Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at Work
Creating programs with tangible value

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At this point, just about everyone is likely familiar with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs. They look good to shareholders, and often "feel like the right thing to do." But are you, and your employees, really getting the value out of these programs that you intend?

In this special report, we've collected the best of Business Management Daily's advice on how to implement DEI programs, what resources you might need, and best practices you can implement that won't blow your budget. Whether you're a small business or a Fortune 500 company — Business Management Daily has the tips you need to stay ahead.

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Why workplace diversity and inclusion is important

Jack dreads this week's upcoming staff meeting. The agenda includes finalizing team shirts. While he has nothing against company swag — and getting to wear the tee with jeans each Friday would be a nice change of pace — he fears he will be stuck trying to squeeze his large frame into clothing that does not fit. If the organization is trying to promote a sense of belonging, he thinks, this initiative is a failure.

As expected, Jack's manager presents the design that received the most staff votes. Then, however, she does something Jack never expected. She hands out forms on which people are to write their name and circle the size shirt they would like. The choices go well beyond the usual range of small to extra large. Jack can choose a 4X as easily as the coworker next to him can opt for a medium.

Walking out of the meeting, Jack overhears a petite Millennial named Julie tell a colleague how thrilled she was to see extra small among the choices because she would not have to end up looking like she was wearing her husband's shirt. Jack smiles as he thinks to himself, "It feels good when a business cares about an inclusive culture for all."

Size inclusivity is just one of the many ways that organizations can build a better workplace culture — one where employees feel genuinely accepted and valued for who they are. Here, we take a look at the importance of diversity and inclusion both to individuals and to the whole company.

What is diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)?

Before delving into why diversity, equity, and inclusion matter, it helps to gain a greater understanding of what these terms mean in the work environment.

A diverse workforce is a heterogeneous one. Its individuals possess different backgrounds and identities. The demographics of diverse groups display a range in terms of things such as age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status.

The international professional services network Deloitte offers a great explanation of the term inclusion: "The actions taken to understand, embrace, and leverage the unique strengths and facets of identity for all individuals so that all feel welcomed, valued, and supported." An inclusive work environment aims to get rid of barriers that make people wonder if they truly belong there. This could involve anything from Jack's t-shirt situation described earlier to purposely designating a section of a conference room table for a worker in a wheelchair so he can pull up to sit with the group rather than behind it.

Deloitte also offers an effective explanation of equity, especially in relation to the similar term equality: "(Equity is) the outcome of diversity and inclusion wherein all people have fair access, opportunity, resources, and power to thrive, with consideration for and elimination of historical and systemic barriers and privileges that cause oppression. Equality, by comparison, is when all people are treated identically, without consideration for historical and systemic barriers and privileges."

Note that being strong in one of these areas does not automatically translate into equal effectiveness in the others. For instance, a company may possess statistics that show diversity among its staff as a whole. But, if qualified female employees routinely experience difficulty breaking into the C-suite "boys' club," the organization lacks equity. Or, what if a company creates an inclusive atmosphere in that everyone who is there feels accepted, but very few minorities are on the payroll? The organization would fail in the area of diversity.

DEI's effect on employees

People want to come to work each day knowing that they matter. Employee engagement soars when individuals feel like vital, respected members of the company. An inclusive work environment enables individuals to be their authentic selves. Workers know the organization's executive team values diverse talent and promotes a company culture where the bottom line is what you contribute, not things such as the color of your skin or who you love.

Especially in times of labor shortages, smart companies put a premium on employee experience. Such efforts improve retention and loyalty. Keeping present workers saves the time and expense of recruiting and training replacements.

Diverse workplaces with inclusive leadership reap what they sow. Research from Great Place to Work, a global authority on workplace culture, shows that when employees trust that they and their colleagues will be treated fairly regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or age, they are:

- 9.8 times more likely to look forward to going to work
- 6.3 times more likely to have pride in their work
- 5.4 times more likely to want to stay a long time at their company

The benefits of diversity to team performance

Plenty of great things can happen when a diverse group of people makes up your company. Diverse backgrounds promote seeing things through unique lenses. This wider range of perspectives can give the organization a competitive advantage, especially in the ever-growing global marketplace.

Take the matter of decision-making. Suppose a company wants to market a new type of backpack to students returning to school. The group assigned to the project brainstorms how to make the product attractive to a large number of potential buyers. A homogeneous team may generate some good ideas. But, think

about what the list of possibilities might look like with a range of voices added to the conversation. Groups with ethnic diversity, gender diversity, and socioeconomic diversity may approach problem-solving from different angles. They can push colleagues to stretch their minds beyond the box: What might kids from different cultures consider "cool"? How might the backpack selection process differ between girls and boys? How does affordability figure in for parents already confronting a variety of back-to-school expenses?

Diverse teams also can help spot bad decisions that would alienate certain customers or be interpreted differently than intended. This company, for instance, would not want to learn after the fact through a barrage of negative social media posts that members of the LGBTQ community find the organization's new commercial homophobic.

Representation from different backgrounds and identities, however, is just the starting point. Harnessing the power of a diverse workplace involves creating an inclusive workplace — one in which employees feel psychologically safe to be themselves and participate as equals. Nobody wants to feel like a "token" hire.

Research by Great Place to Work demonstrates the value of inviting every employee into the innovation process. Places that build this type of environment have been found to "generate more high-quality ideas, realize greater speed in implementation, and achieve greater agility — resulting in 5.5 times the revenue growth of peers with a less inclusive approach to innovation."

The business case for diversity

Speaking of profitability, other studies likewise support monetary reasons for creating a diverse company. The global management consulting firm McKinsey & Company, for instance, found that companies with the most ethnically/culturally diverse boards worldwide are 43% more likely to experience higher profits. It also reports the following regarding inclusive leadership:

"Our 2019 analysis finds that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25 percent more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile. Moreover, we found that the greater the representation, the higher the likelihood of outperformance. Companies with more than 30 percent women executives were more likely to outperform companies where this percentage ranged from 10 to 30, and in turn, these companies were more likely to outperform those with even fewer women executives, or none at all. A substantial differential likelihood of outperformance—48 percent—separates the most from the least gender-diverse companies.

"In the case of ethnic and cultural diversity, our business-case findings are equally compelling: In 2019, top-quartile companies outperformed those in the fourth one by 36 percent in profitability."

[The Network for Business Sustainability](#) adds more support. It notes that "firms with racially diverse upper and lower management do better than firms without diversity at either level. Diverse firms' productivity is 1.32 times higher than firms lacking diversity." (Productivity here was measured as revenue divided by number of employees.)

Leadership is not the only place where diversity and inclusion matter to financial performance. Workers who feel cared about, heard, and treated fairly are more likely to put forth greater effort, leading to better monetary results. Unfortunately, some employees feel they are not given the same concern or level playing field as their counterparts.

Businesses that work on eliminating this discrepancy stand to gain. An [analysis of Great Place to Work-Certified companies](#) found that "the 100 companies with the largest gaps between the experiences of white employees and minorities had significantly lower revenue growth than the 100 companies with the smallest disparity. The companies with the most significant gaps averaged 8.6 percent

revenue growth, while companies in the top quartile averaged 11.1 percent growth."

Other considerations for building a diverse and inclusive workforce

Not all that stands to be gained from paying attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion translates directly to dollars and cents. Rather, making DEI efforts standard to the organization's modus operandi opens doors for things to happen that improve the company's standing.

For example, developing a reputation as a place that prizes diversity and strives to create inclusive teams can boost your attractiveness to job candidates. A Glassdoor survey reveals more than 3 in 4 employees and job seekers say a diverse workforce is an important factor when evaluating companies and job offers. This statistic rises to 4 out of 5 among people who are Black, Hispanic, or LBGTQ. As more job seekers see your workplace as an equitable environment where they feel welcome and have opportunities to advance, your applicant talent pool grows.

Recruitment efforts also profit in other ways. When you have staff diversity, it improves the chances that employee referral programs will yield a richer range of suggested new hires. Similarly, diversity expands the likelihood of building connections with new sources of talent through employee connections to different educational institutions, professional and community groups, and even social media followers. Your company could discover talent pipelines it had never before considered.

Companies committed to DEI often experience fewer legal problems related to employment. A focus on fair hiring practices lowers the potential for claims of discrimination. A workplace atmosphere of respect for all decreases instances of harassment and bullying, especially if backed up by a consistent zero-tolerance policy for offenders. A genuine concern for helping all employees reach their full

potential makes accommodating the needs of someone with a disability seen as the right thing to do, not as some cumbersome mandate to try to circumvent.

The positive reputation built through keeping diversity and inclusion top of mind goes well beyond the workplace, though. It extends out into the public and into the minds of consumers. Your customer base grows when people like your company and its principles. Individuals become more willing to listen to your pitch and try your products when they feel your brand includes them. And, with diverse perspectives going into formulating what you offer consumers, there is a higher chance they are going to like what they see.

Diversity and inclusion best practices for the workplace

Smart business leaders know that building an inclusive, diverse workplace can improve things such as innovation, decision-making, retention, morale, and profitability. Figuring out how to establish such an environment, though, often proves challenging. Here, we take a look at some diversity and inclusion best practices that can help interested companies boost representation and send the message that each employee plays an integral role in the organization reaching its set goals.

Watch your hiring practices

Creating a diverse workforce starts with a recruitment process that encourages top talent from a variety of backgrounds and identities to apply. This action involves two parts — making a range of potential applicants aware of job opportunities and spurring them to toss their hat in the ring.

Look in new places

To gather a more diverse talent pool, look for new outlets rather than limiting recruitment to the same places each time. Establishing connections with a historically black college, for instance, could increase your visibility to minorities. Advertising on a niche job board, such as one dedicated to employment opportunities for military spouses, could open up a labor source that often gets ignored. If your company offers remote work, promote openings to candidates across geographical regions.

Craft inclusive ads

A thoughtful job ad goes a long way toward attracting diverse talent. Pay attention to the wording of the post. Create gender neutrality by using terms such as "salesperson" rather than "salesman" or "postal carrier" over "postman." Avoid the pronouns "he" and "she." Eliminate mention of looking for someone to "fit" with company culture. Candidates may interpret the statement as an organization wanting a new hire who blends in with the majority.

Many job ads contain an EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement to let candidates know that all applicants receive equal treatment. Consider going further by directly stating that your organization encourages applications from traditionally underrepresented groups such as women, minorities, and people with disabilities. If your business has adopted any special diversity initiatives or inclusion efforts, briefly describe them. Publicizing these measures not only helps attract diverse talent, it deters applicants who do not share the company's values from applying.

Keep the hiring process fair

Continue DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) efforts when interviewing. Here are a few options to consider:

- When deciding who to meet, consider hiding applicant names from resumes to lower the possibility of forming opinions based on ethnicity.
- Construct a diverse hiring panel to bring different lenses to the table and make an impression on candidates.
- Formulate a set list of questions so that each applicant gets asked the same thing.
- Consider presenting situational judgment tests as a way for candidates to display their skills on a level playing field, and evaluate each piece of writing without knowing the author.

Make your policies and attitude known

Companies that truly value an inclusive culture look for opportunities to demonstrate their commitment. Reinforcement solidifies the notion both internally and externally that inclusion practices are integral to the brand and its work environment.

Your employee handbook should clearly state your dedication to creating an inclusive workplace. Lay out the importance of creating a sense of belonging where every worker gets treated with fairness and respect. Let people know what behaviors are expected of them as members of an inclusive company and what repercussions will happen for failure to comply.

Share your mindset externally, too. The organization strengthens its reputation when customers and job candidates visit your website and social media pages read about your D&I initiatives and see pictures of diverse teams working harmoniously.

Practice what you preach

Good luck getting employees to truly buy into your inclusion initiatives if actions do not match words. The demographics may look good on paper, but the actual employee experience on a daily basis is the heart of the matter.

A few ways to "put your money where your mouth is" include:

- Sticking to your zero-tolerance policy for people who bully others based on things such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, or religion.
- Creating a physical environment that considers the needs of customers and staff members of all sizes and ones with disabilities.
- Developing a human resources department that encourages people to bring discriminatory behavior to its attention and takes quick action rather than brushing off complaints or making those who talk feel like snitches.
- Expecting leadership at all levels to create a level playing field and to take into consideration the unique needs of each individual employee by making a point of regularly asking "How can I best support you?"

Provide training on unconscious bias and microaggressions

Oftentimes, subtle or "little things" make people on diverse teams feel different, excluded, or less. Combatting these negative factors requires awareness of their existence, even among the staunchest supporters of D&I initiatives.

Unconscious bias

From senior leaders downward, all in the company should examine themselves for underlying assumptions or attitudes commonly referred to as unconscious bias. Because they are triggered by the brain making quick decisions, unconscious biases "pop up" rather than arise from beliefs someone knows he or she possesses. The person displaying an unconscious bias may feel embarrassed or guilty when made aware, but reversing the tendency can prove difficult without training.

A few of the many ways unconscious bias shows up in the workplace include:

- Assuming an older employee will resist technological change or experience problems when learning something new.

- Giving a choice assignment to someone without kids because a parent wouldn't want to put in overtime.
- Presuming the youngest person in the room is not the team's leader.
- Inadvertently passing over job applicants with non-white sounding names because they do not seem like a good fit with workplace culture.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are another contributor to negative employee experiences. In contrast to obvious improper or insulting behavior, microaggressions are digs that casually make their way into the everyday lives of people belonging to marginalized groups.

Many microaggressions occur in the choice of language people commonly use. For instance, making a statement such as "You're so OCD" to someone who triple-checks her work may imply unnecessary carefulness, but it also jabs at people who suffer from the disorder.

Other microaggressions may initially come off as compliments until thought about more carefully. Praising a woman for negotiating like a man, expressing that you barely noticed an accent when a foreign-born colleague gave a speech, or telling a wheelchair-using teammate that you don't even think of him as disabled creates a vibe that something should be said because the original expectations of their abilities were low.

While not as in-your-face as some prejudicial actions, resist the temptation to write microaggressions off as not a big deal. People facing microaggressions often experience many in a day, and these small negative interactions add up to create an overall negative employee experience.

Develop a DEI team

Everyone at your company should feel responsible for exhibiting attitudes and behavior that contribute to an inclusive environment. However, creating an entity

dedicated to diversity and inclusion ensures it remains top of mind. A group that specifically focuses on the issue keeps an eye on progress. Without such ownership, each leader or department may erroneously assume somebody else in the company is taking charge. Assembling a diverse team with representation from various facets of the organization also brings more perspectives into the mix.

However, don't just stop there — make sure your DEI team is empowered to make improvements and take action. Employees will quickly see through the ruse if no tangible actions come out of DEI efforts.

Provide multiple outlets to talk and learn about DEI

A company may have diversity and inclusion training sessions that it requires new hires to attend as part of the onboarding process, and it may from time to time have other educational initiatives in which all employees take part. While mandatory sessions have their value, a range of other measures likewise should have a place in overall efforts.

Employee surveys

Surveys provide insight into employee engagement, attitudes, comfort levels, and perceptions of the effectiveness of D&I initiatives. Include space for telling about individual experiences or offering suggestions on how to improve workplace culture. Make the surveys as anonymous as possible in order to protect privacy and encourage workers to honestly and fully share their reality. Seventy-one percent of respondents in a study conducted by Glassdoor said they would be more likely to [share experiences and opinions on diversity and inclusion](#) at their company if they could do so anonymously.

Informal gatherings

Informal gatherings encourage workers to enjoy each other's company and think outside the box in the process. Consider adding holiday celebrations beyond mainstream ones. Form a lunchtime book club that reads material from a range of

authors or a movie group that covers a multitude of subjects. Volunteer as a team to host a toy drive for low-income children, work at a soup kitchen, or participate in a pride march. Mark every person's special occasions with equal vigor, whether it is birthday number 25 or 65 or whether a new baby becomes the pride and joy of a heterosexual couple or a same-sex one.

Employee resource groups

Many businesses encourage workers to form Employee Resource Groups. ERGs, as they are commonly called, are voluntary, employee-led groups whose members share a common characteristic, such as ethnicity or gender. ERGs often offer such things as support, networking opportunities, career development, and mentorship. A senior leader in the company may act as a group's sponsor or champion to help it secure financial resources and navigate executive waters. Roughly 90 percent of Fortune 500 Companies have ERG programs, and they are becoming more commonplace at small and mid-sized workplaces, too.

Get buy-in from the top

This brings up something critical to all diversity and inclusion best practices — support from above. A company where leaders at all levels commit to DEI stands a greater chance for successful outcomes. Welcoming people from diverse backgrounds and ensuring everyone feels a sense of belonging permeates the organization's modus operandi. It guides decision-making and encourages everyone in the workplace to similarly commit. It'll be hard to convince employees to move the ball on DEI if leaders don't show their own commitment to the effort.

Admit what you don't know

Finally, a company should not shy away from addressing diversity and inclusion out of embarrassment or fear of failure. Wanting to become better is half the battle, so an eager and open mindset is a great starting point.

Leaders and other interested parties will find plenty of reading material on the subject. Likewise, various community, cultural, professional, industry, and identity groups are pleased to offer guidance and direction to resources. Even turning to your LinkedIn connections to ask about D&I initiatives at their place of employment can prove worthy (especially if you have worked on expanding your own network to include diverse connections).

Above all, be prepared to ask questions and really listen to the answers. Giving others the chance to express their true selves and be taken seriously is perhaps the greatest of all diversity and inclusion best practices.

7 DEI policies you can implement in your workplace today

Improving diversity, equity, and inclusion policies within your company might feel overwhelming at the onset, especially if you know you have a long way to go. However, no matter your starting point, consistent efforts are crucial to improved DEI and overall company performance.

A more inclusive workplace improves productivity, retention, and much more. That's why it's vital not to be paralyzed by the size of the overall task, but to start making positive changes in your organization as soon as possible.

To have the greatest impact, you should have both long and short-term plans in place. Large sweeping changes are necessary, but don't forget about the little steps you can make immediately to start seeing improvements as you embark on your DEI journey. Consider these 7 tasks that you can get started with today as you build out your larger plan.

Review previous complaints

Employees submit complaints in hopes that a thorough investigation into the incident will occur. However, if investigating staff underestimated the complaint due to its nature, previous incidents might have been swept under the rug unnecessarily. Take a look back at previously submitted discrimination complaints from your new DEI lens. Review the notes to ensure there was a fair and thorough investigation into the occurrences.

If the situation requires a new investigation, do so promptly. Also, to expand upon this, remind staff that all discrimination complaints are taken seriously and to contact human resources for a prompt, thorough, and serious investigation into the matter.

Today: Review previous discrimination complaints and release a memo that staff should report any discriminatory acts immediately for review.

Seek feedback

Your staff is your lifeline to what's occurring within the company. While they will often discuss amongst themselves or keep their feelings private regarding changes they'd like to see company-wide, you want them to communicate their thoughts with you. In opening the lines of communication with the staff, you're able to identify blind spots you might have typically overlooked.

Also, be sure to solicit feedback from everyone, not just pockets of the staff, and be transparent regarding your desire to improve.

Finally, ensure they can provide their feedback in a safe space. This might not be a conversation best had in person or with identifying information attached to the feedback, and that's okay. The purpose is to get the information in a way that makes staff feel comfortable sharing.

Today: Create a survey or develop a method to collect feedback from staff regarding their feelings related to DEI within the company.

Expand recruiting efforts

Securing a DEI-friendly work environment includes your recruiting efforts. If you want more diverse talent in the company, it might require that you specifically seek out recruitment efforts that include those demographics. When you go where the diverse staff is, you're more likely to find them. It's time to stop relying on your go-to recruiting methods and start stepping outside the box to find your staff.

Today: Identify community organizations, schools, professional associations, conferences, and job recruitment fairs that are likely to attract the talent you're seeking.

Gather your data

The first step in developing a DEI plan is to know where you're starting as an organization. That begins by gathering your data. Having this quantitative data can give you a starting point to track over time as you implement your plan and start achieving your DEI-related goals.

Gather data related to:

- The overall makeup of your organization
- The makeup of your organization at different levels (i.e., upper management, middle management, administrative)
- The recent hires
- The hiring pool
- The recent promotions
- The salary of staff members and more.

Today: Make a list of the data you want to gather and the process you need to take to collect it.

Learn appropriate pronouns

By allowing staff to select their appropriate pronoun, you empower them to go by their identity in the workplace which can take a significant weight off their shoulders. Request an updated employee profile for current employees that includes gender identity and use the requested pronoun consistently. For new employees, you can ask them in their onboarding information. Until you're sure how an employee identifies themselves, you can use a neutral and more inclusive pronoun like "they" or "them."

Today: Determine how you will collect appropriate pronouns from current and new employees.

Review your meeting schedule

As your workforce continues to diversify, keep in mind the time of the company events you schedule. Employees with families, single parents, caregivers of elderly parents, or even those working a part-time job might struggle to attend after-work meetings.

Consider trying to schedule meetings during work hours so the time can accommodate more people's schedules. To do this you can schedule meetings over lunch or end the workday a bit earlier. Instead of assuming the best time to hold meetings, poll your staff to see if the current schedule is working or if a change might be welcome.

Today: Review your meeting schedule and seek input from employees regarding meeting time preferences.

Develop a diverse hiring committee

Having a diverse hiring committee in place will increase the likelihood of more diversity, equity, and inclusion in the hiring selection process. Also, part of a more DEI-friendly hiring process is clarifying how you assess applicants based on job-related qualifications. This might require training on how to prevent internal bias from impacting hiring decisions as well.

Today: Review your current hiring committee and criteria for hiring employees.

How to apply diverse hiring practices to your business

Examining diverse hiring practices encompasses everything from advertising open positions to hiring the selected candidate. Each step from your advertising copy, to your hiring software and screening tests, carries potential legal pitfalls. But there's also opportunity. Cast your net wide enough and take some risk, and you will attract the best talent. Rely only on word-of-mouth and recommendations, and your workforce will be stuck in the past.

Hiring practices do not exist in a vacuum. In the wake of the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, many companies have launched diversity initiatives. Prominent corporate leaders have signed the [CEO Action Pledge](#), promising to overhaul corporate culture and welcome women and minority candidates. But pledges only do so much. Without scrutinizing your current practices and rooting out those that perpetuate discrimination, change won't happen.

Concepts such as resume bias, systemic discrimination, and pay history bias only recently entered the HR lexicon. They have, however, become weapons in plaintiff attorneys' arsenals. If your hiring practices haven't kept up, you may face thousands in legal fees and settlements. Plus, you won't end up with that diverse, talented workforce you need to compete today.

Hiring is the first company process applicants experience and it tells applicants a lot about your company culture. Is the process welcoming or overly bureaucratic? Do the websites hosting your ads screen out protected employee classes disproportionately? Does the wording in your ads discourage some workers from applying? Does your equal opportunity statement advertise the opposite by leaving out newly protected classes?

Here's a step-by-step look at the hiring process and what to watch out for when trying to craft a more diversity-friendly approach.

Diverse hiring practices start with job descriptions

You cannot begin the hiring process without first crafting a job description. It's impossible to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) without a job description that outlines essential and non-essential tasks. Likewise, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) allows leave for employees with serious health conditions. Serious health conditions are those that prevent an employee from performing essential functions of a job. The job description provides those. Make sure those job descriptions welcome disabled applicants by identifying essential functions and inviting accommodation requests.

While managers can often provide a good base job description, input from employees who have held the position is essential. Include workers whose position interacts with that job as well. Get job description input from as many employees as possible. This makes it less likely you'll omit a key part of the job.

Because duties change over time, you should update job descriptions regularly to ensure they accurately describe what workers do. Job descriptions are the first documents requested by lawyers representing workers, and by the administrative agencies that enforce the law. If you don't have one or it isn't accurate, your case is off to a bad start.

Job descriptions should include:

- The job title.
- The job's essential functions, such as whether it requires heavy lifting, and if so, how often.
- Secondary or infrequent duties.
- Job performance standards, such as sales quotas.
- Who is responsible for supervision.
- Whom the worker supervises.
- Any special training, experience, or education required for the position, including special certifications, degrees, or skills.

If your diversity plan includes wanting to close the skills gap, the job description can help. Is your organization open to training promising applicants? State it here. Highlight any skills gap programs you have or plan on launching. Repeat the information in the job advertisements too.

Job advertisements should reflect commitments to diversity

Once you have a good job description, the next step in implementing more diverse hiring practices is to look at the job listing.

The job listing or advertisement should include the following:

- Job title and number.
- Location of the position.
- Hours of work and whether travel/overtime is required.
- Salary range and a brief explanation of benefits.
- Description of essential functions of the job and experience and educational qualifications required.
- Instructions and deadline for submitting applications.
- An equal employment opportunity statement and a notice to disabled applicants about accommodation requests.

Note that your equal employment opportunity statement should be up-to-date. Last June, the Supreme Court expanded that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act's ban on sex discrimination. It now includes discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. Leaving this out will subject your company to ridicule and discourage qualified, talented applicants seeking a modern, progressive workplace.

Additionally, consider the wording in your job description and how it may read to different diverse candidates. Encouraging employees with a "good sense of humor" to apply may seem harmless. However, a minority candidate may see that as an indicator of a toxic culture where tolerance of inappropriate jokes and behavior is expected.

AI systems may not be all they promise to be

Several new software programs claim to eliminate employment discrimination by using artificial intelligence (AI). It's tempting to 'outsource' your diversity recruiting to AI. Be forewarned: While a promising field, some programs may suffer from the garbage in, garbage out syndrome. Regardless of how objective AI promises to be, it must still make judgments based on human criteria. If the criteria contain biases, AI merely automates the bias.

Several states have moved to limit or regulate AI in hiring. In January 2020, Illinois passed legislation regulating how businesses can use AI in video job interviews. The law requires companies to notify candidates that the technology will be used to analyze their video interviews. Employers must disclose to candidates how the AI works. The candidate must consent to be evaluated by AI before any interview occurs. Other states are currently considering similar legislation. A New York City proposal goes even further. It would regulate AI use in hiring, compensation, and other HR-related decisions. It would also require AI developers to validate their products by showing they don't discriminate.

This is a quickly changing field. Before choosing to implement an AI product as part of your diverse hiring practices, consult with counsel to determine what is permitted in your area.

Perpetuating discrimination in the hiring process

Basing job offers on past decisions can create legal jeopardy for employers. That's true even though a different employer is responsible for those decisions. If you're not careful, you inherit them. Recent legal and legislative initiatives have targeted employer's use of salary history as discriminatory. Critics argue the practice affects women disproportionately. Women have traditionally been paid less than men for similar work. Basing current salary on past salary may perpetuate past discrimination. Currently, 19 states and 21 municipalities ban employers from asking applicants for their salary history.

A similar situation happens when employers ask previous employers about absenteeism. This question often triggers a response that reveals protected leave usage. Several federal laws prohibit employers from penalizing employees for taking protected leave, workers' compensation claims, and disability. Employers who inquire about an applicant's attendance record should bear that in mind. It's best not to ask at all.

Criminal background and credit checks

The Ban-the-box movement calls on employers to not ask about criminal convictions on job applications. In locations where the ban has passed, employers must make a conditional job offer before requesting criminal records. The EEOC has long held that criminal background checks disproportionately impact minority applicants. They argue that even if the applicant has a conviction, the employer should consider the following when hiring:

- The nature and gravity of the offense.
- The amount of time that passed since it was committed.

- The nature of the job held or sought. This analysis is highly fact-specific.

To date, 35 states and over 150 municipalities prohibit public employers from asking job applicants about their criminal history. In fourteen states and 20 municipalities, the prohibition applies to private employers as well.

The EEOC has also long held that using credit scores in hiring disproportionately affects minorities. Following that lead, the City of Philadelphia recently passed an ordinance banning the practice in most cases.

Avoiding backlash for diverse hiring practices

Advances for women and minorities have increased in recent years. During the pandemic, one consequence became apparent. Those last hired were often first laid off. And that means female and minority workers have once again seen progress erased. Plus, employers may face charges of reverse discrimination if they base hiring decisions on setting diversity goals rather than qualifications. Hiring a less qualified minority candidate violates Title VII. Fortunately, there are several strategies that can legally allow employers to create a diverse workforce.

The first strategy is to look in the mirror. Talk to current minority employees and find out what issues they face. Are minorities represented in management in the same numbers as other company positions? If not, examine promotion policies with an eye to finding discriminatory patterns.

The New York Times recently held focus groups for minority employees to understand the challenges they face. Management at the Times has pledged to address the concerns raised. It's part of an effort to make minority workers comfortable enough to discuss problems. Bottom line — a workplace where minority workers are comfortable may be the best recruiting tool.

Employers may also hold networking events and job fairs in minority areas when health conditions permit. In the meantime, asking minority workers for references to fill vacancies may help guide recruiting efforts.

Beyond the diversity initiative

Diversity initiatives that have pre-determined end dates are doomed to failure. The point is to change workplace culture so that it reflects the workforce. It will continue to evolve. If your organization doesn't keep up, it will miss the best talent.

Diversity and inclusion jobs: Behind the title

Nationwide racial justice protests in 2020 have led to an increase in the number of Diversity and Inclusion positions made available by companies, and for a good reason. According to Glassdoor.com, job opening for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) roles spiked by 55% this summer as more companies back up their diversity promises with action.

Even still, there's much to be learned about the importance of diversity and inclusion roles and best diversity hiring practices.
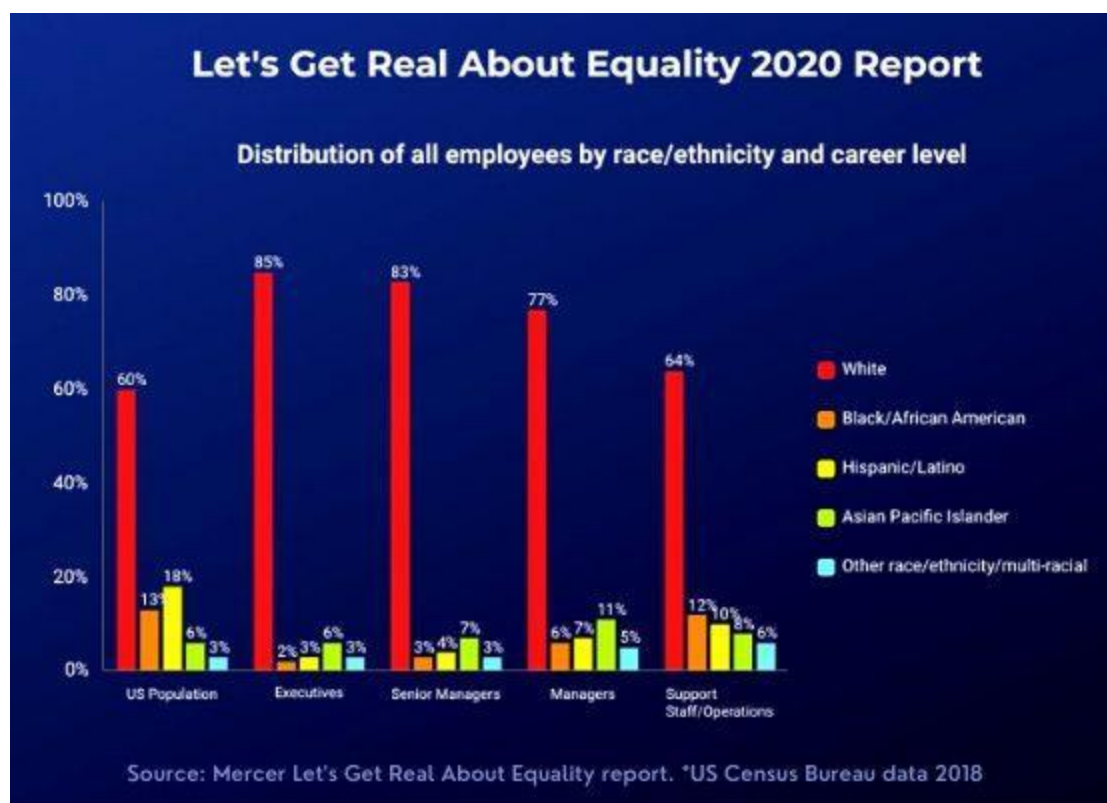
What are diversity, equity, and inclusion?

First, it's essential to understand that these terms are not the same.

Your company has diversity when your employees come from a wide range of backgrounds - ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, lifestyle, experience, and interest.

Your company has inclusion when your policies and procedures make all people feel welcome, and you are open to varying perspectives, opinions, and experiences.

Your company has equity when everyone has an equal chance at opportunities within the company, including promotions, hiring, working on special projects, and selection to participate in professional development opportunities.

Why are diversity and inclusion jobs critical?

As much as we might like to think that no one sees color and everyone looks past differences and treats everyone fairly, time and time again, our communities and companies demonstrate that it's just not true. Companies must be strategic and deliberate about their actions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

One of the best ways to do so is to hire experts in the field of DE&I to lead the cause within the company.

When diversity and inclusion are present in the workplace, employees can showcase their full potential because they feel heard and seen.

5 common diversity and inclusion jobs

While diversity and inclusion jobs can come in all shapes and sizes, here are 5 common diversity jobs with a general summary of their role within a company.

Chief Diversity Officer

The Chief Diversity Officer's role is to oversee diversity, equity, and inclusion within the company. Duties for this position include:

- Recruiting diverse candidates
- Oversee discrimination and harassment complaints
- Implement diversity programs
- Manage and support diversity and inclusion strategies
- Support collaboration between team members
- Address issues faced by select demographics at the company

Diversity Trainer

The Diversity Trainer's role is to conduct diversity training and development programs for leaders within the company. Duties for this position include:

- Lead diversity and inclusion programming
- Determine objectives for the company based on training programs
- Share best practices for fostering diversity and inclusion within the workplace

Diversity Recruiter

The Diversity Recruiter's role is to attract and retain a diverse workforce. Duties for this position include:

- Develop company policies promoting diversity and inclusion
- Lead training sessions for HR members to support diverse hiring efforts
- Establish fair and equitable hiring practices
- Write job descriptions with inclusive language
- Network with potential candidates for traditionally underrepresented groups

Diversity Consultant

The Diversity Consultant's role is to work with a business and help develop and implement new diversity goals, strategies, and initiatives. Duties for this position include:

- Review existing data and processes to support new initiatives
- Conduct diversity training for management and employees
- Identify areas of improvement within the current strategic plan
- Monitor new DE&I developments

Supplier Diversity Manager

The Supplier Diversity Manager's role is to promote the use of diverse suppliers for the company. Duties for this position include:

- Develop business strategies to ensure the supply chain for goods and services is diverse
- Research and record potential businesses owned by diverse groups for purchases and contracts

Other common roles within diversity and inclusion include:

- Diversity Officer
- Diversity Director
- Diversity Coordinator
- Chief Culture Officer
- Diversity Manager
- Director of Diversity and Inclusion
- Inclusion Specialist
- Diversity and Inclusion Manager
- Diversity Program Manager
- Employment Equity Manager
- Equity Manager
- Equity and Diversity Consultant
- Equality Diversity Consultant
- Equity and Diversity Advisor
- Diversity Assistant

Best practices for diverse and inclusive hiring

Whether there is an official DE&I role within your company or not, diverse and inclusive recruiting and hiring practices should be in place at all times. Here are some best practices for incorporating DE&I into your hiring process.

Review job postings

The words of a job posting can have power in the type of candidate you recruit. Be selective with the wording you use in considering the kind of candidates you want

to attract. When describing your organization, note that you are a diverse company and that DE&I are your values or actively recruiting females, minorities, LGBTQ+ community members, etc. for the position.

Review your imagery

Take a look at the images and videos used to represent your company on your website and social media profiles. If you find that your staff is all the same, it can easily run off potential candidates who don't fit that mold. Find other ways to add diversity to your platforms until you can make your staff more diverse.

Try blind hiring

Blind hiring is the process of making decisions about candidates without access to information that can bring about conscious or unconscious bias. This might include the use of software that eliminates their name, school or address, and other information that leads to bias.

Use diverse networking practices

Sometimes, being more diverse in hiring is as simple as looking at how your company networks. Connect with professional organizations and attend conferences and job fairs that represent diverse groups. Have representatives in online spaces such as LinkedIn groups and Facebook groups that represent underrepresented communities. Doing so will place you in a better position to find more diverse candidates.

Have an inclusive interview team

Just as you want to recruit and hire diverse candidates, your interview team should be inclusive as well. You want to ensure that your team includes people with diverse outlooks and backgrounds who are respectful and appreciate differences. This might require that you have a screening or conversation with them beforehand to ensure it's the right person involved in the process.