

Dis-Chem regrets "offence" caused by moratorium on hiring White people

JSE-listed pharmacy retailer Dis-Chem has apologised for offending staff and customers after a letter to managers announcing a moratorium on the hiring and promotion of White employees was widely shared on social media.



Source: Dis-Chem

"We regret the wording and tone of an internal memorandum that has been erroneously widely shared. We acknowledge that it did not reflect our values. Its release did not follow our correct internal vetting processes and steps have been put in place to ensure that, going forward, relevant checks and balances are thoroughly duly performed.

"More importantly, we sincerely regret the offence and distress it caused to so many people, including our staff and millions of loyal customers," the Dis-Chem board said in a statement shared yesterday, 17 October.

“ Important communication from the Dis-Chem Board 17 October 2022 pic.twitter.com/suziG0ESe3— Dis-Chem (@Dischem) [October 17, 2022](#) ”

The moratorium was designed to improve the company's employment equity targets and avoid a fine as a result of Employment Equity Act non-compliance.

In the leaked internal memo dated 19 September, Dis-Chem CEO Ivan Saltzman said: "Following a review of the employment equity profile and the recent BBEEE verification process, it is evident that our organisation's efforts to affect transformation in terms of our employee profile remain inadequate in spite of the regionals making some inroads.

"Remember, we are growing at a fast rate and a few appointments other than White don't cut it. It's the ratio between Black and White that counts. So when no suitable Black candidate is found and a White is appointed, we need several Blacks just to maintain the status quo, never mind moving forward."

Saltzman said that no managerial appointments (including senior, middle and junior) were to be made without his "direct approval as CEO".

News of the moratorium drew ire from some lobby groups, political parties and trade unions, while many consumers took to social media to state that they would boycott the retailer.



Outrage over Dis-Chem's moratorium on hiring, promoting White staff

17 Oct 2022



Employment on merit, with preference to EE candidates

Yesterday's statement by the Dis-Chem board went on to say: "We deeply value all our employees and appreciate their contribution to Dis-Chem. We stand by the unequivocal imperative to continue our transformation journey. Equality, diversity, and inclusivity are important throughout Dis-Chem, and we continue to make great strides in ensuring that we maintain progress in this area.

"We have always been cognisant of the imperative to comply with all legislation including employment equity on our journey to meet transformation targets, and with a priority of employment on merit, based on our view of giving employment preference to previously disadvantaged communities. We apologise for the erroneous communication which caused offence to any South African community."

The statement marks an about-turn after Dis-Chem confirmed on Friday that it stood by the contents of the staff memo.

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