
Diversity & Inclusion Success Strategies

Effective diversity training programs and initiatives take a comprehensive, holistic approach. Here are a few guidelines for successfully starting and increasing awareness for diversity programs and/or initiatives:

1. **Support your customers.** Diversity directly impacts the bottom line. One of the largest segments of one Fortune 500 manufacturing company's customer base was Hispanic and Latino populations, which have over \$1 trillion in buying power. The company recognized this and capitalized on that fact by creating a position for Director of Hispanic Markets. Within just one year, profits increased dramatically. A study done by Cedric Herring, a professor of sociology at the University of Illinois, showed that companies with the highest racial diversity had over ten thousand more customers than those showing the lowest racial diversity.
2. **Develop, implement and enforce clear policies.** Such policies should go beyond statements of anti-discrimination. Diversity should be positive and proactive, not punitive and authoritarian. Is diversity and facilitating an inclusive culture a part of your organization's core values or mission statement?
3. **Commit to a diverse culture.** Half-measures and inconsistency are ineffective. Diversity should be apparent at all levels, as well as clearly evident at the most senior level of management. Otherwise, minority employees may realize they have no real future in your company. Demonstrating and maintaining commitment are critical. Or you may find that your undervalued people will take their ideas and innovation to the competitor, where there already exists an integrated culture of inclusion and a value on those differences.
4. **Recognize potential barriers to diversity.** Certain interview styles may put some candidates at an unintentional disadvantage. Older candidates might be unfamiliar with behavioral interviews. Non-U.S. or minority candidates may be culturally conditioned to downplay achievements - and this applies to simple differences between men and women, as well. Recruiters should be trained to understand the cultural components of interviews under the lens of varied dimensions of difference.
5. **Support employee needs.** Diversity encompasses lifestyle issues far beyond race, age and gender. Child- and elder-care resources and alternative work schedules both help foster workplace morale, and therefore make good business sense. New entrants into the workforce, especially younger generations, whether gay or straight, are asking interviewers whether their company offers domestic partner benefits - simply as a measure of whether the company has an inclusive culture. Is your company doing everything it can to retain its people?
6. **Provide real-world diversity training.** Practical training does far more than large, abstract diversity lectures to help build a company's diversity culture. Small groups

dealing with real issues and relevant situations have proven most effective. To help employees feel that their ideas are valued, leaders must be trained to think beyond their own cultural frame of reference. Does your company have ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) that are open to all members of the organization?

7. **Support employee mentoring.** Develop a program where managers serve as mentors for employees who are different from them: age, ethnicity, gender, etc. The mentor's purpose is to provide constructive coaching and feedback, and when this exchange occurs between people of different backgrounds, doors are opened for powerful and positive changes. And don't forget to mentor "up" – today's young employees can help older employees better understand the generational dynamics and create a more positive experience for both groups.
8. **Expand hiring practices and methods.** If your company wants a more diverse workforce, recognize that different groups access different sources in a job search. Some people still use the classified ads, others use only Internet searches, and others attend job fairs and career expos. In fact, if your company is using only one or two methods for recruiting, you could be unintentionally excluding certain segments of the population. In addition, who is doing the recruiting? Are they representing your workforce "culture"?
9. **Evaluate your performance.** Consistency and accountability are critical over the long term. Conduct regular quantitative assessments on issues like compensation, benefits, promotion opportunities, and work environment. Have you evaluated performance reviews based on race, ethnicity and gender? Don't be afraid to change gears or modify programs if they're not working, or in some cases, there are clear biases that inhibit some people from excelling