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BUILDING BLOCKS OF WORKPLACE INCLUSION

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HUMAN CAPITAL

BUILDING BLOCKS OF WORKPLACE INCLUSION



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Attaining a diverse workforce today is not as difficult as it used to be because many of the groups who were traditionally left out as contenders and applicants in the recruitment process are now fully participating. But if you want an inclusive workplace, mastering the art of recruiting a diverse workplace is not enough.

Some organizations think that having “one of each”—a woman, a person with a disability, someone from a religious minority, a mature worker, a gay employee, an indigenous person, and an employee from another visible minority—means that you are inclusive. Wrong! All it means is that you have a wide variety of people who may have divergent perspectives working for you.

It's a fact: You can have diversity and not inclusion. While the face of your organization may appear diverse, there also may be constant infighting and diversity dilemmas. So the challenge really becomes how to have all of these people work together and share the same organizational goal. This is where inclusion comes in.

Inclusion is about harnessing the diversity you have to create a workplace where employees are respected and sincerely involved in a way that translates into value for the organization. Easier said than done? Definitely!

When it comes to creating an inclusive culture, many organizations don't know where to begin. But although it's a cliché to say, “begin at the beginning,” that is, in fact, exactly what you have to do. But relax. It's not as overwhelming as you may think. Inclusion won't happen overnight, but it will happen if you intentionally work toward it.

In this issue of *TD at Work*, you will learn:

- the importance of creating a mission statement, vision statement, and value statement around inclusion
- how to establish an action plan
- best practices for developing an inclusive organization
- steps to creating a workplace inclusion committee
- how to develop an employee-friendly workplace.

GETTING UNDERWAY

As Deborah Gillis, president and CEO of Catalyst, said to *HRM America*, “Leaders must be mindful of what makes employees feel included, and excluded, and develop skills that can help their companies attain inclusion for the long term.” Let's get started on building that understanding.

So you've hired staff that hits all the marks and has all the hallmarks of a diverse workforce: women, indigenous peoples, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex) individuals, and mature workers. How do you help all these diverse groups get along? To feel a part of the whole? To make their work experience rewarding? And, in the long run, to just be able to be themselves? Having an inclusion strategy will keep you on track.

INCLUSION IS ABOUT HARNESSING THE DIVERSITY YOU HAVE TO CREATE A WORKPLACE WHERE EMPLOYEES ARE RESPECTED AND SINCERELY INVOLVED IN A WAY THAT TRANSLATES INTO VALUE FOR THE ORGANIZATION.

Experience has shown us that organizations that adopt an inclusion strategy embed the value of workplace inclusion into everything they do. They live and breathe it, and their strategic plan is a living testament to their commitment to make their organization a better place.

Evelina Silveira has conducted many training sessions that were just a one-time gig for an organization, not attached to a larger plan. Not surprisingly, those organizations continue to struggle because there is no concerted effort to create a strategy that can address the challenges presented.

It's critical that the strategic plan you develop is unique to your organization. Don't fret, we won't leave you hanging. To follow is a step-by-step process on how to get started, complete with examples and resources.

DEVELOPING AN INCLUSION STRATEGY

A workplace diversity and inclusion strategy does not occur in isolation. It is a written policy that expresses your resolute belief that diversity and inclusion must become part of the organizational culture. This commitment is demonstrated by establishing consistent policies and organizational systems.

First off, there must be buy-in from the top. In other words, there should be a firm, transparent, demonstrated conviction that inclusion is tied to the business goals, objectives, and bottom line of the organization. This is your starting point. Once you have this, rolling out the strategy will be much easier and more worthwhile because the leadership team is on your side.

Your workplace inclusion strategic plan should include objectives for at least three areas:

- *Customers.* This might include a goal of expanding into the global marketplace. For example, how might the organization's products enter the South Asian market?
- *Employees.* A possible goal would be to increase the retention rates of women professionals.
- *Community.* This might entail donating time and financial resources to worthy causes employees have identified.

The strategic plan also should include what are generally known as the organization's mission, vision, and values. Establishing these helps pave the way to achieving a more inclusive workplace.

Mission Statement

A mission statement must be not only clear and linked to the company's identity but also motivating and encouraging. When developing your mission statement, you must first of all consider why your organization was initially started. This helps you be clear about what you want to achieve with, for example, your clients, target population, and community stakeholders. While it may not seem immediately apparent, all of these constituents can benefit from your commitment to workplace diversity and inclusion.

See, for example, this mission statement for Johns Hopkins Medicine:

The mission of Johns Hopkins Medicine is to improve the health of the community and the world by setting the standard of excellence in medical education, research, and clinical care. Diverse and inclusive, Johns Hopkins Medicine educates medical students, scientists, healthcare professionals, and the public; conducts biomedical research; and provides patient-centered medicine to prevent, diagnose, and treat human illness.

A WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY DOES NOT OCCUR IN ISOLATION. IT IS A WRITTEN POLICY THAT COMMITS TO A FIRM AND RESOLUTE BELIEF THAT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MUST BECOME PART OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE.

Vision Statement

The vision statement sets your desired goal and defines your future. It promotes and incites action, and it motivates and generates a high level of commitment to achieving the organization's goals.

Vision statements used to cover five or 10 years or more. Now, given the continuous and rapid change occurring in market conditions, it's more common to find vision statements crafted for between one and five years.

Like your mission statement, your vision statement should take into consideration the interests of your customers or target population, your organization, its people, and its social or financial performance. A vision statement that reflects diversity and inclusion will include these principles in at least two of the parameters covered in the statement.

This vision statement from the American Red Cross reflects their commitment to inclusion on multiple fronts:

The American Red Cross empowers people in America to perform extraordinary acts in the face of emergencies and disasters. To ensure full benefit of this experience by all, we deliver our products and services in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner to all we serve. We fully embrace and promote inclusion across our people, products, and services, and we integrate diversity into our business strategies and decisions.

Value Statement

Values reflect your organization's deepest beliefs. They are nonnegotiable. Simply put, they are how you identify and differentiate yourself from others.

Values should be embodied in specific behaviors that the organization identifies and institutionalizes at all levels. As you will hear throughout this issue of *TD at Work*, if a leader does not exemplify the values of workplace inclusion, it is quite difficult for those values to be passed on to the employees.

This value statement from Norton Rose Fulbright reflects the organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion:

A diverse workforce is essential to enabling us to achieve our business objectives. Diversity gives us a competitive advantage by expanding and developing

our pool of talent on which we can draw. Growth depends on our ability to attract the best workforce and foster, support, and retain members. We work in diverse markets and with diverse clients, and a workforce that is representative of our clients enables us to better understand business needs. ... Our diversity policy applies to all our employees and partners. It covers all aspects of employment including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluations, compensation and promotion, terms and conditions of employment, and termination. Decisions relating to any aspect of employment must be based solely on ability and performance.

Possible Scenarios

Once diversity and inclusion have been defined as a fundamental part of an organization's strategic guidelines, you can create scenarios targeting those people you want to work with or focus on.

Here are three examples of approaches to help you build your strategy:

- The traditional SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) can help you analyze how internal and external forces might interact with your mission, vision, and values.
- In a scenario analysis, studies by trend experts or focus groups enable you to

WHAT AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT LOOKS LIKE

On the website for Ontario Public Service's strategic plan for diversity, Shamira Madhany, chief officer of diversity and accessibility, notes that "an inclusive OPS goes beyond mandatory and legislative requirements: It is a workplace enriched by personal differences, enhanced by the innovation and creativity of an engaged workforce, and widely recognized not just as an employer of choice, but of first choice."

A study by Brent Lyons, Jennifer Wessel, Sonia Ghumman, Anne Marie Ryan, and Sooyeol Kim found higher rates of satisfaction among employees who felt they could talk openly about their religious beliefs at work because their workplaces were generally supportive of diverse opinions and beliefs.

The Health Nexus guide *How To Be a Family Friendly Workplace* states that "policies set the tone of the workplace. They are a means of keeping in place important programs that reflect workplace values. ... Involve workers in policy development whenever possible. Those most directly affected by the policy must buy into it for it to be effective."

imagine possible future outcomes, develop a proposal, and undertake the work with these predictions in mind.

- A Blue Ocean Strategy involves creating a new market or workspace where competition is irrelevant. This approach allows for the creation of a unique strategic plan that identifies insights, hidden needs, or interests.

Adopting any of these methods will guide you as you formulate a strategy based on your mission, vision, and values. Developing this strategy will help your organization determine what acceptable behaviors look like, form a unique identity, and charter a profoundly different course of doing business. The company now has a label that

differentiates it from others and has among its important pillars nothing less than diversity and inclusion.

Considering diversity and inclusion as an important element of the plan is, in itself, strategic. Why? Because many plans take into consideration what the goals are primarily from the perspective of a business market, reputation, or image, rather than being driven by deeply held convictions. A diversity and inclusion plan is more of a statement of conviction and values than many other plans.

But conviction is not enough! Applying and making it a reality is necessary for its ultimate success.

LEADERSHIP, TRAINING, AND PROGRAMS CONTRIBUTE TO INCLUSION SUCCESS

According to the Center for Talent Innovation report, *Innovation, Diversity, and Market Growth*, leaders who show at least three inclusive behaviors versus those who show no inclusive behaviors have team members who report feeling:

- welcome and included in their team: 87 percent versus 51 percent
- free to express their views and opinions: 87 percent versus 46 percent
- that their ideas are heard and recognized: 74 percent versus 37 percent.

Laura Sherbin and Ripa Rashid—in their *Harvard Business Review* article, “Diversity Doesn’t Stick Without Inclusion”—outline three additional elements that drive inclusion: authenticity, networking and visibility, and clear career paths.

- As to authenticity, the authors write that “it’s not surprising that everyone expends energy by repressing parts of their persona in the workplace in some way.” Wouldn’t that energy be better spent on some of the many workplace challenges we face today?
- Sponsorship is a critical component of networking and visibility. Indeed, Carolyn Lawrence writes in the *HuffPost* article, “Sponsorship Can Drive Diversity In The Workplace,” that training about diversity and inclusion is important for sponsor, protégé, and everyone in the organization: “People across the organization would be educated on the importance of diversity, the power of sponsorship relationships, and how they can incorporate those relationships into their own roles.”
- Career paths continue to diverge for women and men, with many women still stepping off the career ladder to take care of children. Other groups, too, often tend to miss out on high-profile assignments, write Sherbin and Rashid.

The Goldman Sachs Office of Global Leadership and Diversity offers specific programs designed to retain diverse staff members. The ACCESS program connects women vice presidents from Asia and Europe, the Middle East, and Africa with local and visiting senior leaders. And Catapult is a nomination-based series to provide black and Hispanic employees with skills and insights to accelerate their careers.

FOLLOWING THROUGH ON STRATEGY

In what's called the "staging" mode of your strategy, the leadership team must develop timelines or deadlines based on anticipated goals and objectives. Reaching these milestones invigorates and motivates the team as they experience firsthand the fruits of their strategic planning labor.

Establishing an Action Plan

Because you have so many things to do, and because things that aren't written down and planned for generally don't happen, it's best to have an action plan.

Here is what your action plan should involve:

Goals you wish to achieve. This is the what, when, how, why, and who. For example:

- What will it take for you to achieve your plan? Professional development? Changes to your onboarding program?
- When will you roll out the plan? At a leadership meeting? An employee gathering?
- How will you execute the plan? Will you leave it up to the leadership or a representative group of employees on a workplace inclusion committee?
- Why are you doing it? Is it because you want to retain staff? Create a more employee-friendly organization? Be an employer of choice?
- Who will you involve in shaping the plan beyond the leadership? Employees? Board members? Customers? Donors?

Projects or actions you must undertake to achieve the goal. You may want to roll out a workforce composition survey to assess the current employee climate or use customer satisfaction surveys to determine where customers stand.

Expected results for each project or action. To get a sense of what might be feasible, benchmark yourself against similar organizations.

Time allotted for each project or action. Some actions will take little time, such as assigning a

task to an employee; but others may take longer to assess, such as a reduction in absenteeism or mature workers quitting because of inflexible working hours.

Person responsible for each project or action. An assortment of people with different skills and positions in the organization will be required to execute the plan. Some actions may involve your board; others will rely on the employee committee, senior leadership, or union representatives.

Support required for each project or action. Some actions needed to carry out the plan may require approval from senior leadership, government funders, unions, board members, or other stakeholders.

Resources required for the project or action. This might entail time from skilled employees who can create action plans, or you might need information on industry standards or other materials.

Budget required. This step will vary for each organization and is dependent on how comprehensive the plan is.

The action plan now becomes a reference tool to keep everyone on track.

Committees and Working Groups

The action plan defines what resources or supports are needed. Now, working groups or committees can be formed to achieve the organization's specific goals.

The working group may be entrusted with changing the organizational structure to generate the desired outcomes or with finding ways to attract more customers or serve the target population better. In any case, you need a very knowledgeable group with skills in many areas to execute the working plan.

Working groups are usually of short duration, with a specific purpose. A good example is a committee or working group established to undertake reforms to a company's inclusion policy. A company also might have permanent committees whose purpose is to maintain and monitor compliance with certain decisions or policies derived from the strategic guidelines.

Whatever the nature or structure of the committees or working groups, they require

flexibility and an openness to fluctuations so they can respond quickly and effectively to changing customer demands and target populations.

YOU NEED A VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE GROUP WITH SKILLS IN MANY AREAS TO EXECUTE THE WORKING PLAN.

Setting Measurable Goals

The action plan describes goals for the project or proposal. One way of determining whether the plan is consistent with its definition is to develop indicators based on these goals (retaining employees or becoming an employer of choice, for example) and closely monitor your progress and compliance.

It is important to measure and evaluate what is in your plans. And remember that what is measured is what improves.

The purpose behind incorporating systems of measurement is to create a culture of continuous improvement. The specific metrics you choose for collecting data and monitoring your progress will depend on your industry.

There are several ways you can measure the success of an inclusion strategy. One way is through your existing strategic plan. Look at what your goals are when it comes to employee relations and engagement. Is there a way of expanding this area to make the environment more inclusive? For example, can you provide additional supports for new parents? For mature workers? For personnel coming back from a mental health leave? How will you measure the success of these efforts? Are there groups in your organization that could use more mentoring? Do all employees have a channel for voicing ideas or concerns? These are just a few areas to consider.

Other organizations will choose to create an inclusion strategy separate from their general plan. Perhaps the easiest way to approach this is through an internal assessment of where your organization believes it is when it comes to workplace inclusion global benchmarks.

The Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarks tool, created by Julie O'Mara and Alan Richter,

helps organizations plot themselves on a continuum of best practices in the field. It can be used in many ways, such as having the senior leadership and members of your diversity committee assess the organization based on criteria related to infrastructure and implementation or benefits and work-life balance.

BEST PRACTICES: WHAT WORKS AND WHY

Creating a culture of inclusion is an ongoing process. If the ball is dropped, so goes the bottom line. A successful management strategy for diversity and inclusion is in place every day for every employee. It's based on a series of best practices that help improve employee performance, encourage and assist employee advancement, and allow employees to bring their whole selves to the workplace.

A workplace is built around all persons being able to do their jobs to the best of their abilities. The following best practices should be an integral part of your organization's policies and procedures. If they are, you will have a more satisfied workforce and a healthier bottom line.

Offering flex-time, telecommuting, assistive technologies, and ergonomically friendly furniture is just the beginning in creating a culture of inclusion. Research has consistently shown that mentoring and increasing networks for employees are some of the best investments you can make in employees and the organization as a whole.

Some organizations make a deliberate effort to show support for specific groups of employees or customers. Marriott International, for example, is a supporting member of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and has launched a marketing campaign, *Be You, With Us*. The company's hotels frequently host galas and events on behalf of the Human Rights Campaign, PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians & Gays), the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Out & Equal Workplace Advocates. These efforts go a long way to tell both its employees and the community they can bring their whole selves to any Marriott hotel. Something to think about, no doubt.

So let's take a look at what you can do and how what you do can work to everyone's advantage.

CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION IS AN ONGOING PROCESS. IF THE BALL IS DROPPED, SO GOES THE BOTTOM LINE.

Understanding Your Employees

Before we begin to figure out what best practices we should prioritize for the workplace, we really need to determine our workforce composition. If this sounds scary—don't fret! You can accomplish this quite easily through a diversity survey. (A link to a sample diversity survey is available in the Resources section of this issue of *TD at Work*.) And the end result will be worth it. You'll have a document that can guide you through human resource planning for years to come. You also will get a better sense of which practices would be most suitable for your organization.

For example, a nonprofit organization that Evelina was working with had a predominately mature female workforce of personal support workers. They were finding it hard to keep employees. The rigid scheduling made it difficult for these women to do their jobs and attend to

the responsibilities of both their children and their parents. It was a classic case of work-life imbalance.

With some scheduling changes that offered a variety of shifts, the organization saved money, retained experienced workers, and maintained a continuous level of service delivery. This ultimately led to greater employee loyalty.

Remember, each region has legal regulations about how employers can collect and use employee information. Be sure to familiarize yourself with those rules before developing your own survey or using a template.

Accommodation

Today, accommodation refers to a lot of workplace issues, from the most obvious (physical) to the least obvious (mental health) and everything in between (religion, hidden disability, work-life balance).

An ongoing study by the Job Accommodation Network has found that 59 percent of workplace accommodations cost nothing. The rest? On average, about \$500. Most solutions to a physical disability, for example, are simple ones such as better lighting, increased amplification on a telephone, a screen reader on a computer, or printed materials in alternative formats.

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION IN PRACTICE

As a young, new executive director of a local nonprofit agency, Evelina was pleased to hire her organization's first employee of color who also happened to be Hindu. Rashmi was asked to start work on a Monday, but there was some hesitation on her part with the date. She seemed to be trying to mask her disappointment with an expression of relief as she had been unemployed for some time. Evelina asked her if something was wrong, and she softly recounted how Monday was the beginning of a very important religious holiday for Hindus. Evelina was thinking that this position had been vacant for weeks and the work had been piling up, and she really didn't want to ask Rashmi to start on another week. So Rashmi decided to forego her religious celebrations and start on the proposed day.

Evelina has reflected on that situation since and is not sure whether there were laws protecting Rashmi at the time. If there weren't, and if she had known better, Evelina could have simply asked Rashmi to start the following week, even if it caused Evelina to get more stressed by the workload that was accumulating in piles each day.

Rashmi didn't seem thrilled when she started that week. Evelina didn't realize that she needed her religious holiday to create balance and beauty in her life. Working that week caused her to miss many of the celebrations she would normally have with her family and community. To make a long story short, the following year, Evelina gave Rashmi the time off, and she turned out to be one of the most hard-working and loyal employees the organization had.

When it comes to religion, it is illegal not to provide accommodation for diverse religious practices in the workplace in Canada, and employers in the United States are required to make reasonable accommodations unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship. Laws regarding religious accommodation in the workplace may vary, so be sure to check. Of course, if you have international offices you will want to make sure your policies will be culturally appropriate in each country.

When it comes to religious accommodation, here are two simple things you can do right away: Acquire a diversity calendar, and find out what the legal requirements are in all of your locations. Make these known and available to the leadership.

We suggest a policy that provides employees a Religious Accommodation Application that includes the names and dates of observances, a confidentiality clause, the job affected, and a definition of what unreasonable accommodation would entail. On a broader scope, an organization may be able to provide a prayer space that can be used during working hours.

An HR policy that includes religious accommodation affirms your company's stand on welcoming everyone and creates a climate of openness and a respect for diversity and inclusiveness. An environment that recognizes the religious practices of all employees is likely to be one where no one feels they have to hide this part of themselves.

If your HR department has crafted a policy that includes accommodation as a basic tenet and communicates this to the workplace, working conditions will improve, employees will be more engaged and satisfied, and turnover will go down. In most cases, this occurs with little or no cost.

Mentoring

Nothing outweighs the benefits of having the support of someone who knows the ropes—from something as straightforward as delegating a task to the complexities of negotiating time off for a parental commitment. A mentor's advice and support can be invaluable to both the mentee and the organization's bottom line.

In fact, ask most successful professionals how they got to where they are today, and they will probably tell you about the person or people who helped them to learn the ins and outs of their job and to develop and advance professionally.

A MENTOR'S ADVICE AND SUPPORT CAN BE INVALUABLE TO BOTH THE MENTEE AND THE ORGANIZATION'S BOTTOM LINE.

Mentoring in Action

Mentorship is important for helping new employees become oriented to the workplace, for advancement through the ranks, and for a seamless transition of knowledge. Ideally, it should be an organic tool that organizations have in place before any knowledge walks out the door.

Research by Sun Microsystems has found that 28 percent of mentors and 25 percent of mentees received salary increases. In addition, mentors were promoted six times and mentees five times more often than people who were not involved in mentorship programs. If this isn't a promise of increased retention, we don't know what is.

The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, an organization devoted to bringing together leaders who are committed to helping immigrants and employers succeed has matched more than 10,000 skilled immigrants over the past decade through its Mentorship Partnership Program. The council attests that more than 75 percent of all mentees in the program found employment in their field within a year. That, in one sentence, is the power of mentoring.

Once all your accommodation and mentoring practices are in place, be sure to keep your policies up-to-date and continuously maintain training with the staff. You can accomplish this through an annual review by a subcommittee of your inclusion committee, or you can place it on HR's list of policies that are regularly reviewed.

Raise the Mentoring Profile

To get the most benefit from your mentoring programs, you will need to communicate, communicate, communicate. Incorporate the

policy into your recruiting and training processes, post it on the intranet, put up posters, and have senior management serve as diversity and inclusion champions.

Listing mentoring programs that you offer during your recruitment efforts is a huge plus. Everyone wants to be successful at their job, and knowing the company culture supports their development from the outset is a wonderful bonus. So be bold and promote your mentoring, both internally and externally. It can be part of your branding.

On a personal level, Evelina has benefitted enormously from mentoring new Canadians in her business, Diversity at Work, as well as coaching clients on soft skills. She remembers a young woman who was afraid to pick up the phone and make calls because she was self-conscious about her accent. With lots of support, coaching, tape-recording, and practice, she overcame her hesitation. A few simple exercises helped make her more comfortable in positions she took later on that involved a lot of speaking over the phone.

Besides helping others grow professionally, mentors learn about themselves and hone new skills. Evelina learned to explain more clearly how to do tasks and how to break them down into more manageable pieces, improved her communication skills, and gained great cultural insight from the international staff she hired.

WORKPLACE INCLUSION AND EQUITY COMMITTEE

No matter what you call your diversity and inclusion committee—an accessibility and equity committee, a diversity council, a diversity/inclusivity/equity committee, or a workplace inclusion group—there are good reasons for having one.

Having an inclusion committee can help your organization:

- affect culture change by establishing processes and practices that are sustainable and profitable for the long term
- assist senior leaders in understanding the complex nuances associated with diversity and workplace inclusion
- create opportunities for input from a broad range of employees, which can bring you closer to inclusion.

The biggest problem Evelina has encountered as a consultant is that few organizations make the effort to plan the recruitment of workplace committee members. Instead, they send out a general call for members or look at trying to fill seats with one member of each designated group. Wrong! Why? Passionate people don't necessarily make the best committee members. They need to have skills, too.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PROGRAMS

Successful mentoring programs require structure. Without it, all you have are two people talking for an undetermined length of time with no purpose and no outcomes.

Here are six ways to ensure a successful mentoring program:

- Develop a business case for your program.
- Ensure proper funding and staffing.
- Rally committed, knowledgeable, passionate leaders to champion the benefits of mentoring and be good role models.
- Establish clear-cut goals, mission, objectives, and evaluation that are part of the program throughout its duration.
- Develop and nurture community partnerships and associations.
- Ensure quality contact and supervision with mentors.

Committee Makeup

So how do you put a committee together? What works? What doesn't work? After spending many years on workplace committees that didn't work, Evelina began to analyze what issues consistently cropped up and why. After many years of reflection and lots of research, the components of a successful workplace inclusion and equity committee were no longer so mysterious.

Committees: What Doesn't Work

Lack of concrete skills or contributions among members, lack of job descriptions, employees with personal agendas, employees who bring only passion to the table, lack of leadership and financial resources, irregularly scheduled meetings, no clear process for handling conflict, lack of ongoing professional development, and the absence of organizational accountability are among the reasons workplace committees don't work.

In fact, one of the most popular requests we receive is how to revive a workplace committee that has died. If it died, there is a good chance that one or all of the problems just mentioned above were present. Once former committee members feel that their time is being wasted or that there is bias or preferential treatment, for instance, they don't want to come back. Take your time and get it right the first time, or risk not having a committee at all.

Workplace committees have value, but only if they are carefully executed, supported, and nurtured. And, to be honest, it can be quite challenging to find good resources to aid you along the way.

Committee Must Haves

Now that we've talked about what doesn't work in terms of workplace inclusion committees, here are some basic must haves to start your committee.

Leadership approval. This ensures greater chances of buy-in at all levels of the organization. Without senior leader support, any changes you want to bring forward will never come to fruition. In fact, it is advisable that at least one senior manager is on the committee.

Membership recruitment. Avoid just putting out a general call for membership. Your members

need skills, the ability to put in the required time to accomplish the work, and the availability to attend all the meetings. Take your membership recruitment seriously by crafting thorough job descriptions and postings. Screen your committee members as you would an employee, and you will get the best group of talented individuals. On top of that, they will feel honored to be part of a group they had to apply to and be screened for.

Terms of reference. Outline the goal of the committee, how often it will meet, who will make the final decisions, what the structure will be, and so forth.

Budget. If your boss charges you with putting a committee together but gives you no budget, you have a real challenge on your hands. You need dollars to bring in trainers and other resources.

Meeting space. Having a dedicated meeting space each time shows that you are serious about the work and will not be scrambling at the last minute to find a room to fit everyone.

Communication. Be transparent about your communication, and use a variety of methods to reach employees on their terms.

Terms of Reference

What rules are in place to ensure our committee stays productive, renewed, and motivated? While crafting a detailed terms of reference can be one of the duller components of putting your committee together, it is essential. When something has gone awry on a committee, it usually has to do with unclear terms of reference. Take your time putting this policy together. It is the most critical guiding document for any committee.

Your terms of reference should include:

- the committee's mandate and purpose
- a description of the membership
- how communication will happen
- the timing of your meetings.

It's important that your terms of reference match the culture of your organization. Formal terms of reference would be appropriate for a group that operates in a more structured work environment.

The terms described above are a base minimum. You may want to add more areas for clarification. If you don't know where to begin, do a quick Google search of diversity, equity, or workplace inclusion committees, and you will see a host of entries. You'll notice some are more detailed than others.

Corus Entertainment, in Toronto, for example, is a media production and broadcasting company with 1,525 employees. As well as providing a fair and equitable work environment and encouraging applications from qualified women, men, visible minorities, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities, Corus maintains an equity and diversity committee composed of management, nonmanagement, and unionized employees. Its efforts have resulted in recognition as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers, Canada's Top Employers for Young People, Canada's Best Diversity Employers, and Greater Toronto's Top Employers.

REMEMBER, INCLUSION IS ABOUT EVERYONE. SO HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONS MAKE COMING TO WORK BETTER FOR THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES?

EMPLOYEE-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

What does it take to keep employees motivated, loyal, and doing their best work?

If you were to ask this question 40 years ago, the responses would sound out of this world by today's standards: quotas, penalties, lots of supervision, and job security—the signatures of an archaic business philosophy.

Forty years ago, the workplace demographic was quite different. There were more stay-at-home mothers, fewer divorces, fewer single parents, shorter life expectancies, and a lot fewer

SKILLS NEEDED FOR A WORKPLACE INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Think about how you recruit your board members. Usually you look for people with certain skills that they can bring to the organization and who have a proven record, can get along with others, and ideally represent a range of political and social views.

A workplace inclusion committee must have the same kind of representation. The leader of your committee should be just as strong as the leader of your board. It should be a person who can make things happen and who can work with dissenting views for the betterment of the organization.

Depending on your organization's structure and funding sources, the skills you require for your workplace inclusion committee members may be a little different. But at the very least, you will need:

- *Leadership.* Someone who will be able to keep the meetings structured and be willing to take in a range of opinions and synthesize them for the good of the organization.
- *Public relations and communications.* Individuals who will act as inclusion champions, keep employees informed, and prepare any promotional materials or written documents about progress, requests for input, and so forth.
- *Training and public education.* Lots of learning can happen at the committee level. And members of the committee should be transferring their knowledge to the wider organization. Individuals with training skills also may be involved in hiring outside consultants and trainers or in arranging a speaker forum.
- *Finance.* Someone who will be able to manage the financial resources allocated to the committee and look for alternative funding if required (as in the case of nonprofits).

persons with disabilities in the workplace. Openly gay unions were rare. Creating equitable, inviting, and friendly workplaces where everyone could do their best work was not on the radar.

When you think about it, workplaces were geared around corporate needs and getting young, married (usually white) men to deliver the results. They were men who could work endless hours with boundless loyalty to the company, often thanks to a wife who stayed at home and made it all possible.

What Do Your Employees Need?

Today, because there is no mandatory retirement, many mature workers are engaged longer because they cannot afford to retire. On top of that we have a skill and labor shortage in a multitude of sectors. So it makes good business sense to hold onto valued employees and give them a rewarding work experience.

Remember, inclusion is about everyone. So how can organizations make coming to work better for the maximum number of employees? By creating an employee-friendly workplace.

How do you ensure that your organization receives the best return on investment? HCI Research has a comprehensive document that outlines the specifics. Some of the main points outlined in *The Family-Friendly Workplace*:

Integrating Employees' Work and Life and the Impact on Talent Attraction and Retention include:

- Begin by conducting surveys or focus groups with all your employees.
- Do your research and look at offerings of competitor organizations and at industry benchmarks.
- Be inclusive of all employees.
- Test out the benefit or policy at one location before you roll it out into another.
- Communicate the offerings using a number of vehicles.
- Ensure that recruiters and hiring managers are aware of the details surrounding the new offerings.
- Make it sustainable.

Which Programs Should You Offer?

Now that you have done your research on what similar organizations are doing and obtained information on your workplace demographics and the data from your surveys and focus groups, it's time to look at what your organization can reasonably offer. Every organization is different in size, mandate, budget, and its ability to be flexible

ADVANTAGES TO EMPLOYEE-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

Besides reducing the risk of losing your best employees, an employee-friendly workplace has many other advantages, including:

- retention of skilled staff
- attraction of new employees
- recognition as an employer of choice within an industry sector
- increased likelihood of people returning to work after a parental leave
- improvement in staff morale
- greater engagement in the workplace
- lower recruitment costs because of lower turnover.

to its employees. For example, a computer gaming business probably can offer more flexibility than a healthcare center.

Consider the benefits and programs you might offer to make your organization a more employee-friendly workplace:

- flexible hours
- gradual retirement
- education benefits
- physical fitness stipends
- pets at work
- retirement counseling.

Bear in mind, not all of these may be possible in your organization. Implementing all of these approaches is not necessary to every “employee-friendly” workplace. Further, this is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but more of a collection of ideas that can generate discussion and possibilities. The checklist at the end of this issue of *TD at Work* can help you keep track of the programs and services you currently offer your employees and which ones you might consider including.

INCLUSION MEANS RECOGNIZING OUR DIFFERENCES, RESPECTING THOSE DIFFERENCES, AND THEN DECIDING TO WORK AS A TEAM.

ROADBLOCKS AND DETOURS

While there are many rewards to creating a workplace that encourages and values inclusion, it also has challenges. Today’s workplace consists of women, indigenous peoples, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI individuals, and mature workers, all with their own needs.

On top of all that, employees bring their personalities to work. It’s unavoidable. How they approach a job, complete a task, and communicate with others can become huge when inclusion is on the table. We’re all human, after all.

Take power struggles, for instance. When Evelina worked with post-secondary institutions, she saw seasoned faculty who simply did not want to change anything about their course delivery, especially when new professors, for instance, were open to switching up theirs. It can be challenging to get everyone focused on the benefits of workplace inclusion when some see it as an increase in workload or a decrease in authority.

Communication also can be an issue. In the absence of diversity, communication may appear to be better because workers are operating from the same cultural context and thus share similar meanings and interpretations of events and behaviors. There is less need to accommodate others based on ability, faith, gender, sexuality, and so forth. Workers feel freer and less concerned about saying the wrong thing, offending others, or facing reprisal for making insensitive comments. Is there camaraderie when there are similarities? Perhaps. But it is our differences that lead us to innovation.

But inclusion doesn’t mean that we have to like each other. It also doesn’t mean we have to put our personalities on hold during business hours. And it doesn’t mean we have to socialize after work.

Inclusion means that we communicate professionally and get along in a business setting whether or not we like each and every one of our co-workers. It means recognizing our differences, respecting those differences, and then deciding to work as a team.

How do we get to this place of true inclusion? Ensure personal biases and feelings do not get in the way of performance management, keep the lines of communication open, and always strive to work as a team.

CONCLUSION

Workplace inclusion doesn’t happen overnight. It requires a set of strategic steps, frequent evaluation, and, most of all, strong leadership. Research indicates that it is well worth the effort when it comes to creating healthier, more engaged, and innovative work environments.

Here's a good example: Transgender employees may not make up the largest percentage of the workplace, but not dealing with the discrimination, stigma, and harassment they may face is an unwise and unsound business practice. Start crafting an HR policy today with the assistance of those employees if you have them. Not doing so might mean some of your best employees walk out the door.

Inclusive workplaces have the benefits of improved service delivery and filled jobs, even when there are labor shortages. No longer a workplace of the future, the inclusive workplace is what many employees expect, and often demand, from their employers.

Leaders need to be role models. So talk the talk. Spread the word that no one has to pretend to be someone other than who they are. Walk the walk, and encourage everyone in your workplace to follow in your footsteps. Make sure employees know it's OK just to be yourself, your whole, acceptable, exceptional self.

Just remember, it's not enough to say you're going to do something, then assign it to the back burner. This is a great disservice to creating a culture of inclusion.

Start by putting your money where your mouth is. It will be money well spent because inclusion affects your organization's bottom line in a very positive way. If you follow the steps and suggestions outlined above, the results will be amazing. Everybody benefits. Start today.

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What You Should Know About Workplace Religious Accommodation (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission): www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/wysk/workplace_religious_accommodation.cfm.

CHECKLIST OF EMPLOYEE-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE PRACTICES

How to use this checklist

1. Check “Yes” for the provision(s) you currently make.
2. Check “No” for the provisions that are impossible for your organization to consider, such as those that would cause a disturbance for other employees or get in the way of customer service and productivity.
3. Check “Maybe” for those provisions that are a possibility you may not have considered before but could implement with a little help.
4. Review each section. What did you notice? Are your yeses and maybes found mainly in one category, or are they spread out? If you find they are under one area only, for example “social,” it may be a good idea to look at the other sections for ideas. If you want to build an inclusive workplace, you want to ensure that the employee-friendly provisions will be appealing to those of different ages. Implementing a few from each section is worth considering.
5. At your next meeting, discuss the provisions and the feasibility of their implementation.

	YES	NO	MAYBE
LOCATION OF WORK			
Allowing work away from the office some or all of the time			
Spending particular days on-site, and a specific number of hours			
Supervision through email communication			
Telecommuting			
HOURS OF WORK			
Working part-time or creating part-time opportunities			
Flex-time—complete freedom for employee or choose from a few options			
Job sharing			
Gradual retirement			
Occasional choice of starting and ending times			
Reduced summer hours			
TIME OFF			
Accessing annual leave in single or part-day periods			
Taking time off in lieu of overtime payments			
Working additional hours to make up for time taken off			
Community service leave for an eligible volunteer activity			
Personal time is worked out with the team and is unlimited and unmonitored			
Flexible emergency leave—a certain number of days a year to attend to medical emergencies			

CHECKLIST OF EMPLOYEE-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE PRACTICES (continued)

CAREER DEVELOPMENT			
Dial up (increase in workload to enhance one's skills)			
Dial down (decrease in workload for a short period of time)			
Subsidies for relevant courses			
Accreditation subsidies			
Sabbatical			
SOCIAL			
Catered, sponsored lunches			
Themed office days			
Discount programs on various services			
Pets at work			
Break room with games, puzzles, humorous books, magazines, and videos			
Stocked refrigerators			
Specialty coffee makers			
WELLNESS			
Physical fitness stipends			
Self-defense classes			
Rewarding employees for meeting self-set goals for better health			
On-site immunization and donor clinics			
Smoking cessation programs or incentives			
Secure bicycle parking			
Ensuring good workplace ergonomics			
MATURE WORKERS			
Pre-retirement counseling			
Elder care counseling			
Retirement education			
Lifestyle transition planning extended to employees' partners			
Financial counseling			

CHECKLIST OF EMPLOYEE-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE PRACTICES (continued)

FAMILY SUPPORTS			
Infertility resources			
Adoption resources			
Parental leave benefits			
Support groups			
Children to access the workplace (where safe)			
Child-care room			
Support for breastfeeding moms			
Company-sponsored events for families			
Family medical leave			
Staff can decorate their desks with family photos			
A wall with employees' children's art work			
Child-care facilities and benefits			
Summer camps			
Educational benefits			
PREGNANT WOMEN			
Transportation plan for emergency			
Light duty policy			

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