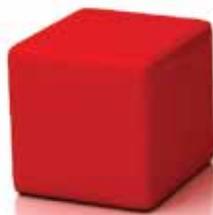




ENGINEERS  
AUSTRALIA  
Western Australia Division

# Influencing your organisation's culture:

A practical guide to crafting a culture that values difference



This guide was commissioned by the Women in Engineering Special Interest Group, Engineers Australia Western Australia, and was prepared by Dr Elisa Adriasola. Funding for this project was provided by the Women in Engineering Special Interest Group, Engineers Australia Western Australia. The comments of the peer reviewers are sincerely appreciated.

#### **Disclaimer**

The opinions and positions expressed in this practical guide are the author's and do not necessarily represent the opinions and positions of Engineers Australia. This practical guide should be reviewed and applied according to the specific needs of the engineers and engineering organisations using it, with the full realisation that it represents only one approach that might be taken, based on the research available at the time of publication. This practical guide should be used as a tool to assist in decision-making, rather than as a prescriptive 'cookbook.' Any references within the document to specific products are illustrative and do not imply endorsement of these products to the exclusion of other products that are not referenced.

#### **Women in Engineering WA Advisory Committee**

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## INTRODUCTION

**Alex** is a young female engineer who has joined an engineering construction company. Right away, she notices her workplace culture values hard-talking, hard-swearing, hard-drinking. Alex wants to be accepted by her team, but she doesn't want to adopt behaviours that she is uncomfortable with.

**Chris** relocated from overseas for an engineering job at an Australian engineering company. Chris has noted that some practices in Australia are different to those he has experienced overseas, but Chris' boss does not welcome—and is even hostile to—his suggestions, saying, 'That's just the way we do things around here'.

**Quentin** has returned to work after parental leave. HR policy requires managers to offer flexible working conditions when requested, but Quentin's colleagues have applied subtle pressure to not go part-time. 'You can't do this job properly part-time. You can't go home before 7 pm. You have to be available on weekends.' Quentin is not optimistic that the manager will support his request for flexible working conditions.

**Alex, Chris** and **Quentin** share the experience of not ‘fitting in’ to their workplace culture. They are also in the position of neither being managers, nor in acknowledged leadership roles. Alex, Chris and Quentin would like their respective workplaces to accept and value them as they are. They know that CEOs, managers, HR and company policies have the power to set and modify workplace culture. What can they, as junior employees, do to influence their own workplace culture?

There *are* actions workers can take to influence their workplace culture. These actions fall along a spectrum from subtle to highly visible: (i) resisting quietly and staying true to one’s ‘self’; (ii) turning personal threats into opportunities; (iii) broadening the impact through negotiation; (iv) leveraging small wins; (v) organising collective action<sup>1</sup>. The good news is that small, incremental changes from within *do* lead to real change, and both grassroots efforts and top-down approaches to change are effective. So be assured that whatever action is taken—a low-risk strategy such as having a family photo on a desk, or a highly visible action such as enlisting staff in an action against being available for meetings scheduled after 5pm<sup>2</sup>—*will* have an impact.

The nine recommendations in this practical guide reflect the author’s research on some of the most concrete and applicable principles to emerge from the literature on influencing workplace culture. The research around the experiences of women effecting change in the engineering culture points to two highly prevalent, but now obsolete myths: (i) the problem is the women themselves (or whoever is in the minority, or doesn’t fit into the prevailing workplace culture); (ii) the problem is that the company and HR do not have the right policies in place. We now know that engineers come in all shapes, sizes, genders and personalities, and that policies can, but do not necessarily lead to workplace change.

As such, it is recognised that there is much that an individual can do to influence workplace culture. For those not in an acknowledged leadership role, a good first step to influencing workplace culture is about preparing for the upcoming encounters. This is not about ‘modifying’ yourself—this is about empowering

yourself with a solid foundation. This foundation includes knowing your strengths profile (in an unequal power relationship it is easy to forget your strengths), becoming aware of the latest thinking around diversity and inclusion (handy to have facts and tips ready for any conversations that come up), and finding ways to sustain yourself as you work towards influencing workplace culture. This is the essence of **Recommendations 1–3** in this practical guide.

Even without completing these first three recommendations, the research points to other actions that can be taken. Engaging with non-accepting colleagues can be confronting, but just the presence of an outsider, of someone different, can challenge assumptions and stereotypes, both unconscious and conscious. **Recommendation 4** suggests engaging with your colleagues in a centred and empowered way, initiating conversations and events (without becoming the social secretary!).

**Recommendation 5** suggests taking action to consistently recognise and acknowledge your colleagues’ actions, and **Recommendation 6** offers some suggestions to colleagues’ resistance or undermining of your efforts.

Within your own team, two actions are suggested.

**Recommendation 7** encourages you to model the behaviour you wish to foster in others, and **Recommendation 8** encourages you to ‘lean in’ and make contribution a habit in your teams.

**Recommendation 9** encourages you to take note of any programs, focus groups, initiatives or feedback that your organisation may initiate around cultural change, diversity and inclusiveness, and to contribute to them. Perhaps initially, your voice is the only one, but the snowball effect needs a starting point, and while your efforts may not directly lead to changes in organisational culture, your actions make it easier for those who follow.

These nine research-based recommendations are seen as a starting point for action. Some will be more relevant to the climate in your workplace than others. It’s not up to you, although it does start with you. Remember there are many professional organisations whose role it is to provide you with support. Having said this, it is important to recognise that sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Debra E Meyerson, *Rocking the boat: How to effect change without making trouble*, Harvard Business Press, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the culture in a workplace is so life-sapping and difficult that any positives at work are outweighed by the negatives. In such situations, choosing to leave that workplace for another is a reasonable response.

Although this guide was commissioned by a women in engineering group, a gendered approach to influencing your workplace culture has not been taken. That could be the focus of a follow up guide.

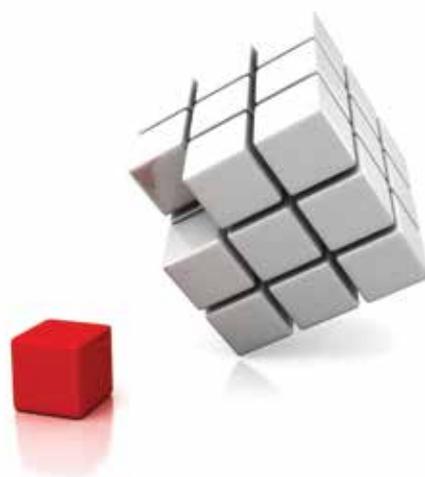
Finally, in this personal introduction, permit me to note some reflections. Sometimes in order to 'fit in' to their workplaces, people consider submitting to an initiation ritual. Richard Rohr's work with male initiation rites, initiating from boyhood into manhood, suggests that the activities in the rites are designed to instil in the initiate five key messages: 1. Life is hard; 2. You are not important; 3. Your life is not about you; 4. You are not in control; 5. You are going to die.<sup>3</sup> That is all the rite is intended to achieve. The activities in the initiation are not about demeaning, humiliating or embarrassing the initiate—they are not about showing who is 'in control', nor subjecting the initiate to abusive words or actions, nor trying to bring the initiate down to some common level. However, I suspect the aims of the initiation rite do provide clues on how to set the scene in a new workplace.

In my view, there is no need for an initiation once you are in adulthood. Perhaps if you are able to demonstrate in your workplace that, for example: (i) understanding that life is hard, you are willing to chip in and do what needs to be done; (ii) you don't see yourself more important than your team or the job that needs to be done; (iii) although you may end up with accolades, it's clear to your team that it was about the job and the team and not you; (iv) you have a realistic appreciation of how life and people really are, with mistakes, broken promises, outright lying, budget cuts, and your interactions with people honour their humanness (which is not say that we cannot control our projects within the boundaries that have been set—project control is an important skill for engineers); and (v) radiating a centred sense of perspective, your colleagues can see that you live these messages of adulthood

Not all recommendations in this guide will apply to all workplaces. Each workplace has its own challenges. Please let us know what works and does not work in your workplace. We look forward to hearing from you.

### **Jolanta Szymakowski**

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Rohr, *Adam's return: the five promises of male initiation*, New York, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004.

# RECOMMENDATIONS CHECKLIST

## LEVEL 1: Intrapersonal

### INTRAPERSONAL: FOCUSING ON YOURSELF

#### **Recommendation 1 – Become aware of your own beliefs about diversity: Identify the gaps and work to reduce them**

- Action 1.1: Identify your beliefs about diversity

#### **Recommendation 2 – Building a strengths profile**

- Action 2.1: Make explicit your strengths and how they make you unique and an asset for your work group
- Action 2.2: What is holding you back? Common thinking patterns and assumptions
- Action 2.3: Develop tools to introduce yourself to others in an effective way

#### **Recommendation 3 – Becoming your own leader: self-management**

- Action 3.1: Identify what makes your goals motivating
- Action 3.2: Setting up an action plan

## LEVEL 2: Interpersonal

### INTERACTING WITH OTHERS: VALUING DIFFERENCE

#### **Recommendation 4 – Getting to know your colleagues: one by one**

- Action 4.1: Get to know the people you work with better

#### **Recommendation 5 – Recognising and supporting a ‘job well done’**

- Action 5.1: Turning the invisible visible

#### **Recommendation 6 – Recognising your role as moderator for diversity in your workplace**

- Action 6.1: Selecting the appropriate conflict-handling style for the situation
- Action 6.2: Communication skills
- Action 6.3: Getting an overall perspective on how to help reduce conflict in the workplace

## LEVEL 3: Group

### TEAM LEVEL: YOUR ROLE WITHIN YOUR TEAM

#### **Recommendation 7 – Making explicit the value of diversity**

- Action 7.1: Model the kind of behaviour you wish to foster in others

#### **Recommendation 8 – Take a proactive role in your team**

- Action 8.1: Putting your self-leadership capacity into action – including yourself in your team

## LEVEL 4: Organisation

### ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL: EMBEDDING THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

#### **Recommendation 9 – Look for ways to influence how your organisation deals with diversity**

- Action 9.1: Take a proactive role in supporting the implementation and success of diversity and inclusion policies in your organisation

## The aim of this practical guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide practical, research-based tools for individuals to address and modify elements of their workplace culture, in order to make it more inclusive and appreciative of diversity. In such a culture, the benefits extend beyond employee well-being, to generating greater value to the organisation.

## Who is this practical guide for?

This guide is for *all* individuals who want to have an impact on the inclusion of diversity in their workplace. It will be of most benefit to people who feel under-represented in their work groups (called 'minorities' in the literature), and who, although lacking any formal power to initiate large-scale cultural change, still feel they need to do something to make their workplace culture more inclusive and appreciative of diversity.

## Context

The demographics of employees in modern jobs are becoming increasingly diverse, not only in terms of gender, but also cultural background and age.<sup>4</sup> If well-managed, this increase in workplace diversity could become a source of strength and added value for organisations in terms of costs, resource acquisition, marketing, creativity, problem-solving and system flexibility capacity.<sup>5</sup> However, there are often no measures taken to adapt jobs and workplace cultures in line with this change in diversity, so the potential added value can be lost, and there can be an increase in the negative consequences of low employee motivation.<sup>6</sup>

Diversity in workplace composition is of key importance to the engineering profession,<sup>7</sup> with many workplaces adopting initiatives to welcome diversity.

Historically, engineering has been a male-dominated profession with female engineers often reporting facing 'an uncomfortable workplace culture'.<sup>8</sup> Broader than just engineering, Professionals Australia (formerly the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia (APESMA)) has found that almost half the women across a range of professions perceived their career progression had been affected by aspects of workplace culture. Workplace culture is thus seen to be a very important factor in attracting, and importantly, retaining women in the engineering profession — women tend to leave the engineering profession at a much higher rate than men.<sup>9</sup> In this 'lose-lose' situation, the engineering profession misses out on the benefits of having highly competent and skilled women in their teams. In turn, women lose the chance to grow and develop their potential, feel undervalued, and sometimes have to fight to stay working as engineers.

However, it is not only female engineers who face these challenges. Other minorities also experience workplace cultures that reduce and overlook their potential. So rather than trying to 'fix the people', this guide aims to empower people with skills to influence their workplace culture, to make it more welcoming and appreciative of diversity.

Workplace culture can be thought of as 'the way we do things around here'.<sup>10</sup> However, while seemingly straightforward, the term comprises a complexity of elements, involving people, procedures, unwritten norms, physical space, and behaviours.<sup>11</sup> Because of its complexity, workplace culture is not easy to modify, and less so if those promoting change do not hold some formal power that allows them to do so. Consequently, most existing approaches to modifying workplace culture require the active involvement of both the HR department and top management.

<sup>4</sup> Helen De Cieri et al., *Human resource management: Strategy, people, performance*, Sydney, NSW, McGraw-Hill, 2008; Taylor H Cox and Stacy Blake, 'Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness', *Academy of Management Executive*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1991; Daan van Knippenberg, 'Embodying who we are: Leader group prototypicality and leadership effectiveness', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 6, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Cox and Blake.

<sup>6</sup> Susan E. Jackson, Aparna Joshi, and Niclas L. Erhardt, 'Recent Research on Team and Organizational Diversity: SWOT Analysis and Implications', *Journal of Management*, vol. 29, no. 6, 2003; *ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Julie E. Mills, Mary Elizabeth Ayre, and Judith Gill, *Gender inclusive engineering education*, Routledge, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Julie E Mills et al., *Challenging Knowledge, Sex and Power: Gender, Work and Engineering*, Routledge, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*; APESMA, *Women in the professions: The state of play 2009-10. Executive Summary of the APESMA Women in the Professions Survey Report*, edited, Melbourne, 2010, <http://www.professionalsaustralia.org.au/download/?dIID=645>.

<sup>10</sup> W Warner Burke and George H Litwin, 'A causal model of organizational performance and change', *Journal of Management*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th edn., Hoboken, Wiley, 2010, <http://UWA.ebib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=588878>.

The approach to ‘crafting’ workplace culture taken throughout this practical guide allows space for individuals to initiate and model change according to their diversity, acceptance and inclusion needs, and those of their organisation. To achieve this, the guide builds on the capacity of individuals to develop the skills and attitudes that foster proactivity and self-leadership, and show them the key steps that can help them achieve these changes for their workplace culture.

## Scope

This guide provides evidence-based recommendations for individuals in crafting their workplace culture, by suggesting actions to make their workplace culture more inclusive and appreciative of diversity.

There are many books written about organisational change, and they fall into a number of categories.<sup>12</sup> For example, some focus on organisation exemplars,<sup>13</sup> or on practitioners’ wisdom and lessons learnt.<sup>14</sup> Others focus on a particular idea or message and tell a story,<sup>15</sup> and there are those that emerge from research.<sup>16</sup> These types of books are oriented to leaders who have the power to drive policies and make decisions influencing the macro-level of culture change in their organisations.

While most organisational culture change needs to be initiated and supported from the top of the organisation, this practical guide takes the perspective of individuals who have no leadership position. Based on positive organisational psychology, the guide builds upon self-initiated change starting with the individual’s own beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

The guide also explores how this approach can support a cultural change in the workplace, through the effect on workers’ relationships with others, their roles as members of teams, and their roles as part of an organisation.<sup>17</sup> This ‘bottom-up’ approach to organisational change is based on strong research evidence, bringing together knowledge from management disciplines, as well as from cognitive, sports, educational, organisational and clinical psychology, among others.<sup>18</sup>

This practical guide has been prepared for the worker who, despite not having the power to make large-scale decisions to initiate and drive a top-down organisational culture change, still wishes to have an influence that makes the work environment more comfortable, accepting and appreciative of diversity.

<sup>12</sup> W Warner Burke, Dale G Lake, and Jill Waymire Paine, *Organization change: A comprehensive reader*, John Wiley & Sons, 2008, Vol. 155.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas J Peters and Robert H Waterman, *In search of excellence : lessons from America’s best-run companies* New York, Harper & Row, 1982.

<sup>14</sup> Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean in: Women, work, and the will to lead*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Spencer Johnson, *Who moved my cheese?: An amazing way to deal with change in your work and in your life*, Random House, 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The tipping point: How little things can make a big difference*, Hachette Digital, Inc., 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Helen Turnbull et al., ‘Skill deficiencies in diversity and inclusion in organizations: Developing an inclusion skills measurement’, *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2010. Available from: bth.

<sup>18</sup> Jeffery D Houghton and Darryl L Jinkerson, ‘Constructive thought strategies and job satisfaction: A preliminary examination’, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2007.

## ESTABLISHING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING

### Organisational culture

An initial explanation of the term ‘workplace culture’ was provided in the Introduction. However, it is useful to explore the meaning of this term in more detail. All organisations develop what is called a *culture*.<sup>19</sup> Culture refers to the combination of ‘taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions, expectations, collective memories, and definitions’,<sup>20</sup> and the way people make sense of these. When applied to a workplace setting, culture acts as a powerful force that drives the usual ways that ‘things get done’ around the organisation, affecting behaviour both positively and negatively.<sup>21</sup> However, one of the most significant aspects of culture is that people are often unaware of most of it, and as such they can be affected in ways they may not even realise.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the first step towards managing the effects of organisational culture on behaviour is to increase awareness and understanding of it.

One model for understanding organisational culture is as an ‘iceberg’.<sup>23</sup> Only a minimal part of the whole ice block is visible, making the huge, submerged remainder the base and strongest part of the iceberg. Similarly, there are three levels identified around culture: artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.<sup>24</sup> ‘Artefacts’ and ‘espoused beliefs and values’ can be thought of the visible part of the iceberg, while ‘underlying assumptions’ relates to the submerged part.

In the context of workplace culture, artefacts include all visible and tangible structures and processes, as well as observed behaviour, such as the physical organisation of the work space, the way in which people relate to each other, and attitudes towards procedures or the organisation. Espoused beliefs and values refer to those ideals, goals, values and aspirations, the ideologies and rationalisations that

are explicitly stated by the organisation and the people who are part of it—for example, the mission and vision the organisation claims to pursue. This level, although visible and ready accessible to most people, is only sometimes congruent with behaviours and other artefacts. The deepest level is ‘invisible’ and corresponds to the basic underlying assumptions of the organisation and its employees. This level involves unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values; these beliefs are the ones that actually determine behaviour, perception, thought and feeling.

Given its complexity, changes to workplace culture require the involvement of people throughout the organisation, and strong support from top management is usually a key element. This practical guide takes a different perspective, whereby cultural change is initiated by individuals—who do not necessarily hold any power—to promote large-scale interventions. Cultural change is focused on making workplace culture more accepting and inclusive of diversity, a change initiated from the grassroots level, and crafted by individuals. The following section contains a definition and establishes common understanding around the concepts of diversity and inclusion as they are used throughout this guide.

### Diversity and inclusion

This practical guide focuses on workplace cultural change aimed at increasing the value and inclusion of diversity. As such, it is useful to establish at the outset a common understanding of the concepts of diversity and inclusion. Diversity generally refers to differences between parts, and has a similar meaning within organisational settings. For example, diversity within a work group is defined as a ‘characteristic of a social grouping (group, organisation, society) that reflects the degree to which there are objective or subjective differences between people within the group’.<sup>25</sup> This means that independently of the group members’ awareness of differences, the degree to which these differences exist will result in diversity.

<sup>19</sup> Culture is defined as a ‘pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems’ Schein.

<sup>20</sup> Kim S Cameron and Robert E Quinn, *Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: Based on the competing values framework*, John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Mats Alvesson and Stefan Sveningsson, *Changing organizational culture: Cultural change work in progress*, Routledge, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Schein.

<sup>23</sup> Steven McShane, Mara Olekalns, and Tony Travaglione, *Organisational Behaviour on the Pacific Rim* 3rd edn., Sydney, McGraw-Hill Australia, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Schein.

<sup>25</sup> Daan van Knippenberg and Michaela C Schippers, ‘Work group diversity’, *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, vol. 58, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Carolyn I. Chavez and Judith Y. Weisinger, ‘Beyond diversity training: A social infusion for cultural inclusion’, *Human Resource Management*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2008. Available from: bth.

Indeed, there is a wide range of differences that can be considered in studying the way diversity affects a group's performance—for example, demographic differences between group members (age, gender or race), differences in personality, and differences in educational or functional background. Most categories of diversity will have an impact as the group forms: on the level of cohesiveness, on the norms or dynamics of the group, or in the actual work outcomes. In order to be successful, group members should not only be aware of the diversity in the group, but value and accept that diversity.

Inclusion is understood as the degree to which individuals are endorsed to participate, and are empowered to contribute to their total capacity.<sup>26</sup> Importantly, the level of inclusion within an organisation represents the critical difference between merely having a diverse workforce, and seeking to turn diversity into an asset and a competitive advantage.<sup>27</sup>

Addressing diversity and inclusion is not just a fashionable topic, but a necessity. As mentioned above, the reality of the modern workplace includes an increasingly diverse workforce.<sup>28</sup> In order to stay competitive, organisations need to turn diversity into an asset and make the most of their current resources. The move towards a more inclusive workplace is associated with greater creative and innovative performance. However, it also lends itself to less tangible outcomes, which are just as valuable: employees perceive their workplace to be more fair, feel they can make a contribution and actually influence outcomes, have an increased feeling of agency, and ultimately have increased satisfaction with and commitment to their workplace. Such inclusivity can improve the work environment, and also lead to increased well-being and reduced turnover, absenteeism and stress levels, thus also indirectly affecting productivity.<sup>29</sup>

This practical guide, rather than seeking to increase diversity in terms of the number of representatives from different social groups, aims to address the actual inclusion of diverse members. In other words, it focuses on identifying the ways that individuals can influence their workplace culture in order to make it more accepting and inclusive of diversity. Furthermore, although the need for this practical guide has emerged from one specific social group, its aim is to be useful for all individuals who might feel their workplace culture could benefit from being more inclusive.

### **Levels of diversity and inclusion skills in organisations**

Research suggests that there are four levels at which the development of diversity and inclusion skills occurs in an organisation.<sup>30</sup> The first is the intrapersonal level, which implies becoming aware of the beliefs—conscious and unconscious—that drive one's own behaviour in relation to diversity and the inclusion of others. The second is the interpersonal level, which is about how an individual acts and reacts towards others, how inclusive and accepting of diversity a person is within their relationships (for example, with a boss, a supervisee, a colleague, or another member of the organisation). The third is the group level, involving group dynamics and one's role in them. In other words, how inclusive and accepting of diversity a person is towards others in a work group context. This includes how they feel and how they address their own feelings of being included/excluded or discriminated against when part of a group, and how they can reduce and manage conflicts emerging at this level. The fourth and final is the organisational level, which includes overall policies and is concerned with large-scale changes aimed at improving diversity acceptance and inclusion throughout the organisation.

<sup>27</sup> Turnbull et al; Quinetta M Roberson, 'Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion in organizations', *Group & Organization Management*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> van Knippenberg and Schippers.

<sup>29</sup> van Knippenberg; Turnbull et al; Chavez and Weisinger; Richard S Allen et al., 'Perceived diversity and organizational performance', *Employee Relations*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Jackson, Joshi, and Erhardt; Turnbull et al.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for diversity and inclusion are organised under the four organisational levels discussed earlier:

**Level 1.** Intrapersonal level: focusing on yourself

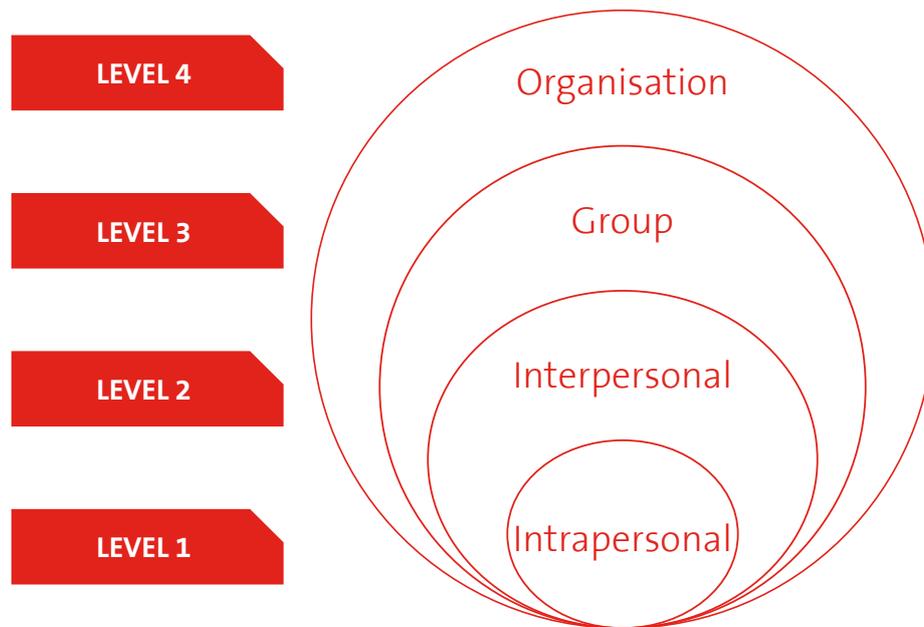
**Level 2.** Interpersonal level: relationships, valuing difference

**Level 3.** Team level: your role within your team

**Level 4.** Organisational level: embedding the value of diversity and inclusion

Under each of these four headings, a brief rationale introduces the perspective from which the recommendations emerge. Each recommendation starts with a scenario to give a context, leading to a rationale that provides the key theory and research findings supporting the suggested actions. Finally the actions are listed and explained.

Although it is not necessary to follow this structure when going through this guide, it is suggested that you start with Recommendation 1, as this will best prepare you to make the most of the subsequent recommendations.



## LEVEL 1—INTRAPERSONAL LEVEL: FOCUSING ON YOURSELF

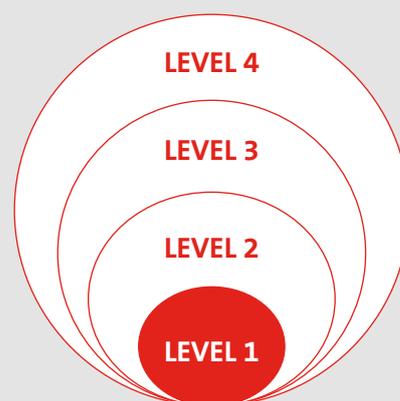
This part of the guide aims at creating awareness about values, beliefs and assumptions about diversity and the way they influence behaviour. By being aware, it is possible to avoid behaving in a biased manner, to better understand other people's behaviour, and prepare to influence workplace culture by fostering appreciation and inclusion of diversity.

The values and beliefs people hold have a key role in shaping their behaviour. Values regarding diversity drive day-to-day actions, but unconscious beliefs and assumptions can interfere with this process. For example, your previous experiences, the context in which you grew up, the significant others that have had a role in your life, religion, cultural beliefs, political views, or even just traditions and games played as children, all have an impact upon those conscious or unconscious beliefs that shape behaviour and inform decisions. Stereotypes form part of the set of assumptions and beliefs that you might hold. First contact with other cultures—such as seeing someone in traditional clothing from a different cultural background, or encountering food from another culture—can evoke a reaction of 'This is strange!' However, it is worth remembering that it is not necessarily strange to other people, it is just different to what you may be used to.

Stereotypes are regarded negatively, as they are subject to distortion in that stereotypes do not describe everyone in a category. However, stereotypes do have an important role in helping the brain organise the exceedingly large amount of information coming in from the environment.<sup>31</sup> The problem is in dealing with exceptions to stereotypes.<sup>32</sup> When the category group is neutral, there are no values associated with it, or there is no conflict or identity association with it, the stereotype is more likely to be more accurate. Thus, it is more likely to be changed to keep on top of its accuracy. For example, meeting a South American who isn't good at dancing.

On the other hand, the brain is also subject to a set of processes that distort stereotypes and that bias judgement and behaviour, resulting in a tendency to 'screen out' (consider just exceptions) those individuals that do not fit the category. This happens more strongly if there is little interaction with the category group, or if there is conflict between one's own category group and others (for example, historical competition), resulting in a magnification of the difference between 'them' and 'us', which allows a strengthening of the 'us' social identity. Similarly, perceptions are subject to halo effect (that is, drawing a general impression about an individual based on a single characteristic), projection (attributing one's own characteristics to another person) and primacy/recency effect (the first and most recent are the most easy to remember).<sup>33</sup>

All of these perceptual problems often act on an unconscious level, without realising they are affecting behaviour. The first three recommendations proposed in this section are focused on helping you to deal with the effect unconscious beliefs might be having on behaviour relating to diversity and inclusion. The first recommendation increases awareness of diversity beliefs and how they compare with what you would like them to be. The second recommendation breaks down some problematic perceptions, helping to revalidate yourself as a change agent in the workplace. The third recommendation then provides tools needed to initiate change, through the capacity to lead into what you want to be, and helping to manage your own goals and ultimately set up an action plan. Together these three recommendations will assist you to take action towards crafting a workplace culture more inclusive of diversity.



<sup>31</sup> Anthony G Greenwald and Mahzarin R Banaji, 'Implicit social cognition: attitudes, self-esteem, and stereotypes', *Psychological review*, vol. 102, no. 1, 1995.

<sup>32</sup> John Martin and Martin Fellenz, *Organizational behaviour and management*, 4th edn., Hampshire, UK, Cengage Learning EMEA, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> McShane, Olekalns, and Travaglione; Martin and Fellenz.

## LEVEL 1 Recommendation 1— Become aware of your own beliefs about diversity: identify the gaps and work to reduce them

**Scenario:** *I work with people who are different to me in aspects such as cultural background, gender, age group, and religious beliefs. In some of these, I belong to the minority and in some to the majority.*

*'I don't feel comfortable/don't understand why this team member takes time off for religious worship while everyone else is working so hard towards the tight deadline for this project.'*

*'On a different subject, I'm a mum and when I needed to take one of my kids to the doctor, despite having completed more than what was my responsibility, my team made me feel very uncomfortable; as if I was letting them down. I can't let my kids down either!'* (Anita)

*'I feel our team is being pulled back by having to include this very experienced guy, who gained most of his experience during the stone age, thus has no understanding about communication in this technological era. Indeed, I cannot understand why they don't value my training and experience in technology and communication. The fact that I got my degree and most of my work experience over in my home country, and not here in Australia, does not mean it is less valid!'* (Josh)

*'I feel it's unfair that women feel entitled to make special work arrangements around their family, when many of us also have family demands we need to juggle with whatever little time we've got left. I wish she was a bit as flexible with my own needs—I could use extra time to get to show them how we did this a couple of decades ago. I'm convinced there are a couple of old principles that could be combined with new ideas and new technology in a very effective way.'*

*They just won't consider there is anything of value on what we did before they were born!'*  
(Ang)

**Aim:** Become aware of your own beliefs about diversity and how they affect your behaviour.

**Why is this important?:** The beliefs and values people hold are the means by which they represent and make sense of the world. These beliefs and values drive behaviour and decisions, and influence motivation.<sup>34</sup> However, more often than expected, behaviours are influenced by unconscious beliefs that in one way or another contradict pursued values.<sup>35</sup> This is how, for example, values held about the environment and beliefs about the effectiveness of energy saving behaviours might make some people consistently turn the power for home appliances off at the wall, while still running the air conditioning for the whole house, thinking that the solar panel installed on the roof is compensating for it. Such inconsistencies can have negative consequences for individuals, as well as within a social work context. Research has shown that consistency between values, beliefs and behaviours results in improved well-being, life satisfaction and job satisfaction.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the greater the consistency between values and behaviours, the healthier and happier a person is likely to be. However, *all* people are subject to the effects of unconscious beliefs and their strong effect on behaviour.

The context of the workplace it is no different: judgements made about, and behaviour towards other people are also influenced by beliefs.<sup>37</sup> For example, without really thinking about it, a person might associate age with a certain level of technological skill, or associate gender with a specific career path or progression. Even those who feel discriminated against in some aspect judge others based on beliefs that might be biased—for example, in the form of 'internalised oppression', whereby internalised beliefs about women and work might result in some women negatively judging the career achievements of other women, based on biased beliefs.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> McShane, Olekalns, and Travaglione; J. Barton Cunningham, *Researching Organizational Values and Beliefs: The Echo Approach*, London, Quorum Books, 2001; Astrid C. Homan et al., 'Believing shapes seeing: The impact of diversity beliefs on the construal of group composition', *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> McShane, Olekalns, and Travaglione; Elisa Adriasola, Kerrie Unsworth, and David Day, *Goal Self-Concordance: Understanding Its Effects through a New Conceptualisation and Task Differentiation*, in *Academy of Management*, edited, Boston, 2012; Kennon M. Sheldon et al., 'Self-concordance and subjective well-being in four cultures', *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> Sheldon et al; Joyce E. Bono and Timothy A. Judge, 'Self-concordance at work: toward understanding the motivational effects of transformational leaders', *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 46, no. 5, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Rolf van Dick et al., 'Group diversity and group identification: The moderating role of diversity beliefs', *Human relations*, vol. 61, no. 10, 2008; Daan van Knippenberg, Carsten K. W. De Dreu, and Astrid C. Homan, 'Work Group Diversity and Group Performance: An Integrative Model and Research Agenda', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 89, no. 6, 2004. Available from: bth.

<sup>38</sup> Turnbull et al; van Knippenberg, De Dreu, and Homan.

Diversity beliefs refer to the value members of a group assign to diversity for their group functioning. Research has consistently shown that groups holding 'pro-diversity' rather than 'pro-similarity' beliefs not only function better, but also achieve better outcomes than groups holding pro-similarity beliefs.<sup>39</sup> Beliefs are essential, not only because they shape behaviour, decisions and the way people relate to others, but also because they influence the means and the quality of outcomes of a team's work.

In order to deal with unconscious beliefs and turn a group's diversity beliefs towards pro-diversity, the first step is to become aware of what those beliefs regarding diversity are. This subsequently improves intrapersonal competencies regarding diversity and awareness of social identity,<sup>40</sup> which ultimately leads to changing workplace culture around the value of diversity and inclusion.

## LEVEL 1 Recommendation 1 Actions

### ACTION 1.1: IDENTIFY YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT DIVERSITY

**Task 1: In one or two sentences, explain what diversity is for you and how you believe it affects your work and maybe your life.**

The aim is to develop a statement about what you think about diversity and how you would like it to be in your life at work.

**Task 2: Follow the link below to take one or more of the tests that will help you identify your unconscious beliefs.**

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

*Note:* the site will offer you the 'social attitudes' test. For that you can either sign up, or take the second option where you select a country and 'go'. The tests offered vary slightly depending on the country you select:

To take a **gender–career association test**, select the United States of America and then press 'go' and follow the prompts.

To take a **sexuality, race, skin-tone, gender–science association** and/or **age test**, select either Australia or United Kingdom, then press 'go' and follow the prompts.

To take an **Aboriginal association test**, select Australia, then press 'go' and follow the prompts.

You will be asked to complete a quick general questionnaire, as your responses will be included in the research group data at Harvard. Your information will be kept completely anonymous.

Other alternative questionnaires:

A. The Inclusion Skills Measurement Profile (ISM Profile) is a questionnaire that explores unconscious diversity beliefs. This questionnaire has a cost per person.

You can learn more and find out how to access it at:

<http://www.humanfacets.com/embedding-inclusion/inclusion-skills-measurement>

B. Questionnaire on diversity beliefs and subjective diversity at the group level :

- Diversity beliefs (this is usually answered using a five-point scale ranging from 'completely inapplicable' to 'completely applicable'. A higher score reflects pro-diversity beliefs, whereas lower ratings indicate pro-similarity beliefs).

<sup>39</sup> Homan et al; van Knippenberg, De Dreu, and Homan; Astrid C. Homan et al., 'Facing differences with an open mind: Openness to experience, salience of intragroup differences, and performance of diverse work groups', *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 51, no. 6, 2008. Available from: heh.

<sup>40</sup> Turnbull et al; Donna Chrobot-Mason, Marian N. Ruderman, and Lisa H. Nishii, 'Leadership in a Diverse Workplace', in David V. Day (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of leadership and organizations*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2014.

*Note:* the words in italics represent different diversity categories. It would be worthwhile to think about your ratings for the statements in each of the three categories (and others if you consider them relevant).

- o I think that groups benefit from the involvement of people from different *ethnic backgrounds/genders/ages*.
- o Creating groups that contain people from different *backgrounds/genders/ages* can be a recipe for trouble (reversed scoring).
- o I think that groups should contain people with similar *backgrounds/genders/ages*.
- o A good mix of group member *backgrounds/genders/ages* helps in doing the task well.

- Subjective diversity (this scale is answered using a five-point scale ranging from 'very similar' to 'very diverse'. Higher scores reflect higher levels of subjective diversity).
  - o How diverse do you think your group is in general?
  - o How similar or different are the members of your group with respect to their:
    - Age?
    - Gender?
    - Ethnic background?
    - Educational background?
    - Personal values?
    - Attitudes about work?
    - Learning goals?

**Task 3: Think about the results and how close they were to what you expected.**

Think about those results that you least expected, and in what ways they might be affecting your behaviour. Try and identify at least two or three concrete examples where your beliefs about diversity actually drive your behaviour.

## LEVEL 1 Recommendation 2— Building a strengths profile

**Scenario:** *After getting negative feedback:*

*'They must think I am such a failure ... I can't deal with them, will call in sick today so that I don't have to attend that meeting ... it might be good to check how the jobs market is doing. I will call in sick tomorrow.'*

*'What do they know? They are so incompetent themselves!... not worth my effort, wait until they ask me for help again ...'*

*'Hmm ... not so exciting after so much effort! But at least I know now what was the error, next time will be spot on. Besides, I have learnt heaps since working with these people. It is definitely helping my career.'*

**Aim:** Build a strengths profile that deals with effects of the environment and avoids incorporating perception biases.

**Why is this important?:** As discussed in the introduction to level 1, people use stereotypes and are categorised as part of stereotyped groups. This can affect an individual in various ways—for example, by incorporating information from others into one's own beliefs. Other people's perceptions can actively influence an individual's self-perception and thus behaviour.

A self-fulfilling prophecy is defined as 'a false belief that leads to its own fulfilment' and happens 'when a perceiver's false belief influences how she or he treats a target, which in turn shapes the target's subsequent behaviour in the direction of the initial false belief'.<sup>41</sup> Research has found that positive expectations or beliefs have a stronger effect on a target's behaviour than negative ones.<sup>42</sup> However, a perceiver's negative

beliefs also influence a target individual's behaviour, making the individual more susceptible to negative self-fulfilling prophecies when he or she has low self-efficacy, vague self-image, and is categorised as part of a stereotyped group.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the clarifying and strengthening of self-image and the increasing of self-efficacy are mechanisms that can be used to avoid becoming subject to the effect of other people's biased judgements.

However, this is not easy to do, especially given that the human brain tends to make use of distorted thinking processes. These fraught thoughts reinforce feelings of incompetency and injustice, building on negative emotions that paralyse, rather than activate proactive behaviour.<sup>44</sup> The use of these dysfunctional thinking processes at work has been associated not only with a decrease in job satisfaction and well-being (leading to stress, burnout and depression), but also with increased job avoidance (such as absenteeism, tardiness, discussing non-work issues with colleagues, and quitting).<sup>45</sup>

The common use of dysfunctional thoughts leads to the development of 'obstacle thinking patterns'. Thinking patterns are habitual ways of thinking about experiences.<sup>46</sup> For example, a person who normally focuses on mistakes, or the negative aspects of situations, might have developed an 'obstacle thinking pattern', in which they generally become discouraged when confronting difficult situations. This type of pattern can be changed into an 'opportunity thinking pattern', which takes a constructive perspective on difficult situations, resulting in feelings of empowerment and proactivity that lead to more effective and successful management of challenging situations.<sup>47</sup>

The actions included under this recommendation provide some practical and proven mechanisms of overcoming the issues identified above.

<sup>41</sup> Stephanie Madon et al., 'Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Mechanisms, Power, and Links to Social Problems', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, vol. 5, no. 8, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Alison E Smith et al., 'Self-fulfilling prophecies, perceptual biases, and accuracy at the individual and group levels', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 34, no. 6, 1998; Madon et al; Jennifer Willard et al., 'Self-efficacy as a moderator of negative and positive self-fulfilling prophecy effects: mothers' beliefs and children's alcohol use', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2008.

<sup>44</sup> Kerrie L Unsworth and Claire M Mason, 'Help yourself: The mechanisms through which a self-leadership intervention influences strain', *Journal of occupational health psychology*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2012; Jeffrey L. Godwin, Christopher P. Neck, and Jeffery D. Houghton, 'The impact of thought self-leadership on individual goal performance: A cognitive perspective', *The Journal of Management Development*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1999. Available from: ABI/INFORM Complete; ABI/INFORM Global; ProQuest Education Journals; Jeffery D Houghton and Darryl L Jinkerson, 'Constructive Thought Strategies and Job Satisfaction: A Preliminary Examination', *Journal of Business & Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2007. Available from: eh; Charles C. Manz, 'Self-Leadership: Toward an Expanded Theory of Self-Influence Processes in Organizations', *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1986; Kerrie Unsworth and Sharon Parker, 'Promoting a proactive and innovative workforce for the new workplace', in David Holman, et al. (eds), *The new workplace: A guide to the human impact of modern working practices*, Chichester, John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Timothy A. Judge and Edwin A. Locke, 'Effect of Dysfunctional Thought Processes on Subjective Well-Being and Job Satisfaction', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 78, no. 3, 1993. Available from: bth.

<sup>46</sup> Manz.

<sup>47</sup> Unsworth and Mason; Godwin, Neck, and Houghton; Manz; Unsworth and Parker.

## LEVEL 1 Recommendation 2 Actions

### ACTION 2.1: MAKE EXPLICIT YOUR STRENGTHS AND HOW THEY MAKE YOU UNIQUE AND AN ASSET FOR YOUR WORK GROUP

**Task 1: Think about adjectives that describe you *when you are at your best*.**

You might want to ask people you trust to tell you how they would describe you.

**Task 2: Using the adjectives you have identified, try and write a small paragraph describing yourself when you are at your best at work.**

Start your description with '*When I'm at my best, I am ...*'

**Task 3: Based on the qualities you have recognised, articulate the contributions you bring to any team or group you become part of at work.**

Some of your qualities might be more important for the functioning and performance of one group and other qualities might be more important for another group.

### Task 1: Identify and confront dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions.

Read the following description of common distorted thoughts and identify any situations where you tend to apply them.<sup>48</sup>

- **All-or-nothing thinking:** When categorising experiences as either 'black or white', it is hard to recognise the shades of grey in between. *For example, you might think 'Jane' is both perfect as an engineer, as well as in her role as mum.* Most situations and people are neither completely good nor completely bad, nor does any action result in a completely good or bad outcome. Instead, it is important to recognise the good and the bad in everything.
- **Overgeneralisation:** This bias is based on drawing inferences from one or a few events, and applying it to other, objectively unrelated events. *For example, doing poorly in an assignment once, leads you to conclude that you have always done and always will do poorly on assignments.* This bias causes unnecessary negative emotions, because it creates the perception that negative things will occur over and over again.
- **Selective abstraction (or mental filter):** Selective abstraction means focusing only on the negative and ignoring the neutral or positive information. *For example, although you made a mistake once in a presentation, you performed the rest of it perfectly; yet you exclusively focus on the fact you made a single mistake.* This can cause a perception of the whole situation as negative, and causes you to suffer much needless anguish.
- **Disqualifying the positive:** The tendency to mentally disqualify positive experiences from having any relevance, and actually turn these positive experiences into negative ones. *For example, you disqualify a compliment someone gives you by telling yourself, 'They're just being nice'.* You are unable to appreciate the good things that happen to you because you tell yourself, 'It doesn't count'.
- **Arbitrary inference (or jumping to conclusions):** Drawing negative conclusions about a situation in the absence of supporting evidence, or in the face of contradictory information. *For example, you believe someone is ignoring you, when there is another reason for their behaviour (that you are simply unaware of).* You respond to these imagined negative reactions with self-defeating behaviours and set up a negative situation when none existed in the first place.
- **Magnification (catastrophising) and minimisation:** The tendency to make gross errors in evaluating the significance of an event. *For example, you exaggerate the importance of negative things, and minimise the importance of positive things.* When you magnify imperfections and minimise your good points, you're guaranteed to feel inferior.
- **Emotional reasoning:** Using the negative emotions experienced as evidence for the truth. *For example 'I feel useless, so I must be useless'.* This reasoning is misleading because it is thoughts that guide emotions. If your thoughts are based on thinking biases, which they most likely are, then the associated feelings have no validity.

<sup>48</sup> Judge and Locke; Unsworth and Mason; Houghton and Jinkerson, 'Constructive Thought Strategies and Job Satisfaction: A Preliminary Examination'.

- **Personalisation:** Blaming yourself for a negative event or outcome, even though you were not responsible for causing the event. *For example, your friend receives a poor performance review and you blame yourself for not helping her enough.*
- **Should and shouldn't statements:** Coercing or manipulating yourself into taking action by telling yourself that you 'should' or 'shouldn't' or 'ought' or 'must'. When your behaviour falls short of your standards, they can cause feelings of guilt, shame and self-loathing.
- **Labelling and mislabelling:** Describing yourself, others, or even an event with negative labels. *For example, 'I'm a failure', 'She is a fraud'.* An extreme form of overgeneralisation.

### **Task 2: Think about the situations you identified above.**

Replace the fraught thoughts with more rational beliefs and assumptions, some that are actually based in factual information.

### **Task 3: To modify thinking patterns, you need to repeatedly reverse the tone of your thinking over time.**

Two strategies are useful to do this:

- **Positive self-talk:** Identify your positives and strengths—make sure you do not allow dysfunctional thinking to bias the usual dialogue you have with yourself. For example, you might say to yourself, *'I'm unsure I would be able to engage that client by myself'*—whereas a more positive approach would be to say *'I have done a good job leading the meetings with the client over the last project; I probably have the capacity to do this from the very beginning of the relationship'*. Overall, this involves recognising your strengths and achievements and telling yourself about them, convincing yourself that you actually have these characteristics.
- **Imagining the successful result:** Think about the successful result of the situation—what it looks like, your actions, and how it feels to you. Create the situation in your head before it happens. This will help to visualise the 'what and how' of your sought outcome, so you can work more effectively to achieve it.

### **Task 4: Continue to practice the changes in your thoughts and thinking patterns.**

The more you consciously practice them, the more you will incorporate these into your normal ways of thinking. The goal is to avoid self-sabotaging your work.

**Task 1: Develop and write down a set of ways of introducing yourself in different situations.**

Include information about yourself, your qualifications, position, years of experience, main achievements and/or main projects you are working on, or have worked on.

- a) For a quick and informal encounter (such as in a corridor). Develop one concise sentence using name, qualification or position, and area of expertise.
- b) For formal meetings (such as when presenting to co-workers or clients). Develop a short paragraph including your name, qualification or position, area of expertise, experience, main projects and achievements.
- c) For a written presentation of your professional career (such as for a project proposal, on LinkedIn, or for special presentations to senior management or high level clients). Develop a 'bio' including your name, qualifications, years of experience, some of the principal organisations you have worked for (or provided services to), main achievements relating to your engineering career, and any information that is relevant and appropriate to the audience, in order to demonstrate your standing as an engineer. These types of bios are usually written in the third person. Get the opinion of someone who knows you well and who can give constructive feedback, in order to make your bio as professional and effective as possible. Lastly, make sure that you feel comfortable with the final version and that your most important qualities and strengths come across well.

**Task 2: Rehearse the two introductions developed in a) and b) above until they feel natural and you feel at ease saying them.**

You might want to record yourself, practice in front of a mirror, and find different ways of getting feedback, so as to make sure your non-verbal message is in line with your verbal message.

## Level 1 Recommendation 3— Becoming your own leader: self-management

**Scenario:** ‘I’d like to do something to change the situation and make my workplace more inclusive, but I don’t know what to do, where to start, or how to do it.’

**Aim:** Develop an action plan, become your own leader.

**Why is this important?:** After establishing your general beliefs about diversity, as well as the internalised beliefs that might be interfering with behaviour, it is time to take action. This third recommendation helps you to become your own leader in the quest of crafting a more inclusive workplace culture.

Self-leadership is defined as leading, managing and motivating oneself towards performing tasks, and involves a combination of behavioural, cognitive and emotional strategies.<sup>49</sup> Developing self-leadership capacity is something that everyone can do, and has important benefits in relation to performance, by increasing effectiveness in pursuing goals, by increasing innovation and creativity, as well as

improving well-being.<sup>50</sup> In this recommendation, the focus is on behavioural self-leadership strategies, which include goal setting, self-monitoring and self-reward.<sup>51</sup>

As well as needing to set those goals in an effective way, it is also important to increase motivation, follow up and make sure to keep up with the plan, achieve sub-goals and ultimately the overall goals—and in doing so, find the rewards you are looking for.

This recommendation is divided into two actions, based on knowledge developed in the area of motivation and goal regulation, which includes much complementary and well-validated research.<sup>52</sup> Firstly, some strategies are identified to help increase motivation for pursuing different goals. Then the focus is on the characteristics of an effective action plan, including not only the development of SMART goals, but also the supporting strategies that can significantly increase the likelihood of achieving that goal.

### LEVEL 1 Recommendation 3 Actions

#### ACTION 3.1: IDENTIFY WHAT MAKES YOUR GOALS MOTIVATING

##### Task 1: Identify where your goal fits in with other important goals you pursue.

It is likely that in your life you pursue multiple goals, some more abstract (such as values) and others more concrete (such as project goals or tasks). Further, you might organise these goals in a hierarchy, where you can identify relationships between them. In this way, you might find that some small goals are helpful in achieving other longer-term goals, or that two long-term goals are complementary to each other. Research has shown that associating goals with values and identities (for example, as an engineer, parent, team leader, and athlete) will increase and sustain motivation over time.

- Take a pen and paper and try and draw your goal hierarchy. First, list some of the values that are most important for you and list them horizontally.
- Next, identify your roles (the different identities you have, such as engineer, parent, Muslim, colleague), and list them horizontally below your values.
- Finally, list some of the key long-term or mid-term goals you are currently pursuing at work and list them horizontally as a third, bottom level. Now draw the connections you see between the goals at different levels.

<sup>49</sup> Unsworth and Mason; Manz.

<sup>50</sup> Houghton and Jinkerson, ‘Constructive thought strategies and job satisfaction: A preliminary examination’; Unsworth and Mason; Christopher P. Neck and Jeffrey D. Houghton, ‘Two decades of self-leadership theory and research: Past developments, present trends, and future possibilities’, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Unsworth and Mason.

<sup>52</sup> Adriasola, Unsworth, and Day; Kennon M. Sheldon and Andrew J. Elliot, ‘Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The self-concordance model’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 76, no. 3, 1999; Unsworth and Mason; Peter M Gollwitzer, ‘Action phases and mind-sets’, in E. Tory Higgins and Richard M. Sorrentino (eds), *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behavior*, New York, NY, US, Guilford Press, 1990, Vol. 2.

Increasing the meaningfulness of your goals may also help increase your motivation for the goals themselves. You can do this by increasing the connections with the other goals that are part of your goal hierarchy. For example, by looking for ways in which the goal of getting to know the individuals you work with is helpful in making you a better parent, or engineer.

Alternatively, you can reframe a goal by focusing on longer-term outcomes, or focusing on the higher-order values. For example, if the specific task of writing an email with positive and constructive feedback after a meeting is not very motivating, you could focus on the longer-term outcome of turning the 'invisible into visible', for example, recognising the work done in reformatting a document to make it appropriate for a client, and influencing the culture of your workplace.

### **Task 2: Redesign your job to include natural rewards associated with your goals.**

Natural or intrinsic rewards are valued outcomes or benefits that come from inside the person and are a characteristic of the task. They can include challenges, potential for learning and growth, autonomy, responsibility, and feedback.

Think of ways of redesigning your job to include the goals for which you would like to become more motivated, in a way that associates them with natural rewards. For example, you might find it difficult to work with a particular person and avoid doing so, even by calling in sick. Think about the time spent working with this colleague as an opportunity to put into practice the use of constructive thinking patterns, therefore making it a potential for learning and personal growth. Alternatively, modify the context—as you normally enjoy working in the outside area of the café, try to arrange your next meeting there.

## **ACTION 3.2: SETTING UP AN ACTION PLAN**

### **Task 1: Establish goals that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).**

- Think about two or three specific things that you want to change in relation to diversity and inclusion in your workplace. For example, being included in project meetings, getting others to value difference, getting to know people in your team.
- Break down each of those goals into smaller tasks that can be achieved in the shorter term and identify how you would measure the achievement of them.
- Identify potential barriers when pursuing each of the goals (in terms of resources, knowledge or skills you might need, or other people).
- Identify strategies to overcome the identified potential barriers.
- Further reading: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fe577>

### **Task 2: Keep your goals salient and motivating.**

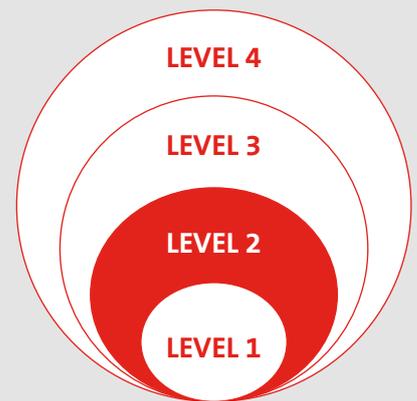
- Identify cues to increase desirable behaviours:
  - Putting up reminders for the things you have set yourself to do (for example, physical objects such as to-do lists or signs around your desk).
  - Increasing positive cues/encouragers (such as surrounding yourself with people or objects that will encourage desirable behaviour). For example, participating more actively in the Women in Engineering Special Interest Groups of Engineers Australia puts you in a mindset of greater awareness of other women's contributions in your workplace, and you feel keen to provide feedback about the 'job well done'.
- Identify cues to decrease undesirable behaviours, and remove any cues that might support the behaviours that you want to eliminate. For example, every time you talk to your great-aunt before work you become very impatient and tend to allow stereotypes to affect the way you relate to older colleagues at work. So you might decide to call your great-aunt on your way home from work instead.

## LEVEL 2—INTERACTING WITH OTHERS: VALUING DIFFERENCE

It is often the case that the needs and interests of the people who form part of a majority group are known and catered for, and these needs and interests are likely to be shared by most of the majority group. Their needs and interests might be even obvious to those who are part of the minority, as they are articulated and discussed more often by members of the dominant group.

On the other hand, the needs and interests of minority groups are more likely to go unnoticed by the people in the dominant group. This is more often due to a lack of awareness or knowledge about the individuals in the groups, rather than an intentional disregard of them and their needs. For example, if you are young and feel on top of your career, like most of the team members in your group, you might be unaware of the needs and interests of the two older members of the team, who rarely join the rest of the group for the many activities happening outside work (from drinks on Friday to young family catch-ups at parks or beaches).

The purpose of this part of the guide is to increase your knowledge about other individuals from work and conversely, their knowledge about you. It looks at the one-on-one relationships you have or can create with different 'actors' from the workplace. The actors can involve any level or position: a co-worker, a boss, another team member, people working in other areas or at different levels within the organisation, even customers and providers. The aim is to increase your skills and those of the people surrounding you in interacting and valuing difference. In other words, the objective is to foster a culture that values learning from each other and is appreciative of multiple perspectives.



### LEVEL 2 Recommendation 4— Getting to know your colleagues: one by one

#### Scenario:

*Your male colleagues get together, but they do things you are not interested in. You feel left out. They talk about things that don't concern you and you don't know how to include yourself. Their camaraderie outside of work creates better relationships in the office, leaving you on the sidelines.*

*A colleague of yours has started to look a bit pale lately and tends to leave as soon as the clock hits 5 pm. This seems a bit odd and you wonder whether he might be looking for another job, might have a problem with you, or maybe a family issue. After a while you overhear a conversation where he is talking on the phone and you realise ... it is Ramadan! As a Muslim he must have been fasting for the last couple of weeks, and probably rushing back home to break the fast after sunset.*

**Aim:** Getting to know people outside of their job, to create better work relationships.

**Why is this important?:** Having common interests increases the ability of groups to work together. According to the social categorisation perspective, 'differences between work group members may engender the classification of others as either similar or dissimilar, categorisations that may disrupt group process'.<sup>53</sup> This is due to people's predisposition to trust, favour, and show willingness to cooperate with others who are similar to them. It is important to note, though, that this does not mean a person has to become similar to the majority and change who they are, it just means that it is important to find common interests and spend time getting to know co-workers.<sup>54</sup> Such an approach can reduce misunderstandings, both in your interpretation of other people's actions, as well as the way others interpret yours.

<sup>53</sup> van Knippenberg and Schippers.

<sup>54</sup> Cameron and Quinn; David A. Harrison, Kenneth H. Price, and Myrtle P. Bell, 'Beyond relational demography: Time and the effects of surface- and deep-level diversity on work group cohesion', *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1998. Available from: [heh](#).

## LEVEL 2 Recommendation 4 Actions

### ACTION 4.1: GET TO KNOW THE PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH BETTER

#### **Task 1: Ask questions instead of making assumptions.**

When someone does something you do not really understand, avoid judging their behaviour (remember that some unconscious beliefs can bias conclusions). Asking in a calm manner what their motivations are is much easier and effective than assuming. Indeed, very often, when guessing someone else's motivations, you will get them wrong.

#### **Task 2: Give information to others that prevent biased conclusions about your own behaviour.**

Other people might jump to biased conclusions about your behaviours too. (for example, when you choose to work at home on a project proposal to avoid interruptions). If this happens, find the right time to explain what drives you, and how you plan to achieve what is expected of you. Talking about it with co-workers or a supervisor gives the opportunity to provide factual information about your actions and decisions. While such an approach might result in having to adjust your plan, this should seldom happen. Further, after a while of giving this type of information to people you work with, they will get to know you and understand your ways, reducing the time needed to provide specific information. The clearer you are, the lower the chance for misinterpretation or misunderstanding

#### **Task 3: Find common interests.**

Most people like to talk about something they are passionate about. Ask people about their likes—for example their family, hobbies, holidays, or sports. Choose an appropriate time, such as during lunch time, coffee breaks or Friday drinks, or in other casual situations. Make a guess about what might be the right topic, but do not panic if you seem to have failed in your attempt to establish a conversation. Next time you can give it another go until you find things you have in common. Finding common interests will decrease the gaps between you and your colleagues, creating a sense of belonging to the same group.

Note that there is a fine line between being friendly and becoming invasive. Pay attention to the other person's non-verbal cues. Look for signs of comfort and enthusiasm with the conversation.

#### **Task 4: Organise activities that you can all enjoy.**

After finding out what your co-workers enjoy, organise small group activities that will give you the opportunity to share common interests (such as movies, sports, dinner, or family activities). You can also focus on activities that use diversity as a way of getting to know everyone—for example, bringing food from everyone's cultural background to share for lunch. Remember that spending time together in a positive atmosphere promotes better work.

## LEVEL 2 Recommendation 5— Recognising and supporting a ‘job well done’

**Scenario:** *One of your colleagues—a young female engineer who has been part of the team for over a year—has done a great job that has significantly and positively affected your job and that of other people at work. However, as often happens with quiet work, it has gone unnoticed. Further, a very extroverted colleague’s work—not nearly as complete—got praise and recognition. You think to yourself that if this young woman does not get recognised, it is likely that less-prepared people lacking the appropriate skills will get the promotions that she deserves.*

**Aim:** Creating a culture where others are valued for their contributions.

**Why is this important?:** It is often found that much ‘invisible work’ is done by women or other minorities.<sup>55</sup> This ‘invisible work’ e.g., streamlining a project quote, is essential for the functioning of organisations, yet may not be listed amongst the KPIs or project goals. By making visible the invisible work, and recognising those doing this invisible work, others become aware that this work, and those doing it, are an asset to the company. By making an individual’s contributions visible to others, it is possible to initiate a change in beliefs about diversity towards a more pro-diversity outlook—for example, beliefs people have about whether a diverse group composition will be beneficial or detrimental to the group’s functioning.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the ability to support co-workers is an indicator of a highly productive workplace.

In addition to helping make the workplace more productive and influence other colleagues’ diversity beliefs, increasing the visibility of other colleagues’ work has an added benefit. Noticing and recognising other people’s work can promote and strengthen their self-efficacy, reduce feelings of injustice and increase the expectation that the effort they invest will lead to the desired outcomes. Furthermore, it reduces the likelihood of people in a minority group incorporating the prejudices against them, or developing self-sabotage behaviours directed at their own work or that of others in the same minority group,<sup>57</sup> for example, as explained in Recommendation 1, when a woman makes a negative comment about another woman’s success.

<sup>55</sup> Joan Eveline, ‘Woman in the ivory tower: Gendering feminised and masculinised identities’, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, vol. 18, no. 6, 2005; van Dick et al.

<sup>56</sup> Chavez and Weisinger.

<sup>57</sup> Turnbull et al; Gail Pheterson, ‘Alliances between Women: Overcoming Internalized Oppression and Internalized Domination’, *Signs*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1986; Mark Chen and John A. Bargh, ‘Nonconscious Behavioral Confirmation Processes: The Self-Fulfilling Consequences of Automatic Stereotype Activation’, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 33, no. 5, 1997.

**ACTION 5.1: TURNING THE INVISIBLE 'VISIBLE'**

**Task 1: When you observe that someone has done a good job, tell them. They need to know what they are doing right and how it helps you.**

- Make sure you are specific and base your feedback on actual facts. This will make your feedback of value, not only for the individual but also for others who can become aware of the point being made. Say what they did right, not just your opinion on it.
- Feedback is more effective when:<sup>58</sup>
  - o given closest in time to the actual situation
  - o associated with the task that has been done well, rather than to the person in general (try 'you performed that task well' rather than 'you are a good performer').

**Task 2: Let other people who work with the person know about their good job**

- If there is a wrapping up meeting after a project, praise the outstanding contributions. Explain what the workers did to make the job better. Focus on their unique abilities and how they are an asset (for example, their excellent communication skills).
- When another co-worker does a good job, email their team leader about it. This is the same for your team leader—you can email their supervisor. When giving feedback, remember to avoid or minimise opinions (adjectives), and use more facts (nouns, actions). Explain what the co-worker did that was helpful. For example, how much time was saved because of the work this person did, or how the person helped you minimise the use of other resources.

**Task 3: When it is your work that is going under the radar, you can make it visible.**

- Make a weekly or monthly summary of the tasks you've been working on and your achievements. Use appropriate situations, such as performance management review meetings, to highlight them.
- Save evidence from your work well done. For example, file positive feedback sent by customers/clients or co-workers, so that you can use facts and evidence when necessary. You could also forward these types of evidence (such as feedback emails) to your boss, so that these can be used to judge your performance based on facts and without bias.

<sup>58</sup> Richard P. DeShon and Jennifer Z. Gillespie, 'A motivated action theory account of goal orientation', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 90, no. 6, 2005.

## LEVEL 2 Recommendation 6— Recognising your role as moderator for diversity in your workplace

### Scenario:

*‘My colleague sent me an email which, despite not having any specific indication of disrespect or superiority, it did make me feel uncomfortable—as if he was telling me off. It is hard to decide whether I should go and clarify what his intention was, or just move on.’*

*‘Whenever I engage in any conversation with this colleague of mine, I cannot help thinking she is too dismissive of people she “doesn’t need”. That puts me off and I tend to get upset and annoyed with whatever she might be saying—even if it is about a specific task she is doing or we are working on.’*

**Aim:** Identifying causes and strategies to handle conflict associated with diversity in the workplace.

**Why is this important?:** Diversity in the workplace can be an asset for an organisation. However, it can also be a source of conflict with negative outcomes. Conflict is not necessarily something bad—when associated with a task it might even result in better, more innovative and creative outcomes. By contrast, when the conflict is based on interpersonal relationships, it tends to have negative effects on the job. Causes of conflict that are likely to emerge in relationships between diverse people at work include communication problems, perceived differences in values or incompatible goals, scarce resources, and ambiguity in tasks, among others.<sup>59</sup>

Working together gets easier over time, as colleagues start to learn about each other’s attitudes, reactions, values and ways of doing things. As time goes by, it is possible to start focusing on superordinate goals of shared relevance, find similarities, improve the quality and effectiveness of communication, and even develop some norms that allow clarification over those issues where there may be a clash of views.<sup>60</sup> However, surface-level diversity becomes less relevant when conflict emerges from deep-level differences, such as personality or differences in values.<sup>61</sup> Some specific strategies can help individuals deal with these types of conflict and turn them into positive outcomes.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, a culture that encourages supportive peer relationships in the workplace will become more productive, as well as reduce the strains that can result in stress and burnout.<sup>63</sup>

These recommendations provide strategies on how to handle conflict,<sup>64</sup> select an appropriate conflict-handling style for different situations, provide tips to improve communication, and suggest ideas for more sustained conflict management when working in diverse teams.

<sup>59</sup> McShane, Olekalns, and Travaglione; Baden Eunson, *Conflict Management*, 1st edn., Hoboken, Wiley, 2012, <http://UWA.ebib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=903141>.

<sup>60</sup> McShane, Olekalns, and Travaglione; Harrison, Price, and Bell; Eunson.

<sup>61</sup> Harrison, Price, and Bell.

<sup>62</sup> Eunson.

<sup>63</sup> Chavez and Weisinger; Unsworth and Mason.

<sup>64</sup> Cameron and Quinn; McShane, Olekalns, and Travaglione; Eunson; Ralph H Kilmann and Kenneth W Thomas, ‘Developing a forced-choice measure of conflict-handling behavior: The “MODE” instrument’, *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1977; Kenneth W Thomas, ‘Conflict and conflict management: Reflections and update’, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1992.

**ACTION 6.1: SELECTING THE APPROPRIATE CONFLICT-HANDLING STYLE FOR THE SITUATION**

**Task 1: Think about the following conflict-handling styles and the situations in which they might be most useful.**

- Avoiding style: The person stays away from conflict and ignores disagreements.  
*Useful when* an issue is trivial, when it is unlikely you will have a chance to satisfy your concerns, when the cost of trying to resolve the issue overshadows the benefits.
- Competing style: Also referred as ‘forcing’, where the person tries to win the conflict at the other’s expense.  
*Useful when* you have a deep conviction about your position (for example, about an ethical issue), when the conflict requires a quick decisive resolution, when the other party would take advantage of a more cooperative solution.
- Accommodating style: Gives in completely to the other side’s wishes, paying little or no attention to their own interests.  
*Useful when* the other party has substantially more power, when the issue is much more important to the other party than to you, when you find your position is not as strong, or that you are wrong and show reasonableness.
- Collaborating style: Looks to find a mutually beneficial solution for both parties.  
*Useful when* the interests are not completely opposing and can be merged, when parties have trust, openness and time to share information and your objective is to learn.
- Compromising style: Seek solutions where the losses are balanced with the gains, give and take.  
*Useful when* parties have equal power, when time is pressing to get the issue resolved, when a temporary solution is required to a complex issue, and when the issue is important but not worth the effort, time or disruption involved in achieving collaboration.

**Task 2: Self yourself a specific goal to practice conflict-handling styles.**

- Identify different situations where you have experienced conflict at work and think what would have been the most appropriate way of handling the conflict.
- Identify a situation that might be likely to occur in the near future, and set a goal for handling the conflict in a more effective way, based on the conflict-handling styles described above.

### Task 1: Interpersonal communication—*sending your message effectively.*

- Non-verbal communication (includes facial gestures, voice intonation, physical distance and even silence):
  - Making your non-verbal signals match your words.
  - Adjust the non-verbal signals to the context.
  - Use body language to convey positive feelings.
- Verbal communication:
  - Be descriptive and focus on the task or problem, rather than the person.
  - Use facts instead of adjectives, use direct language.
  - Rephrase the key points a couple of times ('Tell them what you are going to tell them; tell them; then tell them what you have told them'.<sup>65</sup>)

### Task 2: Interpersonal communication—*receiving a message effectively.*

- Reading non-verbal communication:
  - Practice observing people and identifying individual and cultural differences in their non-verbal language. For example, in some cultures, making eye contact is a way of showing respect for and attention to the person to whom you are listening, whereas in other cultures eye contact between different genders is disrespectful. Also note that some people tend to be less expressive than others.
  - Interpret non-verbal language as a whole and avoid focusing on one specific gesture that might distort the message.
  - Learn to recognise the non-verbal language often used by colleagues.
- Active listening:
  - Make the speaker feel heard and understood.
    - Take the time to sense the whole of the message being sent, avoiding interruptions and maintaining interest.
    - Take the time to evaluate the message, empathise, and organise the information you have received.
    - Set aside judgement or criticisms of the person, as well as biases associated with stereotypes and concentrate on understanding the message.
  - When responding, make sure to clarify the message—this will save time and avoid potential conflict.
- Be congruent and consistent in your interpersonal interactions. For example, make sure your words match your non-verbal communication; don't differentiate in how you speak with males/females, younger/older colleagues.

<sup>65</sup> McShane, Olekalns, and Travaglione.

### **Task 3: Non face-to-face communication—email and instant messages.**

These communication tools are used daily by many people at work.

- Best used for well-defined situations, but not so effective for ambiguous, complex and novel messages. These types of messages are open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation.
- The lack of non-verbal communication in the email offers room for misinterpretation of the ‘tone’ or ‘intention’ of a message. Be aware of this problem and try to take the message at face value, rather than assuming there is another intention behind it. If you feel uncomfortable, look for complementary communication channels, such as phone calls or face-to-face communication.
- Similarly, when sending an email, read it through twice and try to ensure that it is a direct message that is not open to misinterpretation.

## **ACTION 6.3: GETTING AN OVERALL PERSPECTIVE ON HOW TO HELP REDUCE CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE <sup>66</sup>**

### **Task 1: The next step—adopting conflict resolution strategies.**

Once you are comfortable with selecting the most appropriate conflict-handling style as a conflict emerges, and you feel more confident about your communication skills, you can adopt conflict resolution strategies that address the cause of the conflict, which should result in a gradual reduction in the occurrence of conflict. These strategies include:

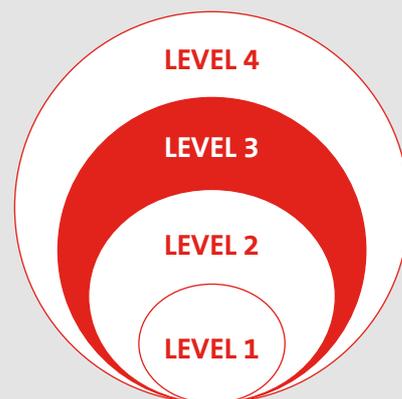
- **Emphasising superordinate goals:** get parties focusing on a broader goal that they all value, and which requires a combined effort in order to be achieved. For example, if the conflict concerns how to address a specific problem that emerged during a large project, get the parties to focus on the benefits of satisfying the client, and the professional rewards that each of them will accrue upon successfully completing such a large project.
- **Reducing differentiation:** This can be achieved by increasing common experiences. Although this should occur naturally with the increase in time working together, actions such as those listed in Recommendation 4 of this practical guide can help create commonalities at earlier stages of working together.
- **Improving communication and understanding:** By becoming a better communicator through practising and by helping others to do the same, escalation of conflicts can also be reduced. Refer to Action 6.2 for strategies to become a more effective communicator.
- **Clarifying rules and procedures:** Conflicts that emerge from ambiguity can be reduced by getting parties to agree upon certain rules and procedures. Keep in mind that setting too many rules and procedures can also be disruptive and unhelpful to day-to-day work, so try and keep to the minimum necessary to avoid major conflicts.

**Task 2: Practise the three actions listed above in your one-on-one relationships and then move on to practising them within your team.**

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

## LEVEL 3—TEAM LEVEL: YOUR ROLE WITHIN YOUR TEAM

This part of the guide moves one level up in the sphere of influence, with the aim of making your workplace culture more appreciative and inclusive of diversity. Thus, the team-level recommendations build upon those from the previous levels. The aim is now to take a proactive role and influence team dynamics to be more cooperative and inclusive of difference, as well as to prevent and deal with conflict over difference.



### LEVEL 3 Recommendation 7— Making explicit the value of diversity

**Scenario:** *You leave the room thinking that this is going nowhere ... The clash between strong personalities has everyone exhausted—they might as well let the point go, it doesn't really make much of a difference which of the two discussed approaches is taken, and time is ticking! Indeed, it would be great if this other team member took a more active role—her contributions in the past have been spot on. But nobody seems to have noticed them. Further, she seems keen on maintaining her low profile so that she can have more flexibility to attend to her family's needs. Well ... we will see where this ends up.*

**Aim:** Inclusion of diversity in teamwork.

**Why is this important?:** Working in diverse teams can be challenging—sometimes communication is difficult, and it can be hard to understand the different approaches people take. As noted above, diversity can be a great asset to an organisation, and the development of team inclusion skills are necessary to make it work.<sup>68</sup> If you want others to value diversity and inclusion, start by actively doing so yourself.<sup>69</sup>

The aim at this level is to get the team to harvest the benefits of being diverse and inclusive. For that to happen, the team members need to value diversity, and also develop a team identity.<sup>70</sup> Finding similarities in attitudes or common goals not only improves communication, but also makes working together a more effective and efficient process. Although time plays a key role in the development of group cohesion, the process can be facilitated by practising the actions recommended previously in this practical guide, and applying them to team dynamics.

<sup>67</sup> Jackson, Joshi, and Erhardt; Turnbull et al.

<sup>68</sup> Turnbull et al.

<sup>69</sup> Cameron and Quinn.

<sup>70</sup> van Knippenberg and Schippers; van Dick et al; van Knippenberg, De Dreu, and Homan.

**ACTION 7.1: MODEL THE KIND OF BEHAVIOUR YOU WISH TO FOSTER IN OTHERS**

**Task 1: Express confidence in the abilities of others.**

- Choose a co-worker and consider the ways in which he or she is an asset to the company. Take the time to tell the co-worker.
- When someone is given a task, show confidence in the worker's ability to carry it out successfully. Expectations of others can directly influence self-efficacy beliefs and thus performance.

In meetings:

- Seek everyone's points of view. Ask for their ideas and why they think they would work. Instead of interrogating, ask them with genuine interest. You are not judging their point of view, you are finding out the ideas behind it.
- Speak up. Let others know how you can contribute to the task at hand.
- After everyone has shared their thoughts, find the common ground or shared goal. Doing this helps everyone to become a part of a team, regardless of how diverse it might be. Every team member identifies with a common goal and thus becomes part of the same team, rather than being 'every man for himself'.
- Highlight contributions and celebrate the success of co-workers. As explained in Recommendation 5, when someone does something that adds value, make it visible. By doing this, you focus on how individuals can contribute to the shared goal. You also model this behaviour in others—they are more likely to start doing it if it becomes common practice.

**Task 2: Bring to your team the conflict management skills you have been practising in your one-on-one relationships at work (see Recommendation 6) and help prevent conflict from escalating.**

- Apply conflict-handling styles to different situations as they emerge. You might want to advise people holding the divergent points of view about the best way to handle the conflict.
- Effectively use communication to avoid misinterpretation and escalation of conflicts. Help others communicate effectively.
- Emphasise superordinate goals to get the team working together.
- Try to create opportunities to spend time with the group other than in a working context, in order to de-emphasise the differences between group members, and encourage shared experiences. For example, catch up for a drink after work, or arrange a cupcake morning tea.
- When lack of clarity repeatedly leads to arguments and disagreements, try to set norms or procedures that prevent similar situations from becoming conflicts in the future.

### LEVEL 3 Recommendation 8— Take a proactive role in your team

**Scenario:** *You're not always invited to meetings, even if you are working on the same project. If you are invited, you don't feel like you can voice your opinions.*

**Aim:** Take a proactive approach towards including yourself.

**Why is this important?:** Even though diversity is a reality, be aware that the majority or dominant group does not always see the dynamics involved in including minorities, nor understand how the minorities feel. They can be blind to the struggles of minorities and may not even be aware they are excluding them.<sup>71</sup>

This often results in people being 'left out of the loop'. Good leaders might have better developed inclusion skills and take an active role in preventing these types of situations from occurring. However, it is not possible to rely solely on the leadership skills of the team leader or boss. As discussed in Recommendation 3, you have the capacity to act as your own leader, and now is time to put this into practice.<sup>72</sup> Prepare yourself and take on the challenge.<sup>73</sup>

### LEVEL 3 Recommendation 8 Actions

#### ACTION 8.1: PUTTING YOUR SELF-LEADERSHIP CAPACITY INTO ACTION—INCLUDING YOURSELF IN YOUR TEAM

##### Task 1: Take a proactive role in approaching your work team.

- Ask to be invited to meetings. If you are working on a project, even if you are not fully involved, show interest by asking to take part in project meetings. Ask the person in charge to add to you to the mailing list, so as not to miss out on crucial information before attending.
- Go prepared. Bring relevant information/data to the meeting. Prepare ideas or suggestions that contribute to the project. Show you are organised and well-informed, and that you can add value.
- Express interest in participating in new projects or tasks. Tell the people in charge that you would like to be involved and explain how you can contribute.
- Avoid negative thoughts and emotional biases associated with other people's actions. As stated above, they might not even realise they have excluded you, or that you are interested in participating. Avoid taking things personally, and instead take action.

##### Task 2: Involve others in your team in increasing the team's diversity and inclusiveness.

- Once you feel you have reached a safe level of trust with some or all of your team members, try to start a dialogue around your goals for diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Take advantage of informal opportunities, such as tea room chats and corridor conversations. Follow up on any expressed interest—for example, exploring their ideas of ways to improve diversity and inclusiveness in the team, or sharing this practical guide, particularly sections of it which have been useful for you.

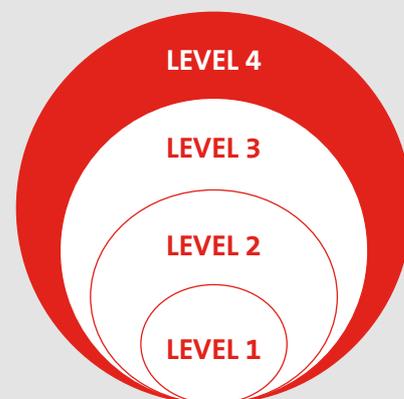
<sup>71</sup> Chrobot-Mason, Ruderman, and Nishii.

<sup>72</sup> Unsworth and Mason; Unsworth and Parker; Greg L Stewart, Stephen H Courtright, and Charles C Manz, 'Self-leadership: A multilevel review', *Journal of Management*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2011.

<sup>73</sup> Sandberg; Cameron and Quinn; Johannes Rank, 'Challenging the status quo: Diversity, employee voice and proactive behaviour', in Mustafa Özbilgin (ed.), *Equality, diversity and inclusion at work: A research companion*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009.

## LEVEL 4—ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL: EMBEDDING THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

This final level is concerned with the ways in which you can steer the macro-level culture towards more appreciation for and inclusion of diversity. As discussed in the introductory sections of this practical guide, large-scale organisational change requires power to make and implement policies—that is, it requires the involvement of top management, as well as the HR department. Therefore, the implementation of large-scale organisational change is beyond the scope of this practical guide. The aim of this section is to foster a collaborative and proactive approach towards those policies and procedures related to diversity and inclusion which may be already in place in your organisation.



### LEVEL 4 Recommendation 9— Look for ways to influence how your organisation deals with diversity

**Scenario:** *You have worked in your company for a few years and you are not sure what the diversity policies are... or if they even exist. You have seen discrimination in your company, but you haven't really done much about it, because you're not sure what can be done.*

**Aim:** Get involved in the development and implementation of your company's diversity policies.

**Why is this important?:** There is a constant increase in policies, training and even laws that are being developed to address diversity in the workplace—almost matching the rate at which diversity in the workforce is increasing.<sup>74</sup> However, policies, laws and training alone do not ensure acceptance and inclusion of diversity.<sup>75</sup> It is ultimately the individuals within an organisation who have the power to 'make it happen'. However, the people belonging to the majority or dominant groups may not recognise the importance of these measures.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, those who benefit from their organisation's diversity measures have to become proactive and active players in the successful implementation of these measures.<sup>77</sup> Research has shown that people who feel disadvantaged may have less voice in their workplaces. However, minority employees need to voice their concerns and make suggestions if they want improvements to be made.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Jackson, Joshi, and Erhardt; van Knippenberg and Schippers; Chavez and Weisinger; Allen et al; Homan et al; van Dick et al; Janet M Bennett and Milton J Bennett, 'An integrative approach to global and domestic diversity', *Handbook of intercultural training*, 2004; Robin J Ely and David A Thomas, 'Cultural diversity at work: The effects of diversity perspectives on work group processes and outcomes', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2001.

<sup>75</sup> Bennett and Bennett.

<sup>76</sup> Chrobot-Mason, Ruderman, and Nishii.

<sup>77</sup> Turnbull et al; Unsworth and Parker.

<sup>78</sup> Rank.

## LEVEL 4 Recommendation 9 Actions

### ACTION 9.1: TAKE A PROACTIVE ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND SUCCESS OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICIES IN YOUR ORGANISATION

#### Task 1: Learn about your organisation.

- Find policies related to diversity and inclusion.
- Learn about them, the people leading their implementation and how are they doing it.
- Introduce yourself to the people that you would like to support in implementing policies for diversity and inclusion.

#### Task 2: Get proactive—.

- Look for examples of other organisations who are doing a good job of being diverse and inclusive
  - o Talk to people and find out what is it that they do well?
  - o Who are the people doing this and how do they do it?
- In your own organisation
  - o Join/create committees.
  - o Make suggestions.
  - o Listen to the needs of other employees and channel that information to key people.

## CONCLUSION

This practical guide has attempted to filter and organise a set of effective and well-supported strategies. The guide has given special attention to making sure that the proposed actions are easy to implement in the reality of the work context, at the same time as looking to develop the full potential of individuals in their capacity as change agents. These recommendations are designed to build upon each other in arming the reader with a set of skills that are not only applicable to their reality, but also effective in helping them craft their own workplace culture in order to make it more comfortable and welcoming for diverse people.

For that purpose the role of individuals was explored at four levels. First, the individuals themselves, their own beliefs and assumptions influencing diversity and inclusion, and some characteristics and skills that every individual can develop and improve upon in order to initiate change in their workplace environment.

Secondly, the guide looked at individuals as change agents in their one-on-one relationships, by providing recommendations and practical strategies for getting to know and support colleagues, and handling conflict in work relationships. Next, recommendations were provided that built on the previously developed skills, with the aim of influencing team-level acceptance and inclusion of diversity culture. Finally, all previous recommendations were built on to encourage individuals to take a role as change agents and facilitators at the organisational level.

As you start to craft a workplace that values diversity, remember you are not alone:

*‘Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.’*

**Margaret Mead (1902–1978) Cultural Anthropologist**



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