

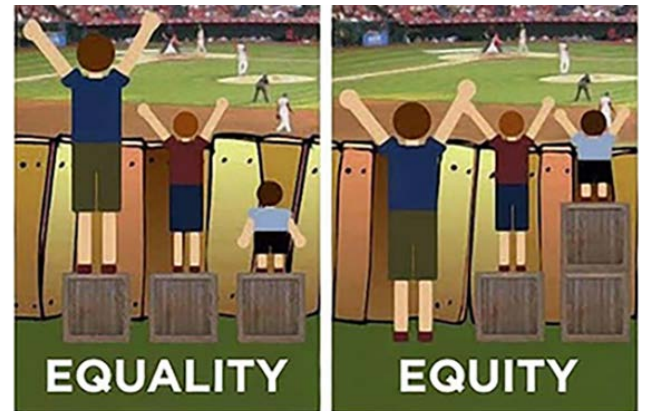
How to Integrate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into Everyday Operations

By Maria Hernandez

At the height of the #metoo debate in the nation’s entertainment sector, actress Francis McDormand used her 2018 Academy Award acceptance speech to promote the “inclusion rider.”

It was a call to action for entertainers to insist in their contracts that studios hire diverse cast and crew. McDormand seized the moment to inspire a commitment to diversity, and she set an important example for leaders everywhere.¹ Business and community leaders alike can and should use their positions of power to set the standard for inclusion. This is especially true for the nonprofits that are providing an increasing share of the US safety net of services for the most marginalized members of society.²

But the cultural transformation necessary to address our nation’s growing racial and ethnic anxiety, and the corresponding lack of equity, will happen only if new behaviors and organizational practices are “baked-in” to everyday operations in service delivery, management, and stakeholder engagement.



Original image by Craig Froehle, PhD

1 David Sims, “Can Inclusion Riders Change Hollywood?” *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/03/will-inclusion-riders-actually-change-hollywood/555602/>.

2 Amy Hsuan, Adam Katz, Brenda Thickett, and Mark Freedman, “Why Nonprofits Must Innovate: Seven Steps to Get Results,” Boston Consulting Group, July 17, 2018, <https://www.bcg.com/en-us/publications/2016/innovation-strategy-why-nonprofits-must-innovate-seven-steps-to-get-results.aspx>.

The Work of Inclusive Leadership Teams

Leaders committed to serving diverse communities effectively should prepare themselves to address three essential challenges:

- Creating a culture of inclusion with attention to key practices
- Setting clear expectations for inclusive leadership behaviors among all managers
- Aligning the mission of their organization to the broader equity issues being faced by the communities they serve

For each of these, leaders can implement operational strategies to foster new behaviors that over time will yield key results—sometimes even before staff fully align on the value of diversity or understand the business case for inclusion. Leaders who have studied peak performance psychology will recognize this as the proverbial “acting as if” mindset.³ To be inclusive in the workplace, skip the polarizing rhetoric or endless debate and move forward with setting performance standards regarding inclusive behaviors. Then measure your progress over time by looking at key indicators of success such as retention and advancement of diverse staff, successful policies to serve communities, and improved program outcomes across diverse community members.

Creating a Culture of Inclusion

Executive teams committed to a culture of inclusion will support ongoing professional development so that middle managers, team leads, and staff are consistently developing skills linked to inclusion. While many organizations focus on unconscious bias awareness training, research indicates that awareness has a limited lasting impact—between several hours to several days.⁴ Inclusive leaders instead look at work routines or processes to make inclusion an integral part of the way they work. This is perhaps most often seen in a review of how people source, recruit, onboard, or promote new hires. For example, many organizations are removing identifiers from resumes or making sure that diverse candidates are identified for all vacant positions, as well as conducting audits of their communications to ensure their values around diversity and inclusion are consistently expressed.

Employees also take cues about inclusive behaviors by the way they are treated during their workday. For example, setting the tone in meetings to engage participants with different communication styles—cultural, linguistic, or introverts/extroverts—allows everyone to be heard. One strategy for team meetings or community forums is to appoint an “inclusion advocate”—the person with permission to note if a person’s comment has been ignored or to make sure anyone dialed in for the call is given time to speak. At the end of the meeting, inclusive leaders ask, “Did everyone who wanted to speak get heard?”

3 Richard Wiseman, “Self help: forget positive thinking, try positive action,” *The Guardian*, June 30, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/jun/30/self-help-positive-thinking>.

4 Calvin Lai, et al., “Reducing Implicit Racial Preferences: II. Intervention Effectiveness Across Time,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology-General*, Vol 145(8), Aug 2016, 1001-1016, <http://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2F1096-3445.145.8.1001>.

This isn't to be confused for a quest for consensus. It's about distributing the power to be heard among all participants.

It's also human nature to gravitate towards others like ourselves. To account for this, executive teams can tune in to team dynamics and identify the "in-groups" that form around any number of issues—tenure, gender, or even alumni networks—and rotate team assignments or distribute responsibility for key tasks to ensure everyone has opportunities for growth.

Setting Clear Expectations

Any effort to build or sustain an inclusive culture must be linked to clear accountability for inclusion. Over the past five years, InclusionINC has trained more than two thousand senior executives about inclusive leadership, using a definition of an inclusive leader as *one who seeks out and integrates the voices of key stakeholders to drive key organizational results*. Our research shows three key—and measurable—statements about leaders that are most often associated with inclusive workplaces⁵:

- My manager asks my opinion about the work I do
- My manager acknowledges my contributions
- My manager demonstrates concern about my success

To determine if leaders are demonstrating these behaviors, conduct 360 evaluations, provide ongoing professional development, and integrate learning opportunities at all levels of the organization. It's equally important to reward these behaviors. Some organizations link a leader's performance raises or bonuses to high employee engagement scores—one of the most correlated indicators of inclusion and psychological safety among employees.^{6 7 8}

Aligning the Mission to Advance Equity

In serving the needs of community members, inclusive executive teams will measure the extent to which services and programs achieve their intended objectives among *all* members of the community. In the United States, we have taken refuge in the idea that equal treatment yields equal outcomes. That notion would be true only if everyone lived in or started under the same conditions—which they don't.

5 The Global Inclusion Index is comprised of 12 questions and used by InclusionINC to validate the experience of inclusion of workers in seven countries.

6 Stephanie Downey, et al., "The role of diversity practices and inclusion in promoting trust and employee engagement," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, Volume 45, Issue 1, January 2015, 35-44, http://doras.dcu.ie/22239/1/Diversity_and_Engagement_-_Final_Accepted_Submission.pdf.

7 John Baldoni, "Employee engagement does more than boost productivity," *Harvard Business Review* (digital article), July 4 2013, <https://hbr.org/2013/07/employee-engagement-does-more>.

8 Jake Herway, "How to Create a Culture of Psychological Safety," *Workplace Digital Magazine* The Gallup Organization December 7, 2017. Available here: <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236198/create-culture-psychological-safety.aspx>.

The Inclusion Playbook for Nonprofit Leaders

Build Your Personal Competencies for Inclusive Leadership

- Seek out cross-cultural experiences that encourage awareness of other cultures or spend a day in the life of the community members you serve
- Make the time commitment needed to build key skills—empathy, active listening, appreciative inquiry
- Get feedback on your effectiveness as a leader from diverse stakeholders

Train for Key Behaviors and Hold Leaders at All Levels Accountable for Inclusive Leadership

- Engage managers in meaningful opportunities to understand and learn about Inclusive Leadership
- Provide opportunities for managers and team leads to explore best practices for creating an inclusive workplace culture
- Use a performance evaluation tool that features inclusion as a valued skill to demonstrate in the organization
- Reward inclusive leaders for their efforts and role modeling of key values and behaviors

Align Your Mission to Address the Equity Issues in the Communities You Serve

- Review your services, outreach, or programs through the lens of inclusion to carry out your mission in culturally relevant ways and advance equity
- Measure your program impact and success across diverse populations to create targeted improvements
- Engage clients, partner agencies, civic leaders, and donors in an annual inclusion summit to bring emerging community perspectives into your services and programs

Set Milestones and Track Your Progress

- Track the hiring, retention, and advancement of diverse staff at all levels to ensure standards of equal opportunity are being followed
- Measure employee engagement by ethnicity, gender, generation, or tenure with the organization to track diverse staff experiences of your workplace culture
- Review the impact and effectiveness of your organization's services across diverse constituents to track equal outcomes

To ensure program success across diverse populations, organizations must abandon a “one-size-fits-all” mindset and tailor services to community members’ unique conditions and cultural factors. For example, Adventist Health White Memorial Hospital is serving Latino patients with prediabetes by modifying a [Diabetes Prevention Program \(DPP\)](#) provided by the YMCA. A typical DPP program would encourage a range of lifestyle changes that includes a diet of vegetables and lean proteins plus exercise to achieve a healthy weight. Adventist Health created a Center for Hispanic Health⁹ and partnered with the YMCA in Los Angeles to customize its approach to Latino patients. It’s DPP sessions for Latino families include cooking classes, showing how to prepare traditional Latino cuisine with less saturated fats, and encouraging exercise—dancing versus the treadmill, as something the whole family can enjoy. In doing so, the hospital and the YMCA are taking note of the collectivist culture of Latinos, where lifestyle changes happen as a family decision and traditional foods are an integral part of family time.

Being an inclusive individual leader—and an inclusive executive team—requires building an adaptive playbook for equity and the support of the board of trustees. (See “[The Inclusion Playbook for Nonprofit Leaders](#)” sidebar.) It also requires a commitment to the resources needed to run a marathon not a sprint. As a nonprofit leader, your #inclusionrider will set the stage for transformative change that is long overdue and needed now more than ever.

⁹ See Adventist Health White Memorial Medical Center for Hispanic Health Video here: <https://www.adventisthealth.org/white-memorial/about-us/foundation/center-for-hispanic-health/>.



Maria Hernandez, PhD is the practice leader for Global Consulting Solutions at InclusionINC and leads the company’s engagements in the healthcare sector. Dr. Hernandez (@drmghernandez) is based in the San Francisco Bay Area. InclusionINC (www.inclusion-inc.com) is a woman-owned business founded in 2010 and headquartered in Minneapolis.

THE BRIDGESPAN GROUP

BOSTON 2 Copley Place, 7th Floor, Suite 3700B, Boston, MA 02116 USA. Tel: +1 617 572 2833

NEW YORK 112 West 34th St., Ste. 1510, New York, NY 10120 USA. Tel: +1 646 562 8900

SAN FRANCISCO 88 Kearny St., Ste. 200, San Francisco, CA 94108 USA. Tel: +1 415 627 4500

MUMBAI Bridgespan India Private Limited (registered address), 9th Floor, Platina, G Block, Plot C 59, Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai, 400051, India. Tel: +91 022 6628 9624



www.bridgespan.org

contact@bridgespan.org

contactindia@bridgespan.org