**A Guide to Unlocking DEI Success in Service-based Industries**

*How to Garner Leadership Buy-in and Drive Organizational Change*

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have become critical components of a thriving and successful workplace. In the healthcare industry, for example, where providing quality care and service to diverse patient populations is paramount, DEI initiatives are not only important for creating inclusive work environments but also for improving patient outcomes. The economic and sustainability impacts of DEI programs are far-reaching, yet it takes commitment and time to gain measurable benefits. This is why it is crucial to gain leadership buy-in upfront so you can drive organizational change. In this article, we will show you how to do just that by leveraging data, aligning DEI goals with your organization’s growth strategy, developing a well-defined DEI implementation plan, and taking actionable steps to ensure your program is a success.

**Leveraging Data to Persuade Leadership**

Data is a powerful tool that allows organizations to establish baselines, benchmarks, and goals to keep moving forward. Good data can help HR and DEI practitioners persuade leadership to prioritize DEI initiatives. By providing compelling data that demonstrates the business case for DEI, you can effectively engage leadership and garner their buy-in. One effective approach is to present diversity data in an easy-to-understand customizable scorecard or dashboard that is relevant to its intended users.

A recent article published by the Harvard Business Review shows how the London Organizing Committee of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) adopted this approach. Authors [Siri Chilazi](https://hbr.org/search?term=siri%20chilazi) and [Iris Bohnet](https://hbr.org/search?term=iris%20bohnet) explain that during a rapid hiring spree of 200,000 people, LOCOG extended the collection and reporting of diversity data to its own organization, as well as to contractors, consultants, secondees, and sub-contractors involved in the Games. All staff had access to a monthly topline snapshot of the organization's diversity metrics across seven aspects, including gender and gender identity, disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Senior leaders received detailed monthly reports broken down by department. The diversity data were presented alongside hiring targets for each relevant labor market. Each department was rated, and each operational area was ranked on its hiring record every month. This allowed the LOCOG team to identify patterns early and intervene swiftly to keep the program focused.

LOCOG’s method was a success. As a result of its data-driven approach, LOCOG achieved or surpassed all of its diversity targets with 46% women, 40% ethnic minorities, and 9% people with disabilities in the Games workforce. A compelling business case was made that garnered leadership support for LOCOG’s ongoing DEI initiatives.

While you may not have plans for a rapid hiring spree to achieve fast data collection, you can build data gathering and metrics into your DEI process to monitor progress and mark goals achievement. The first step is to align DEI initiatives with your company’s growth strategy, then gather and report the data to support the DEI program’s contribution to overall organizational growth.

**Aligning DEI Goals with Organizational Growth Strategies**

It is important to not view DEI as a separate initiative, but rather as an integral part of your organization's overall strategic goals. It is equally important to clearly articulate how DEI initiatives align with your company's mission, values, and long-term growth strategy.

As we noted earlier, quality patient care and positive outcomes are essential in healthcare. DEI programs can directly impact patient experiences, which directly impact patient trust. Studies have shown that a diverse and inclusive workforce leads to improved patient satisfaction, better patient-provider communication, increased access to care for underrepresented populations, and reduced health disparities. By aligning DEI goals with the company's growth strategy, you can demonstrate how DEI is not only the right thing to do from a moral standpoint but also a smart business strategy that positively impacts patient care and contributes to the organization's long-term success.

**Developing a Well-defined DEI Implementation Plan**

To drive organizational change, you will need a well-defined DEI implementation plan that takes the entire enterprise into consideration. A good plan is comprehensive and strategic, outlining the goals, objectives, timelines, and resources needed to support the DEI initiatives.

1. **Define clear DEI goals.** Work with your organization’s leadership to establish well-defined and measurable DEI goals that align with your organization's overall strategy. Clear goals are specific, realistic, achievable, and have success articulations. Share the goals with all employees and relevant stakeholders through clear communications that ensure everyone understands and commits to them.

**Insert 2 Illustrations: DEI Goals and DEI Success Articulations**

1. **Conduct a DEI GAP assessment.** Before implementing DEI initiatives, it is essential to conduct a thorough assessment of your organization's current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This may include reviewing workforce demographics, conducting employee surveys, assessing policies and procedures, and identifying any gaps or areas that need improvement. The assessment may be used provide a baseline for measuring progress and identifying areas that require attention.

**Insert Illustration: Conduct a DEI GAP Assessment**

1. **Develop a DEI strategy.** Based on the GAP assessment findings, develop a comprehensive DEI strategy that outlines the key initiatives, actions, and resources needed to achieve your established DEI goals. Align the DEI strategy with your company's growth strategy. Establish a clear plan for implementation, including timelines, responsibilities, and metrics for tracking progress.

**Insert two illustrations: Develop a DEI Project Management Plan and Align Your DEI Strategy with Your Corporate Growth Strategy**.

1. **Engage leadership buy-in.** Leadership buy-in is critical for the success of DEI initiatives. Engage leadership early and consistently throughout the DEI implementation process. This may include presenting the business case for DEI, providing updates on progress, and seeking input and feedback from leadership. It is important to have leadership actively involved and supportive of DEI initiatives to drive meaningful change in your organization.

**Insert SWOT Diagram here**

1. **Communicate and educate.** Communication is key to driving organizational change. A comprehensive communication plan that includes regular updates to employees, leadership, and other stakeholders on the progress of DEI initiatives keeps everyone in the loop. Additionally, providing education and training on DEI topics to employees and leadership can help build awareness, understanding, and support for DEI initiatives.
2. **Foster inclusion and accountability.** It is best not to limit DEI initiatives to HR or DEI departments. They are most effective when embedded in the culture of your organization. HR and DEI practitioners can work with leadership and staff to create a culture of inclusion where all employees feel valued, respected, and included. This may include fostering inclusive leadership behaviors, promoting diversity in leadership roles, and holding leaders and employees accountable for DEI goals and actions.

**Insert Subcommittee Diagram here**

**Taking Actionable Steps to Ensure DEI Program Success**

To drive DEI success in service-based organizations, it is important to take actionable steps towards implementing DEI initiatives. Here are some practical strategies and tools you can implement:

1. **Collect and analyze diversity data.** By collecting and analyzing diversity data you gain insights into the representation and experiences of different demographic groups within your organization. This data can help you to identify areas of underrepresentation and disparity. It also serves as a basis for setting targets and measuring progress towards DEI goals. Presenting diversity data in an easy-to-understand, customizable scorecard or dashboard, as demonstrated by LOCOG, can be an effective way to engage leadership and employees in your DEI efforts.
2. **Set recruitment and promotion targets.** Setting recruitment and promotion targets for underrepresented groups can help ensure that diversity and inclusion are prioritized in the talent acquisition and promotion processes. Base these targets on relevant labor market data and communicate them to all stakeholders involved in hiring and promotion decisions. Regular monitoring and reporting of progress towards these targets helps to keep leaders and employees accountable and ensures progress towards achieving DEI goals.
3. **Implement diversity and inclusion training. Make this an active link to DEI Marketing Video.** Providing education and training on DEI topics to employees and leadership helps raise awareness, builds understanding, and promotes inclusive behaviors. Make DEI training available for all employees and tailor it to different levels of the organization, from frontline staff to leadership. DEI can also be integrated into existing training programs and resources to ensure it becomes a part of the organization's ongoing learning and development culture.
4. **Create employee resource groups.** Employee resource groups (ERGs) are voluntary, employee-led groups that bring together employees with shared backgrounds, identities, or interests. ERGs can play a crucial role in driving DEI initiatives by providing a platform for employees to engage, connect, and collaborate on DEI-related initiatives. HR and DEI practitioners can support the formation and sustainability of ERGs by providing resources, budget, and leadership sponsorship, and by leveraging ERGs as a valuable feedback mechanism to inform DEI strategies and initiatives.
5. **Review and revise policies and practices.** Conduct a comprehensive review of existing policies and practices to identify any potential bias or barriers that may hinder DEI efforts. This may include policies related to recruitment, compensation, benefits, performance evaluations, and career development. Any identified barriers must be addressed promptly through policy revisions or other appropriate actions to ensure they align with DEI goals and promote equitable treatment for all employees.
6. **Foster inclusive leadership behaviors.** Leaders play a crucial role in driving DEI initiatives. Work with management to develop inclusive leadership behaviors, such as active listening, inclusive decision-making, and providing feedback and recognition in an equitable manner. Leaders may also be held accountable for modeling and promoting inclusive behaviors throughout the organization. Establish a process to recognize and reward positive DEI efforts. **Training video clip here with a link to free training demo.**
7. **Monitor and measure progress.** Regular monitoring and measurement of DEI initiatives are critical to ensure progress and identify areas that need further attention. Metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with the established DEI goals can be used to track progress over time. This may include tracking diversity metrics, employee engagement surveys, retention rates, promotion rates, and other relevant data points. Analyze the data you have collected and report your progress to leadership and other stakeholders on a regular basis to ensure transparency and accountability. **Insert a link to Inclusive Leadership Webpage.**

**Conclusion**

Driving DEI success in service-based organizations requires a strategic and intentional approach that leverages data, aligns DEI initiatives with the company's growth strategy, develops a well-defined implementation plan, and takes actionable steps towards achieving DEI goals. HR and DEI practitioners play a critical role in leading and implementing DEI programs. Their task is made much easier when they gain leadership buy-in and engage employees at all levels of the organization. By following the practical strategies, tools, and examples provided in this guide, you can effectively drive DEI success to create an inclusive and equitable work environment for all employees, and ultimately improve your customers’ experience to achieve positive outcomes for everyone involved.

Got questions? We’ve got answers. Book a discussion call here.