

Workplace Diversity Strategies: Utilizing Universal Design to Build an Inclusive Organization

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Labour Market 2015

- Life span increases, advances in medicine and trends in public spending have all led to more people with disabilities participating in the workforce.
- The need for business to enlist all available talent has also led to recruitment of people from other cultures and diverse backgrounds including underutilized labour pools such as Aboriginal people and people with disabilities.
- Increased awareness of diversity, human rights and social inclusion has placed increased responsibility on employers to include and accommodate an increasingly diverse workforce.

Inclusive Workplaces

- Diversity success in the workplace involves more than mere *representation* of people from differing cultures, gender and backgrounds
- Inclusion is more than just a physical presence
- The main trait of diversity inclusion (and a truly inclusive workforce) is **engagement**

Benefits of Diversity & Inclusion

- Access to larger 'talent pools'
- Increase in innovative approaches to problems
- Improved employee engagement
- Market representation and public image
- Diversity and Inclusion success results in a workplace culture that meets the needs of **all** employees better
- Social Capital and Universal Impact

Social Capital - Definition

Social Capital is the expected collective or economic benefits derived from the preferential treatment and cooperation between individuals and groups.

Networks have value.

Diversity & Social Capital

- The ability of a group to include diverse members is a group strength and reflects:
 - Cultural Agility
 - Flexibility
 - Genuine value for inclusion and engagement

Universal Design

- Initially an architectural / accessibility term
- UD is a process not an outcome – 100% universality seldom achieved
- UD seeks to make products, environments and systems usable by all people to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation.
- Universal Design refers to building things in ways that work for everyone and customizing processes where required.

Universal Design – Things to Know

- UD strives to improve the original design concept by making it more inclusive and enhancing access for ALL.
- UD benefits more people than just seniors and people with disabilities (life-span access, different cultures, etc.).
- UD Can be undertaken by any designer – not just the ‘specialists’.
- UD is not a one size fits all solution – the goal is to provide the same or equivalent experience, activities and service to everyone.

7 Principles of UD

1. Equitable Use
2. Flexibility of Use
3. Simple and Intuitive Use
4. Perceptible Information
5. Tolerance for Error
6. Low Physical Effort
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use

Universal Design at Work

- Physical accessibility (ramps, ergonomics, work stations)
- Systemic accessibility (protocols, policies, flexibilities)
- Leadership / Interactional Competencies (cultural agility, EQ)
- Work Culture Accessibility (inclusive, employee well-being, etc.)

Job Accommodations

- A reasonable accommodation is any modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions.
- Reasonable accommodation also includes adjustments to assure that a qualified individual with a disability has rights and privileges in employment equal to those of employees without disabilities.

Diversity and Inclusion Challenge

How do we intentionally design recruitment and onboarding protocols and workplace cultures that work for everyone?

Recruitment – What Isn't Working?

- Employment application processes are full of practices designed to exclude
- On-line application processes can be barriers to people with disabilities / ESL
- Postings / Job Descriptions are full of non-essential qualifications and jargon
- Biases abound in candidate selection processes
- Candidates are typically poorly informed about the interview process
- Candidates seldom asked if they require any accommodations for interviews
- Micro Inequities can put candidates off their 'game'

Better Inclusive Recruitment

Broader Recruitment Efforts

- Some intentional outreach and new job promotion avenues required
- Understand the previous barriers candidates have faced
- Relationships always more productive than 'marketing'

Reduction of Bias in the Selection Process

- Offer application assistance for people with disabilities or ESL
- Different systemic options for employment application
- Separate essential and non-essential qualifications
- Focus on **what** needs to be achieved not **how** it will be achieved (accommodation)

Partnerships with Diversity Organizations

- Contacts and partnerships with local agencies can help with diversity and talent-match as well as supporting all parties with Disclosure



D&I 'Common Denominators'

- Investment and Engagement across the cultural hierarchy (not just HR)
- Diversity and Inclusion embedded in core values
- Intentional strategies – can't just 'hang a D&I flag' and get results
- Cultural Agility
- Flexibility
- Psychologically Healthy Workplaces – High Employee Well-Being

Cultural Agility?

- Being able to navigate different world-views
- Represent and advocate for those views – without judgement
- The ability to understand that employee's experience is real and valid, even when not fully comprehended by the other person
- Know that you don't know every cultural nuance and be prepared to ask /learn
- Create culture of trust and comfort where 'vulnerability' is acceptable

Micro Inequities

- Micro Inequities occur wherever people are perceived to be different
- Subtle acts of discrimination which are often unintentional or covert (body language, tone, dismissiveness, minimal engagement, etc.)
- Often not recognized by the perpetrator but impact the recipient profoundly
- MI excludes people and make them less confident and less productive
- MI discourages creativity and risk-taking

Cure:

Self awareness, mindfulness, cultural agility – culture of acceptance and trust



Improving Cultural Agility

- Ask people how you are doing – where you can improve
- Evaluation / Employee Surveys
- Make it known that this is a value at the company and open dialogue
- Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can provide feedback and advice
- EQ and Cultural Competency training is available to build skills
- Ideally needs to be part of the work culture to increase inclusion & engagement

Flexibility and Accommodation

- Employers / HR often concerned about sacrificing ‘legitimacy’
- How a goal is met is not as important as it having been met
- UD may create processes which are accessible to all – or it may reveal the need for options and flexibilities
- Examine and evaluate policy and practices which prevent or limit flexibility and accommodation
- Person centered rather than systems centered approach

Psych Health & Safety

- The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace was championed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and developed by the Canadian Standards Association CSA.
- The Standard, launched in 2013 is a voluntary set of guidelines, tools and resources focused on promoting employee well-being.
- This approach has direct bearing on productivity, risk management, financial performance, recruitment and retention.

Psych Health at Work (Well-being)

- **Psychological health** comprises our ability to think, feel and behave in a manner that enables us to perform effectively in our work environments and in our personal lives.
- **Psychological safety** is different - it deals with the risk of injury to psychological well-being that an employee might experience.
- Psychological health problems occur on a *spectrum*, from mild to severe
- At the very least, investment in Psych Health & Safety will:
 - Improve employee wellbeing
 - Improve engagement and productivity
 - Expose flaws and issues in workplace culture and inclusion
 - Serve as a Universal Design mechanism which serves all employees

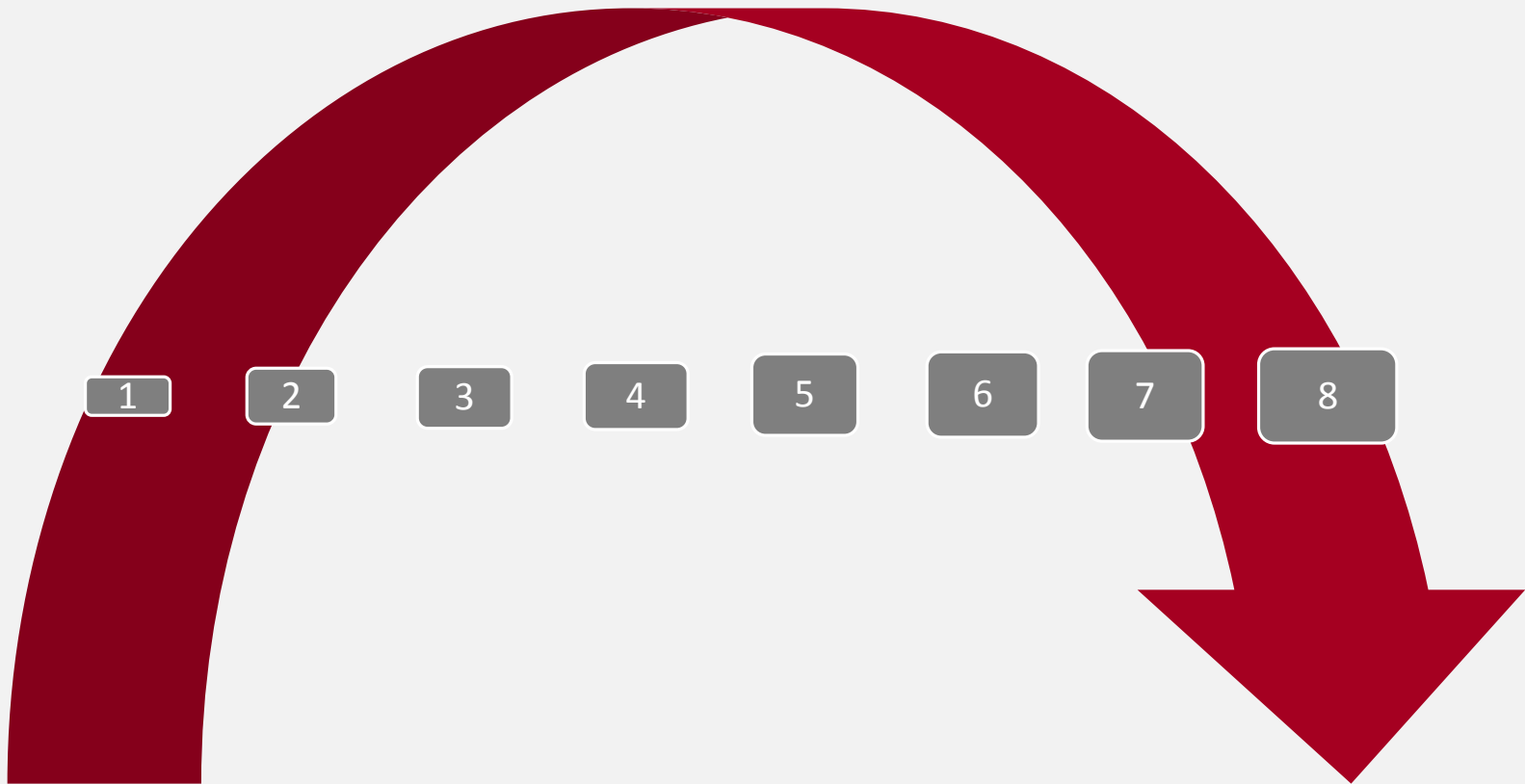
Guarding Minds @ Work Tool

- GM@W is a method for addressing and supporting certain basic human needs at work.
- Identifies factors that act as *supports* for mental health and also those that present *risks* to mental health - with the goal of *strengthening* the former and *abating* the latter.
- Only those needs that can reasonably be addressed in the workplace are relevant here.
- These basic needs can also be represented as rights that are protected in one way or another by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and by legislation.
- GM@Work provides an online tool employers can use to assess their workplace culture
- Also provides specific strategies and recommendations to address 'problem areas'

Psycho-Social Factors Assessed

- Psychological Support
- Organizational Culture
- Clear Leadership and Expectations
- Civility and Respect
- Psychological Competencies and Requirements
- Growth and Development
- Recognition and Reward
- Involvement and Influence
- Workload Management
- Engagement
- Balance
- Psychological Protection
- Protection of Physical Safety

The D&I Workplace 'Spectrum'



The D&I Workplace ‘Spectrum’

1. Yeah, our receptionist is female – we’re good.
2. We’ve heard about diversity and inclusion – at some point we’ll look at it.
3. We’re interested in D&I because management told us to.
4. We’ve got some D&I strategies in development but this is new to us.
5. We have a clear mandate, policies and political will around D&I – now what?
6. We’re breaking our backs trying to make D&I work but have limited results.
7. We’ve got a clear D&I agenda, plan, mechanisms and partners in place.
8. We are making D&I work for us and engaging our workforce effectively.

HR Audit

- Have you evaluated your application, interview and selection processes?
- Have you evaluated your onboarding, orientation and training processes?
- Do you have a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy?
- Is your company's D&I Strategy being implemented:
 - At the leadership level
 - At HR
 - Across the company hierarchy
 - All of the above
 - None of the Above

Strategies for Building an Inclusive Team

- Support at work is an inherent part of any team's dynamics and 'growth'
- Checking in with colleagues – request and demonstrate receptivity to feedback
- Mentorship focused on performance as well as inclusion
- Fostering a culture of information-sharing
- Making room for different learning and communication styles – seek to understand

Supporting People with Disabilities

- A disability isn't the whole person but rather a part of the person's life
- Disability lies in the individual, the handicap lies within the environment
- There isn't any specific strategy that is applicable for supporting all persons with disabilities – except 'agility' and flexibility
- Inclusion is more than just a physical presence
- The common denominator in successful D&I is **engagement**

Inclusion is Universal

- People have more similarities than differences
- Respectful language and dynamics work for any diverse groups – people need to feel valued
- Verification of understanding and colleague's comfort level with tasks/requests works for everyone
- Employee well-being is a significant indicator for engagement, performance and productivity

Community Partners: Criteria

- The service provider:
 - Has a formalized program which provides a range of recruitment, onboarding and retention services
 - Has an established system for 'talent-matching' and ensuring 'talent-readiness'
 - Has documentation to verify this job target as an appropriate talent match (action/investment plan etc.)
 - Has staff and resources to assist with orientation, training, mentorship/natural support development
 - Will support the employer to communicate expectations and address concerns if required
 - Has references from other employers

Community Partners: Criteria

- **Service providers should be able to describe how they build employer capacity in inclusive recruitment and diversity management, specifically how their services can:**
 - Make recruitment and on-boarding accessible
 - Address employee retention, performance management, career development and job changes
 - Inform strategy and policy development for supporting employees with disabilities
 - Develop accommodation plans for employees with disabilities

Community Partner Action Plan

- Set up an information exchange meeting
- Agree to view qualified Candidate Profiles
- Notify Community Partners of upcoming positions and postings
- Conduct informational interviews – increase your familiarity and competencies
- Conduct formal job interviews with ‘talent-matched’ Candidates
- Ask for assistance with customized D&I Action Plans
- Have your leadership express written support to mgmt. and HR for D&I initiatives and partnerships

Resources

- [HR Council Toolkit – Diversity at Work](#)
- [The 7 Principles of Universal Design](#)
- [Inclusive Design Toolkit](#)
- [Guarding Minds @ Work](#)
- [The Standard on PH&S](#)
- [CEFN Employer Resources](#)
- [CEFN Job Submissions](#)
- [CAES Business Partner Action Plan](#)



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