

CAREER COLUMN

Diversity Without Inclusion is Exclusion



Christine W. Li

What does “diversity without inclusion is exclusion” mean? How can exclusion be a part of the equation when such diversity exists in the workplace, social circles, and community?

Inclusion and diversity are core fundamental values for many cultures, companies and families. Let’s examine.

The definition of diversity has evolved to encompass more than the number of nonwhite male employees in a company; rather, it now includes many categories such as gender, racial, ethnic, talent, background, age, global mindsets, etc. One principle of diversity is the belief that no one should be discriminated against due to their religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, expression, or age. Many workplaces embrace diversity and diversify their workplace to create a comfortable and productive environment. Diverse mindsets and perspectives allow companies to improve decision making, customer orientation, cultural fluency, competitive advantage, talent retention, and more.

Diversity has also shown to benefit companies economically. A recent study published by McKinsey & Company demonstrates that companies in the top quartile of diversity displayed greater financial return than those in the bottom quartile of diversity. A diverse workforce has also shown to capture a greater range of the consumer market due to the variety of insights available from backgrounds and experiences of the workforce.

“Diversity without inclusion is exclusion” may initially appear to be nothing more than just a hot catchphrase. However, without inclusion, companies may fail to leverage their diverse talent pool, incorporate various perspectives, and involve different approaches, which may result in failure to maximize their success. Inclusion involves bringing diverse groups together and using these diverse resources in a way that benefits the company. Merely hiring a diverse workforce does not automatically guarantee profits. However, if a company commits to encouraging and stimulating diverse perspectives to add value to their company, profits will follow.

The richness of backgrounds, ideas, and experiences can be harnessed through various ways to create business value:

Inclusive Leadership

Setting good examples begins with strong leadership that is inclusive and encourages different opinions. Inclusive leadership sets an example for team members and can be shown by:

- Encouraging team members to speak up and be heard.
- Giving constructive feedback that can be utilized to stimulate improvement.
- Empowering all team members to contribute and make decisions.
- Taking advice and implementing feedback.
- Sharing credit for team success and recognizing all those that contributed.
- Maintaining your own authenticity while continuing to be receptive to others.

Support and Network

Individuals who feel like the minority, or marginalized, due to their identity should seek support from a peer. Solid support systems or networks within companies can be beneficial for bringing like-minded individuals together and increasing feelings of inclusion. For example, colleagues from varying sexual identities, age groups, ethnicities and economic backgrounds may at first be cautious to provide input during meetings. However, establishing networking groups or receiving support from senior-level sponsors may make individuals more likely to speak up and contribute. This in turn can provide invigorating company engagement and personal career advancement. A helpful way to set up networking within a company is to create formal mentoring programs within organizations. This is one of a multitude of ways to create a supportive environment!

Start TODAY

Avoid the classic excuse, “It’s too late to start.” Inclusion starts with an “I”! By starting today and leveraging the voice and power of leaders who believe in your cause, you can pave the way for diversity in your workplace. Diversity may not be at the forefront of every company’s hiring mantra, but will surely grow more popular over time as our globalized world becomes more connected.

Additional Resources

[Special Populations in Clinical Pharmacology Studies](#)

[More Than Socially Fair or Economically Just – It’s Better Science](#)

[Increasing Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Clinical Trials: It’s Time to Move from Rhetoric to Action](#)

These action items can be a good jump start for integrating diversity in your organization. After establishing these simple initiatives to integrate diversity, you can progress towards more innovative strategies and programs. When I first started my fellowship with Pfizer Consumer Healthcare, the company held several multicultural professional organizational meetings at the beginning of my tenure to involve and educate co-workers on diversity. We were all encouraged to join organizations with which we did not culturally identify along with those with which we did, and I have thoroughly enjoyed networking and meeting with both! Since attending those meetings, my eyes have been opened to how different cultural consumer groups would approach buying an over-the-counter product, which, in turn, has helped me develop and approach a project with a different viewpoint from that point forward.

Noted diversity advocate Verna Myers says: “Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.”

References available upon request.



About the Author: Christine W. Li earned her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) College of Pharmacy in Memphis, TN. She is currently completing a post-doctoral fellowship in Global Clinical Research & Development at Pfizer Consumer Healthcare in conjunction with the Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship Program.

[BACK TO ISSUE](#)