

The Future of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion



While there is a strong trend for diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace, studies show that progress is slow, and many companies are struggling with these concepts.

According to the HR Research Institute's report, *The Future of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* released earlier this year, most organizations lack mature and effective diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs.

Measuring DEI Initiatives

The report shows that only 30 percent of companies rate their DEI programs as highly effective.

“From a global perspective it is very challenging to measure

DE&I,” says Gloria Puentes, DE&I practitioner for Sodexo, a large global company with offices in 67 countries and 400,000 employees. “Not everyone collects the same data, so it’s easiest by looking at regions. Companies need to look country to country, but with a global lens.”

For example, the UK, Brazil, and the US have similar challenges with regard to people of color. In the UK companies are experiencing a pushback against the use of the acronym BAME – Black, Asian, and minority ethnic – because it groups numerous ethnicities together, stripping them of their individual identities. In the US, the LatinX community has a range of ethnicities – some who identify as white, others as black. Many LatinX who are brown don’t identify as either black or white.

“It is complex, but it is important and necessary that corporate America does a better job of making sure that their workforce is reflective of the people they serve,” says Puentes. “You can’t just rely on workforce demographics. It must go beyond recruitment. Look at retention numbers and how to provide people with a successful career.”

Puentes believes that the focus is too much on recruitment and not enough emphasis is placed on professional development and promotion. “After 20 years of diversity recruitment the needles have not moved much,” says Puentes. “And that impacts retention. If your DEI programs are cosmetic, you’re just decorating a house that needs foundational repair.”

DEI Recommendations

Address micro- aggressions.

These are the daily verbal, behavioral or environmental slights, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups. “Everyone has

biases, but we can choose to be aware of our biases and not allow them to interfere with our decisions,” says Puentes. “That is often very hard for people as we tend to make decisions based on life experiences.”

Align DEI efforts and result to the company growth plan.

A report by McKinsey reinforces the link between diversity and company financial performance—and suggests how organizations can craft better inclusion strategies for a competitive edge. For too long it’s been seen as more of a *good thing to do* or a *right thing to do*, rather than as something that must be done for the success and benefit of the company. Once you gauge your DEI efforts against why and how it will benefit the company financially, things start to change.

“For example, calculate the cost of a job fair against how many interviews you got from that fair and how many qualified diverse hires it produced,” says Puentes. “If you continually fish in the same pond, you get the same kind of people applying for jobs. You need to broaden your scope, so you can reach a more diverse group, who also have the skills you need.”

Training and development

Break the cycle of your diversity hires getting stuck in entry level positions. Look for people who show promise and have ambition. Work with them. Offer development and coaching, so that they can move into management positions.

Place emphasis on equity

Without access to fair opportunity, no matter your ethnicity or social background, a diversity program can flounder. Examine your company culture and establish whether you do offer a level playing field for all employees. If not, then that’s the place to start. It is vital to make sure all employees have what is necessary and needed to be successful.

“Sodexo recently added equity to the brand, and we feel it is making a real difference,” says Puentes. “We’re making sure that all employees have what is necessary and needed to be successful.”

Fulfilling the Promise of DEI

<https://www.whitecase.com/publications/story/equity-work-fulfilling-its-promise-through-process>

Delivering through Diversity

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity>