

Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

A diverse workplace plays a critical role in a company's ability to grow, adapt and sustain themselves in modern business. Whether conscious or unconscious, many factors can stop companies from having a racially and ethnically diverse workplace and this can lead to a discriminatory hiring process. It is important that employers:

- work on the implementation and development of their organisations diversity policy.
- actively work to raise awareness amongst themselves by supporting co-workers whenever an issue related to race and ethnicity is raised.

Benefits of a diverse workplace:

- Increased innovation, greater flexibility and adaptability in a global world
- Prevention of marginalisation and exclusion
- Improved social cohesion

Diversity and inclusion strategies to look out for:

- Reporting goals and measuring progress
- Strengthening anti-discriminatory practices
- Creating employee networks (resource groups, community outreach groups)
- Creating metrics to measure progress such as promotion rates, compensation levels, turnover etc.
- Integrating diversity and inclusion strategies in all levels of leadership

Gender Diversity

- Despite making up 50% of the work population, women only generate 37% of GDP globally.
- 5% of women are in CEO positions, men earn 20% more than their female counterparts.

It is important to think about gender diversity within an organisation. Female leadership and diversity need to be prioritized and women deserve to feel that they work in a company that provides them with same opportunities for development and advancement as their male counterparts.

When researching a company, it is important to take into consideration how many women do they have in senior positions? This affects the representation of women at lower levels of employment. If there are no women in senior positions to fight and advocate for other women, it can lead to gender-based discrimination in the workplace.

There are many things a gender diverse organisation signal:

- Competent management
- Greater company performance
- Direct representation
- Equal opportunities in the office - increased ambition and productivity.

Challenges faced by women in a male dominated industry:

- Lack of mentoring and career development opportunities
- Pervasive stereotypes
- Masculine cultural norms
- Harassment

Industries that lack female representation:

- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Transportation and Storage
- Technology
- Mechanical Engineering
- Architecture

Religion

For many individuals who follow a religion, their faith is often associated with their values, actions and behaviours in their personal lives and in the workplace. Employees should feel comfortable sharing their religious beliefs in the workplace, however this openness can cause conflict in the workplace amongst employees as disagreements can arise. This can cause an employer to walk a fine line between non-discrimination on religious grounds and fair treatment to all employees.

Religious Beliefs can dictate:

- How an employee dresses
- What food an employee eats
- Leave on days of religious importance

Things Employers can do:

- Ensure the company values and practices are not aligned to any particular religious group
- Create spaces - accommodating religious practices by having physical rooms employees can use to practice their religious beliefs. I.e., prayer rooms.
- Diversity training

Disability

Disability Inclusion is important and is more than an organisation hiring employees with disabilities. They create an environment where all employees are valued for their strengths and offers employees with disabilities whether visible or invisible equal opportunities to succeed in their role. Organisations that are not proactive about disability inclusion often lose out on qualified talent, due to bias during applications and interview processes.

Things Employers can do:

- Provide accommodations for employees with disabilities to do their jobs effectively
- Create a barrier free workplace by making information, communication and technology physically and attitudinal (behaviourally) accessible
- Make sure there is internal and external communication around disability inclusion and their commitment to training on workplace related disability issues

Sexual Orientation

Employers have a key role in creating a fair and inclusive workplace and all employees must understand that it is their personal responsibility to treat colleagues with respect. Employers can do this through implementing a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying, harassment and discrimination and ensuring consequences for breaking behavioural codes towards sexual orientation and gender identity are clear at all staff.



What should Employers do?

- Ensure all staff are aware of how to report instances of bullying, harassment or discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Make sure line managers understand how they can support trans LGBTQ+ staff and are trained on how to challenge any inappropriate behaviour.
- Work with LGBTQ+ employee networks to understand the importance of inclusion and diversity.
- Ensure recruitment and selection processes are not open to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. I.e., avoiding stereotyping through the language they use in job advertising.

Questions to ask:

Ask these questions to multiple people representing the organisation to get a full understanding of the organisations D&I commitment.

- How do you as an employer support your employees? Especially those who work internationally and are subjected to bias and prejudice in their country of employment.
- What do you do to advocate for diversity and inclusion? What steps do you take to make sure bias is eliminated from the hiring process?
- Why is diversity and inclusion important to this organisation?
- How have you demonstrated your commitment to diversity and inclusion? Examples might be Diversity and Inclusion scheme, staff networks e.g., BAME, mentoring schemes etc.
- In what ways do you feel it is appropriate to incorporate topics related to diversity in the workplace?
- What efforts have you made, or been involved with, to foster cultural competence?
- What does the promotion and evaluation process look like and who oversees these decisions?
- What tangible goals does the organisation have surrounding diversity, equality and inclusion? Who is responsible for making sure these goals are met?