



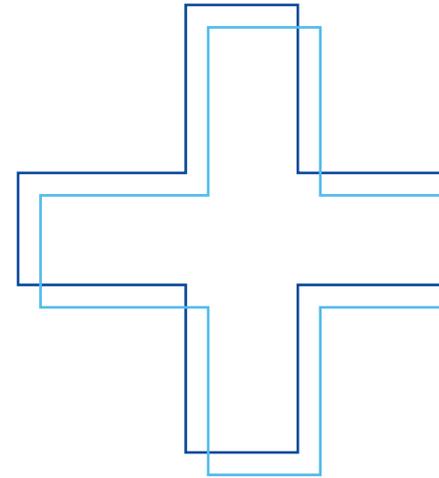
DIVERSITY + INCLUSION

What It Is, Why It Matters,
and How to Make It a Priority

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



It pays to place diversity and inclusion at the heart of your organization's culture.

A McKinsey report¹ found that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity were 35% more likely to generate above-average returns. Those in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely to have above-average returns.

But not everyone has caught on. Most organizations don't fully understand the dynamics at play or how to address them, let alone make them better.

No matter the current state of diversity and inclusion in your organization, this ebook will help you better understand where you are, why you should seek improvement, and how to find the right path forward.

You'll find a concise but thorough discussion around diversity and inclusion. And you'll walk away with a better understanding of these issues, including:

- 1. What is diversity and inclusion:** Precise definitions of terms, important distinctions, and recognizable examples of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- 2. Why diversity and inclusion matters:** An examination of the advantages of embracing (and the disadvantages of neglecting) diverse and inclusive behaviors.
- 3. How to make diversity and inclusion a priority:** Key steps and recommendations from nationally recognized experts on how to address, implement, or improve your organization's approach to this vital element of workplace culture.

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

We conducted an online panel survey with more than 1,000 employees from organizations in our Best Places to Work network.

We set out to explore employee perceptions of diversity and inclusion at work, and how these perceptions impact employee engagement.

The survey results led to some interesting insights, but we knew we couldn't tell this story alone. We interviewed diversity and inclusion experts from across the country to bring you the latest and greatest advice on this complex and important topic.

MEET THE EXPERTS



JOE GERSTANDT

Author & Inclusion Strategist,
joegerstandt.com

Joe is a speaker, author, and advisor who brings greater clarity, action, and impact to organizational diversity and inclusion efforts. He works with Fortune 100 corporations, small non-profits, and everything in between.

Joe presents at numerous conferences and is a featured contributor in many print and online journals. He is co-author of the book "Social Gravity: Harnessing the Natural Laws of Relationships" with Jason Lauritsen.



CHRIS GEORGAS

Chief Operations Officer,
The Kaleidoscope Group

Chris has served in multiple roles with The Kaleidoscope Group since 1994. She has more than 20 years of experience in client service, relationship management, strategic operations, and execution.

Chris currently oversees daily activities associated with clients, vendors, and employees. Her history and ability to align the company's needs and vision support efforts to achieve organizational goals and objectives.

MEET THE EXPERTS



MARIE UNGER

President, Emergenetics International & Student/Teacher Emergenetics Program (STEP)

Marie provides strategic direction and leads the day-to-day operations for Emergenetics and STEP. She has more than 20 years of experience in management and education. Since joining Emergenetics in 2013, she has conducted numerous seminars with thousands of business leaders and educators around the world.

Before joining Emergenetics, Marie was a teacher, school principal, human resources director and director of elementary education for the third-largest school district in the state of Colorado.



LISA D'ANNOLFO LEVEY

Founder and Principal, GenderWorks

Lisa has consulted to a marquee list of clients on women's advancement, diversity, and work-life issues for more than 20 years. Her passion is bringing innovative thinking to social norms around gender, resulting in stronger organizations, more resilient families, and a better world.

Lisa has worked with nearly 25% of the Fortune 50, and is the author of the award-winning book, "The Libra Solution." She has blogged for Huffington Post, the Good Men Project, and Glass Hammer.

What It Is:

DEFINING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Terms like “diversity” and “inclusion” are hard to pin down. They are complicated, messy, and difficult to simplify. But they are critical in the workplace.

Ask 10 well-informed CEOs to define diversity and inclusion, and you’ll likely hear 10 different answers. Or 11. Okay, maybe 12.

The point is, terms like diversity and inclusion are hard to pin down. The topics are complicated, messy, and difficult to simplify. But they are critical concepts for workplaces to get right in order to have engaged and productive employees.

A definite first step is to understand that, although they are closely related, diversity and inclusion are separate, individual concepts.

“It all starts with logic, which is based on concise definitions. When you say ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ what precisely and exactly do you mean? Most organizations can’t answer that. They don’t have clear, concise definitions. They have rambling, beautiful statements of commitment that sound delightful but don’t actually mean anything. This is why a lot of these initiatives kind of collapsed on themselves a couple of years down the road. There’s no foundational language and logic.”

Joe Gerstandt

Author & Inclusion
Strategist



DEFINING DIVERSITY

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) defines diversity as *“the collective mixture of differences and similarities that include, for example, individual and organizational characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, and behaviors.”ⁱⁱ*

Digging deeper, SHRM divides diversity characteristics into two categories:

- **Visible diversity traits** like race, gender, physical abilities, age, and body type
- **Invisible diversity traits** like sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, education, parental status, and more

The critical point about diversity is this: it goes well beyond simple demographics. It encompasses the understanding that all people have a unique identity that influences how they work most productively.

DEFINING INCLUSION

SHRM defines inclusion as *“the achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization’s success.”ⁱⁱⁱ*

Inclusion provides a platform to support and respect employees, which can then be expanded to understand and value differences through diversity initiatives. Unfortunately, inclusion in the workplace is often overlooked or wedged in as an afterthought.

But an inclusive culture creates a strong foundation for diversity to build on. Inclusion goes beyond supporting and respecting employees—it’s about creating a space where employees feel valued, safe, accepted, and heard. Employees should:

- Feel safe to voice their opinions
- Feel valued as an individual
- Feel empowered to grow and develop

*“The energy you put into **not** being yourself takes energy away from your work. Whereas when employees work in a culture they trust as inclusive, that gives you the freedom to be your best self at work.”*

Aaron Brown, Senior Insights Analyst, Quantum Workplace

Why It Matters:

IMPACT ON BUSINESS & EMPLOYEES

More organizations are taking a hard look at diversity and inclusion in their workplace.

First, they want to strengthen and position diversity and inclusion practices to their competitive advantage. Second, in a significant shift, they want to reposition the diversity and inclusion discussion, moving it from the margins to one of the central tenets of their workplace culture.

“There’s a societal conversation happening. People are feeling that the current ways of doing business just aren’t going to cut it. The elevated temperature of the rhetoric happening on all sides is causing people to stop and say, ‘Okay, we need to really look at this, or maybe differently than we ever did.’”

Chris Georgas

Chief Operating
Officer, The
Kaleidoscope Group



HOW DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IMPACTS BUSINESS OUTCOMES

Over the years, researchers have consistently found that diversity and inclusion has benefits, including:^{iv}

- Easier recruitment and retention
- Better employee performance
- Greater innovation and creativity
- Improved customer service
- Increased profits

When organizations are comprised of diverse individuals and perspectives, and when employees feel included and safe to be themselves, businesses enjoy better outcomes.

Leveraging the Competitive Advantages

Employees are drawn to, work harder in, and simply care more about organizations that show they care about their people. Here are a few ways diversity and inclusion can give businesses an edge:

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: When employees are engaged, they're excited about—and actively involved in—their workplaces. A meaningful diversity and inclusion program can instill enthusiasm throughout the company. This energy also improves employee well-being and enhances their perception of the company.

Our [2019 Employee Engagement Trends Report](#) identifies four key drivers of engagement that directly connect to diversity and inclusion.

1. My job allows me to utilize my strengths.
2. The leaders of the organization value people as their most important resource.
3. If I contribute to the organization's success, I know I will be recognized.
4. My opinions seem to count at work.

COMPANY CONFIDENCE: Having a culture that embraces diversity and inclusion plays a considerable role in an organization's overarching confidence. When employees can be themselves, they are more likely to produce their best work. Innovation and creativity can happen freely, which improves quality of work and leads to increased performance.

"Research shows that 67% of today's job seekers say a diverse workforce is imperative when considering offers of employment. And we know that as younger generations come on board and become the drivers of our workforce, diversity of all kinds will become increasingly important."

Marie Unger

President,
Emergenetics
International



TALENT ACQUISITION: Diversity and inclusion programs strengthen an organization's workforce from within, fostering an attractive environment for prospective employees. Top talent seeks out companies with comfortable, supportive, and inspiring environments where people of different ethnicities, genders, ages, and ways of thinking can flourish.

"Diversity and inclusion programs," writes Bradley H. Feldmann in The Huffington Post, ***"create work environments where employees can share their ideas, take considered risks without fear, and ultimately, be who they are."***^{vi}

WHAT EMPLOYEES THINK ABOUT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

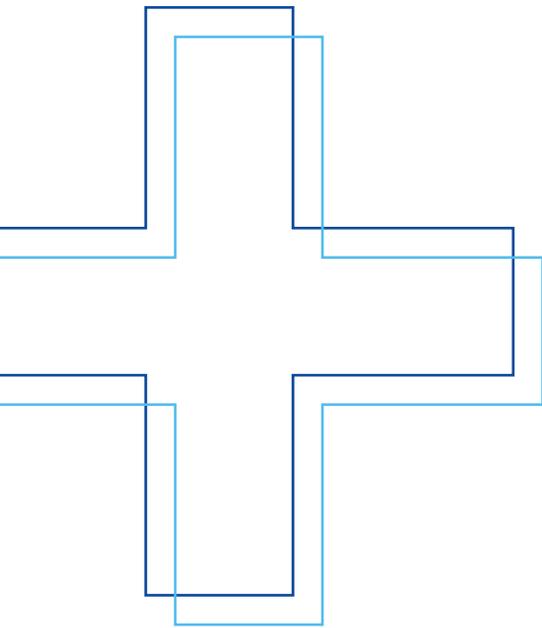
There's a lot of research about the benefits of diversity and inclusion, much of it focused on the organization. But we wanted to approach the conversation from a different angle—we wanted to know what the people inside those organizations think.

We set out to ask employees about their needs and preferences. What do they want? What do they see? How do those things impact their engagement?

Here's what we found in our research:

- **61%** of employees believe diversity and inclusion strategies are beneficial and essential.
- **75%** of employees say diversity and inclusion are equally important.
- Employees who believe no change in diversity is needed in their organization tend to be more engaged than employees who believe more diversity is needed.
- Employees who believe their organization's inclusion strategy is strong tend to be more engaged than employees who believe their organization's inclusion strategy is weak.

Employee perceptions play an important role in an organization's culture, and they have a dramatic effect on employee engagement.



Why It Matters:

EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY

UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY

Organizations clearly recognize diversity matters, but are they doing enough? One study shows that 96-98% of large companies have plans to invest in diversity initiatives.^{vii} Despite that investment, **75% of employees in underrepresented groups don't feel they've personally benefited from their companies' diversity programs.** The same study shows:

- Members of majority groups continue to underestimate the obstacles that underrepresented employees face.
- Half of all underrepresented employees stated that they see bias as part of their day-to-day work experience.
- Half also said that they don't believe their companies have the right mechanisms in place to ensure that major decisions are free from bias.
- White, heterosexual males were 13 percentage points more likely to say their day-to-day experience, and major decisions, are free of bias.

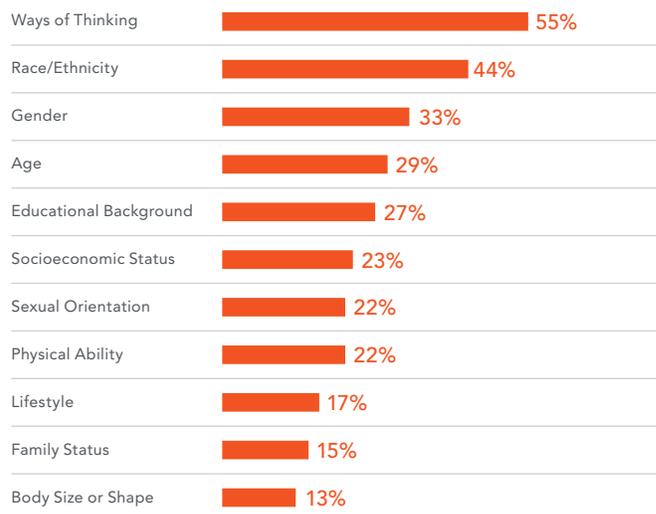
Our research found that employees across the board believe more diversity is needed.

75% of employees believe that more diversity is needed in at least one of the following areas:

- Ways of thinking
- Race/ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Educational background
- Socioeconomic status
- Sexual orientation
- Physical ability
- Lifestyle
- Family status
- Body size or shape

Here is the breakdown of the percentage of employees who believe more diversity is needed per topic:

Percentage of employees who believe more diversity is needed per topic in their organization

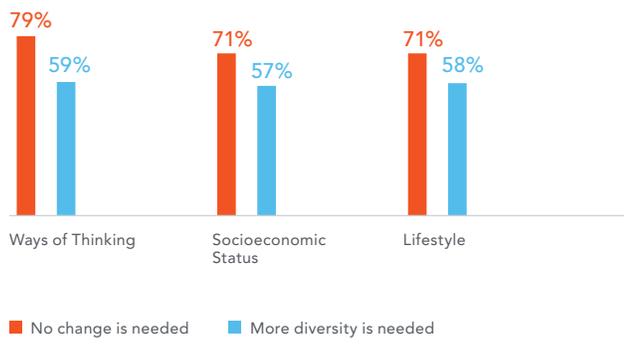


THE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

We know that employees aren't satisfied with diversity in their organizations, but how does that impact their engagement? Our research shows there's a connection.

We compared engagement levels between employees who indicated that no change was needed in diversity vs. those who indicated that more diversity is needed for each topic.

Largest engagement differences between employees who indicated no change is needed vs. more diversity is needed



Employees who believe no change is needed in diversity tend to be more engaged than employees who believe more diversity is needed.

We hypothesize that less engaged employees might feel underrepresented within their organizations, or that not enough is being done to increase diversity in certain areas. That underrepresentation or inaction could be demotivating and disengaging.

UNDERSTANDING COGNITIVE DIVERSITY

Diversity discussions tend to be dominated by visible traits like race, gender, or age. But **our research shows that employees think the most work to be done is actually around cognitive diversity.**

Cognitive diversity is defined as diversity in opinions, world views, beliefs, values, and styles of problem-solving. Whereas demographic diversity focuses on achieving a mixture of statistical characteristics such as gender or age, cognitive diversity focuses on delivering a mix of how people carry out intellectual activities, such as making associations or drawing conclusions.^{viii}

Demographically diverse workplaces can become cognitively uniform for several reasons. Maybe someone in the C-suite prefers candidates who have graduated from a particular school. Or perhaps a mid-level manager thinks she needs to fill an open position with someone who has the same experience as the employee who left. Whatever the case, a lack of cognitive diversity can be extremely limiting to an organization's capabilities and successes.

The Benefits of Cognitive Diversity

Diversity of thought is often considered necessary for a thriving workplace culture. People who bring different perspectives might see threats and opportunities that others may miss. This chemistry of human interaction is now seen as a critical component of innovation.

One study found that cognitive diversity can enhance team innovation up to 20%, and can reduce risks taken by up to 30%.^{ix} Another study found that teams solve problems faster when they're more cognitively diverse.^x Yet another study suggests that organizations with inclusive cultures are:

- 2x as likely to meet or exceed financial targets
- 3x as likely to be high performing
- 6x as likely to be innovative and agile
- 8x more likely to achieve better business outcomes^{xi}

“Cognitive diversity leads to faster problem solving and to better, more innovative solutions. It also helps with overall communication. When you have a team that has diversity of thought, you have this collective of people who outperform teams that don't have a spectrum of perspectives. And businesses are starting to recognize how diversity is a driver for critical business success.”

Marie Unger

President,
Emergenetics
International



Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, a business psychologist who teaches at University College London and Columbia University, identified four key points to consider about cognitive diversity.^{xii}

- 1. Cognitive diversity drives better decision-making.** Studies show that boards of directors with heterogeneous personalities, values, and thinking styles apply their diversity more during strategic leadership discussions, which results in more creative and innovative decision-making.
- 2. Cognitive diversity is a critical consideration in the hiring process.** This is a particularly important factor when companies select candidates in technical roles, such as software engineers. In addition to technical expertise, hiring managers should look for candidates with varied interpersonal skills, which are vital to managing, leading, and working with others.^{xiii}
- 3. Managers must be given time to develop their own cognitive diversity.** People only fulfill their career potential if they have room to grow. Managers should focus on their weaknesses in addition to their strengths. Developing a more varied and less predictable behavioral repertoire will help managers work better with others, which promotes team and organizational diversity.
- 4. Demographics have no impact on cognitive diversity.** Any predictor of job performance and career success is grounded in the fact that psychological factors far outweigh demographic factors, and individual differences are much more prominent than group differences.

8 Tips for Increasing Cognitive Diversity in Your Organization

To increase cognitive diversity in your organization, consider the following possibilities:

- 1. Invest in the process.** Take time to understand your goals and commit to the process involved to reach those goals. What does cognitive diversity look like in your organization? What steps will you have to take to get there? How will you adjust if the process isn't working?
- 2. Create a psychologically safe workplace.** Invite others to recognize, contribute to, and promote a culture that accepts and uses different perspectives. Help employees develop behaviors and habits that are welcoming of others' viewpoints and feelings.
- 3. Provide learning experiences.** Give people opportunities to gain the skills to navigate different perspectives. This could come in the form of team or personal development exercises that allow them to reflect on and test their beliefs, qualities, and behaviors reflective of a culture of inclusion.
- 4. Expand recruitment efforts.** Visit local colleges or universities, seek out specializations that aren't strongly represented in your current workforce, and recruit individuals with different sources of training (e.g., distinct work backgrounds, degrees, certifications).
- 5. Include multi-disciplinary task forces when creating new strategies or initiatives.** If a task force needs six employees, then ensure six different departments or divisions are represented. This won't be appropriate for all situations, but it should be considered as an alternative to the tried-and-true HR team always tackling organizational obstacles.
- 6. Get input from every level of the organization.** It's essential to gather opinions and insights from as many employees as you can, whether it's through surveys, town halls, or online forums. Leaders typically have the final say in strategic direction, but their decisions should be informed by the many perspectives of their employees.
- 7. Coach managers on the importance of employee voice.** Cognitive diversity will have little impact if employees don't feel like they can voice their opinions. Managers arguably play the most significant role in helping employees feel safe being open with their unique perspectives.
- 8. Tap into employees' cognitive profiles.** Psychometric tests and assessments can offer a glimpse into how employees think and how they are most likely to respond to certain situations. But don't let these tests replace the process of getting to know your employees. Instead, the results of these assessments can enhance your efforts to understand the diversity of teams across the organization.

“Innovation requires the ability to question norms, synthesize different views, and collaborate to develop unique and powerful solutions. Cognitive diversity is the DNA of innovation.”^{xiv}

U.S. Navy Office of Strategy and Innovation

Why It Matters:

EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION

UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION

Our research found that 61% of employees believe diversity and inclusion strategies are beneficial and essential in the workplace. 75% said diversity and inclusion are equally important topics. This suggests that the majority of employees believe diversity and inclusion are not only important in general, but that organizations should be prioritizing both.

When asked whether diversity or inclusion should be developed first, 58% said diversity and inclusion should be developed at the same time. However, a sizable minority (30%) believe an inclusive culture should be developed before diversity can thrive.

Although diversity and inclusion initiatives can certainly be developed at the same time, inclusivity is more important to strengthen first.

If employees don't believe their organization has a safe, supportive, respectful, and open culture, then efforts toward increased diversity will likely be slow, inefficient, or perhaps even backfire.

"Diversity is what you have as a goal. Inclusion is the way you operate and behave. There are a lot of organizations where diversity isn't very prevalent. There's not a lot of what you would call overt diversity, but there's probably still a lot of difference of style and things that you can't see at play. With that being said, it doesn't mean that (without an overtly diverse workforce) you're in the clear. It just means you've got work to do."

Chris Georgas

Chief Operating Officer, The Kaleidoscope Group

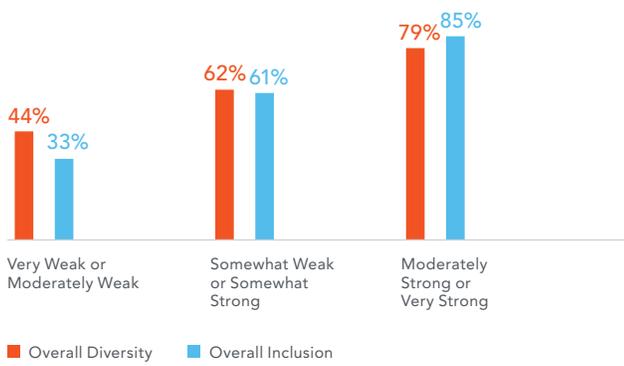


How Perceptions of Inclusion Impact Employee Engagement

Our research found that engagement is more strongly related to inclusion than diversity.

Engagement is exceptionally low for employees who believe their organization’s overall inclusion is moderately weak or very weak, whereas engagement is exceptionally high for those who think inclusion is moderately strong or very strong.

Engagement by perceptions of overall diversity and inclusion across organizations



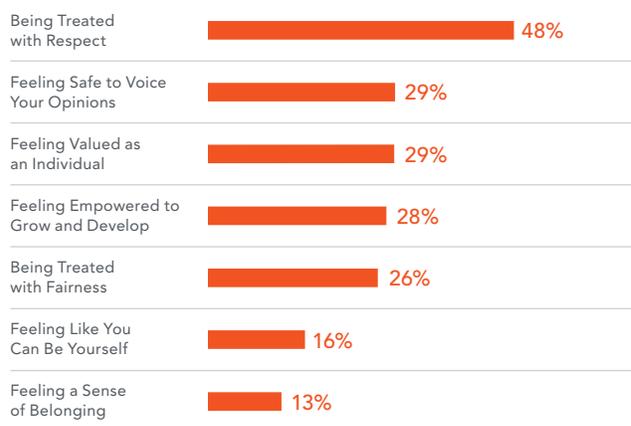
Defining What’s Most Important for a Culture of Inclusion

We asked employees to choose up to two options they think are most important for a culture of inclusion (based on Deloitte’s inclusion model^{xv}).

The results show **employees believe that respect is far and away the most essential factor for a culture of inclusion**. The other elements are undoubtedly crucial in their own ways, but the vast difference indicates that respect is top of mind for employees when they think about inclusion in the workplace.

In other research, the respectful treatment of employees was found to be the most critical factor contributing to employee job satisfaction.^{xvi} Yet more than half of employees (54%) claim they don’t regularly get respect from their leaders.^{xvii}

Percentage of employees who believe which factors are most important for a culture of inclusion



EMBRACING THE POWER OF RESPECT

Respect is another one of those ill-defined, subjective terms that has different meanings in different organizations.

Lisa D'Annolfo Levey, Founder and Principal at GenderWorks, suggests four behaviors go a long way in establishing a sense of respect.

- 1. Listen.** Hear people out, rather than cutting them off or talking over them. Don't check your phone while others are speaking. And build off of others' contributions to a conversation—don't just wait for your turn to talk.
- 2. Show curiosity.** It's crucial to show coworkers that you see them as people, not instruments to get work done. This is best achieved in the small ways we get to know others, such as stopping to ask them how their weekend was, or by sharing stories about family and friends.
- 3. Respect people's time.** Be on time to meetings, be present—physically and intellectually—for the full duration of your interaction. Be sure not to label every request or assignment as urgent when there's no need.
- 4. Praise employee contributions.** All too often, the only feedback employees receive is negative or punitive: "You didn't do this right," or "That deliverable was late," or "If this happens again, there will be consequences." Demand quality work, but also take note of the positive impact people make to the team or project—and celebrate those achievements.

"Though flexible in definition, respect is expressed in some very common-sense ways. But common sense doesn't always drive behavior in the workplace."

Lisa D'Annolfo Levey

Founder & Principal,
GenderWorks



HOW TO MAKE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION A PRIORITY

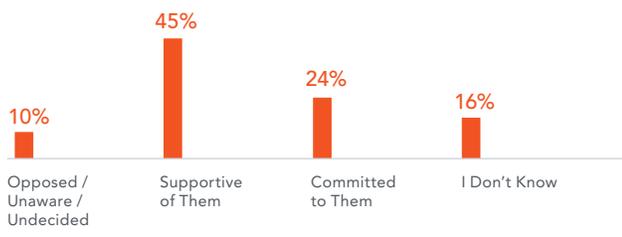
IT STARTS WITH LEADERS & MANAGERS

It's not enough for organizations to just have diversity and inclusion policies in the workplace. Any organization-wide strategy or initiative needs to be embraced by all employees—especially managers.

Managers help guide and lead the teams and individuals that make up organizations. If managers aren't on board with an idea, teams may suffer.

In response to our survey, employees were asked to finish the following sentence: "When it comes to diversity and inclusion strategies, my immediate manager is..." The multiple-choice options were based on Deloitte's six personas of strategic change^{xviii} (as applied to diversity and inclusion).

When it comes to diversity and inclusion strategies, my immediate manager is...



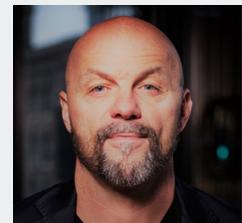
45% of employees believe their immediate managers are supportive of diversity and inclusion strategies in their organizations. An additional 24% believe their managers are committed, which is even better.

However, what's not as good is that **26% of employees either think their managers are opposed, unaware, or undecided about diversity and inclusion, or simply don't know how their managers feel.** These statistics have huge implications on employee engagement.

"Delivering a more inclusive employee experience is first and foremost a product of a certain kind of leadership or management. Organizations must clearly define the employee experience they want employees to have. And then you've got to build that into your management expectations. Some specific behaviors and practices need to be written into job descriptions."

Joe Gerstandt

Author & Inclusion Strategist



How Manager Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion Impacts Engagement

When employees don't feel their managers are committed to diversity and inclusion, their engagement suffers. The graph below breaks out perceptions of managerial support by engagement.

Engagement by perceived level of managerial support



Employees who believe their immediate managers are opposed to, unaware of, or undecided about diversity and inclusion strategies are less engaged than employees who believe their managers are supportive or committed to those strategies. These results underscore the importance of managers in shaping employees' perceptions and feelings.

Another impressive result in the above graph is that employees are less engaged when they don't know how their managers feel about diversity and inclusion. Being in the dark can potentially hurt engagement.

Managers who are supportive of, or committed to, diversity and inclusion should communicate that to their teams at an appropriate time.

If managers are opposed to, unaware of, or undecided about diversity and inclusion, deeper concerns may need to be addressed before managers share those thoughts with their teams.

Getting Leaders and Managers on Board with Diversity and Inclusion

Setting appropriate diversity goals is a big step toward healthier cultures of inclusion and diversity. However, getting leadership buy-in and commitment is arguably the most critical aspect of this journey.

Educate leaders about the impacts their decisions have on diverse employees across the organization, as well as the challenges those employees face. Use real-life feedback and opinions gathered in focus groups and surveys from employees across the organization to fuel these conversations.

Also, teach leaders about social issues by relying on curated content compiled by experts in the field.^{xix} It's not enough just to be aware of the struggles their specific employees face. It's also important to be knowledgeable about social issues from a wide range of sources and perspectives. This is especially true for leaders of smaller or less-diverse organizations, where a variety of insights may not be readily available.

You can't overstate how important early leadership buy-in is to organizational initiatives like creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace. But once you have it, you can move on to the difficult yet rewarding work ahead.

MAKING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION A PRIORITY

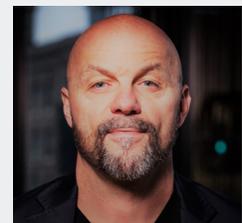
For some organizations, mounting a diversity and inclusion initiative seems like an impossibly big and multi-faceted endeavor. After all, you're initiating nothing less than a massive cultural change in your workplace, right? It helps to look at it this way: the risk is well worth the reward.

So where do you begin? The following pages include 13 practical tips and best practices from our diversity and inclusion experts.

"Focus on small, tangible projects. Things that you can do, instead of trying to change the entire organization. Focus on small, incremental changes. And I try to help folks realize that even if their role or their responsibility is focused on diversity and inclusion, they're the subject matter experts. It's not their responsibility to make everything happen, especially the inclusion piece. Most of that work, correctly done, should be carried by the leaders of the organization."

Joe Gerstandt

Author & Inclusion Strategist



1. Invest time in training.

Diversity and inclusion training helps employees understand how cultural differences can impact how people work and interact in the workplace. It can cover anything from concepts of time and communication styles to self-identity and dealing with conflict. Diversity training offered as optional tends to be more effective than that which is made mandatory.^{xxi}

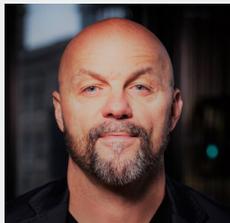
2. Define and clarify terms.

Diversity and inclusion can have different meanings to different people. What does “diversity” actually mean in your organization? What does it not mean? What does “inclusion” mean? Who is included in what? Why are they included, and how? Establishing standard definitions is essential for common understanding.

“It all starts with logic, which is based on concise definitions. That language is so important because we shouldn’t have to fight those battles. Once you get crystal clear on what it means to be fully included in your organization, you can work backwards from there.”

Joe Gerstandt

Author & Inclusion Strategist



3. Set clear goals and objectives.

Unclear goals (e.g., increase applicant diversity) create confusion. Moreover, broad and ambiguous goals are either not demonstrable and measurable or are nearly impossible to meet, which can lower morale or create resentment.^{xxii} Research your competitors—especially those recognized for their diversity and inclusion efforts. Doing so will help you understand where your organization stands, allowing you to set realistic goals.

4. Build accountability into the process.

Organizations that are truly committed to diversity and inclusion have metrics in place to recognize and reward inclusive leaders. They also ensure executives in positions of influence—like business unit or regional leadership roles—are trained to lead in an inclusive manner.^{xxiii} Diversity and inclusion goals should be written into job descriptions and considered equally with other KPIs.

“Education without implementation is just entertainment. You have to give employees opportunities to implement diversity and inclusion, and you have to hold them accountable. That lines up your systems, policies, and practices. You see how it all comes together.”

Chris Georgas

Chief Operating Officer, The Kaleidoscope Group



5. Create a psychologically safe environment

People need to understand that they are welcome to contribute to, and help you promote, the cultural shift you want to instill. This often requires intentional education and learning opportunities for people to gain the skills to navigate differences. Whether that's through learning and development activities or personal development and understanding, they need to know that they have room to make mistakes and learn from them without the fear of repercussion.

6. Model from top to bottom

Board chairs and CEOs who model inclusive behaviors create an environment in which others can safely voice different opinions, which communicates the importance of diversity and inclusion to the organization.^{xxiv} They make diversity and inclusion an organization-level rather than HR-level priority, and they emphasize diversity and inclusion as part of a business strategy.

"From the leadership level and within the organization, you have to be willing and ready to model an appreciation of diversity and inclusion through a positive lens."

Marie Unger

President,
Emergenetics
International



7. Tailor your strategies

What works for one organization won't necessarily work for another. Consider a SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats specific to your organization. Then build out your strategies to address those findings.

"Diversity and inclusion only works when you can really take into consideration the organization that you have, the business that you are, the culture that you have today, and the culture you want. So really think through those nuances and those important factors. It is really the only way you can be successful."

Chris Georgas

Chief Operating
Officer, The
Kaleidoscope Group



8. Hire and promote accordingly

Work to remove subconscious biases from the hiring process. Job postings should be worded with care and tested to ensure they don't appeal to only one group of people. For example, attributes such as "competitive" or "dominant" are viewed as positive traits for men, but negative for women. Make sure your posting is well balanced and appeals to all genders equally. Consider removing personal identifiers (e.g., names, photos, or age) from resumes, and assemble diverse teams of employees to interview candidates.

9. Emphasize commonalities

Commonalities can be as powerful as differences. When people create connections and find common ground, they often find it easier to share, appreciate, and benefit from their differences. What is your organization's common cause? What do you collectively value? Communicate these clearly. These things can help your employees work together despite their differences.

10. Avoid groupthink

It's a natural tendency for people to conform to groups. But when ideas aren't challenged, and are simply embraced with no questions asked, it can lead to poor decision making. Leaders should encourage healthy debate and intentionally assemble employees with different personalities and perspectives. This helps eliminate bias and leads to better vetted decisions.

"If everyone's thinking and behaving with the same tendencies, you're not representing the perspectives of our global population. Taking the time to understand the varying viewpoints of your constituents including clients, employees, and other stakeholders will help you uncover how best to maximize your efforts."

Marie Unger

President,
Emergenetics
International



11. Be aware of unconscious bias

Educate leadership and employees about types of unconscious bias, how bias affect individuals, and what actions continue to reinforce biases. Build awareness and address unconscious bias by encouraging every employee to review, question, and analyze their own biases and assumptions.

12. Engage white, male employees

Your language, your senior leaders, and your white, male employees are three of your most significant levers for changing your culture relative to diversity and inclusion, and all three are commonly missing from the effort.^{xxvi} Get white men engaged, ground them in stable language and logic, help them find their own diversity and inclusion story, recruit their support, and connect them to diverse peers.

13. Measure and adjust your approach

Top organizations measure progress over time and use KPIs to refine their plan and hold leaders accountable for results. Organizations must include affected employees—minority and majority, front-line employees and managers—in the design and assessment of the programs. This inclusivity helps ensure the program will work and take hold.

“I’m working with a client right now where 76% of their workforce reports to a white, male manager. If you want to focus your efforts in the most effective place—if you want to have the greatest return on investment—I don’t know that there’s a more valuable leverage than focusing on that group of people.”

Joe Gerstandt

Author & Inclusion Strategist



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