VISION LIBERATE

Creating a Truly Inclusive Workplace:
A Strategic Approach

Introduction

In the wake of historic social unrest, many businesses have recommitted to prioritising diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The workplace has increasingly become a platform for social change, where indifference is no longer an option. As organisations strive to do the right thing, they also recognise that getting DEI right is inherently good for business.

However, with money and reputation at stake, finding an effective path forward remains challenging. According to Gartner, 64% of Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs) are now held accountable for DEI progress, yet 80% of HR professionals view their companies as merely "going through the motions." To create real, sustainable change, organisations must move beyond superficial efforts and address the practical needs of their employees.

In this resource, we explore four critical areas that can help you move beyond box-ticking exercises to create a supportive and inclusive workplace where all employees can thrive.

What Is DEI?

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) refers to practices and policies intended to support people from varying backgrounds and give them the resources they need to thrive in the workplace.

While DEI initiatives are designed to benefit everyone, they often focus on uplifting groups that experience marginalisation.

This includes implementing policies and practices that prevent discrimination, harassment, and exclusion.

Measure Impact & Focus on Behavioural vs. Attitudinal Goals

While many organisations recognise DEI as a strategic initiative, <u>fewer than one-fifth</u> measure the impact or effectiveness of these efforts.. Simply mandating training sessions is not enough; these can sometimes even lead to resentment.

Focus on Behavioural Change: Instead of solely aiming to change attitudes, target specific behaviours that contribute to a more inclusive culture.

For example, rather than just educating employees about unconscious bias, implement policies that encourage diverse hiring practices and inclusive decision-making.

Setting clear behavioural goals ensures that DEI initiatives lead to real, measurable changes in the workplace.

Understand Deeper Issues to Provide Effective Support

Even with the best intentions, organisations can overlook the unique challenges faced by employees from racialised backgrounds. Listening to your employees' unfiltered experiences and providing the necessary support is crucial.

Ask the Right Questions: Are non-inclusive behaviours from leadership being addressed? Are employees given opportunities to grow, or are they left without the support they need? Are there safe spaces for open dialogue? By asking these deeper questions, employers can uncover the real issues and create a more supportive environment.

Real-World Example: Consider a company that implemented regular listening sessions where employees could anonymously share their experiences. This initiative led to actionable insights, such as revamping mentorship programs to better support underrepresented groups.

Encourage Employees to Show Up Authentically

When employees feel valued for who they are, they are more likely to contribute creatively and innovatively. Research shows that <u>35% of an employee's emotional investment in their work and 20% of their desire</u> to stay at their organisation is linked to feelings of inclusion. However, creating an environment where this can happen requires collective and individual awareness and a culture of reflection.

To help achieve this, organisations should strive to embody the following characteristics:

- **Acknowledge Every Person's Humanity:** Value their presence and recognise each individual's unique contributions.

- **Implement Tangible Improvements:** Make real, tangible changes that employees can feel, rather than superficial efforts.

- **Develop Emotional Maturity:** Embody self-reflection, empathy, and honesty in your approach, understanding that different positionalities require different needs.

Encourage Employees to Show Up Authentically

- **Supportive Policies and Practices:** Develop and implement policies that embed DEI into your organisation's culture and communication. Cultivate an environment that promotes emotional maturity through acknowledgement, compassion, communication, and action.

- **Partner with Employees:** Encourage employees to bring their whole selves to work by partnering with them to identify needs, address blind spots, and understand the inclusion metrics that matter most. Listening to and acting on employee feedback is critical to creating an environment where everyone feels empowered to grow and make purposeful contributions.

Pro Tip: Regularly check in with your team through anonymous surveys or one-on-one meetings. This not only helps to gauge how included your employees feel but also shows that you value their input.

Understand the Business Impact of DEI

Research clearly shows the business benefits of focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion:

Emotional Commitment: Catalyst found that 35% of an employee's emotional investment in their job and 20% of their desire to stay with their company are linked to how included they feel.

Innovation: The International Labour Organization reports that companies with inclusive cultures and policies see a 59.1% rise in creativity, innovation, and openness, as well as a 37.9% improvement in understanding what consumers want.

Lower Absenteeism: Deloitte research indicates that a 10% increase in feelings of inclusion can reduce absenteeism, adding nearly one more day of work attendance per employee each year.

Why It Matters: Beyond the ethical reasons, these statistics show that DEI efforts have a real impact on your company's success. By cultivating an inclusive environment, you not only keep your talent but also boost innovation and productivity.

Conclusion: Move Beyond Box-Ticking

Creating a supportive and inclusive workplace is not just about checking boxes; it's about cultivating an environment where everyone can thrive. Vision Liberate works with organisations to move beyond theoretical concepts, implementing real, impactful actions that support all team members.

Take the Next Step: Join our upcoming webinar To gain strategies that support diverse teams and learn practical insights, join our upcoming webinar, **"Diversity & Inclusion: Enhancing Well-being, Creativity, and Authenticity."**

This session will equip employers with the tools to create a workplace where all employees are empowered and inspired to bring their authenticity, creativity, and sense of purpose to work.

For questions on DEI, employee well-being or our monthly webinars, connect with us.