



Real Change Requires A Real Plan

Advancing Opportunities For Black Leaders In Commercial Real Estate

By Matt Bacon, Project Manager at Pacific Program Management

It is said that a dream without a plan is just a wish.

For too long we have seen anti-racism defined by lofty dreams and good intentions, however real systemic change has remained just out of reach. Racial equity can feel elusive and as recent demonstrations have shown across the country, people are justifiably frustrated and angry. Without a doubt, we need change. And that change starts in our own spaces with the people and systems we engage with and interact with every day. For us, it begins at work.

We launched BlackPAC over the spring of 2020 to enable Black employees to build a solid foundation to further network, grow and learn. BlackPAC consists of 11 individuals within the organization, including four leadership allies. Being endorsed by senior leadership is key. It's more than words – it's action.

At the beginning, we laid out a charter to define our goals and how to achieve them. The goals of the BlackPAC group are:

- A commitment to build a strong foundation through community engagement with organizations that serve the Black community.
- A continued investment in fostering conversations on diversity, equity and inclusion, social issues, and breaking down barriers and biases through leadership and ally partnerships.
- An ongoing collaboration between HR, leadership and BlackPAC to continue our commitment to maintaining a diverse workplace for future employees.

To achieve these goals, we developed a strategy that is actionable and measurable, with specific programs to:

- Strengthen our foundation through community involvement,
- Foster conversation, and
- Enhance collaboration with leadership to realize professional opportunities for Black employees.



This includes a communications plan that includes weekly stakeholder meetings, monthly leadership syncs, and a company newsletter. All of this aims to:

- Advance a deeper understanding about Black history,
- The BlackPAC mission and programs, and
- Other notable milestones.

Success of these efforts can be measured by:

- Empowering Black leadership within the organization,
- Reviewing retention rates of Black employees,
- Measuring diversity and inclusivity impacts with surveys, and
- Increasing community engagement with Black communities in each region.

Community

Along with supporting diversity, we seek opportunities to elevate these efforts collectively so that their impact can be seen and felt by all. One example of realizing this effort took place on Juneteenth.

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Celebrated annually on June 19th, it is also known as Freedom Day. Just as freedom was not realized for all Slaves until over two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, Black Americans continue to struggle in striving for equality to this day. This year, PPM publicly posted its commitment not just to a single day, but to a lasting effort to end racism.

“At PPM, we recognize that racism does exist and remain committed to learning more, raising awareness, and taking action to demonstrate our continued support to eliminate racism and prejudice. It is in this spirit that we have designated June 19th, “Juneteenth”, a permanent company holiday. We choose to take this day to recognize, learn, and facilitate change, and will also be donating all profits on this day to a cause that is aligned with ending racism.”

We double down on this commitment to community by defining long-term collaborations with two significant organizations: The Harlem-Children’s Zone in New York City and Langston in Seattle. We will donate the profits on Juneteenth to both of these important and impactful organizations.

- The [Harlem Children’s Zone \(HCZ\)](#) works to break the cycle of generational poverty and provides “comprehensive and critical support to children and families.” With a focus on fostering education from elementary school through college graduation, HCZ gives underserved communities access to opportunities. Our goal in partnering with HCZ is to help support the work they do while also giving Black youth the information and connections they need to discover if they may want to pursue a career in commercial real estate.



- In Seattle, [Langston](#) works to “strengthen and advance the community through Black arts and culture.” Using programs and community partnerships that focus on Black art, artists and audiences, the Center honors the ongoing legacy of Seattle’s Black Central Area. By supporting an organization that seeks to recognize and preserve the tremendous contributions made by Seattle’s Black arts community and historically Black neighborhood, PPM can also advance understanding of Black culture and recognize the importance of the Central District for the Black community in Seattle.

These efforts are an important part of the broader plan. As we continue to act on our plan, we can begin to realize incremental progress toward racial equity in the workplace. Racial equity in the workplace is important not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it makes everyone better when we rise together. Diverse voices and perspectives enhance our experience and understanding of the world around us.

According to a 2017 report¹ by FSG – a consulting group committed to social change – and PolicyLink – a national research institution advancing racial equity:

“Research shows that more diverse teams are better able to solve problems and that companies with more diverse workforces have higher revenues, more customers, and greater market shares.”

We recognize that our efforts to enact change won’t be realized overnight. But each incremental change in the battle to fight racism can grow exponentially. This cannot be not a fad or a trendy rally cry that corporate America is temporarily getting behind in a short-lived PR stunt. This has to be real and lasting.

It can feel ironic that in the very climate of being distanced from our co-workers during this pandemic, that we should come together and focus on the workplace as a center for social change. But, work is where many of us find personal and professional value, financial security and the potential to grow.

Accessibility, equity and equal opportunity; these are the ingredients of freedom.

¹ <https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/The%20Competitive%20Advantage%20of%20Racial%20Equity-final.pdf>

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About Matt

Matt Bacon is a Project Manager for AMER East based out of New York City and a leader with PPM's BlackPAC. With more than a decade of real estate experience, Matt most recently was with Indeed.com where he handled the coordination of office build outs and relocations for both international and U.S. sites. In his free time, Matt enjoys traveling the globe venturing around New York City. He can be reached at matthew.bacon@pacificpmg.com.