

WORKPLACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION - A SHIFT IN MINDSET

Abstract

In this chapter, we will get information about the importance of 'Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion' popularly known as DEI in companies. Understanding the impact that DEI has made in organizations in the past few years has become very important and will be of top priority in the coming future. When companies embrace DEI at an organizational level there are huge benefits for everyone including increased productivity, innovation, and new opportunities, and faster problem-solving with the richness of opinion. Companies with solid DEI initiatives enjoy all of the benefits that come with a diverse employee base. Working with people who are different from you is also a great way to expand your boundaries and learn about people who are different from you. This can go a long way to help you achieve personal growth.

'A diverse mix of voices leads to better discussions, decisions, and outcomes for everyone'. – **Sundar Pichai**

Keywords: Workplace Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.

Author

Minakshi Lohani

Assistant professor

Department of Commerce and
Management

J.K College of Science and Commerce

minakshi.lohani@gmail.com



Image source: Shutterstock

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, fostering equality and diversity is a major challenge for the entire society. Businesses that understand the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at workplace need to frame policies and strategies in this regard that can help companies to prosper. Workplaces with diverse workforces are more innovative. Researchers have shown that diverse teams are more innovative than analogous teams. The reason for this is diversity in teams can have a broader range of outlooks and experiences, which can unravel problems more creatively. Along with diversity, Inclusion brings a sense of belongingness and satisfaction that they are being heard and of course, equity makes people more encouraged as they can apply and work fearlessly because they now know everyone will be given an equal opportunity and respect in all aspects.

Let us see what is DEI

II. DIVERSITY

Diversity is bringing together different types of people. This includes gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, communities, sexual orientation, place of practice, and practice type, physical abilities and ideologies. An organization creates a diverse workforce by recruiting employees from various social and cultural backgrounds. This ensures that varied voices, experiences, and opinions contribute to building the company. It widens the talent pool.

“Diversity is a fact, but inclusion is a choice we make every day. As leaders, we have to put out the message that we embrace and not just tolerate diversity.” –**Nellie Borrero (Managing Director, Senior Strategic Advisor – Global Inclusion & Diversity at Accenture)**

III. WHY IS DIVERSITY IMPORTANT?

With employees from all different ages, genders, races, sexual preferences, religions, ethnicities, abilities, and cultural backgrounds, bringing ideas to the table, your products and services will serve a wider, more inclusive audience and this is essential because this leads to

innovation. When everyone in your organization is the same and agrees to all the decisions and others' ideologies, innovation will rarely happen. For example, L'Oréal company has stated its commitment to gender equity and the inclusion of LGBTQ+ employees. Also women there comprise 68% of L'Oréal total workforce

IV. INCLUSION

Inclusion involves encouraging a range of perspectives, ideas, and views to be heard and celebrated. A company's growth can be improved by ensuring everyone knows their opinions are valued and heard, which will lead them to continue contributing valuable and innovative ideas.

“Inclusion is not a matter of political correctness. It is the key to growth.” — **Jesse Jackson**

V. WHY IS INCLUSION VITAL?

It can be clearly understood from the above quote that, it is not just the companies looking ‘good to others’, but they are actually ‘being good’. An inclusive work environment promotes open communication, insight sharing, and the ability to contribute more to the organization.

VI. EQUITY

Equity and Equality are different terms. Having ‘equality’ means treating everyone equally, no matter how they live or who they are.’

‘Equity’ means treating the needs of people differently in some circumstances so that they can also get equal opportunity. No matter what their identity, all people have the chance to grow, contribute, and develop. For example, a person might ask to work from home a few days a week because of a medical condition.

VII. WHY IS EQUITY NECESSARY?

Equity in companies helps in recognizing and appreciating the efforts of different people and gives them equal opportunities irrespective of their background. This makes the employees feel safe, respected, and valued at work, and thus they become successful in their role. Implementing equity in companies also provides necessary support and resources based on individuals' needs. This improves the overall efficiency of employees as they feel highly motivated, and productivity increases for the company.

“Equality is leaving the door open for anyone who has the means to approach it; equity is ensuring there is a pathway to that door for those who need it.” –Caroline Belden (Writer, ‘The Inclusion Solution’)

VIII. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE D, E, AND I IN THE WORKPLACE

1. Educate Leaders in the Organization: Introducing and defining your company's D, E, and I policies is your responsibility as an HR professional. Educating and discussing these

concepts in detail must be conducted in workplace meetings and educational sessions. Leaders need to be responsible for their behaviors, actions, and decisions so that they can set a good example. They should also be informed about various styles of leadership that can transform and shape the careers of employees and contribute to inclusion in the workplace. It is therefore essential that your managers and leaders are trained in inclusive policies so that lower-level employees feel included when dealing with their seniors and other staff members.

2. **Forming a Body:** It can be an appropriate step to form a body of dedicated members who are committed to inclusivity in the company. Also, the body set should be diverse enough. There should be a good representation of members from different geographies, genders, ages, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, and races in the company, and thus we can hear voices, perspectives, and opinions from all walks of life.
3. **Focus on Hiring Diversely:** The hiring and recruiting process itself should start with Diversity. Companies should plan to reach out to underrepresented groups while recruiting. Companies will be able to tap more talented people if they hire more women, people of color, differently-abled people, etc
4. **Culture Add Instead of Culture Fit Approach:** A Culture Fit approach focuses on cultural friendliness. Cultural fit is defined as sharing the same behaviors, values, interests, and work preferences. To fit into a culture, a person must have some sort of sense of belonging. The only problem is that it lacks diversity. On the other side, welcoming new voices and talents that will positively impact the company's culture is a Cultural addition. The Culture Add approach can make both employees and employers realize their unconscious biases that become a hurdle in making vital decisions
5. **Connect and Communicate:** Diversity does not guarantee Equity and Inclusion. The company may have a highly talented, diverse team, but it may not ensure equity and inclusivity. The best way to achieve it is through proper, regular, and effective communication and connection. At all levels, an employee must feel included and have their words, ideas, and suggestions valued. In today's digital working culture, employees working in remote areas should be taken seriously. Continuous connection and communication should be made.
6. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training:** Workplaces must provide diversity, equity, and inclusion training to all employees.

The goal of this activity is to educate both employers and employees about how to work with people from a variety of religious, geographical, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds, which will make them more aware. In addition to learning specific skills, they also improve their ability to communicate and collaborate with others.

7. **Encourage and Enable Creativity and Innovation:** The workplace benefits from increased creativity and innovation, all thanks to a diverse workforce.

In order to foster innovation and creativity, employers should encourage employees to contribute their best ideas. Making employees feel seen and appreciated will lead to new growth and success opportunities.

- 8. Keep a Check on Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives:** In order for D&I initiatives to be effective, leaders should periodically review them.

Measuring employee productivity, employee morale, and employee engagement is the best way to evaluate if a company's diversity and inclusion strategies are working. It should clearly give a glimpse of how well-accepted, appreciated, and welcomed employees feel in the organization.

IX. BARRIERS TO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Many companies are already working toward the achievement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at their workplaces, while others are striving for it. What hurdles create equity, inclusion, and belonging in our organizations? The peculiarities of human behavior, organizational structures, and our shared background create barriers that, when understood, can be deconstructed.

X. BARRIERS TO DEI PROGRESS:

- 1. Implicit Prejudice:** Implicit prejudice refers to the idea that a difference between various characteristics, such as gender, race, and culture, can be linked without conscious awareness. It means that we're automatically drawn to those who are similar to us, in most cases. Such a situation could be racial, gender, or sexual orientation. A major barrier to the integration and diversity of workplaces is this automatic stereotyping or judging. As these biases are, by nature, very unconscious happenings, they may be very challenging to identify and control. By educating employees on unconscious bias and carefully considering decisions about things like hiring and promotions, employers can help eliminate this barrier to diversity at work.
- 2. Lack of a Virtuous Mentor:** Employees are unable to feel included in a workplace if there are no relatable mentors or role models whom they can look up to. If your management team consists entirely of people of one race or gender, people from different backgrounds will not feel at home in your company. When employees are empowered and inspired by someone who comes from a similar background, especially if he or she is a minority, a more productive and innovative culture will develop. For instance, when a company implements a policy to encourage diversity by hiring more women and people of color, it can lead to increased employee engagement, lower levels of turnover, and a more positive work environment.
- 3. Communication Block:** Language barriers in the workplace can present challenges for both employers and employees. Communication problems may occur among teams in businesses that hire a culturally diverse workforce. For employers, language barriers can make it difficult to communicate job duties or expectations to employees. Employees may experience frustration, exclusion, and unimportance as a result. Organizations must maintain a steady stream of communication with employees and their supervisors to

understand what their unique demands and schedules may require in order to ensure that cultural diversity does not lead to communication failure. By doing this, you can guarantee that everyone feels heard and respected, which will improve the environment.

4. **Lack of Training:** When an organization strives to be more inclusive and diverse in the workplace, all of the aforementioned obstacles are fairly typical. The education of both current and prospective personnel lies at the heart of many problems. A balanced and inclusive workplace can only be formed when the employees are well trained and the training programs are specifically designed keeping in mind the situation and needs of the employee. We know now that a culturally diverse and inclusive workplace has been shown to result in more innovation, higher levels of efficiency, and, ultimately, a better place to work. The path to a more diverse workforce is made clearer by providing excellent training, maintaining open lines of communication, and ensuring relatable role models are present throughout the organization.
5. **Budgetary Restrictions:** It is crucial for any organization to create an appropriate budget. But people often fail to understand the vitality of budgets in implementing D, E, and I. A budget should include items boosting DEI like hiring diverse candidates, holding training sessions on unconscious bias, and creating employee resource groups. By implementing these steps, firms can demonstrate their commitment to establishing a more inclusive atmosphere and contribute to developing a more diverse workforce. As a result, the company's outcomes may improve.

XI. ACCORDING TO RESEARCH BY GLASSDOOR, THE BELOW COMPANIES HAVE BEEN HIGHLY RATED FOR SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTING DEI.

- Tata Consultancy Services
- Accenture
- Infosys
- Amazon
- Deloitte
- Capgemini
- IBM

XII. GREAT PLACE TO WORK CERTIFIED ORGANIZATIONS

A Great Place To Work® workplace is one that fosters, sustains, and recognizes a High-Trust, High-Performance Culture™.

A few companies certified by ‘Great Place To Work’ organization are:

- Jindal Power Ltd
- MetLife India (PNB MetLife & MetLife Global Operations Shared Services)
- JK Tyre & Industries Limited
- L&T Technology Services
- HIL Limited – A CK Birla Group Company
- Reliance Industries Limited
- Hindalco Industries Limited

- Ericsson India Pvt Ltd
- TVS Motor Company Ltd
- Mastercard Incorporated

XIII. THE REAL DATA

As a conclusion, I would like to share insights into companies around the world that have successfully implemented DEI at their workplaces and are seeing positive results. It is my pleasure to have lovely people in my life who helped me to complete this chapter by sharing their company's story, which made it clearer, and so as a part of THE REAL DATA, you can see how DEI has been implemented in their workplaces and how their employees' performance has improved as well as their organization's overall growth and success.

1. ABC Consultants is a pioneer in senior-level and CXO hiring, serving the industry for over 50 years. Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity have been in the gene of ABC since the inception of the firm; however, in the past few years, the firm has been making conscious efforts to bring diverse talent into the organization. Recruitment as an Industry has more female workers than many other industries; hence, one motive is to attract enough men and other diverse people to strike a balance.

ABC creates various learning opportunities across functions and genders to ensure the development of resources at all levels. The leadership team of ABC Consultants has a good mix of females and males across practices. We have long-tenured people servicing ABC for years, which is a marker of growth, equality, and succession. ABC Consultants is “GREAT PLACE TO WORK” certified and is among the few organizations offering exceptional support to their staff. At ABC we don't track work hours, and we have unlimited paid leaves. ABC Consultants has been successful in creating a wonderful culture and work environment by continuing engagement with the employees and creating unbiased, equal growth opportunities, irrespective of gender.

_____Prakash Pandey,- Business Leader for Pharmaceutical, Healthcare, and Life Sciences Practice, **ABC Consultants**, India, has 12 years of experience across executive searches, corporate, and consulting.

2. As a global business, Carsales is committed to fostering an inclusive work environment where all employees feel valued, respected, and have equal opportunities. Our organization celebrates and embraces diversity in a variety of ways, including age, gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, relationship status, disability, physical ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or knowledge and skillset. Annual equal-opportunity training is required of all employees to instill these values. According to the March 2022 engagement survey, Carsales scored a 95% favorable response to the Diversity statements.

As a business, Carsales operates in two industries where women have traditionally been underrepresented – automotive and technology. From the perspective of the tech industry and driving interest in STEM careers, its employees have devoted a significant amount of time to focusing on improving and maintaining connections with young women and encouraging them to pursue careers in IT. Carsales has a formal gender

diversity strategy in place, has received a Workforce Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Employer of Choice citation, and has been certified as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace for eight consecutive years. It has active employee representation in agencies like WGEA Pay Equity and Inclusive Australia. It has also maintained 40% female representation at the Australian Senior Leadership Team level. 50% of promotions and internal appointments went to female team members. As part of its new Women on the Move program, Carsales has also introduced a Women in Tech group comprised of females in technical, non-technical, and general business roles across the Carsales group. This program aims to equip participants with the skills needed to build a personal brand, set career goals, maximize strengths, communicate assertively, demonstrate influence, and build network connections.

Carsales is also committed to supporting employees who experience domestic violence by providing a workplace environment that promotes their safety by implementing a Family and Domestic Violence Policy, educating its employees, and ensuring that its leaders have been effectively trained in recognizing and preventing violence. On the other hand, to help ensure all new parents have the flexibility and time they need with their new family member, Carsales offers 18 weeks of primary caregiver leave with additional leaves upon return to work and four weeks of secondary caregiver leave. This helps the employees when they need some extra paid days off to adjust to balancing work and home commitments. This year, it also became one of the first 70 organizations in Australia to be certified as a Family workplace. Achieving this accolade recognizes that its policies, practices, guidelines, culture, and leadership support its employees regardless of what stage of life they are in their family.

It is Carsales' goal to promote inclusivity by welcoming the LGBTIQ+ community through its Welcome Here Project and by hosting inspiring guest speakers on days such as International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia to educate and raise awareness of some of the challenges that the LGBTIQ+ community faces. It offers up to six weeks of paid gender-affirming care leave, which is available to anyone who is affirming, has affirmed, or is seeking to affirm their gender and may be used for surgery, medical appointments, counseling, or other related purposes.

Carsales believes in creating a culture where its people can do their best work, irrespective of their physical location, and thus offers all its employees the autonomy to choose where they work. 93% of the employees feel genuinely supported to make use of flexible working arrangements, making it a Great Place to Work® certified company for five consecutive years.

_____ **SayaleePote, a Software Developer in Carsales, Australia.**

3. Inclusion and equity are crucial to the success of the change your company needs. Diversity is the beginning of the change, but it won't be successful without it. We implement it in the following ways:
 - **Start by Targeting Teams:** The DEI implementation strategy is a top-down approach. All of the C-suite efforts should be carried out first, and then you should work your way down. Along the way, focus on teams rather than the complete business if you want to thrive.

- **End Unconscious Discrimination:** Although it is usually pretty clear when someone is intentionally biased, unconscious bias can occasionally be difficult to spot. It means that sometimes the bias and discrimination against a select few are so ingrained within us that we do not even notice it. At a very basic level, the recruitment and the employee assessments are done via a structured and pre-planned format
- **Turning to Tech:** Examine data from across the business to evaluate trends in talent management, retention, and diversity, among other things. Tech can even be used to reveal erratic trends in gender prejudice, remuneration, salary, awards, benefits, and performance evaluations. Consequently, you will be able to put into practice the proper DEI tactics to combat the incorrect measurements.

_____ **Rohan Choudhary, Senior Data Engineer at Adobe**

4. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are crucial aspects of fostering a positive and enriching learning environment in any educational institution, including undergraduate colleges. Embracing diversity enriches the educational experience as students and faculty interact with individuals from various cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, and abilities. At Tilak Education Society's JK College of Science & Commerce, Ghansoli, we believe diversity fosters critical thinking and creativity, collaboration, and teamwork in an increasingly globalized world, breaks down stereotypes and biases, promotes understanding and empathy, and, most interestingly, makes the campus vibrant and dynamic.

On our college campus, we have always believed in providing opportunities to our students in such a manner that a positive campus environment is created and students are treated in a fair and just manner. It helps increase retention rates as students succeed with these opportunities. This promotes equity in our campus.

Having a diverse group of students or giving them opportunities to excel in this world is not sufficient. At Tilak Education Society's JK College of Science & Commerce, Ghansoli, inclusion is about creating an environment where every individual feels welcome, respected, and valued while actively engaging and involving them in all aspects of college life. We believe in fostering a sense of belonging, active participation, and diversity in carrying out all curricular and co-curricular activities.

Our goal is to create a sense of community on our campus. Even though we are a linguistic minority college, we encourage diversity in our admissions and impart a curriculum that is inclusive in its purpose. Our faculty and staff and the support services we provide ensure that we create a campus culture that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. The campus is a safe space for all our students, and our constant aim is to sensitize and enable our students to have open conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion to foster understanding and empathy by conducting seminars, conferences, and workshops.

To conclude, we are molding citizens for the globalized world, and our students must have a deeper understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Having such a

perspective will enable them to become part of the solution to the problems that the world is facing today!

_____ Dr. Bindu S.Tambe, Academic Administrator, Tilak Education Society,
Navi Mumbai

XIV. CONCLUSION

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are no longer optional. Diversity and equality are essential in today's workplace, and ensuring people from diverse backgrounds feel included is crucial. Everyone gains greatly when businesses adopt DEI at the organizational level. These benefits include higher productivity, more innovation, new opportunities, and quicker problem-solving with a diversity of opinions. Businesses with strong DEI programs reap the rewards of having a diverse workforce. Working with individuals who are different from you is a fantastic opportunity to broaden your horizons and gain knowledge of others. This can significantly aid in your quest for personal development.

Organizations must always survey forms, frameworks, and work cultures to dispense with obstructions in any frame. From contracting forms to exit customs to advancements or preparation, pioneers must survey each perspective to break even with openings within the working environment. This would make the benefits of DEI more unmistakable and relatable for perusers and might motivate more companies to prioritize differences, values, and incorporation in their work environments. Hence, a shift in mindset for fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is a must.

REFERENCES

- [1] <https://www.cultureally.com/blog/54-diversity-and-inclusion-quotes-to-inspire-a-better-company-culture>
- [2] <https://www.peoplesmatters.in/article/diversity/iwd-2023-diversity-in-leadership-is-a-must-to-build-equality-in-the-workplace-says-deepti-varma-vp-amazon-stores-india-37124>
- [3] <https://blog.vantagecircle.com/diversity-and-inclusion/>
- [4] <https://www.peoplesmatters.in/article/diversity/iwd-2023-diversity-in-leadership-is-a-must-to-build-equality-in-the-workplace-says-deepti-varma-vp-amazon-stores-india-37124>
- [5] <https://www.croton.com/2023/02/22/five-barriers-to-dei-progress-and-how-to-knock-them-down/>
- [6] <https://www.greatplacetowork.in/indias-best-workplace-in-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>
- [7] [Careers.carsales.com.au](https://careers.carsales.com.au)
- [8] [Positivehire.storychief.io](https://positivehire.storychief.io)
- [9] company-announcements.afr.com