Take Action for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

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Every day I live to make the world better. My community is important, and the people I identify with depend on me to lead with them in mind. Being a black American female and the first member to graduate college in my immediate family, I have awaited this time when diversity, equity, and inclusion are being heard and talked about more often in workplaces influenced by white America. This article breaks down the meaning of each word and provides action steps that you, as an individual, can do to change your professional environment and support the movement for a better society.

Diversity:

Your organization is diverse when it includes people from different social/ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, genders, and people with disabilities. A diverse working environment will have a greater variety of thoughts and a superior blend of foundations and experience. This prompts better thoughts and procedures for making progress in business and projects. Being with individuals of different backgrounds with various life encounters can produce thoughts or points of view that others might not have considered or thought about. Everybody has their way of approaching an issue - thoughts are shaped by an individual's experiences and the perspective they see. Rather than everybody contributing similar considerations and solutions, a diverse interpretation and approach can lead to creativity and innovation.

Here are actions to activate diversity:

1. Connecting with diverse industry professionals when you have or know of open positions.
2. Interviewing candidates with non-traditional credentials.
3. Creating an employee referral program to encourage a more diverse talent pool.
4. Having employee resource groups consisting of employees who share mutual traits, backgrounds, or interests.

Equity:

People who do not face challenges because of their identity have a head start on the ones who do. This should not imply that the person who is behind cannot compensate for any shortcomings - in most cases, people overcome even though the chances may not be favourable based on societal norms.

Equity is ensuring that the challenges are not stacked, to begin with - it is to make changes so everybody has a similar chance to succeed. To have equity in your organization, there must be an understanding of what everyone needs and wants to be successful in that work environment. When you give everyone the same thing, it's known as equality; and equality could lead to boredom and job switching. Try elevating equity and give everyone what they truly need to be happy and productive at work.

Here are actions to elevate equity:

1. Working with more minority and women-owned business vendors and consultants.
2. Mentoring and providing professional development opportunities.
3. Modifying screening questions to focus more on potential and ability and less on specific criteria such as education and previous positions.
4. Considering equity-driven analysis when working with data; this could mean removing bias and stereotypes like race and gender columns.

Inclusion:

Inclusion births acceptance. We are at our best when we are accepted as ourselves. To be your genuine self, a person must feel included. Inclusion recognizes how much people can use their voice, make decisions in a group, and move up in leadership roles in an organization. When a person is included, they have a feeling of belonging that drives results as they begin to collaborate in teams and provide new ideas.

Here are actions to lead inclusively:

1. Including others' perspectives to promote full participation and the sense of belonging of everyone.
2. Supporting inclusive leadership across the organization by motivating diverse people and women to move into leadership positions.
3. Embracing employees to be their full authentic selves.
4. Expanding the company's calendar to recognize diverse holidays, for example, Ramadan for Muslims; Diwali for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Newar Buddhists; and Juneteenth for African Americans on June 19th.

Questions? Comments? Talk to the author today. DeNisha Malone on Twitter.

About DeNisha Malone

DeNisha Malone is a business intelligence solutions architect and international speaker for the data platform industry.

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Non-Tech World of DeNisha Malone

When DeNisha is not working, she enjoys mentoring college students and traveling the world to experience new things.