

Leading Change Toward Inclusion and Diversity

By Yolanda L. Chase, SHRM-SCP, CPM, CM

Executive Inclusion, Diversity, and Belonging Way-Maker

Diversity leaders know that it's typically difficult to get the value of inclusion, diversity and belonging work outside of the "check the box" phase. In leading organizational change with an eye toward diversity and inclusion, a critical first step is moving toward acceptance about what needs to change. Leaders must acknowledge that change needs to occur, requiring a shift in their thinking and how they approach much needed change.

Even organizations that appear to be performing well in their diversity and inclusion journey may still be struggling with different aspects of the work, and how to move the dial in creating truly inclusive workplaces. To work toward greater inclusion, it's important for a diversity practitioner to articulate the value of diversity and inclusion, and how to disrupt the norm in an effort to glean sustainable progress. Communicate the "why" of the change, in order to disrupt the prevalent patterns of behavior that are producing the same results.

Another significant challenge is the strategic use of data. Data is necessary to provide justification for change, however, be wary that data may not be enough to warrant justification for why a particular program needs to be put in place. The reality is that leaders may already be inundated with data representing different points of view. If they're not convinced of the motivation for change, all data related to diversity and inclusion can be very confusing and overwhelming, perhaps leaving them unclear on the behavioral and cultural shifts – as well as overall systemic changes – that need to occur.

An important task for an inclusion, diversity and belonging way-maker is to solidify the strategic direction toward change that will work effectively for your industry or organization. Be prepared to present facts and data to back up the need for change, but always anticipate pushback. Allow the strategy and data to lead, while at same time, know that cultivating communication skills is critical to selling the value of the work. However, doing so doesn't fall squarely on the shoulders of the diversity way-maker: CEOs, CHROs, and other executive leaders must align in the understanding that non-conventional and somewhat unorthodox solutions will be required.

Are you currently experiencing these challenges in your organization's diversity journey? Would you like to discuss ideas and strategies to lead change? Let's keep in touch; [email me](#) for any comments and questions.

