

Inclusion. Narrow the Focus, Apply More Pressure

By Joe Gerstandt



Expert Forum



I am hopeful.

I feel like there is a new momentum gathering behind this work.

Maybe it is time to get started?

With the actual work of inclusion, that is.

I know, I know...

Far too many organizations bite off more than they can chew in trying to make their culture more inclusive. They make some proclamations, bring in some training, and then... hmmm, what do we do now? Is anything changing? What was the objective again?

Culture change requires a lot of resources, a lot of patience, persistence, and support — all of which are frequently missing when it comes to diversity and inclusion, especially in the beginning. There are organizations that can tackle the big, broad effort of culture change, but I think most would be better off focusing on smaller targets.

Get clarity on what diversity and inclusion mean for your organization (critical), get clarity on why they are valuable to your organization (critical), get clarity on how your organization is going to capture that value (critical), and then pick one or two small specific targets. Pick some generic aspects of the work experience, things that nearly all employees are involved in to some extent. Bring all your energy and resources to bear on making that one thing more inclusive.

How about the beginning of the day and the end of the day? All employees experience those aspects of work. What would it take to make them more inclusive? The first few minutes and the last few minutes of the day play an outsized role in how employees see their day, so being intentional here would probably be fairly easy and yield a decent impact.

How about decision making? How about onboarding? How about strategic planning? How about conflict? There may be no more powerful lever for influencing your culture than changing your relationship with conflict. How about meetings? Making meetings more inclusive is a much easier thing to wrap your head and hands around than making your entire culture more inclusive, and, if you do make meetings more inclusive, that's going to push the culture in that direction as well. And, extra bonus — your meetings will become more valuable!

Maybe don't rush off to fight the entire war all at once. Pick battles that you can win, enjoy your victories, create more allies, and continue to move forward.

Be good to each other.