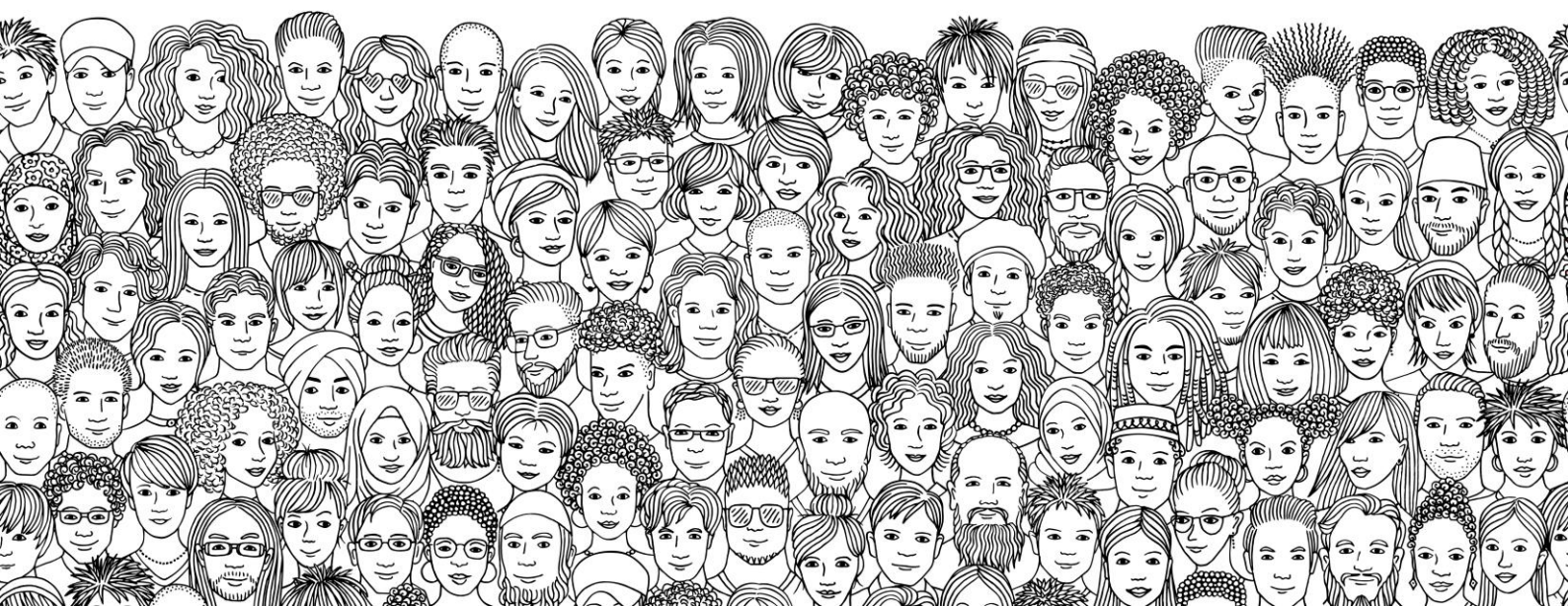


Engaging people to profit

How to overcome resistance to diversity and prosper through inclusion



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Engaging people to profit

How to overcome resistance to diversity and prosper through inclusion

The problem

Progress has been made in enhancing the diversity and inclusiveness of public and private organisations across Australia. But there is still a long way to go and concerns exist about a backlash against the movement. With clear thinking and constructive action to overcome resistance to change there is a real risk the diversity dividend will be lost.

The solution

To sustain progress, it will be important to appreciate and address the differing worldviews that are the root of resistance. Rather than fight those worldviews, it's likely to be more productive to work with them. By finding common ground at the level of core beliefs, we can make it easier for opponents to support ideas and behaviours that foster diversity.

The benefits

Diversity makes organisations better. The evidence demonstrates that greater diversity in gender, race, discipline and thinking style enhances productivity, customer relationships, risk management and financial performance. It seems that two different heads really are better than one, particularly when complex problems need solving.

Overseas migration provided
60% of Australia's growth
in population

Migrants contribute over \$10 billion to the Australian economy in their first 10 years of settlement



1 in 4 Australians were born overseas

In the private sector, less than 2% of executive managers and 4% of company directors have Asian cultural origins.

In federal parliament, only a handful of the 226 representatives come from non-European backgrounds.

The gender pay gap has declined but **men earn 21% more** than women, on average

More women are in leadership roles, but **only 17% of CEOs** are women, and **25% are board directors**.

Sources: Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015; 2017-18 Gender Equality Scorecard.

Introduction

Workforce diversity is a hot topic on the minds of Australia's leaders in public and private enterprise. If it wasn't already an issue challenging the minds of directors and executives, the #metoo movement and weekly revelations of sexual harassment, unfairly paid immigrants and toxic work environments have made it an incendiary issue.

While Australian organisations perform somewhat better than those in countries like the USA and United Kingdom on issues of diversity and inclusion¹ there is still great room for improvement. On the matter of gender diversity, it seems that the higher within organisations that we look, the fewer women that we find^{2,3,4}.

Despite the considerable ongoing attention given to diversity and public statements of support for change from corporate leaders, diversity managers are expressing concerns about a lack of progress and an imminent backlash against current efforts^{4,5,6,7}.

So, what should be done to fuel progress – to genuinely enhance the diversity and inclusiveness of Australia's modern workforce?

Does diversity really matter?

What's diversity ... and why 'inclusion'?

Many attributes make for a diverse workforce. They include gender, age, ethnicity, physical ability, educational background, cultural background, sexual orientation and thinking style. They are the same attributes that characterise a diverse community.

Diversity offers many benefits (discussed below). But just having a diverse workforce is not enough to realise its benefits. Including people so that their knowledge, experience, perspective and talents can be utilised is critical. That is, organisations need to be inclusive for diversity to yield results.

Indeed, there's a good argument to focus on inclusion before diversity. If an organisation is not inclusive, diversity efforts will appear insincere and tokenistic, eroding trust, morale and engagement. People need to feel safe to speak up without fear of embarrassment or retaliation. People need to be able to bring their full selves to work and be respected for who they are. Only then is an organisation culturally prepared to realise the benefits of greater diversity. Otherwise, if people can't contribute, they either quit and leave or, perhaps worse, quit and stay⁸.

*Inclusion is the bedrock
on which the diversity dividend is built.*

Why does diversity matter?

There are four primary reasons that diversity and inclusion should matter to organisations and the people that work for them:

1. Organisations with diversity are better able to empathise and connect with customers or the citizens they serve, increasing customer satisfaction and patronage.
2. Diverse teams are found to be more productive, contributing to organisational success and, in turn, rewards for those that create that success.
3. Organisations can better spot and mitigate risks by engaging the collective intelligence of a diverse workforce⁹.
4. Diversity and inclusion equip organisations with the capability for human-centred creativity and problem-solving that is consistent with the future of work.

Furthermore, being treated fairly, with equality of opportunity, is an essential human aspiration and a right that is enshrined in law¹⁰.

It also makes little social and economic sense to have a large proportion of the nation's talent, capability and experience disengaged and under-utilised^{11,12}.

So, if there are compelling reasons to enhance diversity and inclusion in our workforce, why is progress so underwhelming? Why aren't leaders in business and government driving change more vigorously

and effectively? Are there gaps in understanding, strategy or implementation, or is some overlooked impediment in play?

Diverse companies are better able to win top talent, improve their customer orientation, employee satisfaction and decision making, and this all leads to a virtuous cycle of increasing returns and better social licence.¹³

Diversity positively impacts profits

There is a statistically significant relationship between a more diverse leadership team and financial outperformance¹.

Having more women in line leadership roles (i.e. revenue generating business units rather than functional support units) closely **correlates with outperformance**¹.

Companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are over **30% more likely** to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians. Those in the top quartile for gender diversity are over 15% more likely^{1,13}.

Inclusive cultures are **six times more likely to be innovative**, anticipate change and respond effectively, and twice as likely to meet or exceed financial targets¹⁴.

Companies with above average diversity on their management teams report **innovation** (measured as total revenue from new products and services over a 3-year period) at levels 19% higher than companies with below-average leadership diversity¹⁵.

Investors see a **lack of diversity as increasing risk** and a brake on performance. State Street Global Advisors, BlackRock and Glass Lewis & Co, with multi-trillions under management, are instructing companies in the S&P/ASX 300 that it expects them to have at least one female on their board¹⁶.

How diversity delivers

How does diversity enhance productivity and performance?

If one accepts the egalitarian view that all people should be respected and have an equal intrinsic right to opportunities, one might then ask “Is all diversity equal?” Or, perhaps more specifically, a business leader might ask “Are some attributes of diversity more likely to yield a productivity benefit than others?” What actually makes a difference?

It seems that different aspects of diversity do make materially different contributions to productivity. Behavioural science and management research reveal that^{9,17,18,19,20,21}:

- **Gender diversity helps get people involved.** Women are more inclusive, and when they represent a sufficient proportion of a group (at least 40%) to influence that group’s dynamic, more people are likely to be heard and their views respected.
- **Racial diversity triggers curiosity, questions and sharing of perspectives.** Again, when sufficient people of different ethnic backgrounds are involved in a group, people are less likely to assume “everyone thinks like me”. The assumption “We’re all on the same page” starts to break down. More questions get asked.
- **Multi-disciplinary (or cross-functional teams) outperform single discipline teams.** This is true if effort is devoted to bridging communication boundaries and language differences that often exist between disciplines.
- **Highly cognitively diverse teams solve problems faster.** Indeed, cognitive diversity seems to make a bigger impact on performance than gender, ethnic or disciplinary diversity. Teams that are highly cognitively diverse have been observed to solve problems three times faster than less diverse teams.

So, to be blunt, including one woman in an executive team, around the board table, or in a project group is not enough – on any measure. Only a material increase in the inclusion of women, ethnic groups, disciplines and thinking styles will deliver a substantial productivity and performance dividend. It really is true that two *different* heads are better than one.

Don’t apply diversity blindly

Diverse teams aren’t necessarily required to tackle all problems or situations. Cognitive diversity, for example, doesn’t improve performance when it comes to routine tasks – like flipping burgers – or even complicated problems – like tuning an engine. But with complex tasks like developing products suited to new customer segments, constructing a welfare policy or developing infrastructure in congested urban environments, cognitive diversity is recognised as a key explanatory variable in superior performance²².

What is cognitive diversity?

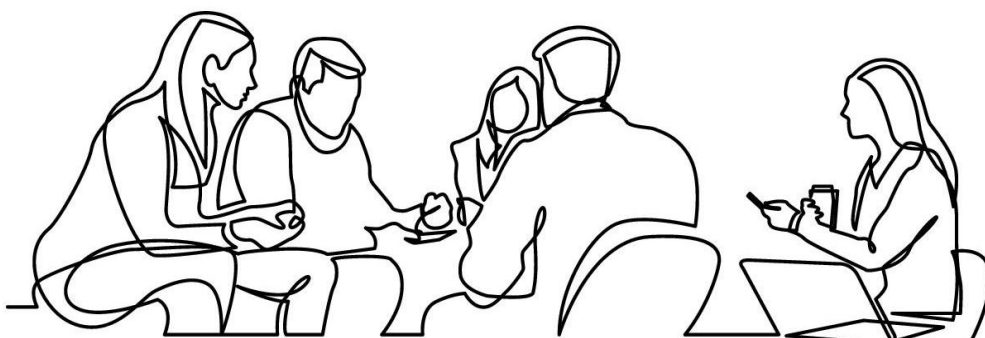
Cognitive diversity has no standard definition²³ but is generally recognised to comprise the way people perceive situations, interpret information, and arrive at decisions. It's largely a function of our mental models, beliefs and values that are shaped by the language we speak, our education, life experiences and the cultural patterns that direct our attention²⁴.

Most aspects of diversity like gender, age and ethnicity are easy to observe and measure. In contrast, cognitive diversity is harder to observe and evaluate.

Psychometric tools like Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)²⁵, the Hermann Whole Brain Model²⁶ and the Kirton Adaptation Innovation Inventory²⁷ can shed light on people's thinking styles. For example, MBTI distinguishes a person's inclination for 'sensing' (seeking facts) versus 'intuition' (seeking future possibilities). It also distinguishes preferences for decision making on the basis of 'thinking' (analysis and logic) versus 'feeling' (values and emotions).

Psychology and neuroscience also demonstrate that people possess different *levels* of thinking. Over a person's lifetime, their cognitive complexity evolves, enriched by experience and accelerated during periods of challenge²⁸. During this evolutionary process, people will tend to shift in their views about how the world works, what matters, and how outcomes are best achieved. These 'worldviews' are not only held by individuals but also cultures and social movements²⁹. So, people can bring both different thinking styles and levels to bear on problems.

New ideas emerge when we see things differently.



Impediments to progress

There are many regularly-cited systemic impediments to improving diversity and inclusion. The real question, which isn't asked often enough, is why these impediments exist and are allowed to persist? What are the deeper root causes? In general terms the answer is: values and beliefs.

Values and beliefs are the source from which our choices and actions grow. Much of the time we are unaware of them, but they form the cognitive rules and biases that subconsciously shape the vast majority of our actions every day^{28,30,31}.

Significantly, the values and beliefs (or worldviews) through which diversity and inclusion is viewed and judged vary significantly across the community.

Three worldviews are currently dominant in western liberal democracies like Australia^{32,33}. They can be named and generally characterised as follows:

- **Traditional** – exhibiting a belief in authority, hierarchy, morality and behaviour consistent with religious teachings, and adherence to 'tribal' norms. (Tribe implies the social group/s with which we most identify and experience kinship.)
- **Modern** – exhibiting beliefs in science, strategy, accountability, achievement and meritocracy.
- **Post-modern** – exhibiting an individualistic, socially-minded disposition, favouring equality and sustainability, seeing reality as subjective and rejecting hierarchies as elitist and oppressive.

These are not the only worldviews, just those that tend to reflect the majority of the adult population in the current era (see Figure 1). People can also be in a process of transitioning between these views. Furthermore, no worldview is necessarily right or better; each is useful in its own way. And while each worldview can be constructive, it also has a darker side or expression. For example, the 'dark side' of the Traditional worldview could be authoritarianism. Rather than judge these worldviews, there is value (as illustrated through this paper) in recognising, understanding and engaging with them.

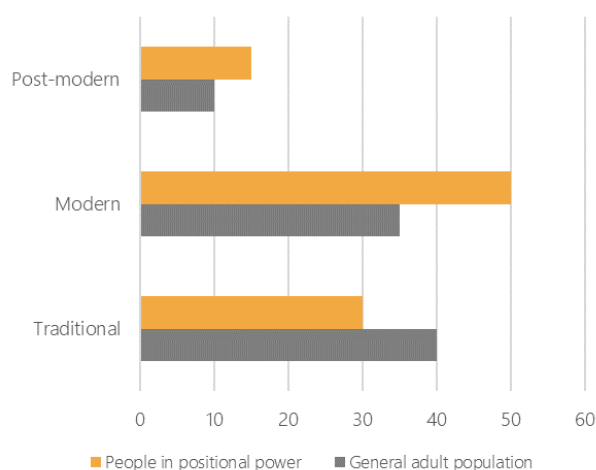


Figure 1. Proportion (%) of current adult population by worldview^{28,32}

Table 1 sets out the perspectives of diversity and inclusion that arise from these different worldviews together with the underpinning values and beliefs from which these perspectives emerge.

The key and perhaps obvious point is that there is a fundamental mismatch between the belief systems of many organisational leaders and the diversity and inclusion agenda which is principally promoted by those of a Post-modern viewpoint. As a consequence, Traditionalists will regard diversity and inclusion as a problem, while Modernists will see it as an obligation or opportunity.

There are several important consequences:

- Changing minds and behaviours takes time, and without intervention, perhaps decades. The disconnect is greatest with those holding a Traditional worldview. Thus, progress is likely to be hard won and slow.
- The shift in thinking and beliefs is less substantial for those holding a Modern worldview. This presents more fertile ground but cannot be taken for granted.
- Criticism, exclusion or demonising of the Traditional and Modern worldviews – and thus the people holding them – would actually represent hypocrisy by the inclusive, egalitarian Post-modern community and likely harden opposition to diversity and inclusion.
- Progressive leaders embracing the diversity and inclusion agenda must therefore lead by example with compassion for and engagement of other authentically-held viewpoints.

Furthermore, every organisation is likely to possess people in management and leadership positions that cover the spectrum of worldviews. Thus, actions to foster diversity and inclusion are likely to be more effective if they are collectively designed and attuned to leverage different preferences and styles that mirror the different core beliefs and motivations.

Diversity makes us uncomfortable

We should acknowledge that for most of us those things that contribute to diversity – like different cultural backgrounds, sexual orientation or thinking style – also make us uncomfortable. Typically, we seek out people who are like us because it's comfortable. This is called the *attraction bias*³⁰.

While different viewpoints around a table are valuable and important to critical thinking and personal growth, they can also be challenging, calling our assumptions into question, for which we may have no ready or compelling answer. This is a situation we'd normally rather avoid.

Furthermore, the more 'difference' becomes apparent, the more likely it is that people may feel excluded, irrespective of whether they are in a dominant or minority group⁶.

So, giving diverse team members extra visibility can risk fracturing the overall team. Rather than accidentally fostering "us versus them", it's best to focus on "one big us", a mindset of including everyone.

Table 1. Prevailing worldviews, potential perspectives on diversity and inclusion, and constructive responses^{4, 32, 36}

TRADITIONAL WORLDVIEW	MODERN WORLDVIEW	POST-MODERN WORLDVIEW	RESPONSE
Hierarchy, command and control, morality, authority, structure, stability, rules, acceptable behaviour, adhere to tribe's norms.	Strategic, optimal, achievement, system effectiveness, science, measures, results, plans, accountability, meritocracy	Social, pluralistic, radical relativism, subjective reality, individualistic equality, tolerance, solidarity	to foster diversity and inclusion in a way that recognises and leverages (not reject) the prevailing worldviews
Direct causes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Command and control management styles separate thinking and doing - Preference for dominant leaders - Move up the ranks with experience in time - Lack of experience and comfort working alongside women and minority groups - "Boys club" familiarity, comfort and influence - Recruitment by managers based on perceived capability discriminates in favour of men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not a top-3 business improvement priority - Preference for extroverted, confident leaders - Existing managers don't appreciate the facts and business case for diversity and inclusion - Tendency to reward individual achievement rather than team achievement - Too few women in middle management roles - Men compete hard for self-advancement - Different opinions between males and female about what would achieve real inclusion - Narrow (women-only) view of inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broadly understood and supported business case for diversity and inclusion - Wider interpretation of merit is reflected in recruitment and promotion processes - No material differences in remuneration for like roles with like performance - Promotion of flexible work arrangements - Complex problems are tackled by teams using transparent bias-avoiding processes - Democratisation of access to information 	<p>Change recruitment and promotion processes to be 'blind', using explicit rules and criteria to select and advance the best candidates.</p> <p>Reward teams for ongoing improvement, not individuals for outcomes.</p> <p>Eliminate unfair pay gaps.</p> <p>Strengthen problem-solving capabilities with proven tools and processes.</p> <p>Engage people/teams with information and a focus on achieving useful outcomes.</p> <p>Develop awareness of cognition and biases as a foundation for learning and reflective leadership.</p>
Choice-shaping worldviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There's a need for clear management hierarchies to direct and control the troops. - Thinking (management) and execution (staff) are separated. - Good businesses run like well-oiled machines. - We employ people with strong technical skills. - Existing systems and processes work well; don't fix what isn't broken. - Diversity programs create unnecessary work and cost, and risk upsetting 'good people' - Other business issues are more important. - Minorities have roles elsewhere in a well-ordered society. - The future is a repetition of the past. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress needs to be based on merit. - 'Other' qualifications aren't good enough (e.g. international degrees, 'different' disciplines) - Co-workers are competitors in the career game - People are resources, not assets - Focusing on minorities disadvantages the majority unfairly - Focusing on diversity cultivates discrimination and compensation claims - It's not a question of right or wrong but what gets the best result - Effectiveness replaces morality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our organisation is "one big us" - Progress is self-determined and non-hierarchical - Hierarchy is oppressive. - All people are unique and valued in their own right - Political correctness is just respect for people - Things can be achieved lots of different ways. - Business should be socially responsible. 	<p>Keep process and system changes lean, only intervening at high leverage points and fixing distinct structural flaws to remove bias and discrimination.</p> <p>Coach future middle-managers to achieve progress leveraging their full talent pool.</p> <p>Immerse leaders in diverse teams where they are no longer dominant to complete a practical challenge.</p> <p>Clarify what constitutes 'merit' based on science.</p> <p>Establish business case with clear connection to high priority business strategies.</p> <p>Highlight the potential for productivity gains (compared with alternative initiatives).</p> <p>Promote stories that exhibit diverse champions from each worldview 'tribe'.</p>
Deep underpinning stories and values <p>"Fads come and go. This will too."</p> <p>"Emotions aren't relevant in business."</p> <p>"Traditional roles of men and women are normal and moral."</p> <p>"Women aren't rational enough."</p> <p>"Who's meant to look after the children?"</p>	<p>"People should succeed on merit. I did."</p> <p>"People should earn their opportunities"</p> <p>"Hiring for diversity isn't hiring the best people"</p> <p>"Let's face it, some groups just aren't that clever. They'd be a drag on the business."</p> <p>"Women aren't tough enough."</p>	<p>"Two heads really are better than one."</p> <p>"You have to keep learning."</p> <p>"Some people never get a fair go."</p> <p>"There's no absolute truth. It all depends on context."</p> <p>"Everyone is equal."</p>	<p>"It's not morally right to disadvantage our kids."</p> <p>"Yes, people should succeed on merit!" (with contribution and merit fairly judged)</p> <p>"We want clever teams tackling our most important challenges"</p> <p>"We want everyone to be contributing to their fullest"</p>

Targeted steps to progress

Shifting beliefs and actions

Table 1 offers some suggested interventions that are *tailored to engage with the dominant worldviews*.

These interventions are translated, further developed and cross-checked against a recognised model for organisational design and behavioural change (Figure 2) developed by Galbraith³⁴.

This model recognises that in order to drive change and make it stick, a range of complementary actions are required to catalyse, support and reward shifts in behaviour. The resulting interventions are summarised in Table 2.



Figure 2. Galbraith's Star Model™ framework for organization design

Connecting at the deepest level

For the most impactful and enduring change to occur, people need to be challenged to think about the 'myths and metaphors' that are built into their cognitive wiring and fundamentally shape their thinking and worldviews. In practice, this means tapping into their core beliefs in a way which leverages those beliefs to make new ideas and behaviours possible. For example, Traditionalists believe in right and wrong, in a moral code and in family. Therefore, an appeal to morals and to preventing disadvantage of their family could be effective. The appeal might be "It's not morally right to disadvantage our kids" (i.e. our daughters).

Similarly, an engaging challenge and appeal to Modernists could be "Yes, we agree, people should succeed on merit". But now, merit is framed in a way that also appeals to their respect for science, recognising the evidence that behavioural science provides about the strengths and blind-spots that each of us carry, and the collective strength provided by diversity.

Accept some mistakes and departures

The journey to enhance the inclusiveness and diversity of our organisations will take time. Along the way, people will make mistakes. While we need to have clear expectations and hold people accountable, we shouldn't unreasonably punish people for stumbling. Very well-meaning people may make some mis-steps and say some clumsy things. When this occurs, provide explicit feedback in private, giving people a chance to learn and change.

Ultimately, you might also lose some people along the way. They may not be ready to shift their views and behaviours in favour of a more inclusive and diverse workforce. Remaining part of your organisation may simply be too uncomfortable for them, so they may choose to leave. At the same time, your organisation is likely to attract people that are comfortable and supportive of an inclusive workforce. Indeed, organisations that drive staff to become more innovative find that staff turn-over can contribute more quickly and effectively to an enhanced innovation capability than skill-building initiatives^{27,35}.

Table 2. An integrated suite of key worldview-based interventions to foster diversity and inclusion

Strategy <i>Vision, mission, comparative advantage, business case</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a business case for diversity and inclusion with a clear connection to high-priority business strategies Highlight the potential productivity gains on offer (in comparison with other productivity improving avenues)
Structure <i>Power and authority, organisational roles, information flow</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help leaders to “walk in another’s shoes”, immersing them in diverse teams (where they are no longer in dominant position) to tackle a practical business challenge Provide teams with equal access to information and emphasise a purpose of achieving useful outcomes (rather than following business-as-usual procedures)
Processes <i>Networks, systems, processes, rules, integrative mechanisms</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hardwire key practice shifts into business processes to normalise inclusive practices and behaviours Keep process and system changes lean and targeted to high-leverage intervention points that fix structural flaws that create bias and discrimination Explicitly clarify “merit” for recruitment and promotion on the basis of science Change job advertisement and hiring processes to be “blind” to gender, race and other attributes of diversity
People <i>Skills, capability, hiring, learning, feedback</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather and promote stories that exhibit diverse champions and positive role models from each worldview “tribe” Develop an awareness of human cognition and biases as a foundation for learning, reflective leadership and a compassionate approach to inclusion Strengthen problem-solving capabilities with proven tools and processes Coach future middle managers to achieve progress leveraging their full talent pool
Rewards <i>Evaluation, recognition, rewards, compensation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate unfair pay gaps between men and women doing similar jobs with similar performance Capture and share feedback on the performance and benefits of diverse teams Evaluate the extent to which inclusion is experienced by staff Reward teams for ongoing improvement (rather than single out individuals with a sole focus on outcomes)

In summary

Diversity makes organisations better. The evidence demonstrates that greater diversity in gender, race, discipline and thinking style enhances productivity, customer relationships, risk management and financial performance. It seems that two different heads really are better than one, particularly when complex problems need solving.

However, organisations will only experience this benefit if its leaders foster diversity and a culture of inclusion. People need to feel respected and safe to contribute otherwise the value of their different experiences and perspectives will come to nought.

While progress on diversity and inclusion has been made, there is still a long way to go, with some concerns about a backlash against the movement. To sustain progress, it will be important to appreciate and address the differing worldviews that are the root of resistance. Rather than fight those worldviews, it's likely to be more productive to work with them. By finding common ground at the level of core beliefs, we can make it easier for opponents to support ideas and behaviours that foster diversity.

This is the essence of the work we need progressive leaders to do – to engage people with differing views in a constructive way, leading with compassion, insight and conviction.

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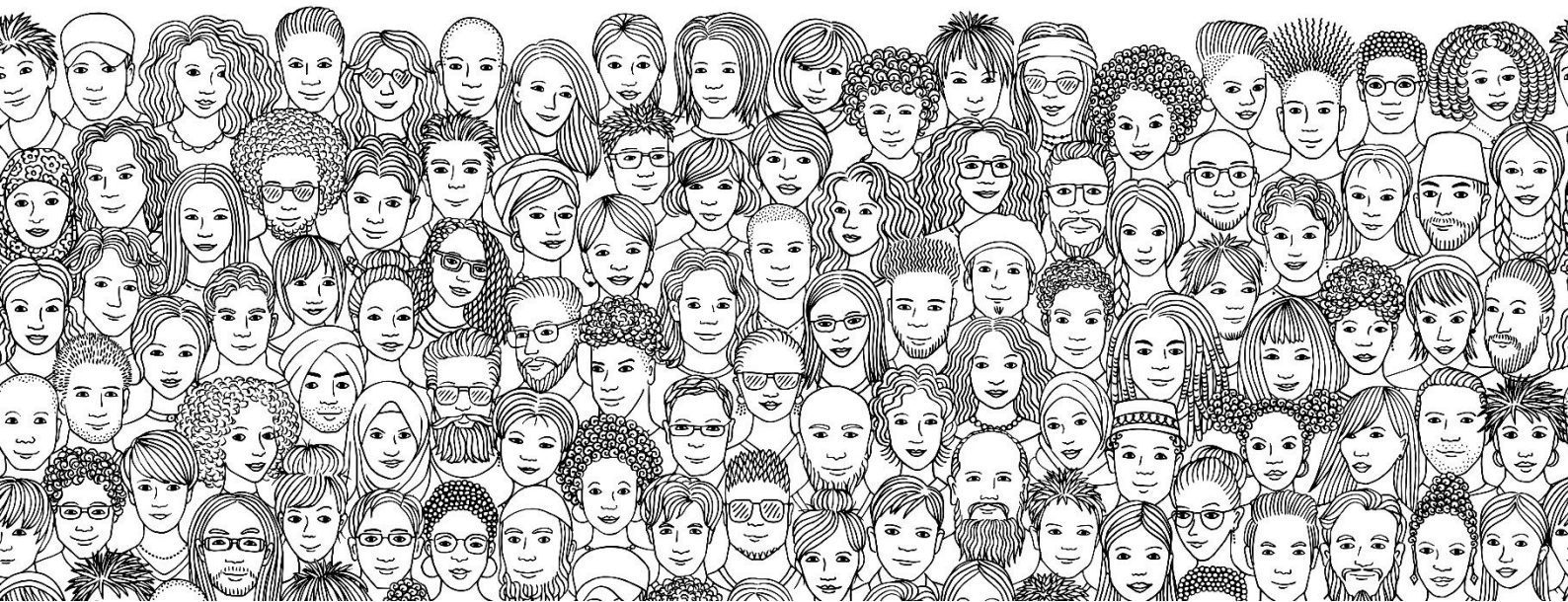
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