



The Journey Ahead

Creating an Environment for Diversity & Inclusion

Isn't it amazing and fascinating the different cultural mixes of corporations today? Not only can you discuss cultural traditions, but you also accompany your peers to a variety of restaurants that offer food from their home countries. With this workplace diversity, companies are stimulated to introduce cultural communication training, socioeconomic practices; and, emotional intelligence awareness.

Companies often use diversity and inclusion in the same breath, but there is a distinction. Diversity is not a problem to be solved. It is the opportunity to capitalize on differences of race and ethnicity in the workforce. Diversity includes, and is not constrained to, religious and political beliefs, gender, ethnicity, education, background, sexual orientation and/or geographic location. Inclusion is defined as the companies' support vehicles and recognition practices of men and women; and, ethnicities in the work environment, so everyone is valued for their distinctive skills.

A prime example of a leader for diversity & inclusion in a corporation is Ana Duarte McCarthy with Citi. Ana is the managing director and chief diversity officer for Citi. Ana is responsible for the development and integration of Citi's global workforce diversity strategy for hiring and developing diverse talent, fostering an inclusive work environment; and, ensuring management accountability. In this role, Ana has established a framework of policies and practices that have advanced Citi's recognition as a top company for diversity. During her time at Citi, she has been instrumental in the adoption of leadership development initiatives for women; and, fostered Citi's employee network programs, now numbering over 70.

Companies that embark on recruiting a diverse workforce open their businesses to a larger sea of candidates. While diverse workforces aren't limited to employees from different countries who speak more than one language or have varying ethnic backgrounds, employees with these characteristics are beneficial to companies looking to expand or improve existing operations in national or regional markets. Use any of these techniques to begin or improve diversity & inclusion in the workplace:

- Identify and remove barriers that re-enforce workplace stereotypes and prejudices among employees.
- Encourage employees to have conversations inviting ideas and innovations without biased judgement.
- Infuse conversational practices to include all ethnic groups as 'insiders' to organizational decision-making and future policy.
- Implement nondiscrimination rules on how to resolve conflict without dismissing others' opinions as non-significant or stupid.



- Create employee resource groups or support forums to endorse the success of employees who may be underrepresented in leadership positions. Encourage candor in these groups.
- Bring in and implement diversity training to reduce interpersonal conflicts with workgroups and entire departments.
- Create task and goal interdependence among other groups and departments. Where possible limit the groups to no more than 6 people. People tend to be more willing to take risks and express opinions in smaller groups.
- Before the close of task or project meetings, be certain to allocate time to ask what may be missing from this meeting, no clear tasks owners or not enough resources for success?

When you want to create or improve diversity & inclusion in the work environment, *ask yourself:*

- Do we as a company only practice employee assimilation of other cultures? If so, what are we willing to change so that all genders and ethnicities are valued for their uniqueness?
- Are we familiar with any of the other employee's traditions, speech phrases, or holidays that are not acceptable to use in business meetings or negotiations?
- Is the company experiencing a high level of employee departures due to others being passed over for promotions? If so, can we and the human resource department examine and document how many departures have been based on ethnicity, not employee performance?
- Are we, as leaders, open to what other people may be experiencing from the onboarding cycle? How can leaders demonstrate a space of openness and conversational safety in the interview process?
- If you are the leader of cultural team collaborations, how can you leverage the differences and use those variances for optimum performance?
- As the leader of a diverse group, are you monitoring the group's dynamics? Are the members of a given group holding each other accountable for performance without cruelty or callousness?
- How can we help our employees share personal stories and establish deeper connections? Can we create quarterly breakfast or lunch sessions for different cultures to be shared with all?
- What behaviors in this organization do we see as enabling for outside groups or cultures to voice alternate perspectives? Can we instill those behaviors company-wide?

"Diversity requires commitment. Achieving the superior performance diversity can produce needs further action - most notably, a commitment to develop a culture of inclusion. People do not just need to be different, they need to be fully involved and feel their voices are heard." *Alain Dehaze*

If this resonates with your current situation, we invite you to realize your efforts with us.