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PROMOTING WORKPLACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

INTRODUCTION

Are the present day workplaces evolving with the ever changing dynamics of the world? Are the workplaces open to embrace diversity, equity, inclusion and employee well-being, as we continue to grow and evolve?

As human beings, we all are different and therefore have different beliefs, views, opinions which in turn can be utilised to generate creativity, talent, innovation and better results irrespective of who we are. That's where diversity, equity, inclusion and employee well-being lies at the heart of a workplace. The initiatives in the direction of diversity, equity, inclusion and employee well-being go beyond the hiring and appointment of an employee.

Generally these terms diversity, equity and inclusion are used interchangeably. Therefore it's important to understand the difference among these terms. These terms have evolved over a period of time. Historically, workplaces used to focus on diversity, then inclusion also came into picture and then over the last few years we started to have equity also a part of this same thread. Along with these, with the globalization of trade and commerce, the well-being of an employee also gained a lot of prominence.

- **Diversity** means the presence of quantifiable differences within a workplace. The difference can be in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.
- Whereas **inclusion** really addresses qualitative differences among people with different identities, feelings or being valued and leveraged within a workplace.
- **Equity** is the approach to ensure that everybody has access to the same opportunity, attention, employment, appointment, retention, promotion, etc. It is about recognising historical legacies, current and present realities of discrimination and oppression that marginalised people experienced.
- **Well-being** concerns the safety, security and overall wellness of the employees in the workplace.

THE FUTURE OF THE CORPORATES

There are still people working in environment where they feel as though they don't belong. We cannot all contribute ideas if women or anyone unequally represented only hold a small percentage of seats in the boardrooms of top companies globally. Unconscious bias in the workplace is just that, unconscious. It occurs before we realise and negatively shapes our assessments of people especially when it comes to decisions such as hiring, promoting and encouraging talent.

Research shows that diverse, inclusive teams are not only more innovative, they are also more engaged and creative. 35% of diverse teams outperform less diverse teams, while diverse companies are 70% more likely to capture new markets.

Due to its subtlety, unconscious bias leads to unintentional exclusion. But the ability to influence change lies within us.

Companies look at things like having a bigger talent pool. When companies are limited in their thinking or their mindset towards a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce, actually they are limiting the top talent that they can actually recruit to their organisation. Talent exists everywhere and too often companies find themselves in the quagmire and conundrum that we cannot find talent from a particular group which may not be real. However top talent exists across different groups.

EMERGING GLOBAL TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES

Today, increasing employee engagement and trust is a key to emerge as a key player in a global workforce.

Employees want to see themselves throughout the organisation. They want to see themselves in their leaders, mid-level managers, and junior employees. Employees want to feel as a part of the workplace; they want to feel connected; and have that affinity to the company.

So, employees, consumers, customers, etc. want to trust the companies in the work they are doing. They are trust-



Abinash Agarwal

Senior Associate, MCO Legals

B.Com (Hons)

LL.B, Faculty of Law,

Delhi University

Expertise:

Corporate Litigation & Corporate/
Commercial Arbitration

✉ abinash.a@mcolegals.co.in



Amit Singhal

Research Partner

B.A., LLB (Hons)

National Law Institute University

ing companies to do the right thing and having a workplace that is focused on diversity that instills equity and provides an inclusive environment where employees feel like they belong.

There is perspectives around innovation having diverse teams and we tend to think about diversity in a very limited way, we often at times tend to think about it in terms of gender, sexual orientation, religion, race but diversity is such a vast topic including but limited to neuro-diversity, diversity of backgrounds, of perspectives, in terms of thinking style, etc. Encompassing all these diversities might look like a challenge for a workplace, but this is the global trend where things are moving.

Though the best practices can be many, the most significant global best practices have been summed up below:

- 1 Raising awareness and education at the workplace.
- 2 Creating an environment for unbiased hiring. Also known as 'blind hiring'.
- 3 Shifting the approach from 'culture fit' to 'culture contribution' approach.
- 4 Instead of an HR professional, having a resource group or team represented by all sections of employees would go a long way in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion and employee well-being.
- 5 Use of language and communication catering to the comfort of the receiver (employee).
- 6 Collection of data is important in taking any initiative towards diversity, equity, inclusion and employee well-being.
- 7 Once, diversity, equity, inclusion and employee well-being process is initiated, it is important to keep track of the progress of the same.
- 8 Facilitating an inclusive on-boarding at every level.
- 9 Analysing why employees are leaving and resigning.
- 10 Empowering employees to have a better work-life balance.

PITFALLS AND SUGGESTIONS

Thinking diversity, inclusion and equity as one and the same thing.

Thinking of diversity, equity, inclusion and employee well-being more often as a function of an HR.

An outdated employment recruitment and hiring process and strategy.

Ignorance of the genuine grievances of the employees.

Dealing with employees in difficult conversations.

Lack of vision.

Not closing the salary-gap among the same working class.

All the workplaces are different in one form or another. That leads us to the importance of data driven promotion of diversity, equity, inclusion and employee well-being. Hence, the data generated through surveys, continuous interactions, meetings and otherwise coupled with the right interpretation and understanding of the data determines our right focus towards those initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Though we have gone a long way in bringing diversity, equity and inclusion and employee well-being measures at the workplace, yet a lot still needs to be done further. Diversity, inclusion and equity are not the same things. Diversity is more about numbers. Whereas, inclusion and equity are about impact. A company can mandate diversity, but they have to cultivate inclusion in the workplace.

Ironically, nobody (or at least not many) denies the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion and well-being at the workplace. It is just that the words do not entirely result in the reality. However, we all ultimately have to do the things which work effectively and diversity, inclusion, equity and well-being of the employees are some of those ways through which that can be achieved. We have to believe in all sorts of people, we have to be open to differences and finally recognise that diversity should not necessarily always be beneficial. It's the context where unique information needs to be shared; problems are complex and therefore need innovation and change to happen. We have to be open to what diversity brings. Diversity opens up opportunities to realise that our way of seeing the world is not the only way of seeing the world and bringing multiple perspectives is going to give a better picture of the truth.