

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

by *Victoria Dale*
INCLUSION
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) in the workplace are no longer seen as a “nice to have” but are imperative to business growth and talent attraction. According to a survey by recruitment agency Robert Walters, majority of employers (73%) believe that having a diverse workforce is critical to meeting customer needs and encouraging innovation and creativity within business. And according to Glassdoor, ED&I is also a top priority for 3 in 4 job seekers when considering potential employers.

If employers are to stay ahead of the competition in an increasingly globalised economy, it is therefore essential that ED&I forms part of their business plans.

So what do we mean by Equality, Diversity and Inclusion?

Equality is about ensuring everyone is treated with fairness, respect and dignity.

Diversity is about every single person- different backgrounds, perspectives and working styles.

Inclusion is an environment where every person can be themselves, their views and ideas are heard and listened to and feel valued.

When I deliver staff training to organisations, I use the following quote to describe why we need to have all 3 to build more inclusive workplaces:

“Diversity is being invited into the room. Equality is having a seat at the table. Inclusion is feeling like your voice is heard and listened to.”

My experience of Busy Women’s Networking and how it has supported my journey

I joined Busy Women Bedford in March having been made to feel really welcome and included when I attended as a visitor. Since joining I’ve made lots of connections and had some great conversations around diversity and inclusion and it’s helped to open the door to potential opportunities for collaboration. Most of all it has encouraged me to get away from my desk and network with like-minded women entrepreneurs, sharing the highs and lows and being each other’s cheerleaders!

This is what every workplace should be striving for if we are to retain talent and be seen as an attractive employer!

Why more diverse and inclusive workplaces should be a priority for every business

It’s been just over 3 years since the first lockdown with many people having to make that transition from working in an office to working at home. This changed the way many viewed how and where work gets done. It demonstrated the benefits that flexible working brings to employers and the positive impact it can have on our mental health and wellbeing.

The business case for diverse and inclusive workplaces is clear and regardless of size of business, every employer can benefit. Research has shown that workplaces that are more diverse and inclusive results in:

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- 1 Improved innovation:** Diverse teams bring different perspectives and experiences, leading to more creative solutions and ideas.
- 2 Improve Decision Making:** When teams are made up of individuals with different backgrounds and experiences, they are more likely to consider a wider range of perspectives and make better decisions.
- 3 Better Employee Engagement:** Employees who feel valued and included are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work.
- 4 Improve Financial Performance:** Companies that prioritize diversity and inclusion tend to perform better financially. A study by McKinsey & Company found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.
- 5 Positive Reputation:** Companies that prioritize diversity and inclusion are viewed more positively by customers, employees, and the public. This can lead to increased brand loyalty and a stronger reputation.

Small acts of inclusion

When it comes to building a more diverse and inclusive workplace, I always remind employers that it's a journey not a sprint. It involves taking small steps every day. There is no end point. It does require putting the effort in and approaching it with an open mindset. And it involves every employee from owner, manager to team member! Here are my top tips on how we can all be more inclusive at work:

- Remembering small details: a colleague's birthday, important event and asking about their weekend will make them feel more valued
- Small gestures: smiling, greeting colleagues and showing genuine interest in what others are saying
- Daily acts of kindness: praise and acknowledge others' achievements
- Consider personal circumstances: childcare/caring duties, shift patterns, working from home and reasonable adjustments
- Encourage engagement from everyone during meetings
- Be clear and remind them regularly you value their feedback
- Share any slides, notes and agenda in advance of a meeting
- As a manager, alternate who takes on a stretching assignment, presents, chairs and take notes

I love helping employers who are serious about ED&I by helping them create workplaces that are happier, more productive, profitable and enable everyone to thrive. If you are committed to becoming a more diverse and inclusive employer and need support, visit my [website](#) for details of my Inclusion Health Check packages and other services and also you can follow me on [LinkedIn](#) for thought leadership on all things ED&I.