Chatsworth Consulting Group

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS
FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

While many organizations have established diversity initiatives, appointed diversity leaders, and rolled out diversity training, many still struggle with how to really effect change – how to break down internal barriers and open up honest dialogue about differences that make a difference in the workplace. In our experience we have found that in order for all leaders and employees to "buy into" and support diversity and inclusion, there must be several factors in place. Leaders must clearly acknowledge the linkages between a successful diversity and inclusion process and business success, and employees must very clearly see what is in it for them to embrace this process. In order for a diversity and inclusion effort to truly effect change, it is essential that an organization and its leaders thoroughly lay the groundwork for the process, clearly and intentionally communicate throughout the process, and equip employees with awareness, skills, and tools that are in and of themselves inclusive.

Lay the groundwork

"No man will work for your interests unless they are his."
David Seabury

- A clear, broad and inclusive definition of diversity and inclusion is needed so that all employees feel they are included and reflected in the definition.
- Instilling ownership across functions, business units, and/or regions will focus accountability and allow efforts to be tailored to those unique needs and challenges.
- As employees interact across time zones and borders and the global business "village" is drawn closer by technology, communications, and commerce, diversity and inclusion becomes an ever more important issue to address.
- Senior leadership support – visible, credible and consistent – is essential to demonstrating true organizational commitment. It is crucial that all the senior leaders are aligned with a shared and consistent understanding of how the firm is defining and approaching diversity and inclusion.

Communicate clearly, consistently, and inclusively

> *"How well we communicate is determined not by how well we say things,*
> *but how well we are understood."*
> *Andrew Grove*

- Sharing real and relevant implications for the business illustrates linkages between a focus on diversity and inclusion and organizational success.
- Communication needs to be consistent and as inclusive as possible by weaving varied messages throughout multiple media channels and tied to key business initiatives.
- When managers and leaders demonstrate ease and individual comfort in discussing diversity issues, needs, and the benefits to the business, employee buy-in grows.
- Effective communications must highlight and answer the question for employees of "what is in this for me." This is true of any organizational change effort, and particularly important for diversity and inclusion because there are often many misperceptions of what diversity and inclusion is.
- Messages that reinforce diversity as a global competitive advantage that drives high performance will make the case for creating and fostering an inclusive work environment. It is essential to share that strategic diversity and inclusion addresses critical business needs such as:
    - increasing employee productivity and engagement
    - increasing innovation and creativity
    - entering emerging markets effectively
    - managing talent – recruitment and retention of the best global talent
    - increasing customer satisfaction
    - increasing strength of global brand identity

Develop awareness, skills, and tools

> *"The greatest lever for change is awareness."*
> *Michael E. Angier*

- We all have blind spots, biases, "hot buttons," and fears. How these play out in our behavior at work and in our lives creates the driving need for diversity education.
- Self-awareness and a close examination of the personal impact of bias and intolerance moves the learning from the "head" to the "heart."
- A diversity education program provides a platform for equipping employees with skills they need to work effectively across differences.
- By introducing the concepts of employee engagement and microinequities, the learning is deepened with an awareness of how our often-subconscious behavior and actions impact the experience of others.
- Personal communications skills, knowledge of the internal processes of value judgments and assumptions that lead us to biased and intolerant behavior, and the opportunity to map out a personal commitment to action in order to effect behavior change are three of the components for lasting impact.
- All change, particularly human behavior change, takes time to take hold. Allow time for change to happen.

<u>**Seek help through the process**</u>

"Wisdom is knowing what to do next,
skill is knowing how to do it, and virtue is doing it."
David Starr Jordan

- Taking a strategic approach to diversity and inclusion will align your efforts with key business drivers and goals. Bringing in a fresh perspective to listen to and observe employees and examine their issues and challenges will provide you with an assessment of the unique needs of your organization and help to identify the best approaches to a more inclusive environment.

SUMMARY

Diversity efforts within most organizations need a jumpstart. In order to breathe new life into a potentially stagnant effort, or to begin an effort that is currently only in planning stages, it is essential to reenergize leaders around the effort and to focus their attention on the clear linkages between a healthy and inclusive work environment, productive and engaged employees, and business success. In addition, communications and education supporting the diversity and inclusion process must address how much is truly in it for employees to change their underlying assumptions as well as their overt behaviors. These two efforts are best accomplished through clearly laying a firm foundation for the process, communicating carefully and intentionally throughout the process, and providing leaders and staff with opportunities to develop awareness, skills, and tools that are in and of themselves inclusive. With proper attention to these factors and guidance from a qualified expert, an organization is more likely to effect real change in diversity and inclusion.

Chatsworth Consulting Group, based in New York and Pennsylvania, helps individuals and organizations articulate and realize their goals. By taking a holistic approach to consulting and coaching, CCG uncovers the often-hidden opportunities for success so that clients move forward with greater focus and purpose. Learn more by visiting www.chatsworthconsulting.com or calling 1-877-405-7288.