

POP QUIZ

Is your company diverse? Think about your employees and answer the following questions:

- Are most of your employees the same gender?
- Are most of your employees the same race?
- Are most of your employees around the same age?
- Are most of your employees able bodied?
- Do most of your employees speak the same language?

If you checked 3 or more boxes, your company is lacking diversity. Don't worry! We've created guidelines for you to create and implement a diversity plan in your company.

FAQs

What does diversity mean?

A group of individuals who differ on a characteristic on which they base their own social identity. (Mazur 6). Basically, when a group of people who don't share the same age/gender/ethnicity/peanut butter preference come together.

Why does diversity matter?

Because it's good for business. Broadening your workforce can help fill labor gaps, increase creativity and problem solving, and create better understanding across cultures.

Is diversity planning hard?

No, it just takes some time, patience and a desire to be better.

Are there different types of diversity?

Yes, much like its definition, diversity comes in all shapes and sizes. There are three dimensions to diversity: primary, which shape our basic self-image and fundamental world views; secondary, which impacts our self-esteem and self-definition; and tertiary, which encompasses historical moments experienced (Mazur, 6).

The table below outlines what type of characteristics fall under each dimension.

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race • Age • Culture • Geographic origin • Economic status • Education • Beliefs • Attitudes • Group norms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnicity • Disability • Sexual orientation • Family status • Political orientation • Language • Assumptions • Feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Religion • Thinking style • Lifestyle • Work experience • Nationality • Perceptions • Values

CREATING A DIVERSITY PLAN

Step one: Define what diversity means for *your* organization.

Diversity isn't black and white. You may think you're in the clear because you employ all minorities. But are you really diverse? Diversity could mean bringing in more Spanish-speakers to go after a new customer base or could it mean learning more about your employees lives.

Step two: Determine why or how diversity will benefit your company.

Yes, it's nice to have a poster that has different races and genders on it. But if that's the only reason you're implementing a diversity plan, we need to start over. Having a diverse workforce looks good and feels good, but what else can it do? Will it help strengthen the bonds in the community your company is located in? Will it fill a labor or customer need? Will it help sell your product or service better?

Step three: Create priorities or goals related to diversity.

If you aren't creating attainable and measurable goals, how do you know if your tactics are working? Determine what make sense for your company and put a number on it.

Step four: Form diversity committees and assign diversity project managers.

These personnel will be responsible for hitting the diversity goals and keeping it a priority. It's not enough to have a goal. Holding a group accountable for reaching the goal will ensure it happens, rather than being one more piece of corporate nonsense that gets filed at the bottom of someone's to do list.

Step five: Think outside the box.

Yes, we know how big of cliché this statement can be. Diversity doesn't have to be about bringing in new people; it can be about finding and embracing the differences of the employees you already have. For example, host a lunch and learn where employees are encouraged to talk about their cultural heritage or even an activity they are passionate about, like chess or gardening.

Step six: Ask for help.

Community and industry organizations may have the network and resources to help you achieve your diversity goals. If your goal is to hire more women, reach out to local women's groups or shelters and find ways to work together. If your goal is to offer different types of food in the cafeteria, contact local ethnic restaurants or churches. Help is always available – you just have to ask for it.

Step seven: Rinse and repeat.

Diversity is not a one-time deal. It's something you must practice often and always make a priority. Holding one open house isn't going to cut it. You should think and plan for the long term, not for doing the bare minimum to get the EEO off your back.

DIVERSITY HACKS

Cheat off others.

The good news is you don't have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to diversity planning. There are a lot of resources available to help you define and create the plan that's right for your organization. Start by finding business or organizations that are similar to yours in size and structure. Take a look at their diversity plan and steal what would work for you. Or maybe just call them and see if you can use it.

Get someone else to do it.

Work with a company or consultant to create a diversity plan for your company. Find someone who will fit your company culture because you will want your employees to be interested and engaged in the process. They will respond better to someone they can trust.

Get someone else to do it...for free.

This presentation started as a project for my master's program. Check the course schedule at your local college and see who teaches diversity-type classes. Contact the professor and let them know what you're trying to do. They may be able to work into a class project.

Be flexible.

There's a chance you're not going to get it right the first time. Or maybe even the second time. Or maybe you get it close to perfect and just need to make a few tweaks. That's okay. Remember this is an ongoing process, not a one-time fix. Be ready and willing to make changes on the fly.

DOs and DON'Ts

- DO communicate your diversity plans and goals with all employees.
- DON'T make assumptions that everyone understands the importance of diversity. You may have to spend some time educating others.
- DO use common sense when thinking about diversity. If you think your idea is controversial, it probably is.
- DON'T generalize groups. A group is made up of individuals and may have more than one need or opinion.
- DO treat others with respect and kindness.
- DON'T be a jerk.

Works cited:

Mazur, Barbara. "Cultural diversity in organisational theory and practice." *Journal of Intercultural Management* 2.2 (2010): 5-15.