



Operation Necessity: Inclusion and Diversity Are a Must-Have in Today's Workplace



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In today's workplace, a focus on inclusion and diversity is not just the right thing to do—it is vital to the long-term success and sustainability of organizations. By fostering an inclusive and diverse environment where employees can bring their whole selves to work, organizations are helping to improve the full employee experience. From recruitment and onboarding to career development, companies will see better results with fresh perspectives, increased collaboration, and happier, engaged team members achieving their full potential.

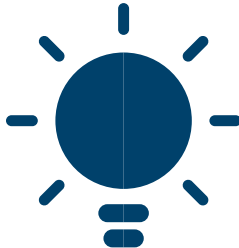
In addition, organizations whose cultures reflect a commitment to an inclusive and diverse workplace are more profitable and hold competitive advantages when it comes to recruitment, retention, and performance—all of which cannot be understated in the AEC industry, which continues to face an ongoing talent shortage and a highly competitive market. To build enduring relationships with employees, companies need to understand the impact that a valued team has on an organization's success.

Diversity & Inclusion Matters: Positive Impacts to Your Business



67%
of job seekers want to join
diverse teams

[Source](#)



Organizations with inclusive
cultures are **6X** more likely to
be innovative and agile

[Source](#)



Companies with D&I practices
generate up to **30%** higher
revenues

[Source](#)



Understanding the Differences

Although diversity and inclusion (D&I) are often in the same conversation, they are not the same thing. Companies must have a clear understanding of what these concepts represent to best implement related practices.

Diversity speaks to the makeup of an organization’s people and examines the differences that make us who we are in a wide variety of ways—gender, race, ethnicity, education, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion, socio-economic backgrounds, thinking and communication style, and personality type. Diversity is not just a buzzword or trend, nor is it a requirement to be met. Diverse employees bring diverse perspectives, opinions, and life experiences that result in robust employee programs and varied solutions for clients.

Inclusion reflects how the organization engages its people and creates an environment that provides opportunities for all employees to realize their full potential by bringing their whole self to work. For example, employees who differ from their co-workers in generation, socio-economic background, sexual orientation, gender, or religion may not feel comfortable being themselves in the workplace for fear of judgement. If these employees don’t feel comfortable in their environment, they are less likely to communicate issues and needs, and more likely to leave a position in search of a different atmosphere.

While diversity and inclusion are different, they must work together. An inclusive environment with a diverse workforce provides the greatest value.



Creating Accountability

Developing and promoting a process that fosters an inclusive and diverse workplace takes steadfastness from leadership. Diversity-focused events and employee training alone won't yield a lasting impact on unconscious and conscious bias and practices. For inclusion and diversity to truly have an impact, leadership must be committed to having honest conversations, evaluating current standards, and establishing metrics for accountability. An ongoing, comprehensive and dedicated D&I process includes several steps.

Evaluate the organization. The new paradigm of inclusion focuses on the entire employee experience, from recruiting to hiring, to retention and professional development. To make real advances toward achieving an inclusive and diverse work environment, companies may need to formalize focus on employee experiences. The new vision may require a leader that is part of the C-Suite and responsible for accomplishing metrics driven by inclusivity.

Inventory and set baseline measurements.

Every company's approach to inclusion and diversity will be different based on company culture. By honestly evaluating an organization's policies and practices, companies can pinpoint areas for improvement and better alignment with company culture and core values. Employee development, training, recognition programs, and compensation are important components of an organization's policies that can be inventoried.

Make inclusion and diversity part of strategic planning.

Incorporating inclusion and diversity into the strategic plan lets employees know how important they are to the organization's growth and success. It also promotes a sense of shared responsibility among all employees to foster a culture that is inclusive, welcoming, and supportive for everyone. Across-the-board involvement is essential to making inclusion and diversity initiatives succeed.



Inclusion beyond the workplace

with **Caroline Ducas, PE, ENV SP**
Project Manger, Transit & Rail

Inclusion plays a critical role in our workplaces, as well as in the work we do for our clients and communities. Hear **Caroline Ducas, PE, ENV SP, Project Manager, Transit & Rail**, share insights on incorporating inclusive design into transit to eliminate unnecessary separations and barriers for commuters.

Trouble playing video? [Click here](#)



Implementing Best Practices

When there is commitment from leadership to provide a best-in-class employee experience, organizations can begin to develop and implement best practices to advance and promote an inclusive and diverse work environment.

Become conscious of unconscious biases.

Biases influence us in ways that we often don't recognize; understanding how they impact our day-to-day interactions and decision-making is essential to changing behavior. Implementing unconscious bias training can help employees uncover hidden biases and become more aware of the impact of bias on decision-making.

Create platforms for employee engagement.

An employee-led resource group (ERG) can foster new ideas for educating and encouraging involvement, while also providing a front-line perspective on the impact of the organization's inclusion and diversity initiative. ERGs can help gather important information about often-unseen inclusivity issues and challenges. And, perhaps most importantly, they offer an opportunity for employees to make connections over shared experiences.

Evaluate benefits and programs. Not all employees want or need the same benefits. Using industry benchmarks and carefully considering employee goals and desires, organizations can refine or add benefits and programs to best meet employee needs.

Reimagine the recruiting process. Evaluate recruiting strategies and refine as appropriate to determine if certain groups are excluded and employ methods to reach a more diverse pool of talent.

Developing a proactive D&I process takes time and requires constant refinement, accountability, an unwavering commitment from leadership, and frank conversations within cultures about unconscious behaviors and attitudes. **But despite these challenges, every leader must consider the alternative—the implications of *not* addressing inclusion and diversity in the workplace.** They are fundamental to creating a work environment where every employee has the opportunity to achieve their full potential, and to the growth and long-term sustainability of any company.



Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Alliance

VHB understands that long-term success for our company—and the AEC industry as a whole—relies on diversity of expertise, perspectives, and life experiences for the best level of problem-solving and finding solutions to complex challenges. Diversity is one of VHB's core values and a foundational element that helps guide

the company. VHB is focused on fairness, and our culture promotes a sense of inclusion, importance, and support for all employees.

IDEAL is VHB's Employee Resource Group (ERG) and is focused on promoting awareness, inclusiveness, openness, and diversity across the company through an integrated approach that includes learning and development, recruiting, retention, community involvement, and supplier diversity. All employees are

encouraged to attend and participate in industry conferences and professional societies, access cultural educational opportunities, partner with our recruiting team to enhance the hiring process, and volunteer at community service activities.

VHB IDEAL helps to develop leadership skills, access mentors across the company, conduct open dialogue around shared concerns and interests, and connect with our communities and across the industry.