

LEADING INCLUSION

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IN SMALLER ORGANISATIONS

While many of the challenges of pursuing diversity and inclusion are similar for both large and small organisations, the differences in size and availability of resources mean that their approaches differ. In many ways, the dynamic nature of the smaller organisation can create a more favourable environment. Nonetheless, as with larger organisations, the strategies below are indicative, and advice should be sought to ensure that they can be applied to the circumstances of the organisation.

Strategy and leadership

1. Lead from the top

In a smaller organisation the tone set from the top is significant and very noticeable. The ability to articulate why diversity and inclusion matter is important. Often the finance leader has responsibilities that are broader than the traditional accounting remit but may include technology and human resources. As a key leader it is a necessity, therefore, for the finance professional to ensure that all the organisational leaders fully appreciate the issues and concerns of the diversity and inclusion agenda, as well as how this can benefit their organisation and its strategic goals.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ARE NOT JUST SOMETHING FOR LARGE ORGANISATIONS, THEY ARE NEEDED EVERYWHERE.

Demonstrating this appreciation through actions and tone is essential.

As the agenda continues to evolve, it is important to stay informed about changes. Leaders should use local networks and online resources to ensure that they are aware of developments and to share practical experiences. There are also many opportunities to attend free webinars to support knowledge sharing and understanding of the challenges.

There needs to be clear leadership of the agenda, including ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks

as they relate to diversity and inclusion. Often in smaller organisations the responsibility for human resource issues ultimately sits with the chief financial officer.

2. Create an understanding of the diversity and inclusion agenda

In the smaller organisation structured programmes are hard to achieve and often lack the impact that can be seen elsewhere. Education is very much at the individual level and it is important to establish a clear understanding of the issues and concerns across the workforce. Mentoring provides an important and effective tool in this regard.

Culture and belonging

3. Make it the norm

CREATE A CULTURE WHERE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ARE THE NORM AND WHERE EMPLOYEES ARE FREE TO BE THEMSELVES AND KNOW THAT THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS AND INSIGHTS ARE VALUED NO MATTER WHAT THEIR ROLE OR BACKGROUND.

They need to know this without having any concerns about reprisal or consequence. Creating accessible workplaces can be more challenging for smaller businesses, yet it is important to recognise how this progresses the inclusiveness of the organisation.



To achieve this requires an effective organisational culture. In the smaller organisation this can often be easier to achieve than in larger ones.

HONESTY AND OPENNESS COME FROM PERSONAL CONTACT AND ENCOURAGING THAT ACROSS AN ORGANISATION WILL HELP DEVELOP TRUST AND IMPLICIT VALUING OF THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS.

4. Remove barriers

Ensure that you have a robust set of policies that support the modern workplace. Although key-person dependency is often perceived as an issue for smaller organisations, they can also afford to be more flexible about, and accommodating of, the life choices and demands of their employees.

ENCOURAGE A CULTURE WHERE PEOPLE HAVE THE FLEXIBILITY TO WORK AS APPROPRIATE IN RELATION TO ALL THEIR COMMITMENTS AND SEEK TO PROVIDE SUPPORT IN THESE AREAS.

For smaller organisations the challenges of recruitment are often different from those experienced by larger companies. It is important, however, to apply the same rigour to the recruitment process, from the creation of the role description, through to the recruitment process, that large organisations apply.

5. Align with community partners

Smaller organisations may lack the ability to develop networks that help support individuals. This, however, represents an opportunity to use networks in their communities and to learn from practices in their peers. Often these mutual support groups can be of value across a broader agenda.

Several charities and similar organisations that support aspects of the diversity and inclusion agenda provide resources that smaller businesses can use – often to great effect.

Responsibilities

6. Employees' role

The recommended actions for employees are in the accompanying briefing Recommended Actions for Individuals.

Measurement and accountability

7. Measure, review and reinforce

As for larger organisations, the ability to measure is important. Organisations in supply chains are increasingly focusing on the ethical practices of their suppliers and therefore it is important to have a robust set of policies and metrics to capture such relevant data as can be practically recorded. The finance community is often involved in the collection and management of the data necessary to support such requests, ensuring that there is one version of the truth and one that is free from bias.

Consider using employee surveys and similar tools, especially where vendors offer benchmarks against other businesses of a similar size, to understand employee sentiment in these areas. Use these to reinforce behaviours and to identify potential issues.

Discover the full report: www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/professional-insights/global-profession/diversity_inclusion.html