DEIB in the Face of Change

Inclusion Maine Conference

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Instructional Design, consulting, training and coaching

CultureCoach.biz

Conference Presentation

Shifts in American Business DEI in 2025

Quiet Persistence

- 65% of U.S. companies maintain or increase DEI budgets while adapting messaging and implementation approaches, 22% plan to increase funding.
- 5% say they've eliminated their DEI programs
- 8% are reducing their budget (Resume.org, 2025)

Leadership Evolution: Organizations increasingly prioritize durable leadership skills—empathy, resilience, emotional intelligence—recognizing these as essential for effectively leading diverse teams.

Companies Are Adapting: Renaming programs, integrating topics in new ways, focusing on teamwork, soft skills

Internal Rebranding: A shift away from DEI language to inclusion, employee engagement, belonging, employee experience.

Microlearning Training: A Tool Against DEI Pushback

Bite-sized Learning: Short, focused modules build awareness and skills incrementally, reducing resistance and fatigue among employees. Focus on topics such as: Resiliency, Difficult Conversations, Conflict Resolution, Empathy, Building Belonging, Innovation, Cross Cultural Understanding

Personalized Approach: On-demand training fits into busy schedules and allows learners to progress at their own pace, reinforcing inclusive behaviors continuously.

Misinformation Defense: Combats misconceptions and DEI fatigue by delivering clear, actionable content without overwhelming staff or leadership. It can be deployed easily to address concerns that come up.

Leadership Development: Builds durable skills like empathy and social influence, essential for creating and maintaining resilient inclusive cultures.

For examples of micro-learning visit: CultureCoach.biz/Microlearning

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Conclusion: Inclusion Is a Strategic Imperative, Not a Trend

Business Driver: Focus on helping leadership, managers and employees to see the value that different ideas and approaches bring.

Small Actions Matter: Intentional, consistent steps create meaningful change without requiring large budgets or extensive resources.

Sustainable Approach: Embrace microlearning and embed inclusion into everyday business practices to future-proof your organization.

Maine Leadership: Together, Maine's organizations can lead by example—building workplaces where everyone belongs and thrives.

Getting Started with DEIB Questions

- Why are you starting a diversity program? What do you want to achieve?
- What is the time commitment your organization is willing to let employees make?
- How involved does your senior leadership team want to be in the DEI work?
- What is the organization's tolerance for risk and culture change?
- Do you have the budget or bandwidth to implement organization wide initiatives or are you focusing on projects such a diversity training or library?

Two Stages of DEIB Program Development

Stage One: Getting Started

- Explore ways to introduce diversity topics to the organization
- Gain buy-in and support from managers and employees
- Provide resources that can be easily understood, used, and shared
- Focus on short term work
- Engage senior leadership team without expecting them to be active regularly
- Create a budget

Stage Two: Organizational Culture Change

- Support employees in understanding how DEIB helps to achieve organizational goals
- Focus is on long-term work for culture change
- Engage the senior leadership team regularly
- Expand training program to include topics such as resiliency and difficult conversations
- Incorporate DEIB into ongoing training programs by using examples
- Align DEIB work with strategic goals and organizational values
- Start a supplier diversity program

Three Key Areas of Impact

1. Workforce

Demographics of employees, their backgrounds, cultures, desires and expectations

2. Workplace

Policies, procedures, organizational culture

3. Marketplace

Markets you are serving, demographics of your customers, where they are located, localization of products and services

Take Action Consistently

- Choose actions/programs/trainings that are appropriate for your organization & where you are at today - move forward at a pace you can sustain
- Be consistent – smaller steps are better than bigger ones sporadically
- Plan for what you can support with time, money and people - think two years out
- How can what you do this year to support next year?

Understand Why Senior Leaders Buy-In

Personal Reasons	**Has personal experiences that makes diversity important to them**
Idealistic Reasons	Believes in the ideals of DEIB and generally making the world a better place and feels that this is important to do in the workplace
Business Reasons	For people who do not have a personal or idealistic reason to support DEIB programs they need a business reason. They need to see how DEIB aligns with and support strategic organizational goals and how DEIB work will help to improve a business metric.

Find Internal Partners to Gain Support

Human Resources

- Recruiting: Understanding bias in talent acquisition, training for hiring managers
- Promotion and Retention: tracking employee demographics, proactively making opportunities available to all employees, examining pay structures

Sourcing

- Supplier diversity, tracking metrics of spending, mentoring smaller businesses

Sales and Customer Service

- Services in different languages, training on different needs of customers, understanding regional and cultural differences

R&D and Engineering

- Paying attention to how bias impacts product design and services

DEI Program Elements

Getting Started

- Start diversity councils
- Develop an action plan that has practical steps to implement to build momentum
- Provide introductory training for leaders, managers, employees
- Engage senior leaders to show how you are helping them achieve strategic goals
- Build a diversity library with resources to support employees and managers
- Celebrate diversity months, holidays
- Encourage small behavioral changes such as pronouncing names correctly or use "Yes, and... " instead of "Yes, but..."

Organizational Culture Change

- Provide ongoing and consistent materials that educate and engage employees
- Develop a diversity strategy
- Design a diversity recruiting strategy: review and adjust as needed talent acquisition policies and provide hiring manager training
- Partner with customer service, IT and sourcing to build foundational support
- Develop Employee Resource Groups (ERG/BRG)/Affinity Groups that help to support specific goals
- Provide support for managers in how to manage and lead diverse teams
- Train on more in-depth DEIB topics

Diversity Programs on No Budget

- Promote diversity months and key diversity holidays
- Create a diversity council and write definitions for DEIB terms
- Host lunch and learn conversations
- Explore with Talent Acquisition new places to advertise positions
- Build a DEIB Library and host on Sharepoint/OneDrive
- Create a respectful workplace guidelines
- Provide information on topics such as resiliency, conflict resolution, difficult conversations
- Use the strategy worksheet to create a basic DEIB strategy

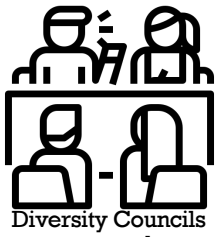
Diversity Programs on Limited Budget

- Provide training: Resiliency, working on diverse teams, communication across differences
- Explore micro-learning to help connect better with employees
- Expand the DEIB Library: Resources for employees, managers, team discussion guides and tools
- Job ads in new places, create relationships with organization to generate a pipeline of talent
- Attend DEIB conferences
- Leverage outside resources to deepen internal skills and to accelerate progress

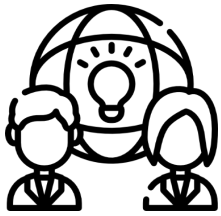
Creating a DEI Council

Diversity Council: a group of people who meet monthly/regularly to provide support and guidance for the DEIB program

Purpose



Diversity Councils serve as the leadership council for DEIB efforts



Bring together different perspectives to the work

Benefits

- They are the eyes and ears to learn what is going on, catching issues
- They help to build momentum for programs, initiatives, training
- They provide a sounding board for DEIB professionals
- They serve as a diversity champion across the organization on diversity topics

- Connecting with community organizations
- Supporting diversity recruiting
- Networking + best practice sharing with other organizations
- Supporting mentoring programs
- Reviewing policies for bias
- Reviewing data for trends
- Recognizing diversity months, diversity days, offering DEI programs

DEI Council Framework

1. Define Mission and Vision
2. Discuss and establish group norms, meeting schedule
3. Define diversity, equity and inclusion
4. Explore past programs, initiatives
5. Capture activities currently in progress
6. Align DEIB strategy with strategic business goals
7. Create a communications strategy

Communication Tips

- Review communications and website for images used to ensure broad and diverse representation, even if you are not calling out DEIB
- Communicate consistently to ensure people hear key messages numerous times
- Engage senior leaders to ensure that employees see support from different leaders
- Share how DEIB is supporting organizational goals

Organizational Planning Worksheet

What is the current focus of your diversity/inclusion/belonging work?	
1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

What strategic goals does your organization have that DEIB can help with?	
1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

Who should play a role in this work and what is their recommended role?	
Name	Role
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

What are your actions steps?
1.
2.
3.

A diverse mix of voices leads to better discussions, decisions and outcomes for everyone. -Sundar Pichai, Google CEO