

Creating an Engaged Company Culture with Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.



"Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard."

— Liz Fosslien & Mollie West Duffy, authors of 'No Hard Feelings'



There has never been a time in history when diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) has been more important to company culture than now. The heightened focus, plus the desire of company leaders to directly address the impact on and for their teams, creates an opportunity to bring about change; and an opportunity to develop the strongest, best performing, and most engaged employees ever. This is a change for the better. As Jenifer Berman states in Business Insider, "companies are prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion, or DEI. They're putting their people first, turning intent into action to create new opportunities for diverse talent, and committing to changing their business outlook, processes, and ways of working on a fundamental level."¹

And to be clear, DEI isn't just a program; it's not a training course, and it's not a stat or quota to attain. DEI efforts need to be part of your company's core values and embedded in the ethos of your organization. Your employees need to intrinsically know that they belong (belonging is the third level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs) and they need to be recognized for their voice, for their ideas, for their successes, and for their differences to feel connected and part of the organization. Recognition programs, whether formal or informal, are a tangible way to help impart and validate that sense of belonging, which will greatly impact long-term engagement.

What's changed is why DEI matters to your culture.

Workplace dynamics have changed over the years and none more than last year. With change, comes new opportunities. Companies have responded positively to the way they source talent, the way teams work together, and the way employees are "present" at work. Here's a little more detail about that:

- ***Our workforces have changed*** – the people on our teams are a mix of genders, races, ages, demographics and ethnicities. Did you know there are technically four generations in the workforce today according to some sources?
- ***The way we work together has changed*** – working across cultures in different countries; globality is a thing and it's not uncommon to be working across time zones or sharing roles across the pond.
- ***The way we go to work has changed*** – companies are more open to remote workforces – remote work isn't new; it's just proved itself to be more efficient for some companies. While plenty of people still "go in" to work (hospital systems, plants, retail, academics, etc.), Covid-19 proved that you can still do business with people, while they can shorten their commute.

Consider this: Your recognition strategy directly impacts inclusion and belonging. A recognition moment validates your employees and lets them know, *I see you, I hear you, I value your contributions.*

Optimizing the impact of DEI.

Improved business performance

DEI can impact your company's success. In one research study, McKinsey & Company along with SHRM looked at how companies performed based on different levels of workplace diversity. According to Sydney Ly, at 15Five, "they found that companies that exhibit gender and ethnic diversity are, respectively, 15% and 35% more likely to outperform less diverse peers. The same study found that organizations with more racial and gender diversity bring in more sales revenue, more customers and higher profits." ²

Improved employee engagement and happy people everywhere

Numerous articles have been published espousing the virtues of building a diverse, equal and inclusive workforce on employee engagement. In a paper from 2018, Gallup notes that "employees who feel they can be themselves in the workplace have been found to be more engaged and have higher self-reported performance than employees who feel otherwise."³ Bottom line? Engaged employees make happy employees, and happy employees make happy customers (and happy customers make happy company revenues).

Improved energy, increased idea generation

Work doesn't have to be work. It should be fun, engaging, interactive and productive. Generating new ideas and finding opportunities for improvement comes from a broadened perspective and open-minded views, whether at work or in school. According to Nancy Aebersold, founder and executive director of the Higher Education Recruitment Consortium, "A diversity of perspectives produces a more energized and dynamic academic environment. People with different life experiences ask different questions. They enrich dialogs and may ignite contestation or disruption of the status quo, which fuels the creation of new knowledge, innovation and deeper understandings."

Do the right thing. Recognize the virtues of DEI, understand the impact on your company culture, and increase employee engagement with your diversity, equity and inclusion principles.



Remember, April is Celebrate Diversity Month - recognize and honor the diversity surrounding us all.

¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/companies-diversity-equity-inclusion-embedding-into-culture-2020-12>

² <https://www.15five.com/blog/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>

³ <https://peopleadmin.com/2016/09/dei-why-it-matters-and-whats-standing-in-the-way/>