



EDITORS

Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska & Tomasz Dąbrowski

THE ESSENTIALS OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION MANAGEMENT

by Diversity Hub

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age | unconscious bias | gender balance | LGBTI | mental health
disability | engaging managers | employee resource groups

Diversity Hub Think Tank
Krakow 2019



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editors: Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska and Tomasz Dąbrowski
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Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends of Diversity Hub,

When we established the Diversity Hub Think Tank four years ago, we did not dare dream about it becoming an organisation that would set the tone for the debate about Diversity & Inclusion in Poland. We noticed the need to open up the business world to diversity and we wanted to have a say in how every person is treated in their workplace, regardless of age, gender, origin, health or sexual orientation; however, we imagined going step by step. As it turned out, what we do is so needed in business that these small steps have become milestones.

Today, Diversity Hub is an organisation that can boast complex projects in the largest corporations – we draft D&I strategies, we work as consultants, trainers and we implement solutions that make businesses more inclusive. We developed our own tools, including the D&I Audit and Age Management Assessment systems. We become the leader of European D&I Network, within which we develop projects together with other organisations from Austria, France, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Two years ago, we established the Mental Health Center by Diversity Hub, pointing out the need to address the issue of mental health in the workplace. We are coordinating D&I SWAP – an original competence exchange programme for corporations. We are also working with universities on studies taking place as part of the D&I LAB by Diversity Hub, supporting students in the process of working on their master's theses in the field of D&I. Together with some of the largest corporations, we develop recommendations for business within the D&I Task Forces by Diversity Hub programme. Our conferences are currently the most important D&I events in corporate market.

We work with nearly 150 corporations. We are proud of what we have achieved so far and we are not afraid to talk about it, because we believe that our commitment to this issue encourages organisations that are just

starting out on their D&I journey to get more involved – and that is exactly what we want. We want to change the working environment – not only in selected companies that decide to get involved, but across the board.

We are responsible for sharing knowledge and experience, as well as promoting diversity. That is why we are active in the media, promoting the best solutions, showcasing best practices and making our voice heard in the public debate. That is why we decided to publish this book and make it available free of charge. By doing so, we are carrying out our mission and paying back everybody who supports us on a daily basis by sharing their experiences, problems, successes and challenges they face. That was the overarching idea behind Diversity Hub as a think-tank organisation. By sharing experiences from companies, we all gain something – knowledge, new insights, inspiration – and we make the world a better place by using what we see in our everyday work.

The book you are reading right now is our second printed publication, and the first one released in English. We decided to switch to English, because we want to reach the broadest possible audience, thus increasing our impact even further than before.

The book is a collection of articles published by Diversity Hub experts in *Personel Plus* magazine (Wolters Kluwer), with which we have been collaborating for two years now. It is not a guide – instead, we intended for it to be something to inspire you and show you concrete solutions based on actual experience in business world. We believe that the selected topics will enable many people to get better acquainted with the issue of diversity management. The selected topics are very diverse – just like the entire debate about the issue of D&I. We have never looked at the issue of diversity from just one perspective, because we believe that seeing the big picture helps people build understanding, as well as notice links and relationships.

This book could not have been published without Accenture's support. We know Accenture's approach and openness towards D&I, as well as the excellent reports prepared by the firm's experts. That is how we know that we are working with a great brand. However, every company is made up of people, and it is their attitudes and their readiness to undertake bold actions that determine the success of many projects, including this one. We were lucky to meet such people along the way. One meeting was enough to learn that we are like-minded and that we all want to do something that

will help other companies to change for the better. All of this led to the creation of this book. We would like to thank the entire Accenture team for that. We are proud of working with such partners and we emphasise this at every step.

This publication would also never become a reality without the support of the editorial staff of the leading HR magazine in Poland – *Personel Plus*. Thank you for your trust and we are glad that we can promote diversity together.

We would also like to thank the organisations we work with on a daily basis, whose experiences have enabled us to write these texts. Non-disclosure agreements prevent us from naming these entities, but we believe that all those who contributed to our materials know that we are grateful for every conversation, project and comment.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who have devoted their time to creating new articles with us – all the authors whose profiles can be found at the end of the book. We are happy with every text we write together. It's great that we can do this together.

We hope that you will be inspired by what you will find on the subsequent pages. Good luck with all your D&I projects! And if you would like to comment on our texts or ask for more details – do not hesitate to contact us. We always respond.

Kindest regards,

Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska, PhD | President of Diversity Hub

Tomasz Dąbrowski, PhD | Vice-President of Diversity Hub



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A BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Tomasz Dąbrowski

If we look at diversity management solely from the point of view of human interests, needs and expectations, I am afraid that we will not only fail to see the whole idea of diversity management, but will also exhibit our naivete. Of course, managing diversity envisions speaking up for people, especially those belonging to disadvantaged groups, but not only them. It takes two to tango – this is no different in the case of diversity management. After all, business also has to benefit from this process. If we ignore this aspect and we're unable to defend our business case, we should not be surprised if our actions do not gain a strategic nature and are limited in scope.

As the Diversity Hub we work with the largest corporations, which are gradually opening up to diversity. In some of them, we dived deep and created entire Diversity & Inclusion strategies, while in the cases of others we collaborate incidentally by carrying out training courses and offering our consulting services. However, in nearly all organisations we hear claims that diversity management is another HR fad, which has no deeper meaning for business.

In all surveys carried out by our team, we constantly stumble upon phrases and expressions such as: “fad”, “buzzword”, “not linked to my work”, “no impact on the results”, “another HR invention.” Our observations are not out of the ordinary here. According to Michàlle E. Mor Barak, the problematic nature of managing a diverse environment stems from the inability of managers to understand the dynamics of this phenomenon.¹ Based on a survey of middle managers in the Polish banking sector, Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska admits that “managers have limited knowledge regarding diversity management”.² At the beginning of this decade, the famous reports published by Forbes Insights concluded that the attitudes and actions (or lack thereof) of managers are one of the greatest barriers on the road towards the sustainable implementation of diversity and inclusion solutions. It also showcased that these barriers often stem from lack of knowledge.³

Given this background, it becomes particularly important to constantly remind and emphasise the business case for diversity management. This postulate, however, has two vectors. It is not only about providing arguments to people who do not see this business case for diversity management, but also about ensuring that people who are responsible for implementing inclusive policies in companies are able to use business arguments instead of only social or ideological ones.

We need to emphasise that the very idea of diversity management points towards its main objective – to ensure that every person feels respected and treated fairly, regardless of age, gender, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, psychophysical ability and so on, as well as to ensure their ability to contribute to the success of their organisations and benefit the business with their commitment.⁴ Thus, the organisations have to see the need, benefit or at least inevitability of taking action in the area of diversity. At the same time, these actions should be directed at people and

serve their interests. Only then can we achieve true diversity management. Let us therefore examine the most important business arguments.

Employee market

Attracting and recruiting candidates is one of the most pressing issues for many companies. A relatively good economic situation and the fact that a number of international players entered our market made the passive approach to recruitment a thing of the past – companies no longer wait for new graduates coming from universities.⁵ The situation in the labour market forced a change in approaches to recruitment, ways of communication with the market, as well as activities aimed at building the employer's image.

On the one hand, the corporate market, which used to be the domain of young professionals, is gradually changing – it is getting older. More and more often companies resort to hiring employees in their 40s and 50s. This forces a broader interest in the subject of age in management, and thus in diversity in the most common understanding of this concept. On the other hand, corporations tend to intensively hire foreign employees from Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, India, the Philippines or Malaysia to combat workforce shortages. This also requires us to focus on diversity, in particular its cultural and intercultural dimensions. The same can be observed when companies facing workforce shortages turn towards marginalised groups and people who until recently were not perceived in terms of “potential candidates” – including persons with disabilities, or women in technology. Such companies also need to focus on the areas of diversity and inclusion.

According to studies carried out in the United States, 80% of all respondents declare that the company's approach to diversity is one of the most significant factors influencing their choice of employer.⁶ An inclusive environment is becoming one of the key elements influencing the decision to choose a given workplace over another. In the age of the Internet a successful marketing campaign or media message is not enough to attract new candidates. Inclusiveness is easy to verify – one can easily sense a lack of authenticity. These days it is not enough to establish a Diversity Team. What matters is the behaviour of every manager, top management devoting time spent on diversity, and the activity of internal networks –

an issue described in greater detail in the November issue of *Personel Plus*. This is a tremendous challenge for entire organisations, which puts the tools and policies from the area of Diversity & Inclusion right at the centre.

Demographic changes and recruitment

Demographic change is progressing – and there's no stopping it. Society is growing older; the average age of corporate employees is also rising. Forecasts published by Statistics Poland claim that the percentage of people under 24 will fall from 26 percent (data from 2015) to 20 percent by 2050. At the same time, the number of persons over 65 will reach the threshold of a third of the entire population.⁷ This forces companies to turn towards people aged 40+ or 50+ in recruitment activities – something that can already be seen in recruitment campaigns, and that was not so obvious in the past. What is more, they have to be aware of the fact that the population of employees who started their corporate career 10 or 15 years ago as 20-year-olds is also ageing. Today, they are 40-year-olds who often constitute the core of existing corporate structures, and who will belong to the 50+ group in a few years. To date, these companies have been focusing mostly on attracting and engaging the youngest cohorts – including the famous Millennials and the so-called Generation Z. One question remains: are corporations operating in Poland, which are used to working with exceptionally young employees, ready and prepared for intergenerational management? Are they ready to motivate employees aged 50+ or 60+? To identify the needs of employees and customers, regardless of their age?

We already talked about the challenges entailed by this change in the July edition of *Personel Plus*.⁸ Here, we need to point out that the impact of demographic changes on businesses remains at the heart of debates surrounding the issue of diversity, especially due to the fact that this issue does not encompass only one-time and reactive activities – it is about a long-term perspective.

Expanding to new markets and customer groups

A focus on diversity opens up new opportunities for reaching new groups of potential customers and users of services offered by companies. This is not only a result of globalisation processes, which seem to be emphasised mostly in the literature and usually concern the cultural aspect of diver-

sity, but also because of the desire to expand the market coverage to encompass groups that to date have either been marginalised or completely overlooked. This is illustrated by several examples – let us take a closer look.

Activities in the area of diversity management have a direct impact on openness towards new ethnic groups and cultural circles. Scaling up the business, adapting its offer to cultural needs, or even basic attempts at reaching customers representing different cultures with the company's offer in a natural way require knowledge regarding diversity.

This area also covers measures aimed at ensuring access to the company's services to people with disabilities. This area serves as a particular example showing the limited extent of activities carried out by companies attempting to fulfil their declarations of openness towards persons with disabilities without a proper understanding of the complexity of this issue.⁹

Examples can also be found in other areas. It is enough to take a closer look at insurance offers for non-heterosexual couples, advanced financial assistance programmes for single parents or people living in civil partnerships, the fact that companies are moving away from traditional male consultancy services in the construction sector, as well as adapting e-commerce stores and applications to the needs of older users. In every single one of these areas, organisations need to face the challenges concerning diversity management, which supports sales activities, market expansion and ensuring stable and sustainable growth. Effective diversity management, broadening its perspective and gaining new points of view, give organisations easier access to the purchasing power of diverse, often overlooked customer groups.¹⁰

Increasing innovation and adaptability while reducing risk

Studies documenting the relationship between diversity management policies and effectiveness, creativity and innovation criteria were undertaken as early as in the 1990s.¹¹ These studies were later expanded and supplemented with additional arguments, which pointed out the issue of adaptability or minimising risks of failures.¹² It might seem that this area is one of the best-known ones among managers. Asked about the benefits of diversity management, managers working for companies operating in Poland usually pointed out four factors: “increased profitability; innovation; better decision making and risk reduction; responsiveness towards

the ever-changing market needs, better connection with customers and the market.”¹³ The issue of innovation was summed up in an interesting way by one of the respondents during a survey carried out by the Diversity Hub: “Diversity is life. Just like in nature. Without diversity there might never be anything new, there is no life.”

Implementation of internal policies and legal requirements

At the beginning of this decade 97 percent of the 300 global companies surveyed by Forbes Insights already had a diversity management strategy in place.¹⁴ Naturally, these strategies also trickled down to Polish branches, challenging the management to implement corporate solutions and adapt them to local conditions. The problems with “translating” such policies to the Polish market were covered in the July 2017 issue of *Personel Plus* in an article with a quite telling title – “Before we act”. This article covered these issues with regard to persons with disabilities, LGBTI groups and elderly people. Here, it is worth pointing out that the elements of strategic actions in the area of diversity management also result from the regulations of the Labour Code, which are aimed at preventing discrimination – thus, we would be hard-pressed to call them a particularly new phenomenon. In practice, this means that even those who do not see the benefits or the inevitability of taking action in the area of diversity should pay attention to them, since tackling this issue is required by law and internal company policies, which simply cannot be ignored or overlooked.

Better working environment and engagement

The statement “the individualisation of human needs and their diversity results in the emergence of the need to diversify management tools”¹⁵ might seem redundant; however, it would be difficult to disprove it. The features and characteristics which sometimes differentiate us, and at other times bring us together, make it difficult to look at the issue of engagement, motivation, loyalty and satisfaction without taking into consideration the field of diversity and inclusion. One of the respondents in the Diversity Hub survey summed it up with a great rhetorical question: “Would you like to work in a ‘stuffy’ environment?”

Diversity is directly linked to something that we could call “a better working environment for workers”.¹⁶ An interesting survey among LGBTI

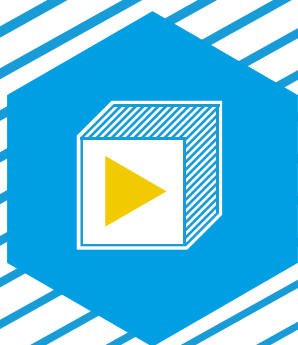
representatives was carried out by the LGBT Business Forum,¹⁷ not only pointing out the links between the implementation of internal anti-discrimination policies and job satisfaction, but also showing how the need to hide one's gender identity in the workplace affects employee well-being. However, this is just one example. Of course, there is more evidence pointing to this fact, and more and more often companies try to show that they are taking real actions to build an open working environment where everyone has the right to feel good, where everyone is respected and has equal opportunities to have an impact on the life of the organisation.

Everyday reality

In one of the most interesting publications on diversity management, Michàlle E. Mor Barak argues that diversity in the work environment is not a temporary phenomenon or a fad, but an everyday reality.¹⁸ The global economy, ageing societies, migrations, the situation in the labour market, changing habits, taking action to increase the engagement and innovation of teams, social expectations, legal regulations and many other factors clearly show that the field of diversity management is clearly connected with the business objectives of companies. There are a lot of proofs confirming this fact; we do not have to come up with any. All that we have to do is to notice and see them.

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EIGHT STEPS TO INCLUSION. A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska

Diversity management as an organised and systematised process is much less common in Poland than in Western countries, with many companies not implementing any such solutions at all. This also applies to Polish branches of large international companies, which often find it difficult to overcome the challenge of implementing global strategies at a local level. Embedding them in our social, political and economic circumstances often forces them to start practically from scratch. When starting your adventure with diversity and inclusion, you should remember the following eight tips.

For more than a year now, *Personel Plus* has been featuring articles and tips on dealing with various aspects of diversity management. However, a recent call from a large company, which acknowledged the fact that they are starting their road towards developing a diversity & inclusion (D&I) strategy, and that they need support at this stage, inspired me to write a guide – a collection of tips on how to get started in the area of diversity. This task is not easy, since all activities of this kind should be tailored to the needs of a specific company and its target groups – there are no programmes that will simply work in all kinds of diverse environments. There is always a risk that employees and the environment will not buy into solutions copied from somewhere else. In other words – what is definitely required when coming up with an effective D&I programme? What should you do before you start to create a measured action plan?

1. Measure diversity

You cannot launch any effective activities concerning diversity without appropriate knowledge about your organisation and its employees. The most common method of obtaining such knowledge is monitoring indicators which illustrate diversity both directly and indirectly, taken from data regarding employment structure, salaries, promotions, absenteeism, resignations and so on, as well as other data pertaining to satisfaction surveys and employee engagement. These indicators certainly help companies understand the current state of the D&I journey; however, they also have some limitations, because they often show a very fragmented and partial picture. That is why we usually recommend supplementing data analysis with in-depth insights into an organisation using qualitative methods. If you're just making your first forays into this area, I could recommend adopting a good practice of interviewing employees on different levels and from various departments, particularly those representing minority groups, as well as those actively working in employee organisations and informal networks. These interviews will not only provide additional insight into their problems in the organisation, as well as their needs related to them, but they will also help establish understanding and give a clear signal that their needs are taken into account, which in the long run will translate into their engagement in the process of fostering an inclusive environment.

It is also good to start with a review of diversity & inclusion procedures, to see what works and what needs to be improved. You should also keep in mind to ask regular employees about these procedures, not only decision-makers. The former will be able to give you honest feedback on the functioning of procedures adopted by the company. We adopted this approach in the diversity & inclusion audit tool, which enables nearly non-invasive verification of D&I processes and their functioning.

2. Appoint a D&I team

Many companies set up a special separate function to manage diversity and coordinate D&I projects. However, experience shows that in the long-term perspective it may cause a decrease in engagement in D&I processes, particularly in the case of managers. The fact that there is a separate function or position responsible for this area makes managers reluctant to take responsibility for fostering a D&I culture, or worse, shifting responsibility to that person, often citing lack of time and other obligations. In many cases we can hear excuses such as: “X deals with that, I need to take care of the business”.

What works better is appointing a team – a committee or a D&I board – encompassing managers as well as employees of all levels, and representatives of networks. The team should be tasked with defining D&I objectives, promoting an open working environment, as well as stimulating and maintaining the engagement of specific stakeholders in D&I activities. The employer’s task is to clearly define the expectations and the mission of the team.

An often-forgotten aspect of the functioning of such a team is the fact that it requires the support of the management board, independence, and a separate budget for the implementation of plans. Without it, the team will only have a symbolic impact on the change.

3. Link D&I to business objectives

The implementation of a D&I strategy will not succeed without linking it to the company’s business objectives in a robust way. This has to be said right away – diversity management is a strategic process, purely linked to business performance. By definition, its aim is to achieve the strategic goals of the company, and as such it should be directly subordinated to these goals. This means, among other things, that when undertaking ac-

tions aimed at diversity management the company does not need to take into account all its aspects, such as age, gender, multiculturalism or sexual orientation. The key to success in the D&I area is to define the aspects which are relevant to the implementation of the company's strategic goals and to focus directly on them, as well as measuring them and including them in the performance assessment of its managerial staff.

It is also worth noting that companies which do best in terms of diversity management usually do not have a separate “diversity management” programme. Instead, they integrate diversity into all processes, using it to identify and develop talents, foster innovation and ensure engagement. So, when they talk about recruitment it is not about recruiting minority groups, but rather about an approach enabling effective recruitment among all possible candidates, without exceptions.

In other words, before you start planning your D&I activities you need to ask yourself some basic business questions – regardless of their type and scope. These are questions like: Who are we? What do our people do and how do they work together in order to achieve our objectives? What do we need to achieve success in business?

4. Identify stakeholders and foster engagement

The key aspect of the process of shaping diversity culture and implementing D&I programmes is choosing the right people, whose actions and attitudes will facilitate the achievement of the intended objectives. In particular, you should focus on individuals who share a belief in the value of diversity and understand the business case for D&I. They will be natural and authentic ambassadors of D&I in the company. Involving them in the planning and implementation of the programme is the most effective way of fostering engagement at all levels.

Fostering a diversity culture should start at the top – from the management board and top-level managers – and cascade down. Three key groups which have to be involved in this process are managers, HR and employee networks, with particular attention paid to managerial staff, since managers constitute a key link in these strategies, and sometimes they can even be a key obstacle. Global studies show that the majority of projects pertaining to the implementation of diversity policy fail at the management level.¹ Our experience shows that executives often fail to understand the

importance of diversity or misunderstand it as ensuring equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups, including minorities. The importance of involving managerial staff in the process of fostering a diversity culture is thus very significant, which is why the efforts of stakeholders and teams responsible for implementing D&I policies in companies should be focused on this group.

5. Prepare arguments and evidence

In my work I often meet people who do not see the connection between diversity and business. This is not all that bad when it comes to regular employees, but it gets far worse when it comes to managers – and this happens surprisingly often. Thus, you need to be prepared for this in your organisation as well. Keep in mind that you will need to convince others at nearly every step of the way, which is why you should arm yourself and other stakeholders involved in building an inclusive working environment with evidence. Use D&I reports and available data regarding your business, and show numbers, statistics and descriptions of good practices. Show them to everyone who does not understand the impact of diversity on business. Work out a business case for your company – it is best if you do it together with your managers. Make it a tailor-made argument which will be easy for other employees to identify with. Gather positive things about your organisation – collect and promote successful projects, smaller and bigger successes, personal stories and other things that will support the process of fostering a diversity culture.

6. Support the creation and operation of employee resource groups and networks

ERGs – Employee Resource Groups – have a potential to support the company's strategic goals and objectives, which is why they should be treated as partners in business development.² Networks create informal space for collaboration, getting to know each other, and fostering employee engagement. What is more, in the area of D&I they are an invaluable trove of knowledge and necessary projects thanks to their knowledge of the situation of people who use them for support – they help solve problems and overcome barriers, as well as dispel myths and stereotypes. Networks are a natural expert environment which can help with identifying the needs

of certain groups, such as young people, women, LGBTI³, as well as provide market knowledge, and serve as consultants or designers for products and services offered to these groups. Thus, they can help solve problems concerning the area of D&I in relations with customers, clients, partners and suppliers, as well as consult on job descriptions, job offers, and the course of the recruitment process itself, for example in terms of openness towards people with disabilities.

The Krakow branch of HSBC has numerous employees volunteering to run five groups focusing on a number of areas: Balance (which focuses on gender diversity), Working Parents (supporting working parents), Pride (for LGBT+ issues), Embrace (focusing on strengthening multiculturalism), and Christians in HSBC (bringing together Christians of all denominations). Each of these activities concerns a different aspect of life, but all of them are equally important, since they all stem from the real and actual needs of people associated in, or sympathetic to, specific groups and subgroups. All activities related to the establishment and functioning of D&I groups are a result of grass-roots initiatives undertaken by employees, Aleksandra Gabryś, leader of the Working Parents D&I group established at HSBC Service Delivery in Krakow, explained. In spite of the fact that there are many reports presenting the benefits of networks in business, even these few examples clearly show their significant impact on building an inclusive working environment.

7. Invite D&I organisations to join you

Building an inclusive working environment is not easy. It is an arduous and multifaceted task whose results are not visible in the short term. In many cases, opening up particular aspects triggers a real avalanche of needs in a given area. More often than not, you also have to deal with internal resistance within the organisation, which is always more or less intense, and which needs to be overcome. This is why we recommend working with professional organisations dealing with diversity, either comprehensively, or just with a certain, narrow aspect. This recommendation is supported by a number of arguments. First of all, you will not have to work alone, since you will have substantive and organisational support in the areas you will need it, particularly in terms of knowledge and professional advice. Secondly, by working with NGOs you support the third sector, you

engage proven suppliers in your supply chain and help organisations that pursue social objectives. Thirdly, these organisations will provide you with the external authority you need to legitimise your actions. What is more, if you collaborate with major, larger-scale organisations, they will promote your business as a friendly and open workplace.

8. Take care of internal and external communication

Managing diversity does not cover only internal activities and building a working environment. Promoting D&I activities outside the company results in a number of image benefits – the company appears to be an attractive employer. When undertaking any activities connected with a D&I programme, you will need to prepare a robust communication plan, covering all the groups you want to reach, both inside and outside the company. Don't make the mistake of forgetting about communication at the beginning of your journey, since this will make it easier for you to involve employees in the process of fostering D&I and increase its impact. Thus, you need to communicate your activities openly and transparently, explaining why the company cares about them and what they will change. Announce successes, promote small projects. Let everyone see that the company invests in diversity and that these activities integrate employees and foster better relations between them.

Seeing how many initiatives we run in other countries, I started to wonder about what we could organise in Krakow. I wanted to initiate more debates on diversity in the workplace. Nearly 30% of our employees in Krakow wear rainbow-themed lanyards that signify openness and tolerance – says Aleksandra Tomaszewska, originator of the LGBT Ally campaign, which launched in March 2018 in the Krakow branch of Aon. As part of the campaign, everybody who wants to show that they are an LGBTI ally can wear a rainbow-themed lanyard with the company name printed on it. LGBTI employees admit that the rainbow lanyards worn by others are a very cool signal. They feel comfortable in a workplace where the symbol of acceptance is worn openly.

Small-steps approach

Regardless of the level and advancement of D&I activities in your organisation, you can foster D&I in small steps. This is particularly important at

TIPS FOR MAKING THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT INCLUSIVE

- ▶ Review job descriptions and job offers, paying attention to inclusion. Pay particular attention to aspects such as characteristics and buzzwords that might scare away candidates from minority groups (for example "we are looking for young, dynamic candidates" or "young team"). Use gender-neutral language.
- ▶ Be sure to include information that your company cares about diversity and is open to all candidates in the job offers and in the "Career" section of your website.
- ▶ If possible, invite representatives of minority groups from your company to participate in the recruitment process, for example in job interviews.
- ▶ Respect and celebrate religious and national holidays observed by employees from other countries and cultures. This brings great joy and a feeling of recognition to the minority groups in your company and opens other employees up to diversity.
- ▶ Reward your employees for their D&I efforts. Thanks to them, your company becomes a great workplace. This is worth appreciating.
- ▶ Communicate diversity on posters and displays.
- ▶ Check whether the materials available to your customers and guests perpetuate stereotypes concerning the industry or the company, and whether they present your company as open to diversity.
- ▶ Use a round-robin approach to meetings – get your leaders and moderators to ask all participants to share their views on a given issue individually. The selected person cannot share their opinion, as well as speak up at the end of the round, if they change their mind. This way of running meetings enables everybody to speak their mind – not only volunteers who have the courage to speak up.
- ▶ Sponsor D&I events and community organisations whose values you share. By doing so you are building your company's brand in the eyes of your competitors and potential candidates.
- ▶ Respect working hours and limit important late afternoon meetings and events so as not to exclude many people who have important private things to take care of.

the beginning, when you need visible results in a relatively short period of time. That is why this article is summed up by a list of small projects which support fostering an inclusive working environment and which can be implemented regardless of the size of the organisation and the current state of the diversity strategy in the company (see: “Tips for making the working environment inclusive”).

These are just some simple and low-budget activities which can be started right away. The topic of diversity is pretty much endless. However, only action – even when changes are small and happen one step at a time – can bring about change. In other words – good luck!

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- 1 See for example: https://www.forbes.com/forbesinsights/innovation_diversity/ (retrieved on: 6 January 2019).
 - 2 The topic of ERGs was covered more extensively in the November 2018 issue of *Personel Plus*.
 - 3 Acronym standing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex.

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HOW TO BUILD ENGAGEMENT OF MANAGERS IN DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PROCESSES

Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska

Managers are a key element in building the culture of diversity in the company, being at the same time often a barrier. Global research shows that the majority of projects related to the implementation of diversity policies get stuck at the level of management¹. Why is that? What shall we do in order to efficiently include managers in the implementation of D&I processes, and in building an open work environment?

Our experience shows that management often does not realize the importance of diversity, or understands it inappropriately as evening out the opportunities of disadvantaged groups, including minorities. Whereas, it is all about creating an open and friendly work environment where everybody has a voice, and each voice is heard out and taken into account. A diverse work environment does not only mean that you employ people that differ from one another. It also means that you create an environment in which people feel respected, accepted and exceptional.

The significance of management in the process of building a culture of diversity is of great importance, and that is why all the efforts of people and teams responsible for the implementation of D&I in companies should be focused on them. Two special aspects of working with management that you need to know about and that you need to remember in order to efficiently build D&I culture is realising that diversity has a strategic dimension for business and building the sense of responsibility for diversity and involvement in D&I processes.

Diversity as a strategic process

On multiple occasions I meet people who are deeply convinced that diversity management is aimed at the evening out of opportunities for minorities and disadvantaged groups. What it means for them is affirmative activities of a purely social character, which do not translate into their business.

However, it is a process of strategic character, and moreover, it has a directly business dimension since it is oriented at achieving the strategic aims of the company and it is directly subordinated to them. This mainly means that by undertaking diversity management the company can, but does not have to, take into account all of its dimensions, such as age, sex, multiculturalism, sexual orientation, etc. What is key for success in this area is defining which diversity dimensions are crucial for carrying out strategic targets and focusing on them, measuring them, and including them in the system of assessment of managers' performance.

It is also worth noting that companies that most efficiently manage diversity usually do not have a separate programme entitled *Diversity management*. In such companies diversity is integrated in all processes, and through the prism of diversity the company looks at identifying and

developing talents, innovation capacity or engagement. Thus, when talking about recruitment, they do not mean recruiting minorities, but also such attitude thanks to which they will be able to recruit all possible candidates, without exemptions.

Understanding such a role of diversity and intentional management of diversity is a crucial factor in convincing managers to undertake an active role in D&I processes.

Engagement and accountability

Many companies decide to appoint a CDO – Chief Diversity Officer, and many create multi-person diversity teams. Many of those people and teams are successful. However, there are also companies that move away from this model of concentrating responsibility, concluding that managers lose or consciously shift their responsibility onto diversity, assuming that a specialised person or structure deals with this topic. It often happens that we can see top managers talking about diversity and its virtues, while managers at lower levels, who actually manage the organisation and have a direct impact on the experience of their employees, do not understand and do not have the sense of responsibility for this area, and are not really engaged in D&I processes.

As a result, Diversity & Inclusion becomes a process or even a procedure which is realised somewhere else. However, diversity is more than the demography of employees and support for some external non-profit organisations. It is a process that has to be deep and authentic in order to make sense. It has to, in a way, be part of organisational DNA.

It is the companies' task to build the sense of responsibility of managers for creating a diverse and inclusive workplace and their personal engagement in the process. In order to achieve this, you need to focus not necessarily on control and on the mechanism of pressure, but on engaging managers in solving problems, making them contact various groups, encouraging social responsibility for change, but also, or perhaps mainly, making them ask themselves the following question: What is my role as a manager in developing D&I? Where am I in this process? What can I give from myself, and how can I support my company?

Let's have a look at some examples of efficiently building the engagement of managers in Diversity & Inclusion processes.

Knowledge: business case and good practices

When cooperating with managers I can sometimes hear: ‘Diversity is not related to my work’, ‘It does not translate into the result’, ‘Another fashion’. We are surprised that the management group, which was supposed to be our support, does not have an enthusiastic attitude to D&I projects. It often turns out that, contrary to what we assume, paradoxically, it is in this very group that we have to start from the basics and deliver essential knowledge concerning diversity. The best effect is brought when managers learn about business benefits coming from diversity (business case), and work on examples of good and bad practices.

During workshops I frequently observe managers who rub their eyes in astonishment, realising the business benefits coming from implementing diversity policies. Previously, they often do not realise the translation of D&I into business in its various dimensions. When they get to know the figures, data, and evidence in the form of research, they start to think differently and stop treating diversity as an additional and subsidiary topic.

An example from the Polish backyard: The LGBTI topic in business is often silently ignored, omitted, and even disregarded. I relatively often meet managers who can see no link between sexual orientation and business. It is only when I present them with data concerning the decrease of efficiency of employees who conceal their sexual orientation at work, research showing the decrease of satisfaction and loyalty of non-heterosexual employees who work in organisations which are not friendly to LGBTI people, and finally data on the consumer behaviours of homosexual people and their purchasing power, that those people change their point of view. The prism of business advantage allows them to notice this dimension of diversity and recognise its importance for business.

The need to benchmark is also distinctive. Managers want to know good and bad practices from the market, especially from the Polish market. When working with this group, one of the major topics is showing examples from other companies: best practices, but also failed, inefficient solutions. Referring to market experiences allows you to have a wider view, and allows us to learn from the experience of others. And there are quite a lot of them. You only need to know how to make use of them.

Workshops and group sessions

The D&I sessions that I most often run, and that work, are short workshop forms (3-4 hours) in groups of up to 15 people, directed at the following objectives:

- ▶ understanding diversity and the importance of investing in D&I,
- ▶ understanding the benefits of diversity as a strategy in achieving aims in business,
- ▶ recognising the importance of the role of the leader and managers' accountability in the D&I process,
- ▶ a consciousness-building, inclusive culture taking into account specific local conditions,
- ▶ awareness of potential traps, and avoiding them.

This form of work gives satisfactory results under certain circumstances. First, sessions need to be dedicated for managers and tailored to their individual needs. Participants should be prepared for and convinced about the usefulness of the sessions, and the expectations and challenges that they face in the area of D&I should be discussed beforehand. It is also good to include people from management at the highest possible level, to welcome participants and make the welcoming address. Their involvement is indicative of the rank of D&I processes in the organisation, and recognises their importance for the development of the business.

If they are to be taken seriously, D&I sessions need to have the value of usability for users. Therefore, they should be enriched by the most recent research results and benchmarks, and should take into account engaging methods, giving participants the possibility to work on real examples from their work environment, preferably from their own backyard.

Mentoring

Mentoring is another good way of engaging managers and overcoming their prejudices and resistance. It usually gives better results than obligatory training on unconscious bias. Establishing mentoring programmes, arbitrary for participants representing both sides, and then matching managers with people from underrepresented or disfavoured groups, usually starts a dialogue and interaction between them, which in other conditions probably would not stand a chance of coming into being. A manager who takes a mentee under his/her protection motivates him/her to develop,

MAJOR TOPICS OF D&I SESSIONS FOR MANAGERS:

- ▶ D&I as a strategic approach to carrying out business objectives,
- ▶ benefits of diversity an inclusion,
- ▶ management in and for diversity,
- ▶ accountability of manager,
- ▶ traps that I can encounter and how to avoid them.

SOURCE | Own elaboration.

and supports him/her in achieving success. It overcomes even very solid barriers, creates a framework of support, and encourages him/her to act and search for opportunities for mentees. Such pairing, especially when it is oriented at a common aim, usually leads to the opening of managers to differences, and stimulates them to search for similarities. Such a relationship has another unconscious dimension, which is very important when working on basics for unconvinced people: mentors start to believe that their charges deserve this success, no matter who they are: a woman, a Hindu, a disabled person. ‘The person that I support needs to deserve it!’ – that is how it works.

Reverse mentoring

In the February issue of *Personel Plus* I presented reverse mentoring as an exceptionally efficient tool for working on basics and building the engagement of managers in building an inclusive organisational culture. It

enables the direct interaction of an employee from an underrepresented or disfavoured group, who is a mentor here with an experienced manager in the role of the mentee. Such a relationship deepens the understanding of the challenges of disfavoured persons, and accepting their point of view by their supervisors. Thanks to this unique relationship, managers have the opportunity to be exposed to the real needs and problems of those people, both in their private life, as well as at work, and they can find out what barriers they encounter and what is their real situation in the company. Finally, they can ask questions that they would normally not ask in other circumstances. What it gives to employees in the role of mentors is the sense that their problems, challenges and needs are treated seriously. The awareness that they open the eyes of managers and build the attitude of openness gives them a sense of impact in shaping the organisational culture and increases their engagement and loyalty.

The example of Eli Lilly and Company, in which the programme of reverse mentoring has been running since 2014, proves the effectiveness of this method. In this case it was used as a tool for building an authentic relationship between LGBTI employees and the company, as well as for building the accountability of managers for an open workplace, respect and acceptance. The programme is very positively perceived by both sides since it enables LGBTI people to educate managers concerning their needs, and it gives managers the tools to manage and develop employees from the LGBTI group.

Task forces

Task forces are a less common example of the efficient inclusion of managers in D&I processes and building diversity culture, at least in the Polish setting. Teams are appointed to solve problems concerning the area of Diversity & Inclusion. Teams consist of managers of various levels, people from minority and disfavoured groups, or people directly linked with the topic in question. At regular intervals, teams analyse data concerning diversity in the company and its particular units, and take decisions concerning areas in which they should focus their attention. After defining areas requiring intervention (such as recruitment, lower ratio of employees with disabilities, or unsatisfactory ratio of women in management), teams develop solutions and prepare the company and its employees to implement them.

BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY ACCORDING TO POLISH MANAGERS:

- ▶ increased profitability,
- ▶ innovations,
- ▶ taking better decisions and decreasing risk,
- ▶ responsiveness to evolving market needs, better relationship with the customer and market,
- ▶ diversity and improvement of competencies,
- ▶ development of managers,
- ▶ access to a wider range of valuable candidates,
- ▶ various experiences and points of view,
- ▶ atmosphere at work,
- ▶ engagement and employee satisfaction,
- ▶ culture that attracts people,
- ▶ greater social awareness of employees,
- ▶ respect and tolerance,
- ▶ excellent workplace.

SOURCE | Own elaboration. Material collected during workshops with managers, October-November 2017.

Task forces have at least three functions in Diversity & Inclusion processes: they promote responsibility for diversity, engage managers, including the engagement of those previously distanced, and build relations, hence understanding between employees representing various groups.

Good intentions will not replace accountability

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that diversity and integration should not be treated as a 'one-time initiative'. Many leaders struggle with the problems of managing diversity in the workplace, and expect quick and

efficient solutions. However, promoting diversity and integration in the workplace is a continuous process, requiring the involvement of many people, especially management, since it is they who have the greatest impact on shaping the workplace and the experience of their staff. That is why it is crucial that they take responsibility for Diversity & Inclusion with sincere conviction. If they feel responsible for D&I and they consciously become part of the process of diversity management, they can shape the whole organisation which follows them. Then, they become a model for employees to follow, D&I champions able to evoke positive changes in organisational culture.

1 E.g. Forbes Insights, Global Diversity and Inclusion: Fostering Innovation Through a Diverse Workforce.



UNCONSCIOUS BIAS. A SILENT ENEMY OF WOMEN'S CAREERS

Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska

Most of the available studies confirm that unconscious bias in the gender area has a negative impact on women's careers, especially in male-controlled sectors and managerial positions. Where do they come from and how can their negative impact be reduced, provided it is possible at all?

I have always assured myself that I am free from prejudices and assumptions, particularly when it comes to gender. One day a neighbour asked me to pick up her son from kindergarten. The kids were playing in the courtyard and I was surprised to find that there was no teacher with them. A dad was looking at my search from a distance, and finally, when he heard that I was asking the children about the lady (the teacher), he approached me:

– You are taking Kacper home today, right?

– Hmm – I looked at him with suspicion. How does he know? – Yes, but I'm looking for his teacher... have you seen her?

– I am “her” – he smiled – I am the homeroom teacher. The parents called me and told me that you would come.

Whoops.

– Kacper, why didn't you tell me that you have a male teacher, not a female teacher? – I asked later.

– Auntie, I told you three times, but you were still looking for a lady!

I still remember how embarrassed I was at the time, and I keep asking myself whether I heard what Kacper said or if it just did not reach me.

Certainly, many people have experienced such a story, which only demonstrates how such assumptions are deeply rooted in our heads. And they remain in each of us, without exception.

What is "unconscious bias"?

“Unconscious bias” is an unaware attitude towards a person or group of persons which manifests itself in a positive (preference) or, more often, negative (prejudice) manner.

Bias is often identified with a stereotype, but it is important to distinguish between the two concepts. A stereotype is a cognitive schema, a generalization in which a specific person or social group is linked to a set of traits in a simplified and excessively general way. For example, we would say that women are the weaker sex, African-Americans are the best runners, and men are brave.

On the other hand, bias refers to cognitive errors occurring in the process of processing information about ourselves and other people, which are based on stereotypical assumptions about specific social groups. Having considered that, a stereotype as a cognitive schema is one of the most important sources of our attitude (bias). Unconscious attitudes (positive

and negative) could lead to errors of judgment and decision making, while at the same time contradicting unequivocally declared and consciously maintained beliefs.

Where does the unconscious bias come from?

Studies show that people demonstrate a natural tendency to categorize, which is a biological property of our brain used to “think in short cuts”, organize information and make decisions faster. Our mind benefits from simplifications because it is impossible to process all available information effectively. Therefore, we categorize others based on different criteria. In the first place, these are easily discernible features such as gender, origin, cultural background, age, state of health or appearance. However, this is not the rule, because we equally often categorize people through the prism of their social origin, religion, political beliefs or professional roles. They act as filters, on the basis of which we formulate our opinions and judgments about them. Because of that, if we see a woman, our minds place her in a specific category with a specific label, and then we have the basic features of a group of women described by the stereotype activated within us.

The shaping of stereotypes, and thus unconscious assumptions, is influenced by, e.g. the culture in which we function, the socialization process, family, friends, our personal experiences, even media messages concerning specific individuals or groups. Thus, if we were surrounded by only female teachers in kindergarten, and the pipes were always repaired by a male plumber, then these associations become established and remain very strong.

Finally, it is important that all people, even those who consciously do not share stereotypes about specific social groups and present equality beliefs and a willingness to act on the basis of factual factors, are susceptible to the influence of unconscious bias.

How do assumptions influence women's careers?

Unconscious bias strongly influences how we act, how we think, and how we make decisions. This happens on many levels, such as:

- ▶ *Perception* – how you perceive others and see the reality around you;
- ▶ *Attitudes* – how you react to specific people and groups;

- ▶ *Behaviour* – whether you are open to others;
- ▶ *Attention* – what you pay attention to; what aspects of the other person you focus on;
- ▶ *Listening* – how attentively you listen to what others have to say;

Let us therefore focus on women. Stereotypical assumptions about women and men are omnipresent, deeply rooted in cultural norms, and generally shared. Men are credited with such features and behaviours as: being aggressive, decisive, technical, strong and logical. Women, on the other hand, are associated with submissiveness, calmness, caring and nursing¹.

We face gender stereotypes from our birth, and they are reinforced throughout our lives. The message conveyed by stereotypes lays the foundations for unconscious attitudes towards gender, which in turn influences the actions of people who decide who to employ, develop, whom to offer a managerial position, who to support or not. They have the same effect on potential female scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs and leaders, who have to decide whether or not they fit into this professional role and a specific career path.

Unconscious bias seriously holds back women in their careers. As reported by The Wall Street Journal², new studies show that men and women are judged in completely different ways at work because of unconscious attitudes. As Caroline Simard, Research Director at the Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford University, explains, our unconscious assumptions may ultimately lead to a cumulative disadvantageous situation for women in their careers over time, resulting in more difficult access to key managerial positions.

A Handful of Evidence

When the researchers analyzed the results of research into recruitment processes conducted for more than 30 years, they found that there had been no change in the area of gender bias over time. The study results confirm that women and men, more or less at the same level, rate women candidates as less competent, with lower employment potential and deserving lower salaries than men with the same qualifications. This is particularly the case when men and women apply for senior positions or leadership positions. Let's take a look at some of the evidence that we have included

in a broader study on barriers to women in promotion, which we called Model 4 x 4 (Personel Plus, 01.2018).

According to the studies in the science sector, elite laboratories are less likely to accept women. Graduate women are paid less in comparable positions, and are less likely to be promoted than men, despite the fact that they are more often praised or have comparable evaluation results.

Studies also confirm that gender bias appears, and is strong, even when confronted with data and evidence that contradicts it, e.g. that teams work better when there are women in them, or, e.g. that women are as effective as men in leadership roles.

It is also worth mentioning that unconscious attitudes can also affect men who are perceived as less “masculine”. Like, for instance, taller men have better careers, have higher incomes, and are more likely to hold managerial positions than men of short stature. Men with more masculine facial features are seen as more competent leaders. In other studies, men with mild facial features experienced discrimination similar to women in recruitment for senior positions.

How does a stereotype work?

Stereotypes can become active as a result of any information that is part of a stereotype, as confirmed by many experiments. At the recruitment level, it has been proven that a more feminine outfit is a factor in reducing the number of women selected for senior positions. Similarly, a fragrance, which in earlier tests was described as typically masculine, influenced the higher ratings of candidates for leadership roles compared to a scent defined as feminine. Various studies also juggled pronouns (he/his, she/her) in recruitment advertisements and examined their impact on women’s perception. The use of male pronouns made women feel excluded, less motivated to apply for the position, and less identified with the position. Such language also drew women’s attention to sexism and reduced their sense of belonging. Men, on the other hand, did not show negative reactions to gender-insensitive language in job advertisements.

Studies also demonstrate that the very fact of motherhood triggers gender stereotypes that affect our unconscious attitudes. When a woman’s resume contains information about motherhood (it is worth pointing out that this information may also be implicit or given in a very subtle way,

such as information about membership of a parental organization, without any other information about children), she is judged to be less competent and less involved in work compared to candidates who have not included any information about parental status. They are also expected to score higher in tests, and are offered lower salaries. In this study, women without children were recommended for employment twice as often compared to mothers. On the other hand, studies show that fathers are assessed as more dedicated and committed to work, and receive higher salaries than men without children³.

Male Leadership Model

Assumptions concerning the characteristics and behaviours necessary to achieve success in some professions, and to take on a leadership role are definitely more related to male than female stereotypes. Features attributed to men, such as decision-making, independence, strength, logical thinking, competitiveness, non-emotionality, are associated as typical for leadership roles. This affects women in two ways. First of all, women are affected by an unconscious assumption of no competence in relation to leadership positions, and therefore, due to a mismatch of qualities, a woman has reduced chances of taking up a leadership position compared to a man. Secondly, if a woman already has traits and takes over stereotypical masculine behaviours, the assessment of her work and the assessment of her effectiveness by others decrease, and this is due to an unconscious perception of her traits and behaviour as a violation of social norms relating to gender.

Stereotype Threat

The assessment of a woman and her achievements by her environment is additionally overlaid with an unconscious bias based on cultural stereotypes which influence her own perception of herself, self-esteem and behavioural control. To illustrate the topic, it is worth taking a brief look at a famous experiment in which students of one of the best universities in the United States, all considered to be strong in mathematics, took a test containing complex mathematical tasks. Half of them were told that the results would show gender differences, while the other half were told that the test would not show such differences. Women in the first group (with

information about the potential gender result gap) achieved lower results than men, while women in the second group achieved the same results. A filter (stereotype threat: women are worse mathematicians) had its influence there, leading to results below their real capabilities.

The risk of stereotyping results in worse results because it causes stress, negative mood (anger, frustration, disappointment or sadness) and self-control of behaviour. It also intensifies the regulation of emotions and at the same time decreases motivation. We may be aware of stress or anger, but we are usually not aware of their aetiology, so we are more inclined to attribute them to our own deficits. This is often the reason why, at the start, women unconsciously exclude themselves from fields stereotypically attributed to men, and from leadership.

How could this be changed?

We are unable to influence the fact that our brain categorizes people. This is a natural aspect of human cognitive function and we will not change it. However, there are ways to reduce the negative impact of this process on decision making, and consequently on the situation of women in business. Nevertheless, this requires much more than just goodwill. Let's get to know the (study-based) practices that could be helpful when dealing with the gender bias phenomenon:

- ▶ *Building Your Unconscious Bias Awareness.* Regularly perform tests for unconscious assumptions. IAT (Implicit Association Test) is a good, very popular tool available on the Internet. Among its many variations, two are available in the thematic area of women's careers: Gender Career IAT and Gender Science IAT⁴.
- ▶ *Stereotype Replacement.* If, for example, girls are presented as poor in mathematics, it is a gender stereotype, and therefore you need to replace it with reliable and true information.
- ▶ *Images Positively Counteracting Stereotypes.* If you are recruiting candidates for a managerial position, visualize a detailed image of a woman who is an effective leader – one you know or you see in the wider world or in the media.
- ▶ *Acceptance of The Other Party's Perspective.* Imagine that you are a woman and that your qualifications have been challenged, or that you are considered incompetent for this position.

- ▶ *Individualization.* Gather as much information as possible about a particular person in order to prevent the development of potentially false assumptions.
- ▶ *Counter-Stereotype.* Organize meetings with people who question stereotypes, and show examples of people who go beyond the usual pattern. Studies have demonstrated that our stereotypes weaken if we confront them with people who do not confirm the stereotype of a given group. Respondents were more likely to see women as leaders after they had read the biographies of famous female scientists. Similar effects were caused by showing TV commercials to respondents in which women and men were presented in non-stereotypical roles⁵. It has also been proven that a man will have a greater impact on reducing stereotypical thinking about women among men, which is an important piece of information in terms of widespread business practices of promoting role models in order to make it easier for women to build their careers.

THE LEVELS OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Perception – how you perceive others and see the reality around you;

Attitudes – how you react to specific people and groups;

Behaviour – whether you are open to others;

Attention – what you pay attention to; what aspects of the other person you focus on;

Listening – how attentively you listen to what others have to say.

- ▶ *Training and Workshops.* Open your employees' eyes to unconscious bias, provide knowledge in this area, and train in techniques for dealing with unconscious assumptions. Studies have shown that training in the area of unconscious bias reduced its negative impact on the working environment⁶.

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- 1 D. J. Burgess, E. Borgida, *Who Women Are, Who Women Should Be: Descriptive and Prescriptive Gender Stereotyping in Sex Discrimination*, Psychology Public Policy and Law, 1999, 5(3): pp. 665-692.
 - 2 *Gender Bias at Work Turns up in Feedback*, The Wall Street Journal, 30.09.2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/gender-bias-at-work-turns-up-in-feedback-1443600759>
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OPENNESS TO EMPLOYEES OF DIFFERENT AGES.

Understanding and diagnosis in place of pigeonholing

Tomasz Dąbrowski, Roksana Ulatowska

The debate about age in management can seem deceptively simple. Although there are many data and studies, they often promote and perpetuate the stereotypical view of generations. Our tendency to generalise things distorts the image and leads to its simplification, resulting in losing sight of individuals in the process. Given this context, it seems important to move away from a stereotypical and schematic way of describing an entire generation, and to define thematic areas which should be addressed by companies that want to foster a culture of openness to people of different ages. Let us take a closer look at these areas.

Let's start with one key declaration – we are great fans of order. We feel satisfied when we can open folders on our laptops – Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y, Z – and enter the world of explanations, procedures and tools which make it easier to manage different age groups. How do we communicate with Millennials? Click – and the “Generation Y” folder opens up. How do we maintain engagement among 40+ employees? Click – “Generation X”, there you go. Simple, isn't it?

We label generations because it's easier. A good label combines the different data concerning a given phenomenon of interest into a single whole, and enables us to assign meaning to this whole. It also gives us an opportunity to categorize and qualify phenomena. That's its charm – it makes things ordered and gives you a semblance of clarity and lack of any ambiguity. This is also gravely dangerous. It is hard to debate labels, and their effectiveness stems from the invisible impact that they have on us. Karl Weick claimed that labels have an encoded instruction on how to act (behave) towards what they designate.¹ In that sense they are a key to control and power. Whoever created the “Millennials” label assigns a meaning and understanding to this generation, while identifying activities that will be effective for its representatives, as well as explaining the expectations and values of these people, and so on. In other words, labelling not only creates a category and organises the world, but also imposes understanding and creates reality. It also leaves a certain stigma. They are also a straight road towards assumptions that every Millennial expects synthetic on-line training courses, every Baby Boomer avoids technology like fire, and every Gen X-er lives to work.

Let's go back to the folders on our laptops. Sure, we tried to create folders for individual generations, but ultimately this effort was in vain. We still have one more folder left – “Age”. This did not happen just because we encountered many ideas for the boundaries and limits separating various generations. Not only because the dominant generation descriptions, which originated in the United States, do not always correspond to Polish reality. It was because we noticed that thinking about differences in management based on generations is often a dead end. We also noticed that we also fell victim to the traditional narrative, which pushed us towards looking at the world through the prism of generations as a key category.

Thus, instead of looking at what generations we are dealing with, what they are like and what their expectations are to inform our actions, we started taking a closer look at problem areas, which should find their way into the focus of every company that wants to open itself up to employees of different ages in a conscious and consistent way.

Key areas of focus regarding age for a business

Over the course of the past few months we have been working with a team of experts² whose tasks involved identifying problems and challenges related to age management in business. Our work resulted in identifying eight thematic areas (see figure: “Key areas of building an organisation open to employees of all ages”).

Area 1 – Employment planning and organisation

Employment planning and organisation include several key activities and processes, such as organising work and supporting business and staff development, while taking into account demographic changes in the labour market. The employment planning process should therefore be based primarily on the awareness of changes and knowledge of the business environment of the organisation, as well as actively shaping the employment policy and effectively using the time and potential of current employees. The key dilemmas revolve around several questions, including:

- ▶ To what extent do demographic changes affect my company (labour market, customers, employees)?
- ▶ How can we shape employment policy in order to ensure the growth of the company?
- ▶ How can we use available resources (employee time and competencies) in an effective manner?

Area 2. Recruitment

The area of recruitment and acquisition of employees refers to one of the biggest challenges faced by businesses these days, namely the increasing difficulty in attracting new employees, stemming from demographic changes, as well as a relatively good situation in the labour market – the so-called employee market. In view of this, companies attempt to reach an increasingly wide pool of candidates, as well as focus their efforts to-

wards ensuring diversity of the pool of candidates for specific positions. This area focuses on the following questions:

- ▶ How can we find employees of a certain age and convince them to join our company?
- ▶ How can we counteract discrimination and prejudices in recruitment?
- ▶ How can we carry out a recruitment process which takes into account the needs of people of different ages?

Area 3. Fostering an open working environment (organisational culture)

Fostering an open working environment refers to activities that form the basis for cooperation between employees of all ages. Before intergenerational teams start to operate effectively and efficiently – even before they are created – you first have to create an appropriate atmosphere of openness towards such cooperation. The challenge faced by organisations in this regard is fostering a culture open to age – devoid of stereotypes, paying attention to the needs of different groups of employees, and – what is crucial – authentic and true in its actions, not just open for show. You can reflect on this issue using the following questions:

- ▶ To what extent is my organisation ready for effective cooperation, independent of age?
- ▶ How can we foster an organisational culture open to employees of all ages?

Area 4. Inclusion and integration of intergenerational teams

The area of inclusion refers to a number of activities aimed at the real and actual inclusion of people of all ages in effective and efficient cooperation. Such activities require an open organisational culture, as well as open recruitment processes; however, even the most open culture and recruitment cannot guarantee real cooperation. The fact that the organisation hires employees of all ages does not have to necessarily mean that these people work together and collaborate on projects. Experience shows that this rarely works that way – in reality, many organisations have closed groups and silos, with teams of older and younger employees, which makes it difficult to exploit the potential for collaboration. Some questions regarding this area, which are worth thinking about:

- ▶ How can we foster collaboration among different generations?

- ▶ How can we support teams in their efforts towards real intergenerational integration and collaboration?
- ▶ How can we prevent and respond to discriminatory behaviours?

Area 5. Lifelong learning and personal development

The area of personal development covers a number of activities aimed at equipping employees of all generations with competencies that enable them to effectively fulfil their professional duties and work obligations. This area is also linked to activities preventing various qualifications and competencies from becoming obsolete, as well as maintaining the professional activity of older employees. To that end, it encompasses both maintaining and improving hard competencies, as well as the so-called soft skills. Taking care of staff development also touches upon the area of employee engagement. Key questions regarding this area:

- ▶ How can we take care of staff development in order to keep their competencies up to date?
- ▶ How can we identify staff development needs?
- ▶ How can we adapt educational solutions to the needs of employees of all ages?
- ▶ How can we reinforce employees' personal responsibility for their own development?

Area 6. Knowledge management

The area of knowledge management focuses on the ability to use knowledge effectively to ensure the growth of the organisation. An organisation where employees have the ability to freely use knowledge created by others, and where they can freely share their knowledge and experience fosters an environment conducive to innovation and development. In this context, one of the key aspects is to ensure knowledge retention, which encompasses retaining knowledge in the organisation in the event of prolonged absence and employee departures – both planned, such as for example in the case of retirement, as well as unplanned, resulting from health and other issues. Key questions regarding this area:

- ▶ How can we retain knowledge in my organisation? How can we prevent knowledge from getting away? What kind of knowledge retention mechanisms should we use in the organisation?

- ▶ How can we convince employees to share their knowledge?
- ▶ How can we ensure the circulation of knowledge in the organisation?
- ▶ What kind of knowledge is retained by the organisation?

Area 7. Employee health

This area encompasses a number of activities aimed at fulfilling the employer's obligations in the area of ensuring the health, safety and well-being of employees. Activities in this area are particularly crucial in the case of older employees. They also have a direct impact not only on employee engagement and satisfaction, but also on their effectiveness and ability to act. The key questions concerning this area include:

- ▶ How should we react to employees' health problems?
- ▶ How can we support teams whose members experience health problems?
- ▶ How can we prevent health problems developing in the context of work?

Area 8. Support in change and conflict resolution

Ensuring support in change and conflict resolution covers activities aimed at leading the organisation through change, particularly in the context of potential difficulties associated with the employees' response to change at the communication, values, engagement survey and other levels. Some questions to consider:

- ▶ How can we deal with intergenerational conflicts?
- ▶ How can we support the organisation in the context of demographic change?

Ensuring consistency and coherence – appointing an ambassador

The identification of the areas presented above served as a substantive framework which enables taking a look at the issue of age in an organisation from a broad perspective. However, in order to enable the use of this framework, two elements had to be provided first. The first of them concerns identifying a person who will be able to navigate the areas listed above. The second covers the development of a tool that will enable diagnosing age-related challenges in an organisation.

We decided that the key action that needs to be taken is the appointment of an internal expert in the field of age in a given organisation. This person should understand the challenges connected with age in a given organisational context, and have the ability to initiate appropriate actions. We call this person an ambassador.

Of course, the aim is not to place the burden of all age-related activities on the ambassador's shoulders. The aim is to ensure that the organisation has a person (or persons) whose aim will be to make sure that age management is not perceived as an afterthought.

We decided to leave the issue of the ambassador's preparation for fulfilling their role open. Our pilot project included training sessions, as well as a set of tools (solutions, procedures, studies) and mentoring support. However, we believed one element to be of key importance, and that element was in-depth understanding of their own organisation. Without knowledge of the company, the ambassador would be unable to act effectively. This is why we developed an on-line system for diagnosing organisations in the area of age, which we called AMA – Age Management Audit.

Diagnosis and understanding – Age Management Audit

The AMA tool enables assessing the organisation's potential and results in the area of age management. It also provides answers concerning the current state of the organisation, and points out key challenges faced by the organisation in terms of age.

The AMA comprises two main components:

- ▶ A self-assessment component, completed by a representative of the organisation, the aim of which is to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation in terms of age management;
- ▶ An employee opinion survey component that is used to verify the actual activities carried out by the organisation, as well as its staff, in the area of age.

The key notion for the study is the concept of dimensions – the eight areas described above – which serve as the basis for all the study activities.

Conducting a self-assessment

Each of the eight areas was accompanied by a number of questions describing the activities which the company should undertake in order to

foster a working environment that is open to people of all ages. The task of the ambassador or the appointed team was giving points, evaluating the company's performance in response to the questions. The total possible number of points in each question was 100. The scores were based on the principles of the Deming Cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act) and the assessment of the organisation's potential using CAF – Common Assessment Framework.

The self-assessment was based on evaluating the performance of a given organisation within each of eight categories:

- ▶ the organisation does not carry out any activities or does not have any solutions in this field (0-10 points);
- ▶ the organisation has planned a number of activities and developed a methodology, but has not implemented it yet (11-30 points);
- ▶ the organisation carries out pilot programmes and activities, but they have not become part of standard operating procedures (31-50 points);
- ▶ the organisation verifies the results of activities and draws conclusions which lead to their improvement and increasing effectiveness (51-70 points);
- ▶ the organisation improves its activities and standardises verified tools and actions (71-90 points);
- ▶ the organisation is on the path of continuous improvement, and shares knowledge in this area with other organisations – benchmarking (91-100 points).

By evaluating individual requirements concerning the selected areas the organisation carrying out the self-assessment can realise the extent to which the actions undertaken are in fact a reality, and to what extent they remain only a plan, a pilot programme, or a one-off activity.

Carrying out employee opinion surveys

Since we believe that self-assessment is hardly sufficient, we also recommend asking your employees for their feedback. To that end, we proposed three groups of questions:

- ▶ advantages and disadvantages based on age – the respondents are asked whether certain age groups are favoured or disadvantaged in three key HR processes (recruitment and selection, promotions, salaries); the answers to these questions show the image of the company in the eyes of its employees;

**KEY AREAS OF BUILDING
AN ORGANISATION OPEN
TO EMPLOYEES OF ALL AGES**



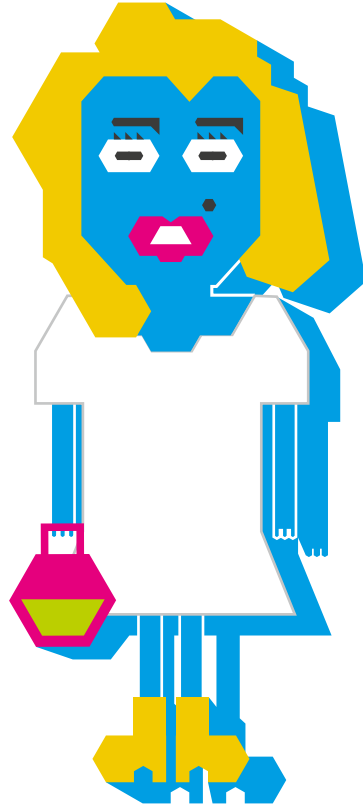
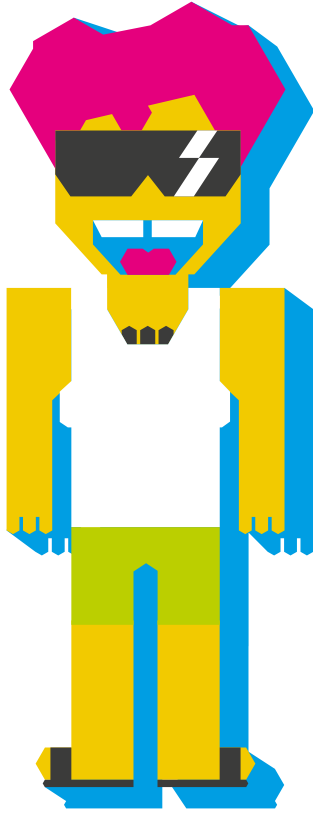
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- ▶ attitude towards people of all ages – an assessment based on a modified Bogardus social distance scale, which enables evaluation of whether a person from a given age group could be employed, could become a member in the respondent's team, could be the respondent's closest colleague, or whether they would not be hired at all in the context of all age groups – the answers show the respondents' attitudes towards people of different ages;
- ▶ questions concerning various areas and dimensions connected with age, which enable the identification of specific problems and challenges in particular areas.

Such questions, supported by a system analysing responses and generating full and cross-sectional reports for specific organisational units, functions and position groups, as well as comparative ones (for example comparing various age groups), enable in-depth understanding of the organisation, as well as form a foundation for the ambassador to initiate effective action in the areas that require their intervention. The entire study is carried out on-line (in Polish and English), and is accessible via the Diversity Hub website.

We are aware that moving away from traditional and stereotypical views of generations constitutes a great challenge, because it requires companies to stop using a shortcut in favour of a deeper understanding of age-related challenges. The proposed approach is an attempt to leave old stereotypes behind and take a look at our organisations, as well as the knowledge and skills of people who deal with the area of age, from a new point of view. We strongly believe that companies which want to open up to various age groups require more than just knowledge about different generations and simplified patterns of behaviour or expectations. They need an in-depth look and perspective. That led us to our attempt; however, we are fully aware of the fact that this constitutes only the beginning of a broader debate, and not a closed chapter by any means. We simply hope that our experience will be a starting point for further reflections, as well as – in consequence – to the companies opening up towards employees of any age.

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- 1 K. Weick after: B. Czarniawska, *Trochę inna teoria organizacji. Organizowanie jako konstrukcja sieci działań*. Warsaw, 2010.
 - 2 The areas described in this article were developed by a team comprising: Ewa Brach-Pogoda, Tomasz Dąbrowski, Katarzyna Ociepka-Miąsik, Joanna Pająk, Izabela Stańczyk, Roksana Ulatowska, Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska, Ewa Zaroda.





HOW TO CREATE A WORK ENVIRONMENT OPEN TO LGBTI¹

Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska, Tomasz Stoma

Business has a unique ability to develop diversity and to promote a culture of respect and equal opportunities. Awareness of its role in this process is growing, which is why so many companies engage actively in activities directed at the LGBTI community. Despite that, most of them are still only at the start of the journey, while knowledge and good practices in that area are still poorly developed. So how should we build a work environment open to the LGBTI community? How can we change attitudes and create inclusive working conditions while avoiding conflict?

Why? Presenting the LGBTI Business Case.

Because a human is a whole.

Imagine such a situation: a group of employees are discussing their holidays during a lunch break. Kasia is talking about a seaside holiday with her husband and daughter, Wojtek about a trekking exhibition with his girlfriend, and Jacek is being quiet. It is difficult for him to admit that he spent his holidays with his male partner. He doesn't know how his colleagues will react, so he feels blocked. He also feels uneasy when talking about other subjects, such as Christmas, family, or even "what did you do last weekend?" Most of us spend around 40 hours per week at work, which, when we deduct time spent sleeping, makes nearly half of the time of our life. Let's imagine that half the time we need to "hide" – block information, emotions and experiences relating to such important areas of our life as "who we are" and "who we love". Let's imagine that we have to manipulate information and use excuses, avoid answering questions, stay quiet, even though in fact we feel the opposite – we want to share things that are important to us.

The psychological consequences for homosexuals who are afraid to come out may make them withdraw from relations with others and experience tension, stress and isolation.

If you are asking us why an organisation should invest effort and resources in building a LGBTI-friendly environment, this is our answer: Because a human is a whole. We are unable to divide ourselves, without impacting negatively on our mental wellbeing, into a professional-self and a private-self. Moreover, "the best version of yourself" is the whole, genuine version. A truly genuine person is a happy person, which means that consequently they are more dedicated and effective as an employee.

Because that's the right thing to do.

Corporations work on "business cases". They take actions when the effort and resources invested can be transformed into measurable results. In this case, however, let us start with a "value case", i.e. let's use values and organisational culture as our basis. An organisation whose standards are based on such values as respect, openness, trust, equality, justice and similar values considers the issue of diversity & inclusion to be embedded in its organisational DNA. The flagship values need to remain alive, and

that is why “Equality and respect for all” need to apply to everyone, irrespective of their sexual orientation. Heterosexuals benefit from the full organisational and social potential of the workplace, including participation in family picnics, benefits for spouses, or celebrating private events such as weddings or christenings. Homosexuals who remain “in the closet” don’t have such opportunities, which is why some companies decide, in a conscious and targeted way, to promote their corporate resources as accessible to everyone irrespective of their sexual orientation.

The subject of Diversity & Inclusion is no longer a trend – it’s a standard. Most corporations have already implemented D&I programmes, or even positions or teams allocated to running them. An important argument in that subject is also law, namely regulations of the European Union, and provisions of the Polish Labour Code which talk about counteracting discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace.

If arguments based on ideals are not convincing, let’s examine a case study. The Out Now Global organisation has analysed the experiences of over 100 000 people from the LGBTI community in over 20 countries, and published probably the most extensive report to date on the situation of LGBTI employees². The report contained an analysis of two elements: employees’ attachment to the company (willingness to stay with the company, and employee fluctuation costs) and employee productivity. According to the report, in all of the examined countries, on average 80% of job applicants from the LGBTI community pay attention to whether the employer runs D&I programmes. At the same time, non-heterosexual staff, who can freely disclose their orientation, are much more likely to stay with the organisation than those who “remain in hiding”. “The organisation accepts me – I feel good there – I will stay longer”. This way of thinking is shared by 16% more employees who have come out than those who haven’t come out yet. It turns out that by creating an environment open to coming out, the employer can save on recruitment costs. Based on the example of France, 22% more employees who have come out stay with the company, which brings around \$2.76 billion in savings nationally.

Minimum standard

In September 2017, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, announced global business standards³ which should help

companies protect the rights of the LGBTI community. Their basic aim is to counteract discrimination in the workplace: the standards set out the steps which should be taken by businesses in order to ensure equal treatment for all. The standards should also serve as a tool for assessing whether a company discriminates against members of the society, clients and suppliers, and whether it works together with its business partners to prevent discrimination in the entire supply chain. This is the minimum that every company should do with regard to LGBT:

1. *Respect human rights* – an absolute principle. Always and everywhere. Every company should prepare and develop its policies, and eagerly prevent negative phenomena in order to ensure that LGBTI rights are respected.
2. *Eliminate discrimination*. People from the LGBTI community, as employees, managers and owners, have a problem with acceptance and inclusion in the workplace. Companies need to ensure non-discrimination in recruitment, employment, working conditions, access to benefits, privacy, and response to breaches of law.
3. *Provide support*. Companies should ensure a positive work environment based on respect, in which LGBTI employees can work with dignity, without stigmatisation.
4. *Prevent other human rights violations*. Business cannot allow itself to discriminate against LGBTI suppliers, distributors and clients, and should use its influence to prevent discrimination and abuse by its business partners.
5. *Act in the public sphere*. Companies should become involved in fighting against human rights violations in the countries where they operate, among others, by engaging in such activities as: public support, joint projects, social dialogue, supporting organisations operating within the LGBTI community, and pressurising local authorities to take action.

These are the basis. However, in order to change an “LGBT friendly” organisation into a real “LGBT inclusive” one, it is necessary to engage all employees and stakeholders at all levels of operation in the change process, and to reach every employee, manager and supplier we work with. You can’t achieve that if you don’t look after the key pillars, which we discuss below.

What next? How should we create a work environment open to the LGBTI community? Best practices.

Policies and procedures

Policies communicate to employees the main message about the values which are important to the company and convey its commitment to ensuring diversity, which is why it is important for them to also be open and inclusive to the LGBTI community. It is the absolute basis for introducing internal regulations relating to counteracting discrimination (e.g. Work Regulations). It should be accompanied with procedures and practices in the scope of responding to incidents of discrimination or other forms of bullying of LGBTI individuals. Documents should also include neutral provisions relating to personal affairs. Such changes are usually easy to implement, e.g. they often concern vocabulary, for example using the word “partner” instead of “spouse”. But they bring about fast results in the process of creating a culture and establishing foundations on which changes can be implemented on a larger scale. Moreover, they change the views of non-heterosexual employees on the company’s approach to the subject. Accessibility to benefits for homosexual employees, or invitations to family events are a clear sign of acceptance of the community.

Effective employee networks and unions

In many companies we can find support networks called employee resource groups (ERG). The company should support them to help them develop from an informal group based on bottom-up social initiatives into professional, more mature groups with formalised structures and a wider scope of competence, able to implement real changes. In order for a network to be effective, it needs to have clear formulates, achievable goals, and responsibilities. They should be well-defined and not excessively ambitious so that they don’t backfire but instead show others that such actions are effective and goals are achievable. It should also be noted that without engaging people on the inside, the network will not be as successful as expected. That is why the company needs to engage people with a passion, who are dedicated to the idea, and fully utilise the energy and openness of supporting centres (e.g. HR).

Allies, i.e. friends of non-heteronormative people, are also very powerful. Programmes oriented at them reinforce support, help build an emotional connection, deepen an understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTI people, and create a framework for effectively building an inclusive culture. Allies serve as role models and are a great example to others. They should be reinforced by inspiring them to act, training them, and organising reverse mentoring programmes.

In both cases, thanks to established relations and support provided, by sharing mutual examples and experiences, homosexual employees are stimulated to come out, and in response the working environment offers them acceptance and respect.

Strong and engaged communication

Coherent and consistent communication is vital. An LGBTI-friendly environment should be promoted on several levels: during initial training courses, management training courses, during recruitment, and while implementing HR processes. Celebrating events important to the community is also a strong sign of tolerance and support for LGBTI people. It is also important that communication relating to LGBTI is not a separate process, but is integrated with company communication and its different channels. This means that it is not seen as a side issue – as an element of the organisational culture. What do you have to remember? Most of all, sensitivity and empathy for all parties, and about using the right language to create an open, authentic message and to share personal stories with an educational value. Such materials inspire a positive response and encourage people to share them, also decreasing the risk of resistance. It is a good idea to also use LGBT symbolism in communication: small flags, rainbow lanyards, headbands, wristbands, pins, etc. It is a small gesture, but over time it becomes a visible element noticed by employees and external visitors.

Last but not least ... education

Let's be honest, awareness and knowledge of LGBTI are at such a low level that education in that scope is a necessity. For everyone. That is why it is necessary to include the subject of LGBTI in the training system, first of all, as part of D&I training. Even though it may only offer a general perspective on the subject and provide employees with only basic knowledge, it

will certainly convey a clear message: our company considers diversity in terms of sexual orientation equal to diversity in terms of sex, age and other characteristics. A deeper understanding of the subject can be achieved through dedicated training, which should provide sufficient knowledge of the subject of challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, as well as through other training, irrespective of its form, targeted at specific gaps in knowledge of LGBTI, oriented at managers, recruiters, HRM and customer services. Remember, try to include LGBTI individuals or their networks in the development of educational activities, and even in their implementation.

Reverse mentoring

An example of an educational tool which brings lasting results is reverse mentoring. This facilitates direct interaction between LGBTI employees (as mentors) and experienced managers (as mentees). This relationship provides a deeper understanding of challenges faced by LGBTI individuals by managers, in which LGBTI employees can enjoy professional development. Let's look closer at the results achieved at Eli Lilly and Company. The programme has been in operation since 2014. It has met with very positive feedback on both sides, as it enables LGBTI individuals to educate managers about their own needs, and it provides managers with a tool for managing and developing employees who identify with the LGBTI community. In that personal relationship managers can ask questions which they wouldn't dare ask in any other situation, which allows them to learn about the real situation of LGBTI employees at the company, and about the barriers and challenges they encounter in their work. LGBTI staff playing the role of mentors can feel that the company takes such actions seriously. They also appreciate the fact that they help develop managers, expand their knowledge, and build an attitude of openness, and that they have a great impact on shaping the organisational culture. This also increases the level of their responsibility for creating good working conditions for other LGBTI individuals. The example of Eli Lilly and Company is certainly a "success story": reverse mentoring is a tool for building a unique, authentic relationship between LGBTI employees and the company, and on the other hand it helps build an attitude of responsibility among managers for creating an open working environment, respect and acceptance.

It is time to take action to create an LGBTI-friendly working environment now. Organisations which take action today are the organisations of the future. They gain advantage by engaging employees, creating more openness, stronger relations and a positive image. This, in turn, translates directly into their business performance. So it is time to treat the subject seriously and even befriend it. And while we're on the subject of friendship... It is extremely important. Actions in the scope of LGBTI require cooperation, so it is a good idea to ensure it and build close relations with organisations which also encounter similar challenges, as well as with expert organisations. Joint projects create an opportunity to broaden horizons and to ensure more successful implementation. Good luck!

1 LGBTI - Acronym of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual and Intersexed.

2 Out Now Global, *LGBT2030. LGBT Diversity. Show me the business case*, 2015, <http://www.outnow.lgbt/> (accessed: 08.12.2017)

3 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, & Intersex People. Standards of Conduct for Business*, New York 2017, <https://www.unfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/UN-Standards-of-Conduct.pdf> (accessed: 13.12.2017)

LGBTU





HOW TO IMPLEMENT CON- SCIOUS EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION POLICIES WITH REGARD TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. Action plan

Tomasz Dąbrowski

The main idea behind one of last year's Diversity Hub conferences was to understand and overcome the fear of disability – not only fear noticeable on an individual level, but mainly on the organisational level. How often do we hear: "Being open to disability is very important to our company, but we're not ready yet"? In reality, it is not about readiness, but about a real fear of making a mistake and overlooking something important in the company's actions. That is why one of the recommendations presented at the conference was to establish an Action Plan for the organisation which could help it arrive at the conclusion: "We've taken care of everything – let's do it!". So here it is.

The first question that comes to mind to most companies preparing to introduce a conscious disability employment policy is quite a natural one – “Where do we start?”. But it is not the best question, as the answer is always the same: “It depends”: on business objectives, available resources – including human and time resources, organisational culture, business surroundings and so on. In some organisations it is better to start with an accessibility analysis and then proceed to a local labour market analysis, and in other companies it may be the other way round. In some companies you should start with an information campaign, while in others it is more reasonable to avoid big slogans announcing more grand projects. That is why the question “Where do we start?” should be replaced by “What should we do?”. The thing that organisations should do consists of seven areas whose co-existence allows the company to successfully implement its conscious disability employment and inclusion policy over time.

Seven areas to take care of

The seven areas of activity have been distinguished to show the whole of the company’s activity with regard to disability, rather than to create a chronological sequence of actions. That is because actions can be carried out in the individual areas in different sequences, also parallel – depending on the context. They were established on the basis of the experiences of around a dozen companies which I’ve had an opportunity to work with. This means that this proposition is not theoretical in nature; it is certainly pragmatic and based on experience. So let’s have a closer look.

Accessibility

Accessibility means creating conditions (procedural, technical, architectural) to facilitate the physical presence and performance of work by persons with specific types of disability. This is one of the most frequently mentioned areas in businesses, and at the same time an area which creates most misunderstanding and confusion. Why? Because companies without experience with disability stereotypically associate accessibility with physical disability, and specifically with persons who use a wheelchair, and on that basis they create the vision of their adaptive activities. Of course, such actions are important, but it is only a small part of the reality.

Certain types of disability require different actions with regard to accessibility. Some of those actions are very simple, and others may exceed the financial, organisational or technical capabilities of the company. This does not mean that you should only focus on what's most accessible. But it is a condition of having a realistic perspective on capabilities, based on the principle that it is better to focus on only a small section of the reality and to do it well than to do nothing. That is why "accessibility" is a context-based category. Some companies focus on a specific type of disability (e.g. visual), while others focus on ensuring the accessibility of specific business units. All of these options are correct if they get us closer to the goal, i.e. systematically opening the organisation to all individuals.

In our activity the issue of accessibility is not a one-off action that can be reduced to an accessibility audit. It is a process which should be a continuous one. Indeed, we need to start with an initial accessibility audit. However, it is always limited in some way (e.g. to a certain location, to specific types of disability), which is why at the same time, in the long-term perspective, we should plan extended accessibility audits involving new business units, disability types, organisational units, etc. This allows us to change the organisation "step by step".

Thanks to audits we can identify positions that are already adapted, as well as positions which can be adapted at a reasonable cost. We also identify all barriers. On the basis of such audits, we develop adaptation plans. Most of all, we prepare a general adaptation plan (general accessibility, main actions in the scope of adjusting to specific disability types), and when specific job applicants come along we develop an individualised plan to adapt specific positions. This way we can adjust the organisation in the most efficient way.

However, it should be pointed out that the accessibility area should not only be limited to a sequence of opening audits. It is extremely important to plan periodic accessibility reviews. Organisations change over time. Sometimes they become more open (e.g. thanks to technological developments), and sometimes they become less open, which is why it is very important to remain vigilant. It is just as important to establish principles which create an obligation to take into account accessibility for disabled persons while engaging in new activities (projects) at the company, e.g.

with regard to investments, development programmes, orders, and company events. Such principles should ensure that the actions taken do not require an intervention in the future to adjust such actions to the needs of disabled people.

Attracting talents

Attracting talents involves communication-oriented activities (information, PR) aimed at convincing potential candidates to apply for specific positions. Another important aspect in that area is to establish relations with entities operating in the company's surroundings which can help us reach such talents with our communications.

Of course, a good communication plan plays a key role here. From information published on the company's website (optimally – adjusted to the needs of people with specific disabilities as part of the “Adjustment” area), to social media, promotional campaigns, media publications, to participation in job fairs and conferences, involvement in events dedicated to disabled people, etc. These actions seem obvious and intuitive. But their implementation is of key importance. Otherwise, how can we expect that the right people will come to us? We should also remember that the communication plan should include intracompany actions aimed at employee recommendations.

With regard to attracting talents, it is very important to analyse the labour market (locally in order to determine the company's ability to attract specific groups of people) and to analyse (map) organisations which support / unite people with disabilities. Good mapping allows us to find stakeholders who can support our actions. They include labour market institutions (employment offices, specialised recruitment agencies), NGOs dedicated to people with disabilities or carrying out activities for their benefit, universities (units dedicated to people with disabilities, student organisations), vocational schools, etc. Our aim should be not only to identify such entities, but also to determine how they can support our goals, and ultimately to establish relations with them which will serve as the basis for joint promotional campaigns, activation campaigns, and internship campaigns to help the company reach potential talents.

In addition, in the case of companies which use the services of external recruitment agencies, it is necessary to verify their ability to attract ap-

plicants with disabilities and (as part of the “Open door” area) to establish principles of cooperation with the agency with regard to making it easier for disabled people to participate in the recruitment process. After all, recruitment agencies represent the employer.

Open door

The “Open door” area aims at formulating and constantly improving the company’s entry principles (recruitment) to really make it possible to employ disabled applicants. This also involves introducing an employee to the company.

Paradoxically, this area often seems neglected. Companies focus on attracting applicants and forget that their organisation actually creates entry barriers: from not adjusting its job adverts, application forms, or locations where job interviews are held, to difficulties with getting into the company’s premises (e.g. the need to collect a pass from a faraway location), to the competencies and prejudices of recruiters and managers.

In order to avoid surprises in that area, it is important to analyse recruitment procedures and to analyse practices in the scope of recruitment and employment. This allows us to remove any potential barriers in the area of recruitment and candidate selection, which may include the wrong format of job adverts, application forms, tests and procedures (e.g. with regard to the amount of time needed to perform a task or operation of the Assessment Centre). Such analysis facilitates the identification of weaknesses in the competencies of persons involved in the recruitment process (recruiters and managers) for whom we need to prepare special training and digests. A good practice which facilitates permanent changes in the organisation in that regard is to introduce the topic of disability as a component of future leadership training courses.

“Open door” also involves preparing frontline personnel (reception staff, door staff, staff members responsible for providing information etc.) in the scope of communicating and dealing with disabled people, as well as preparing individuals who co-create the process of job applicant inclusion (e.g. HR business partners, OHS team, administration, onboarding team, etc.). The aim of all of these activities is to create a situation where disabled people are able to easily enter the organisation and start doing their job.

Open people

Openness policies will not work if there are no open people behind them. That is why the fourth area is so important, as it aims to build awareness of disability, which should lead to co-creating openness and inclusion activities on all organisational levels.

This area includes, most of all, promotional and informational activity, as well as symbolic actions which promote an attitude of openness and which increase awareness of disability (e.g. celebrating a Disability Day, or even better: No Barriers Day). This helps build an attitude of openness among managerial staff, e.g. in the form of training and eye-opening sessions, aimed at breaking stereotypes, gaining knowledge about disability, and learning how to act while in contact with disabled staff. Similarly, this is how we shape the right attitudes towards disability and develop the cooperation skills of whole teams. Many of such actions initially aim at familiarising people with disability, which is especially important in the case of people who build their opinions on stereotypes and popular opinions. Moreover, it turns out that building awareness is also important in the context of HR departments and management boards, whose members should have an opportunity to take part in conferences during which they can share their knowledge and draw inspiration from other companies' actions.

The experience of many companies shows that to achieve efficient communication and to build awareness among staff it is very important to develop a business case (as part of the "Coordination" area) which clearly shows the benefits and reasons for the company's interest in disability. An authentic business case creates the basis for getting all employees involved.

Inclusion and co-operation

Building open attitudes is extremely important, but it is not enough. The company needs to take and maintain actions aimed at the actual inclusion of disabled individuals in the life of the company and individual teams. So it is not only about attitudes, but also about everyday functioning, and about breaking any barriers or solving problems which may arise in co-operation or relations.

The fifth of the analysed areas requires a periodic barrier analysis and implementation of activities dedicated to improvement, prevention or

elimination. Such analysis is carried out, for example, in the form of periodic meetings, during which problems and challenges are identified, and new solutions are developed together. A good idea is also to provide a help desk for managers, which allows them to consult internal or external experts about any challenges encountered. Another good practice is to develop a system of warning mechanisms (whistleblowing policy) to detect any difficulties encountered.

All of these actions are aimed at improving the everyday functioning of disabled people in teams. This helps to eliminate barriers, and improve involvement, relations and productivity.

Support for people with disabilities

It would be difficult to imagine an openness policy which did not focus on the direct needs of people with disabilities. That is why organisations try to provide direct support, which means staying alert to the needs of disabled individuals and providing direct support.

The range of possible actions in that scope is very wide. It includes professional development and improvement, in particular allowing disabled individuals to participate in development programmes and taking into account their needs, abilities and expectations while planning their career/promotion paths.

It also involves introducing an ability to flexibly adjust the work methods (e.g. remote work, flexible/adjusted formal requirements) and developing support programmes for disabled individuals inside and outside the workplace (e.g. support with rehabilitation, or individualised healthcare packages or benefit programmes). Such initiatives aim at providing individual support to people with disabilities, giving them equal opportunities to pursue a career, as well as at building loyalty towards the company and thus increasing their involvement in their work.

Coordination

A well-designed policy of openness to the needs of people with disabilities should include a well-defined component of coordination, facilitating conscious management directed at monitoring outcomes, as well as at maintaining and developing the business case. Activities in that scope guarantee lasting results and should not be left to chance.

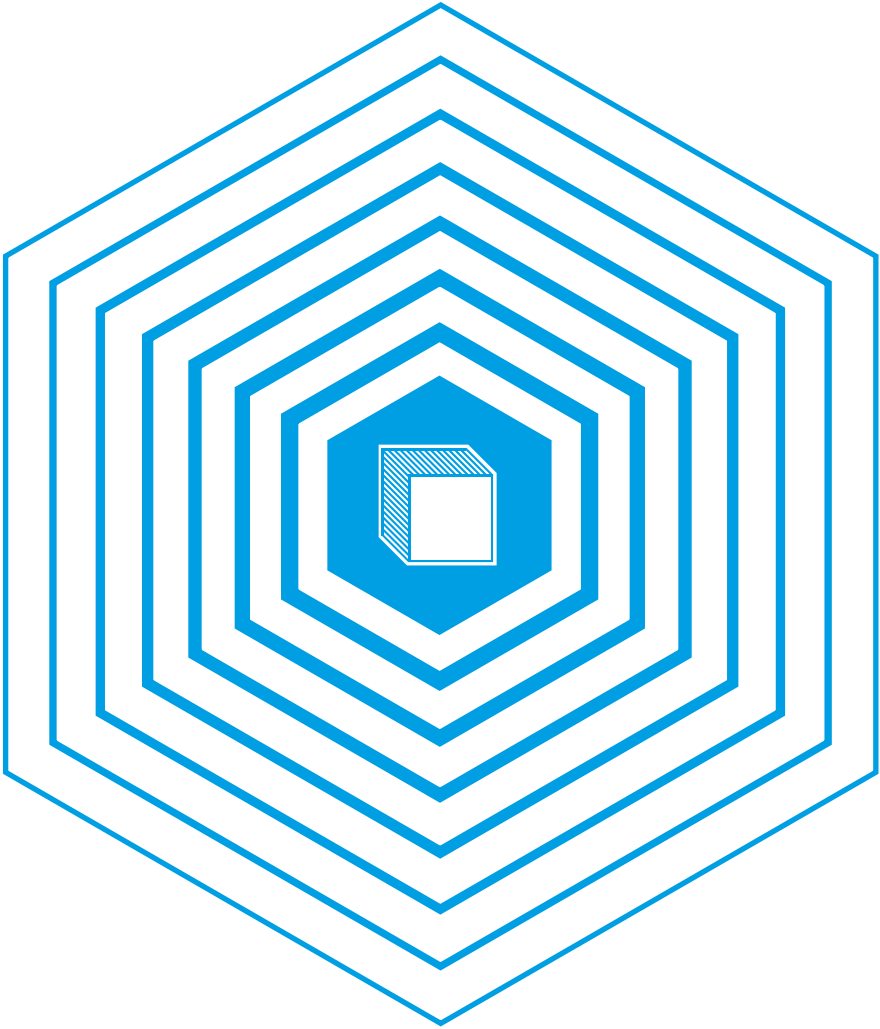
As mentioned earlier, it is key to develop and update the business case, on whose basis the entire Action Plan is built. It is also vital to establish a team responsible for the inclusion of disabled individuals, and to appoint an ambassador responsible for coordination. Diversity Hub's experience shows that such a team works best if they have been appropriately trained and if the team's regular meetings are attended by an external expert who provides advice and inspiration.

The role of the team is to develop the details and update the action plan, to set out goals and to participate in their cascading, to determine and monitor indicators of efficiency, efficacy, adequacy and durability of actions. It should also be noted that although it may seem difficult to establish such indicators, in practice this is not the case. Their number is limited to around a dozen of the most important indicators, and it is not necessary to conduct complex analyses nor to make corrections in data storage systems in order to establish such indicators.

Developing the Action Plan on the basis of the seven areas

Our experience shows that once we have thought about our actions in all of the above areas it is relatively easy to plan specific actions on the timeline. That is the key recommendation with regard to implementation – it is much easier to first perfect our ideas within the seven areas and only then place them at a specific point in time. This method means that we don't lose sight of any of our goals, and ensures that our actions are consistent and comprehensive. Of course, placing all of the required actions on the timeline may be difficult when we look at their intensity (especially at the initial stage). However, it is better to extend a project in time, or possibly limit its scale or scope than to omit or neglect any of the above areas. Because only when we combine them all can we turn the famous “we're not ready yet” statement into “we're ready – let's do it!” and later into “we've done it”.

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HOW TO START BUILDING A STRATEGY ON MENTAL HEALTH

Tomasz Dąbrowski, Katarzyna Ociepka-Miąsik, Małgorzata Wypych

After years of building a positive atmosphere, trying to take care of the balance between work and home, and supporting integration in teams, companies are increasingly paying more attention to the need for a deeper approach to the subject of the mental state of their employees. Undoubtedly, the reason for the interest in the area of mental health is due to the occurrence of crisis situations, as well as sick leave statistics. However, if we look closer at the activities of corporations, we can see that the topic of mental health is a significant gap in the Diversity & Inclusion policy, although it concerns the core of what we call inclusion. This gap is slowly being filled.

Diversity Hub has been developing the area of mental health in business for two years now. Our contacts with corporations show the significance of the need to organise this subject, find answers to our questions, and benchmark. In June 2018, under the auspices of *Personel Plus*, a working group in the field of mental health initiated its activity, in which 16 corporations were involved. The results of this work include the establishment of the Mental Health Centre at Think Tank Diversity Hub, and recommendations to help businesses address this issue in a systemic way.

Do we know the scale of the problem?

According to ZUS data, in 2017, Poles took more than 19.35 million days off work due to mental disorders, presenting more than 1.1 million medical certificates. Unfortunately, this is a record in Polish statistics. This result is almost 70% higher than that achieved in the same period in 2010. Compared to 2016, it is more than 400 thousand days more. Yet we are talking about health problems which are often hidden under other categories of illness in order to avoid stigmatisation, or those of which we are simply unaware. If we look at the age structure, the ZUS statistics show the age groups with the highest number of cases: the largest group comprises people between 30 and 39 years of age; the next one between 40 and 49 years of age. Over 60% of the sick leaves concerned women.¹

Sick leave due to mental illness is also long-lasting. In 2017, the average length of leave due to mental and behavioural disorders was almost 18 days. Higher values are associated only with cancer (20 days), and pregnancy and childbirth (23 days). In this context, it is a problem for employers that when faced with psychological problems, sick leaves take on a long-term character relatively easy, and when the employee is away for more than six months, the chances of them returning to work are radically reduced. This means not only a problem with sick leaves, but also with the departure of employees. The latest figures also show that mental disorders cost us the most of all illnesses in terms of incapacity benefits.

Within the UK, the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) has announced that in 2016, 31% of organisations surveyed in the annual sick leave survey reported an increase in sick leaves due to mental health problems. European surveys show that every year, 164.8 million (38.2%) Europeans suffer from mental health problems.² Experts

have been pointing to a significant increase in mental health problems in society for years. The rapid pace of change, uncertainty, work difficulties, mobility, and constant online accessibility are weakening our mental resilience.

According to the WHO, mental illness will become one of the most serious health problems in the European population by 2020. But are we aware of this?

To see the problem

When managers were asked about the frequency of mental health problems among their employees in a survey of knowledge and awareness of the links between work and mental health problems, as many as 66% said that one in twenty people was affected. More than half of the respondents stated that none of their subordinates had ever had mental health problems.³ How does this relate to reality?

In a representative survey of the mental health status of people aged 18–64 conducted in 2012, almost one in four respondents admitted that they had experienced some of the symptoms of mental health disorders (phobia, anxiety, irritability or aggressiveness)⁴ at least once in their lives. The combination of these figures alone shows that we do not see or do not want to see the problem. That does not mean that there is no problem. On the contrary. It is not only there, but it is growing and affecting all of us.

Why does it matter?

Mental health is not only the absence of illness, but also the ability to set goals for oneself, to achieve them, and to derive satisfaction from them. People in crisis, suffering from various mental disorders (reduced mood, professional burnout, mourning, anxiety disorders), phobias or eating disorders, people going through divorce, suffering from chronic illness, or victims of violence are not able to dissociate themselves from thinking about problems. They constantly experience emotions that affect their effectiveness and creativity, so they isolate themselves, do not use the help of the team, and often fall into conflicts at work, which are not fully understood by those around them, which only deepens their crisis and lowers their self-esteem. A healthy individual thinks and acts efficiently; a person with

a problem needs to mobilise more to mask the problem, but ultimately is less efficient, because hiding problems takes up a lot of their energy. The people around them, their family and their team bear the consequences. Seeing the problem, but not knowing the background, they can be detrimental to the employee and feel a tormenting sense of helplessness, which also has a negative impact on their work and relationships.

The topic is neither new nor rare. Many managers find themselves in a situation where they have to solve a conflict, a problem or a crisis that directly threatens their staff. Statistics on mental illness and disorders are inexorable, so any organisation will sooner or later be confronted with this type of problem. In order for action at such a time not to be crisis management, it is worth creating a policy, procedures and a support network that can be activated in a crisis situation. Knowing how and with whom one can work in psychologically difficult situations is a resource that reduces managerial stress and is a component of mental resilience. Although we would like to avoid approaching the subject from the point of view of effectiveness, it is impossible to avoid the observation that an employee in a crisis is less effective, or even completely absent. Mental health prevention is therefore an important topic to be addressed with employees.

In search of a solution – where to start

First of all, one should be aware of the scale and essence (effects, causes) of the problem. However, this should be true not only in the HR department, but also in the organisation as a whole. The topic of mental health in the workplace is still a taboo subject, so without learning about it, it is difficult to build anything. Only when you understand the problems and challenges can you begin to look for and build solutions.

Organisations already have mental health programmes in place. Ethical procedures, anti-bullying procedures, the reintroduction of employees after long absences, as well as welfare programmes are already in place. They can become a good foundation on which to build mental health programmes. It is important to merge existing projects in order to underline how this topic was treated before. Identifying goals and needs, and preparing appropriate arguments for different groups of employees is crucial to arousing interest and avoiding strong resistance from employees.

Referring to the working group's discussion on the topic of mental health, it is worth taking a variety of actions (see box: "When dealing with the area of the mental health of employees, it is worthwhile to...").

The task for those who undertake the implementation of mental illness prevention will certainly be intriguing (the matter of mental health does not resemble training in team building or motivating), but it is still a challenge. So, what should we pay attention to before we start building a strategy?

Watch out for your own motivation – how to communicate

Motivation to improve work efficiency by taking care of employees' health may be a message perceived negatively by employees. It is worth starting the topic by looking at your motives and naming them honestly. The employees will be happy to use the workshops and help if the motives are more humanistic and based on empathy. Employees can see this project as another idea of "bored HR" (to quote one of the participants of the working group). A sincere motivation to take care of employees' mental balance and to propose procedures for assistance from the company in real problems, implementing mental health prevention, are therefore very important.

Break the taboo

The very phrase "mental health" may initially cause reluctance on the part of employees. This is a culturally taboo subject, and taking it up in organisations can be a cause for concern if we do not create fertile ground. It is worth remembering that mental health is not only the absence of illness or suffering. It is a state in which we can get satisfaction from our life. It is a good idea to start by defining mental health itself and showing workers which areas are covered and why.

Mental health is a taboo subject despite national promotion programmes. The work-life balance and mindfulness fashions are not the same as openness to talking about mental problems, but in companies where integration programmes, sports activation or mindfulness workshops are implemented, talking about mental problems will be easier because the employees are better integrated, and perhaps this is a good foundation for talks about other areas.

Respect employees' boundaries; accept initial misunderstandings

Looking at the reactions of the participants of classes on this subject, one can clearly see both surprise and interest, and resistance, which results from the rigid boundaries between private and professional life which many people establish. These limits must be respected, but on the other hand, the subject matter is important, so it is a pity to postpone action until something difficult happens and an urgent response is needed. Unfortunately, it is often the case that subjects that have been passed over in silence or postponed explode in the form of conflict, aggression and self-aggression, which burden not only the suffering individual, but also the team and leaders.

Wake up empathy

When we talk about mental health in organisations it is important to emphasise compassion and concern, not necessarily the impact of health on employees' performance. It should be remembered that people with mental health problems or experiencing life crises tend to work less effectively because of the emotional and cognitive burden of the problem. It is obvious that prevention in the area of mental health will be beneficial for the organisation. The increasing number of sick days due to mental disorders is sufficient reason to take preventive action. However, this is a delicate subject, and nobody wants to be taken care of so as to be a more effective cog in the machine. The intentions of the programme implementers should be based on the human reflex to help those who are suffering. When preparing to implement mental health support programmes, consider your intentions carefully and develop communication that does not discourage employees from taking up the subject. First of all, managers need to be made aware of the language they will use to talk about this issue. Every motivation spoken at the beginning will be remembered by the employees.

Engage managers

It is worth starting by convincing the “higher ups” – managers who are convinced they will be the support and leaders of change. It is also important to note that managers need to know how to react to difficult situations in their teams: whether and how to act, whom to contact, and so on. It is worth preparing them for this change first.

Appoint ambassadors

Corporate experience shows that mental health measures are more effective when a company appoints a person (or persons) to act as a champion/ambassador for the subject. Their role does not imply the introduction of a “corporate psychologist” or therapist in the organisation. It is the preparation of a person who will consciously and in consultation with experts coordinate the activities of the organisation in this area, who will be able to put teams in contact with appropriate experts in case of difficulties, who will ensure consistency of preventive actions, etc.

How to overcome resistance

Employees may on the one hand declare an interest in the subject of mental health, but on the other hand, they may fear that privacy may be violated. This is an extremely important aspect of the implementation of mental health policy. The effectiveness of the projects depends in particular on:

- ▶ support of the management board and management staff,
- ▶ hard data and economic justification (business case),
- ▶ identifying those unwilling in individual conversations (it is worth showing the benefits and disadvantages of neglecting the subject – here the experts will be a better source of arguments, knowing the secondary problems associated with mental suffering),
- ▶ leaning on existing company procedures (e.g. anti-bullying, health),
- ▶ building confidence through the development of transparent procedures and the use of external experts,
- ▶ the involvement of employees,
- ▶ efficient coordination by champions/ambassadors,
- ▶ process monitoring and attention to feedback,
- ▶ gentle introduction of new tools, building a culture of authenticity and openness,
- ▶ respect the employee’s “no”.

External support

It is worth remembering that in many cases, without external medical and pharmacological support, certain problems will not be solved. There are situations where not only is it not enough for individuals from an organisation to help employees, but it can also harm both the suffering em-

ployee and the helper. Serious crises (mourning, chronic illness, death of an employee) are examples of situations where it is necessary to consult on the actions and call on the help of specialist psychologists (interveners). But we should know beforehand when, and what is worth doing for both the employee and the team. This is, after all, the essence of the inclusive activities of organisations.

- ▶ analyse emerging problems together with managers,
- ▶ appoint champions/ambassadors (persons responsible for coordinating the topic),
- ▶ find shift leaders, respected people who will be happy to support the idea,
- ▶ take up the subject on various occasions, put the subject matter on the agenda of meetings, leader training, promote it in internal communication channels,
- ▶ review the solutions already available (e.g. those included in medical packages) and make this information available to employees,
- ▶ use informal ways of communication, find employees who can easily address the subject, use their network of contacts,
- ▶ involve employees who want to talk about their solved problems,
- ▶ gradually implement the subjects – from awareness-raising, through development workshops, to the implementation of psychological support procedures,
- ▶ be cautious about researching needs in this area – it is good to have focus group data or interviews at first, then to survey the population using survey methods; the survey itself may already reveal many needs.

WHEN DEALING WITH THE AREA OF THE MENTAL HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES, IT IS WORTHWHILE TO...

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WOMEN AND CAREERS.

Analysis of barriers in the advancement of women leaders

Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska, Tomasz Dąbrowski

What blocks and barriers do women face in their career paths? How can we avoid getting lost in the multitude of reports and recommendations that suggest solutions to help women advance to higher positions? How can we avoid falling under the illusion that the key to increasing the presence of women in managerial positions is primarily in the hands of companies?

If we want to see how gender balance looks on a macro scale, we only need to look at some basic data, such as the employment rate of women on the boards of companies listed on the Main Market of the Warsaw Stock Exchange, which barely exceeds 12% (according to a survey conducted by the Business Leaders Foundation¹), or data in a report by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which shows that the Gender Equality Index in Poland reaches a level of less than 57 out of 100 possible points, with the average grade in EU countries at 66.2 points (which in itself is also considered insufficient)². The overall picture leaves much to be desired.

In May 2017, on the initiative of Think Tank Diversity Hub and Delphi, a working group meeting was held in which representatives (both women and men) of corporations from various sectors (services and manufacturing) participated. In the course of our discussion it became clear that the assessment of the reasons why women are not promoted to managerial positions is often based on knowledge that refers to assumptions and principles, or is supported by available research and publications. These are sometimes contradictory – either they try to capture a very wide spectrum of difficulties (on the scale of the whole business), or they try to explain the phenomenon only partially (e.g. only from the perspective of the company).

Recognising this difficulty, we set ourselves the goal of creating a map that would allow us to capture the complexity of the blocks and barriers to the advancement of women and, ultimately, to create a schema that would allow us to conduct research into this phenomenon in an orderly and exhaustive (but also flexible) manner. We called this map the 4x4 model.

Four groups of factors

The starting point for the 4x4 Model is the analysis of blocks and barriers to women's professional development. In order to define them, we have used more than 120 reports and studies in which different authors try to describe the key barriers to women's careers. The factors indicated in these reports were coded and combined into broader categories. Following this path, we have managed to identify four key areas of barriers (groups of factors) – see box: “Barriers to the advancement of women.”

The groups of factors mentioned above occur in different intensities, depending on the context. However, it is worth considering them together each time, since one of the key mistakes is in accepting assumptions

(resulting from stereotypes) leading to the exclusion of certain groups of barriers from the analysis.

Some barriers are not perceived both because of the belief that they do not have a significant impact on the professional life of women (e.g. fear of a new professional role) and because of the notions of the decisive importance of other commonly perceived barriers (e.g. maternity, identified with long-term absence). Equally often, we encounter simple ignorance and failure to see the bigger picture. For example, it is often assumed that caring for dependants only concerns the context of young children and is therefore linked to younger women, without recognising the issue of caring for the ageing generation of parents. However, the analysis of the effects of gender balance support programmes shows that the causes of the later failures often lie in these overlooked areas. Distinguishing the groups of factors we propose allows for an orderly analysis of the blocks in women's careers.

Levels of impact

When we described four groups of factors (motherhood, household and care responsibilities, qualifications, attitude towards career) we noticed that their analysis often leads to simplifications. Some of the simplifications consisted in narrowing the cognitive perspective only to the level of the organisation itself, and consequently in the belief that the company's activity in a specific field (e.g. support for young parents) will solve a specific problem (e.g. return to work). The experience of companies shows that such an assumption is not always effective. This is because in each group of factors such things as, for example, a broad cultural perspective should be taken into account.

With this in mind, in the course of our research we have identified four levels of impact on the identified groups of factors:

- ▶ social and political environment level,
- ▶ organisation (company) level,
- ▶ family and immediate environment level,
- ▶ "me" level.

Therefore, the analysis of each of the indicated groups of factors should be conducted from the perspective of the indicated four levels. The result is a matrix model (4x4 model) that allows for a better understanding of the

limitations of increasing the presence of women in managerial positions (see figure: “4x4 Model”).

How to use the model

One of the key assumptions behind the idea of the 4x4 Model is the belief that barriers to women’s advancement should not be discussed in a generalising way, without taking into account the context of the job position (place in the hierarchy, tasks and competence requirements, etc.). This context differentiates the strength of individual barriers. For example, higher salaries associated with senior management positions make it less important to have unpaid institutional care, but because of the often greater time commitment to work, they can lead to

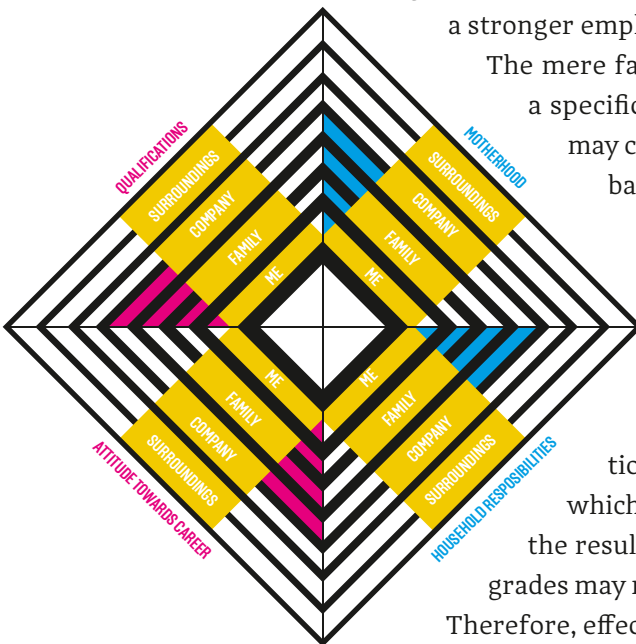
a stronger emphasis on work-life balance issues.

The mere fact of the company’s presence in a specific place (in a geographical sense) may condition the different intensity of barriers at the level of availability of qualifications, institutional support, social attitudes towards a career, etc.

This means that the starting point for the barrier analysis should be a clear definition of the position (job grade) for which it is being carried out. Moreover, the results of the analysis of different job grades may not translate across to each other.

Therefore, effective support activities in a group of team leaders may be a dead end at the level of a director, and programmes operating in large urban agglomerations will not necessarily work in plants located in smaller towns. This is an extremely simple requirement, and it is often overlooked.

Determining the nature of a workplace goes significantly beyond a formal analysis of the job description, as it should also cover what is fixed in the collective imagination. Many of the blocks have their roots in preconceived notions about jobs. Even if these ideas do not coincide with reality



(e.g. the manager does not have to go on days-long business trips “all the time”), the fact that they do occur creates a framework for perceiving a given position and may decide to activate the blocks (“I don’t apply because I have children, and I can’t afford to go on frequent trips”). Understanding these perceptions allows us to assess the validity of the concerns regarding the self-assessment of the ability to take up a position or its impact on the work-life balance.

It is equally important to look at the profile of a person who is a potential candidate for a specific position. Of course, it is important to be aware that such an outlook can lead to unjustified generalisations. However, this does not change the fact that the attempt to “put ourselves in the shoes” of the candidates is an effort that allows us to better see some barriers, for example in the sphere of the socio-cultural environment, internal blocks, and available competencies. Even if the picture of these barriers is not exhaustive, it is worth noting that every attempt to understand the context in which potential candidates function is extremely valuable.

With a basic understanding of the context of the position it is possible to identify barriers to promotion based on the 4x4 Model by analysing the blocks in each of the four areas, at all levels. In this way we gain a picture of what we as an organisation have real influence over, and what depends, for example, on public policy or the immediate environment of women themselves. In this way, we are able to identify possible obstacles that could eliminate even the best support projects.

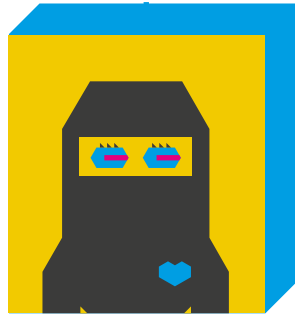
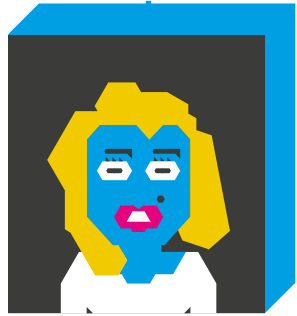
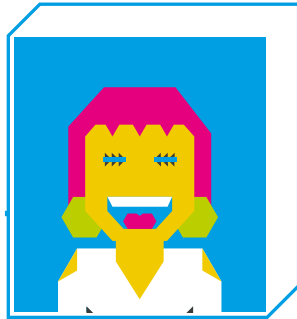
In order to facilitate this task, we have defined a catalogue of factors within each of the four barrier areas that create blocks on each of the four levels. We have also created an additional catalogue of questions that help to analyse the impact of each of these factors on the professional situation of women (a set of questions for each of the factors distinguished at each of the levels). Their detailed description exceeds the framework of this article, but organisations (having the 4x4 Model framework described here at their disposal) are able to fill the model with blocking factors on their own. The 4x4 model is an open structure, a framework for building the understanding of the organisation.

The 4x4 model was developed in order to be able to take more effective measures to ensure a gender balance in management positions. This means that the conclusions drawn from the analysis of areas and levels of

intensity in the 4x4 model should be translated into actions in the area of recruitment, communication, development and retention programmes, or more broadly – management in general. Work with the 4x4 model should therefore conclude with the organisation's action plan, in which the key steps to improve gender balance in the short and long terms are identified. It is worth noting that measures in this area are not always effective, and we should be critical of plans for radical change. In many cases existing barriers mean that the change will be very slow, but not impossible.

In 2018, together with selected corporations, we will conduct research on internal blocks in a selected group of positions (first of all managerial positions) based on the 4x4 model. The research will be a prelude to the creation of a benchmark at the end of the year. However, before it is created we encourage you to start a discussion on the promotion of women in business. We hope that the presented principles of the 4x4 Model will be helpful in this, sensitise the complexity of the situation, and allow you to look at the issue more broadly than before. Thanks to this, it will be easier to assess the situation of our company in a more realistic way and predict possible difficulties in the implementation of measures to increase the participation of women in management.

THE ARTICLE APPEARED IN *PERSONEL PLUS* IN JANUARY 2018





EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS – CHALLENGES, POTENTIAL AND DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Tomasz Dąbrowski, Beata Markowska

For many years they have been an inseparable element of the corporate landscape, aimed at, among others, supporting the processes of building a culture of diversity and inclusion in business. Although their presence is a fact, we still know little about them, we do not always understand their importance in the field of diversity & inclusion, and we do not necessarily see the problems they face.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are internal company groups created for and managed by employees on a volunteer basis. ERGs can focus on social issues (e.g. ecology, health), professional context (e.g. engineers, programmers), as well as on diversity issues such as gender (women's career support groups), disability, LGBTI¹, age, etc. From the perspective of this article, we will be interested in the latter category, linking ERGs with the topic of diversity management.

Helping to reap the benefits of diversity

The history of ERGs began with Affinity Groups, which were formed as small, informal groups of employees from a given minority, focused on common challenges and interests. Their main objective was the network within the group. Over time, they evolved into Employee Network Groups (ENGs) and then Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), strategically important for shaping an inclusive corporate culture. The next stage of employee resource group development, which we notice in some companies, are Business Resource Groups (BRGs), emphasising the strong bond of the ERG with the business.

The aim of ERGs operating in the area of Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) is to strengthen the culture of diversity and inclusion through joint actions for the benefit of employees, the company and the immediate environment. Their actions should be related to the mission, policy and D&I strategy of the company. ERGs help businesses to benefit from diversity and at the same time influence the situation of people affected by their activities (e.g. people aged 50+, women). What is important is that the groups' activities include not only representatives of a given social group, e.g. women, but also people supporting a given group and its goals, i.e. allies. Research shows that 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies have ERGs² within their structures.

Business case for ERGs

In the discussion about the legitimacy of setting up and supporting ERGs, one can only try to state that any bottom-up initiative involving employees is valuable in some way. However, this is a truism. Therefore, it is worth looking at the arguments that explain the legitimacy of setting up ERGs. So what is the business case for employee resource groups? The ar-

guments presented in the “Business case for employee resource groups” box provide a basis for treating ERGs as a business development partner and not only as a bottom-up initiative to meet the needs of the people involved. Employee resource groups have the potential to support the company’s strategic goals.

How to measure the success of employee resource groups

As with all projects, ERG activities should be regularly measured by their leaders, such as HR or D&I units, and ultimately by top management. The effectiveness of an ERG can be measured on many levels. The most common indicators are:

Involvement in ERG activities:

- ▶ number of persons actively supporting the ERG’s activities;
- ▶ increase in the number of ERGs over time;
- ▶ number of people using the ERG offer, e.g. participating in meetings, workshops;
- ▶ number of managers participating in/supporting the ERG programme;
- ▶ time spent by managers on activities organised by the ERG;
- ▶ the frequency of internal meetings of the ERG and its activities;
- ▶ the time spent by those active in the ERG on its activities.

Effectiveness of programmes and activities:

- ▶ results of employee surveys that may relate to specific events or ERG activities in general;
- ▶ the number and quality of contacts that the ERG managed to build through its activities (universities, clients, NGOs, internal departments);
- ▶ observing the development path of staff who hold ERG leadership positions (whether they were included in talent programmes or promoted);
- ▶ sustainability (repetition, cyclicity) of ERG activities;
- ▶ the range of activities undertaken by the ERG (e.g. number of recipients, scale of media coverage);
- ▶ non-company collaboration, benchmarking with other ERGs;

- ▶ the budget at the disposal of the ERG;
- ▶ specific indicators – involvement in recruitment processes, participation in forums aimed at developing new products, activity in conflict resolution committees, scale of involvement in onboarding, number of people covered by mentoring programmes, etc.

We often observe a change in attitudes in the environment in which the employee resource group operates, and a positive perception of its activity. However, this is a subjective feeling. The measurability of ERG activities continues to face problems due to the small number of objective indicators that would clearly define the quality of the activities.

Efficient support structure for ERGs

ERGs, even though they are the result of a grassroots initiative of employees, are very specifically embedded in the corporate structure, which aims to ensure consistency of activities with the D&I strategy and to support and promote their activities at all levels of the organisation. ERGs often have their own budget to support the most promising initiatives (see box: “Examples of functions in company structure working closely with employee resource groups”).

In order to structure ERG activities, companies often define specific areas on which people involved in their activities can focus. An ERG may operate on one or more themes of its choice. Example ERG pillar programmes include:

- ▶ *Recruitment and attraction* – support through actions that build a positive image of the employer and address specific groups, e.g. a women’s network running coding workshops for girls to encourage them to undertake a technical path of development.
- ▶ *Talent development* – support for company educational programmes, mentoring, coaching, activities helping to understand a given culture or community, reverse mentoring programme.
- ▶ *Integration and inclusion* – strengthening the sense of belonging of employees to the organisation through networking and social events; buddy system for new employees, facilitating their integration.
- ▶ *Business development* – commitment to building customer relationships through joint social activities and support for marketing activities based on knowledge of a specific demographic group, e.g.

product testing by ERGs, focusing on people with disabilities, or the LGBTI community.

The areas around which ERG activities are concentrated depend on the company's strategy and priorities. However, it is important for ERGs to have general guidelines that make it easier for them to build their own strategy and to include it in the objectives of the organisation of which they are a part.

Challenges

Despite the benefits for the employer and employees, employee resource groups face many challenges, which depend on the maturity of the organisation and the support of the programme. Analysing ERG operations in Poland, we have identified significant challenges they face:

- ▶ The belief that the mere fact of setting up ERGs will solve problems in a specific area of D&I. This is a cliché, but in order for employee resource groups to be able to change their business for the better they must be active. It's that simple. If they are only "appointed", if they do not act, then they become fiction.
- ▶ Blurring or lack of clear objectives – ERGs without a strategy and clear action plan tend to be random in their activity, focusing on side or even irrelevant themes, which leads to a depreciation of their importance, and a decrease in their activity.
- ▶ Unrealistic strategy – ERGs will not solve all problems. Setting expectations that are impossible to meet leads to discouragement.
- ▶ Lack of visible support from managers who believe that time spent on ERGs is time taken away from business. This lack leads to ERG activity not being seen as strategic.
- ▶ Measurement of activity, evaluation – difficulties in proving effectiveness translate into decreasing importance for business.
- ▶ Limited involvement – like any volunteering programme, ERGs are struggling with commitment and lack of time.
- ▶ Lack of a clear structure – it is often the case that the ERG has one or two leaders on whose shoulders rest the whole ERG's activities: communication, logistics, budget management, etc. The lack of a clear division of roles within the ERG leads to the rapid burnout of leaders.

- ▶ Lack of finances to operate effectively – without access to finances ERGs are unable to effectively manage their activities.
- ▶ Cooperation between companies – employee resource groups can learn a lot from each other, as exemplified by the cooperation of LGBTI networks in Krakow and Warsaw. Developing cooperation platforms (such as Diversity Hub) are conducive to strengthening ERG activity, transfer of good practices, shared ideas, and learning.

It should be stressed here that the discussion on the risk of ERGs becoming closed (homogeneity) is becoming more and more visible. It often happened that the ERG consisted only of representatives of a given demographic group, e.g. women. This reduces dialogue and creates a sense of exclusion among workers who are not representatives of a given group. For this reason, there are increasing numbers of postulates declaring the abandonment of the concept of ERGs for disadvantaged groups (women, LGBTI) in favour of Inclusive Councils¹⁰, which are intended to be a platform for cooperation between diverse groups of working people, aimed at inclusion understood more broadly than from the perspective of a single group, and at the same time providing an opportunity to include new allies and sponsors in the discussion. Our experience in Poland shows that activities aimed at involving people who favour the groups in them, e.g. men in women's groups, people who do not identify themselves with the LGBTI community in the "Pride" networks, are a fact. Nevertheless, companies still need to be vigilant on this subject.

How to ensure the effectiveness of employee resource groups

If we are only just planning to start ERGs in our company, it is worth looking at a few key tips that will help in a good start (see diagram: "Model for initiating the operation of an employee resource group"). If the network is already operational, it is worth considering what can help in its development, both on the part of the people involved in its activities (see box: "Activities of involved people serving to develop ERGs"), as well as that of the organisation. The latter, in order to fully develop the potential of the employee resource group, can support them through:

- ▶ setting up a supportive structure and clear objectives that will allow ERGs to operate effectively, from the moment the idea of the group emerges, through the process of defining the group's mission and

objectives, to the promotion of the ERG and its integration into the organisation's business activities;

- ▶ defining the challenges faced by the organisation; a discussion involving the ERG on specific solutions creates a sense of employees' influence on the company's activities, increases involvement, and sets a specific direction;
- ▶ communication at all levels, explaining the value of ERG activities to the business and organisational culture;
- ▶ motivating employees active in the ERG; this is extremely important in maintaining commitment, so it is worth creating a system of regular pay based on the achievements of the members of the group;
- ▶ involvement of senior managers in actions, meetings, ERG activities;
- ▶ the allocation of financial resources to the budget of the ERG to make its activities possible;
- ▶ improving the quality of the ERG – this can be achieved by providing employees with opportunities for additional development in the form of including them in mentoring programmes allowing for contact with top management, or including group leaders in talent programmes for employees with the highest potential.

Instead of a summary

With this text we wanted to open a discussion on the condition and directions of development of ERG activities. We believe that they are an important element of the corporate landscape, supporting the development of an inclusive culture. In autumn 2018, under the patronage of *Personel Plus*, the first inter-company meetings of ERGs began, organised by the Diversity Hub think tank. They will aim at mutual learning and support. We are currently beginning a study on the effectiveness and efficiency of ERG activities, the results of which will also be published in *Personel Plus*. We cordially invite you to participate in both initiatives. We encourage you to contact the authors of the article.

Model for initiating the operation of the employee resource group

By definition, the ERG is a bottom-up initiative created from the needs of the employees. This model shows how HR or D&I staff can initiate such an action if the ERG programme is not well known among the employees.

BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Networking, engagement, cooperation and integration – ERG activity involves creating a space where people can get to know each other in action, go beyond formal frameworks, establish relationships, and engage in topics important to them. They give the possibility of influence. They are a tool for building commitment, trust, integration and development of cooperation.³

Problem Solving – through the knowledge of the situation of people who support them, ERGs help to solve problems, break down barriers and break down stereotypes.⁴ They can also help to solve problems in relations with customers, partners or suppliers if they concern the D&I sphere.

Development of business, including products and services – the involvement of ERGs in expanding (adapting) the business offer⁵ is still underestimated. Meanwhile, ERGs are a natural expert environment that allows for noting the needs of a specific group (young people, women, LGBTI, etc.), providing knowledge of the market, and consulting on or designing products or services offered to these groups.

Recruitment and Attraction – research shows the impact of ERGs on attracting candidates, as well as on the process of adaptation of newly recruited people.⁶ For many people ERG activity is proof of the implementation of the demands of an inclusive working environment. The involvement of ERGs in consulting on job descriptions, job offers and the recruitment process itself (e.g. opening up to disability) cannot be overestimated.

Talent Development – ERGs are a natural place for the development of leadership and talent, and the emergence of leaders.⁷ Offering a range of development activities (training, discussions, projects), they are a place of personal development.

Employer branding – ERGs support the processes of building an open, inclusive image of the company, making it more authentic. They also help to build relations with the surroundings⁸ – NGOs, universities, business environment institutions, media, and other companies.

Strengthening communication with senior management – the developed ERG offers the possibility of multidimensional cooperation with senior management, creating an additional communication channel, a discussion space, and the chance to avoid disturbances in vertical communication.

Support for diversity policy – the study concludes that ERGs are a critical element in building a culture of inclusion and diversity.⁹ They are a tool in the process of creating, implementing and evaluating D&I activities – a guarantor of their adequacy and grassroots spirit.

ACTIVITIES OF INVOLVED PEOPLE SERVING TO DEVELOP ERGs

Organisations/people supporting employee resource groups should help to build a strategy that reflects the values and objectives of organisations at global, regional or local levels.

Defining achievable but also ambitious and measurable objectives and an action plan (including a budget) is extremely important.

There should be clear roles, leaders, and assigning ownership.

It is extremely important to open the ERG's activities to the entire community of the company, and not only to the representatives of a given group. Inviting everyone to a dialogue and involving them in the group's activities is crucial for building an inclusive culture.

Cooperation between ERGs supports diversity and inclusiveness.

EXAMPLES OF FUNCTIONS IN COMPANY STRUCTURE WORKING CLOSELY WITH EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

ERG Programme Manager – a person in the HR structure whose responsibilities include coordination, support and promotion of employee resource groups at the corporate level. In global organisations, where we have several dozen or even hundreds of groups, contact with all groups is limited, so an additional structure is often created in the form of a council.

Council – at global, regional and/or national levels, it may cover a specific area, e.g. disability, LGBTI, or inclusion in general. It includes top management, and its aim is to set the strategic direction in a given area of D&I.

Executive sponsor – a person in a managerial position who ensures that the ERG's activities are consistent with the company's business values and objectives. This person is often an authority who, through their authenticity and their actions, helps in instilling specific inclusive behaviours. ERGs often choose to work with a sponsor who does not come from their demographic group to open and strengthen social dialogue.

D&I/HR programme leader – supports the ERG in terms of content and communication. This is a person who addresses the problems faced by employee resource groups, takes care of the quality and continuity of dialogue between the business and ERGs, and coordinates their activities at the national level. They also secure the budget for the group's key activities.

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- 1 Acronym referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.
 - 2 Center for Women and Business at Bentley University; *Taking Employee Resource Groups to the Next Level*, 2017.
 - 3 E.M. van Aken, D.J. Monet, D.S. Sink, "Affinity groups: The missing link in employee involvement", *Organizational Dynamics*, 1994/22(4), pp. 38-54.
 - 4 R. McGrath, W.L. Sparks, "The importance of building social capital", *Quality Control and Applied Statistics*, 2005/50(4), pp. 45-49.
 - 5 Mercer, *ERGs Come of Age: The Evolution of Employee Resource Groups*, 2011.
 - 6 Center for Women and Business at Bentley University, *Taking Employee...*
 - 7 M.M. Kaplan, E. Sabin, S. Smaller-Swift, *The Catalyst Guide to Employee Resource Groups. Volume 1: Introduction to ERGs*, 2009.
 - 8 Mercer. *ERGs Come of Age...*
 - 9 M.M. Kaplan, E. Sabin, S. Smaller-Swift, *The Catalyst Guide...*
 - 10 See: <https://www.businessinsider.com/deloitte-replacing-diversity-groups-for-minority-employees-2017-7?IR=T> (Access: 10.10.2018).
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THE DIVERSITY PLAYBOOK THAT NEVER WAS: Leading to diversity in Accenture with guiding principles in mind

Radosław Chłódowicz

In 2018, a Polish website wykop.pl user published an alarming call: "Accenture discriminates against men – JAVA workshops for women only." In 2019, "Accenture discriminates men again. Summer IT Academy only for women" and a screenshot of the Facebook ad followed by over 1000 comments ranging from vulgarities to whole essays on how the Polish language creates odd-sounding words to describe newly-available career tracks for women.

It would seem to be the perfect moment to look into the corporate diversity playbook and look for answers. The problem is that such book doesn't exist.

"I replied to the original poster, inviting him to join me in a debate, where both sides could lay out their arguments and talk," says Edyta Gałaszewska-Bogusz, managing director at Accenture Operations. Until this day, the invitation remains open. If the debate was ever to happen, Accenture has a vast experience of trying and winning, sometime failing, getting up and trying again, at the diversity game.

In a very diverse environment from developer jobs to top-of-the-line technology consulting, no playbook would give the universal right answer. Everything is worked out from scratch, following the guiding principles and matching them with the environment (both location and culture) and the people that work there. It is a constant work-in-progress, as diversity is never given, it is always a result of hard work.

As the *Equality = Innovation. Getting to Equal 2019: Creating a Culture That Drives Innovation* Accenture report states, the answers lie in three principles: Empowering Environment, Bold Leadership, and Comprehensive Action.

Empowering Environment

"I signed up my then 6 year old daughter to a programming class," mentions Edyta Gałaszewska-Bogusz. "She loved it for the first day, playing with LEGO, making things move and act on their own, what's not to love. Then her mood started gradually diminishing and after a couple of days she exclaimed: 'I don't want to go back.' We sat down and talked about the ups and downs of a (very) young developer, trying to uncover the real reason why she wanted to quit. It was all about the pink elephant she and other girls wanted to build, with the trunk and tail to move with programmed parts. Unfortunately, no bricks to match this grand design were available. Race cars – yes, transforming robots – yes, tanks and fighter jets – yes, but not the pink elephant. It wasn't a deliberate limitation by the creators of the workshop, it was just an unconscious bias that affects half of our population of future IT professionals. Unless it is labeled *Coding for Girls* or *Salesforce for Women*, majority of tech education is built with a default male beneficiary in mind."

If you are a woman, and your drive to become an IT expert did not come to a sudden halt in the pink elephant scenario, there is still a lot more to power through. As Accenture's report *Cracking the Gender Code* points out, girls abandon the computing career in high school as the number of female role models suddenly drops and education becomes less fun (because it is essentially built for their male friends).

"For us, the corporate organization, diversity starts a long time before we actually get to see the job application from a candidate," says Jakub Smarz, Talent Brand lead in Accenture. "For women, the moment they graduate high school and decide on their career by choosing the right university, IT jobs may look unappealing. It's a man's world out there. There is not a lot of social support circles, not a lot of dedicated education. We are out there to change this perception by joint actions that build empowerment. You cannot underestimate the power of a women-dedicated coding workshop. Whenever we do one with Geek Girl Carrots or other women-in-IT empowering organisations, we get fantastic feedback. Be it JAVA, Salesforce, SAP, e-commerce or BI. Be it Warsaw, Łódź, Katowice or any other location. A lot of it relates to marketable skills that they get, but the biggest part is being around other like-minded people."

He adds: "Of course for us, building the diverse educational environment is also about building our future candidate pool and therefore, the continuity of business. The more qualified female IT professionals reach out to us, the more obvious it becomes that diversity is necessary if you want to compete and be innovative. The IT professionals market gap is growing bigger and bigger, we just can't turn a blind eye on a huge pool of talents that just need a little bit of a kickstart to their career."

He also mentions that educational actions help to push back against one of the biggest diversity myths. "I believe every organization must have dealt with the argument that once the diversity programs are in place, recruitment will always favor female candidates over male ones. Obviously that is never true. You get to hear that less and less when your own professionals see the potential new employees in action in our workshops. It was also proven that diverse teams of technology specialists are more efficient, creative, and able to better capture the multi-dimensional matters. Men that work in diverse teams are also much less likely to perceive it as a threat and look into it as an opportunity."

Once the new employee is on board, the empowering actions don't stop. While there is a significant decrease of empowerment through social benefits packages (the market is saturated with similar offerings provided by most employers as they become "the new normal"), empowering environment, as the *Innovation = Equality* states, granting them the access to better opportunities at work/life balance, remote work if possible, or just simply, ability to be themselves.

As much *be yourself* may sound like the most cliched fridge magnet tagline, Accenture enables this by creating special activities and dedicated space for various diverse types to *be themselves* and share that with others. The five groups: women, pride (name that embraces all colors of the LGBTQ+ community), people with disabilities, various ethnicities, and cross-cultural groups, they all get their spotlight and the others get the chance to get to know them better.

"It is a challenge in an organization like Accenture as we are a very diverse company. We have different work styles, various locations, different clients and different cultures, but whenever possible, we try to turn *be yourself* into a comprehensive action" says Edyta Gałaszewska-Bogusz.

Comprehensive Action

Whenever an organization starts introducing diversity initiatives, they tend to have a festive feel to them. They happen on dedicated days, they are a combination of fun and education and they may, and probably will, cause initial pushback.

Diversity starts feeling organic when it becomes a comprehensive action: more a premeditated set of workplace policies and programs, less a festivity with fireworks that light up and die out quick.

"It's also more about networks than ambassadors" says Edyta Gałaszewska-Bogusz. "Even the most powerful champion for a particular group will fail, if there is no network to turn ideas into actions,

Part of the comprehensive action is a constant myth-busting through education. And there is a lot of myths that surround all shapes of diversity. Accenture built in diversity into the work year calendar. Networks provide various activities, from whole months dedicated to celebrating and getting to know better various paths (March for women, June for pride events, September for cross-cultural get-to-knows) to targeted trainings.

Live libraries, part of the former, is a concept of walking in somebody else shoes and seeing the world and its challenges through the eyes of a real person. It's real people opening up about their personal and professional lives through storytelling. The latter is a lot about empowering and skill granting trainings for particular groups.

“When you ask me, why do we as Accenture label some of our activities for particular groups, creating coding courses for women, LGBTQ+ leadership programs, and others, it is because most professional education is still built with a man and his way of learning and seeing the world in mind. If you, as a man in technology, feel discriminated by such activities, take a look back at what got you here. But if we empower the others, it will help us all to grow faster”.

Bold Leadership

Another concept that is hurting the progress in building diverse work environments is the belief that equality is a balancing act to get to 50-50. Statistical equality is causing a lot of pushback as it implies very impersonal, almost mathematical approach to individuals and their stories.

“We believe in fair representation throughout the organization” says Edyta Gałaszewska-Bogusz. “If the overall proportions are 45% women and 55% men, that should be roughly reflected on each level of the company. People need leadership role models that are comfortable at *being themselves*. That empowers them, it is a company's promise to enable career progress no matter what is your background.”

The groundwork for diversity happens on all levels. The concept of Bold Leadership reaches out to all levels. At Accenture, we don't consider it to be an HR-only area, it is a business driver on the path to innovation, so all hands must be on deck. Actions are planned and happen on many levels: from the mentioned HR Teams that incorporate that approach into their recruitment and retainment policies; through team leads who work on their personal stories about diversity fueling their teams; to managing directors who need to be visible and vocal about it.

Like with all big transformations of mindsets, leaders being silent or neutral is not enough. Bold leadership is about being loud and clear: from taking personal commitments to diversity to acknowledging team members that actively promote diversity. It's a fine combination of data and

emotions. In fact, there is a lot of diversity data to process so tracking it and reporting is also crucial.

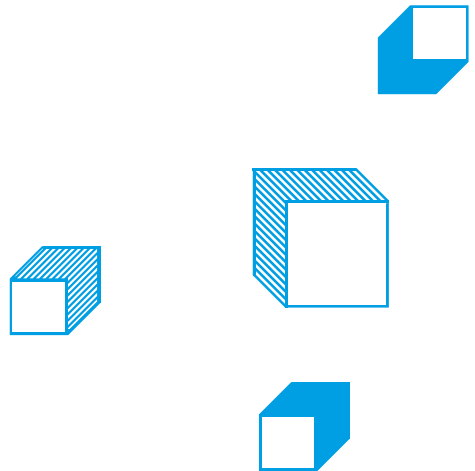
Permanent Work In Progress

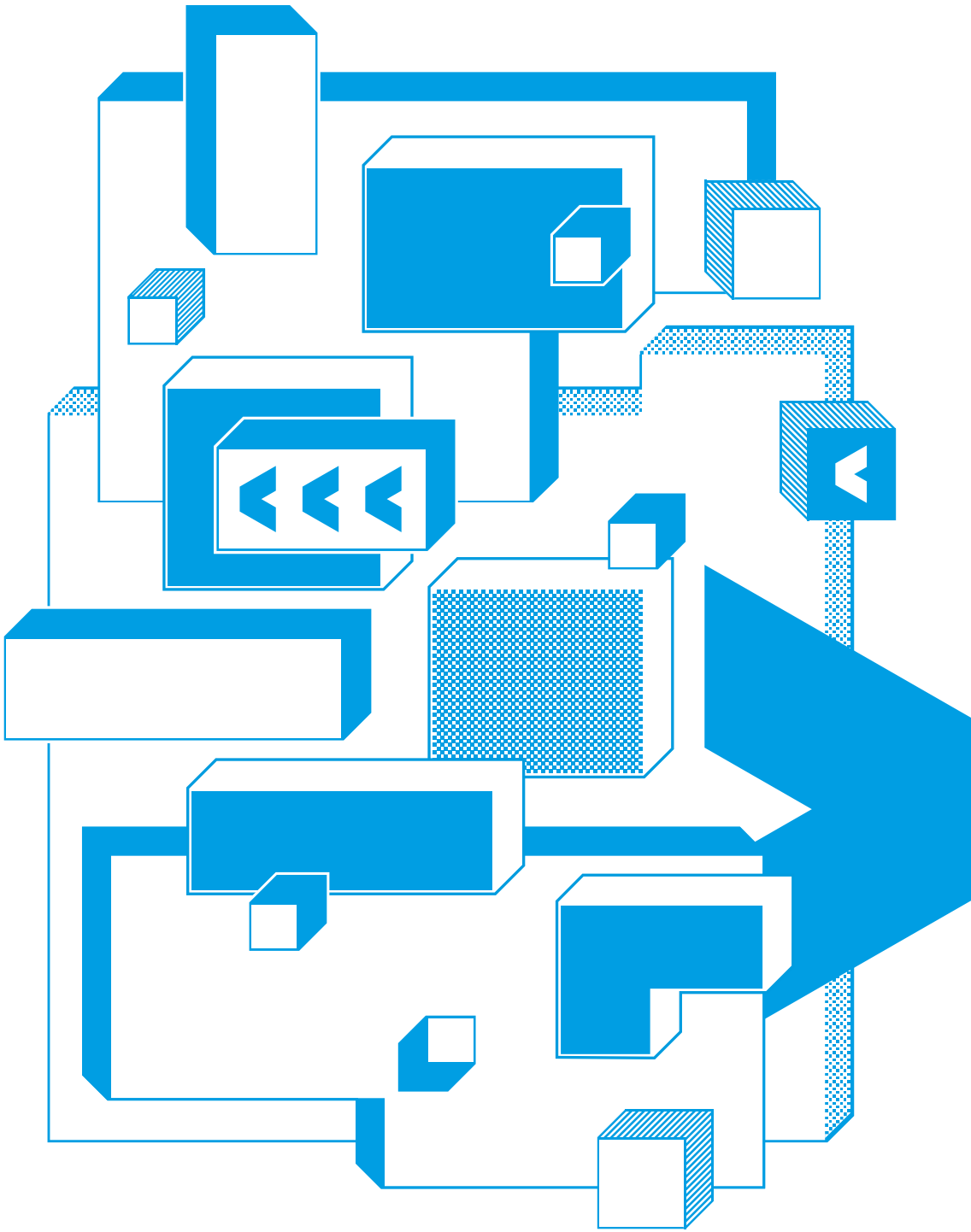
Accenture, are you there yet? Building a diverse work environment is a constant work in progress, definitions change, new areas of improvement appear, technology evolves. Where's the payout for that effort? What's in it for business?

The answers are multiple, but for Accenture, a company that is so tightly connected to future technologies and new concepts of workforce, one is the most crucial. The diverse cultures, as *Equality = Innovation* states, are the ones that got there through trying, failing, trying again, and finally succeeding, only to improve the outcome even further later on. They are cultures that are not afraid to fail. They are the cultures of explorers that walked the less-travelled roads. They are the cultures of multiple views on life and various personal stories that get shared to teach others.

Those are the top qualities of the innovators and that is a label everybody in Accenture is very comfortable with.

Report worth reading:





THE

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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ADVANCEMENT AND CHARACTERIZE A CULTURE OF EQUALITY

by ACCENTURE

Comprehensive Action

- ▶ Progress has been made in attracting, retaining and progressing women
- ▶ The company has a women's network open only to women
- ▶ The company has a women's network that is open to both women and men
- ▶ Men are encouraged to take parental leave
- ▶ Employees trust that the organization pays women and men equally for the same work
- ▶ The proportion of women in senior leadership has increased over the last five years
- ▶ The organization is fully committed to hiring, progressing and retaining women
- ▶ Progress has been made in improving gender equality in senior leadership
 - ▶ There is a clear maternity policy in place
 - ▶ Women are encouraged to take maternity leave
 - ▶ There is a clear parental policy in place
 - ▶ The organization hires people from a variety of backgrounds
 - ▶ Leaders take action to get more women into senior roles

Bold Leadership

- ▶ Gender diversity is a priority for management
- ▶ A diversity target or goal is shared outside the organization
- ▶ The organization clearly states gender pay gap goals and ambitions
- ▶ Progress on gender diversity is measured and shared with employees
- ▶ Leaders are held accountable for improving gender diversity
 - ▶ A diversity target or goal is shared inside the organization
 - ▶ The leadership team is diverse

Empowering Environment

- ▶ Employees have never been asked to change their appearance to conform to company culture
- ▶ Employees have the freedom to be creative and innovative
- ▶ Virtual/remote working is widely available and is common practice
- ▶ The organization provides training to keep its employees' skills relevant
- ▶ Employees can avoid overseas or long-distance travel via virtual meetings
- ▶ Employees can work from home on a day when they have a personal commitment
- ▶ Employees are comfortable reporting sexual discrimination/harassment incident(s) to the company
- ▶ Employees feel trusted and are given responsibility
- ▶ Employees have the freedom to be themselves at work
- ▶ Leadership has a positive attitude toward failure
- ▶ Leaders set a positive example around work-life balance
- ▶ Networking events with company leaders take place during office hours
- ▶ Employees can decline a request to work late without negative consequences
- ▶ Employees can decline a request to attend earlymorning/late-evening meetings without negative consequences
- ▶ Sexual discrimination/harassment is not tolerated
- ▶ The company has made progress in reducing tolerance of sex discrimination or gender-biased language
- ▶ Company training times and formats are flexible
- ▶ Supervisors respond favorably to flexible working requests
- ▶ The organization respects employees' needs to balance work with other commitments
- ▶ The organization has made progress on building a workplace where no one feels excluded

AUTHORS OF THE BOOK





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RANKED

No.1



For the second consecutive year, Accenture has been ranked the No. 1 company on Refinitiv's Diversity & Inclusion Index, which identifies the 100 publicly traded companies with the most diverse and inclusive workplaces.





EQUALITY = INNOVATION

Equality in the workplace has never been more relevant than it is today. In fact, our research shows that equality is a powerful multiplier of innovation and growth. It drives creativity and inspires a sense of belonging. It's why we're committed to championing a culture of equality. One where our people are empowered to be their best, professionally and personally.

Diversity

Diversity
Hub

SERVICES FOR BUSINESS

Training, consulting and studies
in the field of D&I, pertaining to:

- ▶ Creating D&I strategies and Action Plans for D&I
- ▶ Unconscious bias
- ▶ Age and intergenerational management
 - ▶ Disability
 - ▶ Interculturalism
 - ▶ Gender balance
 - ▶ LGBTQ+
 - ▶ Mental Health
 - ▶ Wellbeing
 - ▶ D&I Audit



HUMANITY

is back to workplace!

At Diversity Hub we provide business with know-how, solutions and experience in the area of Diversity & Inclusion. We help businesses reap the benefits of diversity and change their business for the better thanks to openness to inclusion, thus building an open and friendly world for everyone.

#

diversitymatters

We believe that the workplace plays a major role in shaping people's behaviours and attitudes, since we spend a significant portion of our lives there – sometimes more than at home. We see great potential for building a better world in workplaces, which is why we have chosen focus on the human elements of organisations in order to develop and promote values connected with activities in the area of Diversity & Inclusion. By changing the working environment, we have a real and lasting impact on social change.



OUR ACTIVITIES

OUR KEY INITIATIVES

- ▶ D&I Changemakers – the most important conference in Poland devoted to D&I in business
- ▶ D&I Task Forces by Diversity Hub – corporate working meetings developing solutions to key D&I challenges, taking place in 5 cities across Poland
- ▶ Diversity Business Meetings in Poznań – a series of D&I conferences in Poznań
- ▶ European D&I Network – a Community of Practice established by Diversity Hub, a place for the development of D&I experts
- ▶ Mental Health Center by Diversity Hub – an initiative focusing on the area of mental health of employees.
- ▶ D&I SWAP by Diversity Hub – a competence exchange programme in the area of D&I for corporations
- ▶ D&I LAB by Diversity Hub – an academic collaboration programme with universities, along with a student research programme in the field of D&I



Diversity & Inclusion are not a fad. We believe in what we do and we are honest!

AUTHENTICITY:



SCALE AND SCOPE OF ACTION:

We established an environment for a debate on diversity & inclusion in Poland. We work with the largest companies in the country.

BROAD PERSPECTIVE ON D&I:

We look at challenges in the D&I area faced by businesses from a broad perspective, believing that you cannot change your business without looking at the big picture.

ATMOSPHERE AND ENTHUSIASM FOR WORK:

Diversity Hub stands for people and a unique working atmosphere – reflective, attentive, open, focused on dialogue and full of character.



Korzyści z prenumeraty „Personelu Plus”:

- co miesiąc otrzymasz profesjonalne źródło wiedzy i inspiracji dla HR-owca;
- znajdziesz receptę na konkretne wyzwania, z jakimi aktualnie stykają się praktycy w branży HR;
- dowiesz się, jakie zmiany w prawie pracy wchodzą w życie i jak zastosować je w praktyce, a także poznasz odpowiedzi na pojawiające się na co dzień pytania dotyczące stosowania przepisów prawa pracy.



W najbliższych numerach „Personelu Plus”:

- Candidate/employee experience w praktykach zarządzania
- Od trendów do rozwiązań – jak stać się pracodawcą z wyboru
- Zaufanie w biznesie – jak je budować i o nie dbać
- Wyzwania w zatrudnianiu cudzoziemców (w tym komunikacja międzykulturowa – wyzwania i dobre praktyki)
- Systemy motywacyjne w obszarze sprzedaży
- Zmierzch organizacji hierarchicznych



**Zamów prenumeratę
już teraz na
www.profinfo.pl/ppplus2020**

DIVERSITY HUB

We are the leading think tank in Poland in the field of Diversity and Inclusion, whose aim is to provide expert knowledge, sharing experiences and best practices, as well as supporting business in reaping benefits from diversity. By carrying out various activities in this field, we usher in societal change, in line with the idea of "changing business for the better with diversity, building an open and friendly world for all".

The activity of the Diversity Hub encompasses expert support (D&I strategies, studies, consulting and training) for the largest corporations, backed by in-depth understanding of the corporate market (benchmark, surveys, collaboration with nearly 150 corporations), international experiences (as a leader of the European D&I Network), as well as research and development activities, including custom tools and methodologies, such as the D&I Audit system.

An important element of our activities concerns setting new trends and promoting best solutions in the field of D&I. This includes the most important D&I conferences in Poland, activities carried out by our task groups (including our mental health group), making our voice heard in the media and publishing our articles.

"The book is a collection of articles published by Diversity Hub experts in Personel Plus magazine. It is something to inspire you and show you concrete solutions based on actual experience in the business world. We believe that the selected topics will enable many people to get better acquainted with the issues of diversity management pertaining to age, gender, LGBTI, engaging managers, discrimination, mental health, disability, unconscious bias and employee resource groups".

Anna Zaroda-Dąbrowska and Tomasz Dąbrowski, Diversity Hub



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