

MIXTE TIPS

Approaching recognition moments differently

Recognition moments – such as Black History Month or International Women’s Day – are important. They’re intentionally dedicated to lift up a person or group of people, to remember something significant or to honor something instrumental. Check out these tips on how to not only recognize these days, but fully understand and approach them as communications experts.

1. Before you do anything – reflect.

In order to understand what recognition moments make the most sense for you to speak on and how, you must first understand one thing thoroughly: yourself. Not you as a person, but your organization and what your team stands for when no one is watching.

Get together with your team and ask yourself the hard questions. I recommend the following to get started:

- What are your values? Meaning – at the end of the day, what do you stand for?
- What communities does your work directly impact? What do they care about?
- What social justice issues overlap with your work?

Throw everything up onto a virtual whiteboard or Google Doc, no questions asked. When it's all out, go back through and circle the ones that stand out as the most important. Maybe they've come up multiple times, or you feel especially strongly about a handful of them. Once you've got the heavy hitters, move on to step two.

2. Write your internal manifesto.

Use your circled answers to complete this sentence: Because (your organization/business) believes unwaveringly in (values), we recognize our responsibility to be vocal during moments related to (communities/issues).

Let's try it with Mixte: Because Mixte Communications believes unwaveringly in justice for all people and a sustainable planet, we recognize our responsibility to be vocal during moments related to injustice and climate sustainability.

This is not something you will ever publish or probably even say outloud. Instead, consider this your north star as you navigate a calendar year full of recognition moments; the manifesto that underlies how you decide to show up and why.

Moments can be predictable, like Black History Month or Martin Luther King Jr. Day, just as much as they can be unanticipated, like the sudden loss of a leader.

Once you have your internal manifesto, it's time to get specific.

3. Map it out.

Next, go through [this collection of recognition moments](#) from the Social Justice Resource Center that we know at this point and pick out the ones that align with your manifesto above. Don't create your content strategy yet, simply add the moments to your editorial calendar so you can keep track of them. (If you find yourself with more than three or four a month, go back to step one and get even more specific.)

Part of this also means letting go of the desire to say everything all the time, which drains your team, keeps you from posting meaningful and actionable content and waters down your message. Take a strong stand on the days that most directly apply to your work and audience. It doesn't mean you don't care about all the other moments or other people. It means you're choosing to channel your efforts where it makes the most sense to you – in turn, building affinity with others that share your values, in your space.

4. Plan your actions – not just your social media content.

You've got your creed. You've got your list. Your editorial calendar has these moments planned out. Now is the opportunity for you to really think through your content strategy and how you want to show up in these moments that are so much bigger than each of us, individually.

The following are four tips as you plan your content strategy. Remember that planning your response doesn't mean posting a black square on social media and calling it good. Consider your external communication (your social media, emails, website, etc.) as well as your internal communication (how are you honoring the moment amongst your team?).

- **De-center yourself and lift others up:** These moments are not about you, so just let that go. When you remove yourself as the point of focus, you create space to center the communities most impacted – which is what this is all about, anyway. As you step to the side, invite in the voices of people representative of the community in whatever way you can. You can do this very practically by sharing links to free resources, reposting those who are most impacted (always with credit, of course), or recommending leaders to follow.

- **Focus on education and action:** Building a more just and equitable world is not solely the responsibility of the communities most impacted by injustice. It is everyone's responsibility to educate themselves on the history of each movement and issue, and then to use that education to make decisions and take action. To that end, share educational resources in your content around these moments and be transparent about your organization's plans to actively support communities that have been historically neglected. What you stand for is not enough for long – show your audiences that you're invested.
- **Be an ally all year round:** Whatever you do, don't stop caring when the themed moment has passed. Systems of oppression won't stop, so we can't either, and tokenizing isn't a good look. As content creators, this means planning to uplift diverse voices, educational initiatives and action into your company culture all the time. Hey, no one said justice was convenient.
- **Remember that it's not about being perfect:** I get it – it can be scary at first. Transparency and vulnerability always are (at least that's what my therapist says). I encourage you to start small and do your very best to show up on the days, weeks, months and unanticipated moments where your values pull you. It's up to all of us to resist injustice, and every recognition moment is an opportunity to build that collective power. And the truth is, you will mess up. I will mess up. We all will. When (not if) we do, we must listen, understand, and commit to doing better. We don't stop – we just get back up and keep going with more knowledge and awareness.

As Maya Angelou once said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." Now, we know better. So let's all do better.