Success Factors

GET ON BOARD

Comes With a **7**-DAY

INCLUSION CHALLENGE

WES BERRY

keynote speaker | wordsmith

Business Quick Reads
Series Volume 9

WALL STREET JOURNAL
bestselling author

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GET ON BOARD
And 7-DAY INCLUSION CHALLENGE

By: Wes Berry

Inclusion is a concept that has become increasingly important in today's society. It refers to the practice of ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background or identity, is included in social, political, and economic activities. The concept of inclusion is rooted in the belief that every person has the right to be treated

with respect and dignity, and to have equal opportunities in life.

It is always easier to embrace something like diversity or inclusion when benefits are clear. To begin with, inclusion is a fairness issue, and having a fair corporate culture is simply the right thing to do. However, different perspectives also mean a greater variety of ideas, which leads to greater innovation. The culture of an enterprise is enhanced, which will help you attract more talented individuals. Improved community and customer relations will add to these benefits. Besides the fact that it is just fair play and simply the right thing to do, it will also contribute to an improved reputation for your business. And all of this will result in a more successful company. Isn't it nice when the doing the right thing is also the best thing to do?

So, what does this really mean for you and your business? The value proposition that diversity brings is beyond calculation. Besides the increase in perspectives and all the qualities that come with that, embracing diversity also excludes those individuals with narrow minds from being attracted to your organization. This may be even the greatest benefit, as by repelling closed minded individuals, you are actually prequalifying your recruitment standards by avoiding those who would be a hindrance to your mission.

I don't know about you, but it feels like I hear about inclusion all the time these days. I read about it on the internet, I hear about it on the news, and I see it flash time and time again across my social media. On rare occasions, it's coming from some jerk who feels the need to troll everyone for being a "social justice warrior" or some other

nonsense, but for the most part, everything you hear about inclusion is positive.

Still, there are a lot of people out there who seem to treat inclusion as just another corporate buzzword, something that people say so they can sound smart and informed without really knowing what it means. But people use buzzwords because they represent important ideas, and inclusion is no exception.

Inclusion in the workplace isn't a new idea, nor is it a controversial one. So why, then, is inclusion still such an important topic? The answer is because we haven't done enough to make it not a pressing issue. Issues of bias continue to plague us, and even when we think we're doing everything right, there are still many areas where we can do much, much better. And as Colleen Slaughter writes for LinkedIn, inclusive leaders are

"essential to create thriving organizations where everyone feels valued." [1]

Inclusion comes up again and again because it remains an important issue. That's why it's worth our time to really think about what inclusion means, both for companies and for us as individuals. We should make sure we have a solid, clear definition, including a better understanding of why inclusion remains such a critical issue in our society. Finally, we'll look at some ways we can help improve inclusion in the workplace.

Finding a Definition for Inclusion

For all the attention that inclusion gets, there's also a lot of misunderstandings about what it actually means. All too often, it gets lost among a sea of other admittedly important ideas, including diversity, equality, representation, and more. Instead of each term getting the attention it

deserves, there's a tendency to lump all of these ideas together under a single umbrella, and that doesn't do anyone any favors.

It helps to define inclusion by first thinking of its opposite: exclusion. Historically in America, laws and policies have been designed around exclusionary principles: who was invited in and who was left out. While we've made significant strides over the last several years, those exclusions still echo through our workplaces, and they stand in the way of our inclusion efforts. [2]

In contrast, inclusion doesn't apply rules for admittance. Instead of using external factors to determine a person's worth, the focus is on what that person can contribute to the organization, from their skill sets to their points of view. Exclusion sets up barriers to keep people out; inclusion removes barriers to not just let people in, but to welcome them as full members of the organization.

Diversity

The term that most people confuse with inclusion is diversity. It's not done out of any malicious intent—in fact, many companies tend to combine the two efforts under the label "Diversity and Inclusion," or D&I.

This is because diversity and inclusion are really closely related. In the broadest sense, diversity means having a wide range of different voices in the same room. Each person has their own distinct identity, and while that identity may overlap somewhat with others, they have a unique perspective because of their backgrounds.

Now, when I said, "a broad range of different voices," what did you picture in your mind? No matter what you saw, I want to invite you to broaden it even further. Of course, diversity means including people of different races and

ethnicities. But these aren't the only ways identities differ in the workplace. Gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, and disability are only some of the many different categories to consider when it comes to diversifying your workforce.

Being aware of all these different backgrounds is important, of course, and a lot of training and effort goes into helping raise cultural awareness among employees and executives alike. However, being culturally aware isn't the same as being inclusive—it's only a starting point. Yet far too often, diversity training is both the beginning and the end of D&I efforts.

This is at least partially why so many companies have found that their efforts aren't resulting in significant increases in long-term diversification. Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev note that, despite significant increases to diversity training programs, the rates of diversity

within their organizations have largely remained unchanged. [3]

       While many companies shout to the hills about their training programs, the net

> *Being culturally aware isn't the same as being inclusive—it's only a starting point.*

impact is insignificant at best. Why? Because they only focus on getting their diverse hires in the door. After that, they're left on their own. And no matter how much diversity training you do, or how much cultural awareness you raise, you have little to no chance of improving inclusion without the tools to deal with bias.

Conscious and Unconscious Bias

"Bias?" you might be saying to yourself. "I'm not biased! I don't have a biased bone in my body!"

Well, as much as I'd love it if that were true, the fact of the matter is that we're all biased. I'm biased. You're biased. Your family's biased, your pastor's biased, even the little old lady who feeds all the neighborhood cats is biased. It's just a simple fact, baked into our genetics over time.

In general, there are two kinds of biases. The one that's easiest to recognize is conscious bias. This is the form that shows up in blatant racism, sexism, ageism, or ableism. It usually shows up as a feeling of superiority based solely on external personal characteristics, usually with no other reason than because someone either looks or sounds different.

Unconscious bias is much harder to spot, because it's, well, unconscious. No matter how

open-minded you think you might be (and in many cases, people are very open-minded), your brain is making decisions below the surface, determining how you feel about a person by making extrapolations based on several factors—many of which are entirely unfair.

Many of these unconscious biases are based on what's called in-group favoritism or in-group bias. As humans, we tend to find ourselves attracted to qualities in other people that we feel we recognize in ourselves, even though these groups aren't based on much more than speculation. This instinct to form exclusive groups starts young, and it can be hard to train ourselves to think differently. [4]

Unconscious bias is a terror for HR departments, since it's difficult to recognize these hiring patterns without looking at the larger picture. Even then, it's hard to see the cause unless

you're looking for it. While some companies try to combat this with things like employment tests, these methods are still imperfect.

Overcoming bias in all its forms is a critical part of any company's D&I efforts, not just in hiring but also when it comes to creating a welcoming, open, workplace for everyone. That, in a nutshell, is what inclusion means.

Inclusion

For me, the best way to describe inclusion is as sustained diversity. Diversity efforts don't stop when someone signs an employment agreement. It doesn't stop on their first day. And it certainly doesn't stop as soon as onboarding and training are done. Diversity is a process, and inclusion is how we sustain those diversity efforts on a long-term, ongoing basis.

Let's look at it this way. For all of our work, training, and education efforts, scientists say that bias is in many ways ingrained in our brains at subtle levels that we may not even recognize. We can learn to recognize these biases, but there's no way to completely eliminate them. As Dobbin and Kalev write, "you can't simply 'outlaw' bias because shaming and punishing bias doesn't really address the problem. [5]

Instead, inclusion efforts have to revolve around how we deal with bias, rather than trying to solve it outright. You and your organization need to learn skills and techniques to recognize bias and mitigate the impact it has on your workforce.

Listen, you'll never be able to completely eliminate bias, right? And that shouldn't be your project—you're running a business, and while improving your group's D&I efforts is an important part of good corporate stewardship,

solving all the world's problems isn't your main project. Your business is your main project—inclusion just makes that project work much, much better.

Another way of thinking about inclusion is to go back to the idea of cultural awareness. A big part of diversity involves being sensitive to the different cultures and identities that make up your workforce, as well as those that are in your hiring pools. From an inclusion standpoint, cultural awareness is the first step—it's essentially identifying the problem of inclusion without necessarily fixing it.

Think of cultural awareness as a mindset, one that accepts and embraces the wide variety of backgrounds your employees bring to your company. Inclusion, then, is a competency, a set of skills that you can use to effectively maneuver within the mindset of cultural awareness.

The cultural competency of inclusion means having the tools to create and maintain a welcoming, open environment; one that not only accepts people from all walks of life, but also one that relies on multiple voices and perspectives, creating a stronger, more effective, more creative workforce.

Why Inclusion Matters

For most of us, it might seem a little strange to spend time talking about why inclusion is important. I

History is made by those who do the impossible.

mean, we all know that it's important, so why take the time to go into detail? Well, there are two reasons.

First, while most of us recognize the value of inclusion, there are those who don't, and we

should take any chance we get to show these people why inclusion matters. Second, it helps us to put into words exactly why we should continue to focus our efforts on improving inclusion.

Inclusion is essential for a healthy and functioning society. When individuals are excluded or marginalized, it can lead to negative consequences for both the individuals and society as a whole. Studies have shown that inclusive environments are associated with better mental health, greater social cohesion, and improved economic outcomes.

According to a study by McKinsey & Company, companies with diverse workforces are more likely to outperform their less diverse counterparts. This is because diverse teams are better equipped to solve complex problems, generate innovative ideas, and make better decisions. Additionally, inclusive workplaces are

more likely to attract and retain top talent, which can lead to increased productivity and profitability.

Inclusive societies also have better social outcomes. In a recent article in *The Lancet*, researchers found that social exclusion is a major determinant of poor health outcomes. Individuals who are excluded from social and economic opportunities are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes, such as higher rates of chronic illness, depression, and anxiety.

Inclusive practices can also lead to greater social cohesion. Inclusive societies are characterized by greater levels of trust, cooperation, and mutual respect among individuals and groups. This can lead to a stronger sense of community and social solidarity, which is essential for building a healthy and functioning society.

Just "knowing" the value of inclusion isn't enough; in order to really make our D&I efforts effective, we must be crystal clear about the reasoning behind them. When we can explain exactly why we're continuing to pursue better inclusion practices, we can focus our efforts more precisely, while also improving our ability to measure results.

Fairness

First things first: Focusing on inclusion is the right thing to do.

I know, it may seem a little hypocritical of me to talk about being more precise and specific, but then open things up with a general statement about what's right. But when it comes to inclusion, it's worth taking a moment to start out with a simple, declarative statement that should underlie

every other argument we make for improving inclusion.

D&I programs aren't about "righting wrongs" from the past. Hopefully, these efforts will help heal some of those wounds, of course, but that's not our main project. Instead, inclusion is about learning how to look at the whole person, rather than a collection of identity markers, like age, sex, race, and so on.

As a rule, I never say that we're looking past any of these things because that isn't inclusion, either. But while I see all of these factors, I incorporate them into getting to know the whole person, with each fact about their identity making up a small part of that identity.

This is especially true when it comes to hiring. When we're looking for new people to bring onboard, it's not uncommon for us to say that we're looking for quality new hires. The problem

is that we don't always know what we mean when we say "quality."

We may have some vague ideas about skills, job fit, and personality profiles, but it's easy for those to get overshadowed by our personal interactions during the interview process. The problem, then, is the troublesome issue of unconscious bias.

Personal interactions are important for getting to know a candidate, but they also introduce the opportunity for in-group biases to appear, usually without us even realizing it. We may start to recognize similarities with ourselves on an unconscious level and that can lead us to prefer certain candidates based mostly on how they resonate with our preferred in-group.

A lot of companies have stepped up their efforts to fight this bias and ensure fairness among all candidates, including adding skills testing to

their hiring process. But even these systems can fall short, especially if they're unevenly administered.

The best solution—really, the *only* solution—is to combine these efforts to limit bias with consistent training in cultural awareness, so you can keep inclusion in the forefront of your mind as you're making hiring decisions. Remember, D&I isn't an endpoint; it's an ongoing process.

Equal Opportunity

Looking at this section heading, you might be asking yourself how equal opportunity and fairness are different. It's a fair question, since the two concepts are very closely linked. The difference is a matter of approach.

Fairness, in most cases, is about treating people in an impartial, unbiased way. Equal

opportunity, on the other hand, is the idea that jobs should be open to everyone, regardless of their identity, and should be distributed according to who could best perform the required tasks.

There are a number of different laws here in the United States that provide prospective employees protection from bias, including age, race, and sex. These laws, most of which are enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), have been used extensively since the 1960s to try and eliminate biases that have kept our workplaces from being truly diverse spaces.

These laws, in addition to affirmative action, have done a great deal to level the playing field when it comes to employment. But the simple truth is that these laws alone aren't nearly enough to foster diversity and inclusion—really, no law ever could.

Why? Because leveling the playing field is only about getting people in the door. Inclusion is so, so much more than that.

Remember, diversity is a mindset, and inclusion is the toolkit that allows us to sustain that diversity throughout every aspect of the workforce. Getting diverse people into the workplace is just the start. It's very difficult to legislate people's hearts and minds.

It can help to think of your organization's D&I efforts as a statement of values, a clear, declarative testimonial of where your group stands on creating a truly inclusive workplace. It isn't moral grandstanding; it's simply you making it very clear where your priorities lie.

Sound Business Sense

While the moral reasons for focusing on inclusion in the workplace should play a big role

in your D&I programs, I've also pointed out that fixing society isn't your business's main project. What is your main project? It's business—duh!

But here's the interesting thing, which I touched briefly on earlier. Study after study has shown that improving your company's diversity and inclusivity have a direct, positive impact on the success of your business. According to Boston Consulting Group, companies with more diverse leadership teams increased their revenue due to innovation by 19% over companies with less-diverse management.[6] Meanwhile, a Gartner study states that more inclusive groups outperformed more homogenous teams by nearly 30%. [7]

Higher profits and increased productivity? For most businesses, that would be enough by itself to encourage them to expand your D&I programs. But there's more to the relationship between better inclusivity and improvements in

your business. There's a whole host of ways your business can benefit from improving your D&I efforts, all of which can have an impact on your company's bottom line.

Broader Experience

I probably don't have to tell you that your business is stronger when you have multiple voices and perspectives. When you limit the number of viewpoints within your organization, it's easy to develop tunnel vision, limiting your field of view to a narrow band of possibilities.

This has a couple of negative effects that no company wants to see. First, it can make it difficult to see opportunities as they approach. Oftentimes, prospects for new markets or products come from unexpected places and voices, and when you limit

the channels for those voices to reach you, those prospects can speed past you.

Second, limited voices hamper your ability to be flexible or agile, an essential quality for companies in this increasingly digitized world. As our need to be open to change continues to grow, we have to be able to rely on multiple voices to give us the insight we need to make choices that make our organizations stronger.

In a more diverse, inclusive workplace, you surround yourself with a much broader range of life experiences, and this gives you an advantage in the marketplace. By embracing these differences and giving your employees the space and the opportunity to share their perspectives, you can gain insights that would otherwise go unheard in a less inclusive environment.

Wider Market Appeal

Just like broadening the different viewpoints in your workplace strengthens your team, these same viewpoints can give you better access to a wider segment of the market. But how exactly does this work? Let's take a deeper look.

On one level, when you make D&I part of your brand identity, you signal to others your commitment to being a conscientious corporate partner. Consumers tend to respond positively to these efforts. Those who share your position will make it a point to patronize your business—and it costs you nothing!

Internally, a diverse workforce allows you to hear a variety of perspectives from people with access to different insider information

A globe or world map has a strange way of influencing success.

pertaining to different markets. Again, with a

single perspective, you only see part of the story; a more diverse team allows you to build a more complete picture.

I do want to caution you, though, against something called the cultural monolith. A cultural monolith is treating someone's personal experience as representative of their entire group, which is unfair to both parties. It's imperative that you treat each person's opinion as their own. Cultures are varied and diverse, made up of thousands or millions of individuals with their own preferences and identities. Respect that difference—celebrate it!

A Customer-Centric Culture

One of the phrases that gets thrown around a lot in the business world is the idea of a customer-centric culture. I mean, aren't all businesses customer-centric? How, then, does creating an

inclusive workspace create a customer-centric culture?

The answer is that yes, businesses in general are centered around their customers in that they know they need customers to purchase their goods and services. But when it comes to serving these customers in the best, most efficient way possible, inclusion can have a dramatic effect.

Think about my previous point that inclusion can help you increase your market share by gaining access to new markets. The same diversity of perspectives that gives you access to those markets also helps you to serve those customers better.

Not all customers are the same. They have different needs, different desires, and different circumstances, all of which require you to find ways to meet their needs in order to better serve those different markets. With a diverse, inclusive

workforce, you're better positioned to understand those differences, which gives you the opportunity to serve those customers better than your competitors.

Better Work Atmosphere

One of the most valuable aspects of focusing on inclusion in your company is that it almost always improves the atmosphere in your workplace. When you emphasize the celebration of everyone's differences and the value of every person's contribution, you'll almost immediately notice a decrease in the behaviors that can make the workplace miserable—and less productive.

If you don't have a productive, welcoming work environment, it's usually a sign that your inclusion efforts aren't working. An improved work atmosphere underlies all the other benefits

that come along with D&I initiatives, mostly because it reflects the sense of acceptance that true inclusion requires.

Five Ways to Improve Inclusion

By now, you're probably asking yourself how you can help improve your team's inclusion efforts. After all, beyond the mountains of evidence showing how inclusion can help your business, building a culture of acceptance in your company is simply the right thing to do.

While there is no road map for creating an inclusive company, that doesn't have to be a bad thing. The problem with maps is that they tend to focus on a single route, making it hard to find different approaches. Because there's no single pathway to inclusion, you have the freedom to

make your own choices, determining what works best for your company in your specific situation.

What follows, then, are some suggestions for how you can plan your own pathway to inclusivity. None of these ideas are prescriptions, and I'm positive that no single suggestion will be the cure for your company's diversity and inclusion problems. Instead, think of each item as a bullet point in your D&I planning, which you can arrange and rearrange and fill in with other strategies to maximize the impact of your inclusion initiatives.

1. Establish a Feeling of Belonging

It's not a surprise that making employees feel like they belong with your company is a key part of improving your inclusion efforts. Heck, that emphasis on creating a shared sense of belonging

and camaraderie has been around for ages, although for many years, it had little to do with issues of diversity.

But the same efforts that companies went to years ago to make the workforce feel comfortable and welcomed in the workplace are just as important today—they just need a little tinkering to make them work for your D&I planning and to really emphasize how inclusion impacts your employee's day-to-day lives.

There are a number of ways to create a sense of belonging within your employees. Happy hours are always a great idea, since they give you the opportunity to bring your workforce together in a social situation away from work. Supply some food and some drinks and let people share their stories.

You can also provide more structured events. Guest speakers are a great option,

especially speakers from a variety of different backgrounds. You can also organize events like scavenger hunts or other relaxed office competitions, which have a tendency to bring groups together.

No matter what, the emphasis should always be on making everyone feel accepted and heard. Any conflicts or misunderstandings that may arise during any portion of the day should be treated as teachable moments.

2. Consider Your Leadership Team

No matter how inclusive you make your workplace, true change in your organization starts with leadership. Your employees take their cues from their leaders, and if those leaders don't fully embrace the D&I mission, then there's no chance that your organization will ever become truly inclusive.

The most important step towards diversifying your workplace and making it inclusive is to examine your leadership team. Look at who is in place and what positions they hold. According to CNBC, 85% of all executives in the United States are white, while whites also hold 83% of all senior manager positions.[8] If those numbers surprise you, you're not alone.

Now, I'm not saying that you have to assign slots to your leadership team that can only be filled by this or that specific designation. But if your leadership positions are held almost entirely by people of one particular background, you're likely to find it difficult to enact meaningful change. No matter what your good intentions may be, your efforts will ring hollow, simply because you don't seem to be following your own directives.

When you increase the diversity of your leadership teams, you're modeling the change that

you'd like to see. If your leadership reflects the kind of diversity and inclusion you would like to create in your workplace, you'll find it easier to convince your employees that you're earnest in your desire to make the office a more welcoming and accepting environment.

Of course, the real benefit of diversifying your leadership is that you broaden your perspectives, opening yourself up to more opportunities and in most cases increasing your profitability and innovation quotient. Honestly, it seems like a win-win, doesn't it?

3. Give Employees Access to Resources

There are a number of resources out there that employers can provide for their employees to help build an inclusive environment. These resources can be as simple as a collection of books on how to overcome biases like racism and ageism

to full-blown development programs that employees can enroll in to receive training on inclusion practices.

One example of the resources available to workers are employee resource groups, or ERGs. These groups are usually organized by employees. They can provide a forum for employees with common concerns to meet and discuss concerns or issues they may be experiencing. These concerns can then be communicated to leadership.

ERGs often do more than just represent problems in the office, though. Many perform volunteer work in the community, or organize events outside of work, often for the whole company. Ultimately, these groups provide a safe space for emphasizing the value of inclusion within the entire company.

4. Emphasize and Respect Unique Experiences

In a truly diverse, inclusive workplace, people are going to come from all walks of life, and their experiences are going to diverge, sometimes to an extreme degree. Without a focus on inclusivity, this can be a recipe for disaster.

It's easy to see how these different experiences could lead to employees butting heads. Without a shared sense of understanding, it can be difficult if not impossible, to understand where the other person is coming from.

Ultimately, it all comes down to empathy. Being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes gives you the ability to experience what life might be like for someone else, even if it's only in your imagination.

Science has shown that when we witness someone else's experience, whether visually or

through speaking, the empathy we experience is our mirror neurons firing. These neurons react in the same whether we experience something ourselves or simply witness it. If you've ever winced when you saw someone get a papercut or felt a rush of warmth during a romcom when the main couple gets together, you've felt your mirror neurons firing. [9]

However, the power of empathy only comes from practice, and in order to reap the full rewards, you must be willing to try again and again to feel what others are feeling. At times, it can be difficult, but emphasizing empathy as a core value can help you build a strong, lasting, more inclusive workplace.

5. Remember the Little Things (That Aren't So Little)

I always hated the phrase "little things." I think it's mostly because those little things usually turn out to be so important. Anyone can handle the big, obvious things, but it takes dedication, creativity, and focus to handle the details, all the things that must go right in order for those big things to go off without a hitch.

Using the right pronouns, for example, is a simple, easy way to make people feel included. It's such a small thing to include your pronouns at the bottom of your email, but for someone else, it could be transformative. And the best part is that it costs you nothing.

Another simple act is to keep a calendar that highlights diversity, marking not only the major U.S. holidays, but a wide array of holidays from across the globe, both big and small. That way, you can help your workforce celebrate their culture all year round, whether that takes the form of an

office-wide announcement or a small gesture from you to your employee. Both are sure to be appreciated.

It's these not-so-little acts that accumulate over time, and when you encourage everyone to participate in your efforts to encourage and celebrate diversity and inclusion in your workplace, it can bring everyone closer. Big or small, each gesture fosters an attitude of acceptance, and that's something that everyone can get behind.

The Challenges to Inclusion

While inclusion is an important goal, there are many challenges to achieving it. One of the biggest challenges is overcoming the biases and prejudices that exist within society. Individuals may have conscious or unconscious biases that

prevent them from fully embracing diversity and inclusion., as we talked about earlier.

Another challenge is the lack of access to resources and opportunities for marginalized individuals. Individuals who come from low-income backgrounds or who have disabilities may face significant barriers to accessing education, healthcare, and other essential resources.

Finally, there is a lack of understanding about the importance of inclusion and its impact on society. Many individuals may not fully appreciate the value of diversity and inclusion, which can lead to resistance to change and a lack of progress towards more inclusive practices.

Building a Diverse Workforce

When businesses begin to consider D&I initiatives, there's a tendency to start to think in terms of raw numbers. Does my workforce have

the right percentages of people from different backgrounds? If not, how do I go about getting those numbers right? And if I do, does that mean I "did my job" when it comes to workplace diversity, and I can go on without thinking about D&I anymore?

If we consider diversity as a part of the integrity mindset, then this numbers-first approach isn't going to cut it. Looking at D&I as just a numbers game isn't an honest attempt to create a more diverse, inclusive workforce. Instead, it becomes a kind of virtue signaling, where you're telling people you care about diversity without really being committed to the effort.

While numbers are part of D&I efforts, they can't be the only metric. The main idea of diversity in the workplace is to create a fair and equitable atmosphere, a place where everyone's ideas are welcomed and valued.

Here are some additional ideas to consider as you strive to build the most inclusive, equitable workplace possible:

Assess Your Workplace

Improving the diversity in your workplace has to start with a frank and honest assessment of your current workplace. This is more than just looking at your roster of employees and looking at how each member of your staff identifies themselves. While this can be a useful metric to include as you look at the makeup of your workforce, it's only a small part of the overall picture—you also have to include your workplace culture.

Many companies today are including the staff members in these assessments, which can provide crucial insight into the underpinnings of

your company culture. As a manager, you're unlikely to see into the nitty-gritty of everyday interactions in the same way that your employees do. Having these honest conversations is a critical part of truly understanding how people feel about their experience in the workplace.[5]

As you progress through your assessment, you should start to find areas where you can improve your company's D&I efforts. Once you've identified those areas for improvement, you can work together with your team to set goals for your company and develop a plan for achieving them. This is just the first step, of course, but setting that plan in motion can help your diversity efforts progress rapidly.

Recruit Broadly

One reason many diversity efforts fail is because companies don't change their approach to

finding candidates. They tend to use the same job posting boards, go to the same hiring events, and talk to the same people year after year after year. If you don't change your approach to recruiting, then how on earth can you expect to achieve different results?

That's why it's important to consider alternatives. Spread your job postings out to a greater number of boards, especially those targeted to particular populations. You can also increase your efforts to reach beyond your traditional networks, attending hiring and HR events in more diverse areas and writing your job postings with more inclusive language.

Another option is to add more diversity to your hiring pool, which helps undercut any unconscious bias.

Focus on Retention

Hiring more diverse candidates is one thing—keeping them with your company is another. For far too many companies, the focus on diversity ends as soon as new employees are brought into the company. But that's really just the starting point for diversity in the workplace. Ensuring that the workplace is welcoming to an increasingly diverse team has to be the meat and potatoes of your D&I efforts.

For new employees, these efforts start with onboarding, making sure every new worker feels safe and secure in their new position, and that their opinions and contributions will be welcomed from day one. However, the process really begins even before the hire is made. If your assessment reveals that your office culture isn't as inclusive as it needs to be, then any efforts to include the new employee are doomed to fail.

Make the Workplace Inclusive

So how do you make your workplace more welcoming for employees from different backgrounds? Well, the first step should be adhering to equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws, not simply because it's legally required, but because it's the right thing to do.

However, this is only the first step. You can consider a number of options to make your company more inclusive, including:

- Providing daycare options
- Exploring non-gendered bathrooms
- Offering flexible hours for employees, including remote work
- Providing time off for religious holidays
- Establishing committees for diversity and inclusion

And, as mentioned above, it's also useful to offer opportunities for employees to gather in social situations outside of work. This can help establish a company culture that celebrates the diversity of everyone's background, allowing every employee the chance to learn more about different ways of seeing and experiencing the world. It can help smooth over any differences of opinion and provide the opportunity for future growth.

Consider Diversity Training

On April 12, 2018, two black men were waiting at a Philadelphia Starbucks to meet an acquaintance to discuss a real estate project. Although they hadn't made a purchase, it wasn't uncommon for people to use Starbucks as a meeting place. However, the Starbucks manager

called the police, and the two men were shortly arrested, despite not being charged with a crime.

The incident sparked a call for a boycott of the coffee company, as well as anger at the Philadelphia Police Department. While Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson clearly saw the potential for damage to their brand, he also saw an opportunity to improve his company's commitment to diversity. Starbucks reached an agreement with the two men, and on May 29, 2018, Starbucks closed its 8,000 locations to train their employees about racial bias.

While some may have had doubts about Starbucks' motivation—after all, their brand was in danger—the fact that they willingly closed every single location on the same day to engage in serious discussions on race and bias is pretty incredible. Johnson himself said it was only the first step, and former attorney general Eric Holder

praised the company for doing more than simply dressing some windows. [6]

As the Starbucks example shows, diversity training can be a powerful way to instill a commitment to inclusion and equality that can permeate your workplace long after the training itself is complete.

From spreading techniques to help improve equality within the workplace, to sparking earnest discussions about the challenges that each person experiences both at work and outside the office, these sessions can bring employees together and open their eyes to new perspectives.

However, if you decide to employ diversity training, it's important to do so thoughtfully and to commit to the process entirely. There are a number of outside consultants that provide well-tested training programs, and it's in your best interest to

search out a program that will provide your employees with the tools they need.

Inclusion Isn't an Endpoint—It's a Beginning

One of the most challenging aspects of diversity and inclusion is that there's no endpoint. There won't come a day when you'll come into the office, take a deep breath, put your hands on your hips, and say, "It's here. We're officially diverse and inclusive. Good work."

It's hard to measure the success of your inclusion efforts. For the most part, when it works, you won't notice anything at all. You can hold meetings and establish panels, or you could put out surveys or have informal discussions with staff members and managers. At the very least, you should keep track of your staff's diversity.

When it comes to your D&I initiatives, it's important to think broadly in just about every way. Expand your time frame to include both short- and long-term goals. Consider the diversity of your current staff and the ways your new hires could help make your team even more diverse. Make use of a wide range of strategies to build inclusion in your workplace.

You should also broaden your range of what diversity means. For many people, diversity simply means race and ethnicity. But true diversity is about welcoming people of every gender, sex, age, religion, and sexual orientation. And remember, each person is their own individual—they're not monoliths, representative of an entire identity.

When I was running my companies, much of my success was due to my hiring strategy. I only cared about some very specific characteristics,

namely focused, driven workers who could take their own initiative. That strategy propelled me to over $750 million in sales, thanks to the tireless work of my more than 300 employees.

Still, there's always more I could do to continue to build an inclusive workplace. That's the nature of inclusion. As a cultural competency, inclusion is about having the skills you need to sustain diversity over the long haul. Just like with fishing, when you teach a person to be inclusive, they'll carry those skills with them for the rest of their life.

Conclusion

Inclusion is a critical component of a healthy and functioning society. It is associated with better mental health outcomes, greater social cohesion, and improved economic outcomes. However, achieving inclusion can be challenging

due to biases, lack of access to resources, and a lack of understanding about the importance of inclusion. It is important for individuals, organizations, and society as a whole to recognize the value of inclusion and work towards creating more inclusive practices and environments. By doing so, we can create a more just and equitable society for all.

ALMOST THE END! YOU STILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE 7-DAY CHALLANGE

7-Day Motivation Challenge

Why Accept this Challenge?

If you're seeking personal growth and development, you need to commit to consistent effort. One way to jumpstart this journey is by taking the 7-Day Challenge. To succeed in this challenge, you must dedicate a little time each day to contemplation and reflection on the given topic.

The questions provided are only a starting point. If they don't resonate with your personal experiences, modify them to better suit your situation. This flexibility allows for a more

meaningful and authentic exploration of the subject matter.

When you commit to this challenge, you're making a decision to actively engage with your thoughts and emotions. Writing down your reflections is a powerful tool to solidify your insights and gain clarity on your internal landscape. This daily practice can have a profound impact on your overall well-being.

Approach this 7-Day Challenge with an open mind and willingness to explore. You may uncover aspects of yourself that you weren't previously aware of or gain a deeper understanding of your values and priorities. This challenge's benefits extend beyond the initial 7 days, and the act of carving out time for introspection and self-reflection can become a habit.

Ultimately, this challenge is a powerful tool for anyone seeking to enhance their self-awareness

and personal growth. By dedicating a small amount of time each day to contemplation and reflection, you are taking an important step towards a more fulfilling and meaningful life. Upon completion, commit to re-reading and updating this challenge when you find yourself challenged by this concept in the future.

A 7-day Challenge provides a roadmap for achieving your goals by breaking them down into smaller, achievable tasks. By having a clear challenge, you can stay motivated and focused on your goals. Each day's challenge builds upon the previous day's, creating momentum towards the desired outcome. Additionally, having a plan can help you stay organized and prioritize tasks based on their importance and urgency.

A challenge can help you overcome procrastination and stay accountable. By having a clear outline of what needs to be done, you can

avoid feeling overwhelmed and take action towards your goals. Furthermore, having a plan can help you track your progress and make adjustments as needed.

Overall, a 7-day Challenge is a powerful tool to focus on a particular issue and provide greater insight, bringing an area of concern into your comfort zone.

Day 1: Start with Self-Reflection

Begin by reflecting on your own biases and prejudices. Take a moment to examine how they may be affecting your interactions with others. Make a conscious effort to challenge any negative thoughts or beliefs you may have about people who are different from you.
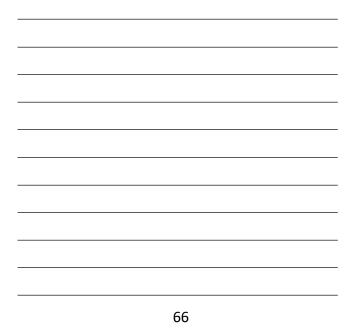
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Day 2: Educate Yourself

Take time to learn about different cultures, identities, and experiences. Read books, watch documentaries, or attend events that expose you to new perspectives. This will help you to better understand and appreciate the diversity around you.

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Day 3: Listen and Learn

Listen actively to people from diverse backgrounds. Pay attention to their experiences and perspectives. Avoid interrupting or dismissing their views, and instead, seek to understand where they are coming from.

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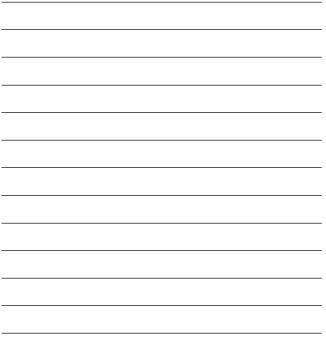
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Day 4: Practice Empathy

Put yourself in someone else's shoes. Try to imagine what it would be like to walk a mile in their shoes. This will help you to better understand their experiences and perspectives, and to develop greater empathy and understanding.

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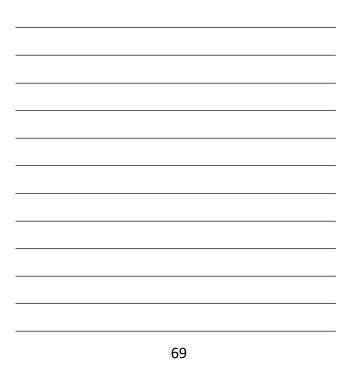
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Day 5: Speak Up

Speak up when you hear or witness exclusion or discrimination. Use your voice to call attention to unfair treatment, and advocate for inclusive practices and policies.

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Day 6: Take Action

Take action to promote inclusion in your community. Volunteer with organizations that work towards promoting diversity and inclusion. Donate to charities that support marginalized communities.

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Day 7: Contemplate

Take time to reflect on your progress and experiences over the past week. Contemplate the importance of inclusion and the impact it has on individuals and society as a whole. Consider how you can continue to make a positive difference in promoting inclusion and diversity in your daily life. Ending on Sunday as a day of contemplation will give you time to reflect on the challenges and successes of the past week, and to set goals for continuing to promote inclusion in the future. Remember, inclusion is an ongoing process that requires continuous effort and commitment.

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Get on Board
Inclusion   Wes Berry

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About The Author
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     Wes Berry is a Keynote Speaker and Workshop Facilitator with the professional skills and real-life experience to deliver on any stage. He works with Fortune 500 companies like Johnson & Johnson to smaller businesses and associations of all sizes that are seeking a breakthrough experience. Wes changes lives and transforms organizations by delivering a Paradigm Shift. He has written sixteen business and success books and is a *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author and TEDx speaker. As an entrepreneur, he built a $750 million international company that operated in 130 countries.

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