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5 Actionable Tips to Drive Meaningful and Sustainable DEI Progress





A strong and long-lasting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) program is critical to attracting and retaining top talent – and to fostering an environment where all employees can thrive. A successful DEI program helps to improve an employee’s sense of belonging and allows everyone to feel comfortable showing up as their authentic selves.

However, progress has stalled for many companies, despite public pledges and advocacy. Gallup research has shown that 97% of HR leaders report their organization has made changes to improve DEI, but just 37% of employees say the same of their organization.

So, how can leaders start making a positive impact on their company’s DEI progress? Gartner® research has found that focus, measurement, and fairness are key.

We’ll start by focusing on a few actionable tips to sharpen your focus, give clear areas of measurement, and center fairness. Boosting diversity, creating equity, and fostering inclusion combine short- and long-term strategies that will enhance your efforts to sustain DEI progress.

Boost diversity



Diverse organizations highlight their employees' unique traits and characteristics. To boost diversity in your organization in a sustainable way, take a step back and focus on your employees.



1. Use data to tell a story.

Your organization needs a thorough and complete picture of where it stands to help set achievable goals. Ensure that your goals are clear and that progress can be measured by prioritizing the areas where you want to see change and improvement.

Benchmarks provide crucial context and help build accountability. Understanding the underlying market and talent landscape will enable you to set goals that are achievable.



2. Create space for employees to use their voice.

Ensure you are regularly collecting employee feedback and taking concerns and suggestions seriously. Take time to reflect on your findings and allow it to guide your DEI efforts.

To collect impactful feedback, create a culture where all employees – especially underrepresented groups – feel comfortable sharing their honest opinions by prioritizing psychological safety. It shouldn't be a surprise that research has found that White employees have the highest levels of psychological safety.

Our research has found that to boost psychological safety in underrepresented groups, organizations can say “thank you” more often and check in with employees more frequently. The data reveals there's room for improvement on both counts. Only 51% of respondents have been thanked in the past month, and only 29% check in with their managers more than weekly.

Create equity



Equitable workplaces treat each employee fairly and provide equal access to advancement and pay opportunities. The good news is, creating equity is entirely in your organization's control. How you pay, promote, and reward your employees will make a big impact on engagement, stress, and retention.



3. Leverage recognition to shield against burnout and retain your workforce in the long run.

Keep in mind that recognition goes further for some employees than others. If your organization is struggling with retention of women or employees of color, take stock of your recognition practices: Are those employees getting recognized as much as their white, male counterparts? Both burnout and turnover of traditionally under-supported employee populations can be combated, at least in part, by fulfilling, authentic recognition.

In a study of Workhuman recognition data across 712,000 employees, Asian, Black, and Hispanic

employee turnover dropped 20%,

and female turnover dropped 17% after one year in a recognition program.

Gallup and Workhuman research has found that all workers who feel they get the “right” amount of recognition are 31% less likely to experience burnout. Recognition makes an even greater impact on disadvantaged groups – 63% of women, 43% of Black employees, and 44% of Hispanic employees are less likely to experience burnout if they strongly agree that they’re getting the right amount of recognition for the work that they do.

Foster inclusion



Inclusive workplaces make people feel respected, welcomed, and valued. To foster inclusion, organizations must take an honest look at their company culture and invest in ways to make their changes last.



4. Prioritize flexibility.

Hybrid and remote work have created more employment opportunities for disadvantaged and disabled employees than ever before. To sustain this success, provide your employees with accommodations and flexibility to get their work done where, how, and when it is best for them. A survey has found that 49% of employers who provided cost information reported the accommodations they made cost absolutely nothing to implement (\$0).

Companies can incorporate accessibility and accommodations by implementing the steps below:

- Ensure there are breaks in long meetings.
- Set core hours for meetings.
- Allow employees to work from home without formal approval.
- Make it clear that brief, flexible leave (a few hours at a time) for employee wellness is acceptable.
- Provide access to change equipment or technology.



5. Contribute to the evolution of employee resource groups (ERGs).

Provide the support they need to initiate positive change in the workplace. Workhuman research has found that when ERGs are successful, those who participate are more engaged in the organization's culture and have higher psychological safety.

To better support ERGs, companies can focus on communication, recognition, and check-ins. Employees involved in ERGs at companies with a recognition program are more likely to say their work is visible to the organization (65% vs. 57%). Employee recognition has the power to strengthen ERGs because it provides more attention to and appreciation for the people doing the work. Further, it shows that the organization supports these groups' missions.

To learn more about the importance of focus, measurement, and fairness in your DEI program, and to arm yourself with the tools and data needed to take action, we suggest downloading this research report from Gartner, provided complimentary by Workhuman.

Gartner, CIOs Must Renew Commitments to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to Boost Talent Retention, Debra Logan, Rob O'Donohue, 16 December 2022

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