A Layered Approach to Practicing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace

Research Summary

January 2023

Photo by Unsplash

OrangeGrove
Consulting

Planting seeds at different depths

As an organizational leader in today's fast-moving work environment, it is hard to know where to start in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion challenges. These challenges are deeply seeded in our organizational cultures and engrained in the behavioral norms of those around us. Addressing these challenges require focus in three practice areas:

- inclusive management,
- enabling equitable practices and procedures, and
- developing and mentoring others.

Leaders can start to build on these practices with a lens of expanding access and increasing diversity within their own sphere of control. Diversity can often feel overwhelming to leaders. Balancing the needs of the diversity of workers with the business goals can present as competing goals that require the sacrifice of one side of the equation. Instead, we offer a model of thinking more deeply about how processes can be adapted to enable the "and" of enabling diverse workers to thrive and making the organization more effective.

The Model (The How)

We argue for a reframing of our approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to focus on process to enable a more equitable end-state, coupling ground-up with top-down change, and prioritizing iteration as core component of the plan. Recent change literature suggests reframing change implementation with an eye to engaging stakeholders in deeper, more interactive ways to enable longer term success and buy-in. When looking at why change fails, Schwarz, Bouckenooghe, and Vakola (2021) propose that change will be most successful when it impacts surface, intermediate, and deep structures. They suggest that surface structures need to be reframed and made to have meaning to enable change. They note that multiple stakeholders need to be engaged in change (change leaders, change recipients, and community members), through a process generating organizational narratives that are retained and rewritten in the process. Finally, change needs to impact the deep structure of the organization, lasting over time, changing conventions, norms, and shared values, and shifting organizational frameworks and paradigms.

In other words, for DEI change initiatives to be successful, change leaders need to formulate their approaches to collectively address change at each level:
1. Surface: adopting diversity management practices and processes,
2. Intermediate: impacting personal narrative and identity development for change stakeholders,
3. Deep: changing organizational culture and paradigms.

Deep Structure: Changing organzational culture and paradigms

Intermediate Structure: Impacting personal narrative and identity development for change stakeholders

Surface Structure: Adopting diversity management practices and processes
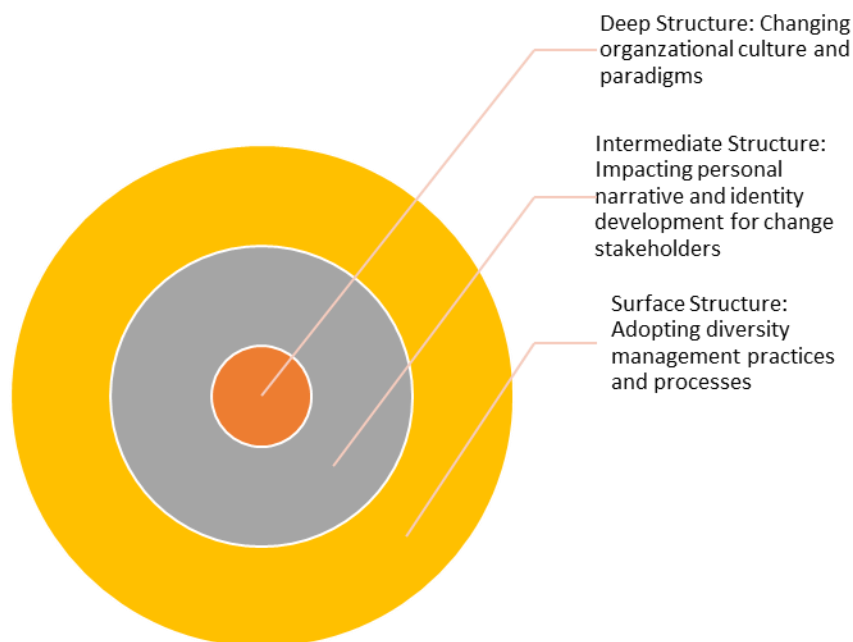
Surface Structure: Adopting diversity management practices and processes (The What)

Diversity Management Best Practices are now widely disseminated. We know what to do to improve diversity and inclusion in our organizations. The challenge is making it happen which in essence is about change. In their article, "What really works?! Evaluating the effectives of practices to increase the managerial diversity of women and minorities," Schoen and Rost (2021) outline diversity management practices that increase the proportion of women in management. The three sets of practices they researched (diversity management practices - such as mentoring programs, recruiting targets, or promotion rules; diversity management training; and family friendly practices – such as flexible work, job sharing, and childcare options) cannot exist in a vacuum. They found that organizations that implemented all three sets of practices in concert were better able to demonstrate the impact of their efforts. In further exploration of diversity training, the article explores possible reasons that diversity programs don't stick; primarily because a gap exists between the formal practice and whether it is followed. In order for the practices to stick, responsibilities need to be assigned clearly and individuals need to buy-in – a change process.

Some specific recent studies focusing on particular diversity management practices aimed at increasing gender diversity offer helpful starting points for professionals looking to increase representation in their recruiting and promotional practices at all levels within organizations. Lucas et al. (2021) looked at the impact of extending an informal shortlist of candidates and found that the extended list consistently had more female candidates than the short list. They note that having a longer short list of candidates is an easy, simple and low cost way to increase gender equity in search processes. In thinking about

representation at the highest levels of an organization, Tuggle et al (2021) noted the increased participation of underrepresented directors in board meetings when surrounded by other underrepresented directors, particularly those with perceived status or experience. Madera et al (2019) studied the impact of representation in top management on women's attraction to an organization, as well as their perception of fairness within the organization. They found that moderate levels of women in top management (less than 25%) was not enough to attract women to the organization. Greater percentages, closer to 50% as represented in the population, not only help to attract women to the organization but also resulted in a great perception of fairness for women in that organization.

Tanja, Seo-Young, and Bosch (2020) looked at the inclusion of diversity in organizational mission statements and noted that the benefits in both potentially attracting applicants that will help to realize this mission, and the directionally reinforcing inclusive organizational practices, such as learning from diversity through diverse mentoring relationships, diverse work teams, and diverse network groups, as well as going further to foster a learning culture (which will be explored in the last section of this article). Moon and Christensen (2020) build on this concept in studying what they describe as the "moderating role of diversity climate". Some examples noted how the benefits of diverse group membership can be realized by organizations, such as the tendency of demographically dissimilar employees to increase familiarity over time, naturally reducing initial biases that impede collaboration. Also, recruiting, training, and mentoring programs go much further in creating change when taken up by leadership committed to workforce diversity and creating a positive work environment. Finally, managers invested in improving work-life balance for their employees may institute family-friendly programs with an understanding of the potential benefits to performance for those employees and the value of gender diversity for the organization as a whole.

Taken together, there are many surface structure interventions that can signal a focus on diversity and inclusion, including measures like compliance based unconscious bias training, hiring from non-traditional sources, forming affinity groups, or drafting diversity statements. These measures are critical but are a starting point. Unless these efforts are taken together, led by responsible parties, and implemented beyond the short term, they may remain surface level fixes or even detract from potential longer term, deeper organizational change.

Intermediate Structure: Personal Narratives and Identity Development of Change Stakeholders (The Who)

While any number of surface structure interventions might signal a true desire for organizational change in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion, these interventions move into the intermediate level when they are taken up by others in a manner that results in behavior change. For example, unconscious bias training will not produce real change if it is a check-the-box measure, but it could impact change stakeholders if the training is ongoing, behaviorally based, and focused on changing habits. One potential

approach uses nudging. In fact, O'Meara, Culpepper, and Templeton (2022) reviewed literature on applying this behavioral design technique to faculty hiring practices. They note that a nudge is a subtle action designed to mitigate bias through timely delivery within a process, such as a reminder prompting a pause or reflection moment and can be useful in hiring practices, training action planning, and a myriad of other potential activities.

The amount of effort required to overcome bias may be underestimated or ignored altogether by organizations taking surface level approaches rather than working towards intermediate structural change. In a 2021 study, Alinor and Tinkler, studied whether professional attire might influence the perception of black men as threatening. Using the Implicit Assumption Test, they found that dress had little impact on the overall tendency of participants to see black men as more threatening than white men, demonstrating that mitigating bias requires more than surface level fixes.

Attention to gender diversity and employee expectations can be particularly important for organizations looking to move more women into leadership roles. In research by Taylor et al (2022) into the emotional labor demands on female employees, they found that feelings of overwhelm increased as women moved up rank and emotional labor demands increased. As women experience more emotional labor demands, it can impact their ability to perform their best, and so organizations should focus on supporting women as they advance through mentoring and networking.

Diversity management strategies are more impactful when layered with other strategies and when taken up by multiple, heterogeneous, invested stakeholders over time. Scarborough, Lambouths, and Holbrook (2019) found that blacks, Latinos, and women were more supportive of diversity policies than whites and men. White men found diversity efforts more favorable when framed as increasing diversity rather than decreasing discrimination. Fath, Ma, and Rosette, (2022) found that white men were better able to engage in discussions of privilege when they explored ways that they may have been disadvantaged due to aspects of their identity alongside ways they have been advantaged.

Devine and Ash (2022), caution against a "one and done" approach to training, arguing for ongoing training interventions and measurement of impact. The article notes that voluntary training is better received broadly, and furthermore, managers facilitating internal discussions about race and gender equity empowers employees to identify concerns in these areas within their own organization and to design improvements. They suggest that we equip organizational "influencers" (highly respected individuals with social connections) with tools and methods to promote greater equity by influencing others. Orange Grove Consulting's approach to inclusive leadership uses this approach to build leadership skills (Orange Grove Consulting, 2022). Finally, they underscore the importance of including members of historically marginalized groups in planning diversity training, noting that this results in a more effective training that incorporates the experiences of these groups. Tinkler and Alinor (2022) noted in their study of the impact

of sexual harassment training on men's willingness to work with women that rather than focusing only on training that may inadvertently reinforce gendered stereotypes, a better approach goes further creating conditions that are counter to gender stereotypes and reducing the potential opportunities that exist structurally that perpetuate abuses of power.

Gould, Robert et al. (2022) named diversity and inclusion statements, employee resource groups, supplier diversity initiatives, and targeted hiring and recruitment plans as four promising practices for increasing and upholding disability inclusion. Additionally, practices like accommodation processes, flexibility for medical leave, and applying universal design practice (to reduce the need for accommodations within this population) are likely to bring a deeper level of change and diversity inclusion within an organization; the article notes the importance of these types of interventions, which focus on sustainable and meaningful change over perfunctory or 'tokenistic practices'.

Together, these articles suggest engaging all populations in facilitated dialogue and enabling allyship, as well as creating connections across and within affinity groups to further solidify DEI efforts moving them to a deeper level of impact. Taken together, this research shows that significant efforts need to be made to engage diverse populations in conversation and collaboration with each other, as well as to speak to particular populations to engage them in these collective conversations and change practices.

Deep Structure: Changing Organizational Culture and Paradigms (The Why)
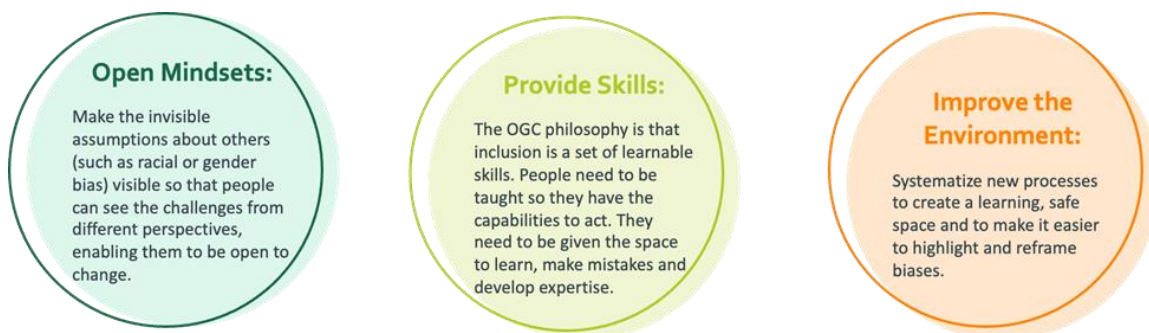
In order to achieve deep structural changes in organizations in relation to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, we need to fundamentally update our models of leadership. Leaders in these organizations need to be vulnerable, willing to disclose of themselves and to get feedback. They need to be open to changing their deeply held assumptions, and ready themselves to learn from others. As new generations of employees enter the workforce, they are keen to determine what level of structural change organizations are taking in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and they are gravitating towards organizations that evidence deeper structural change and diverse, inclusive, and transformational leaders.

Triana et al. (2021) pull from sixty years of discrimination and diversity research to highlight the kinds of leaders that will be able to successfully manage diversity in the next sixty years. They note that these leaders need to be balanced in being task-oriented (the what) and person-oriented (the who), but also goal oriented (the why). Specifically, they write that these leaders need to take up as an ultimate goal, creating a collaborative and inclusive context within the organization. Their research notes that a leader's personality and belief system is the lifeblood of the organizational culture. This of course includes having collaborative and inclusive leaders on an organization's senior leadership team, but also having these leaders at all levels of the organization.

Martins (2020) echoes this sentiment noting that senior leaders in organizations play a key role in sharing organizational vision, strategy, design, and culture; simply put, senior leaders are the meaning makers for the organization and they need to embody it as a

|orangegroveconsulting.com | insights@orangegroveconsulting.com   6

symbol and mouth piece for diversity and inclusion. Watson and Detjen (2021) propose a framework that helps organizations think more deeply about the three levels of change.

Open Mindsets:

Make the invisible assumptions about others (such as racial or gender bias) visible so that people can see the challenges from different perspectives, enabling them to be open to change.

Provide Skills:

The OGC philosophy is that inclusion is a set of learnable skills. People need to be taught so they have the capabilities to act. They need to be given the space to learn, make mistakes and develop expertise.

Improve the Environment:

Systematize new processes to create a learning, safe space and to make it easier to highlight and reframe biases.

Ng and Sears (2020) note in a similar manner that the CEO provides the cues for the rest of the organization as to whether diversity practices will be supported, implemented, and resourced within the organization. With all the many competing demands for time and resources within an organization, the CEO sets the organizational priorities, and then human resources and others within the organization translate these priorities into the more tangible (surface structure) actions and relational (intermediate structure) programs.

Gagnon, Augustin, and Cukier (2021) broaden our perspective even further. Their article reflects on how individual actors' discourse is framed within a larger organizational discourse that may need to be deconstructed. Similarly, deconstructing the structural and historical dimensions of diversity within the organization is paramount to understanding and adopting agency as a change maker. They discuss the tensions that exist between individual actors wanting to make system change and the broader paradigms at play that need to be explored for change to enabled through action.

Closing and Call to Action (The Where and When)

Melaku and Winkler (2022) recently wrote a Harvard Business Review article championing structural approaches to DEI. In particular, they note the importance of providing access to career opportunities (the what), promoting a culture of allyship (the who), a public commitment to DEI (the why) and well as committing to measuring the impact of these efforts (the how). As an internal organizational development consultant with over 15 years of experience with change in organizations, I fully agree that structural change happens at the intersection of strategic and relational efforts that engage others in a collective purpose, which is tracked and measured. Organizational development consultants work at all these levels, coaching leaders around their purpose and presence, facilitating conversations across constituents, and developing long term measurable strategic plans and practices. Are you working at all these levels in your organization? Ask yourself the following:

- What – which of these practices having taken root in my organization? How impactful are they?

- Rethinking promotion, hiring and reward processes	- Recruiting targets
	- Diversity training
- Mentoring programs	- Flexible work

- Job sharing	- Accommodation processes
- Childcare supports	- Support for medical leave
- Inclusion statements	- Universal design in practice
- Employee resource groups	- Bias mitigation in selection
- Supplier diversity initiatives	- Other DEI practice/program
- Targeted recruitment plans	

- Who – who is benefiting from these practices? Who is engaging in these programs?
- Why – is DEI apparent in the values, vision and actions of leadership and organizational culture?
- When – are DEI initiatives focused on short term or long term change?
- How – are you measuring the impact of your efforts across demographic groups?

By asking yourself the above what, who, why, when, and how questions, you can assess the extent to which your practices are engaging change at the surface, intermediate and structural levels.

References

Alinor, M., & Tinkler, J. (2021). Take Off Your Hoodie: Assessing How Professional Attire Influences the Perception of Black Men as Threatening. Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 18(1), 97-117.

Devine, P. G., & Ash, T. L. (2022). Diversity Training Goals, Limitations, and Promise: A Review of the Multidisciplinary Literature. Annual review of psychology, 73, 403–429. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-060221-122215

Gould, Robert et al. (2022). Disability, Diversity, and Corporate Social Responsibility: Learning from Recognized Leaders in Inclusion. 1 Jan. 2020 : 29 – 42.Gray, S., Bunderson, J., and Van der Vegt, G, Rink, F. and Gedik, Y.

Fath, S., Ma, A, and Rosette, A. (2022). Self-views of disadvantage and success impact perceptions of privilege among White men, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Volume 169, 2022, 104114, ISSN 0749-5978, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2021.104114.

Gagnon, Suzanne, Tomke Augustin, and Wendy Cukier. (2021). Interplay for Change in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Studies: Human Relations

Lucas, B. J., Berry, Z., Giurge, L. M., & Chugh, D. (2021). A longer shortlist increases the consideration of female candidates in male-dominant domains. Nature Human Behaviour, 5(6), 736-742.

Madera, J. M., Ng, L., Sundermann, J. M., & Hebl, M. (2019). Top management gender diversity and organizational attraction: When and why it matters. Archives of Scientific Psychology, 7(1), 90.

Martins, L. L. (2020). Strategic diversity leadership: the role of senior leaders in delivering the diversity dividend. Journal of Management, 46(7), 1191-1204.
Melaku, T. and Winkler, C. (2022). Are Your Organization's DEI Efforts Superficial or Structural? Harvard Business Review.

Moon, K. K., & Christensen, R. K. (2020). Realizing the performance benefits of workforce diversity in the US federal government: The moderating role of diversity climate. Public Personnel Management, 49(1), 141-165.

Ng, E. S., & Sears, G. J. (2020). Walking the talk on diversity: CEO beliefs, moral values, and the implementation of workplace diversity practices. Journal of Business Ethics, 164(3), 437-450.

O'Meara, K., Culpepper, D., & Templeton, L. L. (2020). Nudging toward diversity: Applying behavioral design to faculty hiring. Review of Educational Research, 90(3), 311-348.

Scarborough, W., Lambouths, D. and Holbrook, A. (2019). Support of workplace diversity policies: The role of race, gender, and beliefs about inequality, Social Science Research, Volume 79, 2019, Pages 194-210.

Schoen, C., & Rost, K. (2021). What really works?! Evaluating the effectiveness of practices to increase the managerial diversity of women and minorities. European Management Journal, 39(1), 95-108.

Schwarz, G. M., Bouckenooghe, D., & Vakola, M. (2021). Organizational change failure: framing the process of failing. human relations, 74(2), 159-179.

Taylor, C.L., Ivcevic, Z., Moeller, J. et al. Gender and Emotions at Work: Organizational Rank Has Greater Emotional Benefits for Men than Women (2022). Sex Roles 86, 127–142.

Tanja, R., Seo-Young, B., & Bosch, L. (2020). Diversity management efforts as an ethical responsibility: How employees' perceptions of an organizational integration and learning approach to diversity affect employee behavior. Journal of Business Ethics, 161(3), 531-550.

Tinkler, J. E., Clay-Warner, J., & Alinor, M. (2022). Sexual harassment training and men's motivation to work with women. Social Science Research, 102740.

Triana, M. D. C., Gu, P., Chapa, O., Richard, O., & Colella, A. (2021). Sixty years of discrimination and diversity research in human resource management: A review with suggestions for future research directions. Human Resource Management, 60(1), 145-204.

Tuggle, C. S., Sirmon, D. G., Borgholthaus, C. J., Bierman, L., & Bass, A. E. (2021). From Seats at the Table to Voices in the Discussion: Antecedents of Underrepresented Director Participation in Board Meetings. Journal of Management Studies.

Sarah Staley

sarah_staley@williamjames.edu

Jodi Detjen
Managing Partner

Jodi@orangegroveconsulting.com

Orange Grove Consulting specializes in research-based leadership development and bias-removal. We help organizations improve recruitment, retention and promotion of diverse talent across an organization. We can uncover barriers to diversity in current talent pipeline with a focus on removing them so all people can thrive. Our end goal is to create more innovative and productive workplaces. Learn more at www.OrangeGroveConsulting.com