

# Human Capital

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# The How-Tos of D&I

*Organisations should work towards promoting mindsets, behaviours, processes, and practices that embrace differences and remove barriers.*

BY MONIKA NAVANDAR



Today, there is a fair amount of awareness among corporates when it comes to diversity and inclusion (D&I). At least, the C-suite at the enterprise level acknowledges the importance of having either a D&I strategy in place or keenness to kick-off D&I initiatives. Personally, having worked in various roles at the enterprise, global, regional and country levels, my observation is that the MNCs that have been amongst the top 50 D&I organisations for numerous years at the world headquarters level are still lagging in basic D&I practices in their EMEA and Asia Pacific markets. Some of their country leadership teams struggle to understand that diversity and inclusion are two distinct terms.

For them, D&I is equivalent to any gender diversity and unconscious bias awareness program. Also, despite many successful efforts, there is still a lack of minority talent in board rooms and the C-suite.

D&I is a business imperative. Recruitment, unconscious bias awareness, and mentoring programs alone, or merely celebrating Women's Day/ International Day of PwD/ Pride month won't move the needle when it comes to having a diverse talent pipeline.

A diverse workforce with highly inclusive culture leads to better decision-making, teamwork, collaboration, innovation, creativity, customer/market perspectives, talent engagement, and financial

return. The only way businesses can leverage the power of diversity is through inclusive behaviour and by breaking down the existing silos in organisational structures. So how do you really work towards promoting mindsets, behaviours, processes, and practices that embrace differences and remove barriers? How do you work towards realising the full potential of each individual, team, and the organisation as a whole? Well, we need more commitment, concrete plans, and cultural changes.

**“D&I is a business imperative. Recruitment, unconscious bias awareness, and mentoring programs alone, or merely celebrating Women's Day/ International Day of PwD/ Pride month won't move the needle when it comes to having a diverse talent pipeline.”**

**Here are a few ways to accelerate your D&I journey:**

1. Define diversity and inclusion in a consistent manner and regularly communicate it organisation-wide through various mediums.





**2.** Focus on data collection and encourage employees to self-identify. This needs a lot of work in terms of employer branding, inclusive practices, role models, advocates, psychological safety, and overall organisational culture.

**3.** Fix your internal talent development and management practices. There is a lot of bias in talent decision-making processes/systems; hence, you don't see diverse talent movement in senior roles or across the board, including



**POOJA BHASIN**

Sr. Director HR & Finance,  
Ticketmaster India

“More and more companies today are focussing on having an inclusive culture and bridging the gender gap in their workplaces. I believe that true change and inclusion can be brought about when diversity is part of an organisation's principles and not a binding mandate. We should take pride in a woman workforce which is empowered, and colleagues who can be judged solely based on their talent, capabilities and teamwork, not preferences. Disability is no more an obstacle to success; the physically challenged are today probably striving harder and achieving more success than others. As an organisation, it is our responsibility to encourage such inclusive workplaces and offer recognition where due. Freedom to discuss all concerns and sharing suggestions for the continuous improvement in the workplace, flexible hours, kids' zone within the office and considerate work culture are some of the other measures that go on to nurture a healthy work environment.”

cross-functional roles. Think about performance management: How is feedback given to minority talent—constructive or politically correct?

**4.** Run customised unconscious bias awareness programs to mitigate biases in hiring, promoting, and terminating talent. Incorporate practical nudges in your recruitment, performance management, and succession planning processes.

**5.** Start a skills initiative to train your minority talent on networking, building relationship capital, enhancing executive presence, etc.

**6.** Unless leaders are held accountable and compensated for D&I performance, you won't see progress. Set up D&I targets for both reward and penalty. Design scorecards/metrics and tie them to performance bonuses, rewards and recognition programs.

**7.** Work on enhancing your employer brand by sharing D&I data/metrics internally and externally. Participate in D&I benchmarking surveys. For example:

- Google and Facebook both share their diversity data publicly.
- Hindustan Unilever's MD, Sanjiv Mehta, declared the ambition to achieve full gender parity by 2022.
- Goldman Sachs, in January, announced the setting of a new standard to have at least one diverse board member before taking any company public.
- Citigroup announced its commitment to close its gender gap.

**8.** For the business to thrive, you need to connect the dots and bring it all under one umbrella—D&I, CSR, sustainability, and health and wellness initiatives.

**9.** Leverage your Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) beyond celebrations—for developing leadership, driving a culture of inclusion, acquiring talent, onboarding, engaging and retaining employees, identifying new



**TAPAN GUPTA**  
CHRO, PSIPL

“The strength of an organisation lies in its Diversity and Inclusion practices. It can be described as a programme that encourages representation and participation of diverse groups of people, including people of different races and ethnicity, abilities and disabilities, genders, religions, ages and sexual orientations. It could also mean people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, skills, and opinions. Any organisation with distinct viewpoints across various levels helps in improving financial results, organization, and team performance. For any D&I strategy to work, attracting diverse employees is only the beginning. The most important part is to provide an environment where employees feel supported and valued. Any successful D&I strategy should reflect through high retention of a diverse workforce and high employee engagement scores. Diversity is inviting new people to the party; Inclusion is asking them to Dance.”

opportunities, and increasing your market share.

**10.** Focus and improve your supplier diversity. E.g., partner with women and minority-owned businesses.

For those organisations that have identified the business case for D&I, have secured leadership buy-in, and are looking for ideas on what to do next, here are some actions you can take:

**1.** To begin, assign at least one senior full-time resource for D&I

work. Either hire an expert from the market or leverage a consultant to support and enable your team on-site.

**2.** Identify and make a list of stakeholders to conduct interviews and evaluate your existing practices through a D&I lens. Gather insights on your organisational culture, talent management practices, employee experience, and leadership behaviours to develop the strategic plan that is integrated across the business, HR, and ERGs.

**3.** Centre your D&I strategy on delivering “must-wins.” Plot a three-year roadmap along with the first-year action plan, including a few quick wins. Examples: Build inclusive leadership competencies;



**TUSHAR DESAI**  
Director - Talent Acquisition  
India, FIS

“The pursuit of D&I as an integral part of organisational culture strategy has evolved from being a fad to a primary feature in Talent strategies. Embedding D&I into the DNA of any organisation is like adopting a diet plan. There are no quick fixes and there needs to be a holistic plan with a clear executive sponsorship with enough drive to avoid eventual fatigue. From an Indian context, the Inclusion factor plays a more significant role than Diversity as we are already quite diverse as a nation. Hence, it is imperative that we put clear objectives for each component of the Talent pipeline and tie it back to the organisation goals. This makes the pursuit of D&I participative and seamless through the hiring as well as employee lifecycle.”

design diverse talent acquisition strategies; embed D&I into business strategies; establish and optimise ERGs; educate, develop and advance diverse talent at all levels; and strengthen governance and accountability.

**4.** Look at talent acquisition from a D&I lens:

- Consider using software such as Textio for gender-neutral language in job descriptions
- Partner with vendors catering to minority hiring
- Analyse the data to see which sources bring you the most diverse hires. For instance, are you hiring only from Tier 1 colleges?
- For senior leadership roles, analyse whether you are considering a diverse slate of candidates who are also being evaluated by a diverse panel
- Run exclusive tailored unconscious bias programs for recruiters and hiring managers
- Look for “culture-add” instead of “culture-fit” candidates

**5.** Build and enhance psychological safety in teams, including virtual teams, so that every voice is heard to promote inclusion and innovation further.

**6.** Go beyond your traditional leadership development and mentoring programs and launch sponsorship programs for high-potential, high-performing diverse talent.

**7.** Policymaking:

- Keep a D&I checklist ready to ensure that each policy is applicable to every last worker
- Communicate the code of zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment
- Incorporate flexible work-arrangements such as work from home, job-sharing, part-time work, etc.


**8.** Build an inclusive visual environment via pictures of diverse groups.



**SHEELA CHARLES**  
HR Head, Log 9 Materials

“Company policies rapidly evolving and we witness wide acceptance of diversity across levels. It makes good economic sense to hire a diverse workforce, including “Returnees to work after a break” - maternity, illness, and disabilities. But all said and done, the inclusion of a combination of the diverse workforce continues to be challenging due to certain aspects like educational background and skills, especially in companies with niche jobs. Sensitisation of the workforce on “diversity” needs to be undertaken to not lose out on inclusion.”

**9.** Sensitise all the employees, including your facilities staff in terms of avoiding sexist comments, how to treat and interact with PwD, the LGBTQ+ community, etc.

**10.** For accountability and results, measure and share the representation reports. Remember, accountability and execution are key to get anything done! 

#### About the Author

**Monika Navandar** has 15+ years of multi-industry HR experience and has led many leadership roles in India, USA, Singapore, Dubai, and South Africa, supporting global C-suite leaders. She is the Founder of NeoSeven Solutions and has a dynamic partner team of senior leaders worldwide. She has been on the Harvard Business Review Advisory Council for 3+ years. Formerly, she has worked with Johnson & Johnson, Volkswagen, Merck Pharma, HSBC, and IBM. Monika is also an eminent speaker. Reach out to her at [inquiry@neoseven.in](mailto:inquiry@neoseven.in).