Diversity & Inclusion
A Tough Nut to Crack

Diversity and Inclusion: A Tough Nut to Crack

Why is it, that in striving to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive society we require a myriad of measures conveyed in laws, Equality Commissions, Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities Policies, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies, Advocacy organisations, Mission Statements, Pledges and constant promotional initiatives?

The fact is working to change negative cultural attitudes and behaviour, towards women and people of diverse backgrounds, is a tough reality. This experience has been formed through an enduring cultural and historical progression, which is deeply rooted from childhood and has consequently become psychologically embedded in our behaviour and mindset, as well as reflected in institutional structures

Scaling Barriers

Over time we cannot fail to have seen the progression of approaches focused on tackling the social, political, cultural, financial, psychological and historical barriers, which stand in the way of greater equity, diversity and inclusion. There is no denying that progress has been made, in terms of improved rights, treatment, diversity engagement and inclusion, however it is clear that there remain huge disparities and serious conflicts

Why No Celebrations Quite Yet

Should we hail the arrival of Diversity and Inclusion, the concept which is trending in its approach to creating greater equity for women and people of diverse backgrounds? This perspective relates to both the recognition and acceptance of difference, as well as the importance and benefits of diverse inclusion at all levels. From the way things presently stand we cannot start to celebrate yet

Taking the Lid Off Diversity and Inclusion

Despite its popularity and the implementation of Diversity and Inclusion strategies, along with the declared intentions made by individuals, groups and organisations, to redress inequality and eliminate detrimental factors, many fail We have to question why – In taking a closer look it is clear, that many of these approaches are strongly based on

- A lack of fundamental change and continuation of the status quo

- A continuation of the social, political, financial, institutional and psychological barriers, which hinder the progress of diversity, equity and inclusion

- Challenges in understanding the needs and underlying issues related to women and people from diverse backgrounds

- A lack of genuine commitment and investment

- Tokenistic gestures

Beneath the surface tokenism in Diversity and Inclusion represent superficial expressions of commitment, merely creating the impression of adhering to this practice. Whether positively intended, lacking genuine commitment or understanding, this has little lasting impact on cultures and generally produces greater mistrust

Finding the Way to the Woods through the Trees

If we are to develop then it is essential to recognise how, these powerful and long-standing factors bar, side-track and cloud, the way forward in achieving a meaningful diversity and Inclusion transformation

A starting point is to look deeper and question the motivation, goals and conviction of these Diversity and Inclusion practices

Ten Mistakes of What Diversity and Inclusion are Not

It is essential to recognise that, genuine progress and commitment to Diversity and Inclusion are not reflected in actions such as;

1. Celebrating an event like Black History Month, Pride, International Women's Day, The Paralympics and contributing nothing further until these come around again

2. Discussing a commitment to making diversity and inclusion a key part of the ethos and working practice, however not actively establishing clear plans, policies or procedures

3. Employing people with diverse backgrounds and expecting them to think and behave in the same way as the dominant or existing culture

4. Employing a Diversity and Inclusion Lead, however not giving this position the authority or resources to implement meaningful change

5. Having an Equal Opportunity / Inclusion Policy in name only and not ensuring that it is actively implemented, monitored or reviewed

6. Not allowing expression of diverse input throughout the organisation and relevant areas of a person's role or the organisation - particularly revealed in asking for input or referring to someone only in situations when it directly relates to their diverse background

7. Using diverse images on websites and in marketing materials, which do not reflect the reality. Only asking people with diverse backgrounds to take part in publicity, such as; interviews, news features, social media, conferences, training and other live events, in order to give an impression of an overall understanding of this perspective

8. Merely giving someone from a diverse background the opportunity to be the first to hold a senior or leading position within your organisation. At the same time making no serious changes in the culture's practice of diversity and inclusion

9. Specifically employing people with diverse backgrounds and not involving their perspective and status levels, in a meaningful and impactful way, throughout the organisation

10. Merely having a picture taken with diversity and inclusion advocates and not supporting further development

Cracking the Nut

To achieve significant diversity, inclusion and equity goals, a stronger and more deliberate commitment is needed in the implementation of effective ideas and practices. For such a change, a major shift in our present thinking and behaviour are necessary, along with structural and institutional transformations

Facing the Diversity and Inclusion Challenge

It takes courage, deep conviction and a powerful sense of purpose to challenge the status quo. Some people find it their mission in life to bring this about, some

are thrown into it through being confronted and some possess a natural drive to create a more inclusive and equitable society. Creating a fully engaged diversity and inclusion strategy requires courageous Leaders, Disrupters, Advocates, Women and diverse voices who will, challenge, question, engage, listen, commit, invest, collaborate and most importantly dig deeper to transform cultures

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