5 Signs that you might need a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The need to address diversity and inclusion issues in corporate America is as urgent now as it was in the mid-60's. In fact, the diversity landscape is more complicated today as new differences emerge and demographics shift. For example,
- The 2010 census reports that for the first time, Hispanics are the largest minority group.
- The same census report suggests that by 2050, "white" people will be a minority in the USA.

Organizations are witnessing the impact of different races, genders, generations, cultures, communication styles and abilities among employees.

While business leaders understand the advantages of having a diverse workforce, they struggle with how to engage the differences most effectively. To retain top talent and increase productivity, leaders are eager to learn better ways to solidify existing partnerships, attract new markets and position themselves for what's next. Determining how to integrate diversity and inclusion as a pillar of the company's business strategy helps leaders to better anticipate and design future-ready solutions.

Unfortunately, many D&I functions don't have a clear vision as to how their efforts support their business strategy. Briefly scan the following five questions about your diversity and inclusion efforts.

1. Who discusses diversity at your company?
2. Do you hear leaders use phrases like, "I don't see color, I treat everyone the same?"
3. Is your company's diversity training centered on "minority" groups?
4. Do managers say, "How can there be a problem? We're making money!"
5. Do you often hear leaders or managers say, "What else do we need, we already have employee network groups?"

The world is changing and this leaves businesses playing catch up to solidify existing partnerships, attract new markets and be ready for the inevitable shift. But how does that shift occur? You guessed it, by having diversity and inclusion as a cornerstone of your business. Let's re-visit the five questions to ask yourself about your organization and its diversity and inclusion efforts.

1. Who discusses diversity at your company?
Just because you don't hear anyone *talking* about diversity, don't assume that you live in a diverse and inclusive workplace. In a non-inclusive environment, members of certain "in" groups may not notice how the environment is exclusive, and members of "out" groups may not voice concerns about this perceived exclusivity. This is especially prevalent in times of economic uncertainty when "out" group members will "hunker down" so as to "not rock the boat" while being silent in the face of inequity.

2. Do you hear leaders use phrases like, "I don't see color, I treat everyone the same?"
The intent of statements like this is, in most cases, positive. However, to not see a person's race or gender or disability or whatever is to say that you are not seeing some part of that person, a part that probably is important to that person.

3. Is your company's diversity training centered on "minority" groups?
Diversity is about inclusion and as such, diversity programs need to include everyone regardless of level/seniority within the organization, skin color, ethnicity, creed, religion, gender, etc.

4. Do managers say, "How can there be a problem? We're making money!"
This is affectionately known as "no burning platform" syndrome. Making money is not a sole measure of inclusion.

5. Do you often hear leaders or managers say, "What else do we need, we already have employee network groups?"
Many firms mistake tactics with strategy. Inclusion, like any other important organizational initiative, needs to be tied to a strategy, a strategy that clearly lays out costs and benefits, is supported throughout the organization at all levels and is tied to performance ratings and compensation where appropriate.

Take the *"Do we need a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy"* quiz below to determine the degree of inclusive alignment in your organization. Answer all the questions based on a 1 to 5 rating scale. Score your quiz using our friendly scoring key on the next page.

1. Has your company or firm ever had a diversity program? Yes or No. Give yourself 5 points for yes, 3 points for no and 1 point if you don't know. Points: ____

2. Has your company ever had a published diversity strategy? Yes or No. Give yourself 5 points for yes, 3 points for no and 1 point if you don't know. Points: ____

3. Assuming you answered 'yes' to question 1, are the diversity programs you used when the program started the same ones that you use today? Yes or No? Give yourself 5 points for no, and 1 point for yes. Points: ____

4. Who sponsors the diversity program at your firm? Give yourself 5 points if the program has a C-suite executive as sponsor, 3 points if the sponsor is a mid-level manager or director and 1 point if there is no sponsor. Give yourself 1 bonus point if you have assessed the sponsorship of your program in the last twelve months. Points: ____

5. Does your company have any employee resource networks to support different employee groups? Give yourself 5 points if yes, 3 points if no and 1 point if you don't know. Give yourself 1 bonus points if these groups go beyond race, gender or sexual orientation. Points: ____

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6. How often does the diversity verbiage on the corporate website get changed? Give yourself 5 points for frequently, 3 points for never and 1 point if you don't know. Points: ___

7. Is the corporate diversity strategy tied to the Individual Performance Plans of various corporate leaders? Give yourself 5 points for yes, 3 points for no and 1 point if you don't know. Give yourself 2 bonus points if you know of anyone in the organization who has a diversity related performance goal. Points: ___

8. Is successful implementation of a diversity strategy or diversity-related tactics tied to the compensation of any of your company's leaders? Give yourself 5 points for yes, 3 points for no and 1 point if you don't know. Give yourself 10 bonus points if you know of anyone in the company whose compensation is tied to "diversity related outcomes." Points: ___

Scoring Summary

30 - 40: Your organization is on the right track with your diversity efforts. It is important to stay the course and remember to seek InsideOut and OutsideIn perspectives. Consider joining organizations, subscribing to publications that provide new insights about changing demographics, or asking outside experts to benchmark the environment and/or make suggestions for remaining vigilant about changing inclusion needs.

19 - 29: Your organization is on the cusp of achieving better mileage for your diversity efforts. While diversity is talked about, organizations that have the most inclusive environments have strong leadership to sponsor a cohesive diversity strategy. It is important to integrate and prioritize your initiatives. Rather than adding additional activities and tactics, consider focusing on the critical few and making connections between business strategy and diversity.

18 and below: HELP! Your organization's diversity efforts may be on cruise control without leaders focused on driving change. Without new efforts, it is likely that your organization will miss opportunities for addressing the challenges of this millennium and the next most effectively. Without a strategy and leaders talking about diversity as a priority, you are driving blind. Before there is an accident and/or serious employee consequences, begin the dialogue and learn about what you can do to get on track.

For additional information and to learn about what other companies are doing to build and implement diversity strategies, contact our offices at 803.396.8500. You may also contact us by email at info@innolectinc.com.

Also consider our latest inclusion tool OutsideIN. This new Flip-Focus guide book is designed to help leaders, facilitators, and team members engage others at all levels of the organization by offering specific tips to build a more inclusive environment. Visit us at www.innolectinc.com and click on our products page for more information.