

## The Road to Inclusion

### Integrating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Workplace Wellness

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has been at the forefront of many discussions over the last several years. Some workplaces already have robust DEI efforts, while others may be looking for ideas on where to begin.

#### So, what is DEI?

**Diversity:** The presence of difference within a given setting, for example, the workplace.

**Equity:** Ensuring that processes, programs, policies, etc., are impartial and have equal possible outcomes for everyone with no barriers to prevent full participation.

**Inclusion:** Creating an environment in which any individual or group feels welcomed, valued, supported, and respected to fully participate.



It makes sense when talking about workplace wellness that DEI plays a key role. Studies have shown that when employees see efforts being made around DEI, it can promote overall wellness. Other benefits to integrating DEI efforts into the workplace include higher levels of engagement from employees, increasing employee representation, and focus on the human experience in the workplace.

#### Why DEI is important to leaders in the workplace:

Jobseekers consider workplace diversity to be an important factor when considering job opportunities.

Inclusion and a sense of belonging is linked to increased employee retention.

DEI efforts have also shown to accelerate organizational cohesiveness.

#### What can leaders in the workplace do to increase DEI efforts:

Educate leadership on benefits of DEI in the workplace and create excitement at a leadership level. When leadership includes DEI efforts in strategic planning and development of mission, vision, and values it can impact the culture of the workplace.

Identify champions of DEI efforts, across all teams, departments, and positions. This promotes participation across the workplace and allows employees to be engaged in the process, which also promotes being inclusive!

Begin a DEI work group with these champions leading the charge. Some ideas for DEI work group projects include reviewing current policies and procedures to make sure they are updated and reflect your workplace's efforts around DEI, adding new policy and procedures as needed, creating a DEI calendar that observes the dates and months of a diverse workforce, planning for how DEI information will be disseminated across the workplace, and identifying training opportunities.

Look for activities to make available to employees, such as 21-day challenges around DEI topics. Many challenges can be found online. Your local United Way may be a good starting point, as these challenges are often unique to their locations. These activities can be great starting points for further discussion around DEI efforts within the workplace.

**Take the first step:**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace has always mattered. In recent years with the impact of lack of inclusion we have seen with respect to various diverse groups, it is becoming more essential than ever. As leaders you can create diverse and inclusive workplaces where employees share unique perspectives, respect each other's needs, and reach their full potential without barriers. Even small steps towards increased DEI efforts can have a significant impact on your employees and your workplace.

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