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Managing Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

Diversity. What does it all mean? How is it relevant to today's workplace and to your role as a leader?

Diversity is one of the key words and current realities in our workplace. The intent is to create a culture where differences are valued; a place where people are valued and appreciated for their varied skills, talents and uniqueness. In today's modern workplace, diversity isn't just about someone's ethnicity. It's about all the ways we are different and similar including:

- Age
- Color
- Economic Status
- Ethnicity
- Family Status
- Gender
- Gender Identity
- Generation
- Geographic Background
- Health Status
- Language
- National Origin
- Physical Activity
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- Spirituality
- Thought Process
- Views

With all these potential differences in play, the most effective leaders and organizations are those that learn how to not only appreciate those differences, but take advantage of them. Tapping into and appreciating the diversity that people of different origins and backgrounds have to offer allows us to retain top performers, improve productivity, and improve morale. Leaders are expected to:

- Recruit, develop, reward, and retain a diverse high-quality workforce in an equitable manner in accordance with applicable laws.
- Understand, value, and seek out individual differences and strengths to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.
- Develop and use measures and rewards to hold self and others accountable for achieving results that embody the principles of diversity.
- Accurately assess employees and provide developmental opportunities to maximize their

capabilities and contributions to achieve the organization's goals.

Diversity is about empowering people. It makes an organization effective by capitalizing on all the strengths of each employee. It is not about Equal Employment Opportunity or Affirmative Action. These are laws and policies.

As a leader you have an obligation to make your organization more welcoming to others, so learning more about your own perspective and privilege can be a powerful first step. Our bias and prejudice are deeply rooted within us. From the moment when we are born, we learn about our environment, the world, and ourselves. Families, friends, peers, books, teachers, idols, and others influence us on what is right and what is wrong. These early learnings are deeply rooted within us and shape our perceptions about how we view things and how we respond to them.

Talking about diversity and inclusion is one thing, but walking the walk is the true test. To view diversity and inclusion as an organizational priority, one must measure it as such. Analyzing and dissecting the progress made is important, but equally as important is approaching the future with humility and identifying the areas that need improvement.

True leaders realize that it takes a wide variety of people to become the best and that they need to have the ability to be able to rely on everyone on their team, no matter how different another person may be.

What's important to remember is that diversity and inclusion isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather an ongoing conversation. Employees aren't looking for leaders to have all the answers, but rather a clear vision and a plan to build and foster an organization that is truly inclusive of all people of all backgrounds.