

How to ensure equity and diversity in the company. And why you may be mistaken

JULY 29, 2020 | ARTICLES



There are three key reasons – moral, legal and economic – why diversity, equity and inclusion are a greater imperative in business than ever before. The responsibility for achieving them lies primarily with the top management, which sets the tone for the whole organisation.

However, a significant gap exists between the way leaders and employees view progress toward equality in their organisations. How to bridge this gap and how to effectively pursue diverse and inclusive businesses?

What's your priority?

Although both employers and employees declare their concern for equality, leaders rate their efforts to ensure an empowering working environment much higher than their employees are willing to do. These are the findings of the [Accenture's 'Getting to Equal 2020' report](#).

77% of female respondents and 67% of male respondents from 28 countries believe that workplace culture is critical to helping them thrive in the workplace. That's a view shared by 68% of leaders of the surveyed organisations. The same number of **leaders** feel they create empowering environments where people have a sense of belonging, yet just a third of (36%) of employees agree! Also, the number of people who do not feel included in their organisations is 10 times higher than leaders believe it to be (20% versus 2%).

The sources of these discrepancies can be visible when you look at the lists of top organisation priorities indicated by leaders. Only one in three (34%) ranked diversity on top of their priority list. The most common answer was financial performance (76%) and brand recognition (72%). Only the environment (understood as reducing the carbon footprint of the company's operations) is lower on the leaders' priority list.

Equality as a profit

Meanwhile, cutting the employee perception gap by half would boost global profits by US\$3.7 trillion, along with workforce ambition and empowerment – authors of the report estimate. How is it possible? Studies have shown that feeling more included boosts productivity while having the ambition to reach leadership is important to advancing in an organisation – we can read in the Accenture study.

Successful organisations are powered by the diverse opinions, skill sets and life experiences of their employees. Well-managed, diverse teams significantly outperform homogenous ones across profitability, innovation, decision-making and employee engagement. These are, in turn, the findings of the World Economic Forum toolkit '[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 4.0](#)', designed for organisational leaders and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officers.

The WEF report presents several challenges facing recruiters and managers of organisations and explains how new technologies can help them in their struggle for greater diversity in companies. Authors of the report point out that technology is no longer simply 'neutral' concerning diversity, equity and inclusion. Technology carries risks, but, at the same time, it can be an excellent tool to support the pursuit of diversity and equality in organisations.

Technology for diversity

According to the toolkit, there are three main areas for action. Each of them has been described within three operations that can be performed by management:

Talent Sourcing and Selection

- Address bias in a job advertisement
- Tap into talent pools of diverse candidates
- Identify best-fit candidates based on merit and skills

Organisational Analysis and Monitoring

- Benchmark diversity, equity and inclusion across the organisation
- Measure behaviours that create exclusion
- Understand employee experience and engagement levels

Employee Experience, Reward, and Development

- Train and incentivise managers and employees to enhance inclusion and belonging in their daily interactions
- Conduct objective performance evaluations
- Support career path planning alongside learning and development

In each of these areas, the objectives of diversity and inclusion can be achieved using specific technologies. New technologies may, for example, support the HR department in the recruitment process by carefully analysing candidates' applications according to the previously indicated criteria. In each analysed area the toolkit suggests technology providers that may be of interest to managers. It also lists the information we should get from the providers before we decide on their solutions.

"Ensuring racial justice, gender parity, disability inclusion, LGBTI equality and inclusion of all forms of human diversity needs to be the 'new normal' in the workplace set to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis," conclude the authors of the publication. However, this will not be possible unless leaders first take a critical look at their activities. Organisations also need to make **equality their priority and develop tools to objectively assess progress in this direction.**