



EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) CHANGE: MYTH AND FACT SHEET

MYTH: EDI efforts should be the responsibility of a senior leader.

Leading practices for EDI efforts ensure that EDI is treated as everyone's responsibility. That means that senior leaders, people leaders, and employees all play a role in making sure that the goals of an EDI strategy are achieved. While having a dedicated senior leader can help get buy-in, the most successful EDI initiatives are the ones that weave EDI into the fabric of the organization, irrespective of level.

MYTH: Diversity is about race and gender only.

Race and gender are often the most visible representation of organizational diversity, but they're not the only important components of having diversity. There are [more than 40 dimensions of diversity](#), and race and gender don't capture the full picture of what diversity could be.

Applying an intersectional approach to diversifying organizations is crucial. Intersectionality is an analytical approach coined by activist and legal scholar [Kimberlé Crenshaw](#), which recognizes that identities aren't independent.


[Intersectionality](#) isn't additive. For example, a queer woman does not just deal with homophobia AND sexism separately. There is no point where someone's sexuality stops, and their gender begins or vice versa. Identities are inextricably linked together. These intersections alter the character of the oppressions people face and our interactions.

MYTH: We shouldn't focus on diversity but rather on hiring the most qualified person.

"Hiring the most qualified person" heavily emphasizes meritocracy, which is a myth. The [myth of meritocracy](#) implies that success is based on merit and is something that is earned. It is the idea that if you put in enough effort and hard work, you'll get ahead in school, work, and, ultimately, life.

Meritocracy in a working environment applies to a group whose advancement within an organization is perceived as being based on ability and talent rather than intersecting privileges, entrenched biases, and network advantages.

However, factors beyond "working hard" influence advancement at work. As broad examples, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and gender can greatly impact the education people can achieve and the stereotypes that future colleagues will filter their perceptions through when [assessing their contributions, skills, work style, expression, intelligence, potential, and more](#). Something as seemingly tangential as a [name that doesn't seem to be white](#) can have significant and negative impacts on an organization's recruitment decisions.



Additionally, when comments are made about how hiring for the most qualified person means that diversity can't or shouldn't be a focus, it's an opportunity to point out the inherent bias in that statement. The bias that people from specific groups can't be the most qualified candidates should be named and the focus should be shifted to why candidates from that group aren't applying.

MYTH: There aren't enough qualified candidates from x group. / The "Pipeline Problem"

Organizations that feel like there aren't enough qualified candidates from a specific under- or un-represented group often use the "[Pipeline Problem](#)" to justify a lack of diversity within the organization. The "[Pipeline Problem](#)" is a myth, and representational disparities are not simply a result of the "fact" that not enough members of groups experiencing marginalization are qualified to fill positions.

The Pipeline Problem is used as a justification for a lack of diversity. It is circulated and repeated rather than initiating any meaningful interrogation of internal and external organizational policies, processes, practices, presence, and outreach. The mantra circumvents accountability and proposes no strategic ways to invest time, labour, and resources to address the issue.

When a certain community experiences underrepresentation on a team or in applicant pools, it doesn't mean that the candidates don't exist. More likely, indicates that there are salient biases in recruitment, screening, and hiring processes that are going unnoticed.

MYTH: People are too politically correct/sensitive now.

EDI is not about controlling or restricting how people express themselves or behave. This work is about dignity and respect, who we want to be as leaders and people, and how we want to show up for our colleagues and the community in big and small ways. At its core, EDI is not about political affiliations and is relevant to many people.


What feels like being overly politically correct to one person might be an overwhelming signal of inclusion and good faith to another.

Never underestimate the power of small adjustments to our language to be more inclusive and more flexible and equitable workplace practices in fostering a workplace where people feel valued, connected and have a deep sense of belonging.

MYTH: This is targeting [me/ a specific group I belong to].

EDI work done right benefits everyone.

Beyond the business case in which robust research consistently demonstrates that [diverse teams are more profitable, make better decisions, have greater retention rates](#), and help businesses attract top talent - EDI is about making the space that countless people spend an



enormous part of their lives, their workplace, a safe and affirming place where they feel valued and a sense of belonging.

EDI work aspires to challenge so many “isms” such as sexism, discrimination, homophobia, and more that permeate our workplace and world and operate to the detriment of women, gender-expansive people, racialized people, and more.

MYTH: EDI is reverse discrimination.

Reverse discrimination is a myth. Whether it’s antisemitism, cissexism, or racism, [words that end in ‘ism’ can’t be reversed](#). An “ism” is when prejudice is combined with the power to scale, amplify, and codify that prejudice on a societal level. Using an “ism” to describe an experience immediately implicates systems and broader patterns of marginalization and inequity in our social world. ‘Isms’ rely on an unequal playing field where one group holds power over the other; [they can only flow in one direction](#).


As an example, racism operates on both an individual (prejudice) and institutional (power) level and impacts people who are racialized. [Racism doesn’t flow in the opposite direction](#), in this case, against white people. This is because whiteness holds a disproportionate amount of power in most instances. White people can experience things like prejudice, discrimination, bigotry, and ignorance from racialized people, but they cannot experience racism, or “[reverse racism](#).” So, as a general rule, [‘isms’ only flow in one direction and can’t be reversed](#).

MYTH: I’m not/can’t be racist because I’m racialized (or a part of another group).

While the lived experiences of racialized people are real and valid and can foster empathy across different social groups and their challenges, it does not absolve anyone of any sort of “ism” or discriminatory behaviour. [One can belong to a group experiencing marginalization and contribute to the difficulties or prejudice of another person](#). We all need to practice anti-racism and anti-sexism (in addition to challenging many other forms of oppression) daily in our relationships and workplace interactions.

We must also remember that being racialized is a very broad umbrella term that doesn’t capture the depth, breadth and complexity of the identities that exist under that umbrella. To provide an example, someone who is Black is going to encounter specific mechanisms of exclusion related to anti-Black racism. Black people face dehumanizing violence, presumptions of criminality, and ongoing struggles related to histories of enslavement, segregation, redlining, and the prison-industrial complex. In contrast, Asian lives might face presumptions of passivity/obedience, exoticization, and are usually considered “model minorities” that excel in education and adhere to the law.

An Asian person can still hold anti-Black racism, and a Black person can still hold anti-Asian racism. Both groups may internalize harmful ideas about their own identities in childhood and over their life course that they might unconsciously uphold.



Membership in the community does not take away our responsibility to proactively educate ourselves and embrace active listening when hearing perspectives and experiences different from our own. This fact also holds true for people with disabilities. Someone who has a physical disability can still act in ways that are harmful to neurodiversity. Someone who is neurodiverse may invalidate the struggles of someone with a severe mental health condition.

MYTH: There are too many issues to focus on. / We can't do everything!

EDI is a journey; you should not expect your organization or yourself to do it all at once. It's about having an ongoing openness to meaningful dialogue, new perspectives, and being called in by colleagues, friends, and community members.

It involves continuous education through proactive research and immersion in media created by communities unlike your own. It means deliberately establishing networks that mirror the diversity of the world, avoiding unconscious replication of what is familiar or similar. It entails raising up and genuinely listening to the voices of marginalized communities, and translating their courage and vulnerability into concrete actions and meaningful change. It requires intentionally challenging one's own biases and adopting leading practices.

EDI is a critical lens that you should bring with you every day in the situations you inhabit to engage with where you can show up for others, learn, and foster greater inclusion.

MYTH: What we need is diversity of thought.

The term "[diversity of thought](#)" is a way of hindering increasing underrepresented populations in the workforce. It allows for less focus on gender, nationality, sexuality, etc., and favours a goal of having differing thoughts, rather than having unique lived experiences, which can add a lot of value to an organization.

It is notable that "diversity of thought" is also different and distinct from [neurodiversity](#), which aims to make room for neurological differences (Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autistic Spectrum, Tourette Syndrome, and others). Neurodivergent people bring crucial skills and innovation to the organizations for which they work, but very often, are not hired due to hiring managers not being educated about neurodivergence.

MYTH: EDI is divisive. It doesn't unite anyone.

At its core, EDI is about collaboration and dialogue on teams to foster fairness and instill a [sense of belonging](#) for everyone. This comes from earnest efforts to understand lived experiences that differ from your own, including the unique challenges that different communities face, and being willing to unlearn biases that may be harming others.

EDI is about how to show up in big and small ways to co-create inclusive and empowering spaces for team members. It's how to acknowledge, celebrate, and make space for the differences that are inherent in every workplace and space. Along with this, EDI is about acknowledging the pain and obstacles that people face.

EDI is about what it takes to [succeed and innovate](#) in diverse, global, and multicultural markets. The “[business case](#)” for EDI is robust, and is underpinned by countless studies which show that teams that prioritize EDI ultimately reap numerous benefits such as:

- [Greater likelihood of innovation and creativity](#).
- Enhanced capacity to capture new markets.
- Increased profitability.
- [Better decision-making](#) and problem-solving.
- Higher retention and reduced cost of turnover.
- Heightened cohesion, collaboration, and performance.
- Improved company reputation and, as a result, greater ability to attract top talent.

Sheridan



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