



## **DIVERSITY BEST PRACTICES LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK: L.E.A.D.**

By Dr. Maura Cullen

There is no need to recreate the wheel. After combing through the best diversity practices of some of the leading companies and organizations, I was able to take the best of the best and create a four-step framework for building successful and inclusive organizations. Here are some action steps your organization can take to ensure the success of your diversity initiatives.

### **L.E.A.D.**

**L**eadership – **E**ducation – **A**ccountability – **D**evelopment

#### **LEADERSHIP**

- No sustainable diversity and inclusion initiatives can take place without leadership from the top.
- Create a strategic plan Clearly-Concisely and Continually (Best Practices in Achieving Workforce Diversity)
- Hire a full-time Diversity Officer & Staff
- Enforce a ZERO tolerance policy for bias related offenses
- Create a diversity task force/committee that includes stakeholders at every level
- Benchmark your organization to similar competitors
- Provide domestic partnership benefits and a salary-gross up to make up for employees who are taxed differently for those benefits (National Association of Legal Professionals)
- Be certain that social invitations are inclusive in language, spouse/partner/guest
- Develop flex time that are family and holiday friendly
- Include gender identity in EEO statement and provide health insurance benefits related to transgender needs/status
- Display the organizations commitment to diversity on website and promotional materials
- Develop and foster community outreach
- Create an annual “Expect Respect” or Diversity day (University of Michigan)
- Plot current organizational chart related to social identity to assess over and under represented groups and where they are in the power structure
- Conduct exit interviews to learn the employee’s experiences around diversity

#### **EDUCATION**

- REQUIRE diversity and inclusion education for ALL employees including top management
- Training should focus on awareness, skills and action
- Training should be ongoing with follow-up
- Offer executive coaching for senior management to build diversity competency related to policy development and personal skills

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- Celebrate cultural events such as Black History Month, Hispanic History Month, Women's History Month, Gay Pride Month, Asian Pacific Heritage Month, American Indian Month as well as others.
- Offer opportunities for further education such as retreats, webinars, books, audio programs, seminars
- Additional training for interview/hiring team on best practices and legal requirements of what can and cannot be asked
- Harassment policy education
- Define Diversity in the broadest way: R.E.G.A.R.D. (Best Practices in Achieving Workforce Diversity). I have taken the liberty of adding three 's' at the end for Size Socio-economic Status and Sexual orientation (R.E.G.A.R.D.S.S.S.)
  - Race
  - Ethnicity
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Religion
  - Disability
  - Size
  - Socio-economic status
  - Sexual orientation

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Hire an external consultant to conduct a baseline diversity audit and climate survey
- Have external consultant return at a mutually agreed upon time frame for re-evaluation
- Focus group interviews with external consultant
- Develop goals with measurable outcomes
- Link diversity competence and performance in to employee review and compensation
- Institute anonymous upwards reviews that evaluate diversity competency as a component

## **DEVELOPMENT**

- Institute a mentoring program & mentoring training
- Institute a reverse mentoring program where there are open lines of communication that allows senior management to learn of the challenges their staff encounter. (National Association of Legal Professionals)
- Foster the formation of affinity groups
- Create awards and recognitions
- Provide funding to attend diversity related conferences
- Organization wide newsletter with best practice, announcements of awards, cultural calendar, conferences and upcoming events

## **Conclusion**

In no way is this intended to be an exhaustive list of strategy's to develop and enhance your diversity initiatives. Each business genre and organization has challenges that are unique and thus must be addressed in a customized manner. However, one item is

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non-negotiable to ensure that your business and organization increases the bottom line by recruiting and retaining the best possible work force. To stay competitive and to grow as a business, diversity and inclusion best practices must be start at the top. Leaders must L.E.A.D.

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are six 'must see' short video's addressing today's most common diversity  
challenges and offers quick solutions.

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