DIVERSITY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION:

A TOOLKIT

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CONTRIBUTORS
VIVIAN BRECKENRIDGE
CASHIE NAYLOR
THOMAS EASLEY, ED.D
MORGAN CHEEK
BRIAN RASHAD JACKSON

DESIGN AND IMAGES
NICK ARMSTRONG
CANDRA BURNS

AMERICAN GREEN CONSULTING GROUP, LLC

Department of Forestry
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SAF

MESSAGE FROM DR. THOMAS EASLEY, FOUNDER AND CEO OF MIND HEART FOR DIVERSITY CONSULTING

Thank you for accessing this toolkit. As a forestry professional, I am grateful to the discipline that exposed me to the workforce and opened doors for my success in this career. Additionally, as a leader in the movement to improve equity and inclusion in many sectors, I appreciate the doors that diversity work has opened that have allowed me to find value in myself and other people. Diversity has helped me to appreciate the uniqueness of everyone I come in contact with- particularly those whom I employ.

This toolkit is a step in the long journey of enhancing diversity in our discipline. The professionals who created this toolkit understand that the differences we bring to the table help us to stand out and accomplish goals. We also understand that commonalities are what bring us together and make us stronger as a unit. In order for our discipline to continue to thrive, we must meet and direct the demands on our industry by intentionally recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce that will allow us to serve more communities and innovate in ways that broaden the scope and reach of the forest sector.

I appreciate your commitment to the discipline, and I hope these examples from other successful industries will inform and inspire us.

Best,
Dr. Thomas RaShad Easley
MindHeartForDiversity.com

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INTRODUCTION

We developed this toolkit for leaders of organizations and companies and managers in charge of recruitment, hiring, and retention in the forestry industry. It is intended to foster a better understanding of how companies, organizations, and government entities can recruit, engage, and retain diverse staff, and in doing so, help them achieve their goals. [1]

Feel free to use the toolkit as a whole or pull what you need from the outlined sections based on your organization's specific priorities.

This resource is separated into two distinct sections:

1. **Recruitment: How to Open the Door to Diversity.** In this section, we've outlined proven ways to find and recruit diverse staff to your organization. From attracting potential applicants before the application process to building partnerships, we break down action steps for your organization to bring in the candidates your organization needs.

2. **Retention: How to Encourage Diverse Staff to Stay for the Long Haul.** The next step is to keep the people you've worked so hard to attract. Hiring managers face many barriers when it comes to retaining diverse staff, but when employees know they're valued, feel empowered to succeed, and feel safe and comfortable in their workplace, they are more likely to stay.

[1] Note that we will use "organization" to refer to company, organization, or government entity from this point onward (except when speaking of specific companies or government entities).

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

When addressing a topic as sensitive and important as diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, it's important to have a basic understanding of some diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) buzzwords. This is in no way an exhaustive list of definitions, but it is a great place to begin accessing a deeper understanding.

Access: Gained entry into an organization or community where one can utilize the resources when they need them.

Affinity Group: A designated "safe space," where everyone in that group shares a particular identity. This identity can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language, nationality, physical/mental ability, socio-economic class, family structure, religion, etc. Affinity groups can be a place for underrepresented people in a community to come together to feel less isolated and more connected. During affinity groups participants might share and talk about their experiences or focus on working towards a particular mission or goal.

Attrition: The action or process of gradually reducing the strength or effectiveness of someone or something through sustained attack or pressure.

Bias: Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. Cause to feel or show inclination or prejudice for or against someone or something.

Diversity: A concept that involves embracing all individuals regardless of religion, politics, ideology, physical ability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, thoughts, ideas, experiences, perspectives, and values.

Engagement: In this context, engagement refers to the act of attracting, holding the attention of, being in conversation with, and/or inducing the participation of candidates, potential candidates, and employees.

Equality: Ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.

Equity: Ensuring fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for "all" people while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

Inclusion: Where all people are respected and valued for who they are as individuals as well as their unique skills and perspectives; where everyone feels safe and comfortable being their authentic selves; and where everyone has equitable opportunities to succeed and achieve their goals.

Injustice: The quality or fact of being unjust; inequity. violation of the rights of others; unjust or unfair action or treatment. an unjust or unfair act; wrong.

Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS (CONTINUED)

Justice: The maintenance or administration of what is just, especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments meting out social justice.

Microaggression: A statement, action, or incident seen as indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group.

Monoculture: Reflects the contributions of a single individual and operates under a single vision for the organization. Seeks to maintain the current structure and resists change.

Multicultural: Reflects the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and product or service delivery.

Prejudice: Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. harm or injury that results or may result from some action or judgment.

Recruitment: The process of actively seeking out, finding, and hiring candidates for a specific position or job. The recruitment definition includes the entire hiring process, from inception to the individual recruit's integration into the company.

Retention: The organizational goal of keeping talented employees and reducing turnover by fostering a positive work atmosphere to promote engagement, showing appreciation to employees, and providing competitive pay and benefits and healthy work-life balance.

Stakeholder: An individual or group with a vested interest. Inequality: Social inequality is an area within sociology that focuses on the distribution of goods and burdens in society. This is the degree to which a person's social background, defined by their parents' social class or economic status, influences that person's opportunities in life.

RECRUITMENT: HOW TO OPEN THE DOOR TO DIVERSITY

Why is DEI-forward diversity recruitment important?

Recruiting with DEI in mind encourages representation and engagement of diverse groups of people in the workplace, which in turn contributes to a more innovative, productive, and healthier organizational culture where teams and individuals thrive. Some of the many known benefits of increasing the diversity of your organization include:

- Companies in the top-quartile for workforce diversity are 33% more likely to financially outperform their less diverse counterparts. Companies with diverse leadership teams tend to produce 19% more revenue (14).

- Having a diverse workforce enables organizations to understand and better meet the needs of customers, partners, and stakeholders from diverse perspectives and with diverse needs (24).

- Team members from the same background may take actions based on a narrow range of experiences. With a diverse team of social and cultural backgrounds, there is a wider range of perspectives, knowledge, and approaches from which decisions are made (24).

- Inclusive companies are 1.7 times more likely to be innovation leaders in their market (41).

Strong diverse candidates are actively seeking employers who value diversity and inclusion; therefore, you must become familiar with how to effectively attract and hire the diverse talent your organization needs.

How do you recruit diverse employees?

Recruiting for diversity requires organizations to implement changes within their hiring processes that set DEI at the forefront. In the following you will find practical, realistic action steps to get started with and spark future conversations about changes your organization can make in recruitment practices. Steps 1 and 2 focus on the role of leadership and assessment in recruitment, while steps 3 through 6 explain how best to attract and engage with diverse talent.

Leading and Assessing

1. Demonstrate fervent support

Progress starts with you. Like any big initiative within an organization, without obvious and consistent support from its leadership, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives will be more likely to fail. According to the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) Recruitment and Retention Toolkit, best way to show your support as a leader is by demonstrating that you are:

- Informed: Before you publicly announce changes or make promises, educate yourself on diversity and inclusion, including - critically - reflecting on your own positionality (i.e. your level of privilege based on your race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, and other factors and how your resulting social position shapes how you view and move through the world) (20). Be able to explain the importance of diversity and inclusion for your organization, including the business case for DEI. *See the Resources section for suggested resources (3).*

- Committed: Regularly communicate your commitment to your organization's DEI initiatives, their progress, and how they fit into the organization's strategy (3).

- Accountable: Own your DEI initiatives and hold yourself and your staff accountable to your DEI goals. Insert accountability to the initiatives into the regular operations throughout your organization, so that all managers and leadership are responsible for ensuring change (3).

- Engaged: Lead by example and actively engage in the development and deployment of your DEI initiative, from developing and promoting its purpose, goals, and strategies to tracking progress towards goals (3).

RECRUITMENT: HOW TO OPEN THE DOOR TO DIVERSITY (CONTINUED)

2. Assess the situation, set goals, and measure progress

Setting goals to increase diversity is a necessary step to creating equitable change within recruitment and hiring. Goal setting will look different depending on your organizational size and type. Think about what your employee representation percentages currently look like, and how you want that to change and by when. Beyond employee representation data, aim to set goals for how you will change your recruitment, whether it be the number of intentional DEI-centered partnerships you have or the amount of money you are investing in recruiting diverse talent.

For example, two of Google's many goals are to increase hiring of underrepresented groups by 30% and double the number of Black directors across Europe, Middle East, and Africa by 2025 (42). These are attainable, realistic goals that can be easily measured. One thing to note is that percentages aren't people. Beyond the numbers, remember an organization must have a culture that supports and sustains diversity (*for more on this topic see the Retention section*) (27).

Engaging Potential Talent

3. Brand your company as DEI-forward

The earlier in the recruitment process that you can showcase your dedication to DEI – including that you value and celebrate unique qualities and backgrounds at your organization – the better. The first touch point or opportunity to engage a candidate is typically online.

It is within the first few minutes of researching an organization's online presence that candidates begin to form their thoughts on what the company is like. In order to attract diverse talent to apply, organizations must actively brand their companies to promote your engagement in DEI and your organization's diversity? Is your organization engaging with articles, people and other organizations that promote DEI on LinkedIn? Are you highlighting your organization's diversity by thoughtfully featuring current staff that have unique, diverse backgrounds and stories on your website/social media, while ensuring that you are not tokenizing your staff (*for more on tokenizing see What Not to Do*)? Are you actively promoting a desire for diverse talent on the careers page?

Cisco sets a great example of including language across their website and social media that promotes diverse backgrounds to apply. "Cisco doesn't want you to blend in, we want you to stand out. Not in spite of what makes you unique, but BECAUSE of it! So, you have colorful hair? Don't care. Tattoos? Show off your ink. Just show us what you can do" (2). Just remember, if you are going to brand your organization as inclusive and seeking diversity, you must be genuine (i.e., actively working on DEI from within). Candidates can see through when effort is only surface-level, unauthentic, or tokenizing.

Branding should not be a case of "diversity washing," but a reflection of the organization's increasingly inclusive mindset. For example, one of the most common preferences stated internally and externally when searching for a candidate is to find someone who "fits the company culture. This seems completely reasonable at first, but "fits the company culture" can become synonymous for "someone like us" and is often antithetical to recruiting diverse talent (7). Be intentional about the way you think about and promote your organization's culture. Instead of framing conversations around finding people "who will fit in," frame them around people "who will bring unique, diverse attributes that we don't already have". In addition to better engaging diverse candidates, actively cultivating this mindset among those involved in recruiting and hiring will lead to better, more DEI-forward decision-making throughout the process (*for more on how to foster inclusivity see the Retention chapter*).

RECRUITMENT: HOW TO OPEN THE DOOR TO DIVERSITY (CONTINUED)

4. Build partnerships and pipelines

This is a critical aspect of recruiting diverse talent. Oftentimes in building partnerships and pipelines for successful, diverse talent is overlooked or dismissed, but if organizations fail to include this vital piece, they will fail to succeed in building a diverse workforce. To find diverse talent, organizations must be recruiting from diverse sources and know where to find talent. Are you working with Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), professional minority organizations, women's colleges, community colleges, veteran groups, and disability groups? Are you taking part in DEI-focused events and initiatives, like recruitment fairs focused on an underrepresented group? Are you connecting with other professionals who work on DEI? Sometimes the easiest and most effective way to find diverse talent is by working with others doing the same. By building partnerships with the above groups and individuals, you can develop long-term, sustainable pipelines and connect with others that can help bring strong diverse candidates to your organization.

One example the Sky Funders Forum, a collaborative that brings together organizations who fund outdoor initiatives created the "Rethink Outside Fellowship" to connect and elevate leaders of color in the outdoors. By supporting this initiative, organizations who have the opportunity to connect with participants who could be strong candidates for positions in their organization or help connect them with other potential partners in recruiting for diversity.

What are some organizations or collaboratives your organization could partner with to strategically invest in building pipelines for diverse talent?

5. Craft inclusive job descriptions and communications

Job descriptions are an opportunity to sell the position and organization to candidates. Instead of using the required cookie-cutter years of experience under the specific job title – which oftentimes acts as a barrier to diverse talent - include language and details that emphasize a commitment to diversity and inclusion. By highlighting diverse experience and skills rather than degrees or years of experience, you can communicate that you welcome diverse backgrounds. Also consider including the qualification of experience working with diverse populations, clients, colleagues, and so on and provide links for candidates to learn more through articles or web pages on how your organization is promoting DEI (39). Before you run the job description, consider by a diverse group of current employees to view the description through different lenses. The more culturally competent language you can include that encourage different experiences and backgrounds, the more you will attract diverse candidates to apply.

This goes for all written and verbal communication to candidates. Take every opportunity to highlight your organizations DEI values in your communication to candidates.
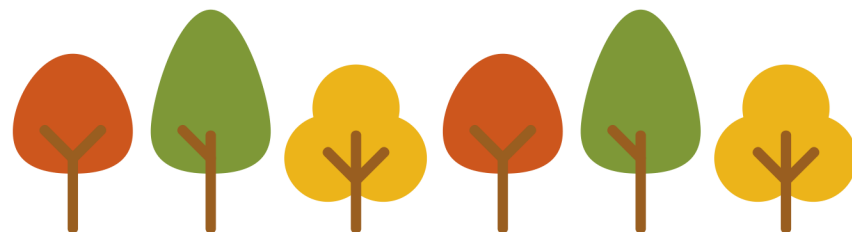
RECRUITMENT: HOW TO OPEN THE DOOR TO DIVERSITY (CONTINUED)

6. Develop and implement a DEI-forward screening and interviewing process

While much of the work of recruiting is primarily done before you receive an application, how your organization screens, interviews, and selects its applicants can support or undermine all the hard work you did to get diverse people to apply. For this reason, organizations should carefully evaluate and – where appropriate – change their screening, interviewing, and final decision-making practices and processes. For example, consider the questions you ask and the tone you set during interviews, because at this point organizations can gain a better sense of a candidate's commitment to diversity and inclusion and vice versa. UC Berkeley has developed a thorough toolkit on hiring a more diverse workforce that details educating hiring committees on DEI, interviewing questions, and more (*See Resources*). This resource is focused on an academic health field setting but can serve as another comprehensive guide that organizations can use to develop their own practices (39).

What mistakes and pitfalls should you avoid?

Two common reasons as to why organizations fail to recruit diverse talent are that 1) their rationale for increasing diversity is problematic; and/or 2) they don't do the work to gain a comprehensive understanding of how to increase diversity. Keep these "whys" in mind when planning recruitment, but also included below are some examples of "how" organizations often get things wrong.

You'll want to avoid:

- **Limiting diversity recruitment to the HR department.** Organizations should be educating and utilizing resources of their entire workforce to promote a DEI-centric workplace and recruit outside talent. Including a diverse group of current employees to lead conversations in recruitment allows your organization to view it from different lenses instead of being siloed into an HR view (7).

- **Limiting pipelines for diversity to traditional spaces** instead of thinking of non-traditional spaces. For example, only 20% of Black college students graduate from HBCUs (7), how are you recruiting the other 80%?

- **Avoiding hard conversations.** Showcasing all smiles and welcoming environments to candidates without discussing hard conversations and the work being put into improving DEI in the workplace (*for how to improve your workplace see Retention*) (11).
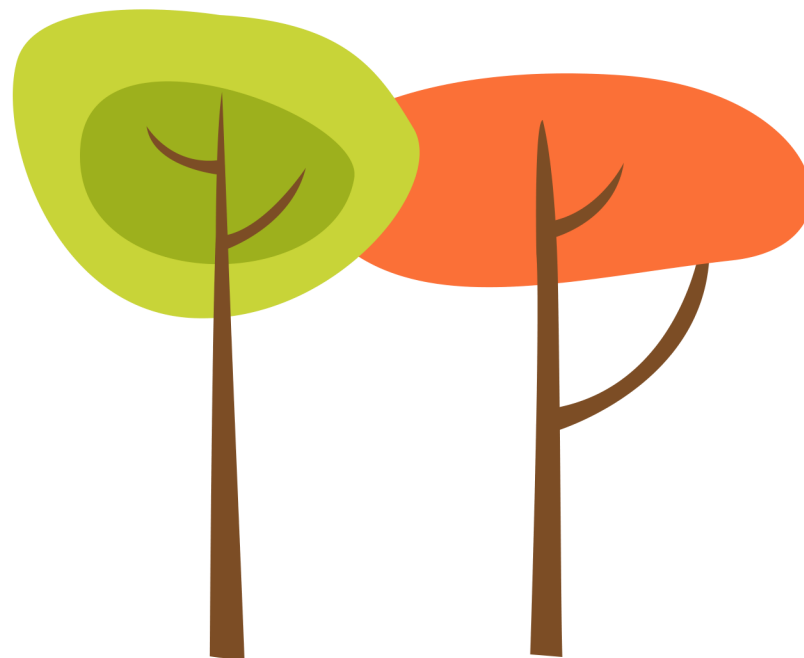
CASE STUDY: USING PIPELINES AND DATA TO ADVANCE DEI AT GOOGLE

It's no secret that the tech giant Google has had a prominent voice on LinkedIn, social media, and other platforms for increasing diversity within their workforce. Their 2021 Annual Diversity Report has a strong, thorough deep dive on how they have increased diversity initiatives both and can be helpful for companies looking to do similar work (*See in Resources*).

Let's take a quick look at the change between their 2011 report and 2021 report. In 2011, their diversity initiatives only focused on increasing the hiring of women and people of color, mostly focusing on pipelines for early talent with HBCUs and scholarships for women in technology (31). While this was a helpful start there are many underrepresented communities they were excluding, including LGBT+ communities, military veterans, people with disabilities, and more.

Within the past 10 years, they have grown more inclusive in their recruitment of these communities. With data that shows they have increased recruitment of underrepresented employees across the board and invested money in pipelines to recruit and invest in young professional minorities, the work they have put in is leaps and bounds above 10 years ago (42). One of the biggest points Google makes in their hiring of diverse talent is that they have a comprehensive approach for inclusion. Hiring diverse talent is only a starting point, they also look at how employees from underrepresented backgrounds are being engaged and retained after they begin their first day. While no company is perfect and Google has more work to do, it offers a great example of a company approaching diversity from a holistic view.

RETENTION: HOW TO ENCOURAGE DIVERSE STAFF TO STAY FOR THE LONG HAUL

Why is diversity retention work important?

Workplaces that succeed in hiring diverse staff, oftentimes are unable to retain them. When organizations fail to retain diverse staff, not only do they lose out on the many previously mentioned benefits of having a diverse workforce, but they also lose a lot of time and money and suffer a decrease in productivity and product quality as they recruit, hire, and train new candidates (8). In addition, the morale of their remaining employees takes a significant hit (26).

Why do diverse employees leave?

Upon starting a new job and entering a workplace, diverse employees are often faced with a slew of challenges that they must manage throughout their time with that organization. Challenges vary widely from individual to individual and can include anything from feeling a need to learn or perform a culture that is not their own to struggling to balance a 9-to-5 work schedule with their responsibilities as a primary caregiver. For people with multiple diverse identities (e.g., women with disabilities, LGBT people of color etc.) these challenges are compounded.

These experiences of diverse employees are a symptom of a lack of inclusivity. An inclusive work environment is one where all people are respected and valued for who they are as individuals as well as their unique skills and perspectives; where everyone feels safe and comfortable being their authentic selves; and where everyone has equitable opportunities to succeed and achieve their goals.

When a workplace lacks inclusivity, diverse employees will have to contend with challenges that will increase the likelihood that they leave an organization. When you intentionally cultivate an inclusive workplace, diverse employees will thrive and want to stay for the long haul. Happily, intentionally removing barriers and challenges for diverse employees benefits all employees and increases overall employee retention (21).

How do you retain diverse employees?

The following is a list of steps you can take to better your chances of retaining your diverse staff. The first several actions (1-3) focus on the role of leadership and assessment in retention, while the latter steps (4-11) explain how best to engage your employees to foster an inclusive work experience.

Assessing and Leading

1. Assess the situation, set goals, and measure progress

Before you can know what to change to improve diverse employee retention, you need to understand the scope of the issue and its root causes. This is where data collection comes in. Develop metrics for and assess current and past attrition (e.g., who is leaving, after how long, etc.) and what might contribute to attrition in the future. Review past exit interviews, conduct surveys and/or focus groups, and carry out a full assessment of your organization's level of diversity and inclusivity to identify factors that can impact the decision of diverse employees to stay or go (35). For example, you might find that there are gaps in pay between employees of different genders (35). Or that certain races, educational backgrounds, and disabilities are underrepresented within the management level of your organization (*for suggestions for training services, see Resources*). Once you have an idea of where you are and the challenges you face, you can set achievable goals and measure your progress towards them.

RETENTION: HOW TO CONVINCE DIVERSE STAFF TO STAY FOR THE LONG HAUL (CONTINUED)

2. Demonstrate fervent support

Set your initiative up to succeed by throwing your whole-hearted support behind it. Be an informed, committed, accountable, and engaged leader of diversity, equity, and inclusion (*for more on this topic see Demonstrate fervent support in Recruitment*).

3. Make DEI part of management performance

Rather than making your HR department and organization leadership solely responsible for carrying out your DEI initiatives, include diversity retention and other DEI criteria in how you evaluate your managers' job performance. You can even use it as part of the criteria to determine whether they will receive promotions or bonuses (37). Holding managers accountable for this work will encourage active engagement and ownership of your initiatives throughout your organization (35).

Engaging Employees

4. Train for unconscious bias, cultural competency, and DEI

While most people believe that they make ethical and unbiased decisions (28), everyone has "inherent socialized biases" that show up in what we think, do, and say in relation to other people throughout the day (3).

And that means that - whether we are aware of it or not - we can cause harm to others in our workplace. According to a 2019 study by Glassdoor, 61% of people have experienced or witnessed "discrimination based on age, gender, race or LGBTQ status" at work (22).

Unsurprisingly, discrimination impacts whether a person feels safe and comfortable at work and whether they have equitable chance of succeeding in their jobs and growing their careers - all of which factor into a person's decision to stay at an organization. Requiring ongoing unconscious bias training for every employee is necessary for any organization that wants to foster an inclusive and non-discriminatory work environment (3). MassMutual's White Men and Allies training – which, according to the company's chief of diversity and inclusion, focuses on the "systemic privilege of white male dominated culture" – has been so successful (29) "that people have called [the CEO] after they left the company to thank him, because [the training] was the most amazing thing they'd been through in their entire careers." (34)

In addition to recognizing and addressing unconscious bias, training should also build employees' level of cultural competency - or the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact in an effective and non-harmful way with people from cultures that differ from one's own (15). Managers should be especially culturally competent and aware of their biases as their behavior and decision-making can have the biggest impact on their fellow employees and might require additional training on how to inclusively manage diverse teams. Finally, your employees should receive training that educates them more generally on the value and importance of diversity and inclusion. All of these trainings have the advantage of helping you to enlist the support and participation of every employee in your DEI initiative, as well as fostering a sense of accountability for its success (*for suggestions for training services, see Resources*).

RETENTION: HOW TO CONVINCE DIVERSE STAFF TO STAY FOR THE LONG HAUL (CONTINUED)

5. Identify and accommodate needs

Every person's needs differ, and chances are, if your organization does not have a diverse staff, the needs of your diverse employees are not being adequately addressed or met. Their needs could include gender-inclusive bathrooms, expanded parental leave, flexible work hours, a quieter workspace, or any other change that would improve their experience and their ability to succeed in your organization (21). Identifying and meeting those needs is necessary - though not sufficient - to create a truly inclusive workplace.

In addition to giving diverse staff what they need to thrive, cultivating an inclusive workplace also improves the experience for everyone else in your organization. For example, instituting formal notetaking in meetings for a staff person who has an auditory processing disability, would benefit all staff persons who are visual learners or find it difficult to simultaneously take notes and engage fully in discussions. Similarly, opening the door for flexible work hours to meet the needs of a parent, would also benefit every other employee whose non-work responsibilities and pastimes conflict with traditional work hours.

To identify what your diverse employees need, you can conduct employee surveys and focus groups (facilitated by a third party so that employees feel comfortable being honest) (37).

Collecting data can also be a part of your organization-wide assessment of diversity and inclusion (*See Assess the situation, set goals, and measure progress*).

Once you have data to analyze, rather than lumping the results of all diverse employees into one group, segment the data to see trends within and across groups. Then look at each individual's needs, discuss possible solutions with them, and make the changes they and others need (28).

6. Encourage everyone to be their authentic selves

One aspect of an inclusive workplace that is often overlooked is the ability of everyone to feel comfortable being themselves at work. People "place a high amount of value on the ability to be their true and authentic selves while at work" (5). However, when a person's race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, or other identifying factor differs from most of their colleagues, they often feel that they have to hide, change, or mask important parts of who they are to avoid being judged, misunderstood, or treated unfairly because of the stigma associated with their identities (43). One study spanning seven different industries and 220 employees found that 94% of black people, "91% of women of color, 91% of LGB individuals, 80% of women", and 50% of straight white men engaged in covering - or changing themselves to avoid stigma - at work (43). Covering takes a serious emotional toll on individuals and "lacking a sense of belonging" is a major factor of why people leave their jobs.

To create this sense of belonging, organizations should encourage self-authenticity in the workplace. Simple policies like getting rid of dress codes can make a big difference. So can consistent internal and external messaging that encourages and embraces employees' authentic selves, like T-Mobile's #BeYou campaign, which encourages employees to bring their whole selves to the workplace. Similar messages like "Uniqueness is powerful," "Diversity is in our DNA," "Be yourself. We like it that way" carry throughout their "Career" page and the company's external messaging on its DEI initiatives (13).

RETENTION: HOW TO CONVINCE DIVERSE STAFF TO STAY FOR THE LONG HAUL (CONTINUED)

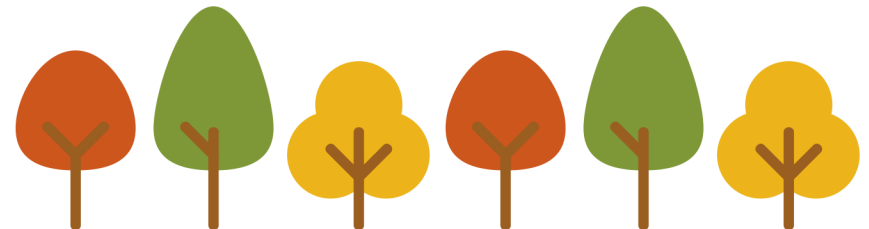### 7. Invest in employees' job performance and career development

If diverse employees see a future for themselves within your organization, and they believe that your organization is invested in their success and career development they will be far more likely to stay. Here are four ways to invest in your diverse employees and help them to see a future with your company are:

- **Mentorship.** Mentors help employees learn, grow, and advance within an organization by providing support and guidance. However, "white males tend to find mentors through their own social networks and can benefit from an informal structure, underrepresented groups and women are less likely to get a mentor through an informal program." For this reason, you should formalize the mentorship program, ensuring that every diverse employee has a mentor from day one (21).

- **Sponsorship.** A sponsorship program is when higher-level executives are paired with junior persons and use their power to advance their career. Unlike a mentor, the role of a sponsor is to advocate for the success of those that they sponsor. Like mentorship programs, they are far more likely to help advance the careers of underrepresented employees if they are formalized and if diverse employees are prioritized within them (1).

- **Transparent paths to career development.** Analyze why people are usually advanced in your organization and communicate to your employees exactly what they need to learn, demonstrate, and achieve to move to the next level or different area within your organization. Conversely, make available resources for people to develop the required competencies. Note that up to this point – if you have not been doing everything described in this section – the selection of who "stands out" and advances in your organization has most likely involved unconscious bias and a lack of equity and inclusivity (36).

- **Stay interviews and personalized retention plans.** "Stay interviews" are check-ins with individual employees with the aim of proactively identifying opportunities to improve an employee's experience so that they stay with your organization (36). These interviews should be conducted twice a year and be the basis of personalized retention plans that specifically address any unmet needs and employ retention strategies appropriate to the individual (e.g., compensation, personal development, recognition, support, etc.) (33)

8. Create and support Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Everyone needs friends who understand their experiences. This is even truer for underrepresented employees in an environment dominated by people who don't share their identity. Actively encouraging and supporting the creation of employee resource groups (ERGs) or affinity groups is an excellent way of helping your diverse employees connect with others with similar experiences and find a sense of belonging within your organization (36). Supporting ERGs can be as simple as asking diverse employees how you can help and what resources they need.

9. Establish community agreements for multicultural interactions

Community norms make it clear to everyone in the organization what is expected behavior and are an effective way to translate the learnings from the unconscious bias, cultural competency, and DEI trainings into the day-to-day interactions within your organization. Establishing clear norms both help to prevent harmful interactions (e.g., microaggressions) and to create a sense of safety for diverse employees who will feel more comfortable interacting with fellow colleagues who have agreed to certain behavioral norms. For a great list of community agreements for multicultural interactions adopted by East Bay Meditation Center from the Visions Inc., see the Resources section.

10. Develop a model for voicing concerns

When a harmful interaction occurs or when an employee sees a bias playing out, diverse employees are often faced with the choice of allowing the issue to go unaddressed (and potentially continuing) or reporting the issue and dealing with retaliation and other blowback. To create an inclusive workplace where everyone feels safe and treated fairly, develop a supportive and confidential process that allows employees to voice complaints and for those complaints to be addressed. Partners in Diversity suggests managing complaints through a third party such as Allvoices.co and creating policies that forbid retaliation.

11. Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

Tell your employees what you are doing as you carry out all the above steps and let them know what new changes are on the horizon. Just knowing that progress is being made can let your diverse employees know that you see them, you care about them, and you are doing your best to make things better.

What mistakes and pitfalls should you avoid?

We are all human and making mistakes is normal and expected, but progress can be made faster – and we can harm fewer people in the process - if we learn from others' experiences. Here are a few common mistakes you'll want to avoid:

- **Making assumptions** about any group of employees based on what you know of an employee (or other person) who shares their identity. Or ask one person to speak on behalf of an entire group. For example, if a millennial employee says that they value flexibility in their work schedule more than anything else, don't assume that all millennial employees feel this way.

- **Tokenizing your employees.** Have you recently hired a person with Pacific Islander descent or an autistic individual? Congratulations! Now, if you want to cultivate inclusivity for this individual, avoid plastering their image and their story across your website and communication materials or parading their personage across the stage at conferences or events. Don't use them as your poster child for diversity. DO invite them to engage in communications, events, and activities that are meaningful and helpful to them, based on their goals and interests (18).

- **Attempting to "assimilate" employees** into your work culture or organization. Assimilate means to cause someone or something to resemble someone or something else. Being truly inclusive means that you fully embrace and value your employees for who they are and what they have to offer. You should want every new employee to impact the culture and perspective of your organization with their own unique way of being (see Company Branding in Recruitment for more).

- **Letting your own fragility or fear of mistakes hinder progress.** DEI work is hard, often uncomfortable, and painful work because it reveals the ugly underbelly of the systems in which we live and work. What is harder, is that it requires looking at that same ugliness inside of ourselves and how we are actively and passively perpetuating it in the world around us. However, the journey - despite its difficulty - is worth the result: growing as individuals, growing as a community, mitigating past harm, and preventing future harm. And as a bonus, doing this work will increase the success - in traditional terms - of your company or organization.

CASE STUDY: THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP, TRAINING, & INCENTIVES AT MASSMUTUAL

MassMutual is a mutual life insurance and Fortune 500 company that employs 7,400 people in the US. Founded in 1851, MassMutual employed its first chief officer of Diversity and Inclusion - Lorie Valle-Yañez - in 2008. When Valle-Yañez joined, the organization was successful, but had little awareness of diversity and inclusion. The typical mindset was "why change anything if things are going well"? And from 2010 and 2014 there was very little change in the level of diversity (a 1.2% increase in POC employees and a 2.5% increase in POC leaders) within the company (17).

What they did: By 2014, MassMutual had refreshed its strategy to increase focus on cultural competence, inclusive leadership, and greater accountability. Over the next few years, the number of employee resource groups grew from two to eight. With the support of the CEO and the board, between 2015 and 2017, the company trained 200 senior employees and 2,000 employees in their White Men and Allies program which explores white privilege, how it shows up in the workplace, and how it impacts white people and people of color within teams in the organization. DEI metrics were incorporated into the company's performance metrics and its bonus incentive plans (17).

According to Valle-Yañez, the CEO was "unwavering in his support. The board has also always been very supportive and pushes us to do more and go faster. We decided that we wanted to [implement] transformative learning and specifically, there was a white male ally learning lab […] I wanted to pilot. Our CEO put his hand up for the pilot, and our entire leadership team ended up going through the first course. The program was so powerful, they decided to roll it out to the rest of the organization […] the way that our CEO is, has really helped to speed things up." (34)

The results: According to Korn Ferry Consulting, which did an assessment of MassMutual's policies and practices in 2017, "the focus on leader cultural competence and unconscious bias led to a dramatic shift in mindsets and behaviors''. This shift in turn allows the company to make faster progress in the racial diversity of its employees and leadership team. Now a little more than half of the board of trustees is made up of women and people of color and in 2021 MassMutual Received several recognitions including a score of 100 from the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index and a Best Place to Work for Disability designation from the Disability Equality Index (17).

A CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY

You have the opportunity to make radical, positive change in your organization and the forestry industry. The action items, mistakes, and successes outlined in this toolkit are only a starting point for that change. There is much more to learn and do that falls outside of the scope of this toolkit. We challenge you to take on these basic steps for recruiting and retention and to learn how you can expand them beyond what has been discussed.

For now, here are a couple of questions to ask that will help you get started:

- What can I immediately do to start making changes in the way my organization recruits and engages staff?

- Who can I bring together within my organization to gain insight and lead the way in changes in recruitment and retention work?

- What resources can we put aside to do this work in the short and long term?

- Who can I partner with outside of my organization to bring about short-term and long-term change?

- What are some things that long-term DEI vision for our organization?

- What goals can we set for the next year? 5 years? 20?

Action Plan Template

Goal:

Pronged Strategy:

ACTION STEPS	PERSON(S) OR PARTNERS RESONSIBLE	RESOURCES NEEDED	PROGRESS BENCHMARK	COMPLETION DATE	EVIDENCE OF IMPROVEMENT
What you'll need to do to implement the strategy	Who performs the action step?	Internal and external resources needed to complete the action step	How is progress measured on the action step?	When is the action step completed?	What is the result of completing the action step?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Mind Heart for Diversity Consulting, LLC (mindheartfordiversity.com)

- Mind/Heart for Diversity (www.diopress.com/product-page/mind-heart-for-diversity)

- Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People (www.barnesandnoble.com/w/blindspot-mahzarin-r-banaji/1102334630)

- Blue Sky Funders Forum (blueskyfundersforum.org)

- Google's 2021 Annual Diversity Report (diversity.google/annual-report)

- CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion (www.ceoaction.com)

- East Bay Meditation Center's Agreements for Multicultural Interactions (Adopted from Visions Inc.) (eastbaymeditation.org/2017/05/agreements-for-multicultural-interactions)

- Erasing Institutional Bias: How to Create Systemic Change for Organizational Inclusion (www.bkconnection.com/books/title/Erasing-Institutional-Bias)

- Harvard's Human Resources Guide to Recruiting for Diversity (hr.fas.harvard.edu/files/fas-hr/files/recruiting_for_diversity_9.17.13_0.pdf)

- The Leader's Guide to Unconscious Bias (bookshop.org/books/the-leader-s-guide-to-unconscious-bias-how-to-reframe-bias-cultivate-connection-and-create-high-performing-teams/9781982144319)

- How to Be an Inclusive Leader (jenniferbrownspeaks.com/inclusive-leader-book/)

- Inclusify: The Power of Uniqueness and Belonging to Build Innovative Teams (inclusifybook.com)

- Recruitment and Retention Toolkit: A Journey Toward a More Inclusive Workforce (www.aicpa.org/career/diversityinitiatives/downloadabledocuments/recruitment-retention-toolkit.pdf)

- UC Berkeley's Toolkit for Hiring Diverse Talent (diversity.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/recruiting_a_more_diverse_workforce_uhs.pdf)

- White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism (www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/566247/white-fragility-by-dr-robin-diangelo)

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