

Methods of Sharing Your Faith at Work
Federal Laws, Rules, and Guidelines Governing Interacting With Non-Christian
Colleagues at the Workplace

Discussion Points

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America ratified as part of the Bill of Rights December 15, 1791: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

1. Establishment Clause* – there can be no government sponsored religion; the government cannot favor one religion over another.
2. Free Exercise Clause* – generally this means that the government cannot compel a person to do something contrary to his genuinely held religious beliefs. Some exceptions in the name of public welfare such as requiring certain types of vaccinations and medical treatment in children.
3. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* also applies to private employers and prohibits job discrimination against employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, and gender. This includes decisions related to hiring, firing, promotion, demotion, discipline, compensation, opportunities for additional job training, and any other term and condition of employment. This means that businesses are required to make “reasonable accommodations” for the religious beliefs and practices of its employees, unless to do so would cause undue hardship to the employer’s business. What is a “reasonable accommodation” and what constitutes an “undue hardship” are relative terms and are determined on a case-by-case basis.

An important current case with implications in this area is the Hobby Lobby case where the judge ruled that individuals who owned the company have religious rights, but the companies the family owns are secular, for-profit enterprises that do not possess the same rights.

**Summarized from “Business Law, Text and Cases, Legal, Ethical, Global, and E-Commerce Environment,” Clarkson, Miller, Jentz, and Cross, 11th Ed., 2009.*

Discussion Points provided by Jim Hyatt, Dean of Skinner School of Business & Technology at Trevecca