

A Roadmap for Planning

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Embarking on a diversity and inclusion strategy is a journey that requires a roadmap. Having a well-planned diversity initiative minimizes risks and maximizes potential. While your diversity strategy should be customized to the specific needs and goals of the organization, using the following guide can help ensure the successful development and implementation of your initiative.

Strategy Suggestions

1. To avoid employee backlash, organizations must define diversity in a broad and inclusive way. The definition must demonstrate to employees that each individual is included and therefore is valued.
2. In order to value diversity, organization must first assure that they are truly diverse at every level – not just when it comes to secondary dimensions, but in terms of the primary dimensions of diversity as well.
3. Leveraging diversity requires a fundamental shift in assumptions about the organization's culture as well as changes in the basic systems and practices used to support customers and employees.
4. "Change management principles" can be the single most important tool in diversity implementation when creatively applied.
5. Having a diversity mindset, founded in education and awareness, separates effective leaders from those who play at or pay lip service to the need for change.
6. Without making a serious investment in both time and human resources, no company can fully adopt or value diversity, which will lead to greater representation.
7. Beating backlash requires building support among those who are ready to adopt change while minimizing the involvement of those who are still resistant.
8. It is critical to develop the strategic and financial arguments for valuing diversity; building the business case strengthens the probability of adoption.
9. While excellent training alone will not ensure culture change, inappropriate training can do considerable damage to diversity implementation efforts.
10. By focusing on the common needs for respect, valuing diversity can help close the gaps in empathy and understanding that exist across diverse employee groups.
11. The ongoing involvement and preparedness of the core leadership team are the most important factors in predicting implementation success.

There is no doubt that launching, implementing and sustaining a diversity and inclusion strategy requires dedication and leadership involvement. However, companies who have implemented such strategies and followed these guideposts over time have found that the benefits are enormous.