



# Ethical Considerations in DEI 2023:

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OF DIVERSE TALENT



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# Ethical Considerations in DEI: Recruitment & Retention of Diverse Talent

## INTRODUCTION

This course is intended to create a foundation of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace, accounting profession and community, and begin an exploration of the impact of ethics and preconceived bias. When you complete this course, you will be able to:

- Recall the importance of DEI and how it relates to the ethical decision-making model
- Recognize recruitment techniques and various channels available for potential employees
- Gain an understanding of retention techniques
- Apply ethical DEI concepts to employment practices

## MEET THE COURSE AUTHORS, HOSTS AND GUEST EXPERTS

### COURSE AUTHORS & HOSTS

#### **Clare Levison, CPA, CGMA**

##### **Owner, Inspired Responsibility**

Clare Levison is the owner of Inspired Responsibility, a consulting company dedicated to delivering continuing education via positive messages and meaningful content that inspires change. She strives to help organizations bridge gaps in their current learning with inspiring programs and meaningful agendas that deliver the message, as well as the WHY behind the message, to propel employees from good to best.

Prior to starting Inspired Responsibility, Levison spent more than twenty years in the aerospace and defense industry involved in all aspects of management, project, and financial accounting, as well as government compliance. Levison also authored competitive proposal volumes, with a focus on creating compelling, compliant content and providing cost trend analysis and risk mitigation.

#### **Vivian J. Paige, MBA, MS, CPA, CGMA**

Vivian J. Paige, MBA, MS, CPA, CGMA has extensive experience in taxation and accounting. She was a successful sole practitioner before selling her firm and joining the faculty of her alma mater, Old Dominion University (ODO). During her nine years at ODU, she received numerous awards, including being bestowed the permanent title of University Distinguished Teacher. She was also named the Most Inspiring Faculty Member by the winner of the ODU Kaufman Scholar Award, given annually to the top student among ODU's 25,000+ students.

Vivian is a member of the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) and the Virginia Society of CPAs (VSCPA). She is actively involved in the VSCPA, currently serving as a member and past chair of the Tax Advisory Committee and as a member of the Political Action Committee, the ad hoc Educators' Symposium Task Force, and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council. She authored the VSCPA Legislators Tax Guide and presented briefings to the legislature on taxation. She has been a presenter at several

VSCPA conferences. Her longtime service to the VSCPA was recognized in 2019 when she was named the Outstanding Member.

Vivian is also involved in her community. She serves as a member of the Audit and Finance Committee of the FoodBank of Southeastern Virginia, on the audit and finance committees of the ACLU of Virginia, and as a board member of the Hampton Roads Tax Forum. She was a member of the Mayor's Commission on Equity and Economic Opportunity and the Mayor's Committee on Gaming. For a number of years, she was a weekly guest opinion columnist for *The Virginian-Pilot*, covering state and local politics. She co-founded Norfolk United Facing Race and was a founding board member of the Hampton Roads Center for Civic Engagement. Her varied interests have led her to be a public speaker and a frequent guest on radio and television, both locally and nationally. For her work in the community, she has received numerous awards, including being a YWCA Women of Distinction honoree.

## **GUEST EXPERTS**

### **Jonathan Zur President & CEO, Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities**

Jonathan C. Zur is President & CEO of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC), an organization that works with schools, business, and communities to achieve success through inclusion. Under Jonathan's leadership, VCIC has quadrupled the size of the budget and staff, and the number of programs the organization delivers annually increased by 3,000%. Additionally, VCIC has been recognized locally and nationally for its effectiveness.

An experienced facilitator and consultant on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, Jonathan was appointed by the Governor of Virginia to the Commonwealth Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, formed in the aftermath of the tragedy in Charlottesville in August 2017. In 2016, Jonathan was a speaker at the inaugural White House Summit on Diversity and Inclusion in Government. His program work with VCIC is noted in the book *No COLORS: 100 Ways to Stop Gangs from Taking Away Our Communities* as "the best...in the nation for sowing the seeds of non-violence, inclusiveness and understanding in a high school."

Active in the community, Jonathan has served in recent years as a member of the Virginia Commission on African American History Education, the Virginia Complete Count Commission, the Virginia Task Force on Culturally Inclusive School Meals and Calendars, the Leadership Metro Richmond Board of Directors, the Capital Area Partnership Uplifting People Board of Directors, and the Asian & Latino Solidarity Alliance of Central Virginia Advisory Council.

Jonathan earned his B.A. from the University of Richmond and he received a Certificate in Nonprofit Executive Leadership from the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. For his professional work and community involvement, he received a Martin Luther King, Jr. Drum Major for Justice Award, the FBI Director's Community Leadership Award, and the Leadership Metro Richmond Ukrop Community Vision Award, among other recognitions. Additionally, Jonathan was a finalist for the Richmond Times Dispatch's 2015 Person of the Year, and he was named one of Richmond's "Top 40 Under 40" in 2009.

**Faith Alejandro, ESQ**  
**Shareholder, Sands Anderson**

Faith Alejandro represents companies and local governments in a broad spectrum of management, operation, and planning issues. Throughout her complete legal support, she offers quick and efficient responses to daily HR management issues and diligently dives deep into regulations and case law. In every step, her goal is to craft successful defenses that help you and your business or locality succeed.

Further, Faith's practice benefits from her prior work in the field of mediation and dispute resolution services. She can bring petitions for the appointment of guardians and conservators, including undue influence and a person's legal and mental ability to make a valid will. She has also represented a social service department in cases involving child abuse and neglect, children in need of services, foster care, and adoption petitions.

As a collaborative partner, Faith can thoroughly guide, support, and train you regarding a variety of employment issues. From addressing disability accommodations and discrimination claims to unemployment benefits and more, she can serve as your complete legal guide. As she supports you, she pays close attention to your business' unique legal needs and goals in order to help you build the outcomes you desire. Faith joined Sands Anderson in 2011.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

Achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion in workplaces and communities more broadly is foundational to realizing our potential as a society. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are mutually reinforcing principles. It is insufficient to focus only on diversity because a sense of belonging (inclusion) and fairness (equity) are equally critical. Without equitable practices and intentional inclusion, diversity efforts will fail.

DEI initiatives often include fundamental fairness as a premise, and the merits of this goal cannot be overemphasized. But “fairness” in and of itself is not a metric traditionally measured and monitored in terms of organizational performance. In recent years, the emergence of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) measures has supported the monitoring and reporting of DEI. For organizations that do it well, these metrics are not seen as a checklist to complete, but rather an ongoing process and impetus to grow and thrive.

When DEI initiatives are successful, organizations benefit by:

- Being more innovative, as diverse thinking harnesses creativity and enhances decision-making by reducing groupthink.
- Attracting and retaining a stronger and more resilient and sustainable workforce as individuals choose organizations that reflect their own values.
- Achieving stronger performance results in the long term, both financially and non-financially.

The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) works to encourage and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the CPA accounting and finance profession and its workforce. The following graphic from AICPA provides 10 reasons to focus on DEI.

### 10 Reasons to Focus on Diversity & Inclusion

- #### 1 Advance Performance

In a study performed by McKinsey and Company, companies in the top-quartile for ethnic/cultural diversity on executive teams were 33% more likely to have industry-leading profitability.<sup>1</sup>

Firm Success Story: [AT&T](#)
- #### 2 Foster Innovation & Creativity

Companies with two-dimensional (2-D) diversity (inherent and acquired) out-innovate others. Leaders who give diverse voices equal attention unleash value-driving insights, and employees in a “speak up” culture are 3.5 times as likely to contribute their full innovative potential.<sup>2</sup>

Firm Success Story: [Marcum](#)
- #### 3 Evolve Productivity

A McKinsey report that covered 366 public companies in a variety of countries and industries found that those which were more ethnically and gender diverse performed significantly better than others.

Firm Success Story: [BSM](#)
- #### 4 Competitive Advantage

Companies with a diverse leadership team are 45% more likely to report a growth in market share over the previous year. Companies with a diverse leadership team are 70% more likely to capture a new market.<sup>3</sup>

Firm Success Story: [Plante Moran](#)
- #### 5 Grow Intellectually

Diverse groups are 58% more accurate in problem solving as compared to homogenous groups. Collective and individual intelligence increases in diverse groups.<sup>4</sup>

Firm Success Story: [EY](#)
- #### 6 Demographic Shifts

Generation Z is on track to be the nation’s most diverse and best-educated generation yet. Today, nearly half (48%) are non-white.<sup>5</sup> A CNBC article states that, “the traditional 9-to-5 office job doesn’t adequately support the lives millennials and Gen Zs want to live. They are flexible-work natives...”

Firm Success Story: [Crowe](#)
- #### 7 Social Responsibility

An increasing number of millennials believe that organizations have a moral obligation to give back to the society in ways that create an inclusive environment for everyone to participate and thrive.<sup>6</sup>

Firm Success Story: [Deloitte](#)
- #### 8 Market Demand

A study of more than 1,300 full-time employees found that an inclusive culture is key to both hiring and retaining talent. 80% of respondents said that inclusion is an important factor in choosing an employer.

Nearly a quarter of all respondents left jobs due to lack of diversity and inclusion. An inclusion strategy is key to retaining a diverse workforce.<sup>7</sup>

Firm Success Story: [Baker Tilly](#)
- #### 9 Talent Acquisition

While 74% of executives view D&I as crucial to the success of their organization, most companies do not take advantage of D&I to attract top talent.<sup>8</sup>

By failing to embed D&I into talent strategies, companies not only miss out on exceptional talent, but also on the benefits realized by diverse talent and an inclusive culture.<sup>9</sup>

Firm Success Story: [Carr, Riggs, & Ingram](#)
- #### 10 Cultivates Engagement

40% of people say that they feel isolated at work, and the result has been lower commitment and engagement. Belonging is linked to a 56% increase in job performance, a 50% drop in turnover risk, and a 75% reduction in sick days.<sup>10</sup>

Firm Success Story: [KPMG](#)

AICPA

1 Deloitte through diversity. McKinsey and Company, 2018. 2 Top Diversity: One Drive Innovation. Harvard Business Review, 2013. 3 Diversity Means You. Business Week, 2015. 4 ERM Social Trends, 2018. 5 Institute for Public Relations, 2017. 6 Deloitte Inclusion/Diversity Survey, 2017. 7 Russell Reynolds D&I Dilemma Survey, 2017. 8 The Value of Belonging at Work. HBR, 2019. Firm Success Story sources: “actions” contributed by firms who have signed the CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion™ pledges and stories from Harvard Business Review Journal of Accountancy, Plante Moran, Strategy+Business

## 10 Reasons to Focus on DEI

1. Advance Performance
2. Foster Innovation & Creativity
3. Evolve Productivity
4. Competitive Advantage
5. Grow Intellectually
6. Demographic Shifts
7. Social Responsibility
8. Market Demand
9. Talent Acquisition
10. Cultivates Engagement

In a report for the Deloitte Review, authors Juliet Bourke and Bernadette Dillon, both of Deloitte Human Capital, derive several truths about diversity and inclusion, the culmination of their work with roughly 50 organizations from around the world, representing more than one million employees.

These are the **Eight Powerful Truths** identified in *The Diversity and Inclusion Report*:

1. Diversity of thinking is the new frontier.
2. Diversity without inclusion is not enough.
3. Inclusive leaders cast a long shadow.
4. Middle managers matter.
5. Rewire the system to rewire the behaviors.
6. Tangible goals make ambitions real.
7. Match the inside and the outside.
8. Perform a culture reset, not a tick-the-box program.

Below are additional key takeaways from the report:

- High-performing teams are both cognitively and demographically diverse.
- Diversity + Inclusion = better business outcomes.
- Leaders must alter their behaviors and the surrounding workplace to suit the needs of diverse talent, ideas, customers, and markets.
- At its best (voluntary, experiential, inspiring, and practical), training raises awareness, surfaces previously unspoken beliefs, and creates a shared language to discuss diversity and inclusion on a day-to-day basis.

- Tangible goals have often been bluntly crafted and poorly communicated. There has been an overemphasis on diversity and an underemphasis on inclusion. The truth is, without appropriately crafted tangible goals, ambitions are merely ephemeral wishes.
- While many organizations have prioritized workplace diversity over customer diversity, both are equally important to business success.
- Organizations frequently underestimate the depth of change required, adopting a compliance-oriented or programmatic approach to diversity and inclusion.

The truths, the authors state, “challenge current practices, which are heavily weighted toward diversity metrics, events, and training.” To address them, the authors provide these actions:

1. Recognize progress will take a culture reset.
2. Create shared purpose and meaning by broadening the narrative to diversity of thinking and inclusion.
3. Build inclusive leadership capabilities.
4. Take middle managers on the journey.
5. Nudge behavior changes by rewiring processes and practices.
6. Strengthen accountability, recognition, and rewards.
7. Pay attention to diverse employees and customers.

DEI efforts may initially create some discomfort as organizations grapple with the changes they bring. Inclusion is not assimilation and increasing diversity while expecting conformity with the norms of the dominant culture will not have the desired effect. In addition, embracing DEI may lead to a shift of the dynamics of power within an organization. Leaders of organizations play critical roles by modeling the behaviors necessary to create a culture of DEI.



## THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

When creating a culture of DEI, begin by pulling the definitions of each of those terms apart. Meg Bolger, the founder of Same Team, an organization committed to helping companies deepen their DEI work, advises “being able to pull apart these definitions is vital. When we can’t hold diversity, equity, and inclusion as separate concepts and understand how they interact, we can’t set clear goals and strategies around them.”



Below are quotes from several Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion experts to help define each concept.

### DIVERSITY

Jonathan Zur is the President and CEO of Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, an organization that works with schools, businesses, and communities to achieve success through inclusion. Zur shares:

*“Diversity is the presence of difference. When we think about having a sense of diversity, it's really about putting different people together and that can be based on background, identity, perspective, worldview.”*

The U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development defines diversity as:

*“any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another.”*

According to Livinghr.com, A Human Resource Professional’s Guide to Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging in the Workplace, diversity is:

*“about the different characteristics that make each of us unique.”*

## **EQUITY**

Regarding equity, Zur offers:

*"When we look at equity, what we're seeing is a structure and policy that supports all of that. So equity really thinks about what are the structures in place that push some people up and push others down solely based on identity. And what can we do to make sure that we don't have those structural barriers that might be new or that might be multigenerational, that prevent some people from being able to be as successful as others solely based on a part of their identity."*

Dr. Naheed Dosani is a palliative care physician based in Ontario, Canada, who founded and leads the Palliative Education and Care for the Homeless (PEACH) program. Dr. Dosani shares:

*"Equality is giving everyone a shoe. Equity is giving everyone a shoe that fits."*

Livinghr.com states:

*"Equity means ensuring all individuals have what they need to succeed and participate fully, accounting for different access to opportunities, status, and rights."*

## **INCLUSION**

Regarding inclusion, Zur offers:

*"When we then move to a climate that is inclusive, we have the accepting, respecting and valuing of diversity. And when we see inclusion, what we see is an opportunity for employees to be their full selves where they want to stay late, where they care about the quality of their work, where they look out for their colleagues, where they share new ideas. So an inclusive environment is one where we don't just have the presence of difference, but where those who reflect a range of backgrounds are able to thrive."*

According to AICPA, inclusion is:

*"the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people."*

Again from Livinghr.com:

*"Inclusion is creating an environment of belonging where employees feel welcomed, supported, respected, and valued, and provides an environment that encourages them to contribute their best work."*

## **DIVERSITY VS INCLUSION**

From the Academy to Innovate Human Resources:

*"Put simply, diversity is about the 'what'; it focuses on the makeup of your workforce. Inclusion, on the other hand, is about the 'how'; the creation of a work environment and culture that enables all employees to participate and thrive."*

Joni Davis, Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer for Duke Energy, says:

*"Diversity speaks to who is on the team, but inclusion focuses on who is really in the game."*

Verna Myers, a DEI educator says:

*"Diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance."*

## ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

Accountants have long been known for their integrity and professionalism, standing out as respected and trusted financial professionals. The profession has earned its collective reputation as trusted advisors, and this reputation has stood the test of time. This means professionals must remain vigilant in upholding the highest ethical standards. Greater focus on DEI as part of ethical behavior is necessary to sustain the reputation the profession has earned.

Ethical obligations with respect to promoting DEI can be thought of in the context of the **Santa Clara University Framework for Ethical Decision-Making**, which is intended to serve as a practical tool for exploring ethical dilemmas and identifying ethical courses of action. The following are the five steps of the framework:

1. Identify the Ethical Issues
2. Get the Facts
3. Evaluate Alternative Actions
4. Choose an Option for Action and Test It
5. Implement the Decision and Reflect on the Outcome

Within step three (Evaluate Alternative Actions), the framework suggests evaluating options by asking the following questions while applying six ethical lenses.

- Which option best respects the rights of all who have a stake?

The **Rights Lens** suggests the ethical action is the one that best protects and respects the moral rights of those affected.

- Which option treats people fairly, giving them each what they are due?

The **Justice Lens** suggests each person should be given their due, and what people are due is often interpreted as fair or equal treatment.

- Which option will produce the most good and do the least harm for as many stakeholders as possible?

The **Utilitarian Lens** is a results-based approach and suggests the ethical action is the one that produces the greatest balance of good over harm for as many stakeholders as possible.

- Which option best serves the community as a whole, not just some members?

According to the **Common Good Lens**, life in community is a good and our actions should contribute to that life.

- Which option leads me to act as the sort of person I want to be?

The **Virtue Lens** suggests ethical actions ought to be consistent with certain ideal virtues that provide for the full development of our humanity and enable us to act according to the highest potential of our character.

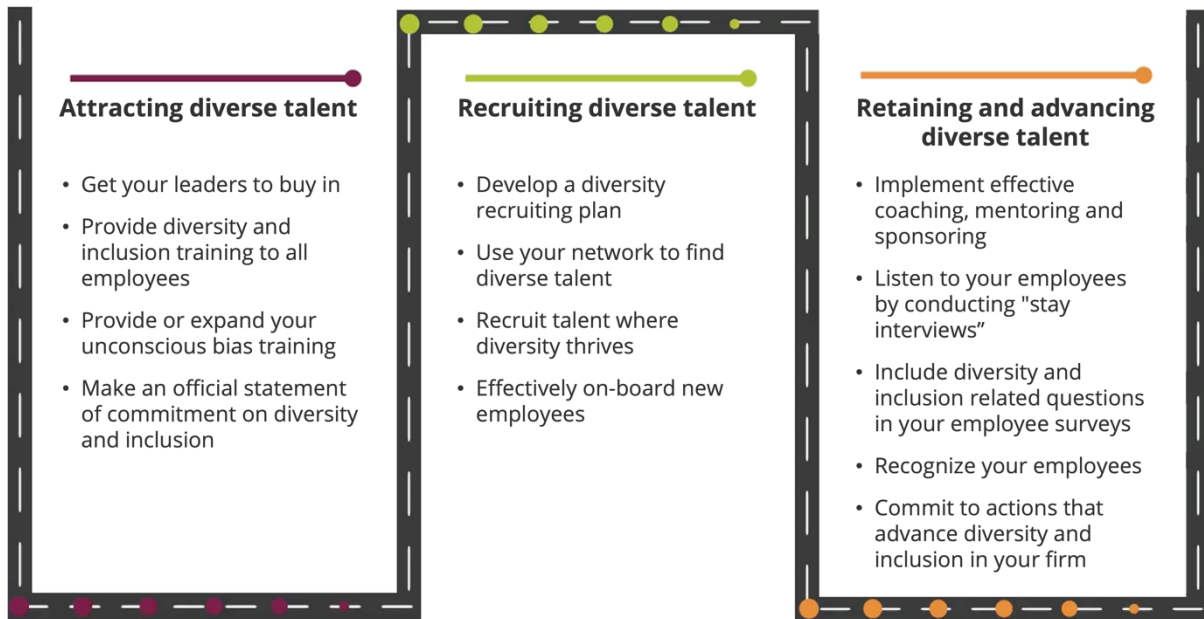
- Which option appropriately considers the relationships, concerns, and feelings of all stakeholders?

The **Care Ethics Lens** is rooted in relationships and in the need to listen and respond to individuals in their specific circumstances, rather than merely following rules or calculating utility.

Each lens helps determine what standards of behavior and character traits can be considered right and good. As a part of making a commitment to creating an ethical workplace environment, a commitment to creating a workplace that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive is a lifelong process. It requires continual effort to pay attention to what it takes to recruit, retain, motivate, and engage different groups of people. It takes a personal investment, not simply the fulfillment of a requirement. Such a commitment can pay dividends, not only to those in the workplace but also to the clients and customers served.

## A ROAD MAP

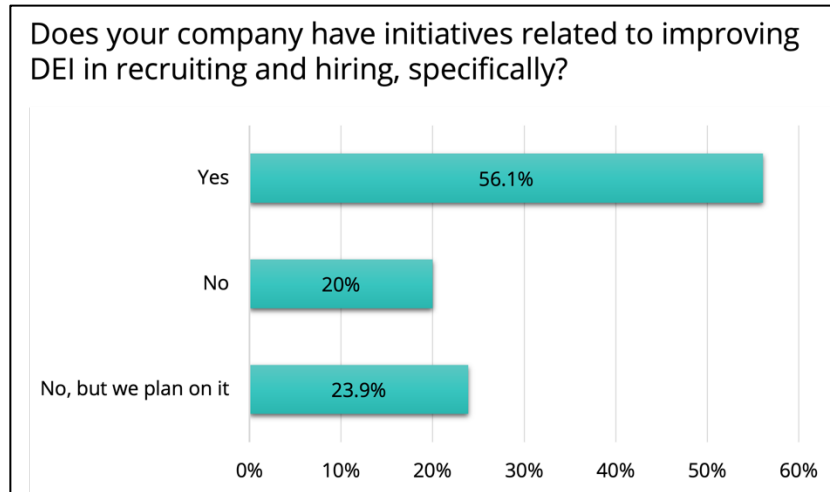
Recruiting and retaining a diverse staff has long been a part of many organizations' efforts. In its **Driving Diversity and Inclusion in Firms** toolkit, the AICPA reports diverse teams are 35% more likely to outperform those that are not, and inclusive teams make better business decisions 87% of the time. The toolkit provides a road map companies can follow to become more diverse and inclusive.



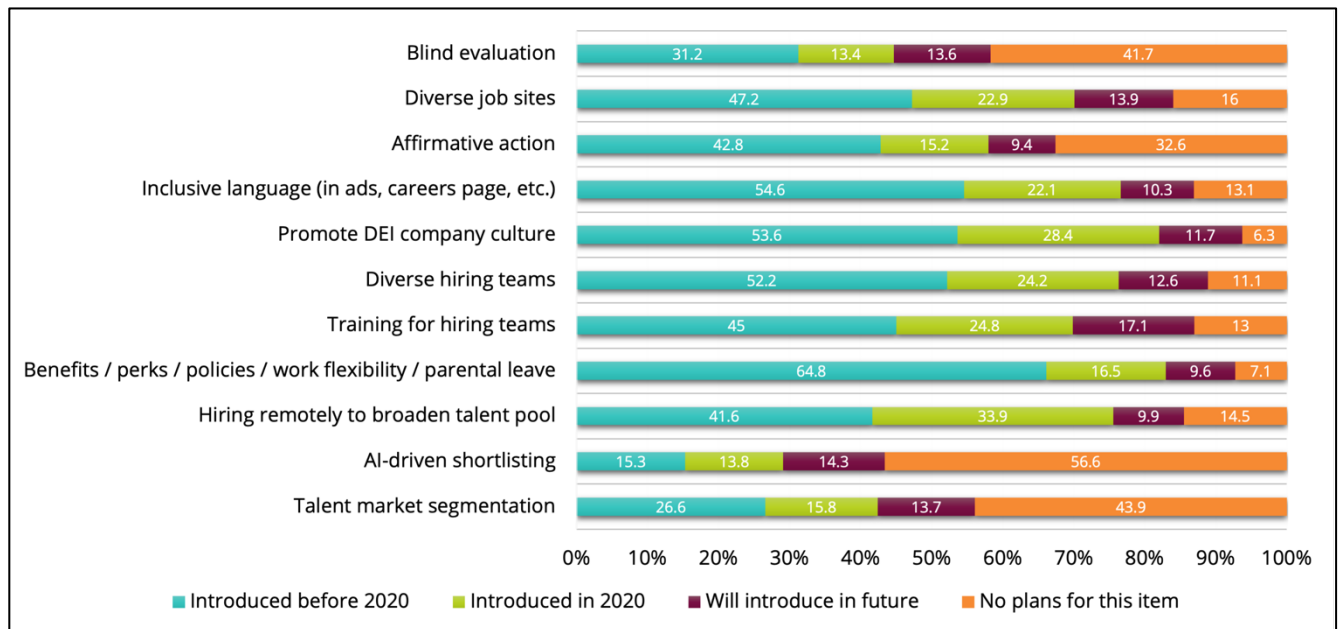
While the AICPA toolkit does not specifically include equity, it easily fits into the model. Employee training on equity should also be included. Remember, diversity alone is insufficient. It is critical equity and inclusion are equally a part of the equation. Diversity is important, but it doesn't directly lead to employees feeling welcomed or supported.

## RECRUITMENT AND HIRING TECHNIQUES

While not all companies have undertaken initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in recruiting and hiring, a [survey](#) of nearly 800 business and human resources professionals on DEI in the workplace by Workable shows that a majority have, and more are planning to do so.



Those surveyed indicate several popular items that support these initiatives, some of which are listed below.



Before implementing DEI-focused recruitment and hiring processes, companies have several considerations.

1. First, as the AICPA road map shows, leadership must be committed to DEI and provide direction. However, according to Leah Knobler, Director of Talent and Acquisition at Help Scout, DEI is everyone's responsibility. Knobler believes there is a danger in putting just one member in charge of

DEI as it diffuses responsibility. Her company does not have a single person in charge of its DEI initiatives.

2. Nearly all DEI efforts start with a survey to assist in determining the company's current DEI position. Such demographic and inclusion surveys are available on the internet, the results of which help companies figure out what and where changes are to be made. In addition to providing insight on where to focus recruiting efforts, the survey will also provide the company with metrics that can be used later to measure progress. Such metrics include requirements for promotion, how raises are determined, and more.
3. If the company already has a DEI hiring initiative, consider assessing what works and what doesn't work. Review the company's public branding, its messaging, and its partnerships with other organizations. The impression the company makes on people could hinder or bolster its recruitment efforts.
4. Finally, review the interview and hiring processes for bias. Acknowledging bias, whether conscious or unconscious, is essential to understanding its impact on decision-making. Identifying, evaluating, and actively seeking to address biases is key. As Knobler stated, *"A huge way to mitigate bias is to just acknowledge it, just to talk about it."* There are several models that provide specific bias mitigation strategies.

### **Start with the Job Description**

Once these issues have been considered, a critical look at job descriptions is extremely important. The criteria included may limit the diversity of applicants. Job descriptions should be written using inclusive language. Use one or more of the many available tools to identify gender-coded vocabulary and language. Review the requirements included. Mariah Driver, Head of DEI for Webflow, states the company has been *"really clear in our job descriptions about the necessary requirements, and then leaving out any nice to have requirements because ultimately a lot of those can be learned on the job."* Rather than a certain degree or years of experience, what may matter are certain attributes, such as resilience, flexibility, and eagerness to learn, that can be gleaned from the applicant's past experiences. The job description should also include an expectation of the individual's commitment to DEI.

Another consideration for the job description is a limitation on location, which can create an entry barrier for those who lack socioeconomic means, thereby limiting the diversity of the applicant pool. One remedy, which the recent pandemic has shown to be successful, is remote work. A recent survey shows 77% of those "whose job can be done remotely say it's important their employer allows them to work remotely when they want to," with 84% of millennials saying it is important.

### **A Diverse Applicant Pool**

To help ensure the applicant pool is diverse, some companies have adopted blind or anonymous recruiting. This process removes the candidate's name and other identifying factors, such as age, gender, race, and photos, from their resumes and applications. Blind recruitment is shown to result in fair representation of the interview population, and in the assessment of applicants solely on their suitability for the position. It also helps to mitigate conscious and unconscious bias. Several applicant tracking systems can anonymize applications and resumes.



## The Interview

The interview process is an important piece of DEI recruitment efforts. In the interview, use standardized interview questions. According to Driver, “The goal is not to get to know the person. The goal is not to make a new friend... It’s really to figure out is this person going to be successful in this role. Do they have the competencies to set them up for success?” After the interview, ensure every candidate receives a response. As Knobler states, *“Nobody likes to be ghosted, and responding with empathy and kindness in all cases builds trust in your company brand.”* In addition, consider using a post-interview survey to assess your hiring process. Such a survey should include questions that find out if the applicant feels they were fairly assessed, treated with respect, and how likely they would be to recommend someone else to apply to the company.

For organizations that outsource certain employee-like activities (that is, use contractors) either by hiring directly or via an agency, the recruitment and hiring techniques previously mentioned would still apply. Organizations that offshore some of the workforce may find it more difficult to have a diverse workforce simply because the host country may be more homogeneous than is the U.S..

## Recruitment Channels

Ariana Moon, Greenhouse Senior Recruiter, recommends companies develop a diversity sourcing strategy for each job and proactively reach out to underrepresented candidates. For many entry-level positions, colleges are the source of applicants. Broadening the list of which colleges are solicited – for example, including historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) - will increase the diversity of the pool. Likewise, broadening the recruiting within the college itself will increase the diversity of the pool. For example, many accounting firms recruit from the membership of Beta Alpha Psi, the accounting honor fraternity, or only those with at least a 3.5 grade point average. In doing so, they may miss the student who is the first in their family to attend college or the student who is working full-time to pay for school. Such a student may have been an excellent hire but is overlooked due to the systemic bias of the recruiting process.

Moon says partnerships with different organizations are critical to building diverse talent pools. Within each profession, there is often an organization geared towards underrepresented groups. The National Association of Black Accountants, the National LGBT Bar Association, the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, and the American Association of People with Disabilities are just a few. Many of these organizations have local chapters, including student chapters, with which companies can connect.

Where job listings are posted is important. *“We saw a huge impact on our pipeline once we began listing jobs on diversity recruiting sites such as NAACP and Ebony,”* Moon said. Knobler advises companies to become familiar with targeted job sites. The groups listed have job sites on their websites where employers can list jobs, many times for free. Also, consider social networking websites. LinkedIn, for example, has [diversity and inclusion groups and communities](#) in which job openings may be posted. There are [a number of websites](#) that specifically cater to diverse groups, such as [Diversity.com](#), [Black Career Women’s Network](#), [Diversity Job Board](#), and [United Latinos Job Bank](#). In addition to posting job openings, many of these sites allow members to post resumes, which is another way of identifying potential employees.

Finally, there are [search firms that specialize in diversity](#). Several, such as [Circa](#), allow a company to post a job listing that is sent to a number of sources of underrepresented groups simultaneously.

Over time, a company will be able to determine how well a particular recruiting source works by evaluating the fitness for the position that the source provided.

## RETENTION TECHNIQUES

Dale Carnegie is quoted as saying, *"People work for money but go the extra mile for recognition, praise, and rewards."* Taking that one step further, it could also be said people go the extra mile when they feel included and supported. The Urban Sustainability Directors Network proposes the following support strategies:

- Be open to learning about your employees and their perspective and worldview.
- Know what the employee wants to learn and be exposed to.
- As a manager, serve as a connector to other individuals and organizations that align with the employee's interests.
- Identify individuals that can serve as formal or informal mentors to help navigate problems, but also provide assistance in thinking about how to develop professionally.
- Avoid putting the employee of color in the position to be the sole educator on race.
- If your employee is drawn to work on diversity and equity, sponsor their participation by endorsing it and supporting them to find balance in their work.
- Check-in regularly on the experience they are having in the workplace, and if the employee feels they have what they need to be successful.
- Work to identify when dominant culture is impacting the ability of your employee to effectively participate, contribute, or be accepted in the workplace.
- Normalize self-care especially when a traumatic event has happened or when there is a triggering environment.
- Support professional development.
- Provide learning space.

Here are a few strategies that can help with retention:

### **Mentors**

There are three main components of mentoring: the mentor, the mentee, and the relationship between them. Key to the success of mentoring is the chemistry between the two parties as well as consistent active participation and communication. Mentorship has been found to be one of the most impactful methods for making changes to DEI and is a foundational component of most DEI programs. There are a number of reasons why mentoring is critical, among them the active challenging of implicit bias, the strengthening of organizational connections, particularly between upper management and the rest of the workforce and improving the diversity of an organization's leadership. There are, however, challenges in creating an effective mentorship program. One of the questions is where within the organization the program resides. It is not unusual to offer mentor programs at the entry-level; however, it is at the managerial level where most underrepresented groups face barriers. Another issue is how mentors and mentees find each other. Allowing mentors (or mentees) to choose someone like themselves may exacerbate the very

problems DEI plans work to solve. To overcome these and other issues, companies have turned to software, such as [MentorCloud](#) or [Mentorloop](#).

## **Employee Resource Groups**

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are employee-formed and employee-led groups within an organization comprised of employees and their allies who share a common characteristic like ethnicity, gender, or religious affiliation, and are based on providing support and contributions to professional development. Membership in an ERG is completely voluntary. Each group typically has a sponsor or champion from senior management within the organization. According to TopMBA, ERGs can be found in 90% of *Fortune* 500 companies. ERGs have been credited with accomplishing such goals as improving work conditions, identifying and developing leaders, and lowering the chance of suppressed frustrations. They help employees feel safe in being their authentic selves at work and foster a sense of belonging, which helps to build trust within the organization.

## **Stay Interviews**

When conducting “stay interviews” or employee surveys, questions can be added to address the company’s equity efforts, including questions about the company’s mentoring program, benefit offerings, and how much employees trust the organization. It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel: there are several such surveys available on the internet which can be customized. Survey answers can provide insight into the effectiveness of the organization’s DEI efforts and point out areas where it can improve or implement new initiatives.

## **Performance Evaluations**

Most companies conduct annual performance evaluations that are used to make pay and promotion decisions, in addition to providing evidence that such systems prevent biased treatment. Studies have shown, however, that women and minorities receive lower ratings, reflecting the unconscious bias of the raters as well as the institutionalized bias that may exist in the performance review process itself.

According to a survey by the Level Playing Field Institute, people of color are three times more likely to cite workplace unfairness as the only reason for leaving a position, and LGBTQ professionals nearly twice as often when compared to straight white men. Of those who experienced unfairness at work, 27% said it strongly discouraged them from recommending the employer to others and 13% said it strongly discouraged them from recommending the employer’s products or services. More than a third (34%) of people of color said they would have very likely stayed on the job if the employer had offered better managers who recognized the employee’s abilities.

Here are some strategies to improve the objectivity of performance evaluations:

- Provide unconscious bias training to managers.

- Use objective formal prompts on appraisal forms.
- Use objective, specific, and clear evaluation criteria.
- Clearly communicate performance criteria and set development goals at the beginning of the performance period.
- Weight rating criteria appropriately to reflect the requirements of the job.
- Use specific, well-defined rating scales, and limit the scale.
- Rather than comparing employees to their peers, assess the individual's performance over time.
- Involve multiple raters.
- Adjust the frequency of performance evaluations.
- Monitor the ratings and feedback and actively search for patterns that could indicate bias.

## **Promotions**

Every employee wants to see tangible results of their efforts, including promotions. The system of promoting employees based solely on length of tenure has mostly given way to merit-based promotions. Although promotions are internal to an organization, many of the recruitment and hiring techniques mentioned above also apply, such as standardized questions.

To mitigate bias, the promotion process should be formal and transparent. Formality requires reliance on objective, rather than anecdotal, evidence or the ability to present well in an interview. Standardized questions minimize familiarity bias that can be an advantage to certain groups.

It is equally important for organizations to develop and clearly communicate career pathways. Employees should understand what they need to do to get promoted. Information about the criteria to be used in the selection process as well as expectations for the role should be provided. This helps employees ask for appropriate feedback along the way and better prepare themselves.

As with recruiting, advertise available positions widely within the organization. Knowledge of an open position should not be limited to just those who are aware or those who are asked to apply.

## EVERYDAY DILEMMAS

Everyday situations in the workplace provide opportunities to consider how to apply DEI techniques for recruitment and retention. Consider the following situations. How might they result in a homogeneous team and what can be done to make them more diverse?



**Scenario 1:** Your team is short-staffed and is looking to hire new staff members.

**What could go wrong:** The job description uses gendered terms, requires ten years of experience, and the job listing is only available on sites that require applicants to pay to access.

**Opportunity for diversity:** The job description is written using inclusive language and only contains the minimum requirements for the position. The job listing is made widely available, including on job sites catering to diverse populations.



**Scenario 2:** Team meetings are lively with frequent debate and good-natured jokes. Discussions are usually carried out by a small group, while team members from underrepresented groups are mostly silent.

**What could go wrong:** The mostly silent group may be intimidated or may have simply tuned out because they have been talked over in the past and their suggestions ignored.

**Opportunity for diversity:** Leaders must model inclusive behavior and create a safe environment for everyone to be heard and their opinions valued. If someone is not contributing to the discussion, the team leader could use mentoring and ESGs to assist members of underrepresented groups to build confidence in their ability to speak up. Diversity of opinion results in more innovative results.

## APPLY ETHICAL DEI CONCEPTS TO EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Everyday behaviors in workplaces provide opportunities to consider employment practices and how to better apply the concepts of DEI. In Harvard Business Review's **"Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity"** by David A. Thomas and Robin J. Ely, the authors put forward eight preconditions for making the paradigm shift to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization. Consider each of the following:

1. The leadership must understand that a diverse workforce will embody different perspectives and approaches to work and must truly value variety of opinion and insight.

Does your organization have diverse leadership teams that seek input from a wide range of stakeholders and model desired behaviors? Does your organization have open-door policies, which allow lower-level employees the opportunity to discuss issues and managers the opportunity to seek out employee input?

2. The leadership must recognize both the learning opportunities and the challenges that the expression of different perspectives presents for an organization.

Is your organization's leadership team committed to persevering during the process of learning and relearning?

3. The organizational culture must create an expectation of high standards of performance from everyone.

Is your organization's culture one that expects less from some employees than from others or is it one that believes all its members can and should contribute fully?

4. The organizational culture must stimulate personal development.

Are your organization's jobs designed to bring out an employee's full range of knowledge and skills? Do your organization's training and education programs allow employees to grow and develop?

5. The organizational culture must encourage openness.

Does your organization's culture instill a high tolerance for debate and support constructive conflict?

6. The culture must make workers feel valued.

Do your organization's employees feel empowered to apply their skills and experiences to enhance organizational and personal performance?

7. The organization must have a well-articulated and widely understood mission.

Are your organization's employees clear about what the company is trying to accomplish?

8. The organization must have an egalitarian, nonbureaucratic structure.

Does your organization have a structure that promotes the exchange of ideas and welcomes constructive challenges to the usual way of doing things?

## **PARTING THOUGHTS**

*"Ethics serves as the soil in which the seed of diversity must be planted."*  
(Aly Colón, chair in Journalism Ethics, Washington and Lee University)

DEI efforts may make some people feel awkward or uncomfortable.  
*"That's OK, because uncomfot drives us to change."*  
(Lauren Guilbeaux, People Geek at Culture Amp)

*"It's not about perfection, it's about progress."*  
(Marcus Cooper, Manager of Diversity and Inclusion at Oscar Health)



## **APPENDIX I: Acronyms & Glossary**

### **AICPA**

The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants

### **DEI**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

### **Diversity**

The range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

### **Equity**

Each of us getting what we need to survive or succeed based on where we are and where we want to go.

### **Equity-mindedness**

The demonstration of an awareness of, and willingness to, address equity issues.

### **Equality**

Treating every individual in the same manner.

### **Inclusion**

The action or state of including or being included within a group or structure.

### **Representational equity**

The proportional participation at all levels of an institution.

### **Resource equity**

The distribution of resources in order to close equity gaps.

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