Make the distinction between diversity and inclusion to drive real change

The fundamentals of diversity and inclusion in the work environment should be reflected by companies promoting acceptance and respect of all individuals regardless the differences that may exist in gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, language spoken or various communication styles.

Seems straightforward, and should be the values that most of us, as individuals should hold. However, due to different life experiences, upbringing, or our own cultural beliefs, we have created certain bias that with time have become part of our learnt behaviours that <u>influence our relationships with and towards others</u>. This is unfortunately also seen by many in the work environment.

Many companies have desperately tried to address these issues and have been confronted with many challenges. Perhaps this is due to them not truly understanding the distinction between 'Diversity' and 'Inclusion'?

Firstly, diversity is not the following!

It's not about hitting your gender or race recruitment quotas

Nor trying to create a positive brand image and advocating for diversity by speaking on panels, or sponsoring relevant events

Jumping on the bandwagon to use the topic of diversity to raise your brand image or company profile

I caught up recently with Nim Haas who is widely regarded in most circles as the Fintech and Payments whisperer, she just needs to look at a brand and it grows. But as well as being accomplished in the industry she is also a huge champion of "No Bullshit Diversity".

One of the funniest stories she told me was standing up on a diversity panel and lecturing the whole white panel about having no diversity on their diversity panel which I found both ironic but annoying that it still happens.

Nim's stance begins with "Embracing Diversity. Applying the basic principles it entails 'acceptance, respect, regardless of the differences that exist amongst individuals' – and ensuring that these are part of a company's values and culture.

Organisations wanting to truly implement diversity need to also provide employees across all levels with the right support and training to help them understand, accept, and respect each other's differences.

Additionally, I agree with Nim that we need to ensure that brands walk the talk and that they have a diversity policy in place that maintains equality regarding hiring, salary, opportunities, and promotions. I also couldn't agree more with her on recruitment, "Organisations could also adopt blind CVs to limit gender bias in the hiring screening process, as well as names of universities to limit any favouritism towards candidates coming for more reputable educational establishments."

There are many benefits ensuring diversity exists within an organisation. Many studies have highlighted that having a diverse workforce yield great results and can outperform by 15% those that do not have diversity in their staff.

However, as the workplace becomes more diverse, more issues may arise. It's fundamental that those in charge of HR are aware of the various challenges associated with diversity so that it can be prevented and addressed. This is why 'Inclusion' is important and companies need to understand the distinction.

It's simple. Diversity does not equal 'Inclusion'!

Once a company has implemented a diverse work environment, this is now

where the challenge begins for many organisations. What can they put in place to ensure they are now also *inclusive*?

I asked Nim in her experience what can brands do to tackle this head-on.

"There are various ways an organisation can try and create initiatives to support inclusion within the work environment. For example, creating initiatives such an 'Inclusion Council', represented by a number of influential employees in the company from diverse backgrounds, levels and regions, that all share a real passion and commitment to inclusion. The council will have the aim of advocating and influencing decisions ensuring diversity and inclusion are always considered across the business. They will be the voice and power of the employees and ensure targets set for the company to be inclusive are met and hold the company accountable when they are not!."

Inclusion also means respecting other beliefs, or religious holidays, and companies need to ensure that a policy is also in place to further support inclusion, including taking into consideration accessibility for the disabled – and selecting an office that is easily accessible for all.

Nim goes on to outline that "… there are many other considerations that could either be driven and implemented by the council to ensure employees voices are heard. Monthly/weekly anonymous surveys, open-ended questionnaires to give employees the opportunity to express any issues they may be facing in the work environment with colleagues or within their role."

Another issue in the work environment that is sometimes overlooked is the language communication barriers To be inclusive, companies need to consider any team member whose mother tongue is not that in which they work. Simple considerations such as sharing documents ahead of meetings or even communicating in a simpler form, using easier words for them to comprehend.

'Inclusion and Diversity' co-exist together, if companies want to succeed in diversity, they need to also understand how to support inclusion within the work environment. One cannot work without the other.

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