



**THE
EQUIANO
PROJECT**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO
DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION**

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COLLABORATION ACROSS DIVIDES

The proclaimed goal of the diversity industry is to help create working and organisational environments that are open, welcoming and supportive for people from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and competencies. Improving communication and the free exchange of ideas enables people to better collaborate across divides. It brings out the best in people and creates a more robust meritocratic system. This is a laudable goal and one that The Equiano Project shares.

However, the mechanisms and processes we use to attain this goal are fundamental to whether or not it will be achieved or close to achieved.

There is growing evidence to show that a significant amount of what is currently on offer is either ineffective or rooted in divisive and largely counterproductive forms of identity politics.

The Equiano Project holds that there are more positive and effective approaches to attaining these goals – approaches based on universal humanist values.

We believe that true, long-term progress can only be driven through a considered, values-led approach, which emphasises both what we share and how we're all unique. This means highlighting our common cause while valuing who we are as individuals, not as race, gender or sexuality-based groups. We aim to contribute towards thinking more expansively about diversity and hearing a range of perspectives and ideas.

**We must
learn
to live
together
as brothers
or perish
together as
fools.**

Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

THE EQUIANO PROJECT STORY

The Equiano Project was founded in 2020 by Inaya Folarin Iman. The aim of the project is to promote a positive, universalist vision of humanity in order to challenge the prevailing narrative surrounding race and identity – a narrative that fosters a divisive form of racial identity politics and racial essentialism within our culture and institutions.

To this end, the project has evolved into a platform through which thinkers and writers have been able to express their thoughts on a variety of issues and ideas, freely and openly. This has been facilitated by high-level debates hosted by The Equiano Project featuring prominent writers, intellectuals and educators such as Trevor Phillips, David Goodhart, Dr Rakib Ehsan, Katharine Birbalsingh, Helen Pluckrose, Ayishat Akanbi and many more. The project has also emerged into a publishing platform for many established and aspiring writers, and has an ever-growing outreach programme, holding talks, workshops and events in schools, universities, charities and businesses across the country.

Importantly, The Equiano Project works with corporations, government departments and business leaders to help them think deeply and critically on issues of diversity, equality, identity and inclusion, and has supported them in making better-informed decisions confidently and with clarity. Approaches range from a one-off workshop to broaden and expand their thinking around these issues, to supporting senior management teams in examining their practices in a range of areas.

The Equiano Project is named after the 18th-century writer and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano, who was enslaved as a child, taken to the Caribbean and sold to a Royal Navy officer. He was sold twice more but purchased his own freedom in 1766. In spite of his terrifying and remarkable experiences, he maintained a commitment to embodying the highest moral virtues. We believe that Equiano's story exemplifies the struggle for freedom and the demonstration of extraordinary bravery and moral fortitude, even in the face of profound adversity. It is this story that has inspired us to promote such qualities across society, industries and in our own lives.

THE FOUNDER STORY



Inaya Folarin Iman is a British woman of Nigerian heritage. She is a writer, commentator and campaigner, well-known for her work on issues surrounding free speech, liberty, democracy, social progress, identity and human potential. Inaya has grown up in a range of societal situations, social classes and culturally diverse

environments, all of which have informed her interest in the relationship between social narratives, agency and responsibility.

Concerned with dominant narratives around race, identity and diversity, and their potential negative impact for wider society, Inaya founded The Equiano Project with a view to promoting freedom, equality, and universalism to combat the divisive rhetoric and aggressive promotion of identity politics and racial essentialism.

Inaya has written for the Telegraph, The Daily Mail, The Spectator, Spiked and several other publications.

She is also regularly invited to provide commentary on TV, radio and podcasts. Inaya is also the founder of Free Speech Champions and was a founding board member of the Free Speech Union.

OUR VALUES

Freedom - We believe in creating an environment where sovereign individuals have the power to speak, act and think within the boundaries of the law. We believe that these are the conditions within which human beings can flourish and achieve their true potential.

Humanism - We believe in the value of human beings as agents of freedom and progress. Humans must take responsibility for their development as individuals and, more broadly, shape the path of progress they wish to see for themselves and the world. The thread that connects us all as human beings takes precedence over any racial or cultural identity.

Universalism - We believe that certain concepts and ideas have universal value and applicability. This is embedded in the notion that there is such a thing as objective and fundamental truth. Accordingly, there are values that unite us fundamentally as human beings that cross all other identity-related boundaries, regardless of colour, creed or race.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

Diversity of thought and experience enables us to think about different belief systems, languages, cultural backgrounds and upbringings.

Inclusion of all as individuals, where we are all able to feel as though we belong, because our value is based on our innate humanity not immutable characteristics. Inclusion in the workplace is a collaborative, supportive, and respectful environment that increases the participation and contribution of all employees.

Equality of opportunity works to remove the barriers to success based on immutable characteristics.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUALITY?

INTRODUCTION

'Diversity, Inclusion and Equality' is commonly understood as a set of policies and practices implemented by government bodies, large corporations, and other types of institutions. It purports to promote a healthy, progressive and cohesive working environment for all employees at the individual level and also at a larger structural level. The general idea behind this model is that there are distinguishable differences between groups of people, and it then makes the case for "recognising" (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2020) and "appreciating" (Global Diversity Practice, 2020) these differences.

Initially, Diversity, Inclusion and Equality served functionally, within the recruitment practices of organisations, to increase representation of those who have been 'historically marginalised'. However, today, the model has now permeated into areas of company culture, marketing (Maryville University) and financial strategy.

The impact of this change has been profound.

WHAT ARE THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUALITY?

To understand the nature and the usage of Diversity, Inclusion and Equality today, we must understand where it first came from and the reasons for which it sprung into existence. Unlike what is commonly believed, Diversity, Inclusion and Equality, as we know it, is not a new concept, but has in fact been continuously evolving and changing shape since the 1960s (Powell, 2014).

The United States' Civil Rights Act 1964 sought to outlaw discrimination in daily life based on sex, race, nationality, religious belief and sexuality. This was a crucial piece of legislation as, for the first time in US history, racially segregated schools and public facilities, as well as gender-and-race-exclusive job postings, became illegal. The act, in effect, extinguished the perpetuation of Jim Crow Laws which had legitimised racism and discrimination against black people and other ethnic groups (University of Southern California Gould School of Law, n.d.) within the United States.

A year later, the first federal agency regulating matters on workplace discrimination was set up: the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The way in which the EEOC initially visualised what diversity, equality and affirmative action meant was not only based on the Civil Rights Act 1964, but also on Executive Order 10925 and 11246 (University of California Irvine Office of Equality of Opportunity and Diversity; US Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs), whereby employers and government contractors should take "affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and employees are treated equally during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin" (University of Southern California Irvine Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity). These policies and laws were about breaking down real barriers that impeded equality of opportunity for minority groups in America.

The United Kingdom, despite a very different historical context, also followed suit shortly thereafter in establishing workplace equality: first in 1970 with the Equal Pay Act; then in 1975 with the Sex Discrimination Act; and finally, with the Race Relations Act in 1976. Prior to these legislations, it was legal for employers to fire women who intended to get married or for employers to reject job applications based on an individual's racial background (Together in the UK, 2019). Once again, such a legislative stance removed very real barriers to equality within British society and had a profound impact on historically marginalised groups.

Importantly, it must be emphasised that the above cases are examples of liberal change to workplace diversity (Jewson & Mason, 1986). This idea of diversity maintains that individuals ought to be recruited on the basis of their competence, performance or merit for the position (Jewson & Mason, 1986). By definition, this means that taking into account one's racial

background, sex, sexuality, or any other identity trait during recruitment ought not to happen.

While these legislative moves made discrimination against the law, this isn't to say they removed discrimination itself. Prejudices, racism, bigotry and stereotyping continued to exist. However, social attitude surveys reveal that racial prejudice is, thankfully, in long-term decline.

The key question is: how do we deal with these issues in a positive, forward-looking manner that provides solutions rather perpetuating and exacerbating existing problems?

Recently, the term 'equality' has begun to take on different connotations in terms of its meaning and scope. Many of those who claim to be advocates of workplace 'equality' are, in fact, diametrically opposed to the idea of liberal change rooted in a universalist conception of human beings, progress and meritocracy. This is the case for the US and the UK alike. Some universities (Cornell University), government institutions, and workplaces (Wolf & Bahsin, 2020) are shifting towards a different idea of diversity, whereby these institutions primarily function as a way to redistribute social reward (e.g. by enforcing racial quotas) and resources to certain groups of people in an unrealistic effort to perfectly reflect the demographic make-up of society. For example, the establishment of the UK's Equality Act in 2010, Section 19 now also permits more subtle and indirect acts of discrimination.

Although quotas based on identity characteristics are illegal throughout Europe, and therefore the UK, these regions do allow for Positive Action. This is where, given equal merit, candidates are recruited based on identity traits to 'correct' a workplace's racial, gender, or any other identity imbalance (UK Government; UK Government Equalities Office, 2011; University of Cambridge).

Such actions and policies have grounding in the radical change theory of workplace diversity. Unlike liberal change, radical change challenges the idea of equality of opportunity for all groups of people, but instead proposes equality of outcome (Jewson & Mason, 1986). This marks a significant shift. The focus is not on a meritocratic promotion of opportunity but rather guaranteeing a set of outcomes no matter what the individual attributes of a given person or the vast myriad of societal factors at play.

This shift is also the reason why we now see variations of Diversity, Inclusion and Equality, such as Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (i.e. equality of outcome), or Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity (i.e. pertaining to indigeneous groups), Accountability (e.g. having stewards scrutinise company diversity plans) and Equity, and so on and so forth. As these processes become more labyrinth-like, the difficulties for businesses become more complex.



WHAT ARE THE CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF MANY POPULAR DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUALITY APPROACHES?

In common parlance today, Diversity, Inclusion and Equality is understood and is referred to as a singular entity, although it is formed of three different ideological conceptions. As mentioned previously, these concepts have now been supplemented with newer ideas, but for the purpose of brevity and clarity, we will focus on the three key traditional concepts and break them down accordingly.

To understand these conceptualisations, firstly, they must be contextualised using the conceptual framework from which they are born – Critical Theory or Critical Constructivism. These are worldviews that believe society is predicated on power, hegemonic and dominance structures (Comstock, 1982; Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Horkheimer, 1972; Ikenberry & Kupchan, 1990; Ogbor, 2001).

This means that there are primarily two groups of people: those who have power and reinforce these structures (i.e. the oppressors) and those who are consistently being subjugated by the hegemony of the oppressors (i.e. the oppressed) (Frye, 1983). According to this theory, this power play between people is ever-present and all-encompassing. This in turn means that everything from individual conversations between people, to structural changes put in place by large corporations and governments can be to the detriment of the “oppressed” (Frye, 1983). Thus, a binary vision of society is created through which all interactions are framed and understood.

Furthermore, science and any attempts to extract evidence is also ‘socially constructed’ by the hands of the oppressors (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). For this reason, Critical Theory does not support science, reason or objectivity (Church, 2020). Instead, it proposes that we adopt storytelling of lived experiences from those who are assumed to be oppressed as genuine epistemology (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009). Critical Theory goes against the universalistic methodology of science – the idea that, no matter who does the experiment given the same conditions, the results should always be the same. The result of this mode of thinking is that objectivity and rationality themselves are called into question. The foundational concepts of liberal society are now fluid where once they were closer to solid (consensus).

When we apply this to race, it becomes Critical Race Theory. In this theory, white people are the oppressors, ‘people of colour’ are the oppressed and racism is present in every aspect of life. This includes individual relationships, workplace associations, general interactions, relations between state and citizen and so on. So despite a total absence of empirical data supporting its arguments, CRT has essentially become a trap that destroys the ability of society to understand itself or bridge divides. The extent to which these people are oppressing others or

being oppressed can also be stratified and ranked under the theory of intersectionality. Intersectionality is also applied to other identity traits, such as sex, disability, sexuality and religious belief.

So, Diversity, Inclusion and Equality is a strategy that directly responds to these assumed power structures. It has been created to facilitate the 'rebalancing' of power to those who are assumed to be oppressed. From the perspective of Critical Race Theory, this is how we create a 'fairer' and equitable society in the world of work.

Today, Diversity, Inclusion and Equality have become an integral part of many institutions. Large businesses and corporations want to appeal to a wide customer base and maintain good public relations for two reasons: the first, a desire to uphold ethical standards and to do the right thing; the second, doing so may ensure the viability of their business. This understandable desire to do the right thing has also created a demand for the billion-dollar Workplace Diversity Training Industry (Hunt et al, 2015).

As popular as Diversity, Inclusion and Equality is today, the underlying theoretical assumptions of many of its practitioners have yet to be challenged publicly in an open way. We ought to think critically of some of its main assumptions: that racial oppression is everywhere and endogenous to society (i.e. racism) and people's experiences are homogeneous or equalised under its identity groupings. Therefore, the assumption is that we ought to see others in race-and-identity-based terms, rather than as individuals. The Equiano Project utterly rejects this notion.

Ironically, the practice of Diversity, Inclusion and Equality is also subject to the internal self-contradictions of Critical Race Theory. This strategy has also been accused, by many Critical Race theorists, of perpetuating white racial hegemony. There is another name for this: Interest Convergence. The general idea behind this is that white people only give 'people of colour' opportunities when it suits them best (Bell, 1980). Consequently, we see many accusations that some diversity schemes can be tokenistic as an effect of Interest Convergence (Rashid & Sherbin, 2017; Sherrer, 2018).

This is problematic as Interest Convergence (and more broadly, Critical Theory) assumes that it is impossible that anyone with racial, sexual, socioeconomic or gender-based privilege can do the right thing to eradicate injustices because it is always or mostly in self-interest. To allow such a determinist, negative conception of human beings into your organisation is disastrous. We cannot conduct our work lives while assuming the worst of one another. This is not conducive to a pleasant or productive work environment.

Understanding the above will allow us to understand the following individual concepts in their modern interpretation:

DIVERSITY



The diversities that these programmes are concerned with are those that make up identity groupings within the workplace (i.e. gender, sexuality, ethnicity or race etc.). While some diversity programmes suggest that having a diversity of identity groups can bring about diverse viewpoints, what they simultaneously suggest is that those belonging to different categories of identity think differently due to those groupings. This is a generalisation. This point will be further discussed in the section: What Type of Diversity Matters Most for Working Environments? in this guide.

Under this guise, what some diversity programmes usually aim to achieve is surface-level diversity of the same Critical Theory or Critical Constructivist viewpoint. For example, this may mean hiring a black, South Asian or East Asian woman who thinks through the lens of intersectionality. Likewise, this could also mean hiring a non-binary bisexual white woman who thinks in terms of systemic power dynamics. This is what employers should be wary of as it may bring about a shallow surface diversity, while destroying intellectual diversity. This is not conducive to a thriving, thoughtful, innovative and inquisitive organisational environment.

INCLUSION



If diversity is the variety and assortment of identity traits in the workplace cocktail, then inclusion can be the spoon that stirs it to help it 'mix'. What this suggests is that having a diversity of identity traits does not suffice and could be problematic if left on its own. As we will discuss and develop further, the idea behind inclusion is that underrepresented groups may face even further discrimination in the workplace due to supposed unconscious biases or conscious biases. Therefore, inclusion is about finding belonging in the workplace.

Although, in principle, inclusion seems like a good idea and one that all companies should implement (the idea that all employees should feel welcome at work and feel valued), the types of inclusion strategies implemented by many conventional diversity programmes, such as Implicit Bias Training, are deeply rooted in political ideology and have very little empirical data to support their validity or desirability.

One of the sad impacts of this mode of thinking is that racism is no longer regarded as an issue to overcome, but rather an ever present, invasive force that can only be managed by 'specialists'. Again, we're much more ambitious than this.



EQUALITY

This is the more nebulous of the three concepts because it is not readily apparent what is meant by 'equality'. Most assume that equality for diversity programmes is about facilitating and allowing for equal opportunity at work. This is a laudable objective that most can agree on, as discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexuality etc. has no place in a healthy democracy. Should discriminatory barriers exist, we must work to find a solution to abolish these barriers.

Examples of inequality of opportunity include: purposely restricting the distribution of job postings to certain individuals or groups of people; using race as a deciding factor in recruitment even if it is for 'diversity' purposes; turning down a CV due to the 'look' of a name; not accommodating the physical barriers of those with disabilities in the workplace such as braille for the blind; not offering job promotions to certain individuals on the basis of race, gender, sexuality etc.

When we have equality of opportunity, it is natural to have some inequality of outcome because equality of opportunity allows for individuals to have freedom in pursuing their own choices in life. However, one of the intellectual pitfalls of diversity programmes is that they often conflate inequality of outcome with inequality of opportunity. For instance, when companies review data pertaining to occupational take up of leadership positions, they will often cite a lack of members of underrepresented groups as 'evidence' for the inequality of opportunity. That is to say, "the reason why we only have x% of Asian workers at the managerial level is because they do not have the same opportunity as everyone else". However, this alone does not suffice as evidence for discrimination and is a hasty generalisation. This overly simplified reasoning overlooks the alternative possibilities and more likely explanations, such as differences in an individual's values and choice, cultural factors, competencies and experience. Simply put, the issue is not always one of discrimination; it is usually far more complex than that. Accordingly, companies must avoid the pressure to come to simplistic conclusions, while under pressure from wider societal developments. A rushed, overly defensive thought process will inevitably lead to poor policy and practice in the workplace.

It is important to take a cautious approach, looking carefully at the evidence and the possible political biases and agendas that can sometimes underpin blanket accusations of racism towards whole groups or organisations.

In recent times, we have seen some very prominent examples of companies that have made overtly political statements with regard to the Black Lives Matter movement, including Ben and Jerry's and Sainsbury's, allowing themselves to become politicised. However, it is interesting to note that according to a 2020 poll by YouGov, 56% of surveyed adults believe brands should not take a side on political issues.

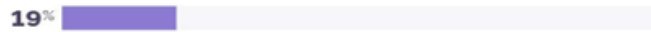
Do you think commercial and retail brands should or should not take a side on political issues?

YouGov surveyed 4449 GB adults

Conducted Jun 10, 2020

BY: All adults

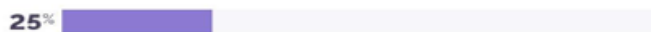
They should



They should not

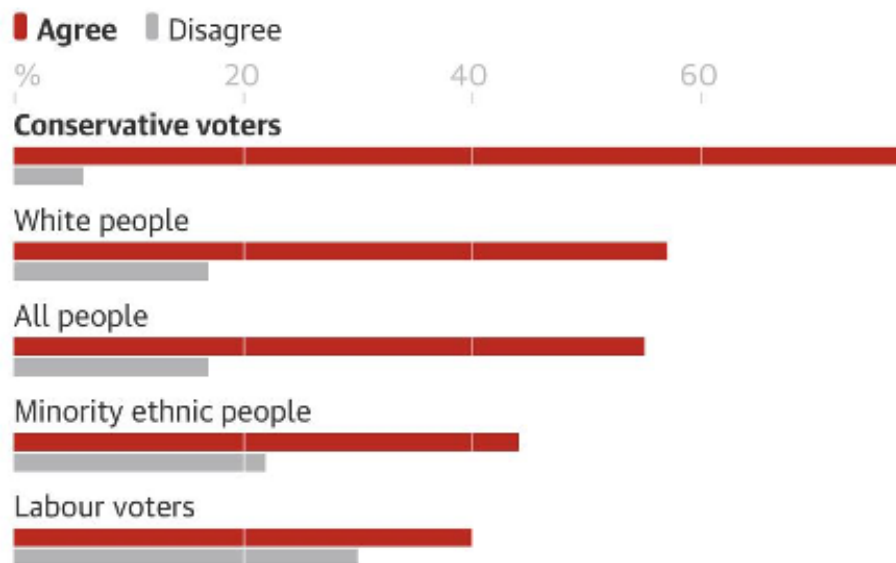


Don't know



So, while we may see a short-term gain in publicity or even sales, the long-term implications for a business or organisation can be very different. Be very aware of setting your organisation on a trajectory that it doesn't truly desire to be on or understand the implications of.

A modern organisation must be aware that the media and social media 'bubble' does not necessarily represent the wider social context of a given moment. For example, a majority of people agree with the statement that 'Black Lives Matter has increased racial tension', according to an Opinium poll in November of 2020. Just over half (55%) of UK adults believe the BLM protests increased racial tensions. The polling also showed 44% of ethnic minorities believed the same (compared to just 21% who disagreed).



Guardian graphic. Source: Opinium

DOES EQUALITY & DIVERSITY TRAINING ACTUALLY WORK?

Given that businesses, corporations, educational institutions and government departments invest billions of dollars into the implementation of Diversity, Inclusion and Equality strategies and training programmes for staff, it would be understandable to assume that the expense is justified given the unanimously positive and unequivocal results of such schemes. Sadly, this is not the case. The evidence surrounding the positive impact of these schemes is mixed, unclear and inconsistent, with emerging evidence suggesting diversity training can do more harm than good (Chang, et al., 2019; Dobbin, 2009; Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Dover, et al., 2020; Noon, 2018; Paluck & Green, 2009). Therefore, we must call into question the efficacy of these programmes and think about investing in places where we are most likely to gain concrete results and a positive path forward.

It is important to note that there is a varied typology of Diversity, Inclusion and Equality strategies and diversity training programmes around the world (Bendick, et al., 2001) We will cover the two angles in which these methods are organised and implemented in business practice: targeting individual perceptions of employees towards protected identity groups and changing professionalism standards to account for more people from these protected identity groups. Please note that these diversity methods are non-exhaustive.

TARGETING INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS

In simple terms, this idea is contingent on Critical Theory's assumption that oppressive or privileged groups (e.g. white heterosexual males) concordantly hold conscious and unconscious biases against 'people of colour' and of other real or perceived disadvantaged categories. These biases are then manifested in how they see the world, and consequently, the everyday decisions that they make which are harmful to oppressed groups.

Conscious bias (or explicit bias) is an overt preference for something, and it is recognisable because you are aware of it (Daumeyer, et al., 2019). This could be applied to almost anything in life; you could have a conscious bias for highly palatable, processed foods as opposed to raw, nutritious vegetables. Applied to the workplace, this may mean that a hiring manager may have a deliberate and intentional preference to work with people whom he or she finds physically attractive, of a particular ethnic group, of a particular accent, and so on and so forth. This concept is often associated with Kahneman's 'slow' type of thinking – System 2 type of thinking (Yim, 2016). In this mode of thinking, a person makes slow, complex, thought-out decisions which he or she has rationalised before a decision is made (Kahneman, 2011).

Unconscious bias (or implicit bias), on the other hand, is not directly obvious to the person (Yim, 2016). According to theory, unconscious bias operates outside of one's awareness and control, and these biases could be opposed to a person's conscious beliefs or values (Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence). This concept is often associated with Kahneman's 'fast' type of thinking – System 1 type of thinking. In this system of thinking, a person makes rapid, emotional or instinct-based decisions (Kahneman, 2011).

Human decision-making is fraught with cognitive and psychological biases of all sorts and this has been well established for many decades in psychological literature (Kinderman, et al.). There is a vast array of biases that exist from confirmation bias to hindsight bias.

We can tackle some of these biases because they are part of our conscious, or slow, rational decision making. For example, we can challenge confirmation bias by developing critical thinking skills through cognitive bias mitigation (Kucera, 2020). Additionally, in the same way, we can challenge our explicit biases towards certain groups of people (should we have any) by demanding ourselves to rationalise and justify our thinking when we are conscious of our biased preferences.

On the other hand, measuring, quantifying and challenging unconscious bias is an unfeasible goal because the very nature of unconscious bias suggests that we do not even know that we are having these thoughts or biases.

Psychologists and scientists have still yet to truly understand the tricky nature of implicit bias, and as of yet, there is no proven tool, way or method to robustly test for implicit bias (Bartlett, 2017; Blanton & Jaccard, 2008). The very concept of implicit bias is currently under fire and highly contested in psychology, so we do not even know how it truly manifests or exists in the first place. Furthermore, we also have very little concrete information that shows us how to overcome these implicit biases successfully if they exist (Blanton & Jaccard, 2008). If we are serious about the existence of implicit bias and its potential ramifications, then we should be investing more into its research and study, not incorporating them into real-life situations to satisfy the political dogma of the day.

Unfortunately, many diversity programmes available on the market today include the Implicit Association Test (IAT) as a way of 'measuring' a person's implicit bias and gauging the extent to which this person acts in a discriminatory way in real life. Many universities and companies are making IATs compulsory for all employees, across all divisions. However, this method has been "mired in controversy" since its conception

(Singal, 2018). Ironically, there are diversity programmes that claim that unconscious biases are “inescapable” (Robert Walters Group), so it is unclear why such dubious ways of unconscious bias training are implemented in the first place if we can do very little to get rid of them.

The IAT was created in 1995 as a measure of associative knowledge, and not prejudice or bias (Erwin, 2007; Nosek, et al., 2005). The IAT is a sorting task in which participants are required to use keys on a keyboard to categorise pictures or words into one of two categories. Participants are asked to respond quickly to the visual stimuli, in a matter of milliseconds. This can be done with a versatile set of concepts, for example, it can be done with flowers and insects (Greenwald, et al., 1998). The underlying premise of the IAT is that “if two concepts are associated, it is easy to give the same response to ex[amples] of both” (Erwin, 2007).

Unbeknownst to common knowledge, the IAT has a weak test-retest reliability value. This means that this test does not have a very good track record of giving us the same test results if we take the test multiple times. In psychology, the minimum test-retest reliability value a diagnostic test should have is 0.7 for it to be considered reliable (Glen.; Nguyen, 2019). Ideally, a diagnostic test would strive to have a value of 0.8 (Ngyuen, 2019). The IAT test, at best and as proclaimed by its founders, has a value of 0.6 (Nosek, et al., 2005), although its mean average reports lower values (Ngyuen, 2019). These are weak scores and, in statistical terms, considered, at its best value, “questionable” (Glen). This is also one of the reasons for which you cannot use the IAT in courtrooms or legal settings (Azar, 2008). Many psychologists are calling for a more robust and concrete vetting process of this tool before it is used as a diagnostic or educational tool for the public.

Various studies and meta-analyses have found that the IAT does not predict real life behaviour (Blanton, et al., 2009; Meissner, et al., 2019; Oswald, et al., 2013), therefore, it cannot tell you how racist an individual is or how he or she would treat others in real life. According to two particular meta-analyses by Blanton et. al (2009) and Oswald et al. (2013), the IAT did not predict any changes or biases in discernable behaviour. They found that the IAT was no better at predicting discriminatory behaviour any more than explicit measures. In other words, asking people whether or not they thought someone would act in a discriminatory way was just as effective at predicting discriminatory behaviour as the IAT. When the founders of the IAT first spoke of the test in the 1990s, they were ambitious about its potential. However, recently, they conceded that the test IAT does not live up to its previous claims (Greenwald, et al., 2015).

The results of the IAT are also context dependent: studies have shown that changing the language of bilingual participants can also alter its results a significant amount (Ogunnaike, et al., 2010); mental and cognitive ability affects IAT results so those who are older might be at a disadvantage (MacFarland & Crouch, 2002); familiarity with the test also reaps different results (Ottaway, et al., 2001). The IAT is unable to filter out all of this 'noise' to give us valid and reliable results or bearings of prejudice.

The most charitable findings have shown that the IAT test can have a minor positive impact on participants, but these impacts are short-lived (Lai, et al., 2016). Conversely, there is some evidence to suggest that the IAT exacerbates negative attitudes to some racial groups (Hussey & De Houwer, 2018).

Aside from the IAT method to improve implicit bias towards minority racial groups, what about other diversity training methods to improve perceptions? The literature regarding the positive effects of perception alteration with regard to diversity training is also incoherent and much further investigation is needed. However, what many studies have systematically identified is the immediate dislike or unwillingness of participants or employees to be imposed with such perception-changing efforts. This resistance can also have other potential negative effects, such as distrust toward colleagues (Sanchez & Medkik, 2004) and increased negative perceptions and stereotypes (Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015).

Training programmes which sought to actively "mentally control" (Macrae et al. 1994, p.1) participants' stereotyping may fall victim to the 'rebound effect' (Macrae, et al., 1994). This is where participants are taught to actively suppress unwanted thoughts, but these thoughts flare up with stronger force than if they were never suppressed in the first place. This leads us to question current methods of challenging our existing stereotypes about people that could have negative effects on the way we interact with others.

If these are some of the harmful effects of the current contemporary diversity training programmes, we need to think about its wider effect on people's behaviour and the potential ripple-effect for wider society.

AWARENESS TRAINING

A large portion of diversity training programmes focus on building awareness among majority participants about the perceived concerns and experiences of minority employees. The reason why such programmes are so popular is due to their easy-to-implement nature. Some of these methods include exclusive mentoring programmes for majority-group employees and for minority-group employees alike (although focusing on different outcomes), lectures and workshops, and onboarding sessions for new employees.

Precisely identifying exactly what is taught in these awareness training schemes is a difficult task because the content varies from scheme to scheme. There is a huge variety of strategies within awareness training and there is no homogeneity in the content that is taught to staff. Some diversity consultants are focused on trying to build racial minority employees' confidence, whilst others seem to be making racial majority-employees functionally more sensitive to their supposed racist proclivities, and others adopt both methods, among others. The lack of consistency is one of the pitfalls of awareness training as much of what is taught is a product of the ideological beliefs of the diversity consultant in charge. There is no independent regulatory body that approves and standardises the thousands of awareness schemes that exist today within diversity programmes. Likewise, there is very little regulation of diversity programs more broadly. Therefore, we do not necessarily know what we are getting ourselves into when we hire diversity consultants to deliver their awareness schemes. In short, these are decisions that should be taken with a great deal of care and attention.

Considering that some of these awareness training schemes form a fundamental and mandatory part of diversity programmes, we need to be asking ourselves very serious questions regarding the role and the utility of these awareness schemes. It is important that we encourage employees to be able to express a diverse range of views in both casual and professional settings in the workplace. However, what is often problematic with awareness schemes is the way in which they are taught. For example, the core tenets of Critical Race Theory are taught in some diversity programmes as truth and are expected to be assimilated by participants without giving space to alternative or opposing viewpoints. This is counterproductive to maintaining a working environment where there ought to be a free-market of ideas and healthy discussion.

For example, when informing white (or other racial majority-group) employees about what they can do to become less racist or 'anti-racist', they are likely to be taught about 'microaggressions', how privileged they are by virtue of being white (or other identity traits), how their lack of comfort regarding race is evidence of their racism, and understanding that being on time to work is somehow regarded as 'white'. Whilst we are

not opposed to others being allowed to express these ideas, what we are opposed to is the stifling of open and free discussion and the ability of individuals to challenge and interrogate such ideas. Indeed these concepts often go unchallenged in the fear that doing so would mean that those challenging them would be labelled 'racist', 'xenophobic' or 'hateful'.

Therefore, we would like to provide a brief analysis of the above concepts so that we can understand what they actually mean for us in the workplace:

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions are seen as socially-accepted, everyday slights, invalidations or subtle discriminatory acts toward people of colour or other types of minorities. This definition is deliberately left broad and unclear, but according to clinical psychologist, Monnica. T Williams, microaggressions can come in physical forms and verbal forms and can be both negative and positive statements (2020). This contributes further to its ambiguity. Williams and other Critical Race Theory scholars give non-exhaustive examples of microaggressions: "black people are good at basketball" (Williams 2020, p.6), "Asian people are bad at driving" (Williams 2020, p.6), saying society should be a melting pot (University of Minnesota, n.d.), asking people what country they were born in or what languages they speak, crossing the street to avoid a black person or putting change on the counter to avoid touching the hand of a minority-ethnic cashier (Williams 2020, p.6).

Microaggressions, as a concept, have been critiqued by some academics for a lack of scientific rigour with respect to the research. Studies have often used biased populations to retrieve data, small sample sizes and have not been vetted for reliability (Nagai, 2017). Some social scientists have labelled the concept as pseudoscientific as its definition, empirical assumptions and boundaries are ambiguous (Nagai, 2017).

We do agree that there can be cases of offence where individuals are targeted due to their ethnicity, appearance, skin colour etc. Individuals can experience genuinely racist or discriminatory comments or be subject to discriminatory actions committed by others. When such discriminatory acts are committed, they are done so with the intention to make the victim feel bullied, unwanted or unwelcome. However, with microaggressions, intention does not matter. Therefore, it does not matter if the 'perpetrator' of the perceived microaggression has good intention or no intent to deliberately harm others. With microaggressions, what matters is the subjective experience of the 'victim'. This means that the 'victim' does not even need to be truly victimised because their feelings matter more than the act itself, what was said, or the intention. As Campbell and Manning have noticed, what this can contribute to is an appeal to victimhood or victim mentality (2018) and the maligning of those with no bad intention, that say nothing of direct consequence.

To help illustrate this point, we could consider something that could

happen in the workplace: a white person and a 'person of colour' are having a casual conversation during their lunch break. They are discussing different types of cuisine and are expressing their opinions on the foods they like best. The person of colour identifies as South Asian. They eventually touch on South Asian cuisine and the white person says that they do not enjoy food from this cuisine as an expression of genuine held taste. The South Asian colleague is hurt and offended by this comment and deems it as offensive to his or her cultural background (i.e. a microaggression). Under the microaggression model, all that matters is the subjective feelings of the South Asian colleague. Instead of allowing for civil discourse to understand intent, which ought to be normative in situations that could result in communicative breakdown, we place the focus on an individual's supposed grievance. Again, we return to the point where employees are being encouraged to assume the worst in one another. We would not sensibly conduct ourselves in this fashion in our personal relations and such an approach should not be extended to the workplace or any other organisational environment.

WHITE FRAGILITY

Some diversity programmes have adopted the relatively new concept put forward by Robin DiAngelo in her book, *White Fragility* (2011). In short, racial majority group participants are taught that white people are sheltered in society by their 'whiteness' and any attempt to confront them on issues relating to racism will provoke defensiveness, anger and clumsiness. DiAngelo also argues that all white people are 'complicit' and 'invested' in racism (DiAngelo 2011). This means that, if you are a white person, it does not matter what you believe or how you treat people, you are fundamentally racist and you need to functionally rewire yourself to make yourself sensitive to your racist tendencies.

The issue with this concept is that it is not based on any substantiating evidence (as much of the evidence in her book comes from dubious anecdotal evidence) and it is also an unfalsifiable claim. It is impossible for a white person to prove that they **do not** have 'white fragility', in the same way it is impossible for someone to prove that they are not possessed by an evil spirit. Another problem with this theory is that it is rooted in a kafkatrap logical fallacy (Church, 2018) whereby any attempt of a white person making the claim that he/she is not racist is taken as evidence of his/her racism.

We hold that such an approach perpetuates racialist thinking and should have no role in a modern workplace. Indeed such an approach only guarantees unnecessary division and friction.

WHITE PRIVILEGE



In a similar fashion to 'white fragility', 'white privilege' is the idea that certain racial groups (i.e. white people) have structural benefits and privileges bestowed on them because of their skin colour (or other identity traits). Such privileges are categorically denied to oppressed groups or people of colour by society. It is assumed that those with white privilege are mostly unaware of their privileges, yet ironically, seek to uphold the structures in society which give rise to these unequally distributed benefits.

The problem with this idea is that it is commonly used as an absolute argument: you must be white in order to succeed or have privileges in life. White privilege is a gross oversimplification of the real intricacies inherent in everyday life. This theory does an extremely poor job of defining what privilege is exactly, and it does an even worse job of isolating all the different factors which can contribute to different outcomes. For example, some studies have shown that children born to single parent households are less likely to succeed at school (Downey, 1994; Krein & Beller, 1988; Mueller & Cooper, 1986; Ziol-Guest, et al., 2015) and are more likely to get sidetracked by destructive behaviours like drugs and alcohol (Ledoux, et al., 2002). Further studies show the nuance in this multivariate problem and suggest that single-parent households coincide with a lower socioeconomic status, which is, perhaps, one of the strongest factors in school success (Wood & Seiki, 2013). When we delve into this further, single parent households have also been suggested to have an impact on a child's overall behaviour and tendencies (Harkness, et al., 2020; McLanahan, et al., 2013). This is irrespective of the ethnicity of the child. These factors are overlooked when analysing racial disparities in outcomes, particularly for people of racial minority backgrounds and of lower socioeconomic status.

For over a decade now, the average working-class white boy is less likely to be admitted into university and succeed academically compared to other ethnic groups (UK Government, 2020; Government, 2019). White men also account for the vast majority of homeless people in the country (UK Government, 2018). The 'white privilege' argument simply does not hold up here or at least it doesn't illuminate the complex ways advantage and disadvantage play out in society. As one can see, many intricacies and nuanced details, such as the aforementioned example, are left out in this

concept. As a result, the success of targeted majority group candidates is often wrongfully assumed to be because of their skin colour. This is a highly reductionist version of events, that not only oversimplifies, but also serves to generalise vast swathes of the population, the basis of prejudice.

This type of thinking is regressive and encourages such unverified assumptions to prevail in the workplace. It can also encourage shame or guilt among racial majority groups. We start seeing others as large collective groups and we override our ability to treat people as individuals. We equally override our desires to want to find commonalities with other people. When working in groups, we ought to treat people on a personable and individual basis.

PROFESSIONALISM STANDARDS

There have been cases of diversity training programmes trying to call for a culture-change of 'Western' practices of professionalism. This phenomenon has been well-documented in diversity training programmes in the US, in particular. The central claim to this is that contemporary professional practices, such as, for example, being on time, common workplace attire, and speaking Standard English all 'centralise whiteness' and give way to institutionalised racism (Gray, 2019).

Not only is it very difficult to understand the poorly defined nature of 'white professionalism', it perpetuates the soft bigotry of low expectations, and there is very little solution offered in lieu of the current dynamics of workplace professionalism. We would argue that from a managerial and personal-development perspective, having excellent time-management skills aids employees and teams to hit deadlines effectively, and there is a plethora of evidence to back this up (Ahmad, et al., 2012; Britton & Tesser, 1991). Additionally, it is common knowledge that being punctual for businesses means being able to attend to emergencies and other time-sensitive issues, particularly those that concern healthcare and childrens' safeguarding for which there ought never to be a compromise.

Such awareness schemes are quick to promote what they perceive as 'progressive' and 'tolerant' ideals in an attempt to showcase moral virtue or 'doing good'. However, what is ironic about these schemes, and perhaps what makes them most problematic, is that they function on hyper-generalised and unproven assumptions of people of minority backgrounds. Not only is this a form of stereotyping, but it also strips away the importance of intention, goodwill and personal agency, consequently, infantilising people of racial or ethnic minority backgrounds. In lay terms, what these awareness schemes simultaneously assume is that people of racial minority backgrounds are 'delicate', 'fragile' and 'special' and ought to be dealt with in a particular way. If they are not treated as such, they will be 'offended', 'upset', or 'angry'. This, evidently, is not the case in reality and many members of racial minority backgrounds would be aghast at being described as such.

Infantilising people of racial minority backgrounds can create a

'playground'-like dynamic in the workplace which encourages people to see others in racial terms, thus contributing to divisiveness and low motivation. The workplace must be a place where we are able to communicate with each other freely to promote higher levels of work-productivity and, overall, employee job satisfaction. We believe in approaching our working environment and our colleagues with an optimistic and well-intentioned outlook. Only by assuming the best in others and in their intentions and holding ourselves and each other to the highest standards and values, are we able to navigate difficult social and professional issues with pragmatism and dignity. This is also where good communication and interpersonal skills are of significant importance and should be a focus of any future training.

WHAT TYPE OF DIVERSITY MATTERS MOST FOR WORKING ENVIRONMENTS?

Diversity matters. But it is not the type of diversity that we've discussed up until this point. We vociferously encourage employers to embrace the idea of encouraging diversity of opinion, perspective, individual experience, skill-sets, personalities and competencies within the company culture and among its staff. Chen (2018) summarises the data available on deep-level and surface level diversity available today: "Different studies have found support for the role of deep-level attributes that drive performance in tasks such as problem-solving and decision-making. In contrast, these studies have found little support for the effect of demographic variables on group performance in these tasks."

Although traditional diversity training schemes have operated for a relatively short time, they have surprisingly unravelled many alternative issues (e.g. the need to promote a diversity of skills) which would have otherwise been ignored. We urge that businesses and recruitment professionals start talking about these issues in a public setting as they could unlock new information regarding job satisfaction and work productivity. Again open, brave and free conversation remains the key to progress.

SKILLS AND FUNCTIONAL DIVERSITY

Research has shown us that teams who are able to work cohesively and enjoy working with people from various backgrounds and experiences are able to do so due to their agreeability and openness to experience (Lall-Trail, 2020). Similarly, when diversity outcomes are contrived (e.g. when companies commit to quotas or other diversity 'check-box' exercises), research has shown us that this does not necessarily produce positive outcomes and can contribute to communicative breakdown (Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Kamalnath, 2020). This also brings to surface one of the weaknesses of traditional diversity training schemes – they often

neglect the role of interpersonal, managerial and communicative skills in the workplace between people in the first place, and they neglect touching on optimising the conditions that allow for team work to flourish. Simultaneously, we realise the dire need for employees, employers and managers to develop and diversify their interpersonal, communication and managerial skills.

According to J. Richard Hackman, a pioneer in organisational behaviour, there are three types of 'enabling conditions' that allow great team-work to happen: a compelling direction; a strong structure; and a supportive context (Hackman, 2002).

Through trial and error, businesses have found that incomplete information and an 'us vs them' mentality among team-members both contribute largely to a collaborative breakdown.

Here are Hackman's 'enabling conditions' (2002):

COMPELLING DIRECTION



All team members must be clear on the objectives that they are trying to achieve. These goals need to be challenging, but not too difficult that it erodes motivation. We strongly advise team leaders to reflect upon the clarity of their goals, ensuring that goals are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based).

STRONG STRUCTURE



Teams need the right amount of people working on projects. Teams also need to have the right blend of skills and experiences which allow the team to attain their desired outcome. This comes from understanding that each person has their own unique set of strengths and weaknesses and may have had different personal experiences that may prove advantageous to the team's project delivery (e.g. an individual who has lived in multiple countries and may also speak multiple languages). Therefore, when recruiting people to join a team, we must consider the individual's unique experience and skill-set. Having been born in the same city, it is very possible that two individuals of different ethnic backgrounds have a lot in common, for instance. Conversely, two individuals of the same ethnicity, but with different geographical and cultural upbringings may produce large differences in perspective. Therefore, recruiters must ensure they 'get to know a person' during the recruitment process whereby they are asking relevant questions to retrieve information relating to a candidate's experience, worldviews and skill-set. In specific or competitive posts, it may be useful to ask candidates to complete skills-based quizzes or simulated work samples, or use credible personality-based psychometric tests to understand the candidate.



Aside from a team context, the methods an individual uses to execute tasks is also a very telling indication of the individual's productivity. For example, good personal time-management skills can also lead to a higher productivity rate, and implementing an effective method to prioritise tasks helps an individual to self-manage. These are the positive and transferable skills that employers ought to be investing in for their employees.

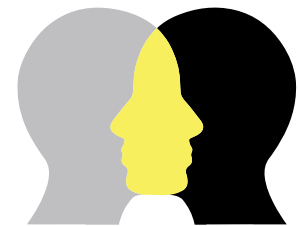
SUPPORTIVE CONTEXT

Support should be provided so that all the resources needed to complete goals are acquired. This may include having teaching and training programmes for staff, technical support, pastoral support and acquiring appropriate funding for projects. This also extends into the realms of proper remuneration and compensation for team members. The way teams work has changed considerably since Hackman's initial conceptualisation of 'enabling conditions', and this means that teams now need to learn how to provide a supportive framework in a globalised and digital world.

SHARED MINDSET

"Distance and [identity] diversity, as well as digital communication and changing membership [of teams], make them especially prone to 'us vs them' thinking and incomplete information" (Haas & Mortenson, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary that team members are united with a shared set of values, a common shared philosophy to start to think beyond their subgroups, whether that be on identity terms or internal group politics.

Therefore, we emphasise the importance of reflecting upon the way in which we implement traditional diversity exercises and recruitment procedures. Although they may be done with good intent, are we doing so as a 'check-box' exercise for better public relations? Are we considering people on an individual basis or for their group identity? Do we know much about the individual's life-philosophy, experience, cognitive competence or personality when we hire them? Do we know much about the concepts and theoretical underpinning of the diversity programmes we are investing in? These are essential questions businesses must begin to ask themselves.



PERSONALITY

Although Hackman deemed personality secondary to his 'enabling conditions' for team work, we still understand the importance and the difference a diversity of personality can make. This is because there is evidence to suggest that employers should be hiring based on a range of different personality types that should help across different departments and positions (Barrick & Mount, 2005). This is especially true for knowledge-based businesses (Hsieh, et al., 2011).

In the past, research relating to personality and group performance yielded mixed results, and part of this reason was due to the fact that personality could not be defined clearly, and therefore, it could not be measured appropriately. However, one of the biggest advances in psychology has been the Big 5 personality model, also known as the five-factor model of personality. This five-factor model is based on five main personality traits: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (OCEAN). Although the model has some room for improvement regarding its scope for which it is actively being worked on, this personality framework is critically acclaimed for its reliability and validity and it has a test-retest reliability score which is higher than the Implicit Association Test.

As found by McCrae and Costa, the model's test-retest coefficients vary between 0.86 to 0.92 for each of the individual traits (2010). This is a strong score and it means that if one were to take the test repeatedly, the results would not vary by a huge amount, indicating that the test works mostly independently of external factors, unlike the IAT. Its reliability and validity have also allowed it to gain popularity over the famous Myers-Briggs personality test within psychology. Additionally, the five-factor model was constructed as a response to a huge body of data unlike the Myers-Briggs test. However, what is important to note is that the five-factor model presents trait tendencies on a continuum. There have been studies which have shown that the five-factor model has predicted effects on socioeconomic status and cognitive ability (Roberts, et al., 2006), academic achievement (Poropat, 2009), happiness and well-being (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998) and many other aspects of the human experience.

Studies have found that teams who exhibit higher levels of extraversion, mental ability, openness to experience, conscientiousness and emotional stability have more work performance success when the tasks involved are based on interpersonal interactions (Barrick, et al., 1998; Liao, et al., 2013; Mount, et al., 1998; Neuman & Wright, 1999). Therefore, if the tasks at hand are teamwork-orientated, there is a case to be made for having such personality traits represented across the said team.

The very early models of team personality diversity showed that it would be useful for teams to be more homogeneous regarding personality traits because compatibility among team members is assured as a result. This could be understood with the common saying 'like attracts like'. However, emerging research has revealed the nuance of team personality diversity. For example, homogeneity with respect to low levels of

neuroticism (i.e. emotional stability) would be positive for team social cohesion (van Vianen & De Dreu, 2001). However, diversity for other traits such as extraversion may be useful for team work where there is a variety in the nature of the workload. For example, team members who exhibit extraverted tendencies can fulfil people-facing and 'energising' roles, whilst others high in conscientiousness or cognition would be great at working independently and getting the task done at hand such as writing reports (Mohammed & Angell, 2003; Sackett & Walmsley, 2014). Conscientiousness refers to an individual's ability to self-motivate and set their own tasks to complete, making those with high levels of conscientiousness able to work in remote locations or without much need for instruction.

We can potentially look toward personality as a reason for which some groups are better able to work with people from different cultures than other groups. This is not to say that those who do not exhibit these personality tendencies cannot work well at all with people from different cultures, but those who end up working very efficiently with cross-cultural teams tend to have such personality tendencies. Unfortunately, many diversity programmes overlook this in an attempt to brand a lack of racial or identity cohesion as racism. As mentioned before, teams that have people who exhibit a high mean level of openness to experience are more likely to work well and enjoy working in teams in which there are people from cultures and experiences they have never seen before. People high in openness to experience are fascinated and curious with novel ideas and things from people to objects. This idea is further reinforced by Anglim et al.'s study on attitudes to workplace diversity of identity traits (Anglim, et al., 2019). Those who were able to get along with people of different identity traits were more likely to embody the values of universalism (Anglim et al. 2019).

OPINIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

The way in which we view the world and our individual perspectives about things are as unique as our own thumbprints. We may share similar ways about thinking of things with others in some areas, but we can also differ in other areas. Our differences in perspective can lead to an exposure of alternative ideas to which we are not accustomed. Usually, when we see things differently to another person or disagree with them about a problem, we are exposed to new ways of looking at things which can cause cognitive conflict. Cognitive conflict is not necessarily the same as social or affective conflict, but it is simply a discrepancy in two or more different ways of thinking. Cognitive conflict is a positive thing as our ideas are challenged and further improved (Amason, 1997).

Cognitive conflict is crucial for thinking about issues critically and it also plays a vital part in making decisions in the workplace in multidisciplinary teams. If we are to think about the decision making process logically, having a diversity of perspective can be helpful in many ways (Jackson, 1996). For example, it can be useful in the preliminary stages of decision-

making during 'environmental scanning'. This is when team members of varying opinions get together in the early stages of problem solving to think through an issue. Their diverse perspectives "should provide a more comprehensive view of the possible issues that might be placed on the team's agenda, including both threats and opportunities" (Jackson, 1996, p.60). Once this is done, diverse perspectives are also useful in helping teams interpret new information during the problem solving process to come up with creative solutions that increase the team's ability to "foresee all possible costs, benefits and side-effects" (Cowan, 1986; Haythorn, 1968; Hoffman, 1959; Hoffman & Maier, 1961; Pearce & Ravlin, 1987; Porac & Howard, 1990; Simon, 1987; Triandis, Hall & Ewen, 1965 as cited in Jackson 1996).

However, one aspect that we need to understand about decision making in the workplace is that it is not always performed in a rational manner at all times. This is because even when expertise is guaranteed within individuals in a team, that expertise or those ideas are not always used when the conflicting or alternative ideas outnumber this expertise, and consequently, this expertise is often ignored. In the same way an individual can lack confidence, a team may "lack confidence that a deviant opinion is correct" (Jackson, 1996, p. 61). This phenomenon has been described in studies as 'truth supported wins' and what these studies have shown is that if a rational or a correct solution is thought of by a lone person with no ally in a team, the team is highly unlikely to adopt that correct solution. "Such evidence suggests that better decision-making and problem-solving should occur when team members have overlapping domains of expertise, instead of a sole expert for each relevant knowledge domain" (Jackson, 1996, p. 61). This potentially makes the case for recruiters requiring individuals to also have a broad and diverse skill-set in the domains in which they work.

WHAT KIND OF ORGANISATION OR BUSINESS DO YOU WANT?



You have the freedom to decide what 'success' means to your business. For some businesses, success is knowing how many people's lives have been positively affected as a result of their work, for others it may be about increasing market share, or expanding its brand awareness across the nation, or maybe even all of these options. However you decide to interpret what success means to you, it all starts with asking yourself important questions about what your organisation values most and identifying your own unique needs.

Here are some aspects of your business to consider when recruiting employees:



FINANCIAL GROWTH, PRODUCTIVITY AND INNOVATION

Many in the media have pointed towards studies showing that diversity, as understood conventionally, can lead to financial growth. However, the way in which these articles characterise the studies can be misleading. In these articles, there is often a lack of distinction between what is meant by surface-level diversity and deep-level diversity and this can lead to inaccurate assumptions. When studies that follow the scientific methodology examine the effects of diversity in the workplace, there are two ways in which they categorise the type of diversity in question: surface-level diversity accounts for all types of diversity which are visible to the human eye (e.g. ethnicity, gender, age, appearance, height, a university degree etc.) and deep-level diversity which is diversity pertaining to all things which we cannot see immediately (e.g. experience, perspective, opinion, intelligence, competence, personality etc.). When the distinction is not made in such articles, we are often led to an assumed congruence of surface-level diversity and deep-level diversity, almost as if they are interchangeable things. To illustrate this point, consider this section written in Forbes:

"It shows that diversity is not just a metric to be strived for, it is actually an integral part of a successful revenue generating business. Of course, this makes sense because diversity means diversity of minds, ideas, and approaches – which allows teams to find a solution that takes into account multiple angles the problem, thus making the solution stronger, well rounded and optimized. Therefore, diversity is key for a company's bottom line."

(Powers, 2018).

There are two things that we can draw from the above statement. The first is that surface-level diversity could mean deep-level diversity, and therefore surface level diversity will fuel revenue increases. This is a logical fallacy and a faulty generalisation. The following example exhibits the same logical fallacy that the author has used:

Eating hamburgers gives me energy. More energy means I can run faster. Therefore, eating more hamburgers will mean I can run faster.

The example's conclusion is a faulty conclusion. It is absurd to say that eating more hamburgers will make us run faster without extra substantiating evidence. In the same way, the author cannot say having racially diverse teams will necessarily even play a part in generating more revenue for business without extra substantiating evidence. The study that the author quoted may show a correlation between the two factors, however, correlation is not the same thing as causation which the author seems to suggest. Even companies that favour conventional diversity schemes, such as McKinsey & Company have picked up on this conflation that we see to be prevalent in media articles: "...Correlation does not equal causation (greater gender and ethnic diversity in corporate leadership doesn't automatically translate into more profit)" (Hunt, et al., 2015).

What we have been suggesting throughout this guide and where we would agree with the article in Forbes, is that having deep-level diversity can be beneficial for team work, social cohesion and decision making, as evidence shows us.

However, where we would fundamentally disagree with the statement made in Forbes is that surface-level diversity automatically means deep-level diversity. The question we must be asking ourselves here is if we were to believe that surface-level diversity means deep-level diversity, doesn't this suggest that what we perceive of as being visibly different to us necessarily equates to thinking differently to us also? Can this thinking be stereotypical? What evidence do we have to suggest that those who are superficially different to us, think differently to us? If there is such evidence, is this necessarily due to prejudice, bias or discrimination?

The issue with thinking about diversity in the conventional sense is that:

"It assumes that diversity is beneficial to groups because people who are 'different' bring different perspectives to the table. Although this is sometimes true, this assumption implies that the person who is different always brings a different perspective to the table, which may put more responsibility on the shoulders of individuals who, due to their distinctiveness, may already be in a difficult position in the organization. This assumption also suggests that people who are not different on the surface have nothing unique to add to the group. This expectation is problematic because, given the self-fulfilling nature of expectancies (Snyder, 1992), it may hinder the organization from uncovering and benefiting from all of the diversity that it truly possesses."

(Phillips, et al., 2006)

Therefore, how should we think about financial growth in a business context? The ways in which a business can grow financially is heavily dependent on the specific circumstances the business finds itself in and the nature of the business itself. However, there is a case to be made that innovation plays a part in financial success, particularly for small-to-medium-size enterprises (Bigliardi, 2013). As Bigliardi states, her "results show that the innovations developed for the customer and those developed to differentiate from the competitors increase financial performance. Innovative new products, in fact, better address customer needs, which then positively influences willingness to pay and adoption likelihood" (2013, p. 252). However, we are still yet to determine the direct effects of having more creative or innovative employees as a direct causation of increased business revenue.

Some studies have gone further to show that while innovation and creativity are attributes that can lead to better company success, having innovation and creativity without action is meaningless (Weinzimmer, et al., 2011). These studies place a strong focus on the reactivity and the propensity for businesses to do something quickly to implement cognition, emotional intelligence and the strengths of employees that, in turn, reap the benefits of creativity and innovation.

WORKPLACE COHESION AND EMPOWERMENT



Workplace cohesion, employee satisfaction and empowerment have been on the forefront of the business agenda for the last few decades. Employees who are both emotionally and cognitively satisfied with their jobs tend to be satisfied with their quality of life in general (Heller, et al., 2002). Considering how well studied job satisfaction is in psychological literature, it is no surprise that individuals have started taking job satisfaction as a personal responsibility, pursuing work that they find of 'quality' and 'worthwhile' and avoiding work which would otherwise be of no emotional fulfilment.

In the same way, businesses are recognising the importance of fostering a work environment in which employees are supported pastorally and emotionally as increased levels of job satisfaction have also been linked to higher levels of work productivity (Halkos & Bousinakis, 2010; Cook, 2008). Promoting employee work satisfaction has "inherent humanitarian value" (Smith et al as cited in Cook 2008, p.3), and given the recent proclivity of corporate entities wanting to make a social impact, this is one the most cost-effective and easy-to-implement ways of doing so.

Where employees feel like they cannot fulfill their greater purpose or engage in work that may seem immediately irrelevant to what they are currently doing, corporate volunteering schemes are a convenient way to tackle this issue and may result in higher job satisfaction and work engagement (Seunghye, et al., 2018). Here, companies set aside some time, during paid working hours, for employees to select a charity or community initiative that they wish to engage in.

It is useful to know that engaging with the community, irrespective of the size of the business, usually facilitates positive public relations. This is because when the public are aware of a company's social efforts, they are more likely to perceive that the business is performing well, particularly in smaller community areas (Besser, 1999).

A report written by the British Psychological Society (2017) to inform effective policy practice has laid out a detailed overview of what it means for employees to feel fulfilled and engaged at work and how employers can encourage this. The report covers some of the factors that can result in poor productivity and employee satisfaction, such as zero-hour contracts, a lack of autonomy, job insecurity and a lack of adequate remuneration that can affect job satisfaction. Additionally, it touches upon evidence based methods to allow for better mental-health, wellbeing and satisfaction at work that employers can implement (e.g. workplace coaching or the Workplace Wellbeing Charter in England).

This report has also picked up on the concept of 'neurodiversity' and the role it plays in workplace engagement and satisfaction. The report defines it thus:

"Neurodiversity refers to differences in people's skills and abilities, for example some people have an outstanding memory but find

comprehension difficult. Whilst everyone has strengths and weaknesses, for some people the difference between them is significant.

For neurodiverse people, some tasks will seem easy and others impossible. This often leads employers, job coaches and authority figures to conclude that the individual is 'not trying', when undertaking particular tasks. Inconsistent performance is mistaken for a bad attitude or poor motivation, which leads to discrimination and perceptions of unfairness on behalf of the individual. Neurodiversity typically encompasses a range of conditions: ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia/ Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) Tourette Syndrome (TS), Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia.

These conditions are thought to be developmental, meaning that people are born with them, and they develop in childhood and adolescence. Some conditions affect behaviour and are typically diagnosed through the National Health Service, whereas the others are deemed educational or practical, and are normally diagnosed by educational psychologists and occupational therapists working with children"

(British Psychological Society 2017, p. 12)

What is important to note is that the purported evidence of systemic discrimination against 'people of colour' and certain gender groups is mostly based on looking at outcome disparities. That is to say that when we hear about systemic discrimination in the workplace, in the majority of cases, the evidence that will be provided to prove its existence will focus on outcome disparities, for example, "only x% of black employees occupy leadership positions compared to their white counterparts". However, this does not, itself, provide evidence of systemic discrimination. To do that, one would also need to investigate if there is concrete evidence of barriers put in place for such groups (i.e. is there legitimate evidence of unequal opportunity?).

Systemic-based claims require systemic evidence.

As mentioned in an earlier section of this guide, the conversation changes when it comes to disabilities. This is because there are real physical barriers which mean that those with disabilities may not have an equality of opportunity when it comes to recruitment procedures and workplace engagement. For instance, it would be unethical and unfair to expect someone who is blind to complete an online verbal reasoning test without auditory support or braille. Similarly, it would be unethical and unfair to expect someone with autism spectrum disorder to engage in socially based activities at work in the same way others could as they may not interpret social cues, facial expressions and social interactions in the same way others may.

As suggested before, when looking at the ensemble of data that is available on the effects of surface-level or racial diversity on firm performance and workplace cohesion, the story is still unclear. There do exist individual studies that show positive effects of surface-level diversity on business performance and workplace cohesion, as the aforementioned Forbes article written by Powers in 2018 hinted. However, these types of studies are not surprising as they do more to show us how humans perceive each other and interact with each other than they do to make a strong case for implementing surface-level diversity in the workplace.

Researchers have pointed out that how people from similar (ethnic) backgrounds interact may have nothing at all to do with racial prejudice and could be a case of familiarity or the novelty effect (Liao, et al., 2011). The situation is complex, and any attempt to denude the complex reality of human interaction may also be a sign of cherry-picking evidence or confirmation bias.

However, when considering surface-level diversity, we need to look at the bigger picture and the other data that are equally available. By doing this, we realise that meta-analyses, that look at an ensemble of data, have shown us that increasing racial diversity or gender diversity in the workplace does not indicate a positive relation with respect to social cohesion, team performance and possibly financial indicators (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007). Regrettably, research into diversity of any kind is still in its early stages of any sophisticated progression. Therefore, we understand the need for the investment into further research on this topic. Furthermore, we need to equally reflect on the financial investments we are making, as organisations, on diversity claims which have not been agreed upon unanimously in the scientific community.

Leaving surface level diversity itself aside, what can be said of diversity training? Fortunately, the data seems to be more cohesive in this aspect. Diversity training does very little to change people's behaviour (Chang, et al., 2019; Dobbin, 2009; Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Dover, et al., 2020; Noon, 2018; Paluck & Green, 2009). The totality of the evidence present up to date shows that it can have more adverse effects than positive effects (Dobbin 2009). As a diversity researcher puts it, "a diversity task force is something you do in-house, diversity training is a product you buy from a consulting firm" and that it doesn't work; "for decades, diversity management programs flourished with no evidence whatsoever about their effects and their success" (Kalev as cited in McGregor 2016). Consulting firms use the prevention of legal trouble as a marketing tactic for mandatory training programs, even without data showing their effectiveness (Kalev as cited in McGregor 2016). Additionally, when Kalev was asked by McGregor about what diversity managers (in the workplace) have to say on her research in her experience, she responded:

"They have the same inclination from their own work." (2016)

And for diversity consultants that run these programmes for businesses? Kalev responded:

"They don't like us so much -- which makes us even more assured [of] our findings." (2016)

Therefore, if we are to use our monetary investment rationally, we ought to invest it where we are guaranteed results. The strategies to improve workplace cohesion come from targeting social interaction and task performance through different angles, and this starts with having a clear sense of direction and vision.

CLARITY OF MISSION, GOALS AND VALUES

As indicated in our previous section, Hackman's 'essential conditions' for ensuring good team work to happen means that all team members have a shared direction and a shared mindset. This is pivotal for any business to implement across the multiplicity of teams that it may have. Having a clear, precise, and communally shared mindset of team outcomes is beneficial for team performance and team cohesion. We hypothesise that this can have a positive impact on employee job satisfaction too. Learning this, we start to understand how the 'essential conditions' as well as the aforementioned aspects are connected and interdependent. Otherwise said, work cohesion cannot exist without a clarity of mission, goals and values and vice versa. Similarly, employee satisfaction cannot be necessarily guaranteed without work cohesion and a shared mindset.

A shared vision among employees is particularly beneficial for those businesses that wish to make the most out of innovation and consider themselves to be knowledge-based. This is because a shared vision and other elements such as shared goals, culture and shared values are expressions of cognitive social capital that allow for trusting relationships. A shared vision is the extent to which employees share a common "understanding and perspective on the achievement of the network's activities and results" (Exposito-Langa, et al., 2015, p. 3).

On the other hand, social interactions play a critical role in shaping goals and values among the members of the network. Having a shared set of goals and a shared vision means that people have similar perceptions of how to act with others, and for this reason the exchange of ideas and materials should be encouraged.

A common culture refers to the set of institutionalised rules and norms that govern behavior in the workplace (Exposito-Langa, et al., 2015). This may mean having the same attitudes about objectives, routines, work processes and worries. As a result of this, a common culture includes many different aspects, such as codes, language, histories, visions or goals of a company (Exposito-Langa, et al., 2015). All these elements permit and improve the understanding between parties involved in the relationship, thereby facilitating the movement and sharing of knowledge.

HOW DO WE INCREASE MEANINGFUL DIVERSITY?

By understanding the theoretical framework (i.e. Critical Theory) of current diversity work programmes available in the market, we see a concerted effort to try to increase and 'celebrate' differences based on identity. We have spoken about the unjustified and hyper-generalised assumptions

that conventional diversity programmes are based on, such as the idea that racial minority groups 'think differently' to racial majority groups and the idea that majority groups are inherently discriminatory or (unconsciously) biased. Consequently, we start to see how this distances us from the ability to treat others as individuals which can further exacerbate stereotyping or the infantilisation of such minority groups within society and the workplace.

Moreover, if we delve deeper into the nature of such diversity programmes, we find that there is very little emphasis on values like universalism and a colour-blind approach – the idea that someone's skin colour has a minimal role to play in who they are as an individual, but more importantly, how we judge this individual. To make matters worse, such diversity programmes seemingly use a 'cherry-picking' approach to the data that is available on diversity management. As we have described earlier, when looking at such data, we ought to think critically and look for the reasons for which we reap certain results. We must refrain from ascribing causality with correlation, and more importantly, while it can be important to look at unique particularities of the data we have, when making generalisations we must look at the data as a whole, rather than selecting individual bits of data that suit our own political ideologies or agenda.

Therefore, as we have mentioned before, while there are individual studies which demonstrate that having certain types of surface level diversity (e.g. racial or gender-based diversity) can generate positive results on work performance, these are only a small part of the equation. Additionally, for instances for which this may be true, social scientists have yet to find out why surface-level diversity may, at times, contribute to better work performance. As mentioned before, is this a matter of the novelty effect taking place? Is this a matter of in-group and out-group theory? We don't have much clarity on these questions. For this reason, these data, in and of themselves, do not provide concrete justification to overall increase the level of surface-level diversity in the workforce. Again, considering the evidence we have at hand, we must consider where we invest our money to reap the most meaningful results because financial resources are limited, particularly for family-run firms or small-to-medium-sized businesses.

As a result of the 'cherry-picking' and oversimplification of data in such diversity training programmes, we often lose balance and all sense of nuance when it comes to appreciating the differences people have. What the data reveals is that appreciating surface-level differences has a context, a time and a place: that appreciating differences of personality, culture, skill-set etc. is heavily dependent on drawing from our similarities with each other too. Where diversity programmes have failed, we have expressed the need for businesses to think about fostering a shared vision among staff. Data pertaining to human behaviour is dotted with evidence that suggest that people are better off drawing on similarities across people irrespective of their perspective, identity traits, skill-set, life experience and cultural upbringing (Hanel, et al., 2018; Lalonde, et al., 2015; Molinsky & Jang, 2016) .

As a result, another drawback of the current diversity training schemes available to businesses is that they make very little reference to the business' unique and defining values and company culture. The current

diversity training schemes place a heavy emphasis on a perceived political idea that they believe should be socially normative, and this political homogeneity often comes with a lack of tailoring of schemes.

At The Equiano Project, we argue that businesses must understand and articulate their own values and commercial nature, and should not succumb to any recruitment techniques fuelled by divisive political ideologies. One of the underlying messages of this guide is for businesses to be honest and responsible with themselves about the type of work they do, the positions that they recruit into and their own company culture.

Therefore, this guide is not meant to be prescriptive in nature of any sort, but a starting point for all professionals to start thinking about what matters to them most, what alternatives exist to the current 'anti-racist' trope inherent in diversity training schemes, whether or not they are looking at the current data in a critical manner, considering the drawbacks of traditional diversity training programmes, what type of people they want to be interacting with and how and where their money is best spent.

CAN WE 'DO BETTER'?

This section will look at how businesses can fulfil their desire to 'do better' and their needs to employ socially and ethically just policies while considering evidence. This section also encourages businesses to 'know thyself' and understand their own situational context before seeking to adopt new practices. Finally, this section will look at some practical ways for businesses to start focusing on the similarities that bind people together, as well as finding ways to increase a diversity of skills and personalities for the appropriate contexts.

FOCUSING ON TREATING OTHERS AS INDIVIDUALS AND SEEING OURSELVES AS INDIVIDUALS

Developing on the System 1 and System 2 theory of thinking, studies have shown us that for whatever reason traditional diversity programmes fail, some of this failure can be attributed to the fact that it is extremely difficult to rid oneself of our unconscious biases should they exist (Blanton and Jaccard 2008). As mentioned before, this is partly because the very nature of unconscious bias suggests that we do not even know we are having these thoughts. Pair this with the fact that the materials and the content learnt from traditional diversity schemes are fleeting and are usually provided as a one or two week course, we learn that participants forget the majority of what they have learnt and there is very minimal return on investment. This signals that any form of training or intervention, be it skills-based or software-training based, ought not to be a 'check-box' exercise but a systematic and continual effort employed over the long haul

to ensure a perpetual reinforcement of learning (i.e. spaced repetition) (Landauer & Bjork, 1978).

We have established that there is very little we can do to combat our own unconscious biases because it seems as though we have minimal control over them, and the very concept of 'unconscious bias' is yet to be truly figured out by social scientists. Hence any meaningful definition of the term, as it pertains to D&I training, remains highly subjective and prone to political manipulation. A modern business must be aware of these pitfalls and act accordingly.

However, what about our conscious or explicit biases? These are the thoughts and actions we are aware of. Thinking about our conscious biases propels one to assume responsibility for their actions. However, not all conscious biases humans have are at the detriment of others. We also learn that when assuming responsibility for our own actions, we act as individuals, accountable for our own wrongdoings or right-doings. In the same way it possible to train oneself to rid oneself of cognitive biases to some extent (e.g. anchoring bias or confirmation biases) through perpetual and rigorous self-questioning and learning how to think critically, we can also do the same for the actions that we take in everyday life and in the workplace. For example, this can be as simple as asking ourselves questions that reflect universal morals such as, "am I talking to this individual in a respectful and courteous manner?", "have I given everyone in my team an equal and fair opportunity to express their views on my new work endeavour?" or "when interacting with any individual, am I assuming the best in them before I make any conclusive statements about them?".

Although seemingly simple, thinking about the role of civics in the workplace is evermore crucial. Research has shown that companies can benefit from some level of 'civics' or social skills training, and given the recently globalised and digitalised nature of our workforce, being socially apt is vital for ensuring success (Kuruvilla, 2007; Zatkova & Polacek, 2015) (Kuruvilla 2007; Šeben Začková 2014) and learning how to cope with different demands. Some of the practical ways to encourage social skills development are:

IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

According to Zatkova and Polacek's (2015) findings this can be done through the following ways:

- 1 Paying attention to social skills development as the part of higher education and professional training of the future managers. New skills and competencies should be an integral part of employees' professional development to match contemporary needs.
- 2 Supporting future managers and employees with knowledge and tools to develop their own skills needed for the future profession.
- 3 Implementing soft skills training programmes in the workplace.

- 4 Reviewing and updating the knowledge in the managerial work across all sectors and disciplines within a company.
- 5 Implementing life-long learning in the workplace. This strategy works well with corporate volunteering schemes or corporate-subsidised skills learning schemes.
- 6 Increasing the level of social skills of managers at different levels of management through various training and development programs as the part of company training (i.e. diversifying skill-sets).

IMPLEMENTING PROPER CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION TECHNIQUES

Workplace-affective conflict is a negative thing that can affect the social dynamics of the workplace. High levels of affective conflict can have detrimental impacts on an employee's job satisfaction and wellbeing, so it is necessary to ensure that should affective conflicts occur in the workplace, they are dealt with appropriately. However, it is important to know that while affective conflicts can happen due to interpersonal breakdown between sets of individuals, this can also happen in sets of groups in the workplace.

According to Overton and Lowry (2013), trying to do the diagnostic work of conflict is a critical part of conflict resolution. This is so one can understand the exact nature of the conflict. Is this recurring? Is this a one-off event? Is this intense in nature? And so on and so forth. They suggest that it is important for the people trying to resolve conflicts to look at the evidence and the stories that the two conflicting parties present.

Overton and Lowry have also proposed a practical and step-by-step approach to addressing workplace conflicts called the VALUED based model (2013) as found in Table 1 below.

Helpful acronyms related to conflict management^{14 16}

VALUED conflict model
Validate
Ask (open-ended questions)
Listen (to test assumptions)
Uncover interests
Explore options
Decide (on solutions)
Four main listening skills
Ask
Mirroring
Paraphrasing
Prime
TSA's four R's of conflict management
Recognize
Respond with Respect
Resolve and manage
Reflect

Table 1: the VALUED based model for conflict resolution (as cited in Overton and Lowry 2013).

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE DO YOU NEED TO RECRUIT AND HOW?

Answering the above question comes with understanding the exact needs of the business. With respect to recruitment, companies must make an effort to understand the exact nature of the role that is put on offer and the capacity the person will be working in. For example, does the individual primarily need to work with other team members, does the individual need to work mostly on an isolated basis, does the individual need to present orally in front of a lot of people, do they need to travel abroad etc.? It is by configuring the exact nature of the role within its context where the company can understand the personality, cognitive and functional qualities that the role requires. Equally, companies need to utilise their existing conflicts and problems to their advantages. This may include thinking about current employee relations and performance issues to source missing personalities, skills and perspectives that may aid in the betterment of employee relations and performance.

For different posts, a business needs to relatively consider the levels of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism for prospective employees. It will also need to consider required or helpful skills. This is called a job analysis. For example, for a post that requires you to work closely with children and aid them in their learning or psychological development, the individual should have relatively high levels of agreeableness. Similarly, if the post requires that you deal with large amounts of money for corporate clients, you would require someone with high levels of conscientiousness and assertiveness.

It is a general tendency for businesses to look for an 'all-rounder' individual with respect to both personality and competency. However, this can be detrimental to a business because recruiters may lose focus on the true nature of the role. For example, for some administrative positions, there is now a tendency for businesses to seek individuals who are 'outgoing' or 'extremely adaptable'. However, if we were to reduce the very nature of the office based administrative role to its essence, having a high level of openness to experience is not actually necessary as the job is mostly fixated in routine. Those who have moderately lower levels of openness to experience tend to prefer routine and may be better suited for this role.

The best way in determining these personality traits is through psychometric testing in early to mid recruitment stages. There are a variety of valid personality measures that can be used to assess the five-factor model of personality traits. The most popular is the NEO Personality Inventory that has gone through various revisions and is popular due to its reliability (Costa & McCrae, n.d.). There is also a long and short version of the NEO. One of the benefits of the use of the NEO Personality Inventory is that it can assess both broad and narrow personality traits. However, there are other psychometric diagnostic instruments such as the IPIP-300 test which may possibly provide a granular analysis because it contains 300 items (i.e. questions).

As mentioned before, trying to increase other deep level diversity can be done through identifying similarities in personal values with company values in interviews, using simulated work samples in recruitment and encouraging life-long skills based learning in the workplace.

ESTABLISH AN OUTREACH PROGRAMME

One of the most positive steps a modern business can take is to establish a meaningful outreach program. All too often quotas and structures are put in place before any wider effort has been made to engage local communities and drive recruitment in a more positive and inclusive manner. An outreach program can come in various forms:

- Sending representatives into local schools and community clubs with a view to showing young people and other people from various cultural backgrounds that your business is a viable place of employment for them in the future. This will not only help people become more aspirational and positive, it will also ensure that your business is seen as a positive community force and working towards appealing to a wider talent pool as possible with regard to the next generation.
- This same outreach practice can be applied to colleges and universities, supporting scholarships, funding and access schemes, and internships for exceptional students who are experiencing barriers to success.
- Look into areas of your staffing where you would like to see change and define your outreach programs accordingly. This does not mean excluding anyone from your recruitment drive, but it can mean you may focus on particular areas with a view to encouraging change.

HOW CAN WE FOSTER WORKPLACE COHESION AND A SHARED MINDSET?

Casper, Wayne and Manegold have produced one of the only pieces of existing research that directly informs the HR practices and policies companies should adopt. This research investigated the importance of both surface-level (or demographic) diversity of underrepresented groups compared with deep-level diversity and what this means for the business. Their findings are concurrent with our research and proposition that “deep-level differences in attitudes and values [are] more important to understanding responses to HR policies than surface-level factors” (p.16). The authors also found out that job pursuits were also higher for firms that valued work-family policies and employee (learning) development policies and lower for firms that valued diversity policies. The authors also remarked that:

“To effectively attract and retain talent, firms may need to answer the

questions: "What do our target recruits want?" and "What employee values fit well in our firm?" By advertising certain HR policies, firms can attract people with similar values. To build a strong culture that supports their strategy, firms can develop and advertise policies that signal the firm's values. Thus, firms that consider the deep-level attributes desired in their employees when adopting and advertising HR policies can effectively target these applicants in recruitment."

(Casper, Wayne and Manegold 2013, p.16)

As Hackman's 'enabling conditions' have suggested, one of the key ways a business can improve work cohesion is by setting a clear direction. Not only does this mean setting goals, but it also entails having a shared mindset, as explained previously.

However, a clear distinction must be made between the following commonly conflated terms: mission, values, principles and purpose.

The **mission** statement deals with the very nature of the business and the type of work it is doing. Therefore, the mission statement deals with the 'what' of the business. This can also clarify what the business is not currently involved with or doing. For example, a consulting firm might define its mission by the type of work it does, the clients it caters to, and the level of service it provides: e.g. "We're in the business of providing high-standard assistance on performance assessment to middle to senior managers in medium-to-large firms in the finance industry" (Kenny, 2014). The mission statement should answer the following questions:

- What do we do?
- Whom do we serve?
- How do we currently serve them?

The **vision**, on the other hand, looks into the future and is a projection of the work that the business wishes to achieve through the work that they are doing at present. A vision statement is meant to be a clear, definitive statement of what an organisation wants to accomplish, and what the world will look like once they have achieved that. The vision statement gives the company direction because it describes the future of the business. Therefore, the vision ought to be aspirational to some degree. Questions that guide vision statements include:

- What are our hopes and dreams for the company?
- What problem are we solving for the greater good?
- Who and what are we inspiring to change?

Values are what describe a firm's culture. For example, are you a family-orientated business? Do you want to have courageous employees? Do you wish to have employees that regularly contribute to wider society through philanthropy? According to Coca-Cola, values function as a "behavioural compass" (Kenny 2014).

Principles work in conjunction with values as they provide the 'behavioural compass' with a set of directions. "The global logistics and mail service company TNT Express illustrates the difference in its use of both terms.

TNT United Kingdom, the European market leader, lists 'customer care' among nine key principles, describing it as follows: "Always listening to and building first-class relationships with our customers to help us provide excellent standards of service and client satisfaction" (Kenny 2014).

Finally, **purpose** is about what you are doing, as a company, that serves and helps others. This shifts the focus away from internal processes and objectives and puts it on the potential impact of your work for others in society.

The second way in which we can promote workplace cohesion is by implementing strategic and purposeful tactics that focus on the team level. According to psychologist Bruce Tuckman, to do this successfully, there are five developmental stages in team activity and it is important for businesses to recognise them (1965). These are forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. According to his theory, each stage of a team's development has specific needs, concerns and problems.

Forming: This stage is defined as the part where team members are 'getting to know each other' and are starting to work together. Some may be ready to play an active role and start dealing with tasks, others, however, may be more reserved and anxious. Here, the role of the team leader is seen as pivotal to enable the team members to get along and explain to each team member what their roles and responsibilities are, as there can be some confusion at this primitive stage. During this stage, a team can focus on:

- Building a communally shared and constructed team charter.
- Ice-breaker and trust-forming activities, including onboarding exercises.
- Setting personal and team-level goals.

Storming: Then, the team moves into the storming phase, where people start to push against the boundaries established in the forming stage. As a result, this can also be the stage where the most team friction is felt and where teams fail. Therefore, this is one of the most important parts of team development, as a particular focus needs to be placed on trying to utilise employees' diverse sets of strengths and abilities. It is also important to take note and monitor how well the team is meeting its pre-established objectives (e.g. the team charter). Additionally, implementing actionable and effective conflict management techniques, such as the VALUED based method for conflict resolution will also prove useful.

Norming: This is the stage where major conflict and strategic issues have been overcome and team members are now 'used to' working with each other. Team members also become accustomed to each other's work styles and to the authority of the team leader. They know what to expect from one another and what normal routines look like. Sometimes, there can be a long overlap between this stage and the 'storming' stage because new tasks can spring into existence which can effectively lapse the team back into the behaviour of the 'storming' stage. The most important part here is maintaining team cohesion and ensuring that trust is continually built among team members.

Performing: All the structures and interventions placed in the prior stages of development will lead to the 'performing' stage. This is where teams are

able to perform at their optimum and deliver their best results. The team is also now adapted to solve problems efficiently and the main concern among team members is getting the job done. The best ways to allow for this is through monitoring the needs of team members. Since this stage is mostly concerned about 'getting the work done', it is important that the concerns of staff who feel 'overwhelmed' by the workload are listened to and an appropriate task delegation is done.

Adjourning: This stage is where there may be a realignment of team objectives or staff as a project finishes. Even if the team is permanent, there are likely to be organisational changes to the structure, effectively putting the team back into the 'forming' stage, demonstrating that team stages can be cyclical in nature. In the last two stages, it is recommended that team members are properly rewarded for their efforts and are praised. It is also a convenient time to receive 360-degree feedback. This type of feedback includes self-reported feedback, receiving feedback from subordinates and managers alike, and customers.

HOW CAN WE BETTER UNDERSTAND OUR OWN BUSINESS AND NEEDS?

Understanding the nature of your business and the specific problems it encounters is crucial so that you're able to take the necessary steps that you need to solve these issues and succeed. One of the most common criticisms of traditional diversity training programmes is that they are 'cookie-cutter' programmes insofar as providing a customised approach to the needs of the business applies. However, it is understandable why businesses readily select such programmes and invest large amounts of money into them given that there is a lack of alternative options available. We also understand the public pressures that businesses face which may push managers to make decisions rapidly without being able to gather data regarding the specific views of stakeholders and employees. Diversity programmes are also set up in a way such that they are ready to be used immediately at a commercial scale.

One of the ways you can think about your needs is by adopting a bottom-up approach to communication. Most companies currently function on a top-down model of communication, however, there are benefits of the reverse: a bottom-up transfer of communication that can be implemented across the Tuckman's stages of team development. This method ensures that highlighted concerns affecting employees are heard by managers, supervisors, directors and anyone of higher responsibility. A bottom-up approach to understanding problems is also useful as it is probable that

employees tend to identify problems where managers may miss them. This can be done using the following approaches:

- Employee surveys and reviews
- Group assessments
- Suggestion boxes
- Focus groups

Another technique that allows those of higher levels of managerial responsibility to be present and observe problems is the 'management by wandering around' technique. The idea is to come unannounced to delve into a 'typical' day of the work process of teams to identify realistic issues that employees are facing. The manager is encouraged to take an active and dynamic role as opposed to a static and passive role. He or she must engage with team members, ask questions and observe work practices carefully.

It is a common business dilemma: businesses work tirelessly to find a good solution to a problem, only to discover that the problem at hand is not the real problem that needs to be resolved. The Nano Tools Action Steps can allow businesses to overcome this common issue (Probst, 2015). It is important to note that when coming to terms with employees' concerns regarding current affairs pertaining to diversity, this method can also be applied.

This method goes beyond trying to comprehend and make sense of large sets of objective data. According to Probst, "time has shown that those who hold a single point of view or perspective on a problem rarely succeed" (2015). Therefore, the Nano Tools Action Steps can expedite the facilitation of functional diversity as well as a diversity of viewpoints.

Probst continues, "expand your viewpoint and look both into and beyond the massive amounts of data that are now available to find the root causes to prevent similar events from happening again in the future. How can you better identify — and solve — the real problem?" (2015).

Here are the six action steps that can help guide decision-makers to focus on the right problems of the business. This process limits having to deal with complicated decision making, and this also helps decision makers take calculated risks more competently.

1 Don't be tricked by large amounts of data. The problems businesses face are mostly multivariate in nature, complex, and have multiple contributing factors. Data is useful when you are able to make sense of it appropriately. This means allocating as much or more time into analysing the data as collecting it. This is something that many leaders in businesses do not take into account. Therefore, more is not always better in this circumstance.

2 Look beyond the surface. What underlying system can explain your current problem? "Events are just the tip of the iceberg — easy to see and explore. They are the "above the surface" manifestation of patterns and trends (what has been happening, have we been here or someplace similar before?), structures (what are the forces that contribute to these patterns?), and mental models (what about our

thinking allows the situation to persist?)” (Probst, 2015). Considering these questions can allow us to think critically about the problems we face.

- 3 Have multiple perspectives and widen your focus.** This is important because “solving the problem of just one (or a small group) of those involved, generally leads to resistance from other stakeholders. Instead, put into place an integrated approach that takes the roles and goals of all key people involved in complex problems into consideration” (Probst, 2015).
- 4 Identify the defining boundaries of the problem.** Once information and data has been gathered regarding the problem and you have considered the views of stakeholders, the next part of the process is to identify all that which is not directly related to the problem. This is done because you want to focus on the cause of the problem, the key drivers and their effects. “These boundaries should be sufficiently open to include all the relevant cause-effect relationships, but sufficiently narrow to avoid generalisation and a loss of focus. Use these boundaries to create a new, clear description of the problem you are solving” (Probst, 2015).
- 5 Identify causes, effects, and key stakeholders.** Once your boundaries to the problem have been defined, now it is time to look at the cause of the problem, its key drivers and their effects. “What are the root causes of the problem and what are the possible effects of those causes? What are some potential solutions, and the effects of those solutions? Who are the key stakeholders who stand to benefit from a change in the system? How can they be part of the solution? Keep in mind that a single effect can be the result of multiple causes, and a single cause can have multiple effects on a system” (Probst 2015).
- 6 Analyse future developments.** When you have understood the root cause of the problem properly, you will need to start thinking about how it can affect your future avenues. “Make forecasts based on past and current trends and patterns for how the problem might evolve in the future. What are the future paths you could take, and the effects of each path?” (Probst, 2015).

There are numerous ways in which the Nano Tool Action Steps can be adapted and implemented into your business. For example, the World Economic Forum uses current scenarios for future projections (Probst, 2015).. This is where they will look at the future projection of a given country or sector so that everyone involved in these sectors or countries can take the appropriate actions and set the right priorities. The World Economic Forum then collaborates with other stakeholders across the globe, providing them with a chance to raise their own unique concerns and opinions with what they believe are key drivers that shape sectors and their effects.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this guide has provided a strong starting point for your organisation to understand the current landscape of Diversity and Inclusion and a range of ways to approach and respond to the subject.

The Equiano Project also offers talks, workshops, training days, and advisory services for organisations, businesses and individuals looking for approaches to answering questions around Diversity, Equality and Inclusion, rooted in a universal humanist ethic.

We certainly live in times of heightened political tension but given the right foundational principles, your organisation can thrive.

A commitment to universalism, humanism and freedom will ensure that you avoid divisive pitfalls inherent in any strategy based around identity politics and its offshoots. It is impossible to overemphasise the importance of these core beliefs. It is from the establishment of these first principles that all else will flow from within your organisation.

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