

# Diversity at Workplace: Creating an Inclusive Culture

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## Abstract

*Diversity in this paper refers to the array that arises out of cultural, ethnic, educational, religious, racial, age, and gender differences. Diversity management is a process that intends to build and maintain an encouraging work environment where the similarity and differences of individuals are appreciated. The core of diversity lies in accepting, discovering and leveraging of these differences in a secure, positive and fostering environment. It means having an open state of mind, being inclusive, giving authenticity to these differences and accepting them with an optimistic frame of mind. Still a lot of organizations view diversity from a narrow point of view. For the purpose of being politically correct they concentrate on helping underprivileged groups. It is regrettable as diversity is a much more influential concept, if it is managed effectively it can create substantial benefits for businesses. If diversity initiatives are designed in such a way that they create an impact on business these will be sustainable for a long time.*

*Due to globalization of businesses a sophisticate, difficult and aggressive environment is created. Organizations need to create new products and services constantly to be successful. And only through diverse & inclusive employees organizations can ensure development of new ideas. The paper examines the potential barriers of diversity and suggests strategies to enhance workplace diversity and inclusiveness. The paper concludes that how effectively managing diversity can lead to more dedicated, satisfied employees and enhanced financial performance for an organization. The paper highlights that though employees of various backgrounds have same organizational motivations, but employers should know that a diverse workforce comes with some challenges as well. The paper intends to tell how incompetent organizational strategy can lead to reduced employee morale and effective communication, and increases conflict. The paper discussed various ways to increase diversity within an organization and enhances contributions toward the accomplishment of organizational goals.*

**Keywords:-** Diversity management, workplace diversity, discrimination, stereotype, inclusiveness

## 1. Introduction

Diversity is not just a multicultural issue but much more than it. Diversity is about accepting different types of people, who represent different cultures, different things, generations, ideas, and thinking. Workplace diversity refers to the array of differences between people in an organization. Though it may sound simple, but diversity includes race, gender, age,

personality, tenure, cognitive style, education, background, ethnic group and more.

Diversity involves how people perceive themselves and others. For employees to function efficiently organizations need to deal with issues such as communication, change and adaptability. Organizations that recognize the need for immediate action and are willing to spend resources on managing diversity in the workplace are successful.

Recent research points out that diversity increases individual's efficiency, organizational effectiveness and constant competitiveness when it is accepted and valued. Diversity not only affects the businesses, people and operations internally but also their suppliers, customers and other external stakeholders.

One of the main blocks in discussions about diversity is its definition. Diversity comprises various experiences and characteristics that define each of us. But usually there is a misconception about diversity that is it includes only certain persons or groups under it, but the fact is, exactly the contrary is true.

## 2. Dimensions of Diversity

Diversity is synonymous of difference. Gardenswartz and Rowe are the authors of one

of the classic models to analyze differences by different dimensions of diversity. It should be remembered that.

- i) An individual can belong to more than one category.
- ii) Each group is heterogeneous
- iii) Identity group is not a permanent or unchangeable circumstance to which an individual belongs.

### 2.1 Personality

This includes an individual's likes and dislikes, beliefs and values. Personality is shaped early in life. It is influenced by and influences the other three dimensions throughout one's lifetime and career phases. It includes personal characteristics that organizations consider as constructive or unacceptable are important in evaluating the potential of success of employees.



(Image: Gardenswartz, L., Cherbosque, J., Rowe, A. (2008): *Emotional Intelligence for Managing Results in a Diverse World*. Davies-Black, Mountain View, California)

## 2.2 *Internal Dimensions*

They represent the typical dimensions i.e. age, ethnic origin, etc. They are selected either as whole or in part based on priority of the organizations. But it is essential to assess if these provide information, when considered in isolation. These are derived from the following dimensions:

- i) Age - Generational diversity holds significance now days as considerable young employees are joining the organizations.
- ii) Sexual Orientation - Organizations generally do not feel comfortable when asked about this dimension. They feel as they might interfere with the private life of their employees. But there is no clear boundary defined between professional and private life of employees. But now day's organizations accept and discuss about the private lives of the employees. Without stimulating gossips organizations act maturely with respect to their Sexual orientation.
- iii) Physical Ability – This means ability to perform some physical act. Means differences associated to physical abilities like, reduced mobility, etc.
- iv) Gender - This is perhaps the dimension that has undergone a lot of change in the last couple of years. It is usually considered as the only typical dimension- factors such as salary gap, the few numbers of women in the top management or the glass ceiling show that there is still a long way to go.
- v) Ethnic Origin and Race - Organizations or countries refers to race means historical origin or ethnic origin in diversity. Ethnic origin or race provides identity as to which historical or cultural group an individual belongs to.

## 2.3 *External Dimensions*

They are different from internal dimensions as they can change throughout the life of a person. As people get married or they change their professional status, etc.

- i) Geographical Location – It means the extent to which individual's geographical origin implies certain assumptions, for examples Japanese are hardworking.
- ii) Recreational Habits - They are significant as they allow the establishment of informal relationships within the organization. Therefore, it has an effect on the visibility of the person within the or-organization.
- iii) Income- It exerts increased effect on the other differences and thus making them more noticeable. It includes style of clothing that decides the perception about the competency levels for senior roles in organization.
- iv) Marital Status - Existence of policies on flexible working makes importance of this dimension more evident.
- v) Educational Background - The importance of credentials, education from a reputed university or prestigious degrees makes this dimension much important as it adds value to the organization.
- vi) Physical Appearance - Its significance comes from The "Halo effect". For example, we usually believe that good-looking people have all positive characteristics.

## 2.4 *Organizational Dimensions*

The last dimension of diversity is associated with the organization itself. Especially with characteristics such as the functional division, hierarchy of managers, line of business, etc. Previous researches of working environments have shown that the best indicator of the degree of commitment of peo-ple to their organizations is not the monetary benefits or the working conditions. But the relationships that the individuals have with their line managers. And how to their managers treat and respect differences among the each employee.

## 3. **Importance of Diversity**

Diversity affects not only the businesses, people and operations internally but also their customers, suppliers, and other external stakeholders.

The most important key ingredient in this shift is:

### **3.1 The Change in Demographics**

The population has seen increase in the number of Minorities, people from other countries & LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Transgender)

### **3.2 Generational Gap**

Due to increased longevity of people and late retirements has resulted in four different generations working together i. e. Conservatives, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Each of these has their own mind-sets, working habits, towards usage of technology, and customs.

### **3.3 Globalization**

With rise in globalization different languages, cultures, and religions of both consumers and employees will represent more diverse mix.

With ever-increasing complexity of business, it has become important to have employees from different backgrounds and cultures. It is important to have diversity in an organization for a variety of reasons like:

- i. Diversity supports unique ideas and brings in diverse viewpoints.
- ii. It lets insight into the customers mind and appeals to a different market place.
- iii. Makes advancement inclusive by taking together employees from different economic strata and religions.
- iv. Functional diversity brings diverse viewpoints to finding solutions.
- v. It facilitates best practices from diverse industries to be implemented.
- vi. Women employees bring distinctive insights and impact which makes the work place more positive.
- vii. Global integration makes diversity significant and thus organizations lay more importance to it.

## **4. Key Findings of Forbes Insights, “Global Diversity and Inclusion: Fostering Innovation through a Diverse Workforce”**

In July 2011 Forbes Insights releases “Global Diversity and Inclusion: Fostering Innovation through a Diverse Workforce, ” a study which examines global trends in employee diversity and inclusion. In particular, the study focuses on the link between diversity and innovation. Also it finds out how senior executives recognize that a diverse set of experiences, approaches and backgrounds is critical to innovation and development of new ideas.

The Key Findings of the study are following:

- 4.1 Diversity is a key driver of innovation and is a critical component of being successful on a global scale** - Study finds out that senior executives are recognizing that a diverse set of experiences, approaches, and backgrounds are critical to innovation and the development of new ideas. When they were asked about the relationship between diversity and innovation, a large number of respondents agreed that diversity is critical to encouraging diverse viewpoints and ideas that promote innovation.
- 4.2 Significant progress has been made to build and retain diverse workforces, but there are still some impediments to organization’s efforts** - Organizations feel that they’ve made improvement with regards to gender diversity. But they feel that they have not been able to do much in areas such as disability and age.
- 4.3 Nearly all respondents reported that their companies have diversity and inclusion strategies in place** – The study finds out that not all of the diversity plans of organizations are the same. About a third of respondents said that their organizations have global strategies that allow for least regional divergence. While half of the respondents said that their organizations have a global plan that allows for diverse strategies so as to address regional needs and cultural differences.
- 4.4 A diverse and inclusive workforce is crucial for companies that want to attract and retain top**



*talent* – In today’s global economy competition for talent is fierce. Therefore, organizations need to have recruitment, development and retention plans ready for managing a diverse workforce.

**4.5 Responsibility for the success of organization’s diversity efforts lies with senior management** –

For a successful diversity and inclusion plan organizations need to assign accountability and constant oversight. In the study seven out of ten organizations reported that in their organizations responsibility lies with middle management and their board of directors.

**4.6 Organization’s diversity goals and priorities won’t change significantly over the next three years** –

When organizations were asked about their present diversity and inclusion priorities, 43% quoted retention and development of talent, 35% said ensuring diversity in the workplace, 29% said development of a strong pipeline of diverse talent, and 28% cited managing cross-generational.

**5. Advantages of Workplace Diversity**

Businesses are recognizing the requirement and significance of spending in diversity and inclusion. Organizations are investing considerable time and resources in their talent management practices and are continually challenging their organizations, so as to make the connection between the diversity principles and their corporate performance. In today’s global markets diversity is critical as organizations interact with diverse cultures and customers. The benefits of diversity include improved creativity, new attitudes, new languages, increased global understanding, increased productivity and new solutions to difficult problems. Also organizations can enjoy benefits of improved market insights, increased consumer loyalty, innovation, and better recruitment and retention plans.

Among the advantages of diversity in the workplace are:

**5.1 Improved Productivity**

Diversity and Inclusion brings in diverse talents together. Organizations can work towards a common goal using diverse skill sets that will increase their loyalty and productivity.

**5.2 Attracting and Retaining Talent**

Diversity adds a competitive edge to the organization. Employees feel included and this increases loyalty and feeling of belongingness among them. The pool of talent boosts organizations to compete in the global world and to increase its diverse consumer base.

**5.3 Saves Litigation Expenses**

When organizations apply and follow the proper diversity & inclusion management strategies it saves money on litigation expenses which arises out of discrimination lawsuits.

**5.4 Enhanced Creativity and Problem Solving**

With diverse minds coming together to work more creative solutions will arise. Every individual will bring in their unique way of thinking, decision making and problem solving.

**5.5 Enhanced Synergy**

Helps to Build Synergy within Teams and Improves Communication Skills that will bring in new attitudes and processes from which whole team can gain.

**5.6 Increased Market Share**

Increases Market Share and Creates a Satisfied Diverse Consumer Base as organizations can relate to and understand well people from different backgrounds.

**6. Barriers to Diversity**

According to Kay du Pont a renowned American speaker & trainer in human communication & relationship in one of his publications “Handling

Diversity in the Workplace: Communication is the Key” asks “Why do we have problems dealing with diversity”? According to him, diversity itself is not a problem but our differences have always been there. They are what make us unique. He says that the problem lies in our attitudes towards diversity. He says, people who have negative attitudes toward other people’s differences often engage in negative behaviors, including Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination.

He further adds that to keep these negative behaviors from becoming obstacles to organizational diversity, we must learn to identify and avoid them in our business relationships, treatment of employees, hiring and firing practices. Prejudice, Stereotyping & Discrimination hurt not only people but also affects organization’s bottom line.

**6.1 Prejudice-** It is a predetermined feeling also called as opinion. It is without judgement and is a normal human reaction. Each of us has biases of various kinds. Some people hate dogs even though they have never owned one. Some people hate green leafy vegetables as they were forced by their parents to eat it. But some people think that green vegetables make them stronger. We all have different likes and dislikes.

Our prejudices come from our family, friends, our environment, media and other external influences. As long as our biases are about insignificant things, like our brand of soap, they are quite harmless. But when we hold biases against people, we can create a lot of problems.

When one believes in the superiority of one’s own race, culture or class prejudices are created. These prejudices frequently create stereotypes.

**6.2 Stereotyping-** When we apply our biases to all members of a group we create Stereotypes. If you think that all members of a particular ethnic group are lazy, you may still believe in this stereotype. No matter what your everyday experience tells you, if you strongly believe this you may spread it to others too.

For example, if you met one member of a particular culture who treated you very nicely and

amicably, you will always recognize that all members of that culture are nice and friendly. But just because of one member of a race, age group, or culture acts in a certain way doesn’t ensure that every other member of that group will act the same way. Your view can be due to lack of knowledge about the other person or culture.

**6.3 Discrimination-** Discrimination is way beyond from failing to hire enough women, minorities or gays. It also doesn’t means not to associate with people from other culture. It means treating people in a different way, unequally & negatively as they belong to a particular group. We build up prejudices, turn them into stereotypes, & let them grow into discrimination.

## 7. Challenges of Diversity in the Workplace

Organizations can’t avail the benefits of diversity in the workplace without acknowledging its challenges. Some of those challenges are as follows:

### 7.1 *Managing Diversity efficiently in the Workplace*

- Diversity training is not alone adequate for organization’s diversity management plans. To create a culture of diversity that pervades through every function of the organization a proper strategy must be created and implemented.

**7.2 Communication** – For diversity programs to succeed cultural, perceptual and language barriers have to be dealt with. When key objectives are not communicated effectively it can lead to confusion, lack of teamwork, and low morale.

**7.3 Execution of Diversity Policies** – This can pose as a major challenge to all organizations which advocates diversity. Organizations must build and implement a customized strategy to make the most out of the results of employee assessments and research data.

**7.4 Resistance to Change** – In all the organizations, we will find employees who will not accept the change in the social and cultural makeup of their workplace. They have their own notions and believe in “we’ve always done it this way” mentality which prohibits new ideas and hinders progress.

## 8. Managing Workforce Diversity

Managing diversity in the workplace should be the concern of every manager and employee. Managing diversity means recognizing individual's differences and considering these differences as important. If organizations ignore diversity issues it can cost the organizations time and money. Also it can leave organizations with employees who are less productive as they feel that they not being supported. Organizations need to be able to manage and utilize their diverse workplace effectively, in order to survive. Managing diversity in the workplace should be a part of the culture of the entire organization.

According to Nandan Savnal Managing Director, PeopleSys, states the pillars of managing diversity at the work place which are as follows:

8.1 Inclusion & Diversity should Strategic Focus of the Top Management - The diversity policy of organizations should be based on two needs that are the social need and competitive advantage need. Social Need states that each individual is unique and so are their needs. Also because of some factors like gender or age organizations considers satisfying this need of individual employees. Competitive Advantage Need arises as organizations operate in diverse markets and deal with different customers. The organization should state its diversity policy and broad objectives.

8.2 Create Committed and Empowered Teams – If the organizations want to implement diversity policy they need to create Strategic Teams. These teams will be at two levels:

- i) Strategic Teams - These teams comprises of the top management. These teams will work out the policies, communicate the purpose, allocate resources and will measure and communicate achievements on a regular basis. Also these teams are responsible for actively engaging with operating teams.
- ii) Operating Teams – These teams will be formed by a representing group for example, gender, physically challenged, women employees etc. These teams will have a

defined structure. And will report to and have the support of the strategic teams. The team members should be given empowerment and should represent different geography and business units.

Both the teams should ask the following questions regarding diversity:

- iii) What organizations should do to make the groups feel welcome, valued and appreciated within the organization?
- iv) How to attain maximum value for each group within the organization?
- v) How can the organizations influence this group's buying decisions?

The operating teams require to study the unique concerns like voice in key decision making, recruitment policies, promotion policies and support for special concern of employees for example, work-life balance initiatives, understanding needs of new mothers, physical infrastructure for the disabled employees.

8.3 Common understanding of the Strategic Goal - Both the strategic and the operating teams should have a clear picture of the strategic goal with them. The strategic team should prepare and approve both long term and short term goals. The competitive advantage objectives of the organization should be stated clearly. For example, "more than 50 per cent of the organizations offices will have local leaders in five years" or "within 2 years all the office locations will be remodeled for disable employees".

8.4 The Teams must communicate constantly and should invite suggestions from employees and other stakeholders.

8.5 Implementing effectively - To manage differences organizations should implement strategies on recruitment, sensitivity training, promotions, retention policies etc. as they arise. The display of commitment is the key to managing diversity.

8.6 Analyzing and Measuring - It is essential to measure the success of diversity strategies both quantitatively and qualitatively i. e. in numbers and the feelings. Diversity ratios, competitive

advantage objectives etc. should be analyzed, evaluated and presented in a logically way to appeal to change the required behaviors. Organizations should also find out as to how the stakeholders feel about the various diversity initiatives. Organizations should also use audits, exit interviews, surveys, polls etc. This activity should be carried out by people who are not involved in the process and are independent.

8.5 Feedback and Follow up – This is a continuous and long-term process. And giving feedback should be simple. The process of feedback and follow up shows the management’s commitment towards diversity and encourages employees.

## 9. Diversity in Indian Context

Why should organizations adopt diversity to be successful? There is a much bigger reason for organizations to adopt diversity. The paradigm used by the organization to define diversity is critical and will form its diversity philosophy.

- i) The Moral Paradigm which says that discrimination is immoral, wrong and illegal.
- ii) The Social Need Paradigm – As India is rising at a rapid pace its diversity too. Diversity in India is different from that of the western world and even from our neighboring countries. Therefore, our resolution to diversity should be different from others. Some organizations go one step further to make sure that unique needs of all individuals are identified and met. For example, a new mother may require and want to work from home.
- iii) The Competitive Advantage Paradigm - India is fairly unique. And behind the cause of inclusion there is a competitive rationale. India is growing rapidly and is creating diversity in the markets. Therefore, for organizations to succeed they require people from diverse groups who can to plan, develop and promote the solutions.

Organizations in India must use all of the above stated paradigms to direct their diversity philosophy. Organizations should remember that these are not phases but continuing engagements. For example, communicating the diversity policy is not a one-time affair but is nonstop commitment process.

## 10. Guidelines for Managing Diverse Relations

According to Kay du Pont, working effectively with diversity means accepting various differences in us and others. It means utilizing each other’s strengths and compensating each other’s weaknesses. It means being appropriately confident. And saying what you mean and ask what you want. It means inculcating patience and tolerance. We should handle disagreements and feedback properly. He gives some specific guidelines to help individuals & organizations manage diverse relationships.

### 10.1 Guidelines for Individuals

- i) Become Aware of the Change and Welcome it – We should understand that world is not constant. Every second things are changing around us. We should be ready for these changes in our environment.
- ii) Recognize and Respect others - In a democratic country, each one of us have right to be ourselves, as long as we don’t harm others. Nobody has the right to impose their ideas, opinions desires or values on others.
- iii) Think before You Speak and Be Sensitive – If you mistakenly offend someone apologize immediately. To avoid embarrassing us people may deny that they felt insulted. Even though, our apology would be heard and will be appreciated silently.
- iv) To Listen more - If you listen to an individual, it can increase an individual’s self esteem and confidence. If individuals are listened to, they appreciate the listener. And are more likely to cooperate with that person. Listening encourages individuals to talk about their concerns and resolve problems. By listening carefully we can learn a lot about others people’s thought patterns, their belief systems and values.
- v) Recognize your Biases - Biasness is normal human emotion. It’s not necessary that we have to like or agree with everyone. But we should treat every individual respectfully and equally.



**Table1: India's Diversity Concerns**

<b>Diversity attribute</b>	<b>Diversity</b>	<b>Illustrative special concerns of this group</b>
Gender	Gender diversity	New mothers — remote working and networking opportunities
Age	Over half a billion Indians are less than 25 years of age	Youth — mentoring and fair HR practices; older employees — reskilling on new technologies
City and hinterland	Rapid urbanization and growing rural economy Over 800-million people spending more than \$425 billion	1. Employees from hinterland - handholding to assimilate within urban areas and culture, e.g. English language training 2. City folks - understanding of rural market
Geography and religion	India is geographically and culturally diverse. Buying patterns are different	Respect and understanding of other cultures
GDP distribution	Agriculture share is reducing, industrial share is around 30%, services over 50%	In such a rapid transition national human force will need orientation to adapt
Physically challenged	Disabled persons constitute about 2% of the total population in India**	1. Equal and fair opportunities and fair promotion policies
Marital status	Single parents, widow(er), divorced, live-in couples	Sensitivity and fairness
Sexual orientation	Here, most of the world is still in the wilderness	1. Life partner benefits 2. Sensitive and non-discriminatory
Nationality	Not a significant area yet	Training to succeed in India
**Report: Disabled Persons in India by National Sample Survey Organization; Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India		

(Source: <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/managing-workplace-diversity>)

- vi) Eliminate Generalization - We should avoid using generalized statements. We cannot understand the entire culture based on our limited knowledge. People from same culture or religion are also not the same in all aspects. Each one of us is made up of different factors. Avoid using words or statements that may suggest that all members of particular group are the same.
- vii. Learn more about other Cultures - We need to make ourselves more open and flexible.

We should be keen to go to another religion's place of worship and see what they do. We should be flexible enough to make friends with people from other cultures. We can read books, see movies and search about their historical past.

- viii) Remember that your Race, Gender or Personality is not alone in the universe – We should always remember that every individual is different. We should respect people for who they are. And should try not

to make them look like us. We should also remember that we are also different too.

- ix) **Be Cautious with Rumor-** Sometimes people are so enthusiastic and forget that their comments or jokes can hurt others. Remarks about one's color, sexual orientation or religion can offend someone. We should always follow the communication standards observed by educated people and involve in careful conversation. If we don't follow these standards our communication standards falls and this will reduce listener's attention and can obstruct the relationship process.
- x) **Cheer Up -** Don't take things very seriously. Try to ease up things and be cheerful. We will not feel threatened by diversity if we allow ourselves to laugh quietly at our own and other's shortcomings.

### ***10.2 Guidelines for Organizations***

Our organizations might regularly hire and promotes females and minority employees. Organizations have adapted our offices to accommodate the physically challenged employees and have installed Braille guides in our elevators. We have asked everyone to avoid use of biased language and comments. Does that means we are diversity perfect? No we are just starting.

With awareness of how others perceive our actions can only end discrimination in our country. Addressing the needs of each segment of population, enabling every employee to perform at his/her best, raising awareness, teaching employees about differences and giving them the skills to act and think differently can ensure that organizations can manage diversity really well.

Organizations a can follow the below mentioned points to meet diversity goals:

- i) **Become a Role Model –** Organizations should try to motivate employees to become a role model regardless of their job title or level in the organization. If we let incidents

pass without confronting them we cannot expect other employees to follow humane behaviors and attitudes. We are contributing to discrimination if we don't disrupt and discredit it.

- ii) **Celebrate all Holidays -** If you celebrate one religious festival your organization should recognize other religion's festivals and cultural holidays.
- iii) **Don't use Prejudicial Words in Marketing & Service Efforts -** Organizations should ensure that all races, genders, ethnic groups or cultures are represented in their marketing efforts. We should not use prejudicial words or comments in any of the organization related materials.
- iv) **Hire Bilingual People & advertise languages** that employees in the organization speak.
- v) **Provide Diversity Training to your Employees at all levels -** We should incorporate training programs that create diversity awareness, stress on relationship building, communication & teamwork. Employees at all levels require an understanding of diversity & how it affects them and whole of the organization process.

## **11. Corporate Practices of Diversity**

### ***11.1 Infosys***

Infosys became first Indian IT organization which established an office for diversity and inclusivity. Their workforce comprises people representing 89 nationalities working from 32 countries, with women representation of 34. 7% on board and a multi-generational representation. They believe that talent diversity is the key to propel business growth.

Diversity at Infosys focuses on propagating & promoting it among employees through ACTION, before proceeding with external stakeholders i. e. suppliers, vendors, and marketplace. ACTION stands for:

Audit Inclusivity & Diversity levels.

Create Change Agents

Train the Managers

Initiate & Implement Alternate Work Models

Organize & Assist Affinity Groups

Network with External bodies to benchmark practices

Some of their diversity programs in 2011-12 were:

- i) *Creating Common Ground* – The emphasis of the program is to educate employees about the values and various cultural philosophies. They use various innovative approaches and communication campaigns like intranet facilities, live events, use of corporate TV channel, mailers and posters to involve employees at all levels.
- ii) *Family Matters* – Under this program they promotes work-life balance initiatives among young parents in the organization. Various programs and workshops like family enrichment programs are offered. It offers opportunities for networking and facilitates employees to support and share information with each other.
- iii) *IGLU* - Infosys Gay Lesbian Employees and You (IGLU) program intends to create a secure and respectful work environment for employees who come from the LGBT community. They organize various awareness programs and events to foster and create inclusion in their culture.
- iv) *Infyability* – Infyability at Infosys means supporting disable employees. The program emphasizes on creating a sensitive and inclusive workplace for differently-abled employees. Also it ensures that infrastructure at Infosys is accessible to differently-abled employees. For this they regularly conduct accessibility audits. World Disability Day is celebrated in all of their campuses each year. They continuously change and enhance the policies keeping in mind the special needs of employees.
- v) *IWIN* - They have initiated Infosys Women's Inclusivity Network (IWIN) to create a gender-sensitive and inclusive work environment for women employees in the organization. This

initiative also emphasizes to prepare them for managerial and leadership roles in future.

- vi) *Samaritans Network* – Infosys trains volunteer employees to help fellow employees to cope up with life's challenges which are mostly personal in nature by counseling them, giving them support, and listening to them. This is a unique initiative and is active on seven of their campuses. (Source: [www.infosys.com/sustainability/diversity/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.infosys.com/sustainability/diversity/Pages/index.aspx))

## 11.2 Accenture

In February 2003, Accenture formally established a Global Inclusion & Diversity corporate function to provide strategic guidance and support for its diversity programs and activities in countries around the world. Its aim is to promote a discrimination and harassment free work environment for all employees globally.

- i) *Accenture's Geographic Human Capital & Diversity Organization*
  - In each of Accenture's geographies, an executive serves as Human Capital and Diversity geographic lead.
  - It is his or her responsibility to create programs that are meaningful to employees, communities and clients around the world.
  - He is assisted by two additional governance bodies.
- ii) *Diversity Advisory Forum* - The Diversity Advisory Forum is a group of senior executives representing organization's global locations. These executives provide the Accenture Diversity Council with additional viewpoints from their fields and recommends innovative solutions to diversity challenges.
- iii) *Accenture Diversity Council* - The Accenture Diversity Council includes members of their Global Management Committee. They assess the inclusion and diversity challenges they face, set strategic course and prioritizes the organization's actions globally.
- iv) *Persons with Disabilities*
  - To build awareness and understanding of issues faced by persons with disabilities, they

sponsor networking and information sharing.

- They also encourage the provision of reasonable accommodations, modifications or adjustments to a job or the work environment.
- They ensure that a qualified individual with a disability has rights and privileges in employment equal to those of employees without disabilities to create an adaptable work environment.

v) *Women at Accenture*

- At Accenture, the success of the women employees around the globe is key to their success, and they are committed to support their professional goals and aspirations.
- With a global workforce they have more than 80, 000 women, i. e. nearly 35% of their global workforce. They strive to provide an environment and culture that empowers them to define their own personal success.

vi) *Supplier Diversity*

- Accenture's supplier diversity efforts demonstrate their commitment to promoting economic growth within the diverse communities in which the company does business, while maintaining its standards for providing high-quality service delivery.
- They believe that diverse suppliers should have equal opportunity to participate in the procurement sourcing process. They focus not only on expanding their own pool of diverse suppliers but also encourage their large suppliers to leverage diverse suppliers on Accenture's behalf.
- Through their procurement practices, they track and encourage purchases with diverse suppliers, such as minority-owned, woman-owned, historically underutilized business zone, service-disabled veteran-owned, veteran-owned, lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender-owned business, and small or other disadvantaged business enterprises.

vii) *Training*

- Accenture offers training programs to educate individuals, to promote inclusion and

diversity in the workplace and to prepare their people to deliver high performance through a diverse workforce.

- Accenture divides Inclusion & Diversity training into three areas:
  1. Diversity Awareness to help develop a greater sensitivity to the challenges and opportunities that arise due to working with increasingly dynamic, global and diverse environment.
  2. Diversity Management to help the leaders manage a diverse workforce more effectively and create an inclusive work environment.
  3. Professional Development to help strengthen the approach of commitment to their women employees and minorities by helping build skills to increase their personal success in Accenture.

viii) *Accenture Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Network*

- Accenture is committed to raising awareness and educating all employees about the LGBT community. While simultaneously supporting their LGBT employees and providing a workplace of equality.
- At Accenture, they adhere to a strict non-discrimination policy and provide a clear, open line of communication between employees and management.
- Recognizing that individual countries may have unique laws affecting the LGBT community, they pay particular attention to ensuring that their global policies and practices have their intended effect in all the geographies in which they operate.

(Source: <http://www.accenture.com/us-en/company/people/diversity/Pages/index.aspx>)

### **11.3 IBM**

Throughout its history, IBM has consistently led in workplace diversity, from opening a training center for more than 600 people with disabilities in 1943 to to being the first company to provide domestic partner benefits to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees.



They believe that promoting diversity is not only the right thing to do, but a competitive advantage as well a bridge between the workplace and the marketplace. Their current approach to diversity follows a framework they call Diversity 3.0. The goals of this framework are twofold:

1. To expand the definition of diversity to be ever more inclusive
2. To advocate for diversity on a global basis, wherever they do business.

IBM views workforce diversity has three pillars: equal opportunity, affirmative action, and work/life balancing programs. Equal opportunity is defined as nondiscrimination and non-harassment, while affirmative action is intended not to provide an advantage, but to eliminate disadvantage and provide all groups a level playing field on which to compete.

*a) Persons with Disabilities*

- They have developed AWC (Accessible Workplace Connection) is a streamlined accommodation process that can be integrated into the workplace through a self-service portal in a Web browser.
- It is also referred to as a “one-stop shop” for requesting, reviewing and making accommodations for people who have disabilities. The tool enables interactive dialog between employees and the IBM teams responsible for providing accommodations, including expert accommodation specialists.

*b) Integrating the Workplace & Marketplace*

- Diversity in IBM means welcoming all people to the workplace regardless of factors unrelated to job performance.
- IBM’s definition of diversity includes all human characteristics that make us unique as individuals. It includes everyone and excludes no one.

*c) Workforce Flexibility & Balance*

- IBM is committed to create a flexible work environment that provides employees more flexibility and control over their working

schedules. This way they can achieve business objectives and meet personal commitments.

- They use flexibility as a retention tool, to attracting talent and enhancing employee productivity so as to be a competitive in the business world.

*d) Cultural Awareness & Acceptance*

- They are committed to providing a workplace where employees feel welcome and valued for who they are. They achieve this through embracing cultural differences.
- IBM recognizes cultural difference on the basis of ethnic background and sexual preference. IBM offers several of educational programs in the field of diversity.
- Some of them are Diversity and Inclusive Leadership, Culture and Business, Culture and Globalization, Culture Shock: Working Internationally, People with Disabilities, Sexual Harassment and Valuing Diversity.
- Methods of study for these programs vary from e-learning to learning in labs.

*e) Advancement of Women*

- IBM stresses a lot on the Advancement of Women. IBM recruits, retains and promotes the best female staff in their organization.
- They focus heavily providing mentoring and coaching for women, promote attending internal and external conferences, emphasize on executive and technical resources programs, regularly carry out work/personal life employee surveys and develop diversity-specific hiring programs.

(Source: <https://www-07.ibm.com/in/isl/diversity.html>)

## 12. Discussion & Conclusion

Managing and leveraging diversity in the workplace is not the sole responsibility of human resources managers or senior management. But it is the combined responsibility of all the employees at all levels of the organization. Even though the senior executives or human resource

managers may play a key role while designing, deploying strategies and training to build a diverse workforce, but developing an atmosphere of diversity should lie with everyone in the organization. A diverse workforce is a reflection of an ever changing world and marketplace. Diverse work teams bring high value to the organizations.

As discussed above that diversity has four dimensions i. e. Personality, Internal dimension, External dimension and Organizational dimension, organizations should include these dimensions and their subparts into their diversity and inclusion strategies. As we have discussed how these dimensions have a bearing impact on an individual, it is important and critical to understand in details these dimensions in detail. Respecting these individual differences will help the organization by creating a competitive edge and increases employees productivity levels. Diversity management helps organizations creating a fair and safe environment where everyone has access to opportunities and healthy challenges.

We discussed barriers to diversity which arises due to prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination. We should as individuals and organizations should avoid biases against people, groups or religion. As these biases creates stereotypes which leads to discrimination. We all know how these barriers can pose dangerous to the prosperity and success of the organizations. Organizations should use various management tools to educate employees about diversity and its impact, including laws and regulations. Most workplaces are made up of diverse cultures, so organizations need to learn how to embrace diversity to be successful.

A diverse and inclusive workforce is necessary to drive innovation, foster creativity, and guide business strategies. As sighted in the study by Forbes that diversity is the key to innovation. It leads to generation of new ideas, new services

and products and encourage out-of-the-box thinking. Organizations are increasingly viewing diversity and inclusion efforts as part of their overall business strategies. And recognize that a diverse workforce can distinguish them from their competitors by attracting diverse talent and capturing new customers.

And while diversity and inclusion efforts at organizations are followed, they still face challenges in implementing these policies and programs. Internally, companies are still struggling with negative attitudes and resistance to accept change about diversity, while externally, economic conditions and policies of government affects organization's hiring efforts.

We have seen above that organizations are actively indulging in managing diversity in their workplace thorough various initiatives. We have seen how Infosys, has defined its strategy through ACTION and Accenture has formed various councils and forums to manage diversity and inclusion. And how they have gone beyond and have included supplier diversity also as a part of their initiative. Also they stress advancement of women employees within organization. IBM has provided with a dedicated initiative for their disabled employee which is available in all its office locations. In the above stated corporate practices we have analyzed that organizations have vanished the traditional shackles of diversity which only surrounded Women, Minorities or Disabled employees. Organizations have come far beyond and given diversity and inclusion a new definition by including LGBT groups, Suppliers, Customers and Work Life Balance initiatives in it.

Some of the ways to include diversity in the workplace are as follows:

### ***12.1 Recruit Diverse Talent***

Recruitment strategies should be designed so that organizations can recruit from among a diverse talent pool. Organizations should post job

opportunities within a diverse range of communities. This will help in portraying the organization as being open and inclusive. Organizations should advertise career opportunities in minority language and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual targeted publications. Hiring diverse talent would help infuse fresh ideas and innovative approaches within the organizations.

### ***12.2 Being Fair doesn't means Equality***

Organizations usually makes the mistake of assuming that being fair means treating all employees equally. This rule doesn't apply to the diverse workforce now days. We need to look at each employee of our organization or team as an individual who has unique needs and make adjustments accordingly.

### ***12.3 Become Accommodating***

Organizations will have to learn to be flexible and open as they will be supporting many cultures in their workplace. By modifying policies to accommodate cultural requests organizations show respect and courtesy towards employees. For example, if there are some language barriers in the organizations we can pair a particular employee facing problem with another team member who speaks their language. Organizations should make sure that communication methods are such that they reach to all concerned employees effectively. Also, make sure that cultural food requirements are considered at lunch meetings and also dress codes should be such that they support different backgrounds.

### ***12.4 Provide Diversity Training***

Through diversity training organizations can raise awareness and sack myths. It can be ensured that all employees have a proper understanding of the organization & its policies. The policies that define limits for inappropriate humor and offensive language. Clear lines of communication

and a proper course action for employees who feel that their rights are being violated can be achieved through proper training. By executing cultural education and training program, diversity can be introduced. These programs will improve employee communication and allow them to view their jobs from a different viewpoint

### ***12.5 Start Focus & Support Groups***

A focus group is a small group of employees that come together to share common beliefs, opinions and ideas about a particular subject. Conducting diversity themed focus groups are a creative way to introduce diversity initiatives within organizations. Focus groups provide a safe environment for workers. Similarly, employee support groups can help maintain a constructive work environment for employees who face unique challenges at work. This will also improve employee retention within organization. Many large organizations, including Boeing, Ernst and Young, HSBC, Proctor and Gamble invest considerable resources in developing safe & positive spaces for ethnic minorities, gay, lesbian, bisexual employees, as well as employees with disabilities. During these group meetings, employers can find out about employee attitudes towards diversity and what steps should be taken to promote diversity.

### ***12.6 Provide Mentoring***

Establishing a mentoring program where new employees from diverse backgrounds associate and work closely with senior managers. New employees can benefits by learning new skills, gathering career advice and building professional relationships. New employees feel welcome and supported by these activities. And such efforts motivate them to perform upto their highest potential.

### ***12.7 Implement a Diversity Policy***

Organizations should implement a well-defined policy to introduce diversity in the workplace.

The policy should focus on the accepting and respecting the individual differences and choices of all employees. This policy should promote diversity by emphasizing on areas such as recruitment, performance management, work/life balance initiatives and organization streamlining. Organizations should follow practices that support and foster diversity such as non-discrimination initiatives, and diversity recruiting goals, open door policies and employee friendly workplace initiatives.

### **12.8 Hire a Diversity Consultant**

Diversity Consultants help in assessing organizations goals and can suggest various ways to introduce diversity programs. The aim of the consultants is to provide a diversity program that integrates all level of the organization. Consultants can help in implementing training programs, mentor programs, diversity councils and committees that support organizational diversity efforts. Diversity consultants also facilitate organizations to develop and implement the standards to measure and follow up with the progress of diversity initiatives.

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