Diversity, Culture and Inclusion: Start from the Very Beginning

by Erin Ross

> *Deloitte Says: "... tomorrow's workforce will be even more diverse than today's—by gender, by ethnicity, by culture, by religion, by sexual preference and identification, and perhaps by other characteristics we don't even know about right now."*

Diversity in corporations continues to rapidly expand. Companies who prepare today will experience big wins by bringing together unique ideas and experiences into a cohesive culture. An inclusive environment results in tightly aligned teams that can move mountains. And, as talent markets remain competitive, you'll gain an advantage that attracts and keeps talent.

But, before creating a plan, it's important to make a key philosophical decision. The best diversity programs are not a one-day training or outreach. Diversity needs to be built into the culture, using an "always on" approach that creates a naturally inclusive environment. It should begin with hiring and continue to retirement – the entire employee lifecycle. Diversity starts when a position is posted, through the offer letter, pre-boarding and welcome and then through an individual's career up to and including an employee exit.

> *McKinsey research found that inclusive workforces have 57 percent greater collaboration, 42 percent greater team commitment, 19 percent greater intent to stay, and 12 percent greater discretionary effort.*

Three-Stage Approach – Commitment, Assessment, Strategy

While an "always on" diversity program sounds complicated, there's actually a simple way to get started. You can develop a highly effective and smooth program by breaking your approach into three stages.

1. **Create leadership commitment.** Support is important because diversity is a company-wide initiative, not an HR program. Examples include a mission statement, communication in as many places as possible and creation of an internal diversity team.

2. **Run an audit.** A baseline is essential for creating the diversity culture you desire and uncovering key needs. It also creates a foundation for building a formal plan. Areas to examine include company demographics, use of language, your digital footprint and more.

3. **Develop a strategy and build a plan.** Integrating diversity into the fabric of the organization involves change management for both people and processes. A popular approach, strategic onboarding, focuses on providing content and activities to develop employees and offers the perfect vehicle to weave diversity into the fabric of the company.

Diversity from Day One and Beyond

The more diverse your workforce, the more productive your company can be. By embracing diversity as part of your everyday culture, you can create a powerful, loyal and engaged team.

For a deeper dive into how to build a stronger diversity program, explore the white paper: *Diversity, Culture and Inclusion: Start from the Very Beginning*