

6 Ways to Accelerate Your Diversity & Inclusion Efforts

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Expert Forum



I consistently see organizations with unnecessary barriers slowing their D&I efforts down or blocking them altogether. Want to move forward? Here are six opportunities to consider. I will unpack each of these further in following posts:

Clarify your foundational language and logic. This is the dead horse that I will apparently continue beating for the rest of my days. You lack a common language, and it makes everything more difficult. Everyone using the words “diversity” and “inclusion” in your organization means something different. What specifically does “diversity” mean in your organization? What does it mean, and what does it not mean? What specifically does “inclusion” mean? Who is being included in what? Why and how? If your leaders and employees cannot answer these questions with some consistency, you do not have a common language and you will forever be fighting battles that need not be fought.

Clarify and reinforce commonalities. Not only is difference a powerful dynamic, so is commonality. The stronger and clearer our common context is, the easier and safer it is to share, appreciate, and benefit from our differences. What is the common cause, the rallying cry for your organization?

Get it out of HR. This one may be limited by the size and scope of an organization – most organizations do not have a dedicated D&I resource, and many smaller organizations do not have much for dedicated HR resources. But, if it is at all possible, get D&I away from HR and even further away from anything remotely involving compliance. HR may have the best of intentions, but it simply does not have the political, financial, or social capital to spare. If HR was going to blow this work up, it would have happened by now.

Hire and promote accordingly. If D&I are truly core values, or guiding principles, or strategic imperatives ... then act accordingly and take them into consideration in hiring and promotion decisions. It seems to me that most organizations saying beautiful things about diversity and inclusion are still better at hiring and promoting people not willing or able to align with those values than they are at hiring and promoting diverse and inclusive people. Do you talk about diversity and inclusion in job descriptions? In hiring interviews? In promotion decisions?

Lead accordingly. See above. If diversity and inclusion are truly important to you, yet you have senior leaders who are not willing or able to talk about these issues publicly and privately – well, you have the wrong leaders. Inclusion is a product of leadership, if you lack inclusion, you lack leadership.

Engage white men. Your language, your senior leaders, and your white men are three of your biggest levers for changing your culture relative to diversity and inclusion, and all three are commonly missing from the effort. Get white men engaged, ground them in solid language and logic, help them find their own D&I story, recruit their support, connect them to diverse peers. This is where the change happens.

I look forward to diving into these topics further with you in the coming weeks.

Be good to each other.