COLLOQUIUM

includes debate by practitioners and academicians on a contemporary topic

Inclusive Workplaces: Lessons from Theory and Practice

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Themes

Diversity

Inclusive Workplaces

Leadership

Gender Sensitization

Organizational Culture

Equal Opportunity Policy

Generational Diversity

Persons with Disability (PWD)

Career Development

LGBT Community

Wipro

Vodafone

MakeMyTrip

Schneider Electric

Starwood Hotels & Resorts

InterGlobe Enterprises

INTRODUCTION

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Given that diversity has been the core of the Indian cultural fabric, one often finds a naturally created diverse workforce in Indian organizations. Therefore, even as several large and small countries in the developed world have been working on creating diverse and inclusive workplaces over the last four decades, India Inc. did not feel the acute need to focus on issues of diversity. However, this also meant that issues around inclusion and exclusion, groupism, and unconscious discrimination—though real in a diverse work group—were ignored. Globalization and glocalization have changed the context for businesses all over the world including India, leading to a shift in discourse among Indian businesses and discussions about diversity. Being able to recognize and promote the uniqueness of different groups of a diverse workforce is not only acknowledged as instrumental in improving performance, but also an imperative that organizations can no longer choose to ignore. While there has been considerable academic debate on the value of diversity, it is accepted that diversity adds both tangible and intangible value, even if it requires working through the issues and costs that sometimes accompany it. For India Inc., the imperatives for diversity have been akin to those in other countries and include a need to attract talent to meet the demands of an expanding knowledge industry sector, creating competent teams for the Indian operations of multinational companies (MNCs), and the ambition of Indian organizations to go global.

Several studies have looked at the relationship between the company's workforce demographics and its bottom line.[1,2] In one study of Fortune 500 companies, it was found that the top 25 per cent of the firms in terms of the presence of women in senior management, actually yielded returns to their stockholders that were 30 per cent higher than those of their peers.[3] Gender diversity was associated with increased sales revenue and customers, and greater relative profit. In a report by Deloitte, it is argued that diversity and inclusion lead to improved business outcomes, and diversity means more than 'just having a sprinkle of women and a dab of color'.[4] Using data from the National Organizations Survey in the United States, Herring[5] found racial diversity to be associated with increased sales revenue, more number of customers, greater market share, and greater relative profits. Thus, diversity can provide many potential advantages to organizations. On one level, it helps organizations to reach out to diverse customer groups and markets, and on another level, by allowing for a variety of perspectives, it promotes innovativeness and superior work outcomes and performance.

Not surprisingly, diversity management is an important agenda in most organizations today and many even have chief diversity officers, much like chief operating officers or chief financial officers. What we see today is the discourse increasingly shifting to one of inclusion, over and beyond that of diversity. Increasingly, research is showing that while explicit goals for diversity may be set, implicit biases often limit the ability to achieve those goals.[6]

Also, merely pushing for diversity through, most popularly, gender, or age, or geographies is not adequate to reap the benefits of having a diverse work force. The clincher is, given a diverse workforce, to promote quality, respect, and trust across multiple teams and geographies composed of heterogeneous people in terms of age, gender, sexual preferences, physical abilities, and national cultures. Diversity management strategies or approaches have been criticized for not addressing the exclusion of people from different identity groups and their limited access and participation in the organization.[7]

This colloquium has two objectives. One is to briefly review the literature and debates on diversity and inclusion in the academic literature. We hope to briefly look at what exactly do diversity and inclusion mean? Are they simply new buzzwords in the business world representing old wine in a new bottle, or do they allude to different things? What influences diversity and inclusion, and what do we know about research regarding them? What are the fault lines in managing issues around them? What role does leadership and organizational climate play in shaping inclusive organizations? The other is to include voices from industry, diversity, and inclusion heads of organizations to share what their own journey has been towards creating diverse and inclusive organizations.

DEFINING DIVERSITY[8]

The term diversity is often used to describe the composition of work groups. At the most basic level, diversity is viewed as demographic differences. Emphasis on diversity focuses on the composition of work groups around factors, which generally distinguishes one individual from the other, mostly in terms of observable demographic characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, or age, or in terms of non-observable attributes such as education or

[1] Hersch, J. (1991). Equal opportunity law and firm profitability. *Journal of Human Resources*, 26(1), 139–153.

[2] Wright, P., Ferris, S. P., Hiller, J. S., & Kroll, M. (1995). Competitiveness through management of diversity: Effects on stock price valuation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(1), 272–287.

[3] Knowledge Centre (2004). The bottom line: Connecting corporate performance and gender diversity. *Catalyst*, New York. Retrieved from http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/bottom-line-connecting-corporate-performance-and-gender-diversity

[4] Deloitte (2011). Only skin deep? Reexamining the business case for diversity. *Human Capital Australia*, September, Australia. Retrieved from https://www.ced.org/pdf/Deloitte_-_Only_Skin_Deep.pdf

[5] Herring, C. (2009). Does diversity pay? Race, gender, and the business case for diversity. *American Sociological Review*, 74(2), 208–224.

[6] Macan, T., & Merritt, S. (2011). Actions speak too: Uncovering possible implicit and explicit discrimination in the employment interview process. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 26(8), 293–337.

[7] Prasad, A. (2001). Understanding workplace empowerment as inclusion. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 37(1), 51–69.

[8] This part of the paper draws from a position paper prepared for an Inclusion Seminar in 2015.
Nair, N., & Vohra, N. (2015). *Diversity and inclusion at the workplace: A review of research and perspectives* (IIMA Working Paper Series No WP2015-03-34).

socio-economic status.[9,10] Diversity has been described[11] as 'the varied perspectives and approaches to work that the members of different identity groups bring'. Hays-Thomas and Bendick[12] define it as 'the mixture of attributes within a workforce that in significant ways affect how people think, feel, and behave at work, and their acceptance, work performance, satisfaction, or progress in the organization'. While demographic diversity may be a visible lead indicator, diversity of thought is seen as the end game.[13]

Just as there are different diversity definitions, there are also a multitude of perspectives that have been found to exist within organizations vis-à-vis diversity. Two complimentary typologies of diversity have been proposed. Dass and Parker[14] propose a continuum of perspectives ranging from diversity as a threat and diversity as a source of problems such as discrimination and fairness to diversity as a means to create opportunities such as access to new markets and diversity as something that has the potential for learning (including costs and benefits). Similarly, examining the effects of diversity on work group processes, Ely and Thomas[15] offered a somewhat similar typology of organizational approaches to diversity, the integration-and-learning perspective, the access-and-legitimacy perspective, and the discrimination-and-fairness perspective. The discrimination-and-fairness perspective involves focus on justice and the fair treatment of all members, as a moral imperative. The access-and-legitimacy perspective is based on the recognition that the organization's markets and constituencies are culturally diverse, and, therefore, matching the organization's own workforce is a way of gaining access and legitimacy to those markets.

The integration-and-learning perspective is premised on the belief that the skills, experiences, and insights of diverse employees are a potentially valuable resource for learning and change, and is valued in the workgroup for the attainment of its goals. It is argued that the dominant perspective among organizational members influences the way diversity is handled within organizations. It is proposed that the integration-and-learning perspective is what provides sustained benefits in the long run.

DEFINING INCLUSION

Changes in the discourse about diversity have seen a shift from debates about affirmative action to focus more extensively on the notion of inclusion. The inclusion literature is still under development and there appears to be limited agreement on the conceptual underpinnings of the construct.[16]

It has been argued that if just 10 per cent more employees feel included, the company will increase work attendance by almost one day per year per employee[17]. A Catalyst report has found that, in India, employee perceptions of inclusion account for 43 per cent of team citizenship behaviour[18]. According to the Deloitte report, when employees think that their organization is committed to and supportive of diversity and they feel included, they report better business performance in terms of their ability to innovate, responsiveness to changing customer needs, and team collaboration.[19] They argue that organizations need to rebalance their focus on inclusion rather than prioritizing only diversity, to fully unleash the potential of diversity. In other words, an additional effort is needed to focus on inclusion, over and beyond diversity.

In one of the early descriptions of inclusion, Miller[20] calls it the extent to which individuals are 'allowed to participate and are enabled to contribute fully'.

9   Kreitz, P. A. (2008). Best practices for managing organizational diversity. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *34*(2), 101–120.

10   Roberson, Q. M. (2006). Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion in organizations. *Group and Organization Management*, *31*, 212–236.

11   Thomas, D. A., & Ely, R. J. (1996). Making differences matter: A new paradigm for managing diversity. *Harvard Business Review*, September–October, 79–90.

12   Hays-Thomas, R., & Bendick, M. (2013). Professionalizing diversity and inclusion practice: Should voluntary standards be the chicken or the egg? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *6*(3), 193–205.

13   Op. cit., Deloitte (2011).

14   Dass, P., & Parker, B. (1999). Strategies for managing human resource diversity: From resistance to learning. *Academy of Management Executive*, *13*(2), 68–80.

15   Ely, R. J., &Thomas, D. A. (2001). Cultural diversity at work: The effects of diversity perspectives on work group processes and outcomes. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *46*(2), 229–273.

16   Shore, L. M., Randel, A. E., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., Ehrhart, K. H., & Singh, G. (2011). Inclusion and diversity in work groups: A review and model for future research. *Journal of Management*, *37*(4), 1262–1289.

17   Deloitte (2012). *Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup? A new recipe to improve business performance.* Deloitte Research Report, Australia.

18   Prime, J., & Salib, E. R. (2014). Inclusive leadership: The view from six countries. *Catalyst*, May 7, New York.

19   Op. cit., Deloitte (2012).

20   Miller, F. A. (1998). Strategic culture change: The door to acheiving high performance and inclusion. *Public Personnel Management*, *27*(2), 151–160.

According to another definition[21], inclusion is 'the degree to which an employee is accepted and treated as an insider by others in a work system'. Considering it along a continuum, Mor Barak[22] notes that 'employee perception of inclusion–exclusion is conceptualized as a continuum of the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes'. According to the Mor Barak model, diversity and organizational culture contribute to perceptions of inclusion–exclusion, which in turn are related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, individual well-being, and task effectiveness. Emphasizing on the fairness perspective and the active seeking out of employees in the process of inclusion, Holvino, Ferdman, and Merrill-Sands[23] define inclusion as 'equality, justice, and full participation at both the group and individual levels, so that members of different groups not only have equal access to opportunities, decision-making, and positions of power, but they are actively sought out because of their differences'. Towards achieving this, Roberson[24] argues that inclusion refers to 'the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in organizations'. Elsewhere it is defined as 'the extent to which employees believe their organizations engage in efforts to involve all employees in the mission and operation of the organization with respect to their individual talents'.[25]

The pairing of diversity and inclusion at times leads to the misunderstanding that these are related and similar. It is argued that while diversity can be achieved by hiring different people in the organization, inclusion is a process that involves change in mindset of all the people in an organization. Achieving diversity is a technical and complicated problem, but experiencing inclusion is an adaptive and complex problem. Diversity is an outcome and inclusion is a process. At the end of the day, a diverse organization in all countries and contexts will have more or less the same look and feel. An inclusive organization will only be reached through an emergent contextual involvement of all employees and thus each inclusive organization will look and feel very different.

CREATING INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

In inclusive organizations, non-traditional employees are not expected to merely assimilate to dominant norms.[26] The concept of a climate of inclusion[27] has been discussed as the one where identity group status is unrelated to access to key resources, creating opportunities for heterogeneous individuals to have ties that are cross-cutting.

One of the ways that organizations and leaders contribute to being less inclusive is by pretending that organizations are gender, racially, or culturally neutral.[28] Thus, it makes sense that organizations create employee resource groups[29] sometimes known as affinity groups or business resource groups, which are essentially established networks to promote a welcoming environment for minority or under-represented groups. Attempts to create inclusive workplaces must consider individual differences, needs, and perceptions as well as focus on creating structures, systems, and processes that make people feel valued and treated equitably.[30] Some research on antecedents of inclusion is described below to enhance our understanding of what it takes to create inclusive workplaces.

DRIVERS OF INCLUSION

Perceptions of employee inclusion have been linked to *organizational climate*, characterized by fairness and

[21] Pelled, L. H., Ledford, G. E., & Mohrman, S. A. (1999). Demographic dissimilarity and workplace inclusion *Journal of Management Studies*, *36*(7), 1013–1031.

[22] Mor Barak, M. E. (2000). Beyond affirmative action: Toward a model of diversity and organizational inclusion. *Administration in Social Work*, *23*(3/4), 47–68.

[23] Holvino, E., Ferdman, B. M., & Merrill-Sands, D. (2004). Creating and sustaining diversity and inclusion in organizations: Strategies and approaches. In *The Psychology and Management of Workplace Diversity* (pp. 245–276). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

[24] Op. cit., Roberson (2006).

[25] Avery, D. R., McKay, P. K., Wilson, D. C., & Volpone, S. (2008). *Attenuating the effect of seniority on intent to remain: The role of perceived inclusivess*. Paper presented at the Meeting of the Academy of Management , Anaheim, CA.

[26] Davidson, M. N., & Ferdman, B. M. (2001). A matter of difference—Diversity and inclusion: What difference does it make? *Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, *39*(2), 36–38.

[27] Nishi, L. H. (2013). The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*(6), 1754–1774.

[28] Ayman, R., & Korabik, K. (2010). Leadership: Why gender and culture matter. *American Psychologist*, *65*(3), 157–170.

[29] Derven, M. (2014). Diversity and inclusion by design: Best practices from six global companies. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, *46*(2), 84–91.

[30] Ferdman, B. M., & Davidson, M. N. (2002). A matter of difference—Inclusion: What can I and my organization do about it?. *The Industrial-Organizational Pyschologist*, *39*(4), 80–85.

a diversity climate.[31,32,33] Research also suggests that in such a climate, employees are willing to speak up and participate more fully,[34] and discrimination and harassment tend to be lower.[35] Some studies have shown perceptions of inclusion as related with *procedural fairness*[36] and appreciation of members' contributions by the leader.[37] A climate characterized by *open communication and transparent recruitment, promotion and development* has also been linked to employee inclusion.[38] A Deloitte report has found the drivers of inclusion to be *merit-based practices and policies, senior leader behaviours, managers' behaviours, and work-life balance.*[39]

At the interpersonal level, inclusion calls for *respect and acceptance, empathy, listening skills, dignity, trust, decision-making authority, and access to information.*[40,41] Inclusion suffers when employees view others in terms of oversimplified stereotypes, thus creating and sustaining differences, rather than working to integrate and overcome differences. *Blindness to other's social identities* can also be damaging in a diverse work context.[42]

Leadership Style as a Driver of Inclusion

Inclusion can be created by leaders demonstrating through their actions, belief in, and commitment to diversity, creating opportunities for dialogue about differences, and when required, even altering rules for acceptable behaviours.[43,44] Empirical research has shown that when leaders solicit and appreciate employee input, it helps create work climates that are high in psychological safety.[45] The work of Shore et al.[46] indicates that both inclusive leadership and inclusive practices can be viewed as antecedents of inclusion. An inclusive leader has been characterized as one who visibly champions diversity and initiatives linked to it, seeks out and values employees' contributions, demonstrates a collaborative leadership style, has the ability to manage conflict, embodies merit-based decision-making, possesses cultural competency, and creates a sense of collective identity.[47] Interestingly, the cultural context and role of leadership interact significantly. For example, in China, relatively stronger links existed between altruistic leadership, inclusion, innovation, and citizenship.[48]

Skills Needed for Creating Inclusive Organizations

While diversity and inclusion are recognized as important for effective organizations, the specific research on what skills or competencies are required to engender inclusion is still in its nascent stage. In their research, Hays-Thomas, Bowen, and Bourdreaux[49] asked their respondents to tell them about a situation in which they had observed someone dealing either very effectively or very ineffectively with a work situation that involved challenges related to diversity among employees. Required values, knowledge, and skills for line/staff, middle managers, and top leadership were identified based on the analysis of the critical incidents and are shown in Table 1.

[31] Daya, P. (2014). Diversity and inclusion in an emerging market context. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, *33*(3), 293–308.

[32] Op.cit., Deloitte (2012).

[33] Op.cit., Shore et al. (2011).

[34] Detert, J. R., & Burris, E. R. (2007). Leadership behavior and employee voice: Is the door really open? *Academy of Management Journal*, *50*(4), 869–884.

[35] Chorbot-Mason, D., Ruderman, N. M., & Nishii, H. L. (2013). Leadership in a diverse workplace. In M. Q. Roberson (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of diversity and work* (pp. 315–340). New York: Oxford University Press.

[36] Kreiner, G. E., & Ashforth, B. E. (2004). Evidence toward an expanded model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *25*(1), 1–27.

[37] Nembhard, I. M., & Edmonson, A. C. (2006). Making it safe: The effects of leader inclusiveness and professional status on psychological safety and improvement efforts in health care teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *27*(7), 941–966.

[38] Daya, P. (2014). Diversity and inclusion in an emerging market context. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, 33*(3), 293–308.

[39] Op. cit., Deloitte (2012).

[40] Op. cit., Daya (2014).

[41] Hays-Thomas, R., Bowen, A., & Bourdreaux, M. (2012). Skills for diversity and inclusion in organizations: A review and preliminary investigation. *The Pyschologist-Manager Journal*, *15*(2), 128–141.

[42] Chorbot-Mason, D., Ruderman, N. M., & Nishii, H. L. (2013). Leadership in a diverse workplace. In M. Q. Roberson (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of diversity and work* (pp. 315–340). New York: Oxford University Press.

[43] Op.cit., Chorbot-Mason et al. (2013).

[44] Wasserman, I. C., Gallegos, P. V., & Ferdman, B. M. (2008). Dancing with resistance: Leadership challenges in fostering a culture of inclusion. In K. M. Thomas (Ed.), *Diversity resistance in organizations* (pp. 175–200). New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

[45] Nembhard, I. M, & Edmondsoon, A. C. (2006). Making it safe: The effects of leader inclusiveness and professional status on pyschological safety and improvement effforts in health care teams. *Jounal of Organizational Behavior, 27*(7), 941–966.

[46] Op.cit., Shore et al. (2011).

[47] Op.cit., Deloitte (2011).

[48] Op. cit., Prime and Salib (2014).

[49] Hays-Thomas, R., Bowen, A., & Bourdreaux, M. (2012). Skills for diversity and inclusion in organizations: A review and preliminary investigation. *The Pyschologist-Manager Journal*, *15*(2), 128–141.

OUTCOMES OF INCLUSION

Inclusive work climates have been linked to employee outcomes of well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.[50] Some other outcomes of inclusion are posited as high-quality work relations, job satisfaction, intention to stay, job performance, organizational citizenship behaviour, organizational commitment, well-being, creativity, and enhanced career opportunities.[51]

Table 1: Values/Knowledge/Skills Necessary for Creating Inclusion

Values	Knowledge	Skills
Humility	Self-awareness*	Active listening*
Acceptance of differences	Building healthy coalitions	Empathy*
Openness to new ideas	Awareness of relevant laws	Self-monitoring
Flexibility	Macro viewpoint	Appropriate communication
		Tact
		Ability to relate
		Persuasion

Note: *Common across all levels of hierarchy within an organization (Adapted[52])

Inclusive environments have been shown to influence work-related self-esteem and employees' willingness to go beyond their job-related roles to engage in citizenship behaviours.[53] Alternatively, managerial strategies to promote diversity and inclusion may, in fact, promote new types of differences and exclusions, as noted by the qualitative research of Dahl[54], where he points towards the attention to the process of artificially 'made up' categorization for the purposes of managing diversity and inclusion, which creates unintended consequences of exclusion and one which workers may, in fact, resist. Another unintended consequence of diversity management practices that focus on improving the representation of historically disadvantaged groups could be the resentment or backlash from those who do not directly benefit from such practices, augmenting in some cases the negative stereotypes that may already exist.[55] As some caution[56], there is a need to scrutinize the extent to which the rhetoric of diversity and inclusion actually meets the reality and the expression of voice among the minorities in today's organizations. Thus, it is important to ensure that diversity and inclusion efforts are not reduced to tokenism[57], as perceived by the minority group members, and are also seen as fair by others in the organization.

In this colloquium, our attempt is to capture the journey of a few organizations, located in India, that have embraced inclusion in spirit and may have gone beyond simply having numbers that reflect diversity. In having the organizations share their journey—what propelled them, their insights and practices—we hope to present lessons for Indian organizations on what it is to create an inclusive work culture. In the questions that they are asking themselves today, we hope to present dilemmas and challenges that give hints on what needs to be addressed in terms of unconscious biases and larger societal issues beyond organizational structures. The six organizations that we present here are by no means the only exemplars of inclusive organizations. We are aware of and have interacted with several organizations that have embraced inclusion as a high priority and made clear progress in their respective journeys.[58] However, due to space and time considerations, the sample has been chosen to represent multinational and Indian origin organizations, manufacturing and service sector, large- and medium-sized organizations. Moreover, the inclusion of other groups, for example, people with disabilities (PWDs) and

[50] Findler, L., Wind, L. H., & Mor Barak, M. E. (2007). The challenge of workforce management in a global society: Modeling the relationship between diversity, inclusion, organizational culture, and employee well-being, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *Administration in Social Work, 31*(3), 63–94.

[51] Op.cit., Shore et al. (2011).

[52] Ibid.

[53] Cottrill, K., Lopez, P. D., & Hoffman, C. C. (2014). How authentic leadership and inclusion benefit organizations. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, 33*(3), 275–292.

[54] Dahl, B. D. (2014). Making up workers in an inclusive organization. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, 33*(3), 249–260.

[55] Fiol, C. M., Pratt M. G., & O'Connor, E. J. (2009). Managing intractable identity conflicts. *Academy of Management Review, 34*(1), 32–55.

[56] Bell, M. P., Ozbilgin, M. F., Beauregard A. T., & Surgevill, O. (2011). Voice, silence and diversity in 21st century organizations: Strategies for inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trasgender employees. *Human Resource Management, 50*(1), 131–146.

[57] Macan, T., Kandola, B., Meriac, J., & Merritt, S. (2013). Learning from others: Expanding diversity and inclusion across our borders. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 6*(3), 233–236.

[58] For details on report of this research, refer to http://www.bizdivas.in/Inclusion-in-India_Web.pdf. A research report prepared by Neharika Vohra of IIM Ahmedabad and Sarika Bhattacharya and Rashmi Mandloi of BizDivas and Vijji Chari. Of the six organizations, the initial interviews were carried out by the BizDivas research team.

people with different sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender—LGBT community) seems to have a lesser focus in India Inc. when compared to gender diversity. We have included two articles based on research and insights shared by organizations working in these specific areas. The attempt is to begin a dialogue on nurturing inclusion and reaping benefits of diversity for all organizations.

Making Differences Matter: Diversity and Inclusion at Wipro

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Wipro Ltd. is a global information technology, consulting, and outsourcing company with over 1.5 lakh employees serving clients in 175 + cities across six continents. It is globally recognized for its innovative approach towards delivering business value and its commitment to sustainability. Today the company is a trusted partner of choice for global businesses looking to 'differentiate at the front' and 'standardize at the core' through technology interventions.

Wipro recognizes that a talented and diverse workforce is a key competitive advantage, and that a heterogeneous group is better equipped to handle complex and intangible problems. Diversity in the workforce also results in a rich organizational mosaic of ideas and practices which can enhance innovation and customer delight leading to higher revenues. Nurturing diversity and making inclusivity a part of Wipro's culture has thus remained a key focus area for the organization and is a strategic enabler to ensure business and performance.

Wipro's commitment to being an equal opportunity employer has been integral to its code of conduct, policies, and processes. In order to give structure and impetus to the diversity charter and to channelize concentrated effort in building a more inclusive and global workforce, the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) programme was formally launched in 2008. The programme is multi-dimensional and consists of four pillars—gender, persons with disabilities, nationality, and underprivileged/disadvantaged communities. Worldwide, research has indicated that there has been slow progress in these areas as indicated by the low work participation rate for women in the organized sector, under-representation of women in leadership positions, high unemployment rate of persons with disabilities, etc. Over the years, Wipro's diversity agenda has focused on driving initiatives to address these areas and some of these initiatives have gained prominence as industry benchmarks.

The impact of these efforts is reflected in the current profile of Wipro's workforce comprising 32 per cent women, more than 440 disabled employees, about 32 per cent betw   een the age group of 30 and 45 years, and 8 per cent above 45 years.

POLICIES AND PROCESSES

Laying the Foundation for an Inclusive Culture

Being a sensitive and inclusive employer is part of our vision statement. Our recruitment policy clearly states that we are an equal opportunity player and even includes the local diversity agenda for specific geographies in the addendum. For example, in the USA, there has to be a certain amount of hiring from the pool of veterans. When it comes to gender diversity, our key belief is that as we increase the input pool, there would be more women with the ability and aspiration to grow within the organization. So, we have focused on hiring more women at the entry level to better the gender ratio through the entire pipeline.

For D&I initiatives to be successful, leadership support is crucial. Our senior management team has actively taken part in spreading the message. Today the communication around D&I is driven through our internal blog. Several senior leaders including our CEO publish their blogs here to promote the D&I agenda. Many also take on mentoring roles for young women employees in the organization.

Creating a culture that supports diversity requires sustained focus and effort. We have two internal

training modules around gender sensitization. They are available online and it is mandated that everyone completes them by a certain time period after joining and get certified. In our efforts to ensure gender diversity, we are sensitive that men may feel side-lined. So in our gender-related initiatives, we have tried to include their contribution on this journey. Men regularly attend our 'Women of Wipro' Speaker Series where we have a facilitated interaction with senior women employees from our customer organizations. Many of the mentors in our 'WOW Mentorship programme for high potential women employees' are senior male employees of Wipro. Essentially, managers—both men and women—are custodians of our diversity charter.

BEST PRACTICES AT WIPRO

Gender Diversity

What has worked for us at Wipro is to not look at gender diversity from a 'one size fits all' approach. The life stages of women employees can be roughly divided into three phases. The early years of their career, when the key driver is to learn new technologies, and there are less constraints in terms of hours at work or travel. The next is the middle stage where life changes with marriage or childbirth, and the women need flexibility and organizational support to sustain their careers. The third stage is essentially where the personal front seems more settled and the drive seems to be around the impact one is making on the organization. Monetary rewards by themselves become less of a motivator and the woman employee will continue within the organization only if she is able to make a difference to the larger charter of the organization, through hugely visible projects, client interfacing roles or driving important agendas for the organization. We have realized that the unique needs and aspirations of each of the three stages need to be taken into account in planning the strategies for inclusion. Being sensitive to these stages has specifically helped us at Wipro to increase the number of women in the middle management levels.

Women in Leadership

Under gender diversity, we have a mentoring programme that has been in place for the last three years. In this programme, senior leaders—both men and women—act as mentors to women employees.

Close to 100 women employees across the globe are selected and put through the mentoring initiative with the objective of grooming them for leadership roles. While the manager is definitely available to discuss career growth, having a mentor helps create dedicated time where the young mentees can discuss relevant issues on a regular basis. Right at the beginning of the process, each mentee defines a clear objective with her mentor and the progress is tracked through the engagement. Through this programme, we are aiming at increasing the number of women in the middle management levels. When we started this programme in 2012, we had a gender ratio of almost 50 per cent, which dropped to 8 per cent as they reached the senior levels. However, today the share of women employees in the middle management level has moved to 22 per cent from 2014.

Generational Diversity

Another important area for us has been to ensure inclusion around generational diversity—with 54 per cent of our employees being between 22 and 30 years, 40 per cent between 30 and 45 years, and 6 per cent above 45 years. We ran an employee perception survey every two years and in a voluntary section called the 'generational survey', we asked questions specific to what people across different generations valued. The survey challenged a prejudice several of us had about millennials—that they got disinterested quickly and changed jobs at every given opportunity. It showed that their value system was not too different from the older generations, that they also valued learning, growth; they just may seem a little more self-occupied than others. This was a huge eye-opener for us. The survey also showed certain trends—like social networking—that one could definitely subscribe to the millennials. This led us to lift the organization-wide ban on access to the social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Seeing how much learning happened through this medium, we actually developed our own networking tool, called Yammer. We actively encourage the use of Yammer as a forum for people to form groups with different interest and skills for writing code in a specific technology, and resolving specific issues.
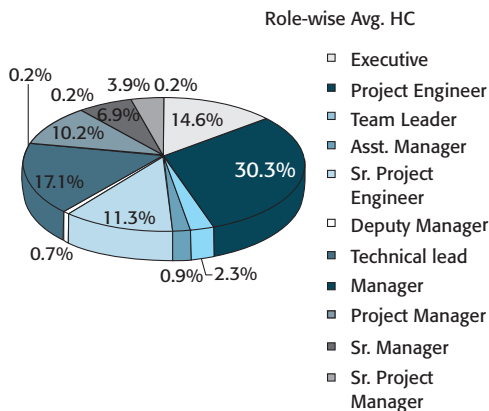
Hiring of People with Disabilities

At Wipro, people with disabilities (PwDs) have been placed in mainstream positions (see Figure 1). Wipro selects all its employees based only on merit and it

believes that persons with disability could aspire for any of these positions. In the last four years, the number of employees who have disclosed their disabilities has reached over 440.

To support the differently abled people, we have looked at different aspects of infrastructure, training, and sensitization.

Wipro is a member of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), and International Labour Organization (ILO). With CII and NGOs, such as Sarthak, Ability Foundation, and Enable India, it has run job fairs to help differently abled people with a platform to find job opportunities besides organizing inclusive campus hiring with JSS, Dr Ambedkar Institute of Technology For Handicapped (AITH), and National Institute of Speech and Hearing (NISH). We have established relationships with colleges where there are students with disabilities, and we encourage them to participate.

Figure 1: Share of Different Roles for PwDs

Role-wise Avg. HC

- □ Executive
- ■ Project Engineer
- □ Team Leader
- ■ Asst. Manager
- □ Sr. Project Engineer
- □ Deputy Manager
- ■ Technical lead
- ■ Manager
- ■ Project Manager
- ■ Sr. Manager
- □ Sr. Project Manager

We have an Interviewer Certification Programme which prepares interviewers to be inclusive. So far, over a 1,000 interviewers have cleared this course. The recruiter while interviewing candidates with disability elicits information on what reasonable accommodation could be required while going through a selection process. We have introduced a self-identification form in which employees could indicate any accessibility issue or accommodation requirement at the time of joining. Any accessibility issue that has been brought up so far has been effectively resolved in 48 hours by the company. Battery-operated vehicles have been procured for people with disabilities to travel within the campus.

The Travel and Transport Policy has been revamped to include 'reasonable accommodations'. Wipro is committed to providing additional reasonable accommodation wherever required to ensure a level playing ground for people with disabilities.

Barrier-free Communication

The Wipro Kinesics website has been developed to maintain a communicative environment between hearing and hearing-disabled employees in Wipro. It is a combination of Indian, American, and local sign languages. The tool includes sections on Wipro terminologies, detailed dictionary, conversation, and sign language basics. Wipro Kinesics brings to prominence the need for communication to be barrier-free and for such communication at work to include categories of disability like speech and hearing. Through this, we anticipate that a large number of organizations may be able to attract talent with speech and hearing disabilities and improve career opportunities for them.

'Winclusive' is a vibrant community of employees with disabilities that discusses the applicants' accessibility. The community posts change requests. These are implemented to the extent feasible. Changes are internally tested and released to the community which then validates the application. Also, help requests by new employees are addressed through this community. This helps enable new employees to become quickly productive. The team has also reviewed all our employee policies numbering up to 58 and has come out with recommendations on possible reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. 'Winclusive' community has now become a part of Wipro's social media platform, Yammer, which has been successfully able to connect people and share global updates in the disability sector.

Managers and leaders are trained in sign language. Rendition of the Indian National Anthem is done in sign language to create an inclusive environment. Wipro observes the International Day for People with Disabilities every year on December 3, by building sensitivity amongst employees at large and also by inviting NGOs working with PwDs to display their products and share their expertise.

We have a PWD engagement calendar through which town halls, panel discussions, rewards and recognitions,

feedback session with managers of disabled employees, etc. are regularly planned and organized.

Barrier Free Infrastructure

'Breaking all Barriers', an annual contest for Wipro employees, is a forum through which employees review Wipro's physical infrastructure (accessibility within buildings, accessible restrooms, railings, ramps, signages, etc.) and collaborate with the Facilities team to bring about changes. An exclusive policy on accessibility on the intranet portal helps individuals to suggest reasonable accommodation requirements to the Facilities team. Wipro's Building Standards (which was earlier based on National Building Code 2005) have been modified to include international norms developed by the United Nations 'Accessibility for the Disabled, A Design Manual for a Barrier Free Environment', and the latest draft of the Building Code prepared by the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) and AccessAbility, India.

Accessible Information Systems

Wipro has a set of over 100 software applications that are used by over 1,00,000 employees daily. These applications address a variety of requirements in HR, travel, leave, cash, career, etc. These applications are created by the Information Systems (IS) Team, and maintained by a team of over 500 employees. Before deployment, each application is extensively validated against the WCAG-2.0 guidelines (*Web Content Accessibility Guidelines*) with a focus on visual and motor disabilities. After deployment, the software is field tested by the community group. Deviations or modification requests reported by the field are prioritized and the application is re-deployed to ensure that it meets WCAG-2.0 guidelines. Wipro.com, the website of Wipro, has also been made accessible by following the WCAG2.0 guidelines.

Skills have to be augmented to enable a software developer to develop as per the WCAG-2.0. Each engineer is first made aware of the needs of persons with disabilities. They are then trained–in person, or through webinars, or through e-training sessions–on what makes software accessible. After the training, they have to clear assessment tests to get certified. The course content is upgraded periodically to meet the changes and challenges of new technologies (such as

mobile enablement). It is reassuring to see many of these certified employees reflecting a changed outlook.

Wipro has a full-time consultant from Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC) to keep us abreast of the changes in the environment, statutory obligations, and also to advise on taking the inclusivity initiative for employees with disabilities to the next level.

Inclusion of Disadvantaged Community

A Rural BPO

Wipro's rural BPO centre was launched in Manjakkudi in 2011 as a 'Back Office to Back Office Model' as the result of a tie-up with Swami Dayananda Education Trust. The trust strives to provide quality education to the economically backward regions of Tamil Nadu. The centre completed three years in 2014 and from an initial strength of 50 employees, it grew to 100 employees in the second year, and around 150 employees in the third year. The centre has enabled the creation of job opportunities and in turn reduced the migration of youth to urban areas.

Tracking Inclusion through Audits

Besides industry research and engagement with external stakeholders on D&I themes, Wipro tracks key diversity indicators to identify opportunity areas. Our key organizational metrics are gender disaggregated and published in the public domain in our business responsibility report and standalone sustainability report. These indicators include workforce composition, leadership pipeline, attrition percentage, training data, and results of the biennial employee perception survey, which includes questions on D&I, freedom of expression, fairness, etc. The structured analysis of these data drives the D&I goals for the year. For instance, three years ago, we looked at how salary increases were happening for women employees across the organization. This audit highlighted that, while there was no apparent disparity in the senior management, in the lower levels, in some pockets, women seemed to get the short end of the stick. This could possibly be due to managers getting the men in the teams to stretch more or possibly a prevalent societal bias that the men as a single breadwinner need a better salary than the women, who possibly are part of double income families. Since these were isolated incidents and not

all-pervasive, we addressed it by counselling the individual managers to eliminate these disparities.

Last year, we also commissioned three key in-house surveys to identify current gender equity perspectives in the organization and to identify the focus areas. The survey results have produced Six-Sigma action plans around global deployment efforts, lateral hiring practices, and company-wise tracking, monitoring, and publishing of these efforts.

COUNTERING CHALLENGES IN INCLUSION

Societal biases around gender obviously creep into the workplace. For instance, a manager's perception on how hard it is to expect the women team members to take late night calls or stretch at times may come in the way of him/her having a good gender diversity in his/her team. Second, when it comes to the differently abled, despite the infrastructure being there, some employees may feel that someone who is, say visually impaired, may not have the same speed on delivering like the others in the team. While such beliefs may not be prevalent, identifying where they exist and sensitively dealing with it at an individual level need a sustained effort.

Wipro being an equal opportunity employer considers differently abled candidates at par with the candidates without disability. However, to be able to hire more of differently abled candidates, we need to develop more people with the skills required in the IT sector. Wipro has collaborated with NGOs and institutes to train and develop the differently abled candidates and prepare them for the IT industry. Also, at times, there could be reluctance among the business groups in letting on board a differently abled employee in their teams.

Increased awareness and sensitization sessions on the inclusion of PWDs and showcasing the achievements of our differently abled employees in the town halls help us address these biases.

GOING FORWARD

Currently, although we operate at a global level, we are still largely Indian. Over the next few years, one of the focus areas would be on how we could become a more global organization by recruiting men and women of different nationalities and cultures. We are also looking at how best we can create a level-playing field for differently abled employees and bridge the gap between their hiring and their placement in a project and ensure a better long-term career path for the differently abled employees.

Power to Diversity: Vodafone India's Inclusion Story

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Vodafone Group Plc. is one of the world's largest telecommunications companies. It provides a range of services, including voice, messaging, data, and fixed communications. Vodafone has mobile operations in 26 countries, partners with mobile networks in 55 more, and fixed broadband operations in 17 markets. As of 31 March 2015, Vodafone has around 446 million mobile customers and over 12 million fixed broadband customers.[59] Vodafone India is a fully-owned subsidiary of Vodafone Group Plc. Making its entry into India in 2007, Vodafone today has built an ever growing and robust business in a highly price-sensitive and competitive market. Serving around 184 million customers, Vodafone provides innovative, customer-friendly, and differentiated products and services through a wide scale distribution and exclusive retail footprint—backed up with a modern, technologically advanced network for both voice and data.

A value-based organization, Vodafone is committed to achieving the highest standards of health, safety, and well-being for its employees and business partners. As a responsible corporate, Vodafone India has been working with several partners from the social sector to address some of India's most pressing challenges over the years. Sustainability for Vodafone is an ongoing journey as it believes that what is good for the society

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[59] For more information, please visit: www.vodafone.com

is good for business. The Vodafone Foundation too is actively engaged in corporate social responsibility (CSR) by harnessing the potential of mobile services and technology to maximize impact within communities, especially in the domains of women, agriculture, education, and disaster relief.

THE DIVERSITY JOURNEY AT VODAFONE

Vodafone India employs 13,000 people, of which women comprise 20 per cent of the workforce. Employees work in 23 different circles pan India. The company consciously began to focus on three key pillars of diversity—gender, ethnicity, and business experiences and skills—in 2010. In the last five years, the practice has led to diversity reflecting across the organization, be it at the circle level, in the corporate office, or at the Vodafone group level.

Enhancing the diversity of the workforce has a clear business impetus. Thirty-three per cent of the telecom customer base is women and ensuring a similar gender ratio in the workforce meant better engagement with the customer. Consciously, adding diversity in nationality and experience also meant a huge scope for innovation and new products. It is believed that different ways of thinking and approaches are the core advantage of a diverse workforce.

As we embarked on increasing diversity, we realized that just stating something as a diversity agenda would not suffice. To bring in and ensure the acceptance of each specific group required widespread and in-depth attention. To inspire a change in culture for the inclusion of a variety of minority groups within the organization, a change in mindset was necessary. Thus, we decided to focus on first, increasing the number of women in the organization and also integrating them and making it possible for them to contribute to the maximum of their potential. It was assumed that unless we tackled gender diversity and demonstrated exemplary performance around this area, the employees may become sceptic of our larger programme of increasing diversity and reduce the commitment to make diversity happen on other fronts.

SUPPORTING INCLUSION

Senior Management Support and Sensitization

The starting point at Vodafone India was to support diversity and create a work environment that believed in diversity and supported inclusion. Our top management and the strategic leadership team were very clear that this was the right thing to do. In fact, Marten Pieters, a former MD and CEO of Vodafone India, hosted the first Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with women employees to get a pulse of the issues on the ground. The organization then spent close to a year and a half preparing the ground in creating a culture that would embrace and support diversity and inclusion. A module around inclusive leadership and unconscious bias was conducted for 2,500 + line managers to initiate a change in the mindset and also to enroll the senior leaders as champions of diversity.

Naturally, the starting point for these inclusion sessions was the Executive Committee. The sessions were then conducted across different circles with the business head of that particular circle as the host. This helped to communicate that it was not an HR initiative but something that the business managers also believed in and supported.

At the end of each of these workshops, each of the circles came up with a list of things that they wanted to work on to include diverse people in their circles. Based on the analysis of action points chosen at each circle in India, Vodafone chose the top three areas to work on to ensure that specific nuances and priorities common to all regions would get addressed. People within each of the circles partnered with the HR teams to make the necessary changes required to build the right culture to support diversity and inclusion. Such initiatives included: sensitizing line managers on respectful language, work-life balance practices, and women-friendly policies.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

We have paid attention to the challenge of ensuring inclusion through specific policies and practices. For example, to support gender diversity, we have identified two specific issues that stop women from contributing to their potential—maternity leave and a sense of safety and security—and have adopted appropriate measures:

- We have introduced the global minimum standard of four months of maternity leave across all our operating companies across the world and also implemented reduced hours of work for six months post-return from maternity for child care.

We have also laid out a detailed maternity-transitioning process to support the women on maternity. It also enables the line manager to plan work better. In fact, the transitioning process starts even before the women employee goes on maternity leave. We sensitize the line managers to take care of her special needs during this period, reassess her goals to ensure that they are commensurate with her stage of maternity, have role-related conversations in advance, and bring in the replacement in the form of a maternity cover. We assign a buddy who stays connected with her during the leave period. On return, the employee is re-oriented into the organization/role. Enough care is taken to see that she does not lose on her benefits, for example, incentives, bonus, etc. while on maternity leave and KPIs are reworked to ensure that they match the hours she will work.

- For women in our organization, we have customized the philosophy of 'Safe Workplace, Safe Travel and Safe Stay':

  o It is mandatory to have a late night drop facility via a company vehicle in case a women employee happens to work late.
  o In some locations, such a drop is additionally supported with a security person escorting the woman right up to her door step.
  o When women employees are scheduled to arrive late from outstation trips, they are provided company vehicles to get to their home from the airport/station.
  o All vendors providing transport services have undergone police verification and background checks.
  o Moreover, hotels or guesthouses need to follow specific instructions to ensure the safety of women for empanelment.
  o Prevention of sexual harassment at workplace is very strongly enforced by the Internal Complaints Committee.

Tracking Inclusion

To ensure that the people who are hired are included in the real sense, we have also put in place the tracking of numbers at the hiring stage—both in terms of gender and in getting people from diverse experiences and skills. On a regular basis, data around increments and promotions are reviewed to ensure that all the deserving people are getting recommended for promotion irrespective of the gender and that there is no disparity on the basis of gender. There are regular dipstick surveys to ensure that Vodafone India is seen as an equal pay and equal opportunity employer.

In the annual Vodafone People Survey, there are specific questions on diversity and inclusion; for instance, 'Am I being treated fairly?' 'Am I being respected?' The responses are closely tracked at an organization level. This survey is conducted yearly and forms a part of Managers' report which is viewed very closely by the organization. As Ashok Ramchandran, Director, HR, Vodafone India, says: 'Even if a manager is delivering great results but is not sensitive, then he is not the right person for us. And we have had to part ways with some people of this kind as an exception'.

Driving Inclusion through Communication

Discussion on the inclusion of women is part of the biannual town halls. Senior leaders, the CEO, the HR director, all make it a point to repeatedly talk about inclusion of women. Management conferences held each year also make it a point to showcase the D&I results. The best circle awards are decided by adding diversity and inclusion of women as a criterion for judging the performance on each circle.

Addressing Exclusion

All the Vodafone circles have an internal complaints committee where any person, be it a man or a woman, can report any sexual harassment that they may be experiencing at the workplace. There are frequent campaigns, through e-mailers, communication by business managers encouraging people to speak up to highlight issues.

'ZubaanSambhalKe' campaigns—A series of awareness mailers have been circulated to men and women employees highlighting the various aspects of sexual harassment at the workplace and beyond. Additionally, associated legal implications have also been highlighted.

The focus on diversity and inclusion has resulted in several unique practices within the organization.

One such concept that has gained a life of its own and made an impact is the Vodafone Inclusivity Network (VIN). It is detailed in Exhibit 1.

The Angel Stores

Vodafone India has set up 34 'Angel Stores' across 21 circles in the country. These retail outlets are managed

and run entirely by women employees, thereby making them unique. From the security and pantry staff, to the customer service resources and management-level personnel, women occupy all the positions. The company believes that this is a way to empower women employees.

The 'Angel Stores' have been successful in building and maintaining loyalty among all their customers—both men and women. In keeping with the Vodafone tradition, the customer service offered at these stores matches the class and standard of all other Vodafone retail outlets.

The friendly female staff helps customers, both men and women, feel at ease while they are visiting the stores and purchasing products, thus enhancing customer experience.

'Project Shakti': Building Diversity in the Frontline

A focused initiative is to hire women for non-traditional roles by giving them exclusive support for one year. For instance, we went to engineering colleges in rural locations and hired an all-women batch of graduate engineer trainees or field trainees. The selected women were specifically hired to work in sales and were assigned as a responsibility of the senior people in the circle who were their mentors. The mentor doubled as sponsor as well by ensuring that the hired women were successful in their assignment and overcame challenges if any. The trainees were put on a year's rotation programme focusing on understanding the product, market, customers, and process. During that period they were not given any actual responsibility or role. Post the first year, they were transferred to territories within the circle as territory leaders.

The project has been a success and the hired women are all performing well in roles which were predominantly done earlier by male colleagues. This initiative is now being run in other circles across Vodafone with every circle having its own name. The project is now currently running in the second year with a third year planned soon.

In the first year, we had hired 15 trainees, and seeing the success of the programme, increased the number to 28 in the second year. We continue to build on this programme.

Exhibit 1: Vodafone Inclusivity Network (VIN)

The 4C model for valuing diversity and promoting inclusion involves Customer, Colleagues, Community, and Communication. There is a VIN chapter in each Circle. The Circle chapters take the onus of creating engagement initiatives around the 4Cs. There is a quarterly meet of circle senior sponsors to share best practices with corporate. The entire network is driven by the 23 business circles across India. VIN teams across the circles have both men and women employees across different levels who drive the 4C initiatives.

- The 4C initiatives for including more women have the following objectives:
- To inspire and empower women to maximize their potential for both individual and business success
- To promote cross-gender understanding and an inclusive culture wherein people get a safer environment to communicate thoughts and views specifically on any cultural or policy barriers
- To support the creation of a consistent Vodafone employer brand that is attractive to women

- To provide insights into the requirements of female customers to inform the development of Vodafone products and service
- To encourage the involvement of network members in Vodafone Foundation or local community initiatives that benefit women

The Vodafone inclusivity network is empowered to drive communication around D&I.

4C Initiatives

Customer: Initiating walk-in drive at the stores for women customers, various plans/offers specifically for women customers, female retailers (Fe-tailers)
Colleagues: Conducting career development workshops for women employees, Inspirational speaker series,
Communities: Associating with NGOs working on girl child education, enabling NGOs to connect people, Fe-tailers
Communication: Conducting 'Open Houses', Coffee with the CEO

'Project Samridhi': Fe-tailers—Our Women Retailers

Vodafone Samridhi is an integral part of Vodafone's objective to encourage women empowerment in Haryana, thereby making a difference to the lives of the communities we engage with.

Under the project, Vodafone has appointed women from the lowest echelons of the society to encourage them to become entrepreneurs and earn a living for themselves. This programme is slated to be extended to other districts in rural Haryana in a phased manner.

As part of the pilot, 24 women from Narnaul in Mahendergarh district were trained to sell e-top-ups and recharge vouchers. As an additional support mechanism, Vodafone women retailers have been given special incentives in the first two months. This pilot was successful and now we have 66 such Fe-tailers.

This initiative has given a huge recognition to the brand Vodafone and has enabled the reach of Vodafone in rural areas which were otherwise difficult to penetrate. It has also given an opportunity of earning a living to women in rural areas.

Career Development: Pathways to Success and Everywoman Network

'Pathways to Success' is a career development series for our women employees to take on future leadership roles in the organization. They come together for two days and focus on Career Maps, Personal Brand, and Networking; and the series has been very well received.

In addition, we have enrolled all our women on 'Everywoman Network'. Everywoman is the world's largest web-based network and learning and development platform for women in business and female entrepreneurs. It enables like-minded women to share experiences, opportunities, and ideas; they are provided a backdrop to enable confidence and success to grow.

We have also been making some efforts in including persons with disability and creating openness for people with different sexual orientation and ensuring the success of those coming from diverse educational backgrounds.

Working with Differently Abled: 'Project Drishti'

Vodafone India has tied up with the National Association of Blind (NAB) to hire visually impaired associates for the call centre in Mumbai on an experimental basis. These associates are supported by imparting specific training and converting the collaterals in Braille and by providing infrastructure support in terms of giving them Braille-enabled phone and so on.

'The core objective is to create a win–win between our business goals and critical social cause by generating skill sets and earning opportunity amongst the differently abled people, and helping them become self-dependent'.

When experimented in Mumbai, it was found that their productivity was higher than the others; they had higher conviction and convincing power, were polite and persuasive, and their commitment was noticeably higher. NAB was therefore approached for the tie-up to start with this unique project called 'Drishti' and it spread in other circles across the country as well.

Celebrations

Besides week-long celebrations to commemorate the International Women's Week, globally Vodafone has started to celebrate Parent's Day, and also has special programmes for people from different sexual orientation or preferences and so on.

VIN keeps the topic of D&I alive in all our 23 circles.

The D&I practices and line managers at Vodafone continue to be recognized:

- Arvind Vohra, Operations Director East, was given the WILL Choice of Women's Awards 2014 for his leadership and support to the D&I agenda.
- Dilip Kumar Ganta received the D&I Champion for the 'I Inspire Biz Diva Awards 2015'.
- Vodafone figures in the top two MNCs, according to a survey conducted by AON Hewitt, which benchmarks its D&I focus and best practices.

Inclusion for Diverse Skillsets

We have also spread our net far and wide to attract professionals from all backgrounds. To ensure that the recruits who come from non-telecom backgrounds are able to function well in Vodafone, we have worked on designing a very structured onboarding process. The new management trainees and people from non-telecom

backgrounds undergo cross-functional induction and an intense technology session. There are 30-, 60-, and 90-day modules to ensure that the recruits interact with the right people to gain a better understanding of the business and the industry.

THE WAY AHEAD

In retrospect we know that the initial efforts to drive conversations across the organization enabled us to set the right tone for driving diversity and inclusion, helping employees see the business imperative and reduce the risk of diversity and inclusion initiative as being just another good-to-do thing. The decision to focus on one aspect of diversity and do a deep-dive in it further helped achieve visible results in a short timespan. 'Over the past two years, we focused intensely on becoming gender-balanced and moved from having 14 per cent women in our workforce to 20 per cent today. This focus will continue in the next phase of our evolution,' confirms Ashok Ramchandran, Director, HR, Vodafone India. 'The company's 'Discover Graduate' programme, under which it hires from business schools and technology institutes, focuses on 50 per cent women hires at the entry-level. The transformation agenda will continue!'

Countering the mindset especially at the supervisory levels is an ongoing challenge. In certain small pockets, we also encounter biases/prejudices around what women employees are capable of doing—for instance, meeting aggressive sales targets, travelling extensively, and being interested in taking up certain kinds of roles. The other big obstacle is the leaking pipeline—women opting to quit owing to a whole lot of societal and personal reasons. This is also related to the larger societal construct that women after all need to take care of their families and unless society makes it more and more conducive for women to get educated and progress as professionals, this will be a challenge for organizations across the board.

At Vodafone, we recognize inclusion as a process, an ongoing journey. Given the commitment from our top management and the sustained discussions and efforts across different levels, we know we are on the right track in creating a culture that welcomes and celebrates diversity in its truest essence.

Make My Organization Diverse and Inclusive: The MakeMyTrip Story

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MakeMyTrip.com, India's leading online travel company, was founded in the year 2000. It was launched in the USA to primarily market to NRI travellers. Founder Deep Kalra conceptualized it with the vision of empowering Indian travellers with a greater choice, transparency, and convenience. The success in the US market was followed up by an India launch in 2005. As the first and only comprehensive online travel site with real time booking for flights, hotels, holidays, and cars, MakeMyTrip.com rapidly became the preferred choice of millions of travellers. A pioneer among online travel companies in India, MakeMyTrip.com enjoys great top-of-mind recall and is now synonymous with online travel in the country.

MakeMyTrip proactively began to diversify its product offering in 2007, adding a variety of services such as hotel bookings and holiday packages. It also adopted a hybrid model through self-owned and franchisee brick-and-mortar stores to reach out to customers in Tier 2 markets. The first retail office was set up in Ahmedabad in 2007. Today, MakeMyTrip is a one-stop-travel shop that offers a broad selection of travel products and services in India. It has 24 company-owned travel stores in 18 cities and 42

franchisee-owned travel stores which primarily sell travel packages in 38 cities.

MakeMyTrip is the dominant market leader with 47 per cent market-share (as per an independent study conducted by Phocus Wright in 2013). Remaining reliable, efficient and at the forefront of technology, MakeMyTrip's commitment and customer centricity allow it to better understand and provide for its customers' diverse needs and wants, and to deliver consistently. It enjoys the reputation of being technology-forward and innovative—and delighting customers through service and value-based offerings. It has a popular travel app in the market, with over 7.2 million downloads to date.

After becoming the first Indian travel company to list overseas through its initial public offering (IPO) in NASDAQ in 2010, MakeMyTrip expanded its global footprint through acquisitions such as Luxury Tours & Travel (Singapore), HotelTravel.com (Bangkok), and EasyToBook.com (Amsterdam). It has received numerous accolades for providing best-in-class services to travellers including the World Travel Awards (2014), CNBC Travel Award (2013), and the Lonely Planet Travel Award for best travel facilitator (2012 and 2013).

Setting Out on the Diversity Trip

MakeMyTrip employs 2,600 employees in the age range of 22–50, located in 24 cities in India and six countries. Today women comprise 40 per cent of the workforce. There are employees belonging to more than 10 countries. There is a conscious attempt to increase diversity beyond gender and increase regional diversity because it is expected to impact business positively. Diverse perspectives, it is argued, would provide richer insights into help create and shape products that serve the needs of a large and diverse customer base.

Making Inclusion a Reality

Given our diverse group and the understanding that efforts were needed for us to work smoothly with each other, the D&I Council was set up in 2012 to drive inclusion. It has the sponsorship and support from the senior-most leaders. This council is owned by a body of 35 employees that represent various functions and tenures. The D&I Council agenda is divided into four focus areas:

1. Inclusive communication platforms
2. Celebration of diversity

3. Improving the gender ratio at the mid-to-senior level
4. Providing better facilities at the workplace

Each of these subgroups has worked to ensure the adoption and sustenance of these inclusion agendas. Several changes in policy, infrastructure, and interventions were introduced based on the recommendations of the council members. Some of these are listed below:

- Ensuring the safety of women employees, travel rosters, and customer visits are planned mindfully.
- Given that there are concerns about safety for those employees on the road, MakeMyTrip partnered with Smart 24×7 to introduce an app that assists users during emergency situations through features, such as panic buttons, panic alerts, travel-status updates, and voice- and photo recording. The safety app is very popular with employees, and has been downloaded by 75 per cent of the women-employee base and 66 per cent of the total employee base.
- Revised laptop policy: Lighter laptops were introduced following the employee feedback. These are being rolled out first for new hires and women employees and over a period of time it would cover the entire employee population.
- Flexibility in workplace attire: Smart casuals to ensure employees are comfortable in the workplace. Also, offer freedom to wear/display religious motifs such as *tilak, kada, hijab*.
- Industry-leading maternity leave policy: Three months of fully paid leave plus three months of additional leaves (with half-pay or work from home).
- Provision for infrastructure support for pregnant employees, such as ergonomic chair, foot rest, special cab if required.
- In the case of critical positions, a hire may be made once the incumbent goes on maternity leave. However, the employee is assured that she will return to the role once she re-joins from her maternity leave.
- Celebrating regional festivals across offices nation-wide and encouraging employee participation through contests and other on-ground engagement activities.
- *Nukkad nataks* (street plays) performed on the floor stressing on the need for changing mindsets towards diversity and inclusion.

One initiative that has created a huge win–win situation for the organization is the creation of opportunities for women to work from home. MakeMyTrip is the

first company (in the travel and e-commerce space) to introduce work-from-home opportunities for women: Holiday Experts Channel.

We recognized that a large number of women have had to give up their corporate careers mid-stream due to home or family reasons. A very talented workforce exists outside the corporate ecosystem that is keen to make careers on their own terms. This insight led to the conceptualization of the Holiday Expert Channel. This was launched with 33 people in Delhi in 2012, and followed by phased launches in Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata. Today, the channel has grown to a 1,000-plus network across nine cities including non-metro centres, such as Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, and Pune. The programme is also being run in Chennai and Hyderabad.

The Holiday Expert Channel programme is designed specifically for stay-at-home women who have prior work experience and love to travel. MakeMyTrip offers them the opportunity to take up customer queries, help plan and sell a holiday, and earn up to a one-third share of the profits on every holiday booking. This is a flexible programme; so, the women can devote as much time as they are comfortable with. On average, a holiday expert books 4–6 holidays every month, earning between ₹20,000 and 30,000 a month. Top-selling holiday experts can make up to ₹65,000 a month.

Potential hires are graduates with good communications skills and customer service orientation. MakeMyTrip provides all the necessary training and background information to transform these ladies into 'Holiday Experts'. They are given access to the database and proprietary software so that they can create an ideal holiday package for customers. They also undergo extensive training and are educated about various travel destinations, MakeMyTrip booking processes, transaction modalities, and other related details.

We have identified a huge pool of women who have to give up their corporate careers mid-stream due to home or family reasons. A very talented workforce exists outside the corporate ecosystem that is keen to make careers on their own terms. This insight led to the conceptualization of the Holiday Expert channel. This programme has been a huge success for us across various parameters. We feel extremely proud to offer an exciting job opportunity to a talented workforce that had to drop off the tenured career track. Women in our Holiday Experts programme are driven to succeed, extremely engaged, and motivated. Little wonder than that in a short span of time, this channel is contributing 20–25 per cent of our holiday business. It brings down operational expenses since we do not have to invest in fixed assets for these employees. Overall this is a win–win proposition for both the employees and business. Our acknowledgement of the value it offers is evident in the pace of growth of this channel.

Managing Challenges at the Ground Level

Being a young organization, there is good bonding among employees and not much resistance to new ways of thinking and doing business. However, the journey towards increasing diversity is new. Although there is an understanding of why it is important to increase diversity, there are also challenges regarding firmly deep-rooted stereotypes and beliefs that impact the perceptions and acceptance of the other group. Therefore, ground-level campaigns and robust communication measures are required to drive the mindset change. Tracking performance and sharing relevant data have helped change mindsets and build the business case for diversity. Over the years, we believe that the D&I charter and the council have been able to firmly entrench the need to have diversity and reasonable accommodations that need to be made to increase diversity. Yet, there is a dearth of senior women leadership in MakeMyTrip. We are not sure how to have more women in the top management. We believe that mentoring of high potential women may help to attract women to these jobs. It is the next challenge that has been taken up by the Diversity Council. Also, given the nature of our business, it is best for us to continuously foster the diversity of age, regions, and religions in our workforce.

Fostering Inclusion at Schneider Electric, India R&D

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Schneider Electric develops technologies and solutions to make energy safe, reliable, efficient, productive, and green. As a global specialist in energy management and automation with operations in more than 100 countries, Schneider Electric offers integrated energy solutions across multiple market segments. The group invests heavily in R&D in order to sustain innovation and differentiation, with a strong commitment to sustainable development.

Schneider Electric's India R&D in Bengaluru is one among the key R&D centres for the group, some of the others being in France, US, Mexico, and China. The India R&D Centre hosts close to 1,500 employees who provide R&D services to the five main lines of business globally. It is a highly matrixed organization with business units reporting globally.

Schneider Electric recognizes that diversity and inclusion are not 'nice-to-have' features in a corporate statement, but are an essential ingredient of a progressive, high performance, and innovative organization. Global research and our personal experience have shown us that diversity is clearly linked to productivity, performance, creativity, and innovation. Our customer base is also becoming more diverse, especially with women taking more buying decisions and exercising more purchasing power. It is essential therefore that our workforce mirrors the diversity of our customers for us to better address their requirements.

When we started our diversity journey several years ago, one area of focus was to increase the gender diversity in the organization. The second population we looked at included differently abled individuals (visual impairment, speech/hearing impairment, and orthopaedic impairment).

MAKING INCLUSION A REALITY

Schneider Electric's Global CEO signed a commitment to the United Nations' Women's Empowerment Principles.[60] We are one of the 10 companies worldwide that are participating in the He For She campaign.[61] Our new five-year company programme (launched in 2015), which sets the tone for Schneider Electric globally, puts

Diversity & Inclusion at the forefront of our aspirations for the workforce. It is a critical component in how we will develop the organization and has the sponsorship of the executive committee.

Some of the conscious practices in supporting Diversity and Inclusion in our India R&D Centre are outlined below.

Creating a Representative Diversity Committee

In Schneider Electric India R&D, we progressively put together a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee which is composed, led, and activated almost entirely by employees from the core business units (very small representation from HR). This committee itself represents the kind of diversity we value in Schneider Electric—as it has people from different generations (from millennials to people in their fifties), genders, and also persons with disabilities. All members are voluntarily a part of this committee which is headed by a senior manager. The team works together to select specific action areas towards inclusion for each year and conceptualize programmes to run for those areas and then implement the same.

Leadership Commitment

Senior leaders of the organizations have specific targets around building up diversity in their teams. The HR business partners are tasked with supporting their leaders on the D&I agenda. Strong messaging from our apex leaders at the global as well as the local level gives D&I the much needed support and sustained momentum at Schneider Electric. At the global level, two leaders from our HR Council have been assigned to lead Diversity & Inclusion across all countries where we have a presence. The respective senior HR leaders in these countries have been assigned the D&I portfolio to ensure good traction and focus.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Specific efforts are made to identify, engage, develop, and retain high potential diversity employees. Development programmes that involve elements like international assignments, coaching/mentoring on as and when needed basis, exposure to internal and external thought leaders (e.g., through panel discussions, leadership seminars, guest lectures, and more), opportunities to connect with local and global

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[60] For details on the principles, please visit: https://www.unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/womens-principles

[61] Details of the campaign can be retrieved from http://www.heforshe.org/

leaders of Schneider Electric, and customized learning workshops are some of the inputs that are available to the diverse employee group. One of our interesting initiatives was a theatre workshop run by the celebrated women thespians for 20 high-potential women in the Schneider Electric R&D. The workshop was designed to help these high-potential women employees learn methods by which they could express themselves more powerfully in the business sphere.

In addition, we have put in place some significant policies and facilities, specially designed to support diversity in our workforce. These policies include work-from-home, flexi-hours, and a crèche facility adjoining our campus. It has been communicated across the organization that all of these facilities are open to all employees, not just women employees. It is our belief that if the benefits are inclusive of all, they create a positive acceptance for the diverse groups and also convey the message that in spirit we are being inclusive. To specifically support women employees, we have looked at both policies and infrastructure support. For example, we have created a mothers' room in our facility which allows lactating and expecting mothers to use it during the day, if required.

Changing Mindsets

While support through policies is necessary, we believe that inclusion is hugely impacted by mind-sets. Conceptually, we all understand how diversity is important but it was still important for us to amplify the business case for enhancing gender diversity to get buy in of the majority men in the organization. We also used creative ways to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of women in the workforce through initiatives like an 'Appreciation Week'—when our workforce specifically acknowledges the contributions of women employees for the work they do in India R&D (through post-it messages stuck on public message boards).

To help make the dialogue on women inclusion central to other dialogues, we have organized inter-company panel discussions by D&I experts and senior professionals from several industries on the topic of Women in Leadership. So far we have had discussions with topics ranging from the core differences in how men and women approach their careers to effective strategies that will allow women to claim and hold their positions in male-dominated business environments, without having to sacrifice their femininity.

We have also worked on helping employees become aware of the conscious and unconscious biases towards women through workshops and focus group discussions.

Sensitization for Inclusion of PWDs

An area that we have actively addressed at Schneider Electric India's R&D centre has been the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs). For instance, after we moved to a new campus in Bengaluru, we realized that our managers were not very aware of how the campus supports or challenges our visually impaired employees. In order to help sensitize our managers to the needs of these employees, we organized a 'Blind Walk' where several senior leaders were taken to the 8th floor of the building blind-folded, and then asked to make their way down to the Ground Floor cafeteria unassisted. What would have taken them less than 10 minutes on a regular day took an excruciating 40 minutes for most of the leaders! At the end of the experience, they were visibly moved by the challenges they had encountered and could empathize deeply with their visually impaired team members. This also led to some decisions being made about enhancing accessibility in the building. We did a similar exercise for the Global HR Tools team to help them understand which tools are accessible for visually impaired employees and which ones need improvement.

While it is easy to become aware and empathetic through an intense experience like the 'Blind Walk', being inclusive is a different matter altogether. To help our managers dispel the myths around the differently abled and their ability to contribute, we held a 'Demo Hour' for our people managers. This was a compact 60-minute session where a few of our differently abled employees made short 10–15 minute demo presentations on their day-to-day work. Our visually impaired employees, for instance, showed the managers how they use screen reader software to navigate huge databases at great speed—so much faster than 'sighted' individuals! Orthopedically impaired employees showed how their disabilities are in no way an impediment to their ability to deliver high quality work in labs. They made it clear that an inclusive mindset and environment is all they need in order to thrive and contribute. Experiences such as this event have helped our managers to open their minds greatly to the differently abled—to the extent that they are now asking for such profiles when they have opportunities to hire.

Through all these sensitization efforts, our managers are encouraged to build and sustain a diverse team. Last year the gender diversity went up despite limited flexibility to hire. Sixty per cent of our new hires are women and we have identified two engineering colleges exclusively for women where we go to recruit women employees. As an example of increasing diversity on the disability front, today we have five differently abled employees successfully integrated into the R&D centre.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

There are several challenges that we currently encounter in building a diverse and inclusive organization. As an industry, we do not easily attract women. At times, the location of our facility is also seen as a challenge. The hiring, being very specific and need-based, sometimes does not allow us the time required to hire candidates who will add to the diversity in the organization.

However, despite the challenges, we are focused on being seen as the best in creating a diverse and inclusive organization. Driving our efforts through the committee, having policies and practices that acknowledge and support the differences, and continuing the dialogue and action towards bettering the inclusion practices—all reflect our commitment and sustained effort. At present, we are in the process of formulating a part-time working policy to support those who are unable to work full-time for various reasons. We believe that if we make such a policy available to all our employees, we will be able to retain talented people who cannot work full time.

We are also exploring programmes and policies for 'Second Innings' through which we will offer career opportunities to women who took a break from work. This programme intends to create full-time, part-time, and advanced internship opportunities for women who took extended breaks from their careers (e.g., due to child care, relocation, health concerns, etc.) and are looking to get back to the workforce. We will first be looking at identifying women in this group, who have the competencies that we value/need at Schneider Electric India R&D. Following this, we will create opportunities for these individuals to 'test-drive' potential careers at SE India R&D in ways that allow them to determine if they would be a good fit for the company and vice versa.

What has specially been heartening for us so far is that Diversity and Inclusion in SE is not perceived as an 'HR Issue' but supported as a core business agenda providing real business results. With such a focus in place, the India R&D team is committed to becoming progressively more diverse and inclusive as a workplace and fostering an environment where differences are respected, encouraged, and celebrated.

In Service of a Larger Vision: The Diversity & Inclusion Story at Starwood

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Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. is the most global high-end hotel company in the world with more than 1,200 properties in 100 countries. Our strength lies in ten distinct lifestyle brands, an award-winning loyalty programme, and 2,40,000 talented associates worldwide. Starwood is a fully integrated owner, operator, and franchisor of hotels, resorts, and residences with the following internationally renowned brands: St. Regis®, The Luxury Collection®, W®, Westin®, Le Méridien®, Sheraton®, Four Points® by Sheraton, Aloft®, Element®, and the recently introduced Tribute PortfolioTM.

At Starwood, we call our shared values 'promises'. These promises guide our everyday actions and ensure a common understanding of what we can expect from one another. They define the organizational culture by enabling us to 'Go the Extra Step by taking actions that build lasting connections and loyalty, Play as a Team by working globally and across all teams in the company,

and Do the Right Thing by using good judgment, respecting our communities, associates, owners, partners, and the environment.

We are committed to creating a company that is a great place to work and provides wonderful guest experiences, great returns to stakeholders, and is growing, strong, and stable. These values are imbibed by each associate who joins Starwood all over the globe by further absorbing the individual brand values of each of the 10 brands of Starwood and making them a way of life.

DIVERSITY AT STARWOOD

Workforce diversity is a broad term embracing the similarities and differences among associates from all walks of life in terms of age, gender, background, culture, race, orientation, and education. Inclusion, on the other hand, is a state of being valued and supported. It means leveraging on the diversity, regardless of the differences. At Starwood, we are not simply accepting diversity and inclusion. We are running towards it. We are actually on a mission for inclusion. We seek out people who are different, we strive for variety; and we push diversity to the forefront. Not because we should. But because it is vital for the success of our people and our company. And because it matters. For an organization that operates in the hospitality business across the country and the world, we believe, our diversity allows us to connect better with our customers and the culture of the place. Given our efforts, we are a very diverse workforce—be it on counts of gender, regional, and now even differently abled people.

Fortunately, the hospitality industry as such is seen as a great career opportunity by women and we have always enjoyed gender diversity right from the start. While across the organization we stand at 15 per cent today, many departments, especially in the white-collared jobs in our hotel would have a gender ratio ranging from 40–60 per cent. In fact, at Starwood, you would see women even in the non-traditional roles; for instance, the kitchen of most hotels tends to have an all-male staff but currently we have three women as part of the kitchen team in The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi. Our Executive Committee comprises The Westin Gurgaon of 50 per cent female representation which is higher than most hotels in the region. Even though our numbers look good for women, we do not take it for granted that women will always seek employment in our organization and drive it consciously.

This piece is written with specific reference to our efforts to increase diversity at the Westin Gurgaon. We follow the corporate mandate and specifically localize our efforts to meet our realities in Gurgaon. Since the last year, we have put in specific effort to reach out to the differently abled. We go to job fairs which are held for this group and regularly scout for talent. We also tied up with an institute that works with the speech and hearing impaired people and through them we took on some trainees last year.

Factors Facilitating Diversity and Inclusion at Starwood

To begin with, Starwood has a very flat structure where people across the levels are involved in decision-making. Managers have an open-door policy and employees have easy access to share issues the they face and come up with solutions that might help to resolve the issues. Empowerment in decision-making creates an environment of inclusion across the organization.

Second, performance is managed purely through achievement of goals and this creates a transparent environment that stresses on meritocracy irrespective of what gender you are or which region you belong to. The performance matrix also contributes to ensuring that employees experience the organization as an equal opportunity employer.

Third, is the top management support. The language we speak around D&I related aspects is consistent across the organization and this is possible only when it is driven right from the CEO level. Sanjay Sharma, Area General Manager India, Starwood Hotels and Resorts, leads it by example. He has focused on employing more women associates this past year, not only as frontline staff but also in other grades and levels. This is an attempt to correct the male-to-female ratio in all levels. As a policy, we source at least three resumes of women candidates for every vacant position and interview at least one woman before closing any position.

To further our D&I agenda, the senior leadership team takes on specific measurable goals. For instance, in terms of gender diversity, my goal as the HR head is to increase it by an additional 3 per cent this year. We also have specific targets for training and employing persons with disability.

Policies and Practices Promoting Inclusion

With this focus, Starwood launched its Starwood Global Female General Manager (GM) Initiative which serves as a roadmap for increasing female GM representation globally. The spotlight on increasing female GMs is a result of an extensive study which sought to understand the current state of women in the GM pipeline and the GM roles within the organization. The study included identifying the barriers to increasing the women GM representation and implementing a globally agreed strategy and action plan. The global study established that Starwood had a balanced gender representation at executive levels but also reflected an opportunity to increase female representation at GM positions. The same insights applied to Starwood Asia Pacific (of which Starwood Gurgaon is a part)—Starwood Asia Pacific employs over 74,500 associates, of which 42 per cent are women. Specifically, 38 per cent of the executive team members in Asia are women but only 12 per cent are in GM positions.

Diversity training has been put in place which educates employees on what might constitute harassment and exclusion and encourages them to bring up issues when they see anything that would be seen as discriminatory. There is also sensitivity training in place which focuses on having conversations around the changing of social culture. Countering prejudices such as, only men can stretch and need to do all the difficult tasks and that women are not necessarily focused on long-term growth, constitute an important part of creating an organization ethos that supports inclusion.

We have also taken several measures to ensure the safety of women employees. Women travelling back late at night fill out a form and share the vehicle details confirming that they are dropped by a company vehicle and are accompanied by a security guard. They are also provided with company accommodation. It is true that women enjoy special benefits compared to their male counterparts regarding safety, but we are open and not apologetic about it.

Also recognizing the change women experience around child birth, we are very proactive in extending the right kind of support to ensure that we are able to retain them during and after maternity. For instance, we give them an option to change their function, or move on to flexible timings. The impact is seen in the fact that 100 per cent of our women employees who have taken maternity breaks have come back to the organization.

We have provided hearing and speech impaired associates with special badges to ensure their comfortable movement in guest areas. One of the associates is working in our Associate Cooperative Store, i.e., a store where associates can purchase groceries at discounted rates. She uses rate charts to share the prices of items along with a white board which helps her communicate easily with others. Another associate working in the pastry shop offers guests the menu card which eases his stress to lip read to decipher the guest's order.

To support cultural diversity, Star Finder, our online interface, helps candidates across the globe to explore opportunities with any Starwood hotel in the world. This helps us in getting people from different regions and also creates bonding across the team members.

Addressing Potential Issues Case by Case

While there may be many policies, procedures, and training to support D&I, ultimately, how it is experienced across the organization boils down to individual acts. Therefore as a culture, we never treat any incident as a minor one. We promptly reach out to specific employees to address issues that may not be good for our culture—say the use of inappropriate language. In one instance, one of the vendors sent a cab for a woman employee almost 45 minutes after it was scheduled to arrive. While this may be a one-off incident and there were no dire consequences associated with it, we made it a point to take up this issue with the vendor to send a signal to our associates that we cared for them. Being in the hospitality business, sometimes our front office may have to deal with offensive behaviour of the customers. There have been incidents in the past where a customer behaving inappropriately with an employee was asked to leave the hotel premises and his club membership was recalled. We have regular conversation with managers to take up any issue that impacts their respective associates irrespective of how frequent or large the incident is.

Tracking D&I

Besides having clear targets that support our D&I goals, we also track it on a monthly and quarterly basis. We send information regarding gender diversity and PWDs to the regional office on a regular basis. This enables us to review progress of inclusion initiatives. The tracking process helps us assess where we stand in comparison to other hotels. This not only is an effective

tool for benchmarking but also provides us insights into best practices at these hotels. Year on year, we have been able to increase these numbers and comparing ratios to previous quarters and years certainly gives us the motivation and the understanding that we are moving in the right direction.

Successful Practices to Promote Inclusion

The programme that we launched in 2014 to hire the differently abled people has been very successful. We tied up with Sarthak, an institute that works with the speech and hearing impaired population, and through them we hired our first batch of five students in August 2014. This group was put through a rigorous orientation session and was given projects to do in different departments before we could find the right fit. They were also assigned mentors in each of their departments. To ensure inclusion into the work group, many of our employees went through training to learn sign language. In fact, all the mentors had to learn it because integration of the trainees was driven by the mentors and not so much by the HR team. And now in our meetings and at times even in our town halls, it is very heartening to see people using sign language not only when they communicate with these trainees but also with others in the meeting so that the trainees follow the entire communication. At present we have four out of the five associates working with us from Sarthak, we intend to coach them and help them hone their skills to grow within Starwood. Furthermore, we plan to incorporate hiring more PWDs in future.

Starwood India properties are constantly seeking new opportunities to integrate people who have been ignored by mainstream by tying up with organizations in order to increase workplace diversity. For instance, recently, we have tied up with some NGOs working with survivors of human trafficking and have taken trainees from that pool. Such partnerships are mutually beneficial as they not only utilize our resources to educate and train the less privileged for employment in our properties but also help us gain motivated and committed associates.

Ms. Ritu Singh Verma, Regional Director, Human Resources, South Asia, Starwood Hotels and Resorts India Pvt Ltd., encourages HR leaders in the region to look for new ideas and strategies to attract, develop, and retain lady associates. This year, she has introduced outsourcing of exit interviews of lady associates who resign and leave. This would give a neutral perspective and insight into the experiences of lady associates at Starwood and help us identify areas for improvement.

CHALLENGES IN OUR JOURNEY

Sensitivity towards inclusion boils down to the individual acts of managers. The thought process of the associates and the acceptance of change is essential for the success of diversity initiatives. It is a challenge to overcome the mental blocks of the associates who do not like any change in the makeup of the workforce and tend to form cliques or groups to resist any such move. Also, difficulty in communication can pose a challenge owing to the presence of myriad cultures and languages spoken. We believe that if we do not address such difficulties proactively it may easily lead to confusion and disintegration in the group.

Today, our managers show different levels of focus on D&I. Where the managers invest highly on the D&I agenda it gets clearly reflected at the group level. Ensuring a sustained focus across the organization is going to come from building ownership with each manager.

THE WAY FORWARD

One question that I frequently raise with respect to the differently abled is the career growth we can offer them. Currently, we are geared to take them as individual contributors. But as they grow within the organization, to what extent we are training them to take on larger people responsibilities and interact freely and confidently with others is something that still needs to be worked out.

Diversity and inclusion is the need of the hour. As HR leaders, we need to drive this, for the company and its stakeholders can reach their full potential only when they leverage on diversity. As a global company, Starwood represents ten diverse brands in hundreds of diverse markets. We cannot bring an authentic global experience to our guests if our thoughts, ideas, and beliefs come from one small corner of the world. Our success will thrive from the infinite number of differences that make each one of us! Be it our life experiences, our career journey, or our educational learnings, our collaborative culture is what will keep us on top. As we see it, there is no way but to traverse the path of including differences.

Flights in Increasing Diversity: The InterGlobe Experience

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InterGlobe is committed to a culture that promotes diversity to create a competitive environment.
Our diversity and inclusion efforts are designed to attract, nurture and advance the lives of our people and customers irrespective of their differently abled status, gender, lifestyle, sexual orientation, religion and nationality.
Diversity and Inclusion statement at InterGlobe

InterGlobe Enterprises today is a leader in aviation, hospitality, and travel related services and is growing exponentially in the market through innovation and service leadership. We build businesses and represent global brands that deliver quality and value. Travel domain expertise, leadership capital, simplicity, culture of innovation, and end to end travel solutions are few of the differentiators for the enterprise. One of our group companies that most people recognize is the Indigo Airlines. We are today operating in ten countries across 126 offices and employ more than 18,000 professionals.

Promotion of D&I has always been a driving force at the heart of InterGlobe's development. The inclusion of people with disabilities, ties between generations, gender balance, respect for sexual orientation, and gender identity reflect our commitment to all our 18,000 employees. By embracing an inclusive culture that supports diverse talent, broad range of attributes, experiences, and point of view, our people collaborate successfully and enable InterGlobe to compete effectively in the global marketplace. Our efforts on this front have recently been recognized and we have been rated as the 5th Best company in 'Supporting Women To Remain at Work–2015' by a study done by Great Places to Work® Institute in partnership with *The Economic Times*[62].

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION JOURNEY

At InterGlobe, the promoters have always been committed to the belief that having an inclusion agenda is a key business enabler. In the initial years, our senior leadership across group companies underwent a diversity and inclusion programme. Inputs from that workshop helped us in articulating our D&I philosophy. We formed the group level and business level D&I councils whose key responsibility was the identification of focus areas based on 3Cs (common sense, consensus, and co-creation). Policies supporting an inclusive culture were introduced and programmes around specific causes such as health and wellness, women's safety, etc. were organized. We now aim to touch employees' lives though equality, enablement, and empowerment.

BUILDING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Diversity and Inclusion are fundamental to our culture and core values, fostering an innovative, collaborative, and high energy work environment. Our wide range of D&I efforts are focussed around the following areas:

Gender Diversity

InterGlobe has a relatively young workforce with 44 per cent of the women employees between the age group of 20–35 years, characterized with aspirations to grow at a rapid pace and the ability to be immensely multi-faceted in their skills and interests. Over the last decade the company has experienced a silent revolution with higher numbers of younger employees having moved to managerial roles and significantly more women at the shop floor. We have 13 per cent of the women in leadership roles, 15 per cent in managerial roles, and 22 per cent in supervisory roles. The number of women in engineering hangar roles has also increased from 0 to 16 in just one year during 2013–14. The business leaders recognize the benefits of maintaining healthy gender diversity in the workplace. Our hiring focus through various mediums—employee referrals, internal job postings,

[62] ET Bureau (2015). India's best companies to work for 2015: How organizations from 11 to 50 ranking stack up, *Economic Times,* July 13, Retrieved from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-07-13/news/64370555_1_best-companies-organisations-best-workplaces-list?intenttarget=no

campus hiring, social media, and search firms—has been on gender balanced workforce. The vendors are also mandated to have 50 per cent of the housekeeping staff and chauffeurs as women. In our airline business, women are hired not only as cabin crew, but also as pilots—14.7 per cent of our pilots are women and this number has been increasing every year.

Breaking Traditions

Engineering hangars are a fully 24×7 environment where technicians and engineers are working in shifts to do major aircraft maintenance for IndiGo. They are sited at an isolated location and are not publicly accessible. This had traditionally been a male bastion. Until one day, when the President while interviewing a lady with engineering degree for another position at the airport, asked her as to why she was not being interviewed for the relevant position in the engineering hangar, and was surprised to hear that the reason was, 'There were no ladies toilets in the hangar'. Needless to say, a woman's washroom was constructed and now we are very proud to have 16 women at the engineering hangar. Appropriate infrastructure like setting up of washrooms and changing room facilities has enabled us to achieve this unconventional hiring initiative.

Similarly, we had few women employees at the ramp—the place where the aircraft is parked. The reason being, the job required special types of shoes—ramp shoes to be worn. However, the manufacturer in India only made men's shoes. We identified a vendor who could make shoes for women and we now have women working at the ramp.

Even in our hotel development business where construction is the core function, maintaining a good gender mix is a challenge. To address this, we mapped jobs which were women-friendly and where getting qualified women engineers at construction sites were not difficult. This journey included sensitizing project managers about work environment, hygiene factors, managing aspirations of women, creating office space at sites which included building separate washrooms for women, and providing medical facility to handle any emergency.

Extending this focus externally, the technology business has initiated an exhaustive short-term, market-oriented, and placement-linked employability skills training programme with 250 under-privileged young girls above 18 years of age.

Cultural Diversity

Over the last decade, the InterGlobe group has substantially grown. We have moved from being an Indian organization to a diversified conglomerate working from more than 20 countries. All the InterGlobe businesses have offices across locations in India and abroad. There is, hence, a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce, with varying requirements. To support this, all critical communication that takes place on a group level, like the Code of Conduct, is made available in multiple languages that our employees are comfortable with.

To ensure culture diversity in our technology business, a global magazine named *Jeepney* is published every year. The magazine not only involves the sharing of practices, experiences, and leadership connects but also the collaboration between different geographies. We also launched a 'No Sir No Ma'am' campaign aimed at addressing everyone with their first name to bring equality and openness in our work culture.

Generational Diversity

Besides the rich gender and cultural diversity, we also have employees belonging to different generations, which is now growing as an area of diversity and inclusion that needs to be addressed. In line with the demographic profile of the country, in InterGlobe as well, the highest number of employees is below the age group of 30 years. Furthermore, the other groups of employees that are significant in number are in their late adulthood, in the bracket of 55 years and over. We are making attempts to ensure that these two groups can energetically work together. From personal aspirations to health and wellness needs, we cater to the work-life balance needs of different generations to create supportive workplace environment that values and trusts employees.

Ensuring Inclusion in a Diverse Workforce

We realize that to create an organization with a healthy gender mix requires us to ensure women receive necessary support through transitions in their personal lives. We have taken several such steps towards making women employees comfortable in the workplace. A liberal maternity leave policy has helped women employees plan their family along with a great career. Women have the option of clubbing

their available leave with their three-month maternity leave and extending their time away from work. They can also avail of the option to work from home for additional two months which helps in retention. For some women who require more flexibility, we are open to contractual agreements. Post their return, they are offered a flexi-time option. Other facilities like nursing rooms, day care facility, and security guards accompanying in official transportation are provided to women employees. To meet the basic hygiene need of diverse population, in our IT and BPO business we have introduced feminine vending machine in the ladies washroom.

Women can avail 'Adoption Leave' of three months if they are adopting a baby between the age of 0-3 months and for one month when adopting a baby older than three months. Women pilots are rostered in a manner that they are not required to work on weekends. Furthermore, opportunities for women are created across locations, when they may be required to relocate due to personal reasons.

All the middle and hiring managers in the technology business have undergone workshops on understanding various nuances of gender biases and prejudices. We used theatre-based methodology to deliver this key message. To engage with such diverse workforce, we celebrate Women's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day and similar such days in all businesses. All our businesses have women network forums which enable women employees to connect with each other and also provide them a platform to share success stories and discuss issues of common interests, etc.

Sustaining Diversity and Inclusion

Every business at InterGlobe has a formal Diversity Council, comprising a Business Head, an HR head, and a Legal Head. This Council has been created to ensure diverse workforce and build an inclusive environment. It also addresses issues on harassment—verbal, mental or sexual in nature and discrimination that employees may raise. The focus of the organization towards supporting gender diversity can be seen through several aspects of employees' responses to various aspects around safety, work-life balance, and diversity of thought gathered during annual Engagement Surveys. The scores as given by employees have risen over the last year (Table 1).

Table 1: Results of Engagement Survey

	2013	2014
Work-life Balance	73%	80%
Safety	84%	91%
Diversity of thought	73%	79%

Note: * Top 2 Box score in the AoN Hewitt Employee Engagement Survey.

Countering Challenges in Our D&I Journey

InterGlobe has substantially grown over the last decade. Employees join the organization from differing geographies, sections of society, etc. and the level of sensitivity towards inclusion varies with every individual. Thus, ingraining inclusion in every employee's mind needs tremendous effort. It requires employees to unlearn multiple stereotypes and notions and re-learn how to adopt diversity and inclusion. One of the focus areas identified for the group companies is creating an impactful diversity and inclusion training that is not restricted to top level leaders and managers, but is applicable across all levels.

Lastly, there are also external challenges. The skewed gender mix is not only restricted to workplaces, but starts much earlier. In certain streams in the graduate and post-graduate programmes, women enrolment is still low. This challenge needs to be addressed, because of its overall impact on the recruitment scenario.

THE WAY AHEAD

InterGlobe has done well to ensure a healthy gender and regional diversity. However, this is not enough. There is still a large section of potential employees in the society that remains untapped. The company is exploring the idea of engaging employees who may be differently abled and from LGBT communities.

Having these employees on board would not only allow access to vast talent available but also help in creating an overall culture of 'care' and 'mutual respect'.

The second area being looked at is skill development for high potential women managers. The requirement for these women has increased peer level interactions that go beyond mere training programmes and allow for interaction with best practices in other workplaces

as well, that may not be limited to the travel industry. Creating an exchange programme, where talent could undertake short-term assignments, or undertake a

learning journey under the tutelage of senior women leaders, is definitely an intervention the group would like to introduce and take forward.

To See or Not to See: Inclusion of the LGBT Community

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Insights and Lessons from Organizations supporting the journey in workplaces

The idea of belonging and membership, being part of a community, is a basic human need. It's one of the principles of our democratic society. We all have the same needs, we want to be loved, we want to have friends, we want to feel that we are making a contribution in our families, in our communities…. We learn about understanding what someone's interests and point of view are by interacting with them. To include everyone is to open up those possibilities for learning and appreciating our humanity.

–Dr. Joseph Petner, Educator

In a recent research study that we conducted across 21 organizations ranging from small to medium and across industries, when asked to respond to current diversity concerns, merely 2 per cent of the sample spoke of promoting diversity with respect to sexual orientation. In most cases, it was never referred to and when specifically asked by the researchers, responses bordered around the 'Don't ask–Don't tell' rule.

Employers and managers are quick to point out that they do not discriminate on the basis of 'personal' choices. This is far from the truth from the perspective of the LGBT working in organizations. A study done by Mingle, the first of its kind in India, covering 455 employees who were either homosexual or bisexual[63], reported that when asked about facing discrimination from managers or company authorities because of their sexual orientation, 11 per cent responded as 'Often' and 9 per cent responded as 'Sometimes'. Data from a survey by Human Rights Campaign Foundation to study the

experiences of the LGBT community in America[64] also revealed that one in four employees reported staying in a job specifically because the environment was inclusive, 9 per cent quit because the environment was not accepting, 35 per cent felt compelled to lie about their personal lives at work; and a third felt distracted from the job at hand due to negative workplace environments.

It is also widely argued that one's sexual orientation is personal and does not belong to the workplace. However, if one reflects on workplace conversations— especially the ones that get people to form bonds and feel truly engaged with one another—many of them are in the realm of revealing to our co-workers who we are as people. Weekend plans, significant life events, light banter, and gossip are all such an ingrained part of our interactions that it is very easy to take it for granted for those whom the conversations are about their realities. When asked, over 80 per cent of non-LGBT workers report that conversations about social lives and relationships come up weekly and often daily. For any member of a work team to not fully engage in such conversations, either because they choose to remain closeted or the sense that it makes others uncomfortable, or because they feel judged, can have a painful, isolating impact. The study by Mingle pointed that of the employees who chose to remain closeted, 17 per cent felt it had a direct impact on their productivity and 33 per cent felt there was an indirect impact. Not feeling free to talk about themselves not only has an isolating effect but also creates a feeling of their career being stalled.[65] The sharing of all parts

[63] Mingle (2012). Annual LGBT Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Survey, 2011–12. Retrieved from http://mingle.org.in/pdf/LGBT-Workplace-Survey-2012-MINGLE.pdf

[64] Feedas, D., & Cooper, L. (2014). *The cost of the closet and the rewards of inclusion: Why the workplace environment for LGBT people matters to employers*. Human Rights Campaign. Retrieved 20 February 2015 from http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//files/assets/resources/Cost_of_the_Closet_May2014.pdf.

[65] Hewlett, S. A., & Sumberg, K. (2011). For LGBT workers, being 'out' brings advantages. *Harvard Business Review* (July). Retrived from: http://hbr.org/2011/07/for-lgbt-workers-being-out-brings-advantages

of self can foster trust and rapport and is an essential part of human interactions. Thus it can be argued that lack of openness around issues of inclusion of the LGBT community has an impact on productivity, retention, and employee engagement. In the competitive scenario faced by all organizations, is it really advisable to allow conditions that lead to a decrease in productivity?

A compelling reason for Indian organizations to consider inclusion of the LGBT community is that despite there being no legal framework within the country and the debate and outcry around Section 377, we are still being evaluated on global principles of diversity. The Human Rights Campaign Foundation's survey points out that while 61 per cent of the Fortune 500 US based companies had sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policy in 2002, the number is up to 91 per cent as on 2014.

The other factor is the changing face of the workforce. Millennials are increasingly becoming a large percentage of the employees and age levels are going down in Indian organizations. The millennials value diversity and are much more open about engaging in conversations around gender equality and sexuality.[66]

It would be important to point out to a recent trend of visible investments being made by Indian companies in reaching out to the LGBT consumers. The idea of attracting 'pink money' is seen clearly in the more recent marketing efforts. According to a report by Forbes India, with help from Out Now Consulting (a marketing consultancy specializing in this sector)[67], the percentage of Indian adult population that is LGBT amounts to 30 million people with annual earnings being close to ₹1.5 lakh crore. This articles notes that organizations today are seeing the benefit of being seen as LGBT friendly, given the greater disposable income of this group.

Making Workplaces More Inclusive

A resource guide created by *Community Business*[68] makes several recommendations for employers to help prepare the foundation and culture to promote the inclusion of the LGBT community. We provide a summary to help organizations wanting to include LGBT in their workforce.

1. Equal opportunity policies: Include equal opportunity for all regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression and procedures to prohibit discrimination or harassment based on the same.
2. Diversity training: Have specific reference to LGBT issues.
3. Diversity structure: Have at least an executive sponsor for LGBT issues and also establish a network when there is enough interest.
4. Benefits: Ensure that benefits to employees also cover the same-sex partners regardless of the employee's marital status, sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity.
5. Corporate culture: Have open communication through posters, emails, intranet, and meetings to portray how the company supports and values its LGBT workforce.
6. Market positioning: Engage in respectful and appropriate marketing to the LGBT community and use them as protagonists for marketing in India.
7. Monitoring: Keep a pulse on recruitment, career development, and employee engagement with respect to LGBT employees who choose to self-identify. Also, track the complaints or grievances involving LGBT employees
8. Community and advocacy: Be a visible role model for LGBT workplace equality by sharing best practices and also engaging in external LGBT-specific efforts (marketing or advertising, non-profit group, or public support for legal LGBT equality).

Shifts Seen in the Corporate Sector

Global business leaders must accept all the complications and challenging issues that surface if they are authentic with their efforts to build a truly inclusive work environment. You cannot rank someone else's inclusion...you cannot say gender is critical, culture is critical but LGBT… complicated so let's put it aside. As business leaders you are either in the game of true inclusion or not...you are in 100% or not...there is no middle ground'.

– Connie Wong, Founder and Managing Director
of CSW Associates Inc.[69]

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[66] Millennials: Diverse, connected, and committed to sexual health and rights. *Advocates for Youth.* Retrieved from: http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/press-room/millennials
[67] D'Souza, N., & Flock, E. (2015, June 26). The lure of the pink rupee. *Forbes India.* Retrieved from http://forbesindia.com/article/briefing/the-lure-of-the-pink-rupee/6652/1
[68] Community Business (2012). Creating inclusive workplaces for LGBT employees in India—A resource guide for employers, *Community Business.* Retrieved from http://www.outandequal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Community-Business-Inclusive-Workplace-India-2012.pdf

[69] Ibid.

In 2012, *Forbes* magazine reported that the HR departments of 11 top multinationals— including Goldman Sachs, the Royal Bank of Scotland, Cisco, Dell, Novell, General Electric, and Microsoft—came together at the Bengaluru campus of IBM to share best practices for fostering a culture of LGBT inclusion in their organizations[70]. Some of the positive initiatives that organizations have undertaken to promote LGBT Inclusion are presented below in the hope to provide pointers to employers undertaking this journey.

Having LGBT Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

In a society that is extremely queasy when talking of sexuality, the ERGs play a critical role in creating a supporting environment for the LGBT community. In the Mingle survey, 84 per cent of the respondents found ERGs as being very helpful. Where these groups do not exist, 86 per cent felt the need for one. One of the successful ERGs has been the one at IBM India. The organization has The Employee Alliance for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Empowerment at IBM (EAGLE at IBM), which is committed to promoting a safe and open working environment for all employees, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression[71]. The organization initiated a reverse mentoring project where members of EAGLE paired up with senior employees to discuss issues ranging from alternative sexuality, queer pride events to career advancement. According to KalpanaVeeraraghavan, the Workforce Diversity Manager in IBM India,[72]

> The project sensitizes workforce on inclusiveness of sexual inclinations. The unique gay-straight collaboration is aimed at building awareness about LGBTs among employees, who cannot easily correlate with people not conforming to hetero-normative behaviour. The conversations between mentors and mentees help segue naturally to other subjects like discussing their career paths.

Similarly, Infosys set up IGLU (Infosys Gay Lesbian Employees and You) in 2012, with the objective of creating a safe and respectful work environment for employees from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. There are several awareness programmes and exclusive events that are held to foster inclusion.[73]

Having an ALLY Network

Goldman Sachs launched its MD Ally Strategy in Asia Pacific in 2010. From 100 members in 2010, the number has grown to more than 300 today.[74] The goal was to communicate the support of the senior members to ensure that LGBT employees succeed in their chosen paths. A selected group of managing directors across the organization who pledged their support to the LGBT Network were listed in Goldman Sachs' LGBT Network website. Training materials were designed to help these managing directors understand the role of an MD Ally, as well as equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to advocate a work environment that respects, welcomes and supports LGBT professionals.

Giving Visibility to LGBT Inclusion in the Equal Opportunity Policy

Several organizations have in the last four years modified their policies to reflect their commitment to LGBT rights. For instance a short excerpt of British Council's equal opportunity statement reads: 'Our Equal Opportunity Policy commits us to ensuring that there is no unjustified discrimination in the recruitment, retention, training and development of staff on the basis of age, disability, gender including transgender, HIV/ AIDS status, marital status including civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, political opinion, race/ ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, spent convictions, trade union activity or membership, work pattern and on the basis of having or not having dependents or any other irrelevant grounds.'[75] Similarly, given Accenture's Meritocracy Policy which is based on sexual and gender orientation,

[70] Inamdar, N. (2013). India is an outlier on gay rights. *Business Standard*, December 12. Retrieved from http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/india-is-an-outlier-on-gay-rights-113121200332_1.html

[71] Eagle at IBM. Retrieved from http://home.earthlink. net/~eagleibm/

[72] Phadnis, S. (2012, December 26). India Inc. creates inclusive HR policies for LGBT community. *TNN*. Retrieved from http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/India-Inc-creates-inclusive-HR-policies-for-LGBT-community/articleshow/17761870.cms

[73] Retrieved from http://www.infosys.com/sustainability/diversity/

[74] Goldman Sachs, *Allies campaign, India*. Retrieved from http://www.lgbtinclusiveasia.org/2013/06/goldman-sachs-allies-campaign-india

[75] Community Business (2012). Creating inclusive workplaces for LGBT employees in India, *Community Business*, October. Retrieved from http://www.outandequal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Community-Business-Inclusive-Workplace-India-2012.pdf

Accenture India also follows its global policy towards LGBT professionals. HR policy of CITI bank India has a provision to protect rights of LGBT group.[76]

Promoting Awareness

The LGBT Network and Office of Global Leadership and Diversity in collaboration with Goldman Sachs University, organizes numerous LGBT related events throughout the year, giving employees plenty of opportunities to learn about LGBT issues. The network has its own website and a newsletter which it uses to share upcoming events and ways that employees can create a more inclusive workplace for LGBT employees. *Humsafar* trust has in the past staged a one act play *MadhavBagh* which shows a mother coming to terms with her child's sexuality. The play has been used as a fulcrum in the corporates (Goldman Sachs, Infosys, and Google) to invite a dialogue amongst people in the audience. Given that the audience is a mix of people who are from the sexual minority community and other people who are interested in the subject, the dialogue helps break the ice to bring up taboo issues which usually don't get discussed at the workplace.

Public Support

Beyond communicating its commitment to LGBT inclusion internally, another avenue for organizations is through active participation in public forums held for and by the LGBT community. For instance, through Gayglers (the employee resource group of LGBT Googlers and their allies), employees of Google from all over India travelled to join the Pride March in Bengaluru in November 2012.[77] Another example is the work done by the Godrej group that hosts *Kashish*, an LGBT film festival that is also supported by other corporates such as Barclays and IBM. Godrej more recently hosted a national conference by Mission for Indian Gay and Lesbian Empowerment

(MINGLE), an organization that aims to groom young people for positions of leadership.[78]

IN CONCLUSION

There have been some winds of positive change for the transgender community in the recent past in India. Be it the appointment of the first transgender college principal in a women's university in Kolkata, or having a transgender anchoring a daily television news, and a transgender mayor in Chhattisgarh. The gay, lesbian and bisexual community is yet to celebrate such public victories in a society that treats homosexuality as being immoral and illegal. With the cloak of silence that has covered the issues for a long time slowly falling, it's time for corporate India to actively address LGBT inclusion. In doing so, we would not be addressing issues merely around sexual orientation but about something as fundamental as one's identity. There is support available from NGOs focusing on LGBT rights—HumsafarTrust in Mumbai and SwabhavaTrust in Bengaluru to name a few. There are lessons to be learned from organizations who are the forerunners in this journey.

Inclusion had been a front-burner agenda in corporate India perhaps only in the past decade. While gender diversity has been treated as the low-hanging fruit in this journey, advocates of diversity and inclusion are slowly admitting that inclusion can never happen if one is focused on labels of gender, race, region, and abilities. To be truly inclusive, one has to embrace it in its true spirit—to be respectful and accepting of the more invisible indicators of diversity. In being willing to break the silence around homosexuality and extending visible support and acceptance of the LGBT community, perhaps corporate India can pave the way to create a more inclusive world, a world in which the LGBT community lives, as expressed in the words of the great poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, 'Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high'.

[76] Guha Thakurta, S. (2015). LGBT community and their workplace problems. *Project Guru*, May 19. Retrieved from http://www.projectguru.in/publications/lgbt-community-and-their-daily-workplace-problems

[77] LGBT Inclusive Workplaces: An online resource for companies in Asia. Retrieved from http://www.lgbtinclusiveasia.org/2013/03/461/

[78] *Economic Times* (2015). Equality at work, Godrej group promotes LGBT inclusivity, *Economic Times*, 3 April. Retrieved from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-03/news/60787277_1_lgbt-film-festival-lgbt-community-nisaba-godrej

Challenging the Real Barriers: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

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The World Report on Disability, jointly published by the WHO and the World Bank, suggests that more than a billion people in the world today experience disability.[79] It argues that persons with disabilities are capable of productive employment with the support of aids and yet their employment rate is 60 per cent lower, on an average, than the general non-disabled population.

In India, no data on disability was collected until 2001 as part of the 10-year census.[80] In the 2011 census, the classification of disabilities was introduced to collect specific data on the type of disabilities. However, the census reveals underreporting of PWDs. In 2011 census data, only 2.1 per cent of the population is reported as PWD compared to the global estimates of 10–15 per cent. The majority (75 per cent) of those reported as PWD resided in rural areas. Furthermore, out of 70 million people that are estimated to be living with disability in India, only 1,00,000 have found jobs.[81]

At the practice level, only very few organizations in India have recognized the need to tap into the vast resource pool of PWDs. Three of the six organizations represented in this colloquium have put effort in looking at the reality and addressing the needs of differently-abled people in their inclusion agenda. However, several organizations still have concerns which prevent them from hiring people with disabilities. The concerns range from lack of awareness (of what constitutes disability), to conscious and unconscious biases around the perceived capability of PWDs, and practical apprehensions on the effort and investment required to make workplaces disabled-friendly.

The National Centre for the Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP)[82] conducted a survey of 'top 100 multinational companies' in India in 1999 and found that the rate of employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector was a mere 0.28 per cent, 0.05 per cent in multinational companies, and only 0.58 per cent in the top 10 IT companies in the country. A similar study conducted by NCPEDP in 2009 shows that there has been a marginal increase since then. In the public sector, it averages between 1 to 2 per cent and in the private sector between 0.5 to 1 per cent. On an average, for all types of disabilities (which includes visual, hearing, locomotor, and mental disabilities), 73.6 per cent of the population is out of the labour force (Shenoy, 2011).[83] Many organizations in India Inc. have started to address employment of PWDs under the aegis of CSR initiatives, affirmative action, etc. There is also a marked increase in awareness to create inclusive spaces for the differently-abled population in educational institutions, hospitality industry, and hospitals. IT and ITES organizations too have made some headway in this area. In most progressive organizations hiring PWDs, commitment from the senior management, exhaustive sensitization and messaging, and ensuring accessibility are the common threads contributing to the success of the efforts.[84]

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[79] World Health Organization and World Bank (2011).*World Report on Disability*, Retrieved from http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf. 12 June 2015.

[80] Central Statistics Office (2011). *Disability in India—A Statistical Profile*. New Delhi: Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India. Retrieved 28 May 2015 from http://mospi.nic.in/Mospi_New/upload/disablity_india_statistical_profile_17mar11.html

[81] International Labour Organization. Facts ondisability in the world of work. Retrieved 28 May 2015 from http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_087707.pdf

[82] National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (n.d.). Retrieved 30 December 2014 from http://www.ncpedp.org/

[83] Shenoy, M. (2011). *Persons with disability and the India labor market: Challenges and opportunities.* International Labour Organization. Retrieved 24 May 2015 from http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_229259.pdf

[84] IIMA (2015, May). *Inclusion in India Inc.—Diversity, the core of our cultural fabric* (Research Report), Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad and BizDivas).

A BUSINESS CASE FOR HIRING PWDS

The exclusion of PWDs from work force leads to an estimated $1.37 to $194 trillion worth of annual loss in GDP.[85] With the number of PWDs in India estimated to be at 70 million, it is a significantly large 'minority' group seeking employment.

In the last decade, there has been a change in the legal scenario, nationally and internationally, for promotion of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. In India, the applicable legislation is the Persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, Protection of Rights, Full Participation) Act, 1995.[86] According to the PWD Act, 3 per cent of all categories of jobs in the government sector are reserved for PWDs, and it provides employment incentives for public and private sector companies that have at least 5 per cent of their workforce comprising persons with disabilities. Employment reservation in the government sector is applicable for only three types of disabilities—locomotive, hearing, and visual impairments. Until two decades ago, the reservation was only for the C and D (support staff) categories of jobs. It was only in 1995 that reservations were extended to category A and B (officer level) jobs. Under programmes like MGNREGA (Specific Needs of Special Categories under MGNREGA, 2010),[87] the guidelines specify that suitable work should be provided for persons with disabilities, but in practice there is limited understanding about what kinds of jobs they can do and what support can be provided to enhance the opportunities for the disabled. In the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill (RPDB) 2014, a reservation of 6 per cent in all jobs has been proposed. It may thus be argued that it makes eminent business sense to hire PWDs because it complies with the law of the land and the government rewards businesses for doing so.

Beyond the legal considerations, there have been extensive surveys in the West in the last decade on tracking organizational impact of hiring PWDs on productivity, work culture and workforce morale. Data from these research studies indicates lesser absenteeism, higher productivity, and better retention of employees with disability. An AIF survey[88] done across 12 employers across industries that maintained a positive track record with respect to hiring and retaining PWDs revealed several business benefits such as:

- Higher customer footfall in retail outlets
- Higher level of motivation among other peers
- Better business results
- Negligible attrition rates.

Besides implications on employment, the social circles of PWDs, which includes families and friends, also constitutes a significantly large consumer base for organizations. Even at the macro level, optimizing all human resources at national level is crucial for overall productivity as a nation.

The road towards hiring and integrating PWD is paved with manifold challenges.

CHALLENGES AT THE GROUND LEVEL IN HIRING PWD

As in the case of inclusion efforts with respect to any of the 'minority groups', individual biases pose the biggest road block when it comes to hiring PWDs. Paternalistic attitudes of managers and custodians of mainstream organizations influence decisions of what work the people can do and how they can perform to the best of their ability, and often is not based on a discussion with the PWDs. Rama Chari of DEOC (Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre), shares, 'At times even the NGOs working with PWDs along with the corporates believe that PWDs are best suited to do desk jobs and can at best become data operators. The prevailing mindset is that the differently-abled people will not be able to "cope" with the environment or the job description'.

The second challenge is that many organizations take on the agenda of hiring PWDs as a feel-good or charity. In fact many organizations hire PWDs as part of fulfilling their CSR agenda. Organizations follow a piecemeal approach and hire only to meet some internal targets and do not look at the inclusion of PWD in letter and spirit. Therefore, the cause of integrating PWD

[85] Metts, R. L. (2000). *Disability issues, trends and recommendations for the World Bank.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

[86] The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act (1995). Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India. Retrieved 29 December 2014 from http://www.ccdisabilities.nic.in/page.php?s=reg&t=pb&p=pwd_act

[87] Members of Working Group on Specific needs of specific category of workers (2010). *Specific Needs of Special Categories under MGNREGA.* Retrieved 13 May 2015 from http://nrega.nic.in/CEGC/SpecificNeedsofSpecialCategories.pdf.

[88] American India Foundation (2014). *Best practices in employment of people with disabilities in the private sector in India.* New Delhi: American India Foundation.

gets diluted with spurts of action and lacks long-term sustained changes in the work structure and culture.

Socially, people without disabilities also tend to rationalize feelings of pity towards those with disabilities by reducing contact and distancing themselves, both physically and emotionally, from the concerned individuals to avoid discomfort. This also makes members of the PWD feel uncomfortable and their discomfort creates a downward spiral in building long-last relationships. Lack of education about PWD and openness towards differences contribute to this dynamic.

Inaccessibility is another barrier when it comes to inclusion of PWDs in the workplace. Changes in the physical infrastructure come with significant repercussions in terms of cost and effort. A group of architects and social work professionals working out of Ahmedabad-run detailed disability audits of building and workplaces for nominal charges.[89] Geeta Sharma, working in Unnati, Ahmedabad and part of the group shares her experience: 'Compared to the situation 10 years ago, organizations are now a little more open to having accessibility audits done to assess their built environments; however, since most people still continue to think that accessible designs are required only for persons with disabilities who are not so visible in public spaces, they do not feel motivated enough to make modifications even if they get an access audit done. The reality is that use of accessible features benefits more than 60 per cent of the population, including senior citizens, children, persons with temporary disabilities, persons carrying luggage and many more'. Transport is another barrier—it is either not provided by the organization or the public transport and private vehicles are not disabled-friendly.

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES

A consistent theme in the literature on accommodating persons with disabilities is that of rehabilitation and reasonable accommodation.[90] The rehabilitation literature looks at the factors affecting the inclusion of employees with disabilities in the work environment.

Failure to provide the needed accommodation for a qualified individual can be legally viewed as discrimination. Reasonable accommodation may include providing assistance or making such changes in the job or workplace environment that will enable the person/employee to perform his/her role. This may include making physical alterations like providing for an accessible toilet, providing reading software for persons with visual impairment or providing for materials in large print for persons with low vision, and constructing a ramp or lowering a desktop to accommodate a person using a wheelchair.[91]

For ensuring non-discrimination and easy assimilation of differently abled work force, job descriptions could have a more thorough skill mapping with all the job requirements. This gives the applicant a clear picture and helps them assess their capacity to take on the job instead of the organization taking a biased, ill-informed view of the same. Also an in-depth sensitization programme goes a long way in promoting dialogue and dispelling myths around disabilities. Collaborating with capacity-building organizations can help corporates bring in the right kind of sensitization training to promote its inclusion efforts.

Having a more holistic view of accessibility is another area that needs to be addressed. A report prepared by DEOC (Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre) on behalf of CII,[92] after collating the critical aspects, has offered the following suggestions for organizations:

- Put in place an overarching equal opportunity policy
- Have a look at the accessibility of all physical facilities—from the parking lot, office spaces, entrances, stairways and elevators to the cafeteria and washroom facilities
- Arrange for accessible transport to reach the workplace and move around in the office premises
- Assess the suitability of furniture, fixtures and flooring for suitability for PWDs
- Ensure all communication (for instance using e-formats, audio formats, sign language, braille, subtitling films, etc.) is converted into formats that are accessible by PWDs

[89] Unnati (2008).*Civil society engagement for mainstreaming disability in development process* (Report of an action research project initiated in Gujarat with multi-stakeholder partnership). Retrieved 28 December 2014 from http://www.unnati.org/pdfs/books/Mainstreaming%20Disabilitydec2008_LR.pdf

[90] Loy, B. (2014). *Workplace accommodations: Low cost, high impact*. Retrieved 12 May 2015 from http://askjan.org/media/lowcos-thighimpact.html

[91] Goodman, N. R. (2013). Taking diversity and inclusion initiatives global. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, *45*(3), 180–183.

[92] DEOC and CII (2009). *The why and how of employing persons with disability*. Retrieved 28 May 2015 from http://www.cii.in/webcms/upload/cii%20manual.pdf

- Evaluate feasibility of safety and emergency evacuation processes for PWDs. Also conduct drills to train PWDs
- Make available the assistive technology when possible (accessing the website, computers, software programmes)
- Conduct regular access audits to identify issues that may inhibit PWDs from full participation.

The above suggestions are in conformity with the United Nations Convention of Rights with Disabilities.[93]

In addition to hiring PWDs, organizations can actively engage in proactively training and developing their talent. Research also shows that this is a winning strategy for both groups. Such projects can be taken in conjunction with NGOs and educational institutes working with PWDs. The training can be a multipronged approach that looks at developing technical and social skills among the disabled. For instance, Blind People's Association, Ahmedabad, has started an employment cell to provide employment across disabilities, with a specific focus on women with disabilities and attempts to create employment opportunities for employment and self-employment in public and private sectors. Similarly ADAPT (Abled, Disabled, All People Together, earlier called Spastics Society of India) provides education and training to promote employment, entrepreneurship skills, and income generation for persons with disabilities. Supporting these programmes with inputs on both technical and social skills can create effective bridges between the PWD community and employers.

In addition to the efforts that have been highlighted in the organizational stories in this colloquium, we would also like to highlight some of the impactful work done for inclusion of the PWDs in other Indian organizations.

Mphasis

Headquartered in Bengaluru, with operations across 19 countries, Mphasis is a leading IT solutions provider, offering applications, business process outsourcing (BPO), and infrastructure services globally through a combination of technology knowhow, domain, and process expertise. Some of the practices at Mphasis that

reflects the organization's commitment of inclusion of PWDs are:[94]

- *Setting up of a non-discrimination policy*: Non discrimination policy states that 'no person is discriminated against in employment because of race or ethnic orientation, colour, marital status, parental status, ancestry, source of income, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability or physical impairment, medical condition or veteran status under the law'.(reference)
- *Working on the supply side*: To attract and mainstream people with disabilities into its workforce, the company has incorporated a statement of diversity inclusion in both its internal and external recruitment practices.
- *Reasonable accommodation*: For example, the company provides screen magnifiers and screen reading software to employees with visual disabilities, arranges transportation, such as pick-up and drop-off services to and from home, and offers sign language interpretation and provides flexible working hours.
- *Create awareness and propose solutions:* To make it possible for the PWD to be included in the workforce, Mphasis has been involved in several community outreach programmes:[95]
  - o Kickstart Cabs by Wheels of Change - Kickstart is a first of its kind service that promotes equitable transportation for individuals with any kind of mobility restrictions with cabs fully remodelled with rotating seats and enough room for smooth entry and exit of wheelchairs and other assistive devices.
  - o Office of Disability Services (ODS) at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIMB) – ODS, aims at ensuring good educational experience for students with disabilities, works with students, faculty and administrative staff to generate awareness, make reasonable accommodation, provide academic material in accessible formats, provide scribes, readers and other support, ensure non-discriminatory admission process, and assist with placement.
  - o Project Communicate by EnAble India- This training focuses on elements of written and

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[93] United Nations (2006). *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities*. Retrieved 20 May 2015 from http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml

[94] International Labour Office (2010). *Disability in the workplace: Company practices* (Working Paper). Retrieved 20 May 2015 from http://www.businessanddisability.org/images/pdf/disability_workplace.pdf

[95] Retrieved from http://csr.mphasis.com/initiatives

spoken communication, analytical skills, and technical skills including fundamentals of computers and personality development. Out of 124 candidates sponsored for training by the company, 76 have been placed in Mphasis in various roles.

o   Enhancing Employment Capabilities of Deaf Youth - The aim of this project was to build employability through English literacy and life skill training. Mphasis F1 Foundation has supported 3 batches of 750 deaf youth between 2010 and 2013, and 25 per cent of them have found suitable jobs with 23 of them working in Mphasis Pune.

Microsign Products[96]

Established in 1979 in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, Microsign Products commenced its operations with products used in electronic industries and subsequently switched over to meet the requirements of automobile, defence, telecommunication, and packaging industries. And, in 2015, it is the market leader in Western India as the seller of its products to large companies such as Honda, Tata's, and Siemens. Half of the workforce at Microsign is comprised of PWD, including deaf and dumb, mentally challenged, and orthopedically challenged. Microsign's inclusion efforts are clearly reflected in:

- *Part of the mission and vision statement*: Its business goals are quality, precision, reliability, and its social goals are 'ABLE THE DISABLED' and remove personal, physical, and economic barriers in their social standing.
- *Recruitment approach:* Bhavnagar has two prominent schools for deaf and mute whose students get a chance to train at Microsign. Some of the trainees stay on and have continued to become full-time employees.
- *Training:* The new recruits are asked to observe employees at work at the plant for a week and are assigned work in their chosen function. They are then trained by the existing team.
- *Job allocation:* Each employee is assigned tasks that are most suited to their capabilities. Each task has its own demands and sometimes the disability of the

person could serve as an ability to do the task better. For example, a deaf person placed at an injection unit does not get affected by the noise and thus takes fewer breaks and displays sharper concentration. The mentally challenged people are assigned repetitive tasks, such as packaging, as repetition is therapeutic for them. In the packaging department, 7 out of the 10 people working are mentally challenged.

Based on the work that has happened in Microsign, the CEO Nisheeth shares, 'with suitable modifications in the job context, persons with disabilities who have the right attitude and requisite skills, can perform'. He confidently adds, 'Now I know that there is nothing such as abled and disabled. The disabled have some abilities and the abled have other disabilities'.

CONCLUSION

When it comes to inclusion of PWDs in organization, the discourse needs to change from hiring differently abled people as a charitable gesture to being able to understand and highlight the business case supporting the cause. Having brought in a certain number of PWDs into the workforce, the challenge is then to help the latter 85 per cent of people *not* living with disabilities or the non-disabled segment of the population to understand the challenges that their co-workers face on a regular basis.

Some possible directions for strengthening inclusive practices with regard to disability include:

- Developing capabilities of persons with disabilities to better negotiate for their rights, themselves.
- Making the terms and conditions of work and employment fair and favourable for persons with disabilities.
- Empowering persons with disabilities to work better by allowing job shadowing and mentoring by internal employees and with special educators/ trainers.
- Upscaling efforts for inclusion by documenting them, creating best practices, and creating wider dialogue with various institutions.
- Building an emancipatory research agenda to investigate the lived experiences of persons with disabilities in various walks of life, particularly those of women with disabilities in rural areas.

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[96]   Business Case prepared by Neharika Vohra and Siddharth Saxena, June 2015.

Making Inclusion Happen: What Truly Matters

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From the colloquium and the extant research on diversity and inclusion, it is clear that when organizations begin to create a diverse workforce, they realize that unless efforts are made to include the different people, diversity per se would not be able to make much contribution. The need to include arises from the response humans have to something that they see as being different. Most people are most comfortable with those who are like them.

From this colloquium, we can say that the following efforts seem to be common in most organizations:

- Defining and communicating a clear business case that supports the need for a diverse work force.
- Aiming mainly to first improve gender diversity and then shifting focus on to other aspects of diversity—regional, generational, differently abled people and in some rare cases, the LGBT community.
- Identifying champions mainly in the senior leadership team to communicate the intent and to drive efforts for supporting diversity and inclusion.
- Looking at a range of interventions to increase sensitization—at times focused on specific groups—like recruitment team, people managers and at times, to reach out to the entire organization to address unconscious biases and acts of exclusion. While the programmes are quite robust, all the organizations spoke of ensuring that these are done on a continuous and sustained basis.
- Being unapologetic in supporting unique needs of the diversity—could be with respect to gender, religion, or physical needs.
- Highlighting the diversity in the culture and celebrating it—through festivals or hosting forums and talks on aspects of inclusion.
- Having zero tolerance policy towards exclusion and having mechanisms that make it safe and possible to highlight and address issues of exclusion, harassment, and discrimination.
- Measuring diversity and inclusion—be it in terms of continuously monitoring the demographics at different levels to using employee surveys to assess employee perceptions and engagement around inclusion and feeling a sense of belonging.
- Identifying collaborators in the larger eco-system—the NGOs and community-based organizations working with specific groups. Also a willingness to share practices and learn from the experiences of other corporates doing focused work around diversity and inclusion.

The above are some of the lessons that can be learnt by organizations who are beginning their efforts in ensuring inclusion or have made a serious commitment to D&I. In addition, as organizations move towards diversity and inclusion, they also realize that one size may not fit all in attempting to include different minority groups. As Derven's research indicates, diversity and inclusion initiatives must be adapted to each region, requiring a multi-faceted approach across the organization's policies and practices.[97] Taking an ethno-centric approach for driving diversity and inclusion initiatives globally has been cautioned as a sure recipe for failure.[98] It is important to recognize that dimensions of diversity vary in scope and importance across cultures and organizational leaders need to be aware of them in their initiatives. Just this fact challenges those involved in the diversity and inclusion initiative to be creative, open and flexible in their approaches, programmes, and policies.

On the basis of our research, reading, and discussions about inclusion with organizations, we paint a word picture of what a truly inclusive organization[99] would look like:

- The climate is characterized by transparency and fairness and there is focus on skills and competencies

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[97] Derven, M. (2014). Diversity and inclusion by design: Best practices from six global companies. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, *46*(2), 8491

[98] Goodman, N. R. (2013). Taking diversity and inclusion initiatives global. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, *45*(3), 180–183.

[99] *Inclusion in India Inc.: Diversity, the core of our cultural fabric*: A research report by IIMA in collaboration with BizDivas. Retrieved from http://www.bizdivas.in/Inclusion-in-India_Web.pdf

of employees rather than in whom the competency resides.

- The labels of skills, competence, citizenship, and roles can coexist with identities such as gender, regions, and special needs.

- Inclusion efforts are not directed towards one particular community or group but are reflected in respectful and supportive practices towards all individuals irrespective of gender, community, age, sexual preferences, and unique needs.

- Leaders demonstrate through their actions, belief in and commitment to diversity, creating opportunities for dialogue about differences, and when required, even alter rules and norms to accommodate differences.

- Employees are able to bring their whole selves to the organization, expressing and giving voice in an unhindered way to ensure effective problem solving, decision making, creativity, and enhanced performance in multiple ways.

- The policies and processes bear a stamp of the diverse needs and perspectives that exist in the organization.

- The employee is seen as a whole person with a life outside the workplace as well.

- It is explicitly recognized that all employees have peaks and troughs – in some cases it is predictable (as seen often in the case of women employees) and at times it is sudden (as can happen to anyone—man or woman—given their own personal responsibilities, needs, and aspirations). Recognizing this, the system extends empathy and the expected support rather than imputing motive to their commitment and abilities when the person going through the trough.

- A sense of belonging is created and experienced not by dismissing but by celebrating the uniqueness among individuals.

- There is an active checking of a predominantly dominant (in most cases masculine) discourse, for example, 'I know everything, I need no help, I can win if I try hard, I need to compete to get ahead'— and alternative discourses are encouraged, for example, 'I do not know everything, I may need help, I can win if we all try hard, I need to collaborate to get ahead'.

- The focus is to be natural rather than correct. For example, it is natural to be curious but correct to not show curiosity.

- The merging of being natural and respect creates an environment of joy and exploration rather than a climate of being proper and constrained as created by correctness and rule obeisance.

- There is a willingness to accept openly the presence of biases and shortcuts in judgements and recognize when it comes in the way of limiting another person's potential and capability.

- Conflicts and complaints arising out of perception of biases of others are openly discussed and not brushed under the carpet.

- Inclusiveness is a way of life and not something nice to do when the going is good for the organization and put on the back-burner when there is a crisis in the organization.

In conclusion, we raise some other questions that we believe individuals involved in diversity and inclusion efforts within organizations and researchers need to work with:

- What differences are we willing to address in our attempts towards inclusion? In what ways could we move beyond the obvious labels such as gender and ability to some of the more invisible differences?

- To what extent are we willing to acknowledge the impact of our larger social structures and realities on our efforts of creating a diverse workplace? Some realities of the Indian socio-cultural fabric— say caste dynamics or socio-economic status— seem to not find adequate visibility in the conversations and efforts that Indian organizations are putting. In most cases, organizations do not capture caste as part of their demographics. However, the reality is that even if organizations do not acknowledge it, people know caste and how it may be leading to dynamics that might be exclusionary of people belonging to some castes and socio economic status. Only a few organizations are making the effort to provide opportunities for people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to find work in the organization.

- Besides the structured processes and mechanisms to promote D&I, what could be some creative ways in which the spirit behind the thought of diversity is promoted among employees across the organization?

- What could be ways of acknowledging and benefiting from our intrinsic ability as Indians to live, interact, and prosper in a diverse community? Or even to use the premium that our culture places on relationships to facilitate inclusion interventions?

- How do we keep everyone continually engaged in the organization? What could we do to make everyone experience that inclusion does not benefit just a select few but when embraced in its entirety serves for everyone's and a larger good.

There clearly is a need to have more open authentic conversations to move towards this ideal. These conversations would perhaps help promote the existing discourse that support inclusion and also derive inputs, to strengthen interventions driving inclusion. In closing, we share this excerpt from Margaret Wheatley's book, *Turning to one another: Simple conversations to restore hope to the future:*

Ask 'What is possible?' not 'What's wrong?'

Keep asking. Notice what you care about. Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters. Talk to people you know. Talk to people you don't know. Talk to people you never talk to. Be intrigued by the differences you hear. Expect to be surprised. Treasure curiosity more than certainty. Invite in everybody who cares to work on what's possible. Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something. Know that creative solutions come from new connections. Remember, you don't fear people whose story you know. Real listening always brings people closer together. Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.Quidempo rerion