



Module 2 (Part 1) Inclusive Leadership Skills

Part 1: Prepare for Real Inclusive Change Through Top Level Leadership



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Discover the DARE Modules Learning Pathway:

Enjoy our learning blocks designed to help SMEs build diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces. Unlock the power of how DEI to drive the sustainable success of your company. Our practical and interactive Modules deliver real life insights and case studies from a European perspective – Join us in creating workplaces and communities where everyone can thrive!

MODULE 1

Introduction: Diversities Reviving European Enterprises

Key Features: Overview and definitions of D&I in SMEs. 12 Dimensions of Diversity. Learning key competencies for business case delivery.

Part 1: Why D&I Matters for SMEs.
Part 2: Building D&I Competencies for SMEs.

MODULE 2

Inclusive Leadership Skills

Key Features: Develop inclusive leadership skills (e.g., Bias awareness and mitigation). Tap into the power of neurodiversity. Measure impact and build resilience.

Part 1: Prepare for Inclusive Change Through Leadership.
Part 2: Unlock Inclusive Leadership & Neurodiversity.
Part 3: Measure Leadership Impact & Build Resilience.

MODULE 3

Inclusive Talent Management for SMEs

Key Features: Inclusive advertising, recruitment and retention. Performance management and leadership succession planning.

Part 1: Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Diverse Talent.
Part 2: Creating Inclusive Job Descriptions & Adverts.
Part 3: Inclusive Selection, Interviewing, and Offer Strategies.
Part 4: Employee Talent Development and Retention.
Part 5: Performance Management and Feedback.
Part 6: Succession Planning and Leadership Development.

MODULE 6

Inclusive Community Engagement for SMEs

Key Features: Learn the six core principles of inclusive community engagement. Understand the four layers to community context and prepare an effective Engagement Framework and Action Plan.

Part 1: Foundations of Inclusive Community Engagement.
Part 2: Understand & Engage Your Community.
Part 3: Ensuring Inclusive Engagement through Shared Value.
Part 4: Prepare for an Effective Community Engagement Framework.
Part 5: Create a Community Engagement Framework & Action Plan.

MODULE 5

Inclusive Marketing For SMEs

Key Features: Embed inclusivity into branding. Understand the needs of diverse audiences. Craft strategic inclusive marketing campaigns.

Part 1: The Power of Inclusive Marketing for SME Brands.
Part 2: Understand Your Customers and Overcome Marketing Barriers.
Part 3: Crafting Inclusive Marketing Campaigns.

MODULE 4

Building an Inclusive Company Culture in SMEs

Key Features: Build an inclusive company culture. Design and deliver a strategic cultural change audit, review policies and practices and empower teams through reward and recognition.

Part 1: Understand and Build an Inclusive Company Culture.
Part 2: Design and Deliver a Strategic Cultural Change Audit.
Part 3: Support Management in Creating a Workplace of Belonging.
Part 4: From Policies to Practice: Cultivating a Culture of Inclusion.
Part 5: Empower Teams Through DEI Collaboration, ERGs, and Recognition.

YOU ARE HERE

Introduction DARE to Module 2

These five key sections show leaders how they can embed D&I into their management practices.

SECTION 1 highlights the role of top leadership in creating a competitive advantage through D&I. Use the DARE Assessment to inform your D&I strategy.

SECTION 2 focuses on creating a proactive, purpose-driven D&I strategy by setting measurable goals and ensuring company-wide buy-in.

SECTION 3 equips leaders with the skills to build inclusive teams by managing biases and embracing neurodiversity to drive team success.

SECTION 4 teaches you how to measure leadership impact on D&I using the SMART framework and develop crisis management strategies.

SECTION 5 revisits measuring D&I leadership impact and provides crisis management solutions to build SME resilience through inclusive leadership.

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Inclusive Leadership Skills

Prepare for Real Inclusive Change Through Top Level Leadership (Module 1: Part 1)

Develop A Purpose Driven High Impact D&I Strategy (Module 1: Part 1)

Unlock Your Inclusive Leadership and Tap Into the Power of Neurodiversity.
(Module 1: Part 2)

Measuring Leadership Impact on D&I
(Module 1: Part 3)

D&I Crisis Management & Resilience Strategies (Module 1: Part 3)

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

M2: Part 1 Section 1

SECTION 1 explores the transformative role that top-level leadership plays in driving meaningful Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) change within SMEs. You'll learn how embracing D&I not only creates an inclusive culture but also delivers a competitive advantage, propelling your business toward greater innovation and success. Learn the profound impact of D&I across all levels of your company and why leadership commitment is essential for creating lasting change. You will have the opportunity to assess how inclusive your SME currently is by completing the DARE Assessment, which will provide valuable insights to guide your D&I strategy. This module will equip you to lead your company towards inclusivity.

Contents to Section 1

01

Prepare for Real Inclusive Change Through Top Level Leadership

How D&I Rewards and Delivers Competitive Advantage to SMEs

The Impact of D&I Across All Levels and Why Leadership is a Prerequisite

Assess How Inclusive You Currently Are by Completing the DARE Assessment

M2: Part 1 Section 2

SECTION 2 guides you through the process of creating a purpose-driven Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategy that shifts your approach from being reactive to proactive and strategic. You'll begin by assessing your current D&I landscape, review existing policies and practices to identify areas of improvement. From there, you'll learn to set specific, measurable D&I goals and targets that align with your business objectives, ensuring your strategy drives meaningful change. Finally, we'll focus on how to effectively communicate and implement your strategy to secure company-wide buy-in, ensuring that every level of your company is committed to the D&I journey.

02

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Develop A Purpose Driven High Impact D&I Strategy

Develop a Purpose Driven D&I Strategy to Move from Being Reactive to Strategic

Assess Your Current Landscape by Reviewing Your Current D&I Practices, your current policies.

Set Specific D&I Goals and Targets that Align with Business Objectives

Effectively Communicate and Implement Your D&I Strategy for Company Wide Buy In

Example: SME in Italy: How they Developed their D&I Strategy.

Example: SME in Finland: How they Developed their D&I Strategy.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Understand the **role and need for top level leadership** to drive real change and create inclusive workplaces.
- Recognise the **competitive advantages** of diversity and inclusion for SMEs.
- Identify **key leadership behaviors** that set the tone for an inclusive workplace.
- Set **clear, measurable D&I goals** aligned with business objectives.
- Develop a **strategic roadmap** to implement a sustainable D&I strategy.
- Move from a **reactive to a proactive approach** in embedding D&I within SME operations.

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Key Points Before We Get Started!

- **Define D&I** Diversity refers to the presence of differences within a given setting, including race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and cultural background. Inclusion ensures that these diverse groups feel welcomed, respected, and valued.
- **Why D&I Matters** Research shows that diverse and inclusive workplaces are more innovative, productive, and have higher employee satisfaction. For SMEs, D&I can lead to better decision-making, broader customer reach, and enhanced company reputation.
- **Leadership's Critical Role** Effective D&I must be driven from the top. Leaders and managers set the tone for the company's culture and are responsible for embedding D&I into every aspect of the business. Through leaders D&I becomes a core value in a company. Leaders essentially drive change, managers mobilise resources, allocate budgets, and support policies that drive D&I. They also influence and inspire their teams to embrace and practice D&I principles.

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Diversity simply means different.

Diversity is about differences, seen and unseen.

Inclusion is diversity in action

Inclusion creates an environment where people are valued, feel valued and are able to achieve and contribute to their full potential. An inclusive environment improves interaction with employees, customers and our communities



D&I Delivers Competitive Advantage to Companies

People

- ❖ 82% of global HR leaders believe that the 'war for talent' will be a key business issue over the next 10 years
- ❖ 75% of employees who experience unfairness will not recommend or refer
- ❖ 67% of LGBT people believe it is important to work for a company that has equality and diversity policies
- ❖ 86% of millennials in Ireland research the culture of a company
- ❖ 72% of women in the workforce say diversity is important when evaluating job offers

Rewards

- ❖ +53% return on equity – Fortune 500 (Diverse Boards)
- ❖ 45% increase market share
- ❖ 80% improvement in business performance
- ❖ +15% financial returns
- ❖ 50% increase in team collaboration, creative agility & problem solving
- ❖ 20% increase in employee retention

Source [Bord Bia Ireland](#)



D&I Delivers Competitive Advantage to Companies

More diverse groups tend to be more innovative, creative, hard-working and better at solving problems

Companies with female Board representation have been found to outperform those with no women on their Boards

Gender-diverse companies are 15% more likely to outperform competitors

Deeper understanding of the consumer market, e.g. in Europe women direct 80% of consumer spending

The talent pool is shrinking. Every company is competing for the same talent

Ethnically diverse companies are 35% more likely to outperform competitors

Source: Harvard Business Review

D&I Delivers Competitive Advantage to Companies

Exhibit 1 Companies with More Diverse Leadership Teams Report Higher Innovation Revenue



Exhibit 2 Changes in Leadership Can Lead to a Percentage Gain in Innovation Revenue



The Need for Inclusive SME Leadership



One of the most alarming results from CIPD 2023 research was that just ‘30% of employers say leaders in their company are completely committed to having a diverse workforce’.

And similarly, just ‘36% said that senior leaders are completely committed to having an inclusive workplace’.

‘Leaders and managers can’t underestimate the importance of inclusion and diversity in the workforce, a high level of adoption is associated not only with greater productivity and performance, but innovation, talent attraction, employee retention and overall workforce wellbeing’.

SMEs Say there is a 'Need for Inclusive Leadership'

Managers should be D&I enabled through job design and training on core people management skills, to fulfil their key role in creating inclusive workplaces.

A leader's pivotal role in creating an inclusive and diverse workplace is fundamental to progress in this area. Managers are a key influence on the employee experience at work. They enact people management practices, design jobs, allocate work, and have a significant influence over hiring and promotion decisions. Managers are employees' main, formal point of contact within the company, and their behaviour and management style shape the climate of the team.

Surveys report we have a long way to go

Just **23%** of employers say they train managers in fair and inclusive people management, and **87%** said it is effective in creating a more inclusive and diverse workplace.

72% of the senior decision-makers strongly agreed that managers deal with any discrimination, bullying or harassment issues promptly, seriously and discreetly.

60% of companies said that managers have the skills to manage people with empathy, fairness and compassion. And **51%** said managers are confident in improving I&D in their team, signalling a need for investment in D&I.

Source [Inclusion at Work 2022](#)

The Need for Inclusive Leadership

78% of leaders understand how an inclusive workplace and diverse workforce can benefit their company.

21% of employees said leaders are not very committed, or not at all committed, to having a diverse workforce, and 17% are not committed to having an inclusive workplace.

21% of employers agreed that senior leaders just pay lip service to inclusion and diversity in their company, with 46% saying they don't.

23% of the senior decision-makers agreed with the statement that senior leaders wrongly believe they already have an inclusive and diverse company.

23% agreed that senior leaders feel uncomfortable talking about inclusion and diversity.

29% of companies have tangible action on inclusion and diversity as part of how senior leaders' performance is judged



Source [CIPD Inclusion at Work](#)

The Need for Inclusive Leadership

51% of employers believe managers, in general, feel confident to improve inclusion and diversity in their team.

60% of employers say managers have the 'softer' people management skills to manage people as individuals with empathy, fairness and compassion.

28% of companies say managers are not given the time and resources to enable an inclusive and diverse team

46% of companies say inclusion and diversity considerations take a back seat to operational imperatives (for example, when managers are urgently hiring).

Ensuring leaders have capability and confidence in this area is especially important as employees will look to them as role models. They need to exemplify inclusive behaviour as well as ensure inclusion is a key consideration in strategy and high-level business decisions. They need to be internal and external champions of inclusion and diversity!



Source [CIPD Inclusion at Work](#)



Lack of Diversity for Working Women in Ireland

51 %

Of the Irish working population are women

10 %

Of the 51% 10% are on Irish corporate boards

26 %

Of Irish political representatives. Ranked 25 of 27 in the EU for diversity.

11

Female CEOs in the Irish Times Top 1000 Companies

14.6 %

Pay gap between women and men in the same work

36 %

Of Irish state boards are women

Source [Bord Bia Ireland](#)

Effective D&I must be driven from the top. Leaders and managers set the tone for the company's culture and are responsible for embedding D&I into every aspect of the business.

Why Must it Come from The Top?

- ❖ Leaders influence the company culture by **setting the tone** and the way things are done. If leaders prioritise D&I, it becomes a core value across the company.
- ❖ Leaders must lead by example and provide the **model of inclusive behaviour**, demonstrating a commitment to D&I through their actions and decisions.
- ❖ Leaders must **drive D&I change** by making it possible by mobilising resources, allocating budgets, and developing and supporting policies that drive D&I. They must also influence and inspire their managers and teams to embrace and practice D&I principles and make it possible for them.
- ❖ Leaders must be **accountable and transparent** by ensuring that D&I goals are not just aspirational but are backed by measurable actions, resources and outcomes.



Source [How leaders influence organizational culture](#)

Source [Why inclusive leadership is so vital to D&I](#)

Inclusive Leadership is an Important Prerequisite

Exhibit 3 Enabling Factors Exist in Fewer than Half the Companies Surveyed



21% of employers feel senior leaders just 'pay lip service' to inclusion and diversity in their company.

D&I must come from the top! Even if Leaders have Diversity and Inclusion as a top priority for their company, this is not enough. If they do not actively communicate this commitment effectively employees won't feel it is at the heart of the business. It won't be a priority to anyone in the company if it doesn't come from the top and will impact the company.

Effective communication by leaders is vital to ensure all employees feel they are empowered and that they belong – leaders need to make sure they're consistently communicating that message to their employees through everything they do and it's evidently high on the company's values and strategic priorities.

This shows the need for leaders to embed D&I everywhere, in their strategy and communication, and in everything they do, from their employer brand and employee value proposition to recruitment processes. Simple things such as changing the language used in your job adverts, reassessing the qualifications needed for a role, and having a diverse interview panel can have a positive impact.

All communication must be backed up by 'inclusive communication'!

How Inclusive is Your Company?

See our [Assessment](#) to assess how inclusive your company is!

The assessment is a key component of the DARE Project supporting organizations in developing inclusive practices that drive innovation, competitiveness, and ethical business growth. By participating in this assessment, you will gain valuable insights into your organization's D&I maturity and receive tailored recommendations for improvement. The results aim to empower your organization to create a more inclusive, innovative, and sustainable workplace. The assessment will take you approx. 15-20 Minutes.

The [DARE Assessment](#) is a comprehensive tool designed to help SMEs evaluate their current D&I practices across five key areas:

1. Introduction to Diversity and Inclusion in SMEs
2. Organizational Readiness and Culture
3. Strategic Impact and Business Operations
4. Legal and Compliance Readiness
5. Workforce Diversity and Talent Management

[DARE Assessment Eng Assessment](#)

M2: Part 1 Section 2

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Example: SME in Italy: How they Developed their D&I Strategy.

Example: SME in Finland: How they Developed their D&I Strategy.

A D&I Strategy Moves Leaders from Reactive to Strategic

A significant number of companies have an ad hoc approach to I&D, responding when a problem or a need arises. A quarter of employers say their approach to I&D is entirely or mostly reactive.

Long-term view and commitment. A strategy or action plan is a necessity to set direction, long long-term view and foster commitment to D&I across the company.

No more reactive short-term responses. A strategy helps focus attention on key issues making lasting positive change, instead of reactive short-term responses.

The issues will arise anyway with or without a strategy. It is important to develop a strategy that is the right one for your company so it's essential that your strategy or plan is built on evidence. You need to tailor it to your needs and potential issues.

Worryingly, 25% of companies consult I&D data before a D&I action is planned. Data is essential to be able to regularly track the impact of your strategy and know if you're making progress, or if your direction or activity needs reassessing.

76% of employers evaluate the effectiveness of their D&I strategy or action plan in some way; however, 18% do not.

SME Leaders Need to Take a Long-term View (Strategy), or They Will Get Left Behind. Don't take your foot off the pedal!

This is a concerning trend, as unless there is focused attention on D&I, company progress will slip. Companies that fail to have a long-term view and keep their foot on the pedal will see employees perceive them as not serious about D&I

Micro businesses (1–9 people) are most likely to say they're not planning on looking at any areas of I&D over the next five years, compared to

39% of small businesses (up from 3% had no focus during the past five years)

25% of medium-sized businesses (up from 2% had no focus during the past five years),

16% of large companies (up from 0% had no focus during the past five years)

Source [CIPD Inclusion at Work](#)

Like most employees and managers, leaders also need training and support on inclusion and diversity to understand what it means for them and their role. The company D&I agenda needs to be owned by the whole business, starting with leaders, this is why a strategy is paramount.

25 %

Senior leaders feel uncomfortable talking about inclusion and diversity

40 %

Senior leaders completely understand what equality (41%), diversity (39%) and inclusion (37%) mean

32 %

Senior decision-makers said they didn't know what areas of D&I their company would be focusing on over the next five years

47 %

Company does not have a formal D&I Strategy or Action Plan, nor stand-alone nor as part of the wider strategy

25 %

Approach to D&I is entirely or mostly reactive

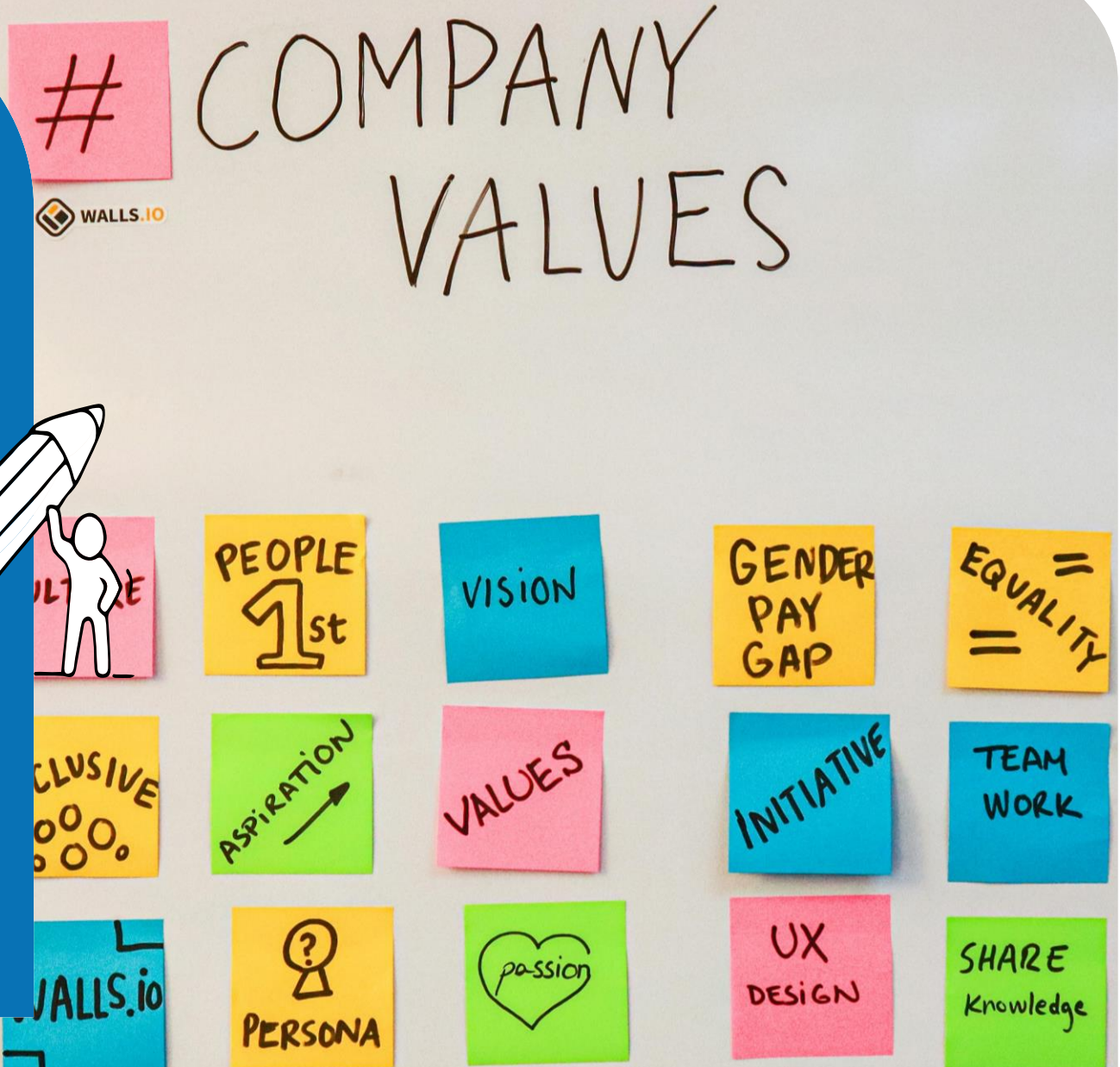
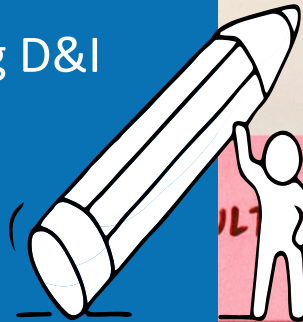
Source CIPD Report
Inclusion at Work 2023

36 %

Company CEOs are not planning to focus on any D&I areas in the next 5 years

Assess Your Current D&I Strategy Landscape

- ☐ Do you have a D&I Strategy or an Action Plan that has been communicated and is accessible across your company?
- ☐ Are your managers and leaders communicating and actively promoting D&I through all areas and actions?
- ☐ What D&I data and evidence is your strategy or plan based on?
- ☐ How have you linked/aligned your D&I strategy up to the wider business strategy and priorities?
- ☐ How do you track progress and communicate that across the company?



Develop a Company Level D&I Strategy

Leaders Need to be First
Backed by Company D&I
Strategies



Action 1

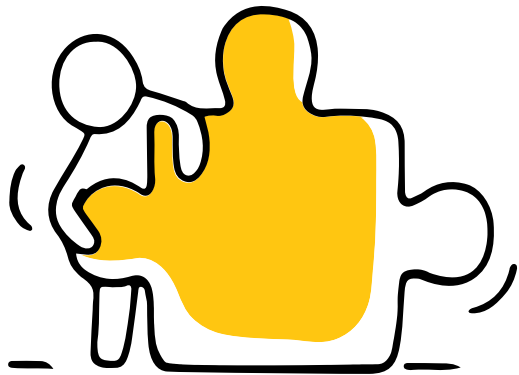


Assess & Understand Your Current D&I Landscape

Why? This is the first crucial step in developing an effective D&I strategy. You need to assess and understand the **current diversity and inclusion (D&I) landscape** within your company to help identify where you are and where to start. You do this by identifying your D&I strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and areas that need improvement.

You first need to get a clear and detailed picture of how diverse and inclusive your workplace truly is by understanding and assessing the **dimensions and demographic makeup** of your current workforce. This includes examining how diverse your employees are across different dimensions (such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, etc.) understanding how inclusive your culture is—and truly understanding if all employees feel valued, respected, and supported.

Tip From Module 1 you learned about the D&I Dimensions use this as a reference for your strategy and demographic makeup.



Why Assessing the Landscape is Important

Companies must consider the broader picture to help them understand their D&I and make better decisions. They need to tap into all employee's profiles, knowledge and perspectives so they can formulate informed targeted D&I strategies, identify gaps and benchmark progress. There are five areas where action needs to be taken:

1. Company, culture, climate and values.
2. Employee behaviour
3. Leaders, manager's capability
4. Senior leadership
5. Policies and wider people management practices

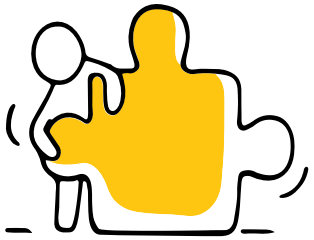
Informs Strategy: You can't improve what you don't measure. Understanding where your company currently stands allows you to set realistic goals and create targeted D&I initiatives, actions and KPIs where you want to get.

Identifies Gaps: It highlights areas where your company may be lacking in diversity or inclusivity, allowing you to focus your efforts effectively.

Benchmarks Progress: By understanding your current state, you establish a baseline from which you can measure future progress and set up schedules, tasks, activities and targets to achieve this progress.

Source [CIPD Report Inclusion at Work 2023](#)

Action 1



1. **Conduct a Demographic Analysis** Gather and analyse data on the demographic makeup of your workforce. Look at different levels, areas and departments within your company to see how diverse they are. This might include: gender distribution, racial and ethnic diversity, age range, representation of people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ representation across different levels and in different departments. This analysis helps you see if certain groups are underrepresented, particularly in leadership roles or specific areas.
2. **Collect Employee Feedback.** Use a mix of anonymous surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather feedback from employees about their experiences and perceptions of D&I in the workplace. This feedback gives you valuable qualitative data that highlights how people really feel about working at your company, whether they feel included and supported, or if there are barriers to participation.
 - Surveys
 - Focus Groups
 - Interviews

Diversity Data contains protected (or sensitive) information about a workforce. Companies typically collect it from applicants during the interview process or from successful candidates during onboarding. This data is usually made anonymous to avoid bias or discrimination. Diversity data may contain one or more of the following data points:

- ☐ Age, Marriage or Civil Partner Status, Sexual orientation
- ☐ Gender identity, Sex, Pregnancy & Maternity
- ☐ Disability status
- ☐ Race & Ethnic identity, Religion or Belief
- ☐ Pre-existing medical conditions, Adjustments needed

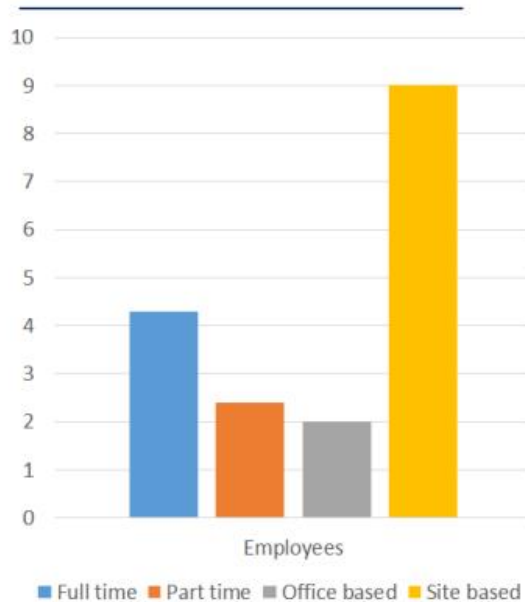
A lack of diverse job applicants may signal a poor company's reputation. Otherwise, your job descriptions may discourage underrepresented people when applying for a role.

Example Demographic Analysis

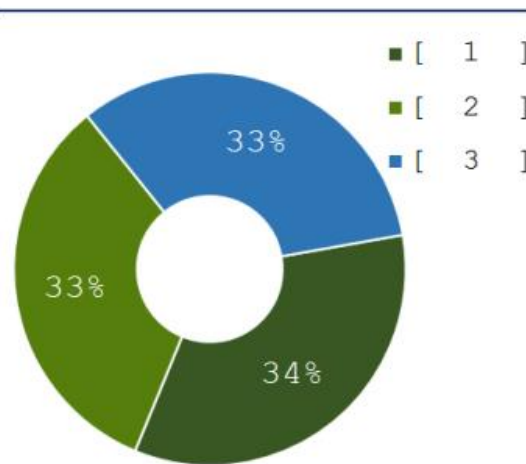
Review Employee Profile

This process will identify focus areas for your D&I Strategy. Repeat these examples for the dimensions. Review regularly to see how you are progressing. You can identify their nationality, length of service by gender, who is in tech and the % of men/women, who was promoted within 2 years and who wasn't and why?

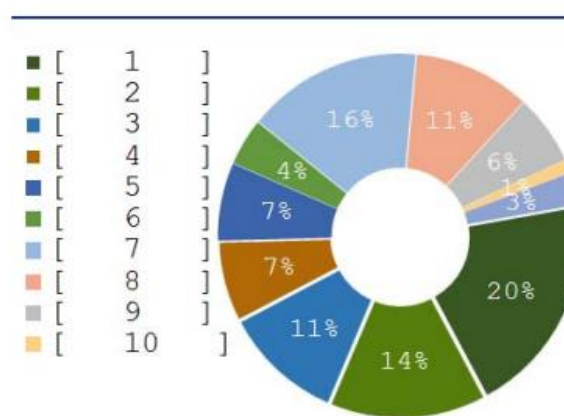
[Overall Employee numbers]



[Gender]

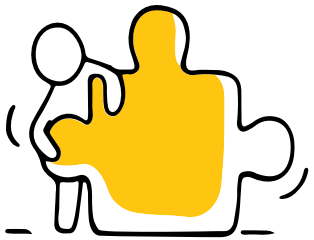


[Age Group]



Source [Diversity & Inclusion, Bord Bia, Ireland](#)

Action 1



- **Surveys:** Distribute surveys to get candid feedback on issues like workplace culture, inclusion, and experiences with discrimination or bias. Make sure to deliver training first so employees understand such D&I topics. This will give you insights into perceptions of inclusivity, experiences of bias, and suggestions for improvement.
Tip: Use tools like anonymous surveys to ensure honest feedback.
- **Focus Groups:** Conduct small group or team discussions with employees to dive deeper into specific issues or challenges they face.
Tip: make sure to pay attention to employees from various backgrounds to explore specific challenges and opportunities for improvement.
- **Interviews:** One-on-one interviews can provide detailed insights from key employees and stakeholders, like leaders or minority group representatives. Interviews can be done on exit, performance reviews or randomly.

Example: A manufacturing SME in Germany used anonymous employee surveys to identify that women and minority employees felt underrepresented in leadership roles and people from minority backgrounds' ideas weren't asked or listened to. Focus groups revealed that these groups faced barriers to promotion due to a lack of mentorship and visibility.

Step 1



Example Survey Questions – Closed

Gather other information, by including a 'Further Comments & Suggestions' question after each question. Make sure employees receive D&I training prior so they understand the questions and their context and value.

1. Feeling Heard

On a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you agree with the statement: "I feel that my opinions and contributions are valued in this company."

2. Feeling Valued

Do you feel that your work is recognised and appreciated by your managers and peers?

3. Fair Treatment

On a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you agree with the statement: "I believe that I am treated fairly in this workplace, regardless of my gender, age, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, or disability."

4. Equality and Inclusion

Do you feel that the company provides equal opportunities for career advancement to all employees? Please elaborate

5. Sense of Belonging

On a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you agree with the statement: "I feel a sense of belonging at this company."

6. Diversity in Leadership

Do you believe that the company's leadership team reflects a diverse range of backgrounds and perspectives?



Step 1



Example Survey Questions – Open Ended

Suggestions for Improvement

What suggestions do you have for making our company more inclusive and welcoming to all employees?

Feeling Heard

Can you share an example of a time when you felt your voice was not heard in the workplace? What could have been done differently?

Valued Contributions

In your opinion, what more could the company do to ensure that everyone's contributions are equally valued?

Experiences of Bias

Have you ever experienced or witnessed unfair treatment in the workplace based on gender, age, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, or disability? If so, please describe the situation and how it was handled.

Diversity & Inclusion Programs

What additional programs or initiatives would you like to see implemented to support diversity and inclusion at our company?

Employee Development

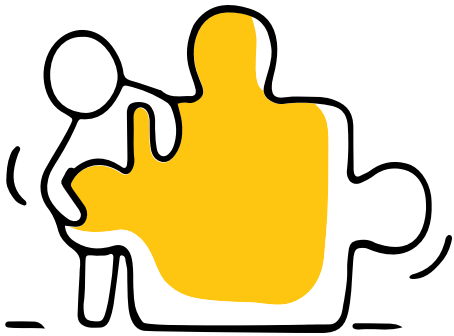
How can the company better support your professional growth and development?

General Feedback

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or feelings regarding diversity and inclusion at our company?



Action 1



3. **Review Policies and Practices** Examine your existing HR and company policies, recruitment practices, and company culture to assess how they impact diversity and inclusion. This helps identify any existing barriers that might be preventing a truly diverse and inclusive workplace.

- **Hiring Practices** Are your job descriptions and recruitment processes free from bias? Are you attracting diverse candidates?
- **Promotion Policies** Are there equal opportunities for advancement for all employees, regardless of background?
- **Workplace Culture** Is there evidence of an inclusive culture where diverse voices are heard? Are any complaints lodged to provide evidence?

Evaluate Policies

A diversity audit can help you evaluate the consistency, effectiveness, and legality of your company's policies. Ideally, your policies should be up-to-date, compliant with relevant labour laws, and able to meet the expectations of both job applicants and existing employees. By conducting a diversity audit, you can identify what's wrong with your existing policies and make the necessary improvements. This helps ensure that:

- ✓ No one group or person is at a disadvantage because of a company policy.
- ✓ Any potential biases, inconsistencies, or discriminatory practices are eliminated.

Example of a biased policy would be having dress codes for men and women but not for transgender or non-binary people. The 3% of the global population who identify as transgender or non-binary/gender-fluid may consider such a policy to be biased against them.

Evaluate Processes

A diversity audit can help identify bias and discrimination in company processes on:

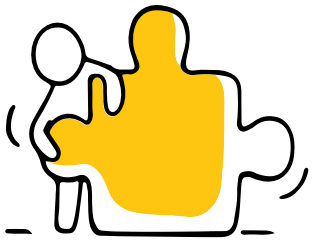
- ✓ Hiring, onboarding, and offboarding employees
- ✓ Conducting performance reviews and check-ins
- ✓ Taking disciplinary action
- ✓ Providing viable career progression pathways

How you perform certain processes in your business is important, as underlying bias or discriminatory actions can cause serious issues.

Example of how bias can affect the hiring process: After conducting several interviews, the list of candidates is narrowed down to two. One is a single man who is ready to start in the role at any time, while the other is a single mother who requires at least a week's notice to arrange caretaking duties for her children. The male candidate is less qualified and has less experience than the woman; however, because he can start sooner, he is chosen over her. This decision could be flagged as a bias in the hiring procedure.

Action 1

Analyse Workplace Data This analysis uncovers disparities that may indicate general issues that need to be addressed. Look at data related to employee turnover, promotions, male versus female, and pay equity across different demographic groups. The most common methods of evaluation are with internal stakeholders (through staff surveys and gathering qualitative feedback from staff networks). Consider...



- **Turnover Rates** Is there a higher turnover rate among certain groups, such as women or minorities?
- **Promotion Rates** Are certain groups promoted at lower rates compared to others?
- **Pay Equity** Is there a gender or racial pay gap in your organization?

CIPD 2023 Reports that 'Just 28% of companies said they have metrics to measure the impact of their D&I Strategy or Action Plan throughout the recruitment stages. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data is needed to help you track progress and examine the reasons behind successes or a need to re-evaluate and refocus your strategy'.

Action 02

Set Specific D&I Goals and Targets

These actions and approaches not only benefit individual employees but also enhance the overall company performance, employee satisfaction, retention and innovation.



Define and set clear targets and KPIs by setting measurable goals, such as increasing the percentage of women in leadership roles by a certain percentage within a year. For example, aim for 40% of leadership positions to be filled by women within 12 months.

Create a mentorship program by pairing senior leaders (both men and women) with high-potential female employees to guide their career progression. Get the guidance of a D&I mentor.

Incorporate D&I into performance reviews for managers. For example, assess their success in providing an inclusive environment and meeting diversity targets as part of their annual review. Check employee satisfaction and get anonymous feedback from their teams.

Review D&I progress by scheduling quarterly meetings to review progress towards D&I goals. Adjust strategies as needed to stay on track.

Action 02

Align D&I Goals with Business Objectives

Ensure that D&I initiatives directly support the overall strategic goals of the company.



- **Identify Overlaps** Look for ways D&I can drive key business objectives, such as improving customer satisfaction, driving innovation, or entering new markets.
- **Integrate D&I into Business Planning** Ensure that D&I goals are part of the annual business planning process, highlighting how these initiatives will support the company's long-term growth.

Example: A software development firm in Finland identified that neurodiversity in tech roles could lead to more innovative products. By setting a goal to increase neurodiversity representation in these roles by 15% over three years, they had the diverse talent they needed to contribute to a broader range of ideas in product development, aligning innovation objectives with current neurodiversity demands

Action 02

Set Clear Measurable Goals Using the SMART Framework



Define SMART-specific, quantifiable D&I targets that align with your business vision. The **SMART Framework** will help you to ensure that goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Here is an example of how it works:

Specific: Clearly define what you want to achieve (e.g., increase the percentage of women in management).

Measurable: Set quantitative targets (e.g., a 20% increase).

Achievable: Ensure the goal is realistic given your resources and time frame.

Relevant: Align the goal with broader company objectives.

Time-bound: Set a deadline for achieving the goal.

Example: A retail SME in Ireland set a goal to increase the percentage of women in management roles by 20% within two years, ensuring that by year-end, women would comprise at least 50% of promotion candidates.

Sample D&I Strategy Goals with Actions

Communicating Diversity

- Mission statement
- Communicate strategy
- Visible sponsorship and support for diverse employees
- D&I Employee Resource Group (ERG)

Hiring Practices

- Check D&I relevant wording of job adverts
- Have diverse candidate short-lists
- Train hiring managers on unconscious bias
- Make-up of interview panels to be diverse

Talent Development

- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Talent & succession metrics
- M:F ratios in development programmes
- Women in Leadership programmes

Pay Equality

Pay Practices – assess equality between M:F or whichever diversity component is your priority

Source [Diversity & Inclusion, Bord Bia, Ireland](#)

Raising Awareness & Understanding

- Educate business D&I values
- Create an understanding of unconscious bias to all
- Promote key events e.g., International Women's/Men's Day
- Learning from other organisations

Flexible Work Practices

- Return from maternity leave/ career break/carer's leave
- Flexibility on start and finish times
- Supporting remote technology
- Parental Leave, Part-time hours

Action 3



Implementation of D&I Strategy & KPIs

Develop a D&I Roadmap & Action Plan Create a detailed plan that outlines the steps necessary to achieve your D&I goals.

- **Develop an Action Plan** by breaking down each objective or goal into actionable steps. For example, if the goal is to increase female representation in leadership or increase neurodiversity talent, steps might include revising recruitment practices, launching mentorship programs, and ensuring equal access to neurodiversity and leadership training.
- **Assign Responsibilities** Designate specific leaders or teams to be responsible for each action item. Accountability is crucial for successful implementation.
- **Set Deadlines** Establish clear timelines and KPIs for each step to ensure steady progress toward your goals.
- **Allocate Resources** Determine the budget, tools, and personnel needed to execute the plan. Consider investing in D&I talent managers, consultants, training programs, or diversity recruitment tools.

Example: An SME in Poland developed a D&I roadmap with a clear timeline. The roadmap included quarterly recruitment audits, monthly D&I training sessions for both managers and employees, and annual reviews of leadership diversity and neurodiversity metrics.

D&I Strategy Implementation with Actions and KPIs

Communicating Diversity

- Company data & metrics on employee profiles
- M:F on Board or Management versus Business Area and Job
- Continuous internal communication with metrics (e.g., opens, responses)

Hiring Practices

- M:F make-up of candidate short-lists 50/50
- Have diverse candidate short-lists min 25%
- Hire targets specific to certain role types
- % of Interview panels with M:F and diversity balance

Talent Development

- Number of mentors assigned to diverse mentees
- Number of diverse trainings attended
- Talent versus succession training metrics
- Leadership programmes and M:F ratios attended

Pay Equality

- Pay Practices e.g: M:F pay parity/difference by level/by role type

Source [Diversity & Inclusion, Bord Bia, Ireland](#)

Raising Awareness & Understanding

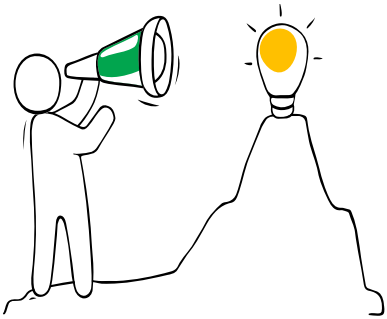
- Number of employees getting involved in diverse events such as International Women's Day
- Number of employees completed D&I surveys

Flexible Work Practices

- Number of employees returning from maternity leave/career break/carers leave & support provided
- % of employees using Parental Leave, Part-time hours
- % of employees working remotely

Action 3

Communicate the Strategy Ensure that all employees understand and support the D&I strategy, and emphasise your commitment to leadership and neurodiversity.



- **Internal Communications** Use multiple channels—such as staff meetings, emails, and the company intranet—to communicate the D&I strategy and its importance.
- **Leadership Messaging** Have senior leaders articulate the business case for D&I and share personal commitments to the strategy. This could be through video messages, newsletters, or in-person meetings.
- **Ongoing Engagement** Keep the conversation going by regularly updating employees on progress, celebrating milestones, and addressing challenges transparently.

Example: A healthcare SME in Denmark communicated its D&I strategy through an all-staff meeting where the CEO emphasised the business benefits of diversity. They followed up with regular updates via email and a dedicated section on the company intranet, where employees could track progress and provide feedback.

Action 04

Implement D&I Training for Everyone!

Example of Benefit

To regularly engage in D&I training (e.g., women in leadership positions) and set specific D&I goals for your teams, will result in a better representation of women in leadership positions ensuring a more inclusive workplace.



Organise quarterly D&I workshops for everyone focused on unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, and gender equality. These sessions should be mandatory for all employees, particularly for those in managerial positions. Outsource to professional D&I VET trainers and mentors. Many are free, funded or affordable.

Customise training to your company's D&I needs and goals e.g., develop training programs that address the unique challenges women face in the workplace. Topics could include balancing work/home life, negotiation skills, overcoming imposter syndrome, and navigating majority male teams.

Promote live and interactive learning by incorporating role-playing, showing case studies, getting speakers with experience in and group discussions to ensure employees can apply what they learn to real-world work situations when they occur.

Action 05

Support with Policies and Practices

Offer flexible work arrangements or hours or remote work options, which can help women and men balance work and family responsibilities, making leadership roles more accessible.

Parental leave and support: Provide comprehensive parental leave policies and support for parents, and returning parents, including reintegration programs and part-time leadership roles.

Action 06

Monitoring and Accountability

Form a D&I committee responsible for tracking progress and ensuring accountability. This committee can report directly to senior leadership on achievements and areas for improvement.

Publish regular transparent reporting on the company's intranet, team reports or in an annual D&I report highlighting progress towards goals, challenges faced, and plans for future improvement.

Action 07

Report Outcomes and Achievements

Share the results of the D&I program, success stories and achieved KPIs and targets with the entire company. Highlight key successes, such as employees who have completed their D&I training or been promoted or teams who have achieved their goals.

Celebrate achievements: by organising an end of year recognition event or an internal announcement to celebrate the completion of a D&I program and the successes of the participants.

Action 08

Keep Planning for the Future

Based on the D&I Strategy outcomes, D&I company needs, and future plan decide on the next steps, such as launching a new training program or mentorship program tailored to support the career development of women and minorities, or an internship program designed to include and expand other underrepresented groups such as NEETs or migrants. Make sure to get employees feedback to support your strategy decisions and improvements.

Tools You Can Use to Execute Diversity Audits

To maximize your diversity audit, use these tools:

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA): Have employees complete a personalized EIA form to identify biased or inconsistent practices in policies. Use the data to measure effects and implement corrective actions.

Pay Gap Analysis: Review salaries and benefits to uncover pay discrepancies between groups. A gap doesn't imply discrimination but signals the need to investigate and address the causes.

Diversity & Inclusion Diagnostics: Conduct interviews, focus groups, and surveys to understand employee experiences. Use findings to identify inclusivity gaps, align strategies with business goals, and strengthen your inclusion efforts.

[More Information](#)



Example

SME D&I Strategy Development and Implementation

A mid-sized company in Italy discovered through their demographic analysis that while 40% of their entry-level employees are women, only 10% of their senior leadership team was female.

“



Note: Try to cover each approach and method. Have key D&I priorities focused on and allow for 'open-ended' or 'further suggestions' to make sure you focus on key priority areas but also hear what is important, but you may not have been aware of.

Example of How an SME Developed a D&I Strategy

A mid-sized company in Italy discovered through their demographic analysis that while 40% of their entry-level employees are women, only 10% of their senior leadership team was female.

Employee surveys revealed that women feel they lack mentorship and opportunities for advancement compared to their male counterparts.

Reviewed promotion policies to further uncover that criteria for leadership roles inadvertently favoured traits more commonly associated with male employees. This understanding then informed their D&I strategy to focus on mentorship programs, unbiased promotion practices, and leadership development for women.

Implemented a mentorship program to support women and minorities in their career and leadership development. This became part of a broader D&I strategy, resulting in higher retention rates and a more diverse leadership team.

In summary, understanding your D&I landscape is about collecting and analysing different types of data consistently (e.g., quarterly) to gain insights into the current state of diversity and inclusion in your company, and to track future progression. It's the foundation upon which you can build a targeted and effective D&I strategy that addresses specific needs and gaps, ultimately leading to a more inclusive workplace.



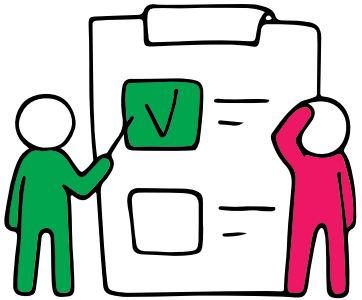
Example

SME D&I Strategy Development and Implementation

A software development SME in Finland with 200 employees Strategy: Recognised that it had an underrepresentation of neurodiverse individuals in technical and leadership roles



SME in Finland, Assessing, Developing and Implementing a D&I Strategy



Introduction A software development SME in Finland with 200 employees recognised that it had an underrepresentation of neurodiverse individuals in technical roles, despite the potential benefits that neurodiverse talent could bring to innovation and problem-solving. They decided to create a Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) strategy focused on increasing neurodiversity within their workforce, particularly in technical and leadership roles.

Step 1 Assessed its Current State

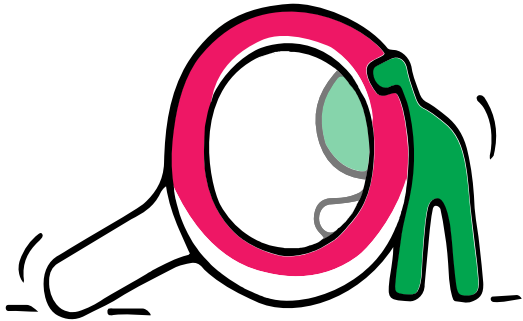
The SME conducted an assessment that included surveys and focus groups to understand the current experience of neurodiverse individuals within the company. The assessment revealed that while some neurodiverse employees felt valued, they also faced challenges related to workplace environment (e.g., open office plans that were overstimulating) and communication styles.

Additionally, the company noted that recruitment processes unintentionally filtered out neurodiverse candidates due to conventional interview formats and job descriptions that emphasized social skills over technical prowess.

Step 2 Set Clear, Measurable Goals

Goal Increase the representation of neurodiverse individuals in technical roles from 5% to 15% over three years.

Sub-goal Ensure that at least 25% of leadership positions in the tech department are filled by neurodiverse individuals by the end of the third year.



Step 3 Aligned its Goals with Business Objectives

Business Alignment The company aimed to leverage the unique strengths of neurodiverse employees, such as exceptional attention to detail, pattern recognition, and innovative problem-solving, to enhance product development and innovation. They recognised that incorporating neurodiverse perspectives could lead to breakthroughs in complex coding challenges, software testing, and user experience design.

Step 4 Developed a 3 Year D&I Roadmap and Action Plan

Year 1

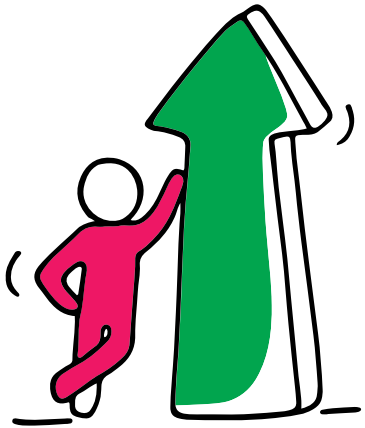
Revised Recruitment Strategies by partnering with organisations, educators or mentors that specialize in neurodiverse talent, such as Autism at Work programs, to attract candidates. Updated job descriptions to focus on essential technical skills and offer alternative assessment methods (e.g., work sample tests instead of traditional interviews).

Adjusted Workplace Accommodations e.g., provided quiet workspaces, flexible working hours, and clear, written communication guidelines.

Year 2

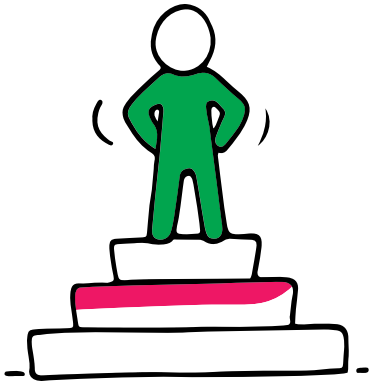
Launched Mentorship and Support Programs by pairing neurodiverse employees with supportive managers who have received training in neurodiversity. Introduced peer support groups to provide a sense of community and belonging.

Trained Managers and Teams by implementing training sessions on neurodiversity awareness, emphasising the strengths of neurodiverse individuals and how to create an inclusive environment. Included their perspective in team discussions.



Step 4 Develop a D&I Roadmap and Action Plan

Year 3



Created a Leadership Development Program tailored to neurodiverse employees, focusing on leveraging their unique talents in leadership roles while addressing any challenges they might face.

Reviewed and Refined continuously current workplace practices to ensure they supported neurodiverse employees, including regular surveys, meetings, check-ins and feedback loops.

Resources: The SME allocated funds for partnership programs, training modules, and external consultants with expertise in neurodiversity to assist in implementing these initiatives. Most of their supports were provided free or partially funded as it tied into local government inclusivity initiatives and programs.

Step 5 Communicate the D&I Strategy & Continuous Engagement

CEO announced, introduced and explained the neurodiversity strategy at a company-wide meeting, highlighting the value that neurodiverse employees bring to innovation and problem-solving.



Intranet and newsletters were used as a second reinforcement of the strategy. It was distributed by email and published on the company intranet with detailed action plans, procedures and resources for managers and employees. Regular updates were provided via newsletters, showcasing success stories and progress with rewards for best outcome teams.

Continuous Engagement

Progress Tracking The company held quarterly company-wide meetings to report on the progress of neurodiversity initiatives, celebrate milestones, and gather feedback. Reports were distributed and employees were encouraged to provide feedback, ideas and insights.

Neurodiverse employees were encouraged to provide feedback through anonymous surveys and focus groups, ensuring the strategy evolved in response to their needs.



**Increased
Representation**

**Enhanced
Motivation**

**Improved
Workplace
Culture**

SME D&I Strategy Outcomes

By the end of three years, the company successfully increased the percentage of neurodiverse individuals in technical roles from 5% to 17%. Leadership representation also grew, with neurodiverse employees holding 30% of the tech department's management positions.

The unique problem-solving abilities and attention to detail of neurodiverse employees contributed to several key innovations in the company's software products. This led to more robust software testing protocols and the development of features that appealed to a broader user base. Employees who were strong in neurodiversity or other areas could focus on their specialties.

The company's commitment to neurodiversity fostered a more inclusive workplace culture. Employees reported feeling more valued and understood, which led to increased job satisfaction and lower turnover rates. It was a great step forward for the company towards the power of D&I and led to employees suggesting other areas of diversity they would like to explore and engage in.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

- Demonstrate and understand of **inclusive leadership principles** and their impact on SME culture and the workplace.
- Explain how D&I **contributes to business success, competitive advantage** and innovation.
- Apply **best practices in leadership** to model inclusive behaviors.
- Create a **structured D&I strategy** with clear objectives and action steps.
- Develop an **actionable roadmap** to integrate D&I into business operations.
- Evaluate and **adjust D&I strategies** to ensure long-term effectiveness.



Well Done!
Module 2 Part 1

Now Move to Module 2 Part 2
Unlock Your Inclusive Leadership and Tap Into the
Power of Neurodiversity.

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