

F A I R E R

The 7 rules of
inclusion management:
*How to create an
effective DE&I strategy*

The Global
Inclusion Company



Introduction

In the context of growing debate on the critical importance of DE&I in the workplace, the need for organisations to develop a clear vision for inclusive change, underpinned by a coherent and comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion strategy is becoming increasingly critical as a business priority.

To ensure sustainability, an organisation's DE&I strategy should be underpinned by a time-orientated action plan, supported by data driven goals and KPIs. It should have leadership sign-off and commitment to funding the agreed actions. Additionally, any successful DE&I strategy should work within a strategic alignment framework – aligning to the organisation's overall business plan, culture and both People Plans and Customer Engagement initiatives. Without such alignment any DE&I strategy runs the risk of remaining at the margins of business thinking, the 'nice to have' agenda in times of economic, social and political stability.

Finally, any success ED&I strategy should follow the 7 'golden rules' as set out below.



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Rule No. 1: Collect, track and analyse data

Before businesses can set a direction of travel for any agreed actions, HR, customer service teams and DE&I functions need to provide leaders with a business 'heat map' of DE&I hot spots and cold spots.

This heat map should be created by collecting, tracking and analysing workforce and other data. Data tracking should include both quantitative and qualitative data and cover key people areas including, recruitment, work allocation, time with leaders and performance review scores. It should include employee engagement data and chart perceptions of inclusion and belonging across a number of key metrics, including psychological safety, fairness, accessibility, team bonding, wellbeing and inter-group relationships.

Information should be aggregated across different diversity groups, and other factors such as location and role. This process provides organisations with hot spots of systematic bias, and avoids a blanket labelling based on difference.

This smart data approach assists with the avoidance of emotional tagging when businesses develop any DE&I strategy; DE&I smart data assists with avoiding the availability heuristic and affinity bias.

Rule No. 2: Take an intersectional approach to DE&I

Different groups experience bias and exclusion differently. Additionally, individuals are also members of multiple communities made up of culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, social background and other such characteristics.

When developing a DE&I strategy, organisations should apply an intersectional lens to smart-data analysis. Such an approach is more holistic in nature and greatly enhances the chances of bias avoidance. For instance, the glass ceiling effect goes hand-in-hand with systemic racism, and thus intersectional analysis acts as a tool to identify interwoven patterns of bias, which can be addressed through data spotlighting and action planning.

Without an intersectional analysis at the beginning of the process, covering both diversity quantitative data sets and qualitative trends covering inclusion and belonging, organisations run the risk of siloing already marginalised groups.





Rule No. 3: Educate your workforce

There is much confusion regarding the language of DE&I globally. Many employees conflate and confuse for instance equality vs equity, diversity vs. inclusion, positive action vs. positive discrimination, and targets vs. quotas.

This conflating of key terms stalls progress, as it creates resistance when employees perceive an organisation taking an approach to DE&I that they deem to be unfair, or even unlawful. Similarly, a common definition of bias – individual conscious intent – fails to recognise the true nature of systemic and institutional exclusion in global societies and workplace cultures. Therefore, creating awareness of such terms through education for key business stakeholders is critical.

Education programmes should also cover key themes, including:

- The nature of bias and its impact on different groups;
- The relationship between bias and opportunities to hire, develop and promote diverse talent;
- The impact of micro-aggressions on perceptions of belonging at work,
- The relationship between psychological safety and performance.

The list of topics is almost endless, and any training programme should be tailored to specific organisational challenges and business cultures.

Rule No. 4: Build a workplace community

As part of any effective DE&I strategy build process, businesses should:

- Invest in and empower their Employee Resource Groups – while many businesses have these groups already set up, they tend to be under-funded and have limited structural connectivity to organisational leadership and decision-making;
- In a 'post' COVID-19 landscape, a sense of remoteness lingers for many employees. Leaders need to find creative ways to ensure that they continue to engage in a long-term dialogue with all colleagues, and ensure their voices are central to the DE&I strategy build process;
- Business stakeholders should utilise micro-listening groups at key stages of any DE&I implementation plan, as these provide in-the-moment 'pause and reflect' points, allowing for fast adjustments as necessary.





Rule No. 5: Integrate DE&I through your supply chain

Business leaders should use their financial muscle to drive DE&I through their supply chain. Procurement teams should set explicit criteria for awarding new business contracts and in contract re-negotiations.

Examples include when working with head-hunters and recruitment companies – insisting on diversity in the final short-lists, and driving inclusion when working with a wide range of suppliers, from construction companies to those working in the creative industries. Companies which are awarded contracts based on commitments to DE&I, and who fail to meet stated goals and targets at contract re-negotiation stage, should face financial penalties.

Key takeaways

- Integrate DE&I within your supply chain
- Consider DE&I targets when assessing new business contracts, and award companies who meet these goals
- Consider ways that you can give back to smaller businesses run by equity-deserving groups to help them to grow and improve their businesses.

Businesses should use their financial muscle by driving DE&I through their supply chains. And procurement teams should set explicit criteria for awarding new business contracts and when in contract re-negotiations. Examples include:

- Working with head-hunters and recruitment companies – insisting on diverse slates on final short-lists;
- Driving inclusion when working with a wide range of suppliers from for instance, construction companies to those working in the creative industries, and other sectors;
- Companies should be awarded contracts, partly based on their commitments to DE&I; those who fail to meet stated goals and targets at contract re-negotiation stage, should face financial penalties.

Rule No. 6: Set DE&I targets

Working under the principle of 'what gets measured, gets done', businesses should set public goals, targets or KPIs for promoting diverse and inclusive workplaces. These public metrics should cover key areas across the employee life cycle, including recruitment, employee engagement, development opportunities, promotions and reward.

To meet their stated ambitions businesses should utilise the Positive Actions provisions within various legal frameworks. These will differ depending on geographical location.

Other activities include implementing sponsorship programmes and creating a diverse leadership bench. Organisations will need to agree quick-win targets as well as more longer-term strategic goals. Targets should be communicated both internally and externally, as public targets increase accountability and act as a motivator for sustainable and long-term action.





Rule No. 7: Establish accountability structures and a 'devil's advocate' process

Businesses should establish long-term structures for measuring progress against any DE&I strategy. Led by senior leaders, a DE&I Action Group should be established. Representation should include stakeholders from a range of key business functions, as well as diverse employees.

Effective DE&I action groups should include a 'devil's advocate' – an independent voice whose role is to provide expertise, advice and guidance, as well as scrutiny.

Part of the devil's advocate approach would include, for example, representation of diverse colleagues on interview panels. Of course, organisations should avoid tokenism in this approach.

Conclusion

These 7 golden rules for creating an effective DE&I strategy should be considered as foundational best practice. Clearly any approach to developing an effective DE&I strategy will need to take into account multiple factors unique to each business, including, leadership ambitions, market conditions, business sector, history of activity to date and overall position on the DE&I maturity scale.

At FAIRER Consulting we support organisations to drive strategic change using our FAIRER Framework. Our framework has been developed with the aim of driving inclusive change by moving organisations beyond the compliance approach of DE&I integration. At FAIRER we focus on driving lasting and impactful change through cultural and behavioural measures, based on our values of:

- **Fairness for all**
- **Access to opportunities**
- **Inclusion drives performance**
- **Respect for difference**
- **Equity as a driver for lasting change**
- **Representation and diversity drives innovation**





FAIRER Consulting

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your diversity and inclusion
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