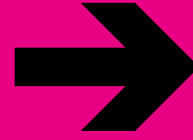


Are We Asking the Right Questions About Diversity?



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Op-ed

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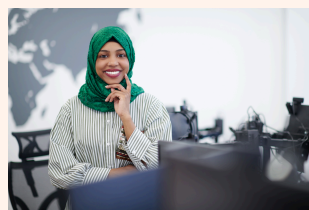
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20 January 2025

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

As companies revisit their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs, we must challenge whether we're asking the right questions. Too often, organizations focus on surface-level diversity without addressing the deeper, more fundamental questions: **Why should leaders be motivated to hire diverse candidates? What's in it for them? And under what conditions can diverse talent truly thrive?**

Most leaders operate with a familiarity bias (unless they are consciously aware of it), gravitating towards people who think and act like them. This approach feels natural, seamless, and efficient. However, when these leaders eventually face change—whether in their roles, industries, or the broader world—they often struggle. Clinging to familiar ways, they may find themselves stuck in the past, unprepared to engage with new communities, explore new opportunities, or adapt to diverse perspectives. The result? They risk stagnation, having failed to invest in relationships or skills that extend beyond their immediate circle.



Why Does Diversity Matter for Leaders?

While there are clear organizational benefits to diversity—such as innovation, creativity, and resilience—it also holds significant personal value for leaders:

1. **Self-Growth Through Diversity:** Engaging with diverse perspectives enriches leaders' cognitive, emotional, and social capabilities. It pushes them out of their comfort zones, helping them identify blind spots and develop a more well-rounded worldview.
2. **Breaking Free from the “Caveman” Mindset:** The irony of today's hyper-connected world is that we no longer live in caves, where surrounding ourselves with like-minded people once protected us from external threats. Yet, some leaders still operate as though they're in survival mode, perceiving those who are “different” as potential enemies or competitors. This mindset erodes trust, limits collaboration, and traps leaders in outdated patterns of thinking.
3. **Adapting to a Globalized World:** The modern workplace demands that leaders not only manage diverse teams but thrive in them. Leaders who fail to embrace diversity risk being left behind in a world that increasingly values inclusivity and interconnectedness.

The Risks of Avoiding Diversity

Stagnation and Irrelevance

Without new ideas and perspectives, leaders become trapped in their own echo chambers.

Loss of Trust and Engagement

Teams that lack diversity and inclusion often experience low morale, limited innovation, and high turnover.

Unrecognized Blind Spots

Diverse teams help leaders identify their own cognitive and emotional gaps. Without this feedback, leaders risk making poor decisions and missing opportunities for growth.



Why Leaders Should Prioritize Strengths:

To truly leverage diversity, leaders need to shift their mindset. Instead of focusing on what's missing or different, they should prioritise identifying and nurturing strengths. Here's how:

1. **Focus on Strengths:** Evaluate individuals based on their unique capabilities and potential. Don't dwell on gaps; instead, provide the tools and support to bridge them.
2. **Encourage Collaboration:** Diverse teams bring varied perspectives. Create an environment where these differences are seen as strengths, not threats.
3. **Embrace Failure as Growth:** Allow individuals to take risks and learn from mistakes. Resilience builds through trial and error.
4. **Invest in Long-Term Relationships:** Build connections with communities and individuals beyond your immediate circle. This not only enhances trust but also fosters a richer exchange of ideas.
5. **Challenge Biases:** Recognise and address unconscious biases that may lead to distrust or exclusion. Leaders must model inclusive behavior to create a safe and welcoming environment for all.

Moving Beyond the “Cave” Mentality

The hyper-connected world we live in today demands hyper-connected leadership. Leaders who cling to outdated, tribal mindsets risk becoming irrelevant. By embracing diversity, leaders not only future-proof themselves and their organizations but also grow in ways that are personally enriching.

We no longer need to see others as competitors or threats. Instead, we can view them as collaborators and allies in a shared journey of growth and innovation. Leaders who embrace this mindset thrive in today's complex, interconnected world—unlocking both their own potential and that of their teams.



Conclusion

Diversity isn't just about helping others; it's about helping ourselves. It pushes leaders to grow, adapt, and connect in ways that lead to personal and professional fulfilment. By moving beyond surface-level diversity efforts and asking deeper questions, leaders can transform not just their organisations but also their own lives.

The real challenge isn't just creating diverse teams—it's creating leaders who are ready to embrace and grow with them.

If you're looking to create harmony in the workplace and seek modern ways to foster a harmonious and collaborative environment, [Farihas.com](https://www.farihas.com) can help.