

A quick guide to diversity and inclusion in the workplace

Overview

A diverse workforce adds value to your business – that's the bottom line. Hiring a wide range of people from different backgrounds and with different experiences has many benefits for your company and your employees. And it's not just about considering age, gender and ethnicity when hiring, it's just as important to educate your existing workforce on the benefits of diversity and inclusion.

In this guide we're going to talk about why diversity and inclusion matters to your business, how it impacts on your bottom line and how your company can get it right.

What is diversity and inclusion?

Diversity refers to the full range of the human experience, recognising that we are all different. It covers race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, political beliefs, religion, and much more. Inclusion is about involvement; making sure everyone feels included, and empowered; when people are included it means they feel recognised and valued for the contribution they make.

If you think about diversity as the vision you have for your company, one which reflects a wide range of identities, then inclusion is the actions you take to ensure that all the people you employ feel valued. Getting both right will be a powerful force for driving your company forward and giving you a competitive edge.

Why diversity and inclusion matter

Data shows that companies with diverse teams and who implement inclusion strategies are more successful. PwC research shows that if your company has strong diversity and inclusion policies more people are likely to want to work for you. They found that:

- Over 80% of millennials consider diversity, equality and workforce inclusion to be a crucial factor in deciding whether to work for a company
- Diverse teams are better problem solvers.

Researchers at Deloitte found that:

- Diversity and inclusion are strongly linked to engagement, and engaged employees are key to driving your company's performance.

This has implications for your recruitment strategies as if you're neglecting these matters, you risk losing potentially valuable candidates who decide they don't want to work for a company without these values.

If you have a workforce that looks the same the chances are they are going to think the same and will approach problems in the same way. But, if your team is made up of a wide range of identities drawn from a variety of experiences and backgrounds, this will be reflected in their ability to approach and solve problems effectively in different and creative ways. This is an example of the value diversity can bring to your business and its performance.

According to research, companies with significantly diverse workforces are outperforming their competitors by up to 35%.

How to improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace

We've talked about how your business will benefit from a diverse workforce, but how can you make sure this is the case? And once hired, how do you ensure that your employees feel included? Here are some tips and examples of best practices.

1. Start from the top:

It's no good just leaving it to HR. To really change your company's culture it's important that your board, CEO, executive team and managers inspire a compelling vision that will initiate action in all areas of the business.

2. Develop a plan:

If you want to inspire a considerable improvement in your diversity and inclusion policy, you need to generate a clear plan of action. Organising a committee and bringing a range of people together to take on this important work can be a visible and practical demonstration of your commitment to inclusive ways of working.

Your plan should include, at a minimum, initiatives to create and develop:

- Equal opportunity for advancement
- Community outreach
- Employee forums
- Collaborative conflict resolution
- Defined behaviours in the workplace
- Training
- Equitable and accessible recruitment practices and processes.

3. Feedback and action:

For your plan and initiatives to really work, and become embedded in your company's culture, you should regularly ask for feedback from your employees. This is good practice and can be done informally or through staff surveys.

You'll be able to understand from this what's working well, where things need tweaked, if you need to add new initiatives, as well as asking your employees for their suggestions on how to improve diversity and inclusion – a good exercise in inclusion and engagement.

Final thoughts

Improving workplace diversity and increasing employee engagement will have a positive impact on your company's performance and reputation making you more attractive to potential future employees.

Next steps

For more information about diversity and inclusion or how to build brilliant teams, please get in touch.

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