



BEST PRACTICES AND RESOURCES FOR PROMOTING DIVERSITY

The initiative and strategy for implementing a more diverse protocol for hiring and promotion may fail if the message, and indeed the practice, are not actively supported throughout the organization. Across the spectrum of the organization, the consistent of practice must be promoted among first-line supervisors, mid-management, and the individual employees.

Leadership and Cultural Change. The role of leadership is essential to creating real change in an organization. The executive offices always set the tone for the entire organization. The managers and supervisors who report up are likely to model the behavior of their leaders. There needs to be dedication to the value of diversity, not just lip service.

Approach Like any Other Business Problem: Use Hard Data. Diversity goals and programs to reduce gender inequality are typically based on general data or cursory surveys. Companies need to seek data to understand their specific problems and then build tailored equity programs. When a solution is implemented, companies need to measure outcomes of both behavior and advancement.

Drop the Diversity Goal and Get Specific. Diversity is often used as a euphemism. Goals are frequently set using the word diversity, such as “we are committed to diversity in our upper management,” instead of specifics: “we are working to ensure there are more women and people of color in upper-management roles.” Dropping the euphemism requires us to be more explicit and accurate in our goals, which can lead to more applicable and accurate dialog and strategies.¹ Specific objectives need to be contingent on data in order to benchmark them against measurable outcomes and evaluate performance. Otherwise, it can be too easy to keep repeating the mantra without making real progress or change.

Accountability. While many companies report that they are addressing issues of diversity and that they support equality, they do not hold leadership across the organization accountable for their actions in the day-to-day work of hiring and management. Change does not happen through talk but through action. Ensuring diversity is a priority on the

agenda of leadership can have a huge impact as can holding managers accountable for implementing changes in their teams. Providing updates on goals through team check-in (such as “Friday Feedback” meetings) can create greater accountability for leaders and teams to ensure progress is being made and to deal with any hurdles that might arise.

Eliminating Sexual Harassment and Creating a Welcoming Environment. Companies need to be serious in eliminating sexual harassment. The best plans for company success can be interrupted if the prohibition of sexual harassment is not taken seriously and addressed. Many organizations have a plan but how effective is that plan? If the plan is watching a video as part of a new hire check list, once the employee views the video, is that sufficient? For the message and the practice to be implemented, real conversation on the topic should be part of the new hire discussion and reinforced throughout the company. This helps the employee and the organization understand that the message is part of a methodology to be practiced every day. Communicating this commitment and educating all employees on company policy in this regard are critical in order to provide a continuous and cooperative working environment for all employees. Aligning with the business problem approach to diversity, companies should seek data on these questions: “Are female new employees feeling welcomed?” and “Are off-color jokes tolerated?” and “Are all people given respect or just tolerated?” Seemingly small things can create an unwelcoming work environment that drives good candidates to go elsewhere.

¹ Bolger, Meg (2017), “What’s the Difference between Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity?” General Assembly, October 24 [accessible at <https://generalassembly.com/blog/diversity-inclusion-equity-differences-in-meaning/>]