# What is **Diversity, Equity** and **Inclusion?**

By Kris Schinke

**X5 MANAGEMENT**

# What is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?

Kris Schinke

## OVERVIEW

It is a phrase that describes what organizations need to consider creating an environment that welcomes and includes all identities. We know this as DEI. Forward-thinking organizations are now making DEI part of their overall strategy— not assuming awareness will happen on their own.

According to Independent Sector, a national membership organization that brings together a diverse community of changemakers with a mission to foster a sense of belonging, leaders are uncertain about the steps needed to turn dialogue and intention into action. Many organizations have the desire to increase diversity, but the reality of an environment that enables people of different backgrounds to succeed isn't translating to success.

According to Asif Sadiq, Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at the Telegraph, "Belonging" is the missing ingredient in Diversity and Inclusion. Despite progress strengthening DEI in organizations, one should be able to be one's authentic self at work, feel appreciated and confident that one can contribute while being one's self. Belonging is a concept that every single person within an organization can support and can bring everyone into the conversation.

## THE DEFINITIONS:

*Diversity* includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or one group different from another. While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, a broader definition of diversity also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance.

*Equity* is the fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of organizations.

*Inclusion* is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued to take part fully. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. It is important to note that an inclusive group is by definition diverse, but a diverse group isn't always inclusive.
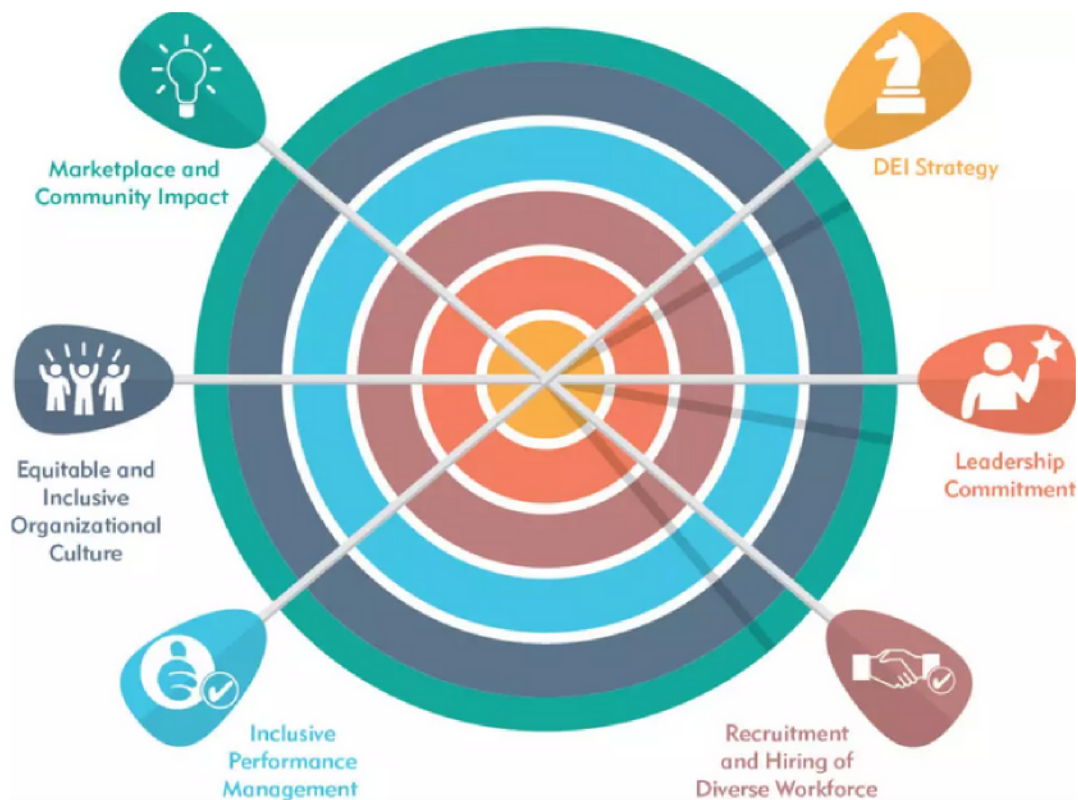


**EQUALITY**        **EQUITY**
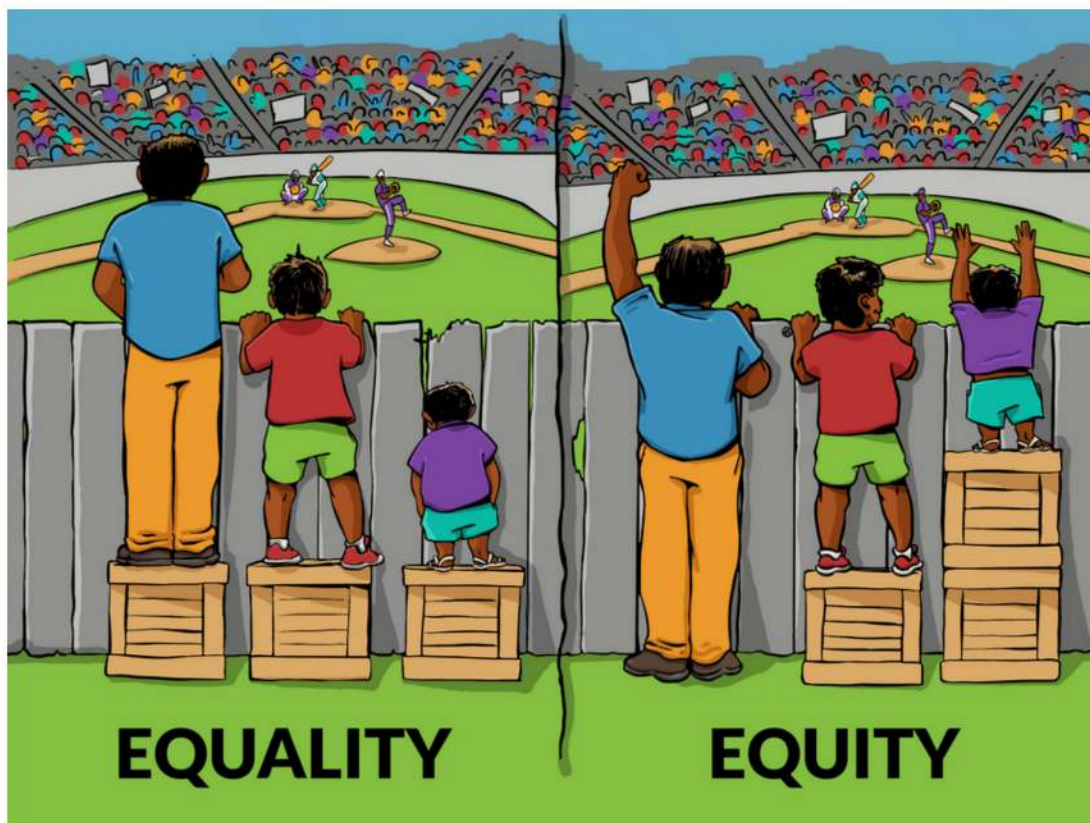
## HOW DID DEI GET STARTED?

There was not one single incident, trend or campaign that started DEI awareness, but rather several events over the years that eventually recognized change had to occur.
Equality for Western women gained attention and momentum in the 1960s during what is known as the "Women's Movement" or "Women's Liberation."  It gained traction in the 1970s and became known as feminism as women sought equal rights (i.e., the right to vote), and opportunities (i.e. education and jobs).

According to Pew Research Centre (a nonpartisan fact tank), 77% of people point to sexual harassment as a major obstacle to women having equal rights to men. Fewer, but still a majority, point to women not having the same legal rights as men (67%), different societal expectations for men and women (66%) and not enough women in positions of power (64%) as major obstacles to gender equality. Women are more likely than men to see each of these as a major obstacle.

Another major factor in raising awareness for diversity was the Civil Rights Movement, referred to in Canada as the "Rights Revolution." The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was signed in Canada in 1982 and created greater inclusion gains for women, queer communities, Indigenous Peoples, and disability activists. At the same time, both federal and provincial governments passed laws that prohibited discrimination and protected human rights for more people in Canada.



Marketplace and Community Impact

DEI Strategy

Equitable and Inclusive Organizational Culture

Leadership Commitment

Inclusive Performance Management

Recruitment and Hiring of Diverse Workforce

## IMPORTANT CHANGE EVENTS

Besides the Women's Movement and the Civil Rights Movement, other events that brought about increased awareness, through public protests and minority groups applying pressure on legislators, were:

- Anti-Vietnam War protests (1967)
- Stonewall Riots in New York (1969) that sparked Gay Pride in Canada
- Lesbian and Gay Pride Day (1981) as a result of Operation Soap (bathhouse raids)
- The Indian Act Consolidation by the Government of Canada (1985)
- Pro-choice abortion rallies (legalized in 1988)
- #MeToo speaking up against sexual harassment and sexual assault (2006)
- Truth & Reconciliation Calls to Action (2015)
- Uber scandal (2017)
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019)
- #BlackLivesMatter protesting George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis (2020)
- #StopAAPIHate documents the rise of anti-Asian hate (2020)
- #Every Child Matters representing the discovery of unmarked graves at Indigenous residential schools (2021)

## WHAT IS AN UNCONSCIOUS BIAS?

Bias is a prejudice in favour of or against one thing, person or group compared with another, and is usually in a way that's considered to be unfair. Biases may be held by an individual, group or institution and can have negative or positive consequences. An unconscious bias often includes a stereotypical belief or perception and is not limited to ethnicity or race and is usually learned at an early age.

Biases can judge individuals for their height, weight, gender, age, name or even attractiveness and lead to potentially negative and potentially discriminatory attitudes. Biases that are not addressed can damage a business, its reputation and have a negative impact on employee morale and organizational culture. Finally, the risk of liability needs to be considered.

To address unconscious biases the workplace should provide ongoing and open discussions at all levels to raise awareness and literacy. Workplace training, at all levels, is recommended as a basic requirement to address Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging.

## PRIDE IS NOT A MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Pride is a strong brand thanks to the hard work of the many Pride organizations around the world to raise awareness and education. In honour of the June 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan, considered the tipping point for the Gay Liberation Movement, each June is celebrated as LGBTQ2S+ Pride Month. The month of June is used for, and not limited to, raising awareness about the current state of LGBTQ2S+ human rights and how their respective organizations are working to protect and advocate for those rights.

According to Forbes, marketers or company leaders will say they do a lot for the LGBTQ2S+ community and will show up in June for Pride. They give their company logos rainbow hues. They hand out Pride swag and support the annual LGBTQ2S+ galas to honour successful LGBTQ2S+ people. Isn't that enough? No. There is a $1 trillion consumer industry that is being overlooked, or not realized. Although this is not a marketing article, the point is being made to suggest there is a potentially supportive community if an organization demonstrates support throughout the year via a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging policy that continues to evolve in changing times.

## TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

In 2015 the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation published Calls to Action to appeal to all levels of government, organizations, as well as individuals to make concrete changes in society to rectify the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is a framework for the establishment and maintenance of mutually respected relationships. It represents the minimum standard for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. There are 94 Calls to Action asking for a dismantling of centuries-old political and bureaucratic culture in communities, governments, places of worship, schools and workplaces.

As of June 2021, the Assembly of First Nations general assessment of the progress made by the Government of Canada and other levels of government stated that the goals set by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action have made moderate to little progress, with only three Calls to Action rated as complete. With the lack of progress on the government's part, there might be an opportunity for private industry to be proactive and familiarize themselves with the Calls to Action, and to take action fittingly for their organization.

## GENDER DIVERSITY

Gender diverse individuals should have fair representation within an organization. For many gender-diverse people, the concept of binary gender – having to choose to express yourself as male or female – is constraining.  Some people would prefer to have the freedom to change from one gender to another, or not have a gender identity at all. Others just want to be able to openly defy or challenge more normalized concepts of gender.

Diverse workforces have been proven to outperform ones that are not. A diverse workforce can increase profitability and decrease staff turnover. Examining gender diverse representation and diversity at the executive level is also important. According to Skills 4, an award-winning Diversity and Inclusion Training Provider in the UK, companies doing this well are 21% more likely to experience above-average profitability.

## EMPLOYER CONSIDERATIONS

Employers need to blend this topic into their corporate strategy and create a sense of belonging for all in the organizational setting. Everyone thrives with a sense of belonging; this must be part of a cultural renovation to ensure diversity is embraced and gender norms, salary discrepancies and past biases are non-existent.

Employers must action an intentional strategy for improvement by:

- Evaluating the reality of gender, race, pay equity and inclusion competencies as they exist currently
- Involving the entire workforce by communicating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative to ask for ideas from employees at all levels through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
- Educating Leadership, Human Resources and hiring managers to include an audit of existing direct reports and what opportunity exists to create DEI
- Creating strategies for attracting and promoting/hiring diverse talent
- Ensuring mandatory employee education courses are offered, internally or externally, as part of a regular awareness training requirement
- Creating an ongoing steering committee/s to continue forward-thinking and ongoing cultural changes supporting DEI
- Ensuring representation is evident in staffing, product offering, marketing and suppliers
- Uncover community opportunities where the industry in which the organization exists can offer mentorship to visible minorities or higher-risk youth
- Developing a dashboard of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure and evaluate DEI over a specific time period
- Evaluating entrances and exits for accessibility by wheelchair or scooter, including ramps and door buttons.
- Gender-neutral washrooms and washrooms with wheelchair accessibility

The Human Resources team is critical in addressing unconscious biases through dialogue and training and hiring decisions. DEI initiatives could include:

- Incorporating diverse holidays into the workplace
- Promoting diversity and inclusion across social media platforms
- Speaking to your workforce and creating "bottom-up" employee-driven initiatives
- Standardizing inclusive language for all internal training, policies, procedures, memos, employment ads, etc.
- Creating mentorship programs, including partnering leadership with diverse employees
- Investing in a hiring platform that removes biases from the screening process
- Introducing pronouns for inclusion when making introductions and on email signatures

## 65% OF EMPLOYEES DO NOT FEEL THEIR COMPANIES FOLLOW THROUGH ON DEI COMMITMENTS
(MCKINSEY CANADA)

## BUSINESS OBLIGATIONS

Inclusion is a business imperative. In fact, employees who feel very included are nearly three times more likely to feel excited by and committed to their organizations. However, building an inclusive culture doesn't happen overnight.

- An empowered business image that is better equipped to build a more inclusive workplace helping the organization and the community in which they exist
- A sense of pride among more informed and educated employees contributes to a positive internal culture due to employee engagement and trust
- A bigger talent pool due to a restructured recruitment process to include more diverse candidates
- A more diverse and qualified workforce, including leadership, contributes to a broader perspective of decision making

"ACCORDING TO DELOITTE, DIVERSE COMPANIES ENJOY 2.3 TIMES HIGHER CASH FLOW PER EMPLOYEE, A 30% IMPROVED TEAM PERFORMANCE AND A 19% INCREASE IN REVENUE COMPARED TO LESS DIVERSE COUNTERPARTS."

Organizations have to ensure they are always listening; this is the best way to obtain insights from their employees and the communities in which they serve. Recent events taught everyone, including business, very important lessons. Awareness and learning should never stop at every single level of an organization.

A workplace wants to avoid the employee perception that training is mandatory, without the associated conversations and leadership actions being demonstrated post-training. As in any type of training, the positive impacts rarely last longer than a couple of days. The efforts must be made to weave this into the workplace culture and day-to-day activities.

**WHY IS WORKPLACE TRAINING RECOMMENDED?**

We all learn our biases and inconsideration somewhere and likely enter the workforce with our pre-conceived notions already formed. It is only as a collective group, at school and at work, that we can learn together how to better understand, and react, to the differences we all have, whether visible or not.

Consider the collaboration, the patience and understanding, and the acceptance and appreciation of a workplace that supports:

- Ethnicity
- People with disabilities
- Gender diversity
- Gender equity
- Gender identity
- Inclusive language
- Cultural holidays and celebrations
- Intergeneration

X5 Management has partnered with The Canadian Diversity Initiative and is pleased to offer diversity and inclusion training online. We're proud of the quality of our diversity and inclusion courses that we have bundled, for ease of learning. We know this self-directed and effective training will supply the learning needed to help any team better understand the importance of an effective workplace that supports Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The Certificate of Successful Completion will create a sense of accomplishment, too.

**DEI - YOUR CULTURE DEPENDS ON IT!**
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## RESPECT AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

Safety Services Canada works to provide employers and employees with the knowledge and training necessary to work safely. They endorse this course as a key educational component of occupational health and safety training. Diversity encompasses all of the ways that we are different from each other, including factors like ethnicity, culture, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, and sexual identity. In a respectful, inclusive workplace, diversity is valued and individuals feel safe and appreciated. This course explores both acceptable and unacceptable workplace attitudes and behaviours.

Participants learn how to identify situations involving discrimination, harassment, or bullying, and how to respond appropriately. Interactive exercises help learners gain practical insights into ways to build and support a more inclusive workplace environment.

## UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE

Unconscious biases affect everyone. In the workplace, these biases can undermine logical decision-making and create an unfair playing field, where some people have advantages over others. This course shows common types of unconscious bias, examines the negative effects on individuals and organizations and provides practical tips for mitigating those effects. Interactive exercises help to reinforce key concepts and give opportunities for participants to consider their own biases and explore ways to overcome them and support a more respectful, inclusive workplace culture.

## CANADIAN INDIGENOUS CULTURE TRAINING – TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

This course was created by The Indigenous Leadership Development Institute of Canada as a core training tool for organizations working with Indigenous Peoples. Participants learn about the diverse histories of Canada's Indigenous Peoples and the challenges and opportunities they face today. The content aligns with the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (2015). This training helps participants gain an understanding of the Indigenous perspective on key issues and developments, including: the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations.

## LGBTQ2S+ DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TRAINING FOR WORKPLACES

The Canadian LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce created this introductory course as a foundational step for organizations seeking to create an LGBT+ inclusive workplace culture. Participants learn about the history, current issues, and terminology associated with LGBT+ identities, and the challenges faced by LGBT+ individuals in the workplace. Interactive exercises offer opportunities for learners to evaluate the existing workplace environment and explore ways to support an inclusive culture where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued.

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## IN CONCLUSION

Diversity suggests perspective, representation, and support of inclusion, including the various ways people differ. Inclusion suggests the creation of environments that promote feedback and openness to support diversity. Equity suggests fairness, openness, and sameness, including valuing diversity and inclusion.

The Black Lives Matter movement has served as a catalyst to raise awareness of the inequities that exist with not only Black people but racial minorities. The protests associated with the death of George Floyd while in police custody, and the social media frenzy, have sparked the beginning of massive change.

Most organizations are now looking within to recognize whether there is a diverse representation of employees and inclusive policies that respect the equity of women, including visible minorities, Indigenous Peoples, persons living with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ2+ community.

**"COMPANIES WITH MORE INCLUSIVE BUSINESS CULTURES AND POLICIES SEE A 59% INCREASE IN INNOVATION AND 37% BETTER ASSESSMENT OF CONSUMER INTEREST AND DEMAND."**

Although change has started as awareness has increased, will we, at home and at work, be as diverse, inclusive, and equitable as we should be? Rather than wait for the largest organizations to take the lead, it is our responsibility to learn so we can contribute toward a solution.

It is people who make up organizations, regardless of how large, and people who make up families. We need to keep the conversation going and broaden our circle of influence. It is people who make up organizations, regardless of how large, and people who make up families. We need to keep the conversation going and broaden our circle of influence.

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1   Why is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training Important? It is one of the best ways to create a sense of belonging to establish a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce.

2   What impact does Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training have on my team? Common and potentially damaging unconscious biases can impact an organization adversely. If your team was more comfortable with cultural diversity and gender-diverse individuals, the culture would be one of belonging.

3   Is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training time-consuming? This convenient, self-directed online training saves time and costs compared to in-person training and can be administered by organizations in a scheduled environment.

## DEI - YOUR CULTURE DEPENDS ON IT!
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GET STARTED

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