THE EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION

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TRENDLINES

The Employers' Association's monthly whitepaper on essential Business/Human Resources practices

The Employers' Association (TEA) delivers reports for businesses that contain relevant and up-to-date information based on our work with hundreds of employers each month. TEA is known to produce a number of essential benchmark survey reports every year and we also compile data and observations that provide organizations practical perspectives on important business trends.

(Diversity, Equity and) Inclusion Surveys

What you should know

Bias (unfair or inconsistent actions taken either deliberately or unintentionally that results in someone or a group of people being treated differently because of who or what they are, they believe, they express, or they represent), is an ongoing global issue that has existed for generations. Racial equality legislation, propagated in the 1960's, was believed to be the end of racial discrimination. The acceptance of these changes resulted in raising several generations of people that could look in the mirror and say to themselves, "I am not racist," and many people believed the main impacts of racism had been addressed. 2020 has demonstrated to the larger population that racial bias (and all other forms of bigotry) are still present and felt strongly.

It is possible to find many articles that speak to the virtues of an inclusive, multicultural and diverse workforce. The primary benefits of **having** and **using** an Inclusive and diverse culture are:
- Improved creativity, problem solving and decision making abilities
- Increased organizational productivity and profitability
- Enhanced employee engagement and retention
- Better company reputation

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) is a term easily bantered about in today's corporate culture but is often misunderstood and/or misinterpreted. Many companies feel that issues of inclusion and racism are addressed once they establish a DE&I program or department but the mere existence of such a focus does not ensure changes of culture or different organizational practices.

Though the diversity and inclusion parts of DE&I are often mistakenly taken to be interchangeable, the two terms actually represent closely related but highly distinct concepts. **Diversity** is about the presence of individual and group differences. Diversity is really a measure of the *makeup* of an organization. **Inclusion** is about the *environment* in which diversity flourishes. Inclusive work environments allow employees from diverse backgrounds to feel welcome to bring their best, most authentic selves to work and create an overall sense of belonging. In truth, the most important part of the DE&I equation is inclusion. Inclusion is the Yellow Brick Road to reducing bias...actively and purposefully BEING inclusive will help to CREATE a diverse workforce that can be leveraged to fully tap into the value that employees from a range of backgrounds can bring to the table.

The single question that has paralyzed people for ages – "How can I, as just one person or a single company, make any difference in such a global issue?" still exists. Perhaps the best way to move forward is to define the state of a situation then intentionally make changes that move towards its resolution.

What we know

Forbes Magazine shared the following statistics that validate the need to improve inclusion in leadership:
- 12.5% of the US population is Black yet hold only 3.2% of senior leadership positions.
- Out of the entire Fortune 500, only 4 CEOs are Black (and they are men) which is 0.08% of Fortune 500 CEO's.
- As of 2018, there have been 1,974 members of the US Senate, but only ten have been Black (0.005%).
- 18.3% of the US population is Hispanic yet only 4% of company executives are Hispanic.

Inclusion Surveys can help establish a baseline for organizations as they intentionally address the exclusive practices and barriers to inclusion. Requests for Inclusion Surveys have increased in the past several months, primarily driven by the increased visibility of the Black Lives Matter movement and other social responses to injustice.
- In the last six months, 83% of the companies The Employers' Association has conducted Employee Engagement Surveys for have requested that questions specific to Inclusion be added to the instrument.
- The number of responses to Google searches for "Diversity & Inclusion Surveys" has increased from 71 million to 100 million in the last two month.
- The Employers Association of America (EAA), an association of Employer's Associations in the United States, is working as a group to identify and implement a specific Inclusion Survey.
- Survey Monkey has developed a template for Inclusion Surveys.
- The Employers' Association has two effective surveys – one for senior management to establish management's perspective of how Inclusive their culture is and one for employees to express their realities.

The National Business Research Institute (NBRII) states, "The sole purpose of a survey-driven root cause analysis process is to quickly, clearly, and simply identify the smallest number of issues that can be shown to drive, control, or predict the largest number of issues within an organization." Data from Inclusion Surveys can provide valuable information that can be used to create action plans to address inclusion and equity challenges as well as demonstrate the value of workplace diversity.

What it means

Companies and individuals have shown a significant Interest in changing and becoming more inclusive but many organizations do not know where to start. The only way to see the whole Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) picture is by gathering the full gamut of DE&I metrics to provide a reference point – a starting place – that will help to establish a direction and help clarify a destination.

NBRII states, "As a result of conducting empirical research, management is challenged by both the advantage of incisive, astute intelligence of the target population and is often overwhelmed by the task of relating, organizing, and prioritizing a large number of issues." In order for a survey to be effective and accurate it must meet two conditions:
1. The survey is designed and conducted properly by an independent third party,
2. The company commits to taking action after receiving the results.

What you can do

Companies are actively looking for ways to improve their Inclusion capabilities, expand their corporate Diversity and plug the holes in their existing programs. The most cost-, resource-, and time-effective way to improve Inclusion and Diversity in the workplace is to follow the steps recommended by Forbes, Harvard Business Review and the National Business Research Institute (NBRII). After identifying a third party having a survey that is easy to administer, details clear and concise results, then provides actionable recommendations, implement the following steps:

Step 1: Collect the data – The survey is the most important step in the entire process. In order to act and make any sort of change, there needs to be a base line of "what is." The "what is" should be from both a corporate perspective and from an employee "reality check" perspective.

Step 2: Identify areas of concern and develop objectives – Review the results of the data to determine what needs to be addressed (the most impactful issues). One step at a time is the best way to move forward AS LONG AS you do not quit "stepping" along the road to your destination.

Step 3: Craft and implement Inclusion Behaviors – Based on the recommendations from the Inclusion Survey and the accompanying recommendations from the survey provider, determine which recommendations can provide the most benefit the quickest, which should be implemented first and which can be cadenced in over time. Ensure all plans clearly establish what should be happening as well as what should not be happening.

Step 4: Communicate initiatives and expectations – Communicate the survey results and recommended changes to the entire organization in multiple ways.   Provide a rational for what changes will be made, a time table for those specific changes, and why they were chosen amongst all of the recommendations.

Step 5: Measure and update results – Over time as work is done, measure progresses by conducting additional surveys to determine the effectiveness of the actions taken.

Do not be overwhelmed by the perceived enormity of the task of improving Workplace Inclusion. There will be many activities and changes that can be made. Understand there are many paths that can be taken – the most important thing is to do something to become more inclusive. Any change that is made will initiate an avalanche effect that will move towards a more inclusion and subsequently diverse organization.

The Employers' Association has instruments available and the knowledge/experience to make recommendations to help you make a difference. Give us a call at 616.698.1167 and we will walk beside you as you begin your journey to a more inclusive environment.