



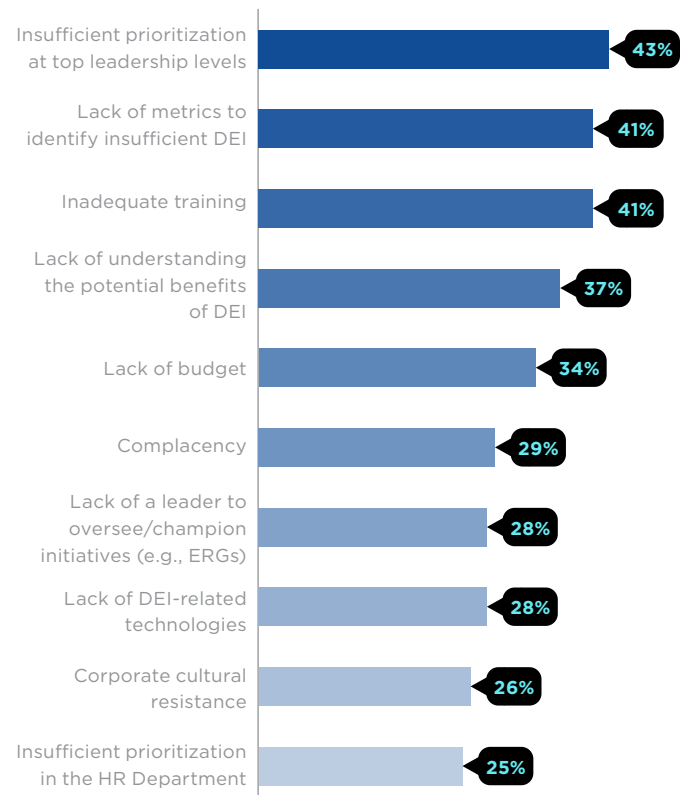
# How to Embed and Operationalize DEI In Your Organization

A guide for HR professionals and employers to take DEI to the next level

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**Survey Question:** What are the barriers to increasing the effectiveness of DEI initiatives in your organization?



Survey from [Future of DEI 2022 whitepaper](#)

## The Challenge to Transform

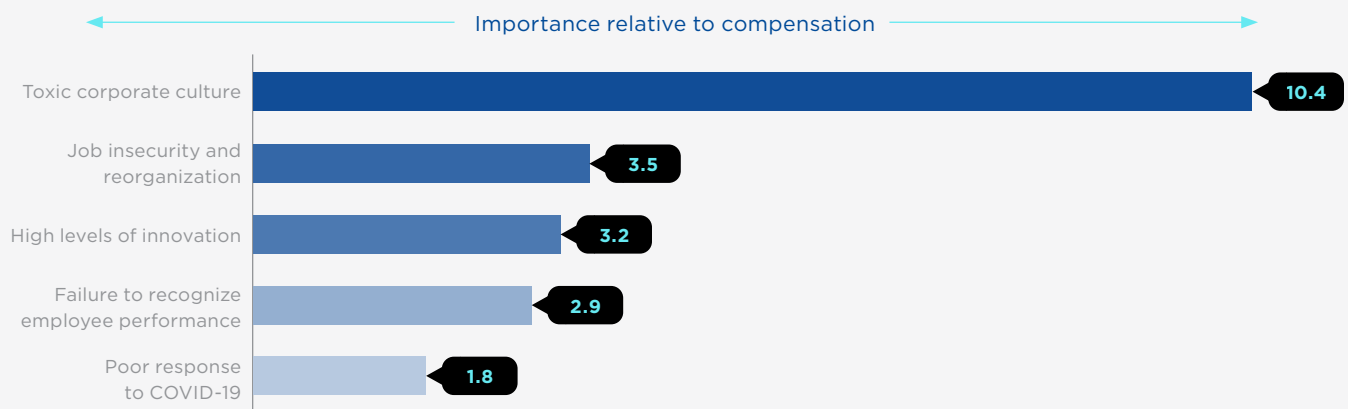
### What is contributing to the challenge?

In a recent [study](#) sponsored by Circa and HR.com we polled senior DEI and HR leaders on what the biggest barriers are to increasing the effectiveness of DEI in their organizations and this is what we found.

Lack of prioritization is emerged as the #1 reason and is occurring at a time when the need and demand for DEI from various stakeholders is at its highest.

In one of the toughest and most competitive job markets we've seen in years, 76% of job seekers say commitment to diversity and inclusion is important when evaluating a potential employer – if you include current and prospective employees, it increases to 89%. Now more than ever, a diverse and inclusive workplace is critical to hiring and retention.

### Top predictors of attrition during the Great Resignation\*



\*MIT Sloan

Notice how compensation is not even factoring in the top reasons for leaving during the Great Resignation, and toxic corporate culture is number one (10.4 times more likely to be a factor than compensation). Toxic corporate culture is more prevalent than many realize, where workplaces are plagued by fighting, drama, employee mistreatment, lack of communication, and low morale.

Another interesting note is people leaving due to high levels of innovation. It might seem like this would be a draw but being on the leading edge of innovation typically requires employees to put in longer hours, work at a faster pace, and endure more stress. While the work is exciting and satisfying, it's also difficult to sustain in the long term. Those employees were more likely to speak negatively about their work life balance and manageable workload.

All these factors are incredibly important to consider when evaluating a DEI strategy and how it will resolve the concerns of employees and meet their expectations.

# Evaluating 4 key people practices with a corrective lens

What are tangible ways companies can take steps toward making real progress in DEI? **Start by evaluating biases and blind spots.**

Talent Acquisition - Learning & Development - Performance Management - Compensation

## 1. TALENT ACQUISITION

### Biases and blind spots include

- ❗ **Stereotyping** - forming generalizations about certain groups like women with caregiving roles may not want to take a job that involves a lot of travel.
- ❗ **Affinity bias** - subconsciously gravitating towards people who we feel share our interests, beliefs, and backgrounds. *Example: favoring someone who graduated from the same college as you.*
- ❗ **Bias in Resume Screening** - this is based off a candidate's attributes like name, background, demographics, location, social media profiles.
- ❗ **Minimum qualifications** - holding a degree, number of years of experience, skillset.
- ❗ **Assessment testing** - measuring predictors for success
- ❗ **Need to be in the office** - not catering to a more distributed workforce, requiring employees to perform work in the workplace
- ❗ **Inclusive language** - how job descriptions communicate the position, do they speak to diverse applicants?
- ❗ **Accessibility of application process** - barriers of access to online application systems for individuals with disabilities or neurodiverse applicants



### Looking through the corrective lens

Questions to ask while evaluating talent acquisition to help surface biases and blind spots.

#### HIRING PROCESS

- Do you have a standard hiring process and is it documented? It should be uniform and applied consistently, easily shared and followed, and can show deviations.
- Breakdown the stages in your hiring process. Compare the rate of progression of underrepresented groups in the funnel with that of your majority groups.
  - » Are there certain stages where underrepresented groups are falling off in disproportionate numbers compared to majority groups?
  - » Is the difference greater than 20%?
  - » What are the selection criteria being applied at these stages? Who is making the selection decision?

## QUALIFICATION & SELECTION CRITERIA

- Review the minimum & preferred qualifications for eligibility
  - » Are these job-related and accurate predictors of successful performance?
- Review the process for evaluating qualifications
  - » Are they being measured and compared in an objective and quantifiable manner?
  - » Do you have a standardized process (behavioral questions, etc.) for assessing candidates?
  - » Is the criteria and measurement consistently being applied?
  - » If you use any form of testing, has the test been validated?

## CAREER SITE & JOB POSTINGS

### Review the language used in your job postings

- Are there gender-coded pronouns or words?
- Are the job tasks and required skills clearly communicated?

### Career Site

- Is the imagery being used diverse and inclusive?
- Is the site accessible and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant?
- Is the messaging welcoming and inclusive?
- Are the benefits and perks communicated inclusive?

### Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

- Do your dropdown menus provide for other response options so as not to exclude other candidates?
- Are there knockout questions that disproportionately exclude or impact underrepresented groups?
- Is there a higher rate of abandoned applications among underrepresented groups?
- Is your accommodations policy visible to job seekers who may need to request it?

## Selection panel

- Are you presenting a diverse slate of candidates?
- Do you have diverse hiring teams and interview panels? This brings in multiple perspectives and the chance to provide a more fair, equitable interview and selection process.
- Are the people involved in sourcing selection and hiring aware of your company's diversity goals, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy, and affirmative action program (if applicable)?
- Have the same people received unconscious bias or inclusive hiring training?

## How to put the corrective lens into practice

### DIVERSIFY RECRUITMENT SOURCES

Revamp job descriptions to be more inclusive and communicate your commitment to diversity.

Increase the variety of your recruitment sources — if you're primarily recruiting via employee referral, that has proven to be a contributor to perpetuating bias.

Create a diversity recruitment marketing plan to communicate your commitment — diversity attracts diversity. Make sure that your online profiles are aligned with your organization's DEI strategy.

Consider doing an internship program focused on diversity. Studies show that minorities and women who held internships with a company can acquire better opportunities there.

Ensure your recruitment process is accessible and ADA compliant, this includes testing the website, online, and mobile.

Leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) for candidate sourcing & screening to remove candidate attributes that can cause biases. Consider using AI to help de-bias job descriptions.

## OPEN YOUR SELECTION PROCESS

Find job-specific skills that leads to success for each role including knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors.

Conduct a step analysis to identify bias in the hiring process, which will determine if there are certain stages in the process where underrepresented groups are falling off disproportionately.

Use strategic disposition codes to answer the question, “when and why did the candidate fall out of the process, and who made that decision?” It will provide insight into the selection process and help mitigate biases.

Ensure you have consistency in the questions you ask. Look for common pretexts for bias, such as “culture fit” and instead view diversity as a “culture add”.

Identify the right behavioral questions to assess each candidate. The questions should be open-ended and allow for them to tell a story about a past experience or situation.

Create diverse hiring teams and interview panels.



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Want to learn more about Disposition Codes?

The Roles of  
Disposition Codes

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Examples of  
Disposition Codes

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## IMPROVE ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES

Onboarding begins the first day hired. This is the first impression to help them prepare for success and learn about the company culture. The activities can include a nice welcome email and expectations of onboarding to ensure everyone is prepared the first day.

Improve your onboarding to retain employees. Understand if they have any starting preferences, require certain accommodations, prefer to be addressed a certain way, if they have certain pronouns etc.

During training and onboarding, create an accessible and ADA compliant process. This includes a focus on all materials being

accessible like all videos having closed captioning.

Build a mentorship program and establish career sponsors.

Inform new hires about company Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), have ERGs reach out, let them know they are welcome to join, and let them know what's happening within them.

Prioritize space and time for feedback and questions.



## 2. LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

### Biases and blind spots include

- ❗ **Training design** – how accessible and available it is to different demographics, languages, and other populations (e.g., deaf community)
- ❗ **Equal Access to Training** – is leadership training available and accessible to many groups, and is it equal across demographics?
- ❗ **“Check the box” training** – going beyond complying with basic training requirements to build a foundational, habitual mindset
- ❗ **Task Focused vs. Behavior focused** – training tends to be task focused which is focused on equipping skills, but not enough attention is on teaching inclusive behaviors. This helps to transcend from concept to action and leads to behavior modification
- ❗ **Unilateral/top-down approach** – does not leave room for leveraging the diverse perspectives in the organization during training
- ❗ **Internal and external input** – don’t forget to leverage your ERGs to help facilitate conversations and create training lessons

### Looking through the corrective lens

Questions to ask while evaluating learning and development pillars to help surface biases and blind spots:

#### Accessibility

- Who gets to attend training?
- Who is able to attend roundtable discussions?
- Who gets selected to participate in conferences or project teams?
- What are the criteria for selection?

#### Training design

- Does training make use of universal design?
- Does it appeal to multiple learning abilities, personalities, and communication styles?
- Does it cater to those who speak different languages (and not just the very common English/Spanish)?

#### Flexibility

- Can employees work through training material at their own pace as opposed to specifically scheduled courses?
- Is the training flexible to accommodate those with factors that might impede them from attending a pre-scheduled class (e.g., caregivers)?

### Diversity

- Is the training team diverse?
- Are you leveraging different voices in your organization, especially your ERGs or diversity council, for input, feedback, and facilitation?

### Communication

- Does training encourage open and honest communication?
- Does the facilitator, along with the organization, create a safe space to enable difficult conversations?

- Does the environment allow for people to speak their opinions and contribute authentically?

### Tangible goals

- What goals does your organization have surrounding DEI?
- How do you tie those goals to individual commitment?
- Are you providing post-training processing to help unpack the learning?
- Are you providing a vehicle to bridge the gap from concept to action and behavioral changes?

## How to put the corrective lens into practice

Conduct a training needs assessment to establish a baseline of where your employees are, where the needs are great, identify performance requirements and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed. An effective training needs assessment will help you direct resources to areas of greatest demand and form the basis for your training curriculum.

Leverage your employees for input and truly listen to what employees have to say.

Tie back your DEI training objectives to your roles and contributions to the organization.

Design training to engage those with varied learning preferences and capabilities.

Leverage Employee Resource Groups for training, assessing content, and providing feedback for facilitation to make use of diverse perspectives.

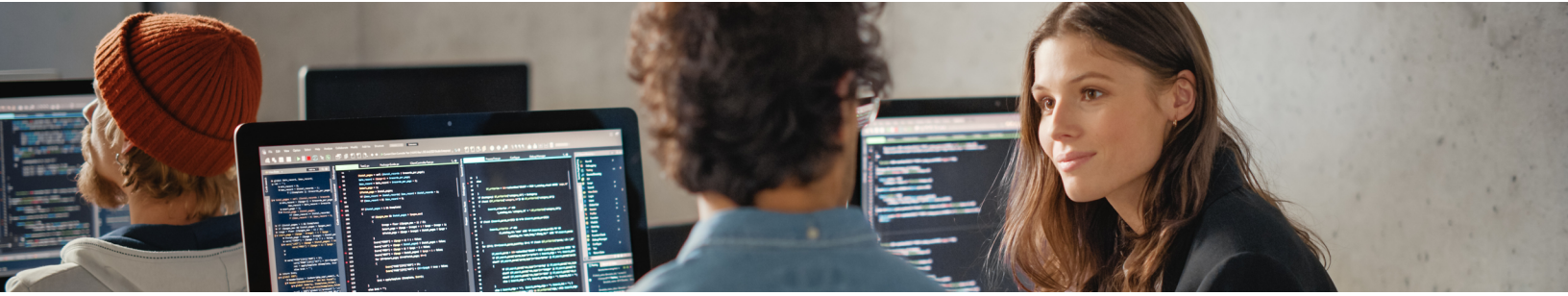
Don't think of training only in a formal capacity — learning and development can encompass roundtable discussions, small groups, coffee and conversation type learning, or honoring heritage and observances.

Conduct learning assessments before and after to measure the impact of training.

Enact follow-up measures such as small group discussions to process the learning and ensure it is making its way into everyday choices and actions.



At the end of the day, your **Learning & Development** strategy should be identifying not just the skill gaps among your employees and teams – but **INCLUDING** the barriers and the inclusive behavior as a critical competency - and based on that, develop, and deliver training that will build those competencies.



## 3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

### Biases and Blind Spots Include

- ❗ **Self-promotion format** — most performance management systems cannot rely on the employee to promote themselves, often comes unnaturally or is uncomfortable.
- ❗ **Recency bias** — favors those who achieved something more recent.
- ❗ **Affinity bias** — lends to those who are “more like us” and causes them to be rated more favorably.
- ❗ **In-person vs. remote workers** — creates two classes of workers, managers may favor one over the other and treat them differently.
- ❗ **Diversity in work styles** — working effectively can require a range of diverse styles and preferences.
- ❗ **Language used in feedback** — inclusivity of feedback language and disparities in how it is provided to different demographic groups.
- ❗ **Criteria for evaluation** — setting evaluation standards that are not consistent across gender, ethnicity, etc.
- ❗ **Access to mentors and resources** — non-equitable access to mentors will cascade eventually into performance evaluation, systematic vs. piecemeal solution.
- ❗ **Allocation of rewards** — uneven or inconsistent among groups.

### Looking through the corrective lens

#### Feedback

- Are people managers giving the same feedback to employees regardless of gender or ethnicity?
- Are they respecting the individuality of each person?
- Is the feedback they're providing constricting people from showing up authentically?
- Are there certain departments or managers where underrepresented groups are consistently rated lower?
- Are performance metrics, objectives, and key result areas clearly communicated to employees and managers?

#### Evaluation & opportunities

- Is there a standardized process in place for evaluating performance?
- Does it use objective measurements and multiple sources of input?
- Does the process normalize for varying levels of self-promotion or self-review skill and comfort?
- Are the definitions of low/mid/high performance inclusive of neurodiversity and differences in work styles?
- Do you provide all employees equal access to mentors, coaching, sponsors, stretch assignments, professional development, and networking opportunities?



## How to put the corrective lens into practice

Gather input from multiple knowledgeable sources that have first-hand understanding of the person's performance, behavior, and contribution.

Establish standardized assessments that evaluate against defined criteria. Train managers to validate conclusions. Every time they have a strong sentiment toward a worker—whether positive or negative—train them to pause and reflect and revisit performance criteria and validate that conclusion based on tangible evidence, not instinct or inclination.

Eliminate the use of subjective criteria, such as an employee's personality traits, and instead focus on skills or performance, in all evaluations.

Provide managers with decision-making frameworks to enable a shift from opinions to facts by building unconscious bias concepts into the content that managers and workers leverage to provide performance feedback.

Document and clearly communicate performance goals and expectations. Define what good looks like and what is low, average, and high performance. Make sure these are documented.

Evaluate and calibrate goals with the same level of difficulty across managers, departments, and positions for similar goals.

Ensure all employees are given equal opportunities to succeed by tracking which employees are invited to marketing, training, and networking events.

Offer all managers and employees hands-on sessions on how to identify and address unconscious bias.

Offer workshops to understand diverse working styles and preferences.

Educate on diverse language (gendered, ethnic, etc.) and providing training on appropriate language for providing feedback.

Regularly review your reviewers to ensure they are being conducted in an inclusive, equitable, and fair manner. Identify and address any recurring issues in your audits.

Use technology and AI to review performance reviews, write ups, and more to identify gendered language or other biased patterns.





## 4. COMPENSATION

### Biases and Blind Spots Include

- ❗ **Steering** — tending to hire a certain demographic (e.g., women) in roles that are more often stereotyped for that group.
- ❗ **Gender and/or race salience** — when it is very apparent that a candidate is of a particular race or gender while reviewing a resume, gender or race bias may contribute to steering, affects promotion barriers and compensation.
- ❗ **Desired salary and negotiations** — asking for desired salary/starting compensation is illegal in many states, salary ranges that are too wide cause disparities or discrepancies for that position.
- ❗ **Manager's discretion** — relying too heavily on manager discretion creates inconsistencies across the board and lack of transparency.
- ❗ **Waiting for employee asked raise** - diverse employees may have experienced rejection in the past and can be less likely to ask for a raise.

### Looking through the corrective lens

Questions to ask while evaluating compensation biases and blind spots.

#### Equal compensation

- Do you have standardized and documented processes for setting compensation, commissions, bonuses, and other rewards?
- Are starting pay, salary increases, and bonuses based on merit (pay for performance) and other objective measures?

- Are similarly situated employee groups paid equally?

#### Identifying gaps

- Are there disparities in pay by gender, race/ethnicity, or other protected class?
- Are you able to provide reasonable explanations for any gaps?
- Are there gaps in the process that led to those pay decisions?
- Are you able to identify causes and at what juncture in the employment lifecycle discrepancy occurred?

### How to put the corrective lens into practice

Secure leadership buy-in and determine an approach for doing a pay equity analysis. Work with legal or a consultant to properly address any disparities. If you find systemic issues, investigate, and correct those. Be ready to have a budget to address any issues discovered.

Use narrower pay bands/salary ranges to avoid disparities among different employees within similar roles.

When evaluating merit increases, bonuses, stock options, and other awards, make sure you have a diverse team of reviewers.

Standardize policy and process for setting initial compensation. Stop using compensation history and previous salary as

a starting point – it’s already illegal in many states. Use market data to set the hiring range for each role.

Look at your policy for promotions and succession planning, which does impact pay.

Evaluate your benefits offerings to ensure there isn’t any bias and benefits appeal to a broad range of employees.

Practice real pay transparency. Gone are the days when we can’t talk about pay in a realistic and honest way.

Leverage internships. Studies have found that women and minorities who have had internships are more likely to be paid higher than those who did not.

Document all your decisions regarding compensation and monitor for patterns or discrepancies especially those that impact protected groups.



## THE BIG PICTURE

The key to operationalizing DEI in your organization is to align your DEI objectives with your key business priorities. Hiring and retention are good drivers for alignment — if you can unite everyone in the organization on hiring and retention, it gives good reason for everybody to buy in and act on what is learned.

As you evaluate your DEI initiatives, what are you going to start doing? What are you going to stop doing? What are you going to change in what you’re doing? And when you talk about change, it’s not simply at the organizational level, but at the personal level. What is every individual employee going to do and change?

As discussed, the critical thing to consider is how to create institutional change by evaluating the key systems in your organization — **talent acquisition, learning and development, performance management, and compensation.**

Systemic issues require systemic solutions!