

## 6 Ways to Cultivate a Workplace Culture That Inspires Diversity and Inclusion

[Heidi Lynne Kurter](#) | June 30, 2020

True diversity isn't about checking the box. It's about recruiting a workforce that includes individuals with different worldviews, ethnicities, religions, backgrounds, abilities and ages. Gallup [stated](#) "a lot of companies consider lifestyles, personality characteristics, perspectives, opinions, family composition, education level or tenure elements of diversity, too." However, diversity is only half of the equation. Hiring diverse individuals means little when they don't feel included. This is a challenge many companies face when trying to create a well-rounded culture.

Diversity and inclusion isn't a one-size-fits-all approach as each culture has their own unique circumstances. Furthermore, one can never fully anticipate the comments, situations and behaviors that will unfold. It's paramount companies and HR prioritize having policies in place to demonstrate what's acceptable and what isn't.

Here are six ways companies and HR professionals can ditch the check the box mentality and cultivate a workplace culture that inspires diversity and inclusion.

Education comes in many forms such as trainings, team building exercises, workshops and courses, to name a few. The goal of educating employees is to make them aware of their own unconscious bias, instill a new perspective, bridge gaps and strengthen relationships. Leaders, especially middle managers, need to be fully onboard and dedicated to educating themselves and being aware of their own unconscious bias.

HR must remain committed to exploring various learning opportunities to keep leadership and employees engaged in learning. Organizing an inclusion council can help address underrepresented employee groups and advance diversity internally through hiring, developing, promoting and retaining diverse employees. Members of C-suite should be actively involved, but employees, ideally with diverse backgrounds, should be leading the committee.

### **Foster A Supportive And Safe Space**

Upholding a safe space for every employee means asking hard questions, seeking feedback and creating discussions to build better relationships. For too long, employers have been shying away from difficult and sensitive conversations for fear it would create a divide within the workplace. Contrarily, pretending these differences don't exist is what creates the divide.

Allyship is fundamental in creating stronger, healthier and more positive work environments. Employees should feel heard and comfortable to freely voice their feelings, opinions and concerns without the fear of retaliation. They should feel confident that their workplace supports and embraces their differences. Joe Bailey, business development consultant at [My Trading Skills](#), said "in order to achieve this, employers need to encourage everyone to offer their opinions, as well as encourage collective decision making."

### **Practice Collective Accountability**

Every culture has rules that must be abided by in order to keep the workplace functioning and healthy. Violators should face the consequences, regardless of their rank or title. Turning a blind eye to one

situation is how toxic cultures breed. Leadership and management are the ones who set the tone of the culture and employees, candidates and consumers look to them to see if they're practicing what they preach.

Following George Floyd's recent [death](#), consumers have been using their social media platforms to call out companies and hold them accountable for their lack of diversity and inclusion. They're even going as far as boycotting brands altogether for their neutral position, lack of accountability and poor behaviors.

### **Review The Application and Selection Process**

HR Technologist [wrote](#) "unconscious bias can negatively influence recruitment and hiring efforts, making it more difficult for candidates from traditionally underrepresented groups to get hired." John Linden, lead interior designer at [Mirror Coop](#), shared the application and selection process unintentionally already puts women and other minority groups at a disadvantage. He added "regardless of the leadership roles you hope to fill, first and foremost, there are well qualified women, immigrants, disabled people, queer people and people from minority races."

Companies should conduct an audit of their current recruitment process to see where bottlenecks and barriers exist when it comes to attracting diverse talent. Some ways to do so is

- rewording the job posting and being mindful of language used. E.g. using adjectives such as superior and confident turn off women from applying
- evaluating website and social media platforms to see if pictures, videos and language show diversity efforts
- use blind resumes where information such as names, date of birth, schools, etc... are removed
- use tools such as Greenhouse to remove personal opinions about the candidates when interviewing
- if striving for a diverse culture, speak about what you aspire to be
- implementing racially diverse personality assessments
- identify sources where diverse candidates can be found
- encourage minority employees to refer their connections

Both candidates and employees believe transparency is key. Monster shared "62% of job seekers would turn down a job offer if they feel the company did not value an inclusive and diverse workplace culture." Another Monster poll revealed "job seekers are watching how potential employers respond to social issues." Likewise, "the likelihood to work for a company increased for nearly 62% of employees based on a company's response to the Black Lives Matter Movement. Alternatively, the likelihood decreased over half (55%) because of a company remaining silent. However, many respondents have expressed skepticism about how authentic the external messaging is from companies. While some have pledged to support the Black Lives Matter movement or LGBTQ community, few have shared how they plan to do so or have owned up to prior incidents which have contradicted their pledge.

### **Celebrate Employee Differences**

Companies should constantly be assessing and thinking about the culture they want and making sure it's one that's aligned with their brand and goals. There are various ways companies can promote inclusiveness and celebrate employee differences such as:

1. Hosting potlucks to celebrate the different nationalities represented within the company
2. Incorporating diverse office decor such as artwork or furnishings from different cultures to broaden employees perspectives and inspire conversations
3. Supporting minority organizations or small businesses (business lunches, donations, etc...)
4. Having a designated meditation or prayer room
5. Holding mini events to show appreciation, generate conversation and education employees on the different holidays their colleagues celebrate
6. Organizing a book club that creates discussion around sensitive and diverse topics such as LGBTQ inclusion, racial equity, etc...
7. Bringing teams together with a diversity game such as "I am... but I am not..." to confront and dispel stereotypes, whether positive or negative. Big Think Edge [shared this example](#) used in an MIT paper, "I am Asian, but I am not good at math."

The [Zappos](#) culture is built on employees bringing their full selves to work. One way they do this is by allowing employees to decorate and personalize their desk space. While touring the Zappos Las Vegas headquarters this year, [Letha Myles](#), my tour guide, told me how allowing employees to showcase their personalities helps build relationships and let them be their authentic selves. She explained this also helps visitors connect with employees on an individual level through things that are present on one's desk.

### **Be Honest About Goals, Progress And Shortcoming**

Traditionally, companies kept employees in the dark about what was happening internally. As a result, employees never felt like they were valued because they weren't kept in the loop or included in the decision-making process. The advantage of including employees increases productivity, improves morale and creates a sense of belonging in the organization. Additionally, employees can help identify areas of weakness that otherwise might've been overlooked. On top of this, they can help provide unique solutions to meet goals and turn shortcomings into strengths. For this reason, leaders should be proactive in communicating diversity and inclusion goals, metrics and how these results will impact the mission, culture, brand and bottom line of the company.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/heidilynnekurter/2020/06/30/6-ways-to-cultivate-a-workplace-culture-that-inspires-diversity-and-inclusion/?sh=3748496131ae>