



## Best Practices:

# Five Ways to Champion Diversity in Your Workplace

- On the surface, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) programs might seem like a fit for corporations with big budgets and large workforces. But, small to mid-sized companies can scale their DEI efforts based on staff size and budget requirements to achieve similar results—and the investment will more than pay off in the long run.

G&A Partners' Lucy Garcia said a strong DEI program provides the roadmap, course, and tools to steer your company in the right direction—away from practices that have been hardwired into company culture because of long-standing cultural and societal factors.

To get you started, we've compiled best practices from several human resources industry reports and articles that make recommendations for a successful—and sustainable—DEI program.

# 1

## Model Diversity in the Workplace from the Top Down

It's crucial to set DEI standards and develop actionable goals, but they may be challenging to achieve if your company leaders aren't committed to the program.

"Lasting success is only found when that diverse leadership team is genuinely committed to inclusivity in every aspect of their company culture," states Forbes' "[The Benefits Of Creating A Diverse Workforce.](#)" "A leader who values diversity will choose to surround him or herself with a diverse leadership team that keeps an eye on the culture, continuously considering these questions and holding one another accountable."

A [RedThread Research study](#) recommends taking the following actions at different organizational levels:

- ▶ **Executives/senior leaders:** Integrate DEI into all aspects of business operations and guide change throughout the organization.
- ▶ **Managers:** Find ways to incorporate "big picture" DEI initiatives into everyday activities, such as developing diverse teams, using fair and empathetic conflict resolution techniques, and leading discussions about sensitive topics.
- ▶ **Employees:** Commit to listening, learning, seeking feedback from colleagues and management, and taking action to improve when needed.

# 2

## Create an Inclusive AND Accessible Workplace

Inclusivity and accessibility are similar but not the same. An inclusive workplace treats all employees with respect and dignity and provides them access to equal opportunities and resources. An accessible workplace provides unique support systems to employees of diverse abilities.

Examples of workplace inclusivity include creating [employee resource groups \(ERGs\)](#), micro-communities within a business that provide safe spaces for employees with commonalities to network, share ideas, and support each other and mentorship programs. Also, invite employees to share concerns and feedback and encourage open and honest dialogue so that everyone feels welcome in your workplace. [cont.]

An accessible workplace should comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and provide “reasonable accommodations” to help an individual with a disability perform the essential job functions. These could include modified equipment or devices, flexible work schedules, and closed captioning for video conferences and interviews.

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## 3 Prioritize Accountability

Without an accountability system, your company’s DEI program, goals, and policies are at risk of enacting minimal change in your workplace.

According to Forbes’ “[4 DEI Practices Your Company Should Adopt In 2022](#),” there are several accountability measures that companies should adopt, including allowing employees to rate leadership on a DEI scorecard, implementing anonymous reporting systems to expose bad behavior, and having a transparent and objective approach to dealing with exclusionary and problematic behavior. “In 2022, employees are no longer willing to stand for inequities, especially when it is easier to find a company that cares more about employee well-being,” states the article.

In addition, you can keep tabs on your DEI program’s progress using tools such as the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)’s [Diversity & Inclusion Self-Assessment](#), which measures benchmarks through a series of questions such as:

- ▶ Do we have a nondiscrimination policy?
- ▶ Do we make diversity and inclusion a core value and goal for our organization tied to the business objectives and strategic goals?
- ▶ Have we spent time and energy learning about the qualities and attributes of the various groups in our organization?
- ▶ Have we implemented specific programs and outreach initiatives that target diverse employees for our organization?
- ▶ Are all our staff/employees aware of our diversity, inclusion, and nondiscrimination policy and their expected behavior?

# 4

## Recruit and Build a Pipeline of Diverse Talent in Your Organization

Diversity in recruiting and advancement are worthy goals, but only if applied throughout the company.

[Create a strategic diversity recruiting plan](#) that includes goals for reviewing your business' job description development, candidate sourcing, applicant tracking, pre-hire assessments, interviewing, maintaining legal compliance practices—and align them with DEI goals. Ensure that your interview panels include many diverse viewpoints and people. Also, create and implement an inclusive hiring and onboarding process. Work with an expert in [recruitment process outsourcing \(RPO\) services](#), such as G&A Partners, which can help you find and hire diverse candidates.

Search for and promote opportunities for diverse talent—at all levels of your organization. This will require your company to beef up training and educational programs so that employees who do not have access to these opportunities can compete on a level playing field.

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# 5

## Set Actionable Goals

It is essential to set DEI goals and targets, but equally important is to think carefully through an actionable plan that will stand the test of time. One that includes:

- ▶ Looking at your current workforce demographics and identifying strengths, weaknesses, areas of concern, and trends.
- ▶ Talking to your team and creating an employee focus group to gather feedback about their perceptions of the company and its culture.
- ▶ Recruiting a core team to promote your DEI program.
- ▶ Implementing the initiatives in your company's plan along with a robust employee communications plan.
- ▶ Collecting and reviewing data with your employee focus group or DEI committee.
- ▶ Create a safe space to have hard discussions.

To fully advance your company's DEI efforts, it is also important to provide an educational program that helps employees understand unconscious bias, learn new perspectives, and build relationships.