3 steps to a more diverse and inclusive workplace

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Diversity and inclusion are important. These days, that goes without saying. Diverse and inclusive businesses demonstrate higher financial performance (McKinsey), better decision-making (Business Insider), and higher customer satisfaction (PWC report), among other tangible and intangible benefits.

At the same time, making progress on diversity and inclusion can be challenging. It takes time, requires us to acknowledge and engage with our own unconscious biases, and forces us to examine our organisational culture.

That's why we at Ally Skills NZ have created this resource toolkit to provide **three clear steps** you can take to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace. To achieve the business benefits of diversity, we need to go beyond lip-service and ticking boxes to make an ongoing commitment to building diverse and inclusive businesses. This toolkit aims to support that by encouraging continuous improvement and a culture of openness.

The world is looking for leaders who are committed to supporting diversity and inclusion. **You can be one of them.**

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Getting started

Deciding where to begin in the diversity and inclusion space may feel overwhelming.

The good news is that it's all interconnected--every step you take will have ripple effects for other aspects of diversity and inclusion and for your business more generally. Some examples: Ensuring that employees are paid and promoted fairly can decrease turnover. Implementing flexible policies for your staff can help not only caregivers but also employees with mental illness and make your company a more desirable place to work.

As you succeed in your initial goals, you can expand into other areas of diversity and inclusion. This Ally Skills NZ framework aims to support you in both getting started and making ongoing improvements.

Step 1: Assess where you are today

Understanding where your company is today will allow you to choose the action steps most relevant to you. Step 1 will help you come together as a team to honestly and openly assess where you are and where you would like to be.

❏ **Discuss your goals as a company**
Questions to ask yourselves:
◆ Why does your company think it's important to embark on this journey? What are the personal and business reasons that you want to enable diversity and inclusion?
◆ How does diversity and inclusion fit into your business strategy and goals?
◆ How does diversity and inclusion fit within your company values?
◆ If your company were living its values to the fullest extent, what would diversity and inclusion look like in the workplace?

❏ **Run a diversity and inclusion survey**
Both diversity **and** inclusion are important parts of the survey: **diversity questions** ask about who's in the team; **inclusion questions** ask whether the people in the team feel safe, valued, and supported. Diversity questions could include gender, ethnicity, disability or mental health experience, LGBTQIA+ identity, caregiver status, age, or nationality, among others.
◆ Project Include offers starting guidance on [Measuring Progress](), and Culture Amp and Paradigm have a [Diversity & Inclusion Survey]().
◆ *Asking about ethnicity in NZ:* Stats NZ provides guidance on [ethnicity categories]()
◆ *Asking about gender identity:* Please note that "male" and "female" refer to sex, whereas it's more inclusive to ask using the terms for gender like "woman"or "man". It's also important to recognise that gender isn't binary by including gender options like "gender-diverse" (which is used by [Stats NZ]()). For more on this, check out Riley J.

Dennis's explanation of the gender spectrum.
◆ Make sure to provide an option on all demographic questions for those who "prefer not to answer".
◆ *Note:* The Privacy Act (1993) has regulations on employers asking for personal information from employees: Employers must tell employees what the information will be used for and by whom. They also need to store the information securely and make sure only the appropriate people have access. For details, please refer to the Act.

❏ **Run the numbers**
Analyse fairness in compensation and promotion, and compare retention rates:
◆ Lara Hogan provides guidance on how to do this in Tracking Compensation and Promotion Inequity

❏ **Raise awareness by learning more about bias and marginalisation**
   ❏ **Check your bias** by doing an Implicit Association Test (created by scientists from Harvard, University of Virginia, and University of Washington).
   ❏ **Run an unconscious bias training** for your company. Some options:
      ◆ Facebook's videos on managing bias: These free videos provide a great introduction to the research on bias.
      ◆ New Zealand-based trainers include Diversitas and Diversity Works NZ.
   ❏ **Set up a Treaty of Waitangi workshop**. The Treaty Resource Centre offers a range of options.

Step 2: Set goals and create systems for accountability

Now that you know where you are today and why you want to do this work, you can create goals and set up systems to track progress. Measuring progress will allow you to celebrate your successes and adjust your strategies if you're not achieving the goals that you and your team have set together.

❏ **Set up a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee**
This group will steward your company's work in diversity and inclusion:
◆ Make sure this isn't just one person; there should be multiple people who can support each other and the work.
◆ The committee should include people with different experiences of marginalisation as well as allies, people who aren't marginalised but who want to contribute. (Marginalised groups include women, people of colour, LGBTQIA+ folks, people with disabilities or experience of a mental health challenge, caregivers, non-native English speakers, folks from low-income backgrounds, and people of different ages and body sizes, among others.)
◆ The D&I Committee needs CEO-level support to be successful.

❏ **Decide on your company's diversity and inclusion goals**
The D&I Committee should create a proposal using input from the company conversations about values, the survey results, and the numeric analysis. The D&I Committee should also provide plenty of opportunities for the wider company to weigh in on the proposal and give suggestions to improve it.

❏ **Set up systems to track your progress**
This doesn't need to be complex--and in fact, keeping this simple will help ensure that your team is able to keep doing it.
   ❏ **Identify metrics:** What metrics are early indicators of success or failure in reaching the overall goals?
   ❏ **Set up tracking systems:** How will you track those metrics? Using what data? Will you use excel or a software system to analyse and store results? (This could be as simple as a spreadsheet with key metrics and dates.) Who will be responsible for managing the data tracking?
   ❏ **Set check-in points:** How often will the D&I Committee review progress? How often will the leadership team or the wider company get updates?

As before, the D&I Committee should create a proposal and provide opportunities for the rest of the company to provide input. It's important that everyone have an opportunity to shape this work, since you'll need everyone's support in implementing changes (in step 3).

❏ **Share your goals!**
Once you have your goals, share them with employees and, if you're large enough to anonymise the data (>50 employees), with the public. Be sure to check with employees before sharing data publicly. To keep individual identities anonymous, make sure to only share the data in aggregate and only include categories where you have least 5 employees.

Some great examples:
◆ Lyft shares their current diversity stats and their plan for improvement
◆ Buffer offers an interactive dashboard that shows their diversity statistics (they also published a blog post on why they made the dashboard and how you can do it too)
◆ Monzo uses animations to show not only where they are today, but also how their numbers have improved over time--this is a great way to focus on improvement

Step 3: Experiment and learn

This step is a key part of growing and improving; it asks that you be willing to experiment and open to learning from your experiences.

No company has "solved" the question of diversity and inclusion; this is still a relatively new area with lots of room for learning. Plus, what worked for one company may not work for yours, and you might discover a new strategy that could help others.

Especially during this step, it's important to have open channels of communication for staff at all levels and from all backgrounds--these are key feedback loops to show the impact of the actions you take.

❑ **Based on your goals, choose actions that you can take**
Brainstorm actions with your D&I Committee--what initiatives could you do to get closer to your goals? Here are some ideas to get started:
◆ *Branding and attraction:* Ensure that public-facing materials reflect diversity--that images show diverse people and that your language is inclusive (tools like Textio, Gender Decoder, and Alex JS check for gendered language).
◆ *Hiring:* Minimise bias by using Blendoor to filter resumes without names, setting job criteria in advance, and structuring interviews so that each question ties to the criteria. Reward hiring managers when they bring in more diversity and ask them to explain when they hire people like themselves.
◆ *Engage employees:* Create affinity groups for marginalised communities (i.e., women, people of colour, LGBTQIA+ folks, people with disabilities, caregivers, etc.). "Affinity groups" bring together people working for a shared goal--i.e., a caregiver affinity group would have employees who want to make the workplace more inclusive for caregivers.
◆ *Include allies:* It's vital to engage all your staff in encouraging diversity and inclusion, not only people who belong to marginalised groups. (Examples of allyship include men supporting women and gender-diverse folks or straight, cis people standing with LGBTQIA+ folks.) Ally Skills NZ offers an Ally Skills Workshop that covers simple, everyday ways for employees to take action as allies in their workplace.
◆ *Leadership involvement:* Managers and senior leadership should proactively sponsor and mentor people from diverse backgrounds and also get involved in recruiting and outreach efforts to diverse groups. A particularly powerful way they can show their commitment is by attending affinity meetings and being careful to listen much more than they speak so they can learn from the experiences and ideas of marginalised groups. (Jill Wetzler, Director of Engineering at Lyft, speaks more about this in her talk on The Inclusive Leader.)
◆ *Decision-making:* Be explicit about who has a say in key decisions, and consider whether diverse voices are involved in those decisions. Tools like CloverPop help track who's included in decision-making and overall decision-making effectiveness.

❑ **Implement your initiatives:** Prioritise and choose the initiatives that are likely to have the biggest impact on your diversity goals. Then create an implementation plan:
◆ What initiatives will you try?
◆ Who will be responsible for implementing each initiative? Who else will support the implementation?
◆ How will you measure the impact of each initiative? How will you know if it's been successful? What are warning signs that the initiative is not working and should be

changed or stopped?
◆ In what timeframe will the initiative be implemented?

❏ **Monitor the metrics for signs of progress or lack of change**
Some of the metrics may take months or years to change so it can be helpful to consider leading indicators. For example, it may take time before a successful initiative leads to improvements in recruitment success or retention rates, but in the meantime, you can watch for changes in employee engagement levels and ask for feedback from employees on how the initiative impacted them.

❏ **Celebrate your successes!**
As you succeed, you can identify new areas for improvement and new experiments to try. The steps of this framework are meant to be used in a loop--you may spend a bit of time in step 3, trying different experiments, but as you get further along, you may also want to revisit step 1 or 2 to re-run the numeric analysis or update your goals. You can rotate through this guide in the way that works best for you and your company.

We commend you for beginning your diversity and inclusion work, and we're excited to support you on this journey. Remember, no one knows how to do this perfectly--the important thing is that you try and are open to feedback on how it's going.

Though this journey may be challenging, we've also seen the positive impact that diversity and inclusion can have on innovation, team performance, and overall business success. Let us know if you have feedback on this toolkit or want support in taking action, and we wish you all the best!

About us
Ally Skills NZ helps forward-thinking companies make diversity and inclusion a reality. Our focus is on the role of allies--people who care about equality and want to use their voice and influence to support marginalised groups in the workplace and their communities. To that end, we provide workshops and consulting to help individuals and companies take action. To get in touch, email us at contact@allyskills.nz.

Additional resources
◆ Project Include offers other free recommendations for companies seeking to embed diversity and inclusion into their work.
◆ Change Catalyst offers free toolkits for tech communities seeking to create safe and inclusive events and spaces.
◆ *New-Zealand-based groups:* Be.Accessible offers an accessibility assessment for New Zealand businesses, and Rainbow Tick supports businesses in recognising and welcoming gender and sexual diversity.

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