

DEIB in the Workplace - May Department Connections

What is DEIB?

Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging

Diversity - Recognizing and valuing differences among employees, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.

Equity – providing fair access to opportunities for all people.

Inclusion - Actively creating a culture where all employees feel respected, supported, and valued regardless of their background or identity.

Belonging - is the feeling of security and support a person has when there is acceptance and inclusion within an organization. Showing up as your most authentic self and feeling accepted, valued, and included within an organization.

Why Does It Matter?

A diverse and inclusive team = stronger problem-solving, collaboration and innovation.

- ✓ Create a culture where employees feel a sense of belonging.
- ✓ Enables employees to fully participate in workplace and prioritize mental health and wellbeing
- ✓ Provide psychological safety
- ✓ Reduces toxic behaviours like discrimination and BHV
- ✓ Allow everyone from a greater range of experience leads to more innovative ideas, enhances creativity and generally improve outcomes for the greater good of all.
- ✓ Makes good business sense; Increase in morale; Increase in productivity and engagement; Decrease in absenteeism and turnover

Types of Diversity

Everyone one of us has unique make up of individual experience, personality and traits. There is only one of us.

We all are made up of cultural, racial, gender, colour, nationality, ethnicity, genetic background, age, education, personality, work experiences, disabilities, and traumas. None of these characteristics stand alone, they intersect and overlap to create our unique person.

- Remember from our bias conversation, do not assume that possessing one characteristic automatically means you have another particular characteristic.

In addition, many of these, race, gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and other attributes are protected under human rights legislation and are safeguarded against discrimination. Which is why Diversity awareness and understanding is so crucial in Bullying and Harassment prevention.

There are many types of diversity but let's highlight a few:

Cultural Diversity can cause friction in the workplace.

Understanding that we each hold our own culture and individual values highly and it often is attached to our personal identity means we may cause a person to be sensitive to perceived slights or threats against cultural practices and expression.

This also means that we must be mindful of accepting our differences and recognize how allowing people to feel comfortable and safe in the workplace will improve overall engagement, retention and productivity.

When people are not worried about being criticized for their background, they have increased time and energy for their work and overall performance improves. There is a measurable increase in retention when people feel happy and comfortable being themselves at work.

Generational Diversity

Generational diversity in the workplace refers to the coexistence of employees from multiple age groups, each bringing distinct experiences, values, and work preferences. Managing and leveraging generational diversity effectively can enhance collaboration, innovation, and overall organizational performance. Embracing generational diversity promotes knowledge sharing, creativity, and a broader range of problem-solving approaches. It also helps organizations foster inclusivity and better meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce or clientele.

Educational Diversity

Often people see Education as equating to ability.

However, it can become harmful when reversed to imply that someone cannot possibly be talented, clever, or capable if they have not gone to higher level university or a famous institution; Ability does not equal educational experience.

Ability and educational attainment are not closely related. Even if they were, it is better to build a team with diverse educational backgrounds. Ideas can be hard to find or inspire when everyone thinks alike (homogeneous teams).

Homogeneous teams are groups where all the members have similar backgrounds, skills, experiences, or perspectives. In other words, the team members are alike in fundamental ways such as education, culture, expertise, or values.

Because members are significantly similar, homogeneous teams often find it easier to communicate, build trust, and work together quickly. However, they might struggle with creativity and innovation because everyone tends to think in similar ways.

Equity

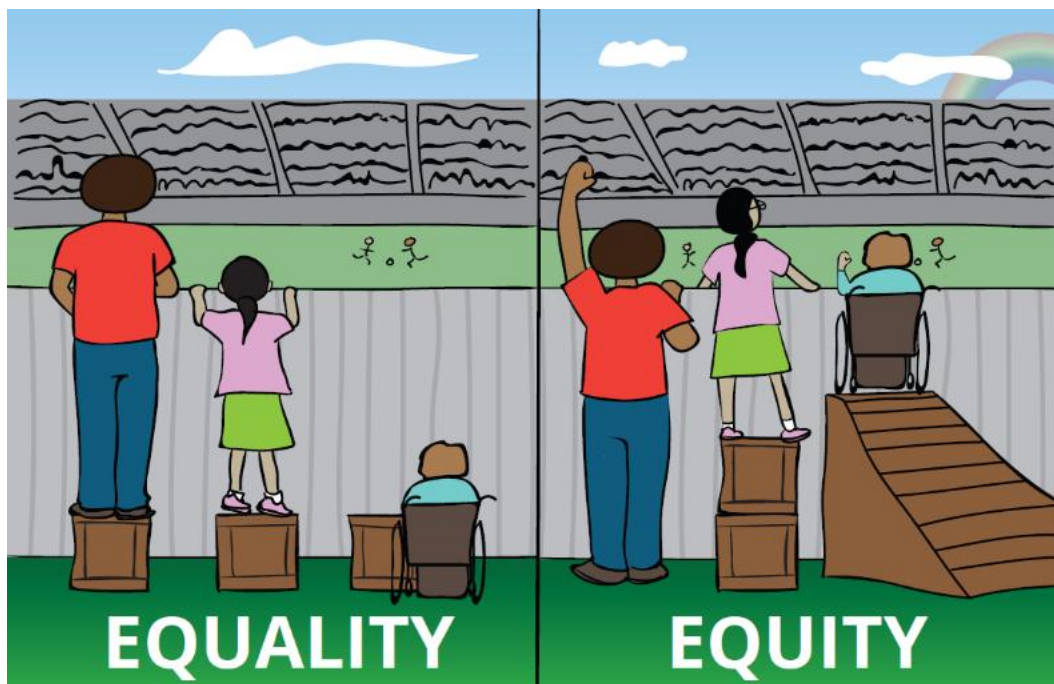
Equitable treatment considers differences people have because of their unique circumstance and traits.

Equity is not equality. Equal treatment means treating all people the same. Equitable treatment is treating people differently so that the end result is equal opportunity.

EXAMPLE: Equity addresses imbalances that already exist; correcting past and present injustices. Equity initiative does not give unfair advantages, nor take away from others.

It acknowledges and addresses systemic barriers, not a lack of ability or effort.

Indigenous analogy: the “canoe” analogy—if some people were given paddles while others were not, equity is about ensuring everyone has the tools they need to move forward together. A stronger, more inclusive team benefits the whole organization and community.



Inclusion

If Diversity is quantity (# of managers who are women), but presence is not enough. If you have diversity, but people cannot bring their diversity to the table to provide tangible value for the organization OR they do not feel comfortable or welcome doing so, then diversity doesn't help; it needs to be utilized.

This is where inclusion comes in, inclusion is quality. (How many of those women are on the executive track or in charge of important teams and projects.)

Inclusion is the meeting and mingling of diversity in a way that is real and meaningful.

Inclusion means creating a culture that embraces, values and respects diversity and supports all members of the team through equitable practices.

Inclusion is achieved when people feel their diverse uniqueness's are welcomed and valued in an organization. Without inclusion, individual diversity cannot shine, and people cannot contribute to the organization and cultural wellbeing.

Belonging

It is the result of strong **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)** efforts. Belonging creates positive environment where people want to stay and work.

Barriers to DEIB

- Unconscious biases and stereotypes
- Fear of speaking up (lack of psychological safety)
- Resistance to change
- Lack of meaningful actions to encourage and create diversity
- Unwelcoming work environments that enable microaggressions and exclusionary behaviours

Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional comments, actions, or behaviors that convey bias, stereotypes, or discrimination toward marginalized groups.

Examples include:

- **Verbal:** "You speak English so well!" (implying someone is an outsider)
- **Behavioral:** Ignoring someone's input in a meeting while acknowledging others
- **Environmental:** Lack of representation in workplaces or media

Recognizing Bias & Exclusion in the Workplace

Building on our last meeting where we outlined how Bias is natural, but unchecked bias can lead to exclusion.

Examples of workplace bias: Assuming someone's skills or abilities based on their background; Only including certain voices in decision-making; Overlooking cultural differences in communication styles.

How to recognize exclusion:

Who is speaking the most in meetings? Who is being interrupted?

Are we valuing different communication styles (direct vs. indirect)?

Are team members comfortable asking for support or raising concerns?

Accountability & Allyship

What we can each do:

- ✓ Self-awareness: Doing the work to know and understand yourself. Challenging your biases, privileges, underlying default patterns of behaviours or thought patterns.
- ✓ Active listening: Pay attention to who is and isn't being heard.
- ✓ Encouraging open dialogue by ensuring everyone has a chance to speak without interruption or dismissal in team meetings fosters constructive discussions and the confidence to share new ideas. Additionally, intentionally mixing teams or rearranging workspaces to encourage interactions between different individuals helps build comfort, strengthen relationships, and spark innovation.
- ✓ Speak up: If you witness exclusion, say something. Even if not in the moment, you always have a chance to come back to it.
**The more behaviour goes unchallenged, the further it becomes normalized.
- ✓ Learn continuously: Engage with different perspectives and cultural experiences.

Allyship & Bystander Action:

Asking for Help is a Superpower. Allowing other to Help is a Superpower.

Allyship = Advocating for underrepresented voices even when it's uncomfortable.

Active bystander = Intervening when witnessing microaggressions or exclusion.

Key Takeaways:

DEIB is about creating fairness, opportunity, and a sense of belonging for all.

Psychological safety = essential for people to speak up and challenge bias.

Small, intentional actions lead to real workplace change.

Encourage ongoing conversations beyond today's session.

A lot of energy goes into constantly fighting back, DEIB founded culture allows others to help push back with you. Famous quote: "if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go further as a group."

"Diversity is being invited to the dance. Inclusion is being asked to dance." – Verna Myers

Further, Equity is ensuring all participants at the party can dance the way they feel most comfortable.

And Belonging is about the individual empowerment that comes from this environment. It's the feeling of safety that allows a person to feel they too can invite others to dance rather than the feeling they must wait to be asked to participate.

Self reflection Questions

1. Personal Identity and Awareness

- How do my own lived experiences, cultural background, and identity shape how I show up in the workplace?
- What assumptions might I be holding about others based on their identity or background?
- In what ways do I notice bias—either in myself or others—and how do I respond?

2. Diversity

- When have I learned something valuable from someone whose background is different from mine?
- Are there voices or perspectives that are missing or unheard in my team or workplace?

3. Equity

- Do I recognize when some colleagues face more systemic barriers than others?
- What privileges do I carry, and how can I use them to support equity in the workplace?
- What does "giving everyone a paddle" (canoe analogy) mean in my role?

4. Inclusion

- Have I ever felt I had to hide a part of who I am to fit in at work? How did that feel?
- What am I doing (or not doing) that might help others feel included, valued, and respected?
- Do I create space for different communication styles and ways of knowing?

5. Belonging

- What does belonging mean to me? When have I felt true belonging in a workplace?
- Do I contribute to an environment where others feel safe to be their authentic selves?

6. Accountability and Allyship

- How do I hold myself accountable for creating a respectful and inclusive work environment?
- When have I witnessed a microaggression or exclusionary behavior, and how did I respond?
- How can I speak up in a way that is rooted in care, courage, and community responsibility?

7. Growth and Commitment

- What is one small but meaningful action I can take to promote DEIB this week?
- What will I commit to learning more about over the next month to grow my DEIB awareness?
- How can I support ongoing DEIB conversations in my team or community?