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DEI in the Workplace

A companion to 'Becoming an Inclusive Leader' Webinar

WEBINAR CONTENT

A diverse workforce brings diverse viewpoints and perspectives to the company. Employee morale, turnover and retention rates, and performance can all improve when workers have confidence that their employer values diversity and inclusion and ensures pay equity.

Employers can create a positive culture by providing mechanisms by which employees can report instances of discrimination or harassment in the workplace. It's imperative that employers set the tone from the top that any form of discrimination or harassment is not acceptable, and that the company will investigate promptly, and take appropriate actions, with respect to inappropriate behavior.

Eliminating inequality in the workplace and incorporating diversity and inclusion as an initiative for your business can improve the overall employee experience and increase performance.

DEI: What Is It and How Can Employers Build It in the Workplace?

DEI stands for diversity, equity and inclusion, which is an important topic in the workplace. DEI starts at the top and trickles down through management levels to create meaningful change at work, particularly for the groups who have been traditionally underrepresented in the workforce. Understand the DEI definition and how you can strengthen it in your company.

What Is DEI?

DEI is often used to describe the programs and initiatives a company has in place to improve those areas. Diversity, equity and inclusion work together to create a stronger workforce.

Diversifying your workplace can impact inclusion and equity for some employees, so it's important to pay attention to your staff, and ensure everyone feels heard, included and safe.

Benefits of DEI

Why should you worry about DEI? It's easy to make a general statement about valuing diversity, but doing the work benefits you and your employees. Here are some ways it accomplishes that:

- **Innovation:** Hiring a diverse workforce, giving everyone equitable opportunities and making all employees feel included can generate creative ideas and solutions for your company. This can encourage growth and increased financial performance for your company.
- **Engaged workforce:** Employees who feel valued and have opportunities in the workplace are more likely to be actively engaged in their work. This translates to a happier, more productive workforce.
- **Recruiting benefits:** When word gets out that you actively focus on DEI, you'll likely see an increase in applicants. This makes it easier to hire with diversity in mind because you have a larger talent pool. It could also give you the edge if your number one pick receives multiple job offers.
- **Empowered employees:** Employees who feel supported and heard feel empowered to make decisions, be innovative and perform their jobs well.
- **Positive culture:** An inclusive, equitable and diverse work environment improves your company culture by valuing individuals and their differences. You create a safe environment based on respect.
- **Expanded audience:** Having a staff that represents marginalized groups gives you insight into serving those populations better. Consumers might be drawn to your company because of your focus on DEI.
- **Improved teamwork:** Diversity and inclusiveness help promote relationships between employees. This can help promote teamwork because all employees feel safe and accepted.

Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity in the workplace refers to having staff members who represent different groups. When you hire a diverse workforce, you get unique perspectives, which can challenge current thinking and generate innovative ideas that help your company grow. Improving diversity also gives people in marginalized groups the opportunity to shine in the workplace.

Many characteristics about your employees can fall under diversity, including:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Socioeconomic status
- Gender
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Physical ability

Creating and Maintaining a Culture of Inclusion

To become an inclusive company, an organization must actively reduce workplace discrimination. This can be done through:

- Educating employees about discrimination.
- Developing and enforcing policies that prohibit discrimination.
- Investigating complaints of inappropriate behavior.
- Training supervisors and managers on how to respond to discrimination in the workplace.

Benefits

There are numerous benefits for incorporating diversity and inclusion initiatives within your organization.

- If your workforce is diverse, you will hear from more unique viewpoints, interesting perspectives, and new ideas. Collaboration is strongest when you can share different ideas and empower creative thinking.
- Different backgrounds mean different experiences and skills. These lead to innovative thinking and out of the box solutions.
- Having a diverse team means you can relate to diverse clients by breaking down language and cultural barriers. Open the doors to new clients and potential to work on exciting projects that also expands your knowledge and reputation as a company.
- The stats show that diverse teams can outperform similar teams by 35%.
- If your company can do this and become more successful, you will be noticed. Your company's reputation will climb, you'll see more opportunities, more advanced thinking, and at the end of the day it will boost your bottom line.

How To Improve Diversity

Here are some ways you can improve diversity in your office:

- **Add diversity to hiring teams:** Having a diverse hiring team can improve diversity in the workplace. Affinity bias is an unconscious bias that attracts people to others with similar qualities or viewpoints. If there's no diversity on the hiring team, it might be more challenging to hire diverse employees.
- **Use a blind hiring process:** Removing names and other identifying factors from resumes before they're reviewed can help increase diversity. A blind review process helps you focus on qualifications without letting unconscious bias affect who gets invited to interviews.
- **Analyze your makeup:** Gather statistics on the diversity you currently have on your staff. Look for underrepresented groups to guide your recruiting methods.
- **Hire for culture contribution:** You often hear about culture fit when hiring, but culture contribution is a better approach. Culture fit insinuates that new employees should fit in with the established culture. Culture contribution means new employees bring something new to the company culture while still aligning with your core values.

Reduce Workplace Discrimination

This includes taking such actions as educating employees throughout the organization about what is discrimination and how to respond to discrimination in the workplace, and developing and enforcing policies that prohibit discrimination and inappropriate behavior.

- Take the time to learn about and accept the nature of bias and learn to slow down and be mindful about how our thoughts and decisions, and even company policies and processes, may be influenced by bias.
- Establish internal diversity and inclusion practices.
- Expand your company's outreach to marginalized people.

Equity in the Workplace

Equity in the workplace means that all employees are given fair, impartial opportunities so everyone can be successful. That doesn't mean all employees get identical opportunities. Equity at work levels the playing field for all employees, which means some opportunities are different for certain employees. It takes into consideration the barriers some employees have and the advantages other employees have to determine how to give everyone fair opportunities.

Defining Equal Work

There are three kinds of equal work:

- **like work** is the same or broadly similar. It involves similar tasks which require similar knowledge and skills, and any differences in the work are not of practical importance.
- **work rated as equivalent** has been rated under a valid job evaluation scheme as being of equal value in terms of how demanding it is.
- **work of equal value** is not similar and has not been rated as equivalent, but is of equal value in terms of demands such as effort, skill and decision-making.

How to improve equity

Try these methods to improve equity in the workplace:

- **Provide development opportunities for all:** Work with every employee to identify development opportunities that can help them grow. Individualize career plans for your employees to give everyone an opportunity, starting from where they are now.
- **Ensure pay equity:** Stop asking for previous salaries and using that as the basis for an offer. If the candidate was paid unfairly at previous companies, you're continuing that cycle. Establish salary guidelines with pay bands to offer equitable salaries for various positions.
- **Offer advancement opportunities:** Hiring a diverse workforce without being equitable with advancement opportunities can hurt DEI overall. Consider diversity when hiring for upper

management positions or offering internal promotions to avoid keeping your diverse employees stuck in entry-level or lower positions.

Equity in Workplace Policies and Procedures

Employers should keep pay equity in mind when developing workplace policies and procedures. Consider how the business determines starting pay, merit increases, promotions, one-off increases and incentives.

Are these decisions designed to incorporate objective reasons?

Are they applied consistently?

Setting controls for salaries offered at the hiring stage may prevent unintended disparities. Employers should provide training to their executives and managers about how to make fair pay decisions to ensure they understand what pay equity is and why it's important.

How To Improve Inclusion

Creating an inclusive work environment takes ongoing effort. Here are some ways to improve inclusion in the workplace:

- **Establish workplace policies:** Create a policy on inclusion for your company. Address known issues that have prevented inclusion for your employees in the past.
- **Focus on company culture:** Improve the company culture to emphasize psychological safety for all employees. Create an environment where everyone feels valued and all ideas are encouraged.
- **Rethink benefits:** Make employee benefits more flexible and compatible for a diverse workforce. Offer floating holidays instead of standard holidays, so employees can have time off for the holidays they choose to celebrate. Choose health insurance plans that offer benefits to LGBTQ+ employees.
- **Develop extensive onboarding:** Creating a supportive onboarding program for every new hire, including assigning mentors, can help them feel more comfortable. The program has a built-in method of helping new hires learn about the company culture and meet their coworkers. They have support throughout the first three months or longer.
- **Honor and celebrate differences:** Don't be afraid to notice and celebrate the differences among employees. Make it easier for people who are different to be themselves. For example, if you offer free snacks to employees, include Kosher snacks or have a separate refrigerator designated for Kosher food to support people who eat Kosher.

Ways To Improve DEI in the Workplace

Focusing on the individual pieces of DEI can help you improve, but it's also helpful to have an overall DEI strategy. Here are some ways to support and grow DEI in your company:

- **Form a DEI committee:** Create a team dedicated to developing DEI. This team can analyze the current situation and establish and maintain DEI initiatives. Include employees from all levels and backgrounds to ensure your DEI team is as diverse as possible.
- **Survey your staff:** It's not always easy to understand how well you're doing on DEI from your perspective. You need input from all staff members to see how they feel about the current situation. This creates your baseline and gives you guidance for training and initiatives to improve DEI.
- **Set goals:** Once you understand the current feelings on DEI, set goals to improve. Even if you get positive feedback and are already incorporating DEI initiatives, you can always set new goals to improve more.
- **Create a budget:** If you're serious about building DEI in the workplace, put a budget in place for DEI initiatives. The money goes toward training and staff time to educate your staff and make changes.
- **Investigate all complaints:** Listen to your employees when they bring up instances of discrimination or bias in the workplace. Handle situations with specific employees and use them as inspiration for the training that all employees receive.
- **Implement training:** Employees at all levels need training in DEI. It's not something that only managers can do. Everyone needs to help to create an equitable, inclusive environment.
- **Balance all three:** Remember that diversity, equity and inclusion are all important and need to go together. Focusing on one and ignoring the others can cause DEI to suffer.
- **Recognize that it's ongoing:** DEI isn't something that has a finish line or a recognizable endpoint when you can say your work is done. It's something you always need to strive for and improve.

Creating a Positive Culture

- Employers should provide mechanisms by which employees can report instances of discrimination or harassment in the workplace.
- Set the tone from the top that any form of discrimination or harassment is not acceptable, and that the company will investigate promptly, and take appropriate actions, with respect to inappropriate behavior.
- Reassess whether the legal and HR personnel are properly equipped to handle and track incoming complaints and sufficiently empowered to investigate.