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How to make your workplace more diverse, equal, and inclusive: a user guide

1: Assess the company's starting point

In order to improve how things are working at a company, there must be a clear picture of its current operations. Since diversity, equality, and inclusion is largely to do with the workforce, an organisation or company must compile demographic data about its employees to understand and audit its current status with diversity and create a game plan for improvement. Information including an employee's age, race, ethnicity or national origin, sex, gender identity, disability status, language, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs—to name some essentials, though there are many more factors that should be considered—are necessary to paint a picture of the workforce and compare it to the labour market to understand the gaps in hiring.

Many organisations will already have most of this information in their HR systems—it just needs to be engaged with—and if not, sending surveys out to employees will fill in the missing information. With a clear understanding of *who* the company's workers are, relevant, effective and clear plans can begin to be made.

2: Hire and establish a diversity, equality, and inclusivity manager and team

Establish a group of workers who are solely dedicated to focusing on this issue. Companies have financial managers and HR specialists to take care of important facets of the business, so to properly dedicate resources and energy to DE&I within the organisation, its importance has to be expressed in the day-to-day as well. According to the Harvard Business Review, companies that appoint diversity managers see 7-18% more diversity in their management within five years, representing numerous demographic groups. The British Academy of Management found that currently, only 6% of managers in the UK are BAME and full representation of these groups would be worth £24 billion a year—a huge impact on the economy.

3: Adjust hiring and candidate search practices

Bias, both conscious and unconscious, plays a large part in diversity and inclusion, often beginning in the hiring phase. In The UK, Accent Bias Britain has been studying the impact of unconscious attitudes that people have in the job hiring process towards different regional accents--representing other qualities of a person's background like race, ethnicity, or class. They found that some accents do indeed perform worse in employment interviews, but they also found that job recruiters are able to unlearn these biases if made aware of them. Whether conscious or not, these types of selections and biases create a barrier for entry for some groups of people and ultimately hinder intentions to diversify a workplace. Given the difficulty and time involved in undoing biases (a worthy task that should be pursued in parallel) some technological and programme solutions can at least check employers on whatever biases they may have with quick results. Forbes suggests three options:

- Unbiasify: This free extension on Google Chrome removes names and photos from hiring sites like LinkedIn to pre-emptively account for any unconscious bias on the part of the hiring manager.
- Texito: An augmented writing program, this app provides language insights to help make your text more appealing and inclusive to a wider audience of candidates.
- Gender Decoder: Different words are associated with different genders and behaviours and the use of—what may feel like ordinary—words can lead companies to seem exclusionary in their advertisements. This website allows a company to paste its text to scan for these gender-biased uses of language.

4: Manage bias within the organisation

Confirmation bias is when people seek out or prefer information and evidence that confirms their pre-existing beliefs and ideas. Similarity bias is the inclination for people to surround themselves with people who are like them. Both phenomena, and many other types of biases, negatively impact not only the hiring process but also the process of promotions. It also has a tendency to affect any type of inequality in assignments, praise, criticism and more. Many companies have mandatory diversity training and this forced context can often backfire, but offering optional training will highlight leaders in the team and create additional followers who dedicate passion to the goal of DE&I by choice and by new social norms. Furthermore, managers can audit their behaviour by considering a set of questions outlined by Ceridian including:

- How and to whom do I delegate work?
- How do I give feedback to different direct reports?
- Do I make any generalisations about team members?
- Who do and don't I praise publicly?
- What equity gaps have historically existed at the company?
- How do I evaluate people for a job or a performance review?
- With whom do I exchange casual banter?
- Who do I go to for advice?

5: Establish equality within pay

Pay equality is a complex and ongoing review process that should have a dedicated person or team to conduct audits, data and analysis. Ensuring that all workers performing similar tasks are compensated equally is essential and a strict pay scale helps in this effort. Furthermore, to raise accountability, employers should advertise the average pay for the role and disseminate clear information to employees about what constitutes top performance so that workers know how to achieve the top pay range. Additionally, companies can make their pay scales transparent so that everyone knows what they should be making and can file a grievance if there is inequality. The CIPD outlines a factsheet about UK regulations for pay reporting and pay fairness that companies can reference.

6: Seek ongoing feedback from employees

Many employee engagement surveys are not executed to maximize their potential. Ceridian outlines the way to make these forms the most useful. One major factor is eliminating the heavy reliance on multiple-choice and allowing employees to write in their own answers to open-ended questions. Furthermore, keeping the surveys short—one to two questions—but more frequent will keep management up to date with what the workforce is experiencing. The key to all of this? Management needs to make a commitment to listen, take the feedback, and implement change. The surveys themselves are not a solution to the problem, but rather a vector through which a company can learn about areas in which it can improve. Employee experience won't improve from just a survey, but from being asked for their feedback and seeing change as a result.

7: Tracking progress over long periods of time

An essential component to making any improvements in diversity, equality, and inclusion is to stay committed to the cause over an extended period. Companies need to continue to re-evaluate and reassess their metrics and feedback until goals are reached and then set new, more ambitious goals. DE&I is a long-term commitment, not a fad. In order to see improvements to business revenue, performance and innovation, plus a change in society and social stratifications, companies need to make a lifelong commitment to the project.