

## Strategies to improve Human Diversity skills

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### Introduction

In today’s rapidly changing world, the idea of diversity has become more important than ever. Diversity is not just about differences in appearance or culture; it is about recognizing and valuing the uniqueness of every individual. Each person brings their own experiences, beliefs, skills, and perspectives, which together shape a richer and more vibrant society. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2021), “Human diversity” is defined as “the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.”

Diversity also connects closely with the ideas of inclusion and belonging. Without inclusion, diversity can become superficial, leading to what is known as “tokenism,” where individuals are present but not truly respected or heard. To illustrate these concepts, diversity is like being invited to dinner; inclusivity is eating at the same table with the same offering of food and tableware; belonging is being able to eat as if you were in your own home. All three are crucial for success.(Servaes *et.al.* 2022)

### Human skills needed in Diversity

The following human skills help in diverse groups

- **Innovation and Creativity:** it brings unique experiences, fostering out-of-the-box thinking and more creative solutions.
- **Better Decision-Making:** it analyzes situations more thoroughly, leading to better decision-making 87% of the time, as they consider a wider range of options and viewpoints.
- **Improved Performance:** companies with higher gender and ethnic diversity in leadership are significantly more likely to outperform their peers in profitability and create more value. Hewlett *et.al.* reported that more diverse groups result in higher levels of performance as well as innovation. individuals and teams can perform better when they are able to focus on their tasks in a comfortable environment
- **Attracting Top Talent:** a commitment to diversity helps organizations attract and retain a broader, more

skilled talent pool, increasing competitive advantage. Being inclusive and embracing diversity results in a larger talent pool from which to select team members.

- **Broader Market Insight:** it offers better insights into the needs and motivations of a diverse customer or client base. A Deloitte report highlights that diversity and inclusion improve overall business performance and outcomes. It emphasizes that true diversity goes beyond token representation and requires meaningful inclusion of varied groups.
- **Enhanced Productivity and Engagement:** inclusive workplaces that respect diverse perspectives foster higher employee engagement, trust, and commitment. A U.S. survey found that racial diversity is linked to higher sales revenue, more customers, larger market share, and greater profits. Similarly, gender diversity is associated with increased sales, a broader customer base, and improved profitability.
- **Social Impact and Representation:** it reflects a diverse society, promoting equality, breaking down barriers, and fostering a more equitable and harmonious environment.

### Challenges at workplace diversity

Creating a human diverse and inclusive workplace sounds great- until individual actually try to do it. From big-picture strategy to everyday behavior, there’s a lot that can get in the way

1. **Communication barriers:** such as language differences, non-verbal cues, and varying communication styles can cause misunderstandings and reduce efficiency.
2. **Prejudice and unconscious bias:** hidden biases, stereotypes, and prejudice based on age, culture, gender, or race can lead to unfair treatment, discrimination, and a hostile environment. Research shows how typecast “diverse” employees have been placed in positions of lower power and status than those enjoyed by others in the organization. In other words, diversity has a flip side too and diversity management runs the threat of becoming a means for creating and perpetuating distinctions rather than seeking assimilation and integration.

- 3. **Cultural misunderstandings and conflicts:** differences in values, beliefs, and professional etiquette can lead to clashes and discomfort.
- 4. **Resistance to change** employees may feel threatened or uncomfortable with new diversity initiatives, leading to a lack of inclusion and resistance to adapting to a multicultural team. Some scholars point to the inadvertent creation of distinct categories for the sake of diversity management. Intersections of multiple identities at work in organizations may be ignored
- 5. **Integration challenges:** diverse teams may struggle to work cohesively, creating fragmented teams rather than an integrated, productive environment. Studies have reported that female and racial ethnic-minority employees in the United States are more supportive of organizational diversity initiatives than their White male counterparts. This leads to greater polarization in the work groups.
- 6. **Ineffective inclusion:** even if diverse teams are hired, they might not feel supported, leading to high turnover of employees who feel marginalized.

**How to cultivate Diversity skills**

Building an inclusive workplace doesn't happen by accident – it takes daily, deliberate effort. Here are key strategies that help turn good intentions into lasting impact:

- **Self-education & bias awareness:** actively learn about different cultures, traditions, and perspectives to broaden your understanding. Recognize that diversity encompasses age, ethnicity, gender, and physical abilities. Take training on unconscious bias to understand hidden prejudices.
- **Practice active listening and empathy:** make an effort to understand others' experiences without judgment. Focus on listening to understand, not just to respond.
- **Implement "The Platinum Rule":** shift from treating others how *you* want to be treated to treating them how they want to be treated, which requires sensitivity to cultural nuances and individual boundaries.
- **Engage in inclusive communication:** ensure all voices are heard by encouraging participation in meetings and avoiding interruptions. Use communication platforms to ensure remote or diverse team members feel connected.

- **Cultivate cultural intelligence:** celebrate diversity by learning about different cultural holidays and traditions.
- **Build relationships across differences:** participate in mentorship programs that pair people from different backgrounds or experience levels. Engage in collaborative work with diverse colleagues.

**Strategies for developing Diversity skills at workplace**

1. **Set clear, objective criteria:** by using consistent, skills-based criteria to guide decisions whether hiring, promoting, or assigning work. Make sure teams aligned on what matters, write it down, and check in regularly to keep things fair for everyone.
2. **Ongoing training:** implementing regular training to educate employees on cultural differences and conscious inclusion. Mentorship programs: pairing staff with diverse mentors to aid in professional integration and retention.
3. **Recognize and reward inclusively:** when appreciation flows from leaders, peers, and everywhere in between, people feel seen and more likely to stick around.
4. **Measure what matters:** success isn't a vibe- it's measurable. Use tools like engagement surveys and voice-of-the-employee platforms to uncover blind spots, track sentiment, and gather feedback in real time. Then act on it.
5. **Empower employee resource groups (ERGs):** to help employees connect, share perspectives, and shape culture from the ground up. When supported properly, they're not just affinity groups- they're engines of innovation and belonging.
6. **Make psychological safety non-negotiable:** people should feel safe speaking up-whether it's flagging a concern or sharing a new idea. Normalize feedback, embrace vulnerability, and build trust at every level. Without psychological safety, inclusion stays surface-level.
7. **Gather (and act on) feedback:** using targeted surveys to learn what's working, what's not, and where to go next. And yes, action is part of the ask.
8. **Document and share best practices:** Clear policies set the tone, such as code of conduct up to date, accessible, and reflective of company's values. Regularly reinforce non-discrimination policies through training- and make sure they're more than just fine print.

**Conclusion**

The positive impact of human diversity in the workforce is undeniable and offers clear benefits. Some clear advantages of having a diverse workforce are a bigger talent pool, increased employee trust and engagement, new perspectives, innovation, better decision-making, improved performance and stronger business profiles and profits. Institutions that are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion have formed committees and taskforces to implement effective change at their workplace. Human diversity is not just the right thing to do, it is the essential thing to do. Human diversity encompassing race, ethnicity, gender perspective is critical for driving innovation, improving decision making and fostering organisational resilience.

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