

Broadening perspectives

A diverse and inclusive workplace has many tangible benefits

INTERVIEWED BY ADAM BURROUGHS

A narrowed definition of diversity typically refers to differences in race, age, gender and sexual orientation. However, it has evolved to include diversity of thought, experience, ability, personality and communication style.

“The broadened sense of the term is an attempt to convey that everyone is different and those differences help drive business results,” says Tiffany Short, Director of Organizational Effectiveness at Corporate College, a division of Cuyahoga Community College.

Businesses have gotten better at hiring for diversity, but there is a need to foster an inclusionary work environment through practices and company norms to ensure those differences are welcomed and the benefits can be realized.”

Smart Business spoke with Short about the state of diversity and inclusion in the region’s businesses, and how to activate a diverse workforce.

How well is the concept of diversity and inclusion being realized in area businesses?

Organizations understand that diversity and inclusion are not just about recruiting and hiring. They’re going a step further and shifting their cultures to be more inclusive, which requires companies to understand where they are, envision where they want to go, and drive toward change. Leveraging diversity and inclusion assessments to gauge employees’ level of engagement and experiences at work will provide companies with insight on areas that need to be improved to create a more inclusive work environment. In addition, offering robust training to help employees and managers to collaborate, communicate and navigate conflict will serve them well in creating a respectful and civil work environment.

TIFFANY SHORT, MS, SPHR
Director of Organizational Effectiveness
Corporate College, a division
of Cuyahoga Community College

(216) 987-5907

WEBSITE: Learn more about Tri-C’s Organizational Development program by visiting the Corporate College website at tri-c.edu/corporatecollege.

Insights Education is brought to you by **Cuyahoga Community College**



Northeast Ohio companies are getting there, but it takes time to fully realize the results. These initiatives need to be woven into the fabric of the company as a business imperative.

How do the principles of diversity and inclusion benefit a business?

Bringing together people with diverse perspectives and backgrounds leads to more creative and innovative solutions, and evidence suggests there are dollars associated with embracing these initiatives. A 2015 McKinsey & Co. analysis found that ethnically diverse companies are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.

What are companies doing to ensure their recruiting methods reach and appeal to a diverse population of candidates?

Many companies are adjusting their recruiting methods. Some are integrating images of a diverse range of people into their website and other digital portals, designating sections describing their company’s culture and commitment to diversity and inclusion, and being transparent on what they are doing to foster an inclusive work environment, all of which applicants look for before applying.

In addition, companies are starting to expand the locations where they recruit,

and are partnering with schools to create a direct link to minority students to apply for open positions.

Often organizations are under pressure to quickly fill open positions. When they plan ahead, they can think strategically about where to focus their efforts and how to expand that recruitment net. Otherwise they tend to stay with what’s worked in past.

Once a position is filled, companies can improve retention through mentoring programs and employee resource networks, both of which help increase engagement and establish an inclusive environment.

How can companies get the most out of a diverse employee population?

Much of it is about being aware of our own unconscious and personal biases and how they affect our interactions and decision-making at work. In addition, companies can invest in and utilize diversity training as a method to reinforce the policies and practices that lead to more desirable behaviors and positive team dynamics.

Creating an inclusive environment that embraces and welcomes all employees enables them to bring their diverse knowledge and skills to the table. Claiming to be diverse isn’t enough. Be proactive through assessments, training and strategic recruiting efforts to diversify and improve workforce engagement. ●