

Change in motion

The three components to inclusive diversity.

“Diversity” and “inclusion” are no longer buzzwords used solely by and relevant for Human Resources departments. When properly implemented and embraced from the top down and bottom up, diversity and inclusion programmes are effective, holistic business strategies that incorporate the company’s mission, strategic plans and practices.

No longer a “nice to have,” these programmes have become imperative to a company’s ability to maintain a competitive edge and to attract and retain the best talent available.

Inclusive Diversity (ID) momentum is achieved through various enablers with three main components: alignment/ownership, focus and measurement. Organisations that properly implement each of these tactics can move closer to achieving ID success, instilling a sense of belonging in each employee.

Alignment/ownership, focus and measurement

Alignment or ownership exists not only at the “top of the house,” but “throughout the house.” I’m often asked, who owns ID? Isn’t it a function and accountability of HR? Quite simply, the answer is a resounding No. While HR facilitates ID, every employee has an ownership stake – they drive it, exhibit it and enable it. So while leadership may set the ID strategy and tone, it is up to every employee to carry it out.

Focus: Consistent and continuous focus on ID is the only way to ensure its success. This can only be realised through long-term commitment, time and resources. Often a multi-year process, implementing ID takes time to be embraced across most organisations.

Measurement is perhaps the most important component of a successful ID programme, as it holds everyone

in the organisation accountable. If the ID programme is not accurately and consistently measured, the alignment/ownership and focus are irrelevant.

Measurement is a fine balance in Inclusive Diversity. It’s not just an exercise done for measurement’s sake: it’s the right thing for the organisation. Approaches to measurement can vary as no two departments within an organisation are staffed quite the same. One constant, however, is the need to drill down to the department level to identify ID gaps within the organisation. Implementing successful ID programmes is not a one-size-fits-all initiative.

For example, in one of my previous roles, my department had both a strong female presence and largely promoted from within. Thus, my accountability for this team was to hire or promote more males into leadership positions and to increase the mobility of talent outside of HR. This was not necessarily the case for other departments within the organisation. By taking a very analytical approach to measuring ID that entailed reviewing retention rates, promotions and turnover rates, we moved the needle and accomplished our goal of building a more balanced team.

All things ID start with recruiting

The recruiting process is the baseline or entry point in having a positive impact on ID. While leadership development and succession planning are important to any organisation, if you don’t have enough of the right people in the recruiting pipeline, you will continue to be behind the ID curve.

I have seen several ways to achieve ID success through recruiting, including committing to interviewing a certain percentage of diverse candidates for an open position. By increasing this pool, Recruiting Managers ensure that diverse

candidates have an equal chance of being chosen. Another example is the commitment that a diverse candidate will be selected for certain open positions, which is again accomplished through ensuring that a robust, diverse candidate pool is identified early in the recruiting process.

ID is more than just a recruiting exercise – it’s a mindset and cultural change for an organisation. It is a commitment to ensuring that diverse candidate pools are identified, and that is not just HR’s responsibility. Leadership, and primarily hiring managers, need to recognise that ID is important to the success of the business and make it a priority. Yes, it may take a little longer to find the right, diverse candidate, but isn’t that worth it if it’s the best decision for the business in the long run? In the long term, finding the right candidate is the goal.

As companies continue to invest in their ID programmes, ID will remain top of mind and will only grow in importance. By implementing ID strategies – including programmatic change – into your recruiting process and committing to an ID mindset over the long term, your organisation can secure a competitive advantage.



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