yale University and the following are some of the statistics reported.³

- Fat adults are six times more likely to report height/weight discrimination than average size adults and younger adults are at particular risk
- Women in the workplace are twice as likely as men to report weight discrimination
- Study findings indicate the prevalence of weight and height discrimination is high in the US and has comparable rates to racial discrimination and in some cases were even greater than discrimination due to gender and race

This pivotal study confirms that assumptions and stereotypes regarding people’s ability, skills and intelligence are often linked to the size of one’s body. Weight bias has created a haven for a hostile workplace and fat people are subjected to discrimination on a regular basis.
NAAFA is bringing the issue of discrimination based on size to the front door of corporate America and asking the question, “Do you believe you will get the best out of your fat employees if they are demeaned and harassed on the job?” The answer is a clear “NO”. No company can afford for any of its employees to be stifled or discouraged from bringing their whole selves to their work. Companies might as well throw their money on a bonfire if they continue to cultivate an environment of fat prejudice.

The health of fat employees is often posed as a liability to a company’s bottom line. An individual’s health cannot be determined by their size. NAAFA is fighting to remove weight from the liability equation and add it to the equality equation. Good health is good for everyone; good nutrition, physical activity and access to good health care are important independent of numbers on a scale.

We are not advocating for people to become fat, we are advocating for those of us who are already fat. We are productive members of society, our communities and businesses and as such are entitled to the same opportunities as everyone else. Size diversity is good for business.

References:
1 Hubbard, Edward, The Diversity Scorecard, Evaluating the Impact of Diversity on Organizational Performance, The Business Case for Diversity p. 16
2 Gallup Management Journal, April 13, 2006
A national employee survey confirms that uncomfortable work environments do make for disgruntled employees http://gmj.gallup.com/content/22381/Dilbert-Is-Right-Says-Gallup-Study.aspx

Watson and Wyatt:

4 Gaesser, Glenn, Big Fat Lies: The Truth about Your Weight and Your Health
Weight & height discrimination in the US has comparable rates to racial discrimination ...¹
Stories of Weight Prejudice and Size Discrimination

Discrimination is Just Wrong

The following are excerpts from real people across the nation who have experienced weight prejudice and size discrimination in the workplace. NAAFA has compiled these stories from various sources including letters sent to their own website. Some excerpts were edited for educational purposes only.

August 16, 2008 – Missouri

...I've given my employer a note from my Dr that I have to take diuretics and because of that I need to make trips to the bathroom. Yesterday, about a week or so after I gave them the info, I was written up about being away from my desk too much. That would be my EEOC complaint. I’ve got another supervisor that is no longer here that was in management meetings when my weight was discussed by the owners of the company. Also [there was] a discussion about my weight and health when I had to leave work in an ambulance that was very derogatory. She is willing to sign affidavits to those facts...

July 14, 2008 – New Jersey

I am being discriminated against at work because of my weight to the point where I am sick. I had to have emergency surgery, and they continue to harass me. I would like to talk to someone about my rights.

August 16, 2008 – Missouri

I've given my employer a note from my Dr that I have to take diuretics and because of that I need to make trips to the bathroom. Yesterday, about a week or so after I gave them the info, I was written up about being away from my desk too much. That would be my EEOC complaint. I’ve got another supervisor that is no longer here that was in management meetings when my weight was discussed by the owners of the company. Also [there was] a discussion about my weight and health when I had to leave work in an ambulance that was very derogatory. She is willing to sign affidavits to those facts...

July 25, 2008 – Virginia

I am an employee at a private liberal arts university. I am working very hard on...
Stories of Weight Prejudice and Size Discrimination

June 12, 2008 – Missouri

I recently applied for a chef position and after several conversations with the contact person I was told I needed to cook for them to show my talent. I did, and the chef told me that my tasting was the best of all candidates. I talked to the chef again and he told me the other guy, [Eric] had a problem with my weight but the chef didn’t. (I had worked for that chef 15 years earlier). The chef later told me that I wouldn’t be hired as the chef but asked me to be the Sous chef. I said yes, and accepted the position. That was the first week of May. The chef said I would start on June 9th. I started the job on the 9th by completing all the necessary paperwork and received my badge with my name, picture, and title on it. I was told that my first duty was to recruit 6 more cooks and 2 more dishwashers. I left to go recruit and got a phone call two hours later from the chef and he said that the [other guys] didn’t want me to work for them and I was not going to work for them. I know I was discriminated against...

May 17, 2008 – Connecticut

I moved my business (a family retail jewelry store) into a location in a small town in Connecticut. I sell luxury items and work one-on-one with clients.

A business neighbor– an older man in a retail food business– has a ‘thing’ about the limited on-street public parking spaces- he feels they should all belong to him. As I travel over 60 miles each way to work, and am often loading and unloading things in the mornings, I usually park somewhere in the vicinity of his business (which is adjacent to mine). I usually moved my car after I was set and secure, and would re-park it a little further away from the shop (I’d like my clients to have parking, too).

In any event, this didn’t sit well with the food man, and he made every effort to drive me away by mocking my weight. Calling me names, making faces with his cheeks puffed out and making an ape-like gesture, letting me know exactly how he felt I looked. He’s made nasty remarks on a regular basis about weight, butt, and so on. We have police foot patrols here, and I frequently complained to them about it. At one point, one of the officers found me crying, and went over to ‘speak’ with the man. To no avail. This sick man became even more aggressive, and I went to the police department to file a complaint, which they said they couldn’t take because Connecticut has no standard for harassment.

Day after day, all I had to do was even just step out my store front and he’d be there, making faces, gestures or verbally abusing me. Can you imagine trying to work and sell ‘pretties’ when you were made to feel so low on a daily basis?

This filthy individual only got more emboldened, and one morning, as I was just parked and gathering my things from the car, he came towards me shaking a broom [he had been sweeping the sidewalk], and lunged at me. I truly felt endangered, and warned him to get away from me, as I had mace (it was really pepper spray). He had me trapped between him & the open car door, shaking his hips and the broom. I thought he was going to strike me- so I sprayed him.

I was arrested, and am facing charges. Can you believe that? I begged the police for over a year to help me. I sincerely feel that if the police had done the right thing, this man would have left me alone. Instead he was able to stalk me, bully and harass me- and make fun of my weight...
Stories of Weight Prejudice and Size Discrimination

February, 2008 – Washington

I recently read an article regarding the banning of people of certain sizes from restaurants. I was immediately angered by the idea that the government, be it state or federal had the gall to propose such a law. As the partner of someone who is currently being discriminated against due to her size, I am shocked to see this.

When we met... I believe she weighed somewhere in the neighborhood of 400 pounds. After learning more about her, I discovered that she has been large ever since her birth, and that her size is quite obviously a genetic issue. I in no way consider obesity a disease of either mind or body let me make that very clear. We have always had a very healthy and nutritious diet [mostly vegetarian]. We exercise and do not engage in any unhealthy behaviors. She has lost weight since we met, and is continuing to do so, but her history is working against her.

Nevertheless, she is considered to be a diseased and disabled person. She has been terminated from one job due to her size, and as I said previously, is now facing similar discrimination at her newest workplace. These problems range from blatantly untrue comments to minute innuendo. Some days, the very thought of her having to go to work makes her violently ill and she is forced to take the day off.

She is not an unintelligent person and is in fact the most brilliant person I have ever met. She is not a lazy person. She is a concerned and proud American citizen...

No lawyers have stepped forward to help us, as apparently that is not a protected civil right. They all claim that size is not a protected right.

It's not protected when someone says so many wrong things about you that it causes you to be physically sick. It's not protected when even your managers and supervisors tell you, you are overweight and ugly. It's not protected when people tell everyone you lied to get your job and you are stupid. It's not protected when every single person you work with humiliates you on a daily basis.

She has been marginalized and made into a sub-human. When the people causing these problems were “disciplined” it only made the situation worse...

October, 2007 – Iowa

Until Sept. 27th I was a Nursing student at a community college in Iowa. I say until, because I was failed by my instructor (who weighs 90 lbs and is on a diet). She spent three weeks of clinical days, [two days per week] making comments about “my shape”, about how I ”didn’t need dressing on my salad”, go ahead and “tells us, but don’t spit food all over.” after which wrote me up for smiling, because ”it was disrespectful to her.” and then two days later, for not being enthusiastic enough. She created a hostile environment, for me, and then failed me when I messed up because she was harassing me, tapping her foot while I was performing a procedure. Ignoring me and walking away while I was asking her a question.

I have talked to my Dean of Nursing, she doesn’t believe me, and doesn’t seem to care. We had a conference with all present, [the Dean, myself, the instructor and a counselor at the college] and my instructor lied about everything, and everyone in the room except me believed her. Two weeks ago I was an honors student, now
Stories of Weight Prejudice and Size Discrimination

I have a “behavioral problem”, I’m “disrespectful” and I am “incompetent.” I don’t know what to do. I need help. I want to fix the school so this doesn’t happen to anyone else, but it really seems like no one wants to help me.

September, 2007 – Florida

Hi. I lost my obesity case at the District level because the Judge granted Summary Judgment to my company. I filed an appeal and just lost at the Eleventh District Court. I am sending you this case so perhaps you can see if any mistakes were made that might benefit any future cases. My company ended up firing 7 employees in our area whose added seniority was almost 200 years. The sad part is that the Ladder industry recently in the past few years has made a 375 pound ladder which would have accommodated all of the fired individuals. The company could have purchased these ladders for $131 more than the existing 300 pound ladders.

August, 2007 – Georgia

I am a professional woman who was hired to work for a company in the Atlanta area. After only working there for one day, I was terminated. I later found out from the recruiter that the owner of the company informed her that he didn’t like me because I was overweight and had large breasts.

He now has hired a young woman who is smaller and who didn’t have as much experience as I. Can I fight this? What should I do? I live in Atlanta, Georgia. Where do I begin? I have NEVER experienced anything like this before.

February, 2007 – Texas

Hello, my name is Alison, and I have an issue I need addressed. I was 100% discriminated against at my work, and the State of Texas says it’s legal. I was hired at a Spa resort where many politicians, famous and rich are members.

I worked as a dedicated employee for 3 months over the holiday hours, and on January 2nd, I was called in a private meeting room by both managers, and was humiliated and ridiculed. I was told I never should have been hired due to my weight. I was told that I at least wear nice big enough clothes to cover my fat sufficiently. I was told that I should consider gastric bypass surgery, and much more cruel and malice things.

I am only 27 yrs old. I am a new mom of a 2 yr old. I work -out, eat healthy, and have been trying my best to get in shape. I am over-weight, but by no means am I so huge that I need such a dangerous surgery. I was also told by the other boss that just because I am poor that I need to hide that from the client. I was told that when I compliment people, it shows that I am not used to being around nice things, and it makes me look like trash. I am not trash. I was raised with class, but society is tuff, and my family and I struggle a lot, like most other middle class families.

When I got the job, I treated it like gold, loved it, etc. BUT, when they told me I was too fat to represent their company, it tore me apart. I am a recovering bulimic, and had been sick with the disease for 10 years before I almost died from it, and overcame it. I was straight, eating right without throwing up for 2
Stories of Weight Prejudice and Size Discrimination

years now. However, after what they did to me, I have relapsed, and I AM SLIPPING INTO ANOREXIA. I HATE MY IMAGE, I HAVE NIGHTMARES, IT RUINED MY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH MY HUSBAND, and depression consumes me now. All of this because of what my trusted employer did. When I went to EEOC, they explained that weight discrimination is legal in Texas and there was really nothing they can do, according to the law...

2005 – Alabama

I am not a member or your organization and this is the first time I have viewed your site. I am sending you this letter because I and some of my fellow employee’s are presently being singled out because of our size. If you wish to follow up on this information I would appreciate it if you try to keep my name a secret. My company does not like it’s employee’s talking bad about it publicly so this might get me in further trouble.

I work for a local utility company and I and an unknown number of other employee’s have been given an ultimatum. Get rid of the weight or get fired. I currently work as a helper at a hydro facility and have worked for this company for almost 15 years. I always get good performance reviews and do my job well. The company has recently started a new weight policy. They say it is because of safety concerns (ladders, fall prevention equipment, bucket trucks, anything with a weight limit).

I have been told that I have to loose a minimum of 63 1/2 pounds or I will be fired. My boss is working with me and say’s because I am a good employee he will not make me loose it all in the 6 month time limit. He says as long as I am making progress with my weight loss they will continue to work with me. I do not feel that it is their right to tell me I need to loose weight.

I am qualified as a journeyman and have hopes to advance one day. I have now been told that at my present weight if a job comes up I will be passed over. This is not right as I have filled this position temporarily in the past and did it well with no complaints. I am at present pursuing this as a grievance issue with my union behind me. I know of one other grievance filed. An employee holding a position was denied a similar position in another location because of his size. I do not know if I will get anywhere with the union but must go thru the steps with them if I wish to pursue this in the courts at a later date.

This letter is simply to inform you of another big company stepping on the rights of it’s employee’s...

Talent retention can be negatively impacted even before a candidate is hired...
Business Case Scenario 1:

The Job Interview

This scenario focuses on the interview and can be the first time a candidate experiences weight bias and discrimination. A resume reflects the abilities, skills and experience of an individual. However, once an interviewer who may be well intentioned comes face to face with a candidate, that interviewer can demonstrate behaviors that don’t support an inclusive environment. Talent retention can be negatively impacted even before a candidate is hired and as result, company resources spent before, during and after the interview process are lost.

Marcos arrives for his interview ten minutes early, just as the how-to books always advise. Entering the reception area, he announces his presence to the receptionist, who waves him over to two small, padded chairs placed right up against one another. If he weren’t burning with embarrassment, Marcos would laugh, since the only way he could fit into these tiny, armed business chairs would be if he welded them together and removed the center arms. He stands awkwardly near the chairs, smoothing imaginary wrinkles from his suit and wishing the receptionist would stop staring at him.

Five minutes later, a smartly-dressed woman emerges from a nearby office, introduces herself as Amanda King, and invites Marcos into her office. Relieved yet apprehensive, he follows her. She sits smoothly behind her desk and gestures toward the interview chair; as he suspected, the chair is the same size as those in the lobby. He briefly wonders how to broach the subject and decides humor is best.

“Are there any larger chairs available?” he asks. “My experience isn’t the only impressively ample thing about me.”

Ms. King apologizes, buzzes her secretary, and asks her to bring in an office chair. “Armless, please,” a smiling Marcos says. Two or three minutes later, Marcos is comfortably seated in an armless, leather office chair. He hopes his face isn’t burning as brightly as he is inside.

After several minutes of questions and discussion, Marcos is beginning to relax.
Business Case Scenario 1: The Job Interview

Interviews are never fun, but he’s experienced, well-educated, and is positive he is perfect for this position.

“You’ll forgive me for asking this question, Mr. Garza,” Ms. King says. Marcos tenses. “But this position does require some travel and some walking around various sites. Are you sure you could handle that? I mean, with, you know—” she gestures vaguely in his direction.

Marcos keeps his smile pasted on his face and assures her that yes, he can travel and yes, he is also perfectly capable of walking.

“Also, while we’re on the subject, your resume is sparkling and your experience impressive, but given your condition, I’m concerned that you might have to take more sick time than we generally like.”

Marcos has no medical condition except the occasional stress headache, but he knows she’s not referring to that. He points out that he expects to take no more sick leave than any other employee of the company. He also assures her that he’s very healthy. Ms. King’s face is politely skeptical. He can practically hear the number crunching in her brain as she calculates how much his “condition” will cost the company in healthcare, sick leave, and potential lost business.

An hour later, Marcos rises from his comfortable seat, smilingly shakes Ms. King’s hand, and exits her office. He knows he’s the ideal candidate for this job but isn’t very confident that he’ll soon be joining their ranks. He’s no longer certain he even wants to.

Scenario 1 Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss some of the ways that Marcos’ size became an issue during the interview.
2. What are some of the consequences of this type of interview?
3. What aspects of this scenario would need to change in order to accommodate Marcos and any other people of size?
4. What steps might be taken to implement some of the changes discussed in question number three?
5. Do you have any other comments, suggestions, or contributions?
An interviewer must demonstrate behaviors that support an inclusive environment...
The first day: a critical and pivotal retention point...
Business Case Scenario 2:

First Day on the Job

The first day on the job is another critical and pivotal retention point. This experience will be the first time an employee gets a sense of the overall corporate culture and cues how to navigate it. If they have to spend energy dealing with weight biased ‘roadblocks’ this can deter employees from the job for which they were hired. An employee’s ability to be innovative and productive can be diminished, negatively impacting the company’s bottom line.

Shelley is excited to be joining a great company with her dream job. After a great interview and an enthusiastic phone call offering her the job, she feels confident that her education and hard work have finally paid off.

Upon entering the lobby, Shelley receives a warm welcome from the receptionist, who kindly tells her to take a seat. She strides over to a chair and squeezes into it, wincing in discomfort as the narrowly spaced arms dig into her hips. Oh well, she thinks, no big deal. Shortly she is greeted by a Human Resources Manager who walks her to a conference room for the new hire orientation.

Once inside the conference room, she immediately notices those same grammar-school-type desks with the folding top that tormented her throughout her school years. Damn, she mentally groans, not again. She quickly scans the room and spies a few chairs with no arms in the very back; they are positioned a good distance from the group and will make her feel conspicuous, but at least she’ll be comfortable.

The orientation begins. It’s very impressive, good information and great presentations. Shelley is scribbling furiously when a presentation about the company’s benefits begins. The presenter chats animatedly about the company’s perks, including its gym, and all-of-a-sudden Shelley notices the presenter seems to be focusing solely on her. She begins to feel a bit uneasy as others start glancing her way. Okay, she thinks, I can get through this one.
Business Case Scenario 2: The First Day on the Job

The presentation finally ends and the orientation breaks for lunch. Shelley sits amongst her fellow new employees at a long, cafeteria-style table. After everyone has introduced themselves, one new employee mentions the company’s Weight Watchers program. Smiling, she looks at Shelley and asks her if she would like to join her at their next meeting. The table falls silent, waiting for her response. Shelley takes a sip of bottled water, giving her a few seconds to formulate her answer. Finally, she smiles back at the woman, politely thanks her for the invitation, and says she’ll get back with her. Although she continues to smile, Shelley once again feels conspicuous and self-conscious; she can’t focus on the conversation and suddenly she’s lost her appetite.

Lunch is finally over. Just a few more hours and she’ll be done with Day One. By the end of the orientation, Shelley’s inner thighs are sore from trying to hold them together to form a flat surface for her notepad and orientation materials.

Thank goodness, her manager arrives to escort her to her new office. On the way, he stops in front of a colleague’s cubicle and introduces Shelley’s new coworker as “Irina, who just lost over 100 pounds by visiting the gym and Weight Watchers. Isn’t that great?” Shelley smiles and greets Irina, who gives Shelley the same look she would give to something she found wriggling under a rock.

As they proceed down the hall, Shelley notices multiple copies of a flyer for that famous company gym. The left side of the flyer depicts the traditional appearance of Santa Claus, only he’s frowning, slumped over, and morosely dragging a lumpy bag of toys. The right half of the flyer features a thin, muscular Santa, standing upright, smiling winsomely, and effortlessly hoisting a bag of goodies over his ripped shoulder. Her manager turns to her and says, “I even lost 15 pounds going to the gym! The great thing is that the company shuttle picks you up right in front.”

Shelley smiles again like the Princess of the Pasadena Parade after five hours atop a rain-soaked float. “Really?” she says with all the authenticity she can muster.

Finally, she arrives at her office and shuts the door. “Thank you,” she mutters to the universe in general.

As she pulls out her [armless, thank goodness] chair, she notices sitting front and center of her desk a memo from her manager to the entire department asking employees to sign up for a walk-a-thon for a local charity. The memo, done up in bright colors and employing several exclamation marks, asks employees to list their t-shirt size on the form. Shelley sighs and ponders whether she will “fit” in here.

[Adapted from the article: Size Diversity in the Workplace: When Goliath Works for David]  
Healthy Weight Journal, July/August 2004

Scenario 2 Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss some of the attitudes and environmental factors that made Shelley feel excluded and uncomfortable.
2. What might make Shelley’s workplace more inclusive?
3. What steps would you take to make a new hire orientation or on-board processing more inclusive?
4. What additional comments or thoughts did you have about this scenario?
New employees are trying to get a sense of how to navigate...they don’t need ‘roadblocks’
Performance, not appearance...
Business Case Scenario 3:

The Promotion Discussion

Promotion criteria is important to establish upfront as an employee begins to develop and hone their skills and abilities. One of the sure ways to disengage employees is to display behaviors indicating that assumptions are made about them which are not linked to their skills or aptitude. There is sufficient data that suggests that employees don’t leave companies, they leave their managers. If employees don’t feel valued and respected, they will leave and go straight to your competitor, it’s just a matter of time. Make sure promotion discussions and decisions are based on performance, not appearance.

“You asked to see me, Ms. Mendes?” Lee asks politely while stepping into her office. Ruby Mendes, Lee’s supervisor, smiles at him and waves him inside while she finishes signing some paper or another.

“Have a seat, Lee,” she says. He’s prepared for this and dashes outside to grab the office chair that he rolled from his own office to hers, since the tiny, armed, wooden chair sitting before her desk isn’t large enough to accommodate one of his thighs, let alone his full bulk. This isn’t the first time he’s supplied his own seating, but he remains embarrassed all the same. Ms. Mendes smiles again at his wacky chair antics; although he’s relieved she doesn’t seem annoyed by the slight delay, he also can’t help wondering when she’ll put an armless chair in her office. He’s worked for her for three years.

“I see you submitted an application for the sales position,” Ms. Mendes says casually, and Lee’s heart starts pounding. Is this The Talk, where she offers him the job? Everyone knows he’s the top runner for this position, especially since his background in sales has heretofore been underutilized in the company.

“Tyauna.”
Lee tries to hide his supreme shock and disappointment, but he must not have entirely succeeded, since his supervisor leans toward him and adds, “I know she’s only been here a little over a year, but we think she has great potential.”

Lee thinks he has great potential as well as a sterling record, perfect evaluations, and a degree; Tyauna only has one of those. All he can say is, “I’m a little surprised, I admit. Tyauna’s a great worker, but she doesn’t have a background in sales or customer service.”

“You’re right, Lee, but in the world of sales, experience and training aren’t everything. Tyauna has a certain -- way about her that we think customers will find appealing. You know how it is in the sales world: image, image, image. We think Tyauna will help reflect positively on the company’s image. Besides, Lee, you’re such an asset to our customer service team. Thanks to you, our customer satisfaction ratings with online and phone support have increased drastically.

“And really, Lee, think about it this way: salespeople have to leave the office all the time, always on the go and always lugging heavy stuff around. It’s much cozier in a warm office where the heaviest thing we have to lift is the phone receiver, am I right?” Ms. Mendes smiles.

Lee is once again stunned. His experience, his education, his strong rapport with coworkers and customers alike, all swept away because of his size? His voice and writing skills are good enough to represent the company, but not his appearance?

“I’m so sorry to have to break this news to you, Lee, and hope you’re not too disappointed. Part of the problem is, we just don’t want to lose one of our best troubleshooting representatives. Besides, everyone loves you in this department; I’d have a riot on my hands if I let you get away!”

Lee forces a smile. “Well, you know I do love this job,” he says, and it’s true. However, he knows he would also love sales: its flexibility, its heart-throbbing competitiveness, and it’s almost 50% pay raise.

His head starts to ache and he wonders if it has something to do with bumping it on the glass ceiling.

Scenario 3 Discussion Questions:
1. What issues or concerns came up for you as you read this scenario?
2. What are some potential consequences of this discussion for Lee? Ruby?
3. What actions could be taken to implement a more constructive outcome?
Employees must feel valued & respected...
Health at Every Size (HAES): promotes individually-driven physical activity & nutritional needs...
Business Case Scenario 4:
The Company Wellness Program

There is no argument that healthy employees are productive employees. However, the question of how health is defined arises. A thin appearance has been equated with good health, which is simply not true. Instead of focusing on weight as a measurement of health, a more effective approach is the Health at Every Size (HAES) philosophy which removes weight from the equation and replaces it with a diverse perspective, accepting the full range of body shapes and sizes. HAES promotes individually-driven physical activity and nutritional needs. Think about how this could impact results for the company wellness program, where individuals could customize healthy life-style activities which are established to enhance one’s life. For example, defer costs of a swimming class rather than ‘punish’ your employees with higher insurance premiums based on body size.

Bill is eager to revamp his company’s wellness program. He has been given a mandate to not only improve the health of the employees but to also demonstrate cost savings to his employer. His first step includes rounding up some of his colleagues, perhaps a few people from various business units, and having them brainstorm some strategies for enhancing the current wellness program. The business has seen some success with the smoking cessation initiatives; however, the weight loss programs are spotty at best.

It’s the overweight employees, he silently grumps, since he would never say it out loud, who are not only driving up the cost of health care, but making me look bad and endangering my job. No way will I let them ruin me!

With those thoughts in mind, Bill selects the members of his focus group:

- **Jim**: Not only is he the contract physician in the Medical Services Group, but Bill has heard he’s a great golf player, too.
- **Ted**: The captain of the employee biking team and in great shape, Ted obviously knows a lot about wellness.
Business Case Scenario 4: The Company Wellness Program

- **Dwayne:** A mailroom employee, Dwayne played Division A college basketball before injuring his knee in the war.
- **Joan:** Bill has seen her hula troupe perform at a company picnic; wow does she know how to move! Besides, he’s heard somewhere that hula is one of the best exercises out there.
- **Tiffany:** Manager of the company cafeteria and a nutritionist, she is also known throughout the company as the “food police”; additionally, she recently lost 100 pounds. Impressive!

Bill thinks it sounds like a well rounded group: a physician, two athletes, a dancer, and a nutritionist. Two of the team members are women and one is even a Black guy with military experience. The only thing left is to meet tomorrow with his manager, Susan, and review the list with her.

“Hey, Bill,” Susan says the following day as she sits across from him, “this is a great list, but I’d like to add another person to your group.”

“Sure, fine, fire away,” Bill says, pulling his pen out of his pocket and poising it above his list.

“What about Shelley?”

Bill pauses and taps the pen against the paper. “Shelley?” he asks carefully. “You mean the new person in the finance group? In all honesty, Susan, I’m not sure Shelley would be a good fit.” Bill chuckles.

“Come on, she’s perfect,” Susan says. “She could really benefit from being part of this group, if you understand my meaning. It might motivate her.”

Bill nods. “Well, since you put it like that... plus we’ll enhance the diversity of our group, which will look good to upper management.”

“Exactly,” Susan says, smiling herself.

Bill scrawls Shelley’s name on his sheet. “I bet she’ll be a hard sell.” He glances behind him to make sure he’d latched Susan’s office door. “I wonder if she even remembers the last time she exercised. I guess I better talk to her first, huh?”

Susan nods. “If you run into any problems, let me know. I can always chat with her manager.”

“Thanks for the support,” Bill says, rising from his seat. “I may have to take you up on that offer.”

**Scenario 4 Discussion Questions:**

1. What were some of the assumptions Bill made about persons of size in general and about Shelley in particular?
2. Can you anticipate how the meeting will go with Shelley?
3. What about the first meeting of the focus group?
4. How might you have handled this situation differently in order to eliminate some of the preconceived assumptions and maximize its effectiveness?
5. What additional comments or thoughts did you have about this scenario?
Healthy life-style activities enhance one’s life...
Glossary

**Body Positive**: explores taking up occupancy inside your own skin, rather than living above the chin until you’re thin. It is a set of ideas that may help you find greater well-being in the body you have. [Definition obtained from The Body Positive website www.bodypositive.com]

**Body Dissatisfaction**: refers to one’s dissatisfaction with the size or shape of one’s body. Typically the dissatisfaction comes from external factors and false images of what is being depicted as a standard, when in fact the image is an unrealistic view of one’s body.

**Fat**: is an adjective describing the dimensions of the body. NAAFA is reclaiming that word to promote fat acceptance. This word is regularly used in the size/fat acceptance movement.

**Health at Every Size (HAES) Principles:**

- Accepting and respecting the diversity of body shapes and sizes
- Recognizing that health and well-being are multi-dimensional and that they include physical, social, spiritual, occupational, emotional, and intellectual aspects
- Promoting all aspects of health and well-being for people of all sizes
- Promoting eating in a manner which balances individual nutritional needs, hunger, satiety, appetite, and pleasure
- Promoting individually appropriate, enjoyable, life-enhancing physical activity, rather than exercise that is focused on a goal of weight loss

**Obesity**: is a medical term/label that describes ranges of weight that are greater than what is generally considered healthy for a given height. The terms also identify ranges of weight that have been shown to increase the likelihood of certain diseases and other health problems. For adults, overweight and obesity ranges are determined by using weight and height to calculate a number called the “body mass index” (BMI). BMI is used because, for most people, it correlates with their amount of body fat. An adult who has a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese [Definition obtained from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/defining.htm]

**Overweight**: is a term used to describe an individual whose weight is over a subjective number on a scale. The term implies judgment regarding a person’s weight.

**Size Diversity**: is another dimension of diversity where the full range of body size is valued and respected.

**Weight Discrimination**: Discrimination is defined as unfair difference in treatment made between people because of specific characteristics. It is based on prejudice, which is defined as preconceived opinion or judgment without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge. In its extreme, discrimination is called bigotry, which is defined as obstinate and unreasoning attachment to one’s own opinions, with intolerance to any opposing views. When the specific characteristic is body size and weight, this is weight discrimination, weight prejudice, or weight bigotry. [Definition obtained from the Council on Size and Weight Discrimination website www.cswd.org]

**Weight Bias**: a perspective and/or opinion based not on an individual’s character or skills, but on an individual’s physical size.
General Resources

**BOOKS**

This is a partial list of books on weight bias, weight and size discrimination, size diversity and health, wellness, fitness and HAES principles. Additional resources are available.

**Health at Every Size: The Surprising Truth About Your Weight**
By Linda Bacon, PhD

**Tipping the Scales of Justice: Fighting Weight Based Discrimination**
By Sondra Solovay, J.D.

**Weight Bias: Nature, Consequences, and Remedies**
by Kelly D. Brownell [Editor], Rebecca M. Puhl [Editor], Marlene B. Schwartz [Editor], Leslie Rudd [Editor]

**The Obesity Myth: Why America’s Obsession With Weight is Hazardous To Your Health**
By Paul Campos, J.D.

**Fat Politics: The Real Story Behind America’s Obesity Epidemic**
By Eric Oliver, PhD

**Great Shape: The First Fitness Guide For Large Women**
By Pat Lyons, R.N., MA and Debby Burgard, PhD

**Big Fat Lies: The Truth about Your Weight and Your Health**
By Glenn A. Gaesser, PhD

**Losing It: America’s Obsession with Weight and the Industry That Feeds on It**
By Laura Fraser

**WEBSITES**

This is a partial list of websites that have information on weight bias, weight and size discrimination, the HAES principles and size diversity. Additional resources are available.

**NAAFA – National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance**
http://www.naafa.org

**ASDAH – The Association for Size Diversity and Health**
http://www.sizediversityandhealth.org

**Body Positive**
http://www.bodypositive.com

**The Body Positive**
http://www.thebodypositive.org

**Council on Size and Weight Discrimination**
http://www.cswd.org

**Healthy Weight Network**
http://www.healthyweight.net/index.htm

**Linda Bacon PhD**
http://www.lindabacon.org/LindaBaconHAES.html

**Size – The Other Diversity**
http://www.theueellconsultinggroup.com/sizediversity.asp

**Teaching Tolerance – A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center**
http://www.tolerance.org
General Resources

ARTICLES

This is a partial list of articles on weight bias, weight and size discrimination and size diversity. Additional resources are available

Size: A Diversity Un-Discussable
http://www.progroupinc.com/site/page/pg4523-as561-pn_Size_A_Diversity_Un_discussable.html

Studies Refute Common Stereotypes About Obese Workers
http://news.msu.edu/story/5608/

Junkfood Science: I think therefore I am, Part Four
http://junkfoodscience.blogspot.com/2008/08/i-think-therefore-i-am-part-four.html

Perceptions of weight discrimination: prevalence and comparison to race and gender discrimination in America
RM Puhl, T Andreyeva and KD Brownell

Weight Bias – The Need for Public Policy
The Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity
Yale University 2008

Non-Dieters More Successful At Boosting Health Than Dieters, Study Finds
http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/25384.php

Questions and Answers on Size Diversity
Miriam Berg, President
Council on Size & Weight Discrimination

Size Diversity in the Workplace: When Goliath Works for David
Lisa M. Tealer
Health at Every Size Journal July/August 2004

WEIGHT DIVERSITY INFORMATION AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
(This is a partial list of colleges and universities that study size diversity, body image, weight bias, weight and size discrimination. Additional resources are available)

University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana’s Counseling Center
http://www.counselingcenter.uiuc.edu/?page_id=157

San Jose State University [CA]
http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/counseling/self_help/body_size_diversity.html

Grand Rapids Community College (MI) – Diversity Learning Center
http://www.grcc.edu/ShowPage.cfm?PageID=21

Delta College (MI)
http://www3.delta.edu/diversity/
Diversity builds the bottom line...
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Our intent is that the tool kit be used to help build a weight neutral environment through education and awareness. We are committed to adding size diversity to the equation ensuring that all people across the size spectrum are valued and respected. To read NAAFA’s complete statement on diversity, please visit our web site at www.naafa.org/

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NAAFA SIZE DIVERSITY TOOL KIT

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