

GALLUP®

Advancing DEI Initiatives: A Guide for Organizational Leaders



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The Power of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in the Workplace

Gallup has been studying the public on questions related to diversity of various kinds for decades. We also have measured how employees of different demographic groups, such as genders, races/ethnicities and generations, experience the workplace.

Through our research, we have discovered that specific experiences have an impact on employees' engagement, retention, wellbeing, and perceptions of their team members and employer. For example, employees who feel included — based on strongly agreeing with Gallup's recommended measures for inclusion — are more engaged at work than those who do not strongly agree with those survey items.

Engagement Higher for Those Who Strongly Agree With Inclusion Items

Employee engagement is measured using Gallup's Q12® survey

% Engaged, among those who strongly agree or do not strongly agree with each item

■ Strongly agree ■ Do not strongly agree



Gallup consultants can provide clients with additional DEI-related information based on Gallup's extensive workplace database. However, the most important discoveries and opportunities for enhancements to a workplace culture arise when examining a specific organization's needs, listening to the voices of their employees and acting upon those results.

In this brief, we present our recommendations for DEI-related workplace measures, as well as key considerations for leaders aiming to improve DEI in their organization. For recommendations specific to your organization, please [contact Gallup](#) to connect with one of our workplace consultants.

DIVERSITY

The traits and characteristics that make people unique

Diversity represents the full spectrum of human differences, often based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, neurodiversity and physical disability. Many organizations also recognize personal differences, such as talents, education or tenure, as elements of diversity.

EQUITY

Fair treatment, access and advancement for each person

Equity involves taking into consideration the historical and sociopolitical factors that affect opportunities and experiences so that policies, procedures and systems can help meet people's unique needs without one person or group having an unfair advantage over another.

INCLUSION

An environment that makes people feel welcome, respected and valued

In inclusive environments, individuals are appreciated for their unique characteristics and therefore feel comfortable sharing their points of view and other aspects of their true and authentic self. They feel respected, accepted and encouraged to fully participate in the organization.

The Right DEI Metrics Make All the Difference

To make real progress for diversity, equity and inclusion at your organization, you must make changes that are seen, felt, believed and trusted by individuals across your organization. When employees have certainty that their leaders are fair, equitable and inclusive, it changes the way employees behave and perform. In other words, employee opinions are at the heart of authentic culture transformation.

Benchmarking Diversity

Employers of certain sizes are required to report workforce data, including data about gender and race/ethnicity, to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission each year. Besides needing to meet legal requirements, some organizational leaders want to understand the diversity of their workforce to ensure they have teams that benefit from a greater pool of knowledge, perspective, experience and skill.

Because of legal risks of collecting and/or reporting demographic information, such as age, gender and race/ethnicity, leaders who want to learn or report the demographics of their workforce should always consult their legal team for guidance.

In addition to potential legal concerns, organizations should consider that including demographic questions in a survey can be perceived by employees as intrusive and can affect survey participation negatively. Gallup recommends including demographic variables and/or demographic questions on employee surveys only if there is a strong need and a well-thought-out plan to use the information in a way that will improve the workplace.

Diversity of Strengths

Looking beyond demographic characteristics, leaders can encourage a culture that celebrates diversity by focusing on diversity of strengths.

A strengths-based culture based on Gallup's [CliftonStrengths](#)[®] provides a natural foundation and framework for a diverse, equitable and inclusive organization. Gallup consultants can share with leaders further details on the tie between CliftonStrengths and diversity, equity and inclusion.

Analyzing Equity

Gallup has identified three survey items that capture equity within an organization. These items allow leaders to identify regions, departments or teams in which employees do not feel they are being treated fairly. They also provide benchmarks to show improvements in perceived equity across an organization.

Three Key Equity-Related Topics

Fairness | Pay | Opportunities for Advancement

Top Three Survey Items for Measuring Equity

When an employee strongly agrees with these statements, they are experiencing equity at work.

- 1) My organization is fair to everyone.
- 2) I am paid fairly for the work I do.
- 3) I have the same opportunities for advancement as other employees in my organization.

Tracking Inclusion

How can leaders be confident they have created an inclusive culture? Gallup has identified and validated the following components of inclusion in the workplace. These elements capture the sense of being one's authentic self and feeling like part of the team.

Seven Key Inclusion-Related Topics

Respect | Strengths | Integrity | Authenticity | Belonging
Trust and Openness | Autonomy

Gallup's Three Culture of Inclusion Index Survey Items

When an employee strongly agrees with these statements, they are experiencing inclusion at work.

- 1) At work, I am treated with respect.
- 2) My current employer is committed to building the strengths of each employee.
- 3) If I raised a concern about ethics and integrity, I am confident my employer would do what is right.

Four Additional Inclusion-Related Items for Digging Deeper

- 1) At work, I feel comfortable being myself.
- 2) I feel like a valued member of my team.
- 3) My supervisor creates an environment that is trusting and open.
- 4) I have the freedom to make the decisions I need to do my job well.

Four Key Considerations for DEI Programs

Ultimately, DEI is not about diversity reports or good intentions. It's about making a decision and taking action to change the way you do business to improve the lives of individuals who have been historically marginalized.

Culture transformation does not happen without the long-term, serious commitment of leaders who see their culture as part of their business strategy. To make meaningful improvements to their organizational culture, leaders should integrate DEI initiatives, along with a belief in the power of unleashing human potential through strengths development, into the mission, culture and values of their organization.

Whether leaders have just begun their DEI journey or are far down the road of trial and error, they should answer the questions below to help them build an effective, long-term DEI strategy.



1

What Is Your Commitment?

Enhancing DEI over the long term requires more effort than exploring what everyone else is doing and implementing a few ideas with a “check-the-box” mentality. Truly transforming organizational culture requires differentiating activities based on data-driven discoveries. Before leaders decide which changes to implement, they need to have a clear understanding of their organization’s baseline. Gallup recommends that leaders diagnose their organizations for DEI using the latest science and data analysis techniques.

Gallup’s world-class analytics help employers understand how employees are moving through their organization, from recruitment to promotion to exit, taking into account the entire employee experience. For example, Gallup can help leaders identify bottlenecks in development and succession strategies. When programs target only certain aspects of the workplace and ignore others, the results can make employees feel confused and frustrated. Consider how addressing DEI-related considerations during onboarding but not addressing them at the team level could leave employees feeling let down.

When crafting DEI programs, keep the following points in mind:

- **Address the D, the E and the I.** There can be benefits to focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion separately; however, isolating each pillar too much can hinder or undermine progress in any one element.
- **Create buy-in through aligned culture and values.** When an organization’s culture doesn’t demonstrate the values that are communicated to employees, initiatives lack authenticity and meaning, which threatens buy-in and sustainability.
- **Implement both broad and targeted DEI initiatives.** Pair organization-wide culture initiatives that emphasize inclusion for everyone with DEI initiatives that address the needs and experiences of people in specific groups.
- **Consider local needs for DEI strategies.** Organizational leaders should develop specific DEI initiatives locally or in close collaboration with local leaders, managers and employees to ensure the strategies target the needs and concerns that are most relevant to the population. Collaboration with local leaders also ensures that strategies are implemented in ways that are authentic and culturally appropriate.

2

What Changes Will You Make?

Once your organization decides on your commitments, it becomes essential that managers understand their critical role in the engagement, development and wellbeing of their team members. Employees experience their organization primarily through their manager. Leaders' intentions for DEI initiatives mean nothing if managers don't deliver on the organization's policies and values.

Gallup has these recommendations for helping leaders and managers effectively implement DEI initiatives:

- **Employers should teach their managers to spot, celebrate and coach toward their organization's expected DEI behaviors.** Defining your organization's values and expectations is only the first step. Managers need training to help them build trusting relationships and hold meaningful conversations that lay a foundation for effectively coaching on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- **Leaders should communicate — through words and actions — frequently and consistently in ways that demonstrate and foster inclusion in the workplace.** Organizations often increase companywide communication, commit resources and change policies to reflect a focus on DEI. Leaders' daily interactions with employees also should show that DEI is a priority. Leaders are responsible for creating a work environment where people feel safe offering new perspectives and sharing about their personal lives and where employees are recognized for their unique contributions.

Some organizations develop a strengths-based culture to help cultivate a common language within teams. Strengths-based interventions using Gallup's CliftonStrengths have been shown to convey individual contributions and future potential, and increase employee engagement, which is highly predictive of perceived respect, care and inclusion within a team.
- **Leaders should gain ongoing advice about DEI issues to continue learning as this field evolves.** One way to continue increasing knowledge and gaining perspective on DEI issues is through ongoing, reliable partnerships with experts. For example, using a scientifically rigorous approach, Gallup provides analytics and advice to clients, tailored to their organization, on many kinds of workplace issues, such as DEI, employee engagement, culture transformation, organizational identity and other aspects of the employee experience.

3

How Will You Track Progress?

DEI is not about perfection, but improvement. Gallup has ongoing conversations with many CHROs, and they admit they have made mistakes along the way and had to try again. They all agree that learning from those mistakes has helped their organizations advance. Improving DEI measurement is challenging — but also essential to making meaningful progress.

To effectively evaluate and adjust DEI strategies, leaders need to ensure that the results on a spreadsheet match the real-world, lived experiences of their employees.

Consider the following advice when it comes to tracking progress:

- **Set time to discuss your DEI strategy.** Leaders signal what is important to them by how they allocate their time.
- **Establish a dashboard of DEI metrics.** Which key metrics, analyses and outcomes are you pursuing, and how are you progressing toward those goals?
- **Establish clear accountability.** Many organizations have begun to set up a better infrastructure for implementing and continuously improving DEI, including appointing chief diversity officers, creating task forces, or more clearly outlining the responsibilities of human resources and other functions. Leaders must examine their organization's structure, needs, goals and measures and then align on which people and functions are accountable for ensuring improvements in DEI.
- **Examine how policies on paper differ from policies in practice.** Loopholes, "gray areas" and subjectivity make it all too easy for practices to perpetuate inequitable outcomes. Leaders should explore how their DEI-related policies are applied by managers and teams to ensure they are fostering an inclusive culture as intended.
- **Be transparent to create trust.** Increasing transparency and reporting about DEI initiatives can build trust with potential employees, consumers and investors. For example, some CHROs are joining local or national organizations that create public DEI rankings.

Gallup Center on Black Voices

Gallup's 100-year commitment to studying the progress, experiences and life outcomes of more than **40 million Black Americans**

[LEARN MORE](#)



4

How Will You Sustain Progress?

Perceptions account for a lot — especially regarding DEI. Some employees may feel like there has been a lot of change within an organization, when actually, very little has changed. In contrast, some employees may feel like nothing has changed, simply because they are unaware of what has been happening in their organization. Both situations can lead to apathy or disengagement around DEI progress.

Employee awareness ignites celebrations of changes that have already happened and spurs further change, creating motivation to see initiatives through over the long term.

Keep the following in mind when considering how to sustain DEI initiatives:

- **Seeing is believing.** Employees need to see and experience progress for themselves.
- **Communication is key.** Not communicating successes and wins can lead to the misconception that no progress is being made.
- **Champions are essential for the long haul.** Leaders should partner with DEI champions — employees, managers and other leaders who already feel invested in and positively affected by the organization’s DEI initiatives. These individuals are intrinsically motivated and less likely to get distracted or sidetracked by other priorities.

Gallup Can Help

Through our decades of experience researching DEI and other workplace topics, we:

- **ask** the right questions
- **analyze** how results apply to an organization’s unique culture
- **advise** on what to do next

Contact Gallup today to explore how we can help you effectively implement the right solutions for DEI and other workplace challenges at your organization.

Appendix: Methodology

The data featured in this Gallup report are sourced from web survey studies completed March 9-23, 2020, by 14,161 respondents, Nov. 6-Dec. 1, 2020, by 8,360 respondents (including 5,240 respondents from a third-party sample provider), and March 10-24, 2021, by 16,477 respondents. All respondents are U.S. employees, aged 18 and older.

The total number of respondents from the Nov. 6-Dec. 1, 2020, study was supplemented by 5,240 respondents from a third-party sample provider to ensure more thorough coverage of populations that are generally more difficult to reach (i.e., populations with lower income and levels of education) and to improve representativeness of the sample.

For results based on these samples, the maximum margin of sampling error, which takes into account the design effect from weighting, is ± 1.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error and bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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