



Institute of
Hospitality

YOUTH COUNCIL

DIVERSITY AND BELONGING
ARE YOU IN?
#imin

DIVERSITY AND BELONGING; ARE YOU IN?

The cultural and commercial importance of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), may now be widely recognised but there are still many who either do not understand what it means or who pay lip service to having a diverse workforce. This is contradictory to the essence of hospitality, where a warm, all embracing culture makes everyone feel welcome. Diversity is about celebrating our differences and so is hospitality, they are complementary.

To clarify, diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice and belonging is having that voice heard [Liz Fosslien and Mollie West Duffy 2019](#).

Everyone, whatever position they hold in an organisation, should feel that their story will be heard; where they come from, who they are, their identity. They should be treated fairly and respectfully. But for many this is aspiration rather than fact because of their ethnicity, their education, their background, because they are neurodivergent or, even in the 21st century, because they are a woman.

One of the barriers to having a representative industry is that there is no widely accepted definition of diversity, so there is no way of identifying, measuring or benchmarking it. And there is no global standard by which the industry can be held accountable.

In addition, nothing can prevent companies approaching EDI as a tickbox exercise ie 25% of our workforce is female, 35% people of colour, so we have done what we need to do. But putting people in boxes, black, female, LGBTQ+, neurodivergent, is not the answer.

"The approach has to be intersectional because you cannot tackle just one protected characteristic without addressing the others – there might be several in one person; we show up as our intersectional selves," says EDI lead for the Institute of Hospitality Dorothea Jones MIH FIEDP.

At Halford's some 15 years ago, to ensure diversity across the business, the chair said that if 50% of Halford's customer base were women, then 50% of the board should be women, and if 35% of the company's customers were over the age of 30 then 35% of the board should be over the age of 30. Halford's reconfigured the board in line with its customer base.



TALKING POINT

Diversity should be visible at all levels and should be reflected in behaviour and attitudes from the board to entry level; it should run like water into every corner of a business.

Everything cultural comes from the top and diversity is no different. One way of ensuring this is to communicate regularly with teams in a way that makes them confident to speak out if they have experienced or observed inequitable behaviour or attitudes; confidential staff surveys and measures of both employee and guest satisfaction also play a part – satisfied employees lead to satisfied guests.

These things also have a marked impact on staff retention and therefore, ultimately, on the bottom line, so exit interviews are essential as people may be leaving because they do not feel included, and an organisation has to implement changes in the business; it cannot be done from the outside.

Having diversity and belonging in the workplace contributes to an organisation's success, and a sense of belonging nurtures a safe and inclusive environment. It is well documented that 68% of Gen Z will not join an organisation that is not diverse.

Large organisations tend to have bigger budgets to spend on D&I and can create employee resource groups (ERG) to serve particular identities; those groups can then feed messages back into the company. A smaller business can find an ambassador to advocate on behalf of any groups, when given a voice and a platform. If an employee chooses to advocate on behalf of any group in this area, they should have resources, time off in lieu (TOIL) and access to emotional wellbeing support if required.



TALKING POINT (cont)

Also, dedicated groups seem to suggest, 'you can only have a voice within this one group'. The converse of this is that some people feel more comfortable expressing views in front of those like themselves, although it is possible to join a group because you support their initiatives. Allyship is important – leaders and group representatives cannot do all the work, they need and want help and everyone should feel they can express an idea without judgment.

Although it is now recognised that people should be able to bring their whole self to work, there are still people who have separate home and work personas (code switching), either because workplace culture is not all embracing and tolerant, or because of their own lack of confidence.

"I want to see the life I lead reflected in my workplace," says data product analyst for merchant bank Close Brothers Susan Bailey. "I worked for more than 20 years in the fashion industry and it is exhausting working with a group of size 8, blonde women who are all privately educated, especially when you don't fit that mould. And they don't reflect the people they are trying to sell to.

"I have two mixed heritage sons, my husband is black, and I do see my full life reflected in the merchant bank workplace; about 30% of the workforce are people of colour and we are trying to increase that. And I feel I can tell people about my home life," she says.

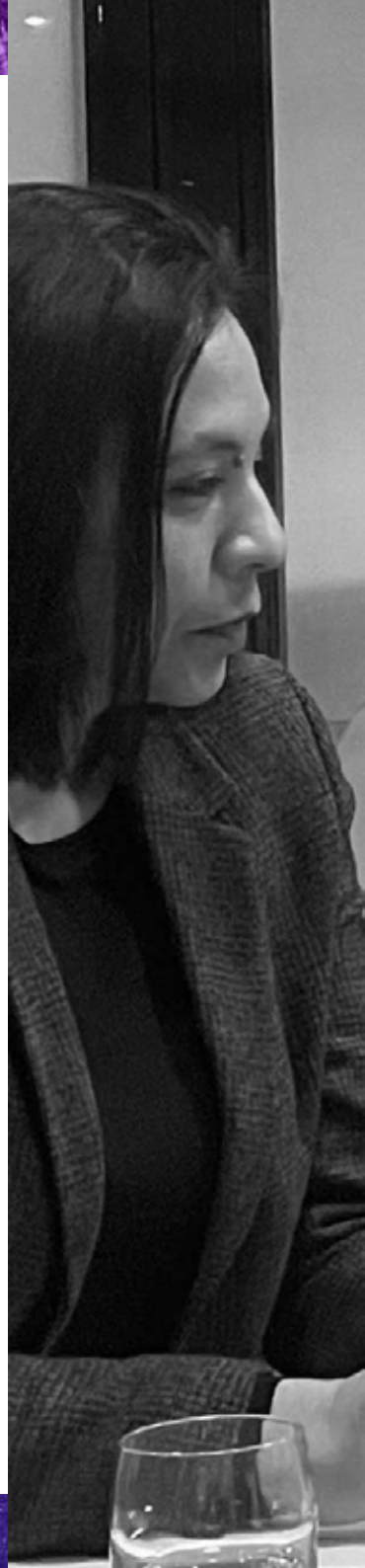
TOP CULTURE, BOTTOM LINE

According to ACAS, diverse teams perform 60% faster and that leads to an increase in productivity; diversity is a commercial imperative.

A broad mix of employees brings a variety of ideas and attitudes and that fires creativity, leading to new products and approaches. Mixing up disciplines also engenders inspiration, so getting someone from a product team to work in design, or from HR to collaborate with marketing helps create a cohesive and empathetic workforce. It can also produce interesting and imaginative results. If someone does something all the time, every day, it becomes routine but working with someone from another part of the company injects something new and represents belonging.

Diversity is not just colour it is so many things. The hospitality industry has changed dramatically since Covid and the ensuing lockdowns. It has had to be more diverse because of staff shortages. There were 12 sommeliers at Galvin at Windows before it closed during lockdowns, now there are three.

"Diversity isn't about the box people tick, diverse culture is at the heart of our business, it is why we succeed and that adds value," says general manager Peter Avis FIH. "The value for me is bringing in people like Carlson, who has autism, training him and ensuring he feels like he belongs. The value I retain is that I can keep the business open, make money and be profitable. If people see you are genuine in what you do, they will come back. I want to share how we are doing it, it is measurable."



LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Leadership is still top down and results driven; not enough care is given to those farther down the line, but leaders must care about their teams. Leaders need to recognise the intrinsic value of individuals, someone who may not be the strongest performer but may bond the team, for example. A company with a command and control culture will have retention problems; people will leave. Organisations have to move away from hierarchical structures.

Leaders should challenge the status quo and ask how things could be improved. The industry needs continuous improvement and organisations need to find communities within the business who can advise.

The top down formula is imprinted on us from school, where teachers are experts and pupils are non-experts. But sometimes people at entry level in business have more to give than those more senior because they are new to the environment; their voice should be heard. They make diversity and should be made to feel valued and taken seriously.

This takes humility, which is a rare but valuable commodity; it is only possible when people who have had advantages and are privileged recognise that and want to help others attain it. Promoting, mentoring and supporting other people is one of the best things you can do. When people challenge the status quo, listen to them and act on it; when they have a different view, maybe they have a point. Self-awareness and reflection are essential.

"We must lead by example and we need to model inclusive leaders, who listen, accept change, encourage open dialogue and respect differences. We need to educate ourselves and others. Some people don't do this because they are not aware and some are not trained enough on these topics," says restaurant manager at Shangri-La The Shard Marco de Simone MIH.

"Promote a culture of diversity and inclusion and people will want to work in your organisation. At Shangri-La The Shard, we have a team of 20 nationalities, which forced collaboration and provided opportunities for growth. If someone is 17 and could be promoted to supervisor, then act on that. I achieved that at 21," he says.

Good leaders look at the level below them and see whom they can bring up and that increases retention; hospitality needs that. The success of a business is down to teams but communication is not only addressing the good news, discussing problems and creating a safe space to do that are also essential. This collaboration also creates a sense of community.

BELONGING - JOIN THE CLUB

There are some excellent examples of diversity to follow. "The Institute of Hospitality has appointed Dorothea Jones to lead on ED&I, and I was proud to see that," says Marco de Simone. Companies have flexible working arrangements and some have introduced CV screening to increase diversity.

When Galvin at Windows reopened after the series of lockdowns, Peter Avis took the opportunity to engage with diverse people. He set up a student programme and was given bedrooms by Hilton on Park Lane where he put up eight young people for 12 weeks. "This included Daniel who has autism and wanted to take a chance with him," says Avis.

"It was challenging at first but at the end of the 12 weeks, he'd completed the programme and has since been offered a job as a supervisor at a restaurant in Scotland. We gave him a life changing opportunity," he says.

At a conference, chief diversity and inclusion officer for Uber Bo Young Lee said the best way of measuring D&I without a large budget is to find the most under represented group in your organisation, see how they are reflected in recruitment and progression, and they will tell you where you need to work. In Uber, that is black women and when it looks at their recruitment and career progression, it can see what it needs to do overall.

When CEO of the Institute of Hospitality Robert Richardson FIH MI recruited members of the Youth Council, he put out a cryptic call on LinkedIn, asking are you interested in making a change in the industry? "That's powerful because it brought people together through a common interest," says hospitality revenue management professional at Accor Hotels Siân Rann MIH Youth Council treasurer.

At Accor, people can take part in voluntary projects and applications are anonymous. When the right number of people has shown interest, the project launches with a group that is united through a common cause.

Diversity gives us not only a sense of belonging but better places to work and a competitive advantage - more money, investment and retention. Diversity, equity and belonging are not bolt-ons, they have to be embedded and run all the way through like a stick of rock. We want to have the best talent and the widest pool, and diversity is the strongest way to achieve that.



REQUIRED OUTCOMES

To define good practice. An IoH book stating what the Institute is doing; this is how recruitment should look.

Do an audit to define what creates a diverse culture; there are still businesses that are not getting it right. In his role as vice chair of the IoH Board of Trusees Peter Avis looks at what is happening in members' organisations, and in the Institute and its partnerships; IoH needs EDI partnerships and focus groups.

Dorothea Jones is working with the University of Surrey to create a toolkit for measuring diversity. This will be for the industry.

Meanwhile, and most important, everyone needs to make more noise about what is wrong and why. We need more black people, those who are neurodiverse, etc.; only 17% of people with autism are employed and yet hospitality is crying out for team members.



WITH THANKS TO:

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