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50 Years Later, the Challenge Continues...

Several years ago, soon after Tanenbaum began addressing religious bias in the health care industry, I visited a large, full-service medical center/teaching hospital to meet with a group of directors about our work. The meeting was fruitful, and it was clear that the hospital was committed to providing religio-culturally competent patient care.

But after the formal meeting was over, I was pulled aside by a woman working in human resources. She quietly told me that there were other things to know, and how nursing applicants were really being screened, especially for emergency room openings.

During our conversation, she described an informal but consistent practice of identifying, and immediately disqualifying, Jewish applicants because they might cause scheduling problems by asking for time off on Friday nights and Saturdays. From our conversation, it appeared that the hospital had struggled to accommodate Orthodox Jewish employees in the past, and when it did so, their accommodation was perceived as favoritism and caused friction. To respond to these challenges, the hiring staff was effectively eliminating the problem - by carefully hiring nurses who were anything but Jewish.

This illustrates how - 50 years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed - employers with good intentions are still struggling with religious discrimination.

Employers are expected to provide *reasonable accommodations* for sincerely held religious, ethical or moral beliefs unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the employer's business. In the face of the 50th anniversary of this important piece of national legislation, Tanenbaum offers [Eight Steps to the Accommodation Mindset](#), a tool we developed to help companies establish work cultures that proactively accommodate religiously diverse employees and applicants.

We have made progress but there is more to do. We ask you and your colleagues to continue to work toward creating the kinds of equal and inclusive workplaces envisioned with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

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