Diversity & Inclusion – The Way Forward

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In our last article, we talked about gaining leadership buy-in through building an understanding of how Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) is crucial to business success and helping them discover their own connections to D&I. Once you have leadership on board and have outlined your D&I business case, it's time to turn your attention to the rest of the organization.

To get started, it's important to first assess what you need structurally. Ask yourself questions like:

- What does success look like for your D&I program? How will you measure growth and progress both incrementally and as a whole?
- Is your EEO statement truly inclusive, or does it only follow government mandated categories (race, ethnicity, gender, etc.). Does it include military families, the LGBTQ community and more?
- **How will you appeal to all employees**, including those who don't see themselves as "diverse". For example, how will you engage with white males? We all have a diversity story in some way.
- What type of training or education will you need to roll out to the organization to ensure everyone has a solid foundation regarding what diversity and inclusion means. How will you help build understanding of key concepts like unconscious bias?
- Are there any types of groups that can help? Many organizations have Employee or Business Resource Groups to better understand the needs of various demographics, and to help the business in reaching out to various communities (either as customers or potential talent).

Once you've gotten a firm understanding of where your organization is at and have identified a plan to fill any gaps, it's time to start spreading the word. A few things to keep in mind:

- Start small – find out who will be supportive early on and leverage them as allies to help build consensus and energy around your D&I efforts.
- Make sure your messaging, communications, etc. are fully inclusive—**diversity doesn't "stick" without inclusion**. We all have blind spots – get a few eyes on whatever you send out to the organization to make sure you're not unintentionally excluding anybody.
- You may wish to engage in awareness campaigns, but avoid "window dressing" activities like diversity potlucks or diversity days to simply "celebrate diversity". Make the focus on inclusion first and then diversity. Ensure all engagement efforts in the organization align well with your overall strategy for D&I.
- Ensure leaders remain actively engaged. The employee population will need to see their visible support. Think through how they'll be involved and provide any coaching or guidance to help them be successful in this role (which may be new territory for some).

As your D&I efforts settle into a good rhythm, be sure to have regular feedback loops with key stakeholders, so you can re-evaluate and adjust your programs as needed. Be open to

change—this is a journey! Your organization will continue to evolve in its D&I efforts and strategy. Bersin by Deloitte, a division of the professional services giant that consults on talent management, **puts companies in four stages of "diversity and inclusion maturity"**:

The Bersin by Deloitte Diversity and Inclusion Maturity Model

Level 4, Inclusive Culture (12%)
All employees take responsibility for D&I

Level 3, Leader-Owned D&I (15%)
Leaders advocate and take responsibility for D&I

Level 2, Programmatic D&I (31%)
D&I programs employed, but uneven leadership buy-in

Level 1, Compliance-Focused Diversity (42%)
Companies focused on D&I for compliance reasons

Data source: Bersin by Deloitte, Deloitte Consulting LLP

As you look forward to future stages, consider how D&I can evolve at your organization:

● Could this become a differentiator for you as an employer attracting and retaining top talent?
● Could your Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) evolve into Business Resource Groups (BRGs) to **add value to the business and promote revenue generation?**
● Could this be a way **for your organization to drive social change in the world**?

Whatever your organization decides, ensure it is authentic and consistent with your values and identity. Embrace it!