



Diversity  
in the  
Workplace



# Defining Diversity

**M**ost of us are familiar with diversity as it relates to race and gender, but, it also extends to age, medical conditions, religion, language, sexual preference, socio-economic class and much more.

In the workplace, though, it can mean much more than just employing a wide variety of people. At its core, it means recognizing each individual's own traits and strengths and how they contribute to the company.

## **ONE OF THE BIGGEST TRENDS IN BUSINESS**

Diversity has been a buzzword

for years, but now it's becoming more granular for employees and for consumers. Businesses are also recognizing the link between a diverse workforce and a diverse clientele.

## **MORE DIVERSE CAN EQUAL MORE PROFIT**

A 2017 McKinsey survey shows that companies in the top quartile

for gender diversity on their executive teams are 21 percent more likely to experience above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile. Companies with ethnically diverse executive teams are 33 percent more likely to experience above-average profitability than peers.

What does this mean? Diversity means profit.

## **DIVERSITY IN YOUR COMPANY**

There are several ways to incorporate diversity into your company, including considering diversity in your company's marketing plan.

One of the most visible ways, even moreso than a giant billboard, is to ensure you have hired and trained a diverse workforce.



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# Benefits of Diversity

**A** diverse workplace should reflect the community it serves in regards to age, gender, ethnic groups, religions and other factors. Paying attention diversity when you hire new employees or create a new team can bring big benefits to your company.

## **ATTRACTING CONSUMERS**

More and more, consumers are recognizing and rewarding diverse companies. Multicultural buying power, Forbes says, grew to \$3.4 trillion in 2014 and is predicted to rise. Consumers like to see a company that recognizes diversity and where they can be served by someone who looks, thinks or talks like themselves.

## **SERVING NEW POPULATIONS**

As the American population

becomes more diverse, so must American business.

Having a diverse workforce can mean having an employee that speaks a consumer's specific language or recognizes a religious holiday. Make it easier for multicultural consumers to spend their money with you.

## **ATTRACTING TALENT**

Just like consumers, job seekers are putting a premium on working with a multicultural team. A 2017

survey by employment website Indeed showed that more than two-thirds — 77 percent — of job seekers in the white-hot tech sector say it's important for a company to have a diverse workforce.

Even if you aren't hiring now, you should be concerned about diversity. A 2014 survey by employment review company Glassdoor shows that 57 percent of employees think their current company should be doing more to increase diversity.

## **ATTRACTING NEW IDEAS**

By hiring from a range of cultures, races, genders and more, companies are bringing in a wide range of new ideas.

Teach managers to foster a company culture of engagement and innovation by encouraging all employees to bring their ideas and experience to the table. Better brainstorming sessions mean a shorter time to a workable solution in your company.



# What Is Inclusion?

**M**anagers, along with making sure their workforces are diverse, also should make sure they are inclusive.

The Society for Human Resource Management defines inclusion as a work environment in which all people are

treated fairly and respectfully, with equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute to company success.

Here are four tips from SHRM on bolstering inclusivity.

## **GET MANAGERS ON BOARD**

Hold mandatory inclusivity training and have your managers brainstorm strategies for

promoting inclusion on their own teams. Make sure to discuss real-life scenarios managers can face, like accommodating a disabled worker. Keep the conversation going beyond training. Consider adding inclusivity to evaluations and other existing feedback mechanisms.

## **THROW A PARTY**

Show off how diverse your company is by building a cul-

ture of celebrating diversity and inclusivity through events such as a dinner to celebrate different nationalities or supporting employees in their efforts to raise awareness.

## **COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE**

Don't just set goals and walk away. Communicate inclusivity goals to your entire company and engage employees at all

levels. Measure progress and let everyone know how you're doing. Some questions SHRM suggests to guide your decision-making:

- What are our inclusion goals?
- What are the reasons for those goals?
- How do we quantify inclusion?
- How will inclusion impact our mission, brand or bottom line?



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# Tips for Increasing Diversity

**H**iring managers and human resources managers may need to think outside of their usual boxes when looking for a more diverse workforce. Here are some tips from The Wall Street Journal on increasing diversity.

## **MAKE A PLAN**

Working with your management team, decide on a goal, such as serving a particular population. Then, come up with a workable plan to achieve that goal. You don't want to end up struggling to hire someone with specific language skills when you won't be working with the community with whom they can communicate.

Make sure your hiring strategy conforms to federal, state and local laws

regarding recruiting and employment.

## **CONNECT WITH COMMUNITIES**

Speaking of community, reach out to houses of worship and community groups that serve the populations you'd like to represent in your workforce.

Oftentimes, leaders there can point you to candidates in places you may not have reached before. While you're there, ask these leaders what your company can do to make itself more

attractive to job seekers and consumers alike.

## **TAKE A LOOK AT BENEFITS**

See that your benefits offerings align with the communities you want to employ and serve. Some changes might be simple — flexible schedules and mothers' rooms for parents — while others, like accommodating religious wear and holidays, might be more difficult. Play up these benefits while you're recruiting.

# Legal Considerations

**D**iversity and inclusion feel like soft issues in many ways. But here's one very concrete way it can affect your bottom line: fines and lawsuits. You probably already know the basics of employment law, but here are some particular issues you should be aware of when hiring for diversity.

## **EEOC**

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was created by the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It enforces federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or employee because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age, disability or genetic information. It also enforces complaints of discrimination against employees who complained or filed a charge of discrimination. EEOC laws cover most employers with 15 or more employees, labor unions and employment agencies.

The commission resolves

disputes through mediation, settlements, and, in some cases, litigation. In 2015, the EEOC secured more than \$356.6 million in monetary benefits. Many states also have their own rules and similar commissions and agencies to handle complaints.

Running afoul of this law can definitely impact your bottom line. If you have any questions or concerns about the EEOC and your workforce, look to a local human resources professional or legal counsel to make sure you're not impacted.

## **LAWSUITS**

Outside of the EEOC and other laws, you also can be sued by an aggrieved employee or candidate. In addition to legal fees, these cases can also impact your company's reputation. Tread carefully when it comes to writing job ads,

interview questions and more, and also look at best practices for accommodating different populations in the workforce.

This is a great time to look at not only how you serve your employees, but also your consumers.





# Retaining a Diverse Workforce

**N**ow that you've found the perfect candidates and built your diverse team, you need to keep that talent on your payroll.

Maintaining a diverse, inclusive workforce takes the thought process you put into hiring them and implements it into your workplace culture.

## **TRAIN, TRAIN, TRAIN**

But train the right way. The Harvard Business Review reports that diversity training yields better results when it's

voluntary and when it's not billed as a consequence ("we've had complaints about x, so you have to do this training.") It also works better when everyone, not just managers, are included.

## **RECRUITMENT INTO RETAINING**

The work's not done when the recruiting is. Spend the

same amount of time working on keeping your employees as you do finding them, The Wall Street Journal says, or your carefully created diverse, inclusive workforce will disappear. Pay attention to your onboarding process and give employees time to adjust to their new role and to your company's culture.

Set up mentoring programs

and pass on chances to move up.

## **LEARN FROM MISTAKES**

A comprehensive, easy exit process is just as important as onboarding.

With a solid exit interview, you can learn what mistakes, if any, you made during that person's career with your company.



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# Hiring HR Professionals

**W**hile you're hiring, if your company doesn't have a human resources professional on staff, it probably should. An HR professional can help your company navigate the processes critical to recruiting, hiring and retaining a workforce. Furthermore, an HR professional can help with payroll, benefits, safety procedures, an employee handbook and more.

## ARE YOU READY TO GO PRO?

Small business owners are probably used to handling human resources problems themselves. But as the company grows, it begins to make more sense to turn this job over to a professional. At first, you may want to hire consultants or local HR companies to run your human resources for you, especially if your business is pretty straightforward. However, as you grow or if your management needs are more

complex — say, if you manage employees at home and abroad — you might want to consider putting someone on staff.

## FINDING THE RIGHT HR PERSON FOR YOU

Some things to consider when looking for your first human resources professional, from the Society of Human Resources Management:

- The number of years of HR experi-

ence and the level of responsibility during that time.

- Experience working in your industry and with companies your size;
- Education level and HR certifications; and
- Knowledge of local, state and federal employment and compliance laws.

## CERTIFICATIONS

The accrediting agency for human resources professionals is the HR

Certification Institute. The organization offers a range of certifications for human resources professionals at home and abroad.

For a one-person department, SHRM recommends to look for an HR generalist or manager rather than a specialist.

Look for a PHR or SPHR — professional in human resources or senior professional in human resources — after a candidate's name.