



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

What is Diversity?

Diversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and individuals from one another. Historically, the focus has been primarily on race and gender, but organizations have started to recognize that a more complete discussion of diversity also includes many other factors: education, religion, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, marital status, parental status, veteran status, socioeconomic status, union affiliation, geographic location, etc.

Another aspect to consider is diversity of thinking, in other words, deriving value from different perspectives and different ways to address solutions. Thinking of diversity more broadly helps organizations to be aware of the risk associated with homogeneity, especially in senior decision makers. Research by Deloitte shows that high-performing teams are both cognitively and demographically diverse.

Note: Diversity is about a collective or a group and can only exist in relationship to others. A candidate is not diverse – they're a unique, individual unit. They may bring diversity to the team or hiring pool, but they in themselves are not diverse. They're a woman; they're a person of color; they're part of the LGBTQ community, etc.

What is Representation?

Sometimes, diversity gets used interchangeably with representation, but they are different. Representation is when the workforce, leadership, board – or whatever audience is relevant to the discussion – reflects the diversity of a population.

Employees who don't see themselves represented at leadership levels feel a lower sense of belonging, which can lead to lower productivity and higher turnover.

The importance of employee representation reflecting the makeup of customers has been proven many times over, such as the crash test dummies that didn't factor in safety for female bodies or automatic soap dispensers that didn't recognize dark skin.

Then there's the National Football League: African American men make up 6% of the United States population, but comprise almost 70% of the players in the NFL. However, in 2003, there was only one minority head coach—and while that was technically representative of the population at large, it was certainly not representative of the professional athletes on the field. After the creation of the Rooney Rule, which requires teams to interview at least one minority candidate when they are hiring a head coach, the number increased to a high of eight minority head coaches, which moved the NFL closer to equal representation in coaching.

What is Inclusion?

An inclusive environment is one in which different perspectives are encouraged and valued. It's a state of being respected and supported not in spite of but in light of one's differences.

You can have diversity without having inclusion. Thought leader and influencer Verna Myers put it simply: "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance."

It's important for organizations not to stop at the idea of a diverse workforce, but rather focus on inclusion as well. That's how to leverage the power of differences to achieve goals. Moving beyond diversity to focus on inclusion requires companies to examine how fully the organization embraces new ideas, accommodates different styles of thinking, creates a more flexible work environment, enables people to connect and collaborate, and encourages different types of leaders.

Organizations that support diversity and also help employees feel included are much more likely to meet business goals than those organizations that focus on diversity and inclusion separately or not at all.

What is Equity?

Equity is an approach that ensures everyone has access to the same opportunities. It recognizes that advantages and barriers exist, and that, as a result, not everyone starts from the same place. Equity is a process that begins by acknowledging that unequal starting place and makes a commitment to correct and address the imbalance. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems.

What is Unconscious Bias?

Unconscious biases are stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. They are typically the result of one's upbringing, experiences, and exposure to all forms of media. While one can be biased toward or against something, unconscious biases can often have tangible, negative effects on those who are on the receiving end of the bias.

What Are Microaggressions?

UA microaggression is indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group. The professor and author Derald Wing Sue wrote, “In many cases, these hidden messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of target persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment.”

What is Psychological Safety?

A phrase coined by Harvard Business School professor Amy Edmondson, psychological safety is the belief that team members can speak up, admit concerns, ask questions, request help, and offer dissenting opinions without fear of negative consequences to their self-image or career.

Sources

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<https://independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/>

<https://generalassemb.ly/blog/diversity-inclusion-equity-differences-in-meaning/>

About OutSolve's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion MIRROR™

OutSolve's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion MIRROR™ Action Plans focus on actionable steps companies can take to implement a DE&I program strategy proportionate to their needs. The MIRROR program is designed to focus on areas with the greatest impact. It helps companies move from the abstract to defined diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that are manageable, even by smaller HR teams.”

For more information please contact OutSolve at info@outsolve.com or 888.814.2410.



Phone

888.414.2410



Email

info@outsolve.com



Website

outsolve.com

