

# Creating the Strategy

### Leadership Buy-in

No matter how well laid out your plan is, unless your leadership has bought into the need for an inclusive work place – you will not be successful. Key elements for creating buy-in and addressing excuses:

- **Identify and strip away the excuses.** Conduct a cultural assessment, study turnover rates for your industry and company. Complete a benchmark analysis.
- **Build the business case** based on your industry
- **Build awareness** by sharing industry examples and bringing in keynote speakers to help raise awareness.
- **Connect your leadership with others** who have gone on the diversity journey. Invite leaders to board meetings or business meetings.



### Business Case

There are a few primary reasons companies should strive to have a diverse and inclusive work environment:

- **Cost Savings**
  - Diverse environments can result in a reduction of sick days & accidents
  - Reduce turnover and reduce the hiring cost.
  - Increase productivity as a result of employees feeling more engaged
- **Competition for Talent**
  - Attract more candidates; identify new recruiting venues
  - Better leverage workforce (i.e. baby boomers, Gen X & Y)
- **Global Market Place**
  - Identify new business markets (Asia, Latin America)
  - Develop new products or recycle and reposition services
  - Reduce operations costs by leveraging lower production costs in other countries
- **Improve Brand Awareness**
  - Increase market visibility in diverse communities
  - Improve external relations and community presence



### Diversity is NOT

#### • Diversity is not an Affirmative Action plan

The federal government regulates Equal Employment Opportunity by requesting companies to submit Affirmative Action Plans. However, Diversity initiatives are not regulated by the government. Diversity efforts are intended to be a proactive approach to creating an inclusive work place that supports business growth objectives and helps retain or attract talent.

#### • Diversity is not a program it is a way of doing business

Diversity is about creating an inclusive work place where people regardless of level, language, sexual orientation, race, etc. feel they are able to contribute to the work environment.

#### • Diversity is not solely for disenfranchised groups

While some organizations focus on ethnic or gender and gender orientation, a strong strategy looks to build an inclusive workplace. It will build awareness and skills based on cultural differences, communication and thinking styles.

#### • Diversity is not about awards, branding and marketing an organization

The decision to develop and implement a diversity initiative can not be driven simply by a desire to improve product branding. Employees, customers, and vendors will quickly determine that there is no substance and become disengaged.

### Recommended Diversity Reading

- Designing & Implementing Successful Diversity Programs by Lawrence M. Baytos
- Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling by Jane Hyun
- Without Excuses: Unleash the Power of Diversity to Build Your Business by Joe Watson
- Keeping Good People by Roger E. Herman
- Ouch that Stereotype Hurts: Communicating Respectfully in a diverse world by Leslie c. Augilar
- Straight Talk about Gays in the Workplace by Liz Winfield

### Websites to check out

- Association of Employee Resource Groups – [www.aergonline.com](http://www.aergonline.com)
- Diversity Inc. Magazine – [www.diversityinc.com](http://www.diversityinc.com)
- Conference Board – Diversity Conferences : [www.conferenceboard.com](http://www.conferenceboard.com)
- Linkages Diversity Conference – [www.linkages.com](http://www.linkages.com)
- Profiles in Diversity Journal – [www.profilesindiversity.com](http://www.profilesindiversity.com)
- Society of Human Resources Management – [www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org)



## Diversity Councils

Developing and launching a diversity council is a great way to ensure that the initiatives and activities rolled out support business goals.

The role of the council is to support the leadership team in the development and implementation of a diversity plan.

Some key decisions to be made in the formation of the diversity council include:

**Membership** – A council's average size is 12–15 people who represent various cross sections of the business as well as race, gender, age, years of services and gender orientation. Look for people who are good strategic thinkers and who have strong communication skills. In addition, because diversity is about cultural change the individuals need to be willing to surface issues and concerns and engage in open dialogue about those concerns.

**Recruiting Members** – you can seek volunteers or can identify sections of the business that you feel should be represented and invite those leaders based on their roles and responsibilities.

**Length of Membership** – in general 12–24 months is a good length of commitment. Stagger the membership on the council.

**Senior Leadership & Diversity Council's role** – The council should be headed up by the CEO /President or Chief Operating Officer. At least two members of the executive leadership need to serve on the council to establish credibility and to ensure there is linkage to core business objectives.

## Cultural Assessments

The purposes of cultural assessments is to provide a picture of the processes, policies, and formal/informal practices of the organization that will potentially impact your diversity efforts.

### Areas to look at:

- Review traditional elements such as turnover rates and offers by race, ethnicity and gender, etc.
- Review diversity make up of the promotion pipeline for senior level positions
- Review the demographic make-up and reasons employees are leaving the company
- Look at the employee opinion survey assess the trends by demographic make-up
- Where and how money is being spent on nonprofit organizations and supplier diversity
- Assess size and growth of your customer segments (African American/Asian)
- Understand customer/ consumer views with respect to the company's brand image
- Gather community perceptions of the company
- Review results of employee opinion surveys by ethnicity and gender
- Look at demographic representation of employees going on international assignments

### Who should participate in interviews:

- Diversity Council Members
- Senior level executives
- Employee Network Group leaders
- Executives who are Network Group Champions
- Head of public affairs/community relations
- Head of Human Resources
- Head of Recruiting/Resourcing
- Head of Employee Relations or company's Ombudsman

### Potential results:

The Cultural Assessment will help form the foundational elements of your diversity strategy. Some things that may come out of the assessment include:

- The turnover analysis may confirm or help you uncover patterns of people leaving the company (i.e. women in middle management may be leaving at a faster rate than any other group)
- Reviewing the organization's succession plan will provide a glimpse into any potential gaps in workforce representation in the senior ranks
- Reviewing employee opinion survey data by demographic make-up could serve as an indicator of both areas that are working well or that need attention

When deciding to do a Cultural Assessment it is best to use an outside consulting firm that specializes in audits this will ensure neutral feedback. Take time to interview the companies to make sure there is an organizational fit. Also, interview at least three companies.

## Role of Senior Leaders

If your efforts are to be successful then it is critical that the CEO and senior leadership understand how critical their role is and embrace the business case.

The CEO and the senior leadership team must become visibly engaged in leading the diversity efforts. They may need the help of an external diversity coach or leader to help increase their understanding of the diversity process.

Make sure diversity is part of the senior team's business agenda. Some ideas to broaden the senior team's understanding could include:

- Invite other CEOs who have rolled out diversity strategies in their companies and have seen it work
- Share the findings of your demographic analysis and the impact the patterns on the future business growth of the company
- Invite an external speaker from the local Business Economic Council or a university's demographic/ economic expert to share information on market trends
- Hold a learning session and bring in a speaker on generational differences or learning styles of men/women
- Invite other Chief Diversity Officers to share their perspectives

In order to increase the senior leadership team's visibility work with communications to imbed diversity in key company messages. Identify opportunities for them to show commitment in employee publications, while delivering key speeches at townhall meetings, business meetings and community events. Create a vision statement of your diversity efforts and place it on your company website.



# Components of a Strong Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

## Develop Your Case for Action

- Define why your organization wants to address diversity. Pull together details in a white paper or presentation
- Some reasons for diversity : improve retention, attract diverse talent, expand into new markets

## Create a Vision of What You Want to Achieve

- Form a committee of employees, managers, leaders and engage them in the development of a vision for your organization
- You may want to work with a change management consultant to help develop your vision

## Assess the Current Reality

- Collect data on current turnover rates assess what is the average rate for your industry; review hires by race, ethnicity, gender and etc. compare population with marketplace; look at exit interviews and assess why people are leaving; review employee relations cases and determine if there are any issues that need to be shared. Look at promotion rates and distribution of promotions by business area, races and gender.
- Review and identify opportunities for improvement in employee opinion survey
- Obtain a copy of the business strategy and assess who your top competitors are and review their diversity goals; identify what the key business development needs are and countries of operation

## Establish Goals and Actions

- Identify Learning Goals – Workshops and training to be rolled out to address skills gaps
- Work with Recruiting function to establish goals and objectives for attracting new candidates and increasing hiring numbers
- Work with HR to determine what policies and processes need to be reviewed and modified (i.e. are there domestic partner benefits or accommodations for people with disabilities)
- Work with Communications function to determine messages and key points that will be used to engage employees in the diversity process
- Work with Marketing to identify opportunities to increase visibility of diverse employees in the market place
- Connect with Community Relations to determine if there are opportunities to expose leadership to working with diverse nonprofits

## Develop an Infrastructure

- Define roles of executive leaders in the diversity process
- Determine whether a diversity council is needed; identify who will be on council and the types of committees needed. Members should represent diverse groups & leadership levels
- Determine if and when employee network groups will be established; develop operating guidelines and the funding process
- Connect with communications to determine internal messages and activities to be used to increase awareness about diversity
- Develop a master project plan

## Implement the Plan

- Develop calendar of activities to be rolled out (i.e. training, meetings, communications, etc.)
- Assign goals and responsibilities

## Establish Measurement & Accountability

- Develop goals and objectives for training
- Develop recruiting and retention goals
- Develop goals for employee opinion survey

## Training & Learning Programs

Rolling out a diversity initiative is like implementing a change management process. While you can hold Heritage Month celebrations or host social networking activities for employee resource groups and/or create a very nice brochure, these things will not transform the corporate culture of the organization.

Transformation comes from developing and implement learning initiatives that providing skills that enhance communications and understanding of inclusion.

Some examples of training workshops that can be conducted to help increase cultural understanding includes:

- Diversity 101 – Creating an inclusive work place
- Cross Cultural Communications Skills
- Skills for working in a global market place
- Managing virtual work teams
- Microinequities
- Building awareness of sexual orientation in the workplace to increase understanding of the challenges faced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender employees
- Managing a multi-generational workforce

Some companies that deliver training include:  
(Listed in alpha order not all inclusive. It is critical that you interview any company for fit before you hire them.)

- Association of Global Diversity Practitioners – [www.globalgdp.wordpress.com](http://www.globalgdp.wordpress.com)
- Association of Employee Resource Groups – [www.AERGonline.com](http://www.AERGonline.com)
- Catalyst – [www.catalystwomen.org](http://www.catalystwomen.org)
- Cook Ross– [www.cookross.com](http://www.cookross.com)
- Craig Clayton, Sr. – [www.craigclayton.com](http://www.craigclayton.com)
- Future Works Institute – [www.futureworksinsstitute.com](http://www.futureworksinsstitute.com)
- Global Lead Management Consulting – [www.globalead.com](http://www.globalead.com)
- Mary Harlan & Associates – [www.harlanconsulting.com](http://www.harlanconsulting.com)
- Hyun & Associates – [www.janehyun.com](http://www.janehyun.com)
- Hewitt Associates – [www.hewitt.com](http://www.hewitt.com)
- Human Rights Campaign – [www.hrc.com](http://www.hrc.com)
- Linkages, Inc. – [www.linkages.com](http://www.linkages.com)
- Novations – [www.novations.com](http://www.novations.com)
- PFLAG – [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)
- Prism International Inc. [www.prismdiversity.com](http://www.prismdiversity.com)
- Roosevelt Thomas – [www.rthomasconsulting.com](http://www.rthomasconsulting.com)
- Virtcom Consulting– [www.virtcomconsulting.com](http://www.virtcomconsulting.com)
- Winters Groups, Inc. – [www.wintersgroup.com](http://www.wintersgroup.com)



## Fundamental building blocks of Diversity Learning

Diversity training occurs in three phases:

### Initial Awareness

- Fundamental training on What is Diversity & Inclusion. Training is delivered companywide and imbedded in Onboarding/New Hire processes.
- HR representatives may get training on difference between Diversity and Affirmative Action.
- May include training on sexual harassment and workplace harassment.

### Skills Building

- Managing cross cultural teams
- Microinequities in the workplace
- Culturally competent recruiting
- Sexual orientation in the workplace
- Learning styles of men and women
- Cross cultural communication skills
- Generations in the workplace
- Resolving diversity conflict (managers and sales team)
- Selling to diverse markets

### Full Integration

- Basic diversity training is completely imbedded in onboarding & new hire processes
- Managing Diverse Teams is imbedded in new manager and supervisor training
- Working with diversity clients is part of sales management workforce
- Recruiters go through annual certification for interviewing people with disabilities and diversity candidates
- Managers go through annual training for interviewing diverse candidates

**About Author: Nereida (Neddy) Perez has more than 17 years of Human Resources & Diversity Management. She has worked for several Fortune 500 and global companies like UPS, Sodexo, Shell, KPMG and National Grid. In 2008, she founded the Association of Employee Resource Groups ([www.AERGonline.com](http://www.AERGonline.com))**

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