

INTRODUCTION BY CHUKKY OKOBI, NFL SUPER BOWL CHAMPION

BUSINESS **LEADERSHIP** **AND** **EQUITY**

**Unlock Your Business's Full Potential through
Strategic Leadership and Equity**



JASON MILLER
FOREWORD BY DR. BRUCE RIPPEE



CHRIS O'BYRNE, PATRICIA BARONOWSKI-SCHNEIDER, IRA BOWMAN, DR. JULIE DUCHARME, LYNN HOERAUF,
BRIANNA AND RYAN JACKSON, MIKE JACKSON, MICHAEL MARKIEWICZ, DR. BRUCE RIPPEE, LUBA SAKHARUK, JON MACASKILL

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Foreword

by
Dr. Bruce Rippee

Welcome to this wonderful collaboration centered on business leadership and the concept of equity. Although it is tricky to define a concept by stating what it is not, I would like to dispel the myth that inequity is a form of racism, and that equity is a cause championed in the name of racial justice.

Although it is true that there are people of color in need of more and better opportunities, education, and resources so that they can be free to pursue their ambitions; inequity and racism are very different social phenomena. Equity can relate to a person who, for example, has special needs, like the hearing impaired, the blind, the wheelchair bound, or those with any type of difficulty pursuing the needs and ambitions of a human being. As this dialogue—for that is what this book really is—progresses, you will learn that many of us have very different perspectives stemming from different upbringings and interactions before we finally made it to leadership positions.

For example, my early life was full of the opportunities of a military community with parents and siblings who took the time to teach me how to think for myself and how to, most of all, ask many questions so that I wouldn't fall for the next trend or social stance. While not always equitable, the military came surprisingly close when it came to resources, opportunities, and training. In contrast, here is a lesson that I learned about the way my father—and, in fact, many people in the military—saw race.

In 1971, my family was stationed in Fort McClellan, Alabama, where my father, a captain in the US Army at the time, was an administrator and chemical officer. The race riots of 1967 were still raging in some places, exposing a real need for change, and unfortunately, man's inhumanity to man. These riots were often topics of conversation in our schools among the teachers and some of the students. I remember them even though I was in

first grade at the time and almost completely sheltered from them because I lived on a military base where everyone was everyone. I remember this lesson about race that my father gave me when I asked him if Marcus Goldman, my best friend in first grade, could come over on a Saturday. To be fair, I always had to ask if someone could come to our house, but I was especially concerned because Marcus was black and, even as a child of six years old, I had heard “things.”

“Of course!” my dad said. “Do we need to go get him?”

I told him no and that he lived close by because he was two bus stops before mine. I told dad that I was worried about inviting him because he was black. What my dad told me next was so simple yet had so many layers to it that it took me years to unpack the whole meaning. “Which way is the weapon pointed?”

I had no idea what he was talking about and asked him what he meant. This is a child’s memory of his lesson blended with the very good conversation that I had with him for decades afterwards.

“When I was in Vietnam,” my dad said, “I was in some very dangerous places where people were actively shooting at me. There were bad things happening all around me and good people—people I was supposed to help protect—were dying. Some of those people were black, some white, and some were other colors, but we were all dirty and wet and scared, and I loved every single one of them that had their weapons pointed down range. I would have done anything for them, and I still would to this day.

“Outside of the foxhole and across the jungle, other people had their weapons pointed at me and mine, and I hated them. The truth is that the color of a human being doesn’t matter in the slightest—their intention does. Friends take on the world with you. Marcus is your friend, which means his weapon is pointed down range, so that makes him my friend, too.”

This book is a dialogue about the business strategy of equity but not necessarily as it relates to race. I make the distinction because, done correctly and with the appropriate resources, equity may be a worthy cause as it helps all those who are marginalized. Done incorrectly, it is simply a shift of resources from one group to another without fostering the sweeping

changes needed, a sort of participation trophy or handout that neither side really wants.

Business Leadership and Equity was built on a series of questions asked of CEOs, doctors, entrepreneurs, business and personal development coaches, and high-level executives who are in the top 25% in their field. How do we know that they are in the top 25%? Because they are still in business.

The Small Business Association defines a small business as having at least one but not more than 500 employees. As of 2021, there were 31.7 million small businesses in the United States, 25% of which did not survive to the writing of this book. Historically, 75% fail in less than 15 years. Most small businesses fail because of a lack of capital, poor research, ineffective marketing, social climate, changing tax structures, and a myriad of other factors that could be avoided with timely, strategic advice. This book offers talking points, mentorship, advice, stories, and strategic timing as it relates to equity in today's environment.

One of the underlying and hidden questions posed to the authors of this book was, "Is equity strategic at all?" Most of us had to define our understanding of equity first, simply because there are far too many definitions with ever-changing connotations. The concept of equity appears to be fluid, but a reasonable 10,000-foot view of it comes from recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and adjust to imbalances.

Recent narratives have become psychologically abstract and have become the focus of interest and controversy, and unfortunately, have divided our personal and professional interactions into teams and tribes. If I were to paraphrase the sides, I would say that one camp believes business equity to be a *handout* and the other side sees equity as a *hand up*. This book allows us to hear many voices, tactics, and positions and will hopefully spawn conversations and add structure to our beliefs and convictions on equity and whether it is strategic to add this concept to our own enterprises.

I am not a fan of dividing society into groups and then comparing and contrasting the difficulties and differences between these groups for the sake of making policy. However, when we separate society into groups with

the intention of understanding, developing, and honoring the human condition together, it seems that all of society benefits.

Equity seems like a great idea in many situations but, with trepidation about running counter to the narrative, not all of them. This dialogue is filled with experiences where equity is both challenging and rewarding when viewed from the position of the author. You may have your own opinions and experiences that are so different as to make the position of the author reductive and maybe wrong. I believe that, when that happens, it is up to us to ask for clarification, refinements, data, and research until we find common ground. One of the best skills ever taught me was the ability to say, “I think I understand your position but not why you have it. Help me with that.”

I do believe that, done correctly, equity begins with empathy and evolves into action steps that proffer empowerment and parity. We must stay away from blanket statements such as, “Equity is allocating the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome,” without asking some highly important questions.

What, for example, do “exact” and “equal” mean in this context? Most of us assume that the person offered more resources than usual to make up for deficiencies in their background or abilities wants to succeed, but it is also important to ask them what success means to them. I also believe that we need to ask them about their goals and intentions. In fact, equity without questions, conversation, and understanding would eventually create another faction saying, “Do this because it is what is best for you.”

If we can agree that asking pertinent questions should happen first, then depending upon the answers, equity in academia, philanthropy, and government is paramount in part because this formative nuance empowers us to strive for more of that which we desire.

For example, I was diagnosed with dyslexia as a 7th grader. The teachers I had at the time chose to pour extra resources into me and had some of the other children help me read and study. Working with me seemed to help the other children learn at a deeper level and helped me learn the lessons while helping me not to feel stupid. Fortunately, my siblings were also willing to

help, and I eventually learned tactics to keep words and letters from changing places in my brain. You will have to read my chapter to see how equity also applied to my undiagnosed ADHD.

Some of the content of this book is challenging and asks us to accept that all of us may carry biases and prejudices that run deep in our subconscious and are on display in our social and business interactions. The hope is that we bring solutions to those challenges in a way that opens a heartfelt dialogue.

I have recently seen pundits who want to rank difficulties according to their own hierarchy and historical references. In all honesty, they may be right. The fact is that I don't know their represented community or group, what it has been through, or what the future holds for those involved. I never will if I am not allowed to ask questions and hear the stories for myself.

The danger, it seems, is that we have become a nation of bandwagons, righteous causes, and echo chambers, wanting to be right more than we want to be civil. This has led to many of us becoming academically lazy, closing our mind and blindly checking the box for "bad" or "good," depending upon the wording of the argument. If the argument has the words "pro" and "equity" in it, then those who don't wish to continue to learn, grow, and evolve will automatically check the "good" box, even when a more careful, in-depth look may come up with a different answer.

All the authors of this book cherish the opportunity to dialogue with those who see the world differently. Speaking only for myself, and perhaps accidentally for the other authors, asking questions, offering experiences, and uncovering solutions together may be the only way to truly create the change that we all want to see in the world.

Introduction

by
Chukky Okobi

Some may wonder why a former pro football player was asked to write the foreword to this book on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Starting with a little personal history may be useful.

From age seven through seventeen, second grade through twelfth grade, my family moved around quite a bit. This meant that my siblings and I found ourselves as the new kid in class again and again.

From living in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood and simultaneously attending a Catholic school in Pittsburgh, to a predominantly white beach town in Connecticut, to attending inner-city predominantly African American public schools, to my high school years among the affluent matriculating at a New England preparatory boarding school, my life experience has given me a unique perspective on the significance of the cultural, racial, and socio-economic diversity in America.

As a first-generation American of Nigerian descent and coming from a family that was culturally different from pretty much any and everybody I went to school with, sometimes I felt I didn't fit in anywhere. With my Caucasian classmates, the contrast was obvious. And even when I found myself surrounded by people who looked like me, the other black kids who had no direct connection to their own African heritage didn't seem to relate to where I was coming from or how I saw the world.

I remember a conversation I had with my older sister when we were both teenagers. We were discussing our shared frustration of constantly feeling like outsiders no matter where we found ourselves. She said something at the time I thought to be profound. The older I get, the more significant this quote seems in the world we live in today.

She said, "You know, everything in this world would be different if we could all just—*be different.*"

As a practitioner of Huna, The Healing and Spiritual practices of ancient Hawaii, for years, I've studied the laws of the natural world through the Hawaiian cultural perspective.

When I think about the benefits of DEI through my "Huna filter," there are two natural laws or presuppositions that come to mind.

The first natural law is called The Law of Infinite Universe, which states: "There are infinite ways to view the universe, and no two people view the universe in the same way. Therefore, there are an infinite number of universes, or at least an infinite number of descriptions of the universe. To experience a different universe, change either the input ability or the organization of the data. In other words, look at the world in a different way; gain a new perspective of the world you thought you knew."

The second is The Law of Union of Opposites: "The union of two opposing ideas or data will produce a third idea—a new idea—which is truer than either of the first two."

When I connect the dots on these two concepts, my takeaway is that every person, regardless of their background, has a unique perspective that I may know nothing about. And if I open myself to consider more diverse perspectives, I may make a discovery or learn a valuable lesson that I might have missed if I stayed fixed on my individual point of view, believing that my way of thinking is "right." I could miss an opportunity that could have possibly taken my life, my relationships, and/or my career or business to the next level.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are key elements of any successful organization, institution, or community. By promoting acceptance, understanding, and respect for people of all backgrounds and experiences—from the workplace to schools to other public settings—embracing DEI can have a positive impact on morale, productivity, creativity, and collaboration.

When the acceptance of DEI is woven into the fabric of an organization, everyone benefits from a much broader perspective than the combination of the various backgrounds of the individuals provides.

There are valuable lessons that, no matter where an individual comes from, the collective can learn and apply to explore possibilities and achieve results that, if the environment were a homogeneous one, those insights and revelations could be missed and never come into our consciousness. In the context of a company, that could mean that we may never realize what our full potential actually is.

As an eight-year NFL veteran, having won a championship at the Division 1 collegiate level and a World Championship in the NFL, my personal experience has provided me evidence that leads me to believe that, when people of all different backgrounds collaborate harmoniously, in the end, we lift each other up as individuals and can create a lasting, positive impact on our individual families, our communities, and in our global society.

Chukky Okobi, Basic Instructions Mind Mastery

Master practitioner of neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), executive mindset coach and keynote speaker, Super Bowl XL champion (Pittsburgh Steelers, 2005)

Leadership and Equity: Valuing your Most Important Assets

Jason Miller

While diversity is a clear asset to any business, more than just diversity is needed to support furthering the future of a business. Beyond diversity, centering equity in your business can create opportunities, foster innovation, and help a business stand out. Creating an equitable work environment and running a business that supports and centers equity as a core business value is an important skill for any business leader. One way to know if you are practicing equity is to ask yourself, are you mindful of investing in your most important assets—people and resources? Centering equity does just this and is an essential investment in your business, especially when cultivating the relationships and resources that support the work you do. Emphasizing equity within a business or entrepreneurial effort has far-reaching implications. For example, it can help ensure that everyone abides by mutually beneficial rules and regulations, foster open communication between all parties, and infuse unity into any business or industry. By promoting equity, we are cementing our potential for greatness.

Strong leadership is essential to achieving equity but knowing precisely how or where to start can take time and effort. This chapter will explore creating fairness and equity through effective business practices. Understanding equity and how it functions in a business community will help you understand the power of valuing your resources—both human and otherwise. Being a leader who centers equity also means understanding what equity is, why it's so important, what strategies are necessary for success, and how to center equity in your business goals. These are the critical pieces of knowledge needed when building a successful business that fosters both diversity and equity.

Equity is an essential trait for any leader to exercise. Equity is all about fairness and justice. A leader committed to equity will strive for everyone to have the same access to resources, opportunities, and respect regardless of their backgrounds or experiences. Equity means to provide access to

resources and opportunities in a way that recognizes the unique experiences and barriers individuals in a community might have. As leaders, we can do our part to help create opportunities that address these barriers and offer more to those in need. Caring about equity shows respect for everyone because all great leaders recognize that people should not be judged or kept from opportunities based on arbitrary factors.

Inclusion and empowerment are natural outcomes of ensuring everyone has access to opportunity, making equity an essential step in creating the kind of businesses that thrive and help communities thrive. Leaders who prioritize equity create a business community with mutual respect and understanding, working together towards a common goal. When leaders understand, promote and advocate for equity, they model what it means to improve the business world.

In today's business world, having leaders who focus on prioritizing equity is critical. By advocating for a more equal and equitable way of working, you will be able to pave the way to build a business network of mutual respect and understanding while creating solidified connections with like-minded businesses and entrepreneurs. Engaging in this kind of collaboration will create better opportunities, find innovative solutions, and have an overall fairer approach that benefits every person, from the customer to the staff to the community. As a result, equity has become a crucial aspect of success in modern times, and the ones leading the charge are changing the game.

In the business universe, a practice of equity can be the most critical practice a leader can commit to implementing. All business leaders play an invaluable role in ensuring these qualities, instilling them, and modeling these qualities for the rest of their business community. Whether breaking down hierarchies within your business or creating policies for equitable pay scales, leaders are responsible for ensuring that their actions and practices uplift everyone within the company ecosystem with equity in mind. With the guidance and dedication of leadership, employee and community voices will be heard within our business structures. However, with effective stewardship by leaders, employees will flourish and build a reliable source of strength.

Customers, other businesses, and entrepreneurs around you will follow suit and compete to make more equitable measures themselves. Modeling equity is an effective strategy for change and is a strength for any leader. Even small gestures of recognition can create a lasting impact on both the more incredible culture and a business's productivity. Those who doubt the effectiveness of equity in business should always appreciate the power of great leaders to inspire and lead the charge toward a brighter future.

Even with great leadership, we often live in a world where equity is only sometimes at the top of the mind, and it can be easy for thoughts and ideas about equity to get swept under the rug. But with that all-important guidance from leaders who prioritize equity and build a culture of inclusion, those voices can be heard. It's why it's so essential that every business structure has dedicated leaders willing to recognize and amplify each unique voice, experience, and background. Leaders create paths for individuals to share their stories and contribute meaningfully to and through the business. A business is not an isolated entity but an entrepreneurial effort within a community, meaning there is a significant impact on a society when it centers equity in its goals. With the right leader at the helm, everyone has an equal chance of having their voice heard and barriers broken down so they can take a seat at our proverbial business table.

Developing leadership skills that embody equity can initially seem challenging, especially if you have yet to think so heavily about the issue of social equity in a business setting. The challenges involved in developing these critical leadership skills are worth the growth and self-learning that will help you evolve as a leader and your business grow as social norms and expectations continue to expand. Creativity, courage, and resilience make this growth and skill development possible and rewarding. By embracing equity as a core value, leaders can identify structures and practices that detract from equity and develop initiatives that move towards inclusiveness. Identifying these gaps entails being aware of one's unconscious bias and challenging systems that perpetuate inequality. Reaching an objective point of equity means being creative. This process can require thinking critically about existing systems while creating a culture where everyone who steps foot in your business or works to help your business feels they belong. Developing these leadership skills is vital for lasting change within your team.

Learning about implicit bias can be an invaluable way to develop your leadership skills and become a true champion of equity. With this knowledge, you can recognize and address unconscious biases buried beneath your conscious thoughts and goals. Implicit bias is attitudes or stereotypes that unconsciously affect our understanding, actions, and decisions. They are automatic responses, activated involuntarily without awareness or intentional control, but most importantly, we all have an implicit bias that can impact our commitment to equity.

Remaining committed to learning about equity issues and how they impact your business can help you gain an inspired understanding of how our qualities operate when we make decisions. This commitment will enable you to create a better work environment for everyone under your leadership while diving into a socially conscious business ethos. Through continued learning about implicit bias, you can create an atmosphere of equity and develop your leadership skills, especially as it relates to incorporating equity into your work.

The business world is changing and expanding constantly. Part of its work is to keep up with new generations, social expectations, and trends. Keeping up with this expansion is how good businesses stay in business. Equity has become extremely important because of growing and evolving social expectations. An equitable business will create an environment that supports the success of all employees, ensuring workplace principles and values are respected. An equitable business will intentionally remove barriers to opportunities by engaging in behaviors such as promoting good, hard-working employees or donating part of their profit to local organizations doing important work in their community. Businesses should prioritize equitable policies by implementing initiatives such as equal access to promotions, pay raises, and mentorship opportunities that enable fair practices across the business. This way, every team and community member can contribute their best to reach collective goals and build a cohesive workplace culture. Equity also communicates to staff that they are valued and that their efforts are appreciated. These behaviors create an environment that promotes loyalty and contributes to the sustained success of businesses in the long run.

Success comes from the willingness to grow and learn about new, innovative ideas for the workplace. Diversity and equity issues may feel unique to the business world but can benefit businesses greatly in today's social climate. Equitable practices ensure that everyone who comes into contact with the business is treated fairly and provided with ample opportunity and resources to succeed. Equality in promotions, pay raises, and mentorship offers an ideal foundation for success; on a larger scale, it promotes workplace harmony that allows a business to grow and thrive. Establishing equitable policies is a win-win for businesses, customers, and employees. Each group will gain access to further opportunities within and in relation to the company. At the same time, businesses foster a diverse workforce that can benefit from each other's perspectives and knowledge. For this reason, prioritizing equitable policies makes sense for every business.

In our rapidly changing world, learning the tools and gaining the skills to practice equity properly in your business is vital. There are many ways to create a more equitable environment. To truly engage in an equitable practice, employers and business owners must work to protect their employees' rights and ensure that everyone is treated with fairness concerning their unique set of circumstances. When considering these circumstances, we must also understand and imagine that different experiences create different barriers for an individual or group. Each set of barriers will require other solutions. Because of the uniqueness of each potential situation, creating a more equitable business model and practice will require creativity and a willingness to learn from those who live the experiences you hope to impact. As a business owner and entrepreneur, you can appreciate the various challenges in business alone, which can help you build empathy for those who face a few more challenges than yourself. Equal opportunity, pay equity, and fostering a diverse working culture are essential to creating a more equitable environment and practice for your business. As a business owner or entrepreneur, you can also invest in people's development and local education initiatives to create a level playing field.

Moreover, as a business owner and leader, you should actively encourage and reward members of marginalized communities for speaking up and contributing ideas. The sharing of these ideas and experiences is where

innovation will thrive. Leaders should also ensure they are responsive to feedback from staff and their customer community, considering any equity concerns they may have. Working towards equity takes effort, but it can improve morale and foster creativity when done effectively.

In addition, another great way to create equity in the workplace is to foster genuine conversations between colleagues and build meaningful connections with those you meet through your business or entrepreneurial networks. When we consider our human instinct to lean on our implicit and explicit biases, we must be responsible for ‘rewiring’ our brains to be more open-minded and take in new information. The best way to combat our biases about people and groups is to have intentional, meaningful, and sustained interactions with people and groups we may not normally interact with daily.

Ask yourself, what communities or experiences do you not know enough about, and which do you wish you did know more about? These questions help us identify where we can learn more and encourage us to build meaningful connections and change the way we think about people. These exchanges should be open and honest, enabling individuals to discuss their experiences and views openly. These efforts could include workshops on equity-related topics or dialogue between different groups across the business community. It can be as simple as a conversation with a new customer or someone you run into at the store. Other ways to create workplace equity are for leaders to consider making an equity policy for their business and outlining critical principles for equity within the business. An equity policy should include steps for assessing equity levels and ideas for improving equity overall. It’s essential that you make equity a priority by setting expectations and holding yourself and others accountable for creating a more equitable business.

Investing in equity and equity initiatives can be a challenging but gratifying venture for businesses; after investing the time, effort, and resources necessary for equity to take root, there is an enormous positive potential in being able to galvanize morale better and spark creativity. With equity as an anchoring focal point, it is possible to create a dynamic business and workplace that provides opportunities for all to thrive. Unlike equity initiatives of the past, current ones are far more expansive; they encompass

fairly distributing power while creating a safe environment free from discrimination. They help us better understand the unique circumstances that may act as barriers to success for our customers, employees, and peers. Equitable practices produce the kind of sharp focus that encourages productive collaboration amongst colleagues. This fruitful collaboration and thought-sharing can lead to more creative problem-solving, idea generation, innovation, and business.

As a leader, there is no doubt that it is important to prioritize equity in the workplace. When you value every team member and commit to equitable practices, you set yourself up for success. Equity fosters strong relationships between your business, employees, and community and helps everyone gain better access to opportunities that help them grow and help the business thrive. A thriving business comes from being courageous, creating, and investing in healthy relationships in the business community. Implementing these strategies means that through the trial and error of incorporating equity measures, you will invest in relationships built on trust, respect, and, most importantly, equity. If you want your business to succeed, start by valuing your most important asset: your people.

The Impact of Implicit Bias in the Workplace

Chris O'Byrne

Implicit bias is an unconscious process that influences our attitudes and behavior toward others. It's shaped by our experiences, cultural values, and social norms. Because implicit biases operate outside of our conscious awareness, we're often unaware of how they influence our decisions, judgments, and actions. Yet, implicit biases can be harmful, especially in the workplace. They can interfere with our ability to make fair and unbiased decisions in hiring, promotions, and other workplace decisions. Recognizing that implicit bias exists is the first step in addressing it and promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Implicit bias can lead to unfair treatment in the workplace, such as unequal opportunities, biased hiring and promotion decisions, or even harassment. If left unchecked, implicit bias can create a toxic work environment that harms morale and productivity. When organizations recognize the impact of implicit bias in the workplace, they can work to create a culture that is inclusive and welcoming of all employees. This requires identifying areas where implicit bias may exist and implementing strategies to address it, such as training on unconscious bias or adopting diverse hiring practices.

Dealing with implicit bias requires a collaborative effort among individuals and organizations. Strategies for addressing implicit bias include interrupting prejudiced behaviors, challenging assumptions and stereotypes, and increasing exposure to diverse perspectives. For example, organizations can implement policies and practices that promote diversity and inclusion, such as mentoring programs or employee resource groups. Individuals can also address their own biases by practicing self-reflection, adopting diverse perspectives, and having honest conversations about implicit biases with others. By addressing implicit bias, we can create a more equitable and inclusive workplace for all.

Implicit biases are a type of unconscious bias that influences our perceptions, attitudes, and actions toward others. They're usually based on

deeply held assumptions or stereotypes shaped by our cultural and social experiences. Implicit biases can manifest in many ways, such as microaggressions or subtle behaviors that can be harmful to others. It's important to recognize that implicit bias can be deeply embedded in our thought processes, making it difficult to recognize and address. However, with training and self-reflection, individuals and organizations can work to recognize and reduce the impact of implicit bias in the workplace.

Implicit bias can have a profound impact on how we think and act, especially in the workplace. For example, a hiring manager may unconsciously prefer applicants who have the same background or interests as him or herself, even if these factors aren't relevant to the job. Or an employee may be more likely to interact positively with colleagues who share the same ethnicity or culture, leading to feelings of exclusion and lack of inclusion of others. These biases can affect our decision-making processes, our communication style, and our overall behavior in the workplace. By working to identify and eliminate implicit bias, we can create a more equitable and inclusive work environment that benefits everyone.

Several types of implicit bias can show up in the workplace, including gender bias, racial bias, and age bias. For example, women may be seen as less competent or less suited for leadership positions than men, while people of color may be seen as more aggressive or less qualified than their white counterparts. Other common biases include confirmation bias, in which we seek information that confirms our preconceived notions and ignore information that contradicts them, and beauty bias, in which we prefer people who are perceived as more attractive. By recognizing and addressing these biases, individuals, and organizations can create a more inclusive and equitable work environment for all.

Implicit bias can lead to discrimination and unequal treatment in the workplace. For example, an employee may be more likely to interact positively with colleagues who share the same ethnicity or culture, leading others to feel excluded and not included. Similarly, a supervisor may be more inclined to promote employees who are like him or her in personality or work style, even if these factors aren't directly related to job performance. These biases can lead to missed opportunities and a lack of

diversity in the workplace, which can hurt morale and productivity. By recognizing and addressing implicit bias, we can create a more equitable and inclusive workplace that benefits everyone.

Implicit bias can create a harmful work environment in many ways. When an employee feels that their colleagues or supervisors are biased toward them, they may feel excluded or undervalued, leading to low morale and poor performance. When employees feel the workplace lacks diversity or that certain groups aren't represented, this can lead to a culture of exclusion and division. And when employees witness discriminatory behavior by colleagues or supervisors, it can lead to a hostile work environment and even legal action. When companies and individuals recognize and address implicit bias, they can create an inclusive and welcoming work environment that benefits everyone.

There are several exercises that individuals and organizations can use to identify implicit bias. One effective exercise is the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT), which measures implicit bias in several areas, such as race, gender, and sexual orientation. This test can be taken online and allows you to identify your own implicit biases. Another exercise is to self-reflect and keep a journal, examining your thoughts and feelings about others and trying to identify any unconscious biases that may be present. Finally, companies can also conduct an anonymous survey to gather information about the work climate and potential biases. These exercises can help individuals and companies identify implicit biases and eliminate them.

Recognizing when implicit bias is at play is challenging, but there are signs that can indicate bias. For example, if a decision is made quickly or without considering all available information, this may show that unconscious bias is at play. Also, if a particular group is consistently underrepresented in hiring, promotions, or other workplace decisions, this may be a sign of bias. Other signs of implicit bias include making assumptions about others based on their appearance or background or using stereotypes as a basis for decision-making. If you recognize these signs, individuals and organizations can work to address implicit bias in the workplace.

Dealing with implicit bias requires a concerted effort by individuals and organizations. Strategies for dealing with implicit bias include interrupting prejudicial behavior, challenging assumptions and stereotypes, and increasing exposure to diverse perspectives. For example, if you witness prejudicial behavior, you can choose to address and challenge it to create a more inclusive workplace culture. Similarly, individuals can work to challenge their assumptions and stereotypes by seeking different perspectives and information that will help them identify and address their own implicit biases. Finally, exposure to different perspectives and experiences can help broaden the understanding of others and challenge preconceptions. Organizations can create opportunities for employees to interact with people from diverse backgrounds, such as through mentoring programs or employee groups. By implementing these strategies, individuals and companies can work to create a more inclusive and equitable workplace.

Self-reflection is an important part of identifying and addressing implicit bias. By self-reflecting and examining our thoughts and behaviors, we can identify areas where we're biased and work to eliminate them. This includes being open and honest with ourselves about our biases and assumptions and gaining different perspectives and experiences that can challenge those biases. Personal growth is also important in addressing implicit biases because it requires a willingness to change and adjust our behaviors and attitudes. This can be uncomfortable but is necessary to create an inclusive and equitable workplace. Through self-reflection and personal growth, individuals can work to identify and address their own biases to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all.

Overcoming implicit bias requires a long-term commitment to continuous learning and personal growth. Strategies for overcoming implicit bias include practicing empathy and perspective-taking, building relationships with people from diverse backgrounds, and developing a growth mindset. By practicing empathy and perspective-taking, for example, you can learn to recognize and understand the experiences of others, even if they're different from your own. Building relationships with people from different backgrounds can help broaden your perspective and challenge your own biases and assumptions. Finally, developing a growth mindset involves being open to learning and change and recognizing that we all have biases

and can work to overcome them. By implementing these strategies, individuals can work to become more inclusive and empathetic to create a more welcoming and equitable workplace.

Ongoing education and training are essential to address and overcome implicit biases. By learning about the latest research and best practices, individuals and organizations can further develop their understanding of implicit bias and the strategies to overcome it. This can include attending workshops or training, learning online, or seeking other resources and materials to deepen their understanding. Ongoing education and training can also help foster a culture of learning and growth in the workplace and encourage employees to take an active role in identifying and addressing their own biases. By prioritizing ongoing education and training, individuals and organizations can work to create a more inclusive and equitable workplace that benefits everyone.

In summary, implicit bias is a widespread workplace problem that can have serious implications for employee well-being and overall workplace culture. Individuals and organizations must recognize and address implicit bias to create a more equitable and inclusive work environment. This requires ongoing education and training, as well as a willingness to engage in self-reflection and personal growth. By implementing strategies such as interrupting prejudicial behavior, challenging assumptions and stereotypes, and increasing awareness of diverse perspectives, individuals and organizations can work to overcome implicit bias and foster a culture of empathy and inclusion. By recognizing and addressing implicit bias, we can work toward creating a more welcoming and equitable workplace for all.

About the Author

Chris O'Byrne is the CEO of JETLAUNCH Publishing and co-owner of the Strategic Advisor Board and Rogue Publishing Partners. He is also the director of SAB Publishing.

The Value of Equity in the Workplace

Patricia Baronowski-Schneider

Normally, when thinking of equity, I usually think of the stock market. But there is much more to equity than just investments. There is equity in business and in life, both of which are hot topics these days. In the news and in business, the terms equity and equality are on everyone's lips.

Equity and equality are different. Equality means that everyone is treated the same, regardless of their differences. Equality means that everyone gets what they need to be successful.

In contrast to equality, equity refers to fairness and justice. While equality means that everyone gets the same thing, equity means that we know we don't all have the same starting position and that inequalities need to be acknowledged and corrected.

We need both equality and equity to ensure fairness and justice and to allow every member of society to reach their full potential. Equality ensures that everyone has the same opportunities, while equity aims to give everyone what they need to take advantage of those opportunities.

Equality in the workplace means providing fair and equal opportunities to all employees based on their individual needs.

Equal opportunity in the workplace is a wonderful thing. It'll take some effort, but the goal of creating a more equal workplace is worth it.

Equality in the workplace means expanding the pool of employees who can move up in a company and contribute to a future with more diverse leaders.

Because investing in employees is necessary to create a fair workplace, equality can also lead to higher employee engagement and retention rates. People prefer to work for companies that seem to care about them. This can be beneficial for companies for branding and staff retention. Research shows that over 150% of employees who feel they belong at their

workplace are more likely to promote their company and have a 34% higher willingness to stay there.

It's not for nothing that more and more companies are committed to improving their equity. A 2021 CNBC survey found that more workers want to work for companies that value equity. In the survey, nearly 80% of respondents said they want to work for a company that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion.

According to another 2019 report, companies with more women on their leadership teams are 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the bottom quartile. Given the growing need for equality, a company's image could be improved if it took the time to become more equal, resulting in a more competent and diverse workforce.

By providing every employee with the access, opportunities and promotion they need to succeed—and to bring in the diversity of expertise and opinions that will help your company serve its customers and expand—leaders create equity within the workforce. Why is this important?

First, because you're leading by example. If we want the world to change for the better, we need to lead by example. It also shows your employees that you value them, despite their differences.

As a business owner, you want to make sure you're not only doing things right legally, but ethically and morally as well. A company with high employee turnover is never good, and a diverse workforce has its own value.

For example, the question about your educational background is on every job application and expected on your resume, and many companies won't hire you without a college degree. Some jobs even require a bachelor's or master's degree.

If someone doesn't have a college degree, are they stupid? Not at all. Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs, and Richard Branson are among the smartest and richest people alive today, but none of them have college degrees. The richest person in the country who has made a fortune without a college degree is oil tycoon Harold Hamm, who is worth \$27 billion.

Sticking with the old status quo isn't necessarily the best approach these days. I think people today recognize that different backgrounds, educations, parenting styles, etc. can bring new and valuable ideas to a business.

When managers understand this and recognize and promote the value of equality and equity, employees feel valued and are more likely to develop within the company and contribute as much as they can to the company.

Equity isn't just about support and resources, but also about justice and equality in outcomes. In terms of workplace equity, organizations seek to recognize and identify special needs related to demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, race, gender, and gender identity, as well as impairments and other factors.

When I first started working (and unfortunately, I still experience this today), there were places that wouldn't hire you if you were a certain nationality, or that rejected certain religions or genders.

Today, when you fill out an application, they ask about your age, religion, education, marital status, sexual orientation, etc. But even though companies insist they don't discriminate or base their decisions on these factors, it's hard to tell now that they have this information.

Federal law protects workers from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, just as it protects workers from discrimination based on race and gender. So it makes sense that companies need to know their status.

I know that collecting race and gender statistics on job applications allows companies to measure their diversity and inclusion efforts in hiring. The results can help them rethink their job postings and spur them to try harder to reach out to underserved communities and applicants. But unfortunately, some use this information to discriminate or meet specific quotas.

For federal contractors and subcontractors, affected employers must take affirmative action to hire and promote qualified minorities, women, people with disabilities, and veterans.

Under laws enforced by the EEOC, it's illegal to discriminate against anyone (applicant or employee) based on race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, age (40 years or older), disability, or genetic information. However, as noted above, if a job application asks about my age, sexual orientation, education, etc., it's easy for a hiring company not to hire me for those reasons and blame it on something else, like "we're looking for someone with more experience," when that may not be the real reason.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit given to employers for hiring and employing individuals from certain targeted groups who face significant barriers to employment.

As you can see, equal rights and equality still have a long way to go, but if a company adheres to equal rights and equality standards, it can solve problems with workplace discrimination, employee turnover, lawsuits, etc.

Some ways to better promote equity in the workplace might be to give preference to a diverse group in the hiring process and to form a diverse hiring committee. Companies may even implement a blind application process, meaning names and educational institutions are removed when resumes are reviewed.

Applying the same standards to all employees when evaluating performance and awarding promotions is also a good start. Companies can also conduct exit interviews with employees to gather valuable data that can improve workplace culture in the future.

The following are nine strategies for promoting equality in the workplace:

1. DEI research matters

- A good starting point is to have enough knowledge
- Understand the context and history
- Companies need to learn about discoveries, sociological studies, and industry research from current and past companies.

If you do your research, you'll get closer to equality in the workplace.

2. Check your data. In the second phase, you need to know where you stand in terms of your metrics. You need to collect and analyze relevant data from your employees to determine the demographics of your organization, including your leadership team.

Set the benchmarks and metrics for the DEI goals you want to achieve after gathering the data. These metrics include:

- Information regarding hiring
- Practice data
- Data on advancement
- Exit interviews with employees
- Employee engagement surveys

3. Establish goals and show accountability. As a company, you need to set measurable goals right at the beginning of the hiring process. Your hiring process must be transparent, from job description to pay equity. That way, you can successfully recruit a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce.

You can get ideas from companies like Adidas, which publicly commit to hiring members of underrepresented groups. By linking quantifiable outcomes to compensation, especially for leadership positions and the overall bonus pool, a company shows accountability in the DEI process.

4. Review your hiring practices.

- Examine the talent pools you have available and the recruiting tactics your talent acquisition team uses.
- Decide in advance where you'll post your job openings.
- Move away from homogenous platforms to attract a diverse talent pool.

- Use offline and online channels to attract customers from all walks of life.

DEI is a huge competitive advantage for companies for hiring because it helps foster a culture of quality for all employees. You can keep employees by creating a welcoming and egalitarian workplace by hiring diverse applicants.

5. Hire for contribution to culture

- In contrast to the traditional notion of employment, modern, diverse companies hire people for their cultural contributions.
- Employers who share your company's ideals and bring diverse perspectives and life experiences are essential to learning conversations.
- You shouldn't choose the person who just fits the job, but the best candidate for your team.
- Don't just focus on the applicant's degree or experience when hiring.
- An experienced employee might be qualified but have the wrong attitude. Or the most brilliant person might not have a college degree.
- That's why you need to be careful when selecting your staff and not hold any preconceived notions.

6. Continue onboarding initiatives

- Consider onboarding your staff beyond their 1st week as an executive or HR manager.
- Consider developing an onboarding strategy that provides at least six months or perhaps a full year of support.
- This way, you can make sure your new employees are set up for success.
- If you employ people from marginalized social groups, you need to provide them with a mentor so they can learn and grow.

- Build this into your onboarding process.
 - Later, periodically review whether the support was helpful and whether the mentor/mentee relationship helped the organization achieve its goals.
7. Coordinate executive sponsors with ERGs. Employee groups that support community building are called Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). They're sometimes called diversity groups because they provide a public forum for employees who share a common identity to help each other create a sense of belonging and a safe space.

To improve your DEI in the workplace, you need to connect your ERGs with leadership sponsors. Having the support of a leadership team shows that the company supports and stands by ERGs. ERGs receive guidance, funding, mentoring, visibility and networking to create a space for community.

8. Refuse to tolerate discrimination in the workplace. From hiring to termination interviews, your company's HR staff must treat everyone fairly. No employee should be discriminated against in the workplace because of race, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender. If you want your workplace to be fair, you must reject discrimination against all employees, whether they're privileged or underrepresented.
9. Advocate for gender parity. The fact of gender discrimination in the workplace must be addressed, and you mustn't take shortcuts.

Promoting equality in the workplace is a leader for gender parity. You need equal representation of workers of all gender identities if you want to have a diverse team in the workplace. You also need to treat male and female employees equally and provide them with the same opportunities.

Basically, people stay longer in a company where they feel valued and recognized. If people stay longer because they feel they're heard and appreciated, this will reduce turnover. Your reputation for treating your employees well will help you stand out from the crowd. People will talk,

and it'll become known how well you treat your employees. Since not every company adheres to this, it'll help you to be more competitive.

Companies can even try things like cross-functional learning, where you give your employees the opportunity to collaborate across departments and teams. This will increase visibility, insight and networking opportunities.

Create leadership opportunities so employees can practice their organizational, planning, and leadership skills.

The financial return for both the company and the employee is the primary benefit of employee ownership.

It allows companies to offer more benefits to their employees without negatively impacting the bottom line, which is beneficial to both the employer and the employee.

Here are some ways/ideas on how a company can best implement equality:

- Watch for implicit bias
- Communicate the importance of avoiding bias
- Encourage equal pay
- Create a tactical training program
- Recognize all cultural holidays
- Make it easier for your employees to take part in employee resource groups
- Rotate your teams
- Encourage continuous feedback
- Review company policies
- Track development over a long period.

One way for an organization to make the best use of an equitable workforce is to conduct equity audits.

To conduct equity audits, organizations should:

- Set goals and ensure buy-in

- Collect the relevant data
- Evaluate the data
- Take action to address equity issues
- Routinely monitor equity

Below, you'll find some adjustments that may be necessary:

1. Acknowledge the reality of historical colonialism. In a vacuum. Organizations don't exist. They're intimately intertwined with the environment, communities, and settings in which they live and work.
2. To undermine systems of prejudice and discrimination, you must communicate your purpose, vision, and values. A statement that outlines the above is a good place to start.
3. Set your goals. Realize that this is a challenging task that requires sustained effort. Short bursts of momentum have limited reach and cannot have a lasting impact. Put your efforts into solving the problem from the ground up over the long term.
4. There is a problem. It also requires a change in mindset. Organizational inclusion is often primarily motivated by the business case for D&I (diversity and inclusion), but when focusing on equity, one must recognize the importance of the ethical case for D&I.

Ultimately, would we still act morally if there were no financial rewards?

While commercial reasons are helpful, it's important to create a corporate culture that values justice on ethical grounds alone.

5. Name the discoverers. Who are the indigenous and people of color in your organization who are at the center of the larger struggle through their personal experiences? What are their demands and viewpoints? D&I work often highlights allies and supporters of the cause who rightly support it.

However, equity cannot be based solely on the opinions, drives, demands, and plans of allies.

6. Inquire at various organizational levels about:
 - Is there diversity? Who is appropriate for the organization?
 - Is there inclusion? Who feels a sense of belonging in the company?
 - Do we have equity? Who owns the company? Who profits?
7. Be a role model. To change rules and procedures, consult innovators and stakeholders, create an organizational “equality strategy” and put it into action.
8. Get involved in real initiatives to make a difference. Spend money on awareness, education, and training, and give entry-level business professionals a chance to thrive.
9. Foster a sense of group ownership. Set quantifiable goals and implement equity-oriented evaluation processes to ensure goals are met.
10. Communicate the impact and liberation that creating equitable spaces has on the company and, by extension, the community.

I believe that we’re rapidly developing and changing in today’s world. We need to stop following the status quo and realize how valuable equality is. As a female entrepreneur in a male-dominated industry, I’ve experienced this firsthand. As a single mother of two in a company where there were no other parents or children, no one had any idea what I was going through or the sacrifices I was making to work long hours. Recognizing that we’re all different and finding common ground to support each other and thrive as a team is essential in today’s world.

I’m glad to see that change is finally happening, even if we’re not there yet. My advice is for people to speak up. Even if some companies think they’re doing everything right to ensure equality and equity, there is always the possibility that they’re missing something. Don’t be afraid to speak your mind. And don’t be shy about being a mentor to someone in your shoes. Be someone people look up to and pass on your help to others. That’s the only way the world grows.

About the Author

Patricia Baronowski-Schneider is an IR/PR/marketing expert who works in driving brand awareness for her clients through integrated marketing. She is a two-time bestselling author with over thirty years of experience working with all types of niches around the world.

Avoid Quiet Quitting with Equity in the Workforce

Ira Bowman

Let's talk about equity in the workplace, but not in the traditional financial sense rather from a sense of opportunity. Simply put, I want to discuss fairness and how it should apply in the office. The goal is that everyone should have an equal opportunity to work, learn, and earn what they deserve. Equality should translate to both compensation and position advancement internally and extend to vendors in the form of earning the business based on both service levels and price value they deliver.

Clearly, equity doesn't mean receiving special privileges or benefits just because you know the right people. It's not about nepotism or cronyism. True equity means everyone has a level playing field and the same chances for success. For example, if you get a job just because your dad is buddies with the boss's dad, that's not equity. It's important to understand the difference and strive for true equity in the workplace.

Let's put it this way, equity is all about getting what you deserve based on your hard work and effort. If you have the chance to take advantage of opportunities and put in the work, then you should get compensated fairly. It's not just about equal treatment but rather making sure that rewards and compensation match the effort and investment.

Why not simply treat everyone equally? Think about it, someone who works full-time may not get the same treatment as someone who works part-time in every situation and that's OK. In some instances someone who has invested ten years into their job might get more preferential treatment with regards to scheduling or advancement opportunities. It's all about fairness, where the compensation matches the effort and investment, so someone may get a bigger piece of the pie but only because of their hard work and circumstances surrounding their work history.

In a nutshell, equity is about giving everyone a chance to earn what they deserve through hard work and taking advantage of opportunities and making sure that rewards and compensation match the effort and investment so everyone gets a fair shot at success. There should be no glass ceiling based. People should not be held back by race, religion, sexual preference, disabilities, as long as they are amongst the most qualified for the position. Neither should anyone be pushed to the front of the line simply because of who they are, despite their lack of qualifications.

Imagine two workers in the same department, doing the same job. One is new and just starting out, making \$15 an hour. The other has been at the company for twenty years, but they're both making the same hourly wage. That's equality but not equitable. The experienced worker should be making more, , given their circumstances. Equity is all about fairness and considering all the factors that play into a person's situation and compensation.

When it comes to the workplace, equity is key. Sure, diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility are important, but equity makes sure everyone has equal opportunities to succeed and earn what they deserve. Think of it as a pillar that supports a level playing field. Factors like time of service, education, and quality of work are all considered in the reward system to ensure equity for all.

Let's say you've got a team of ten people, and not everyone's getting the same pay. Some are making more; some are making less. That doesn't mean it's equal, but it can still be equitable. The person making more should be providing more value, and the one making less likely isn't as productive or doesn't have as much experience or time served on the job.

But what makes it fair is that their pay is based on the whole picture, taking into account things like their work hours, experience, and level of productivity. Equity isn't just about compensation; it could be about anything that's fair and balances the scales based on all the variables at play.

So, equity isn't the same as equality. It's like a scale that weighs more than just the final result. The opportunity may be equal, and the access may be

equal, but the scale of equity needs to provide those who contribute more with fair compensation in this example.

But the key to making it fair is considering the whole picture. It's not just about pay; it could be about anything. And equity isn't the same as equality. It's like a scale that takes into account more than just the end result. The opportunity and accessibility may be equal, but for equity to exist, the person who contributes more should be compensated more.

That's why equity is so important in the workplace. It motivates people to do their best and not just "quietly quit." People who give more effort and produce more should be rewarded for it. Without equity, why would someone try harder if they don't see any advantage or benefit to it? That's where "quiet quitting" comes in, where people just stop giving it their all. So, by having equity in the workplace, you're rewarding people for their extra effort, making sure it's not ignored or dismissed.

Equity in the workplace is crucial because it motivates people to perform better and be more productive. And we don't want "quiet quitters"—people who slowly disengage from their work without actually quitting. This is a real issue in today's economy, as there is a lack of equity in the workplace, which can make people oversensitive to the idea of giving some people preference over others.

But not everyone is the same. Workers who put in more effort and produce more results should be rewarded accordingly. If people feel like they're not going to be rewarded for their hard work, they'll start to lose motivation and the risk of quiet quitting goes up dramatically. That's why equity in the workplace is so important; it shows workers that their extra effort is not going unnoticed. It gives them the recognition they deserve and makes them feel valued.

When it comes to leadership, equity matters. It sets the tone for the rest of the company, and as a leader, you're in the spotlight. If leaders are contributing at different levels, it's important to address this disparity. If one leader is getting favored over another, even if they contribute less, it sends a negative message and sets a bad precedent in the company. This is why

equity in leadership is crucial. Managers are just as suspect to quiet quitting as the staff they manage.

Let me put it this way: if your team, company, or organization sees that some leaders are being paid more or getting more recognition, even though they don't contribute as much, it can really hurt morale. This kind of unequal treatment sends a bad message to the rest of the organization. In leadership, especially in middle management, there are those who see it as just a job and those who pour their heart and soul into it. It's not fair to reward those who clock in and out the same way as those who are all-in. Those who live and breathe their leadership role typically have the pulse of their department, if not the entire organization.

Let's talk about the difference between equality and equity. Imagine a manager who treats their job as just that—a job. They're only invested during work hours and don't put in any extra effort. If they're still treated and represented the same way as a leader who's fully committed and puts their all into the job, that's not going to create a positive work environment. Most employees in an organization aren't in leadership or management positions, so it's important to create a supportive culture for them.

When it comes to leading, equity is crucial, both for setting the tone for the organization and for the leaders themselves. Leaders need to embody equity in their own actions, as it helps avoid issues like quiet quitting and low morale. When employees feel appreciated for the effort they put in, it builds loyalty and confidence in the brand.

It's okay not to treat everyone the same because equal treatment isn't always the same as fair treatment. Rewarding those who put in more effort, perform better, and do a better job through equity helps build recognition and appreciation. This way, rewards, compensation, applause, and esteem are based on performance and not just the title. By doing this, leaders can avoid having an environment that suffers from a lack of effort and high employee turnover.

Introducing equality into the workplace has the potential to solve a major problem: lack of engagement across the board. This can be achieved by creating incentives for both high and low performers to try harder. Those

who will work harder will be more likely to do so if they know that their extra effort will be rewarded fairly. Meanwhile, those who are less motivated to do their best will also be encouraged to try harder, knowing that they, too, will be fairly rewarded for their increased effort. By creating an equitable system where efforts are rewarded fairly regardless of position, compensation, or recognition, you can level the playing field and motivate everyone to do their best.

Let's talk about how fair treatment in the workplace can have a big impact. When everyone feels they're treated fairly, it can counteract the problem of "silent resignation also known as quiet quitting." When people feel they aren't treated fairly, it can lead to a bad working atmosphere. But when things are fair, everyone knows they'll be rewarded for their efforts.

Marketing can be a real game changer when it comes to promoting equity in the workplace. But how do we get started? The first step is to bring HR and marketing together to define the equity system. You need to clarify what equity means and how it'll be rewarded, such as through performance-based incentives. And to make sure everyone is on the same page, it's important to put everything in writing and have marketing create official, clear content.

Once employees are in the loop, it's time to get managers involved. Give them the authority to implement the equal opportunity policy and hold everyone accountable. Regular performance reviews can be a great way to emphasize the importance of the overall equality in the workplace.

To keep things running smoothly, it's important to have some kind of oversight. This could be management, HR, or the owner. They keep an eye on things and make sure the participation policy is being followed. By including marketing in the process, the policy gets the company's seal of approval so there is no ambiguity. Ultimately, promoting equity starts with HR and marketing, is disseminated by management, and is reinforced through performance appraisals. All of this effort helps reduce quiet quitting and improve overall performance in the company from top to bottom.

Promoting equity in the workplace can be a powerful tool to increase a company's competitiveness. Companies that incentivize performance-based

rewards attract employees who want to be recognized for their hard work and effectiveness. This type of equity system is common in sales, where commissions are based on the number of products sold or the profit of a deal. Each salesperson is likely to make different amounts of money, but they're treated equally.

In contrast, in most other departments, there are no performance-based incentives, and pay is usually based on the length of service or the position held. This type of pay structure doesn't encourage extra effort. Companies that offer performance-based incentives see improvements in customer service, production efficiency, and cost savings. This leads to an increase in the company's bottom line and overall competitiveness.

For a company to be truly competitive, it must promote equity in its thinking, hiring, and management practices. Employees should be rewarded not only for their position but also for the effort they put into that position. This will help the company be more competitive and ensure its future success.

It should be pretty easy to do justice as a business. It's a matter of attitude, from the top down to the employees. If an individual performs better than his colleagues, there should be incentives for that. If someone performs less, there should be consequences. This approach to fairness is fair for the company, fair for the employees, and fair for everyone, including customers.

Implementing equity benefits the company and leads to better service for the people it serves. However, the hardest part of implementing equity is getting initial buy-in and replacing the old system with the new system of equity. Once equity is in place and the benefits are realized, it becomes second nature, and the organization no longer has to worry about implementing it.

Do you want your organization to have an equitable workforce? Make sure your employees are aware of all the systems in place. That means talking about your equity and management systems during interviews, during the hiring process, and even when you're looking for new employees. But there's one more important thing. You need to have a way to verify that it's

actually happening. If you say you're going to be fair and pay based on merit, you need to have a system in place to check that. Make sure there's a system in place to periodically check what's happening. This could be daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually—it all depends on the organization. The most important thing is to have a system in place that sets expectations before someone is even hired. And of course, meeting equitable practice can take many forms, such as compensation, preferred time allocation, or the title someone holds.

Want to promote an equitable workforce in your organization? It all starts with a solid plan. Make sure you have a plan—what it should look like, how it'll be implemented, and how it'll be monitored. Without a plan, you'll run into problems. If you don't have a plan, people won't know about it. And if you don't monitor it, things can slip through the cracks.

But here's the good news. If you have a written plan, share it with your employees and potential employees, and have a way to monitor it, you're on the safe side. Your plan will work the way it's supposed to, and you'll avoid falling into any traps. And if you do all these things, the benefits will come automatically. Your business will thrive with an equitable workforce.

Look at individuals who have the will to go the extra mile and deliver exceptional results. I'm a proponent of equity-based compensation because it rewards hard work and superior performance. But not everyone shares my enthusiasm for this approach. Those who are content to check tasks off their list with minimal effort may prefer an equal system where everyone is treated the same regardless of performance.

If you're running an equality-based system, which I highly recommend, it's imperative that you make sure the people you hire match that approach. The hiring process should be focused on finding high performers who are comfortable in a competitive environment. Therefore, assessments such as DISC or personality tests can help you better understand the mindset of potential employees and ensure that they fit into your equality system.

Bad hires can be costly, so it's important to hire the right people the first time. The cost of onboarding and training, not to mention the additional cost of repeating the process due to a mis-hire, can be significant. While it

may seem daunting to spend a little more money per hire, it pays off in the long run when employees stay longer, and you don't have to repeat the onboarding and training process as often.

When drafting your HR policy, it's important to carefully consider the mindset and personality of the people you want to bring on board. When it comes to equity, make sure your system is tailored to the individual needs and goals of each department rather than using a blanket approach that may not effectively motivate all employees.

By tailoring participation programs to the specific goals and challenges of each department, you can achieve maximum performance while fostering a sense of loyalty and fairness among your employees. After all, you want your employees to be motivated and satisfied with their performance so they don't feel the need to leave or simply give less than their best effort each day. If you view equity and fairness as synonymous concepts, you can create a harmonious and productive work environment and greatly avoid quiet quitting in your workforce.

About the Author

Professionally, Ira is a marketing and sales expert, photographer, graphics designer, website builder, philanthropy owner, search engine optimization content writer, and TEDx speaker. Ira has built a large social media following with six-figure following counts on both LinkedIn and Instagram.

The Importance of Equity in Business Leadership

Dr. Julie Ducharme

Equity has become an increasingly popular term in recent years, especially in conversations about diversity and inclusion. But what exactly does equity mean? And how can we achieve it? Overall, equity means different things to different people. For some, it's a sense of fairness and justice in the world, while for others, it's the right to be treated equally regardless of race or gender. However you define it, we should all recognize its importance in our society today and strive to create an equitable future where all people have access to the opportunities they need to succeed.

Equity in the workplace goes beyond paying employees fairly. It's about creating an environment where everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed based on their own merit, regardless of race, gender, or other factors. It's also about ensuring that everyone has access to the same opportunities and resources. But why is equity so important? Equity provides everyone with an equal opportunity to succeed; it benefits not only the individual but also the company as a whole. A diverse and inclusive workforce is more innovative and productive, and companies that focus on equity are more successful overall.

Why is equity so important to you? Because feeling like you belong and that your voice matters will make the difference in whether you succeed in your career. When you feel like you have a seat at the table, you're more likely to speak up, share your ideas, and be fully engaged in your work. And that's good for everyone.

When we talk about equity in the workplace, it's about creating fair competition so everyone has a fair chance to succeed. That means ensuring that employees have access to the same resources and opportunities regardless of their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics. When inequality exists in the workplace, it creates an environment where some employees are disadvantaged due to factors

beyond their control. This can lead to frustration and resentment, which can affect morale and productivity.

Achieving equity in the workplace requires effort and commitment from everyone in the organization. It starts with hiring employees who focus on diversity and inclusion and goes all the way to creating policies and procedures that are fair and equitable for everyone. Working together, we can create workplaces that are truly inclusive.

There are myriad reasons why equity in the workplace is important. For one, a level playing field can increase productivity and motivation. In addition, equity can help reduce turnover rates because, in a fair and equitable environment, workers are more likely to stay with the company. When workers feel they're treated fairly, they're also more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and less likely to suffer from stress or anxiety. Finally, promoting equity in the workplace can also foster a sense of teamwork and camaraderie among employees.

In the workplace, equity is important for several reasons. Foremost, it ensures that employees are treated fairly and have an equal opportunity to succeed. Second, equity in the workplace can help create a positive and productive work environment. Finally, research has shown that companies with more equitable workplaces are more profitable.

So what happens when there is no equity in the workplace? Unfortunately, this can lead to a number of problems. For starters, employees who feel they're being treated unfairly are likely to become disgruntled and may even look for a new job. This can lead to high turnover, which can be costly for companies. Second, a lack of equity can lead to tension and conflict within teams as employees jockey for position and vie for management's favor. This can lead to lower productivity and an overall negative work environment. Finally, companies that don't have equity in the workplace risk lawsuits from employees who feel they have been discriminated against.

So, there are many risks associated with a lack of equity in the workplace. Companies need to be aware of these risks and take steps to ensure their workplaces are fair and equitable for all employees.

To create a more equitable workplace, there are several actions companies can take. One of them is to provide employees with access to the same resources and opportunities, regardless of their background or identity. This includes, for example, ensuring that everyone has the same opportunities for promotions and salary increases and that training and development resources are accessible to all.

Another important step is to create policies and procedures that promote an inclusive environment for all employees. This includes anti-discrimination policies, flexible work arrangements, and ensuring that all employees feel comfortable expressing their needs and concerns.

Finally, it's important to foster an open dialog about equity in the workplace. This can be done, for example, through regular surveys and focus groups, company-wide town hall meetings, and the establishment of an anonymous hotline or HR where employees can voice their concerns. By taking these steps, companies can create a more equitable workplace where everyone feels comfortable.

When employers use equity to solve workplace problems, everyone takes part in the solution. A shared leadership model that incorporates this type of problem-solving will connect employees to the company's mission and vision and make them feel like they're involved in the decision-making process. This gives everyone an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or identity. Equity also fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging in the workplace, which can boost morale and productivity.

There are many ways to incorporate equity into workplace solutions. Some employers may set quotas for underrepresented groups, while others use blind hiring to avoid bias in the selection process. Pay disparities can be addressed by regularly reviewing salaries and making adjustments as necessary. Policies and procedures can be reviewed and updated to ensure they're fair and equitable for all employees. Solving workplace problems through equity requires the commitment of employers and employees. But when everyone works together toward a more equitable workplace, everyone benefits.

There are many workplace problems that can be solved through equity. Some examples include:

- Unequal pay for workers doing the same job
- Unequal access to opportunities for advancement or training
- Inequity in the distribution of work assignments
- Unequal recognition or appreciation for workers
- Inequality in the support or resources provided to employees

Promoting equity within an organization can be an important factor in remaining competitive in the marketplace. Equity-based initiatives, such as diversity and inclusion programs, flexible work environments, and fair compensation, are essential for any company striving for excellence. But what tangible benefits do equity initiatives offer for a company's success? There is a growing body of evidence that shows that promoting equity can increase a company's competitiveness. A more diverse and inclusive workforce is proven to be more productive and innovative, and companies that focus on equity are more attractive to top talent. In addition, customers are increasingly interested in doing business with companies that share their values.

So what does promoting equity look like in practice? Here are a few examples:

- Providing paid parental leave and flexible work arrangements to help parents balance work and family life
- Providing training and development opportunities for employees from diverse backgrounds
- Implementing equal employment policies and practices
- Commitment to promoting diversity in the customer base

With business, equity is a competitive advantage. Promoting equity provides everyone in the company with an equal opportunity to succeed. It's not only good for society, but it's also good for business. A more equitable society is a more prosperous one, and businesses that take advantage of that prosperity will be more successful.

There are many ways to promote equity, but one of the most important is inclusion. Creating an inclusive environment where all employees feel valued and respected can help a company attract and keep top talent. It can also foster creativity and innovation, improve decision-making, and increase productivity.

Other examples include supporting public policy, investing in underserved communities, and supporting diverse suppliers. When a company's leaders decide to work toward greater equity in the workplace, they create a more equitable business environment and a positive image.

If you don't know where to start, there are many resources that can help you promote workplace equity. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) offers guidance on how to avoid discrimination in the workplace, while the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) provides resources to create a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Equity is an important concept in any organization. It's a way of looking at the world and making sure that everyone is treated fairly and given the same opportunities, regardless of their background or identity. When fully implemented, it can be a catalyst for positive change within an organization. But embracing equity can also be a challenge. After all, if it were easy, every organization would have done it already!

Organizations can implement equity in several steps. First, they must identify any areas where inequities may exist. This can be done through data collection and analysis, as well as through surveys and focus groups. Once inequities are identified, companies must put policies and procedures in place to address them. These may include changing the way job descriptions are written, implementing hiring quotas, or conducting training on unconscious bias.

Equity is an important goal that organizations should strive to achieve. When everyone is treated fairly and given the same opportunities, it benefits not only the individual members of the organization but also the whole organization.

There are many ways that organizations can make equity a reality. Some examples of equity in organizations are:

- It's important that everyone feels they have a voice in making decisions in the organization and not just one person or group deciding
- Create policies and procedures that are fair and inclusive of all employees
- Provide training and development opportunities that are accessible to all employees
- Ensure fair and equitable compensation for all job functions
- Promote open communication and dialog about equity issues within the organization

With organizational equity, the benefits are far-reaching. When leaders create a positive environment where people feel respected and valued, they can also develop innovation and creativity. In addition, a focus on equity can help build trust among employees, customers, and other stakeholders. Finally, when implemented properly, equity can lead to higher productivity and profitability.

Companies must commit to equity as a core value and work to continuously improve their practices. Equity cannot be achieved overnight but is a journey that requires continuous effort. When leadership takes steps to create a more equitable environment, it'll also lead to a more inclusive culture and make people feel like they have a voice.

Companies recognize the value of an equitable workforce in remaining competitive and successful in the marketplace. As globalization increases, companies need to be aware of the diversity of their workforce and create a culture that promotes equality and inclusion.

Equity is an incredibly important concept to understand in today's society. With so much injustice and inequality in the world, it's more important than ever to make sure that everyone is treated equitably and fairly. Why is equity important? Treating people equitably doesn't just mean giving everyone the same thing. It also means considering the unique needs and circumstances of each individual. That's why equity is such an important value in our society. By making sure everyone has a fair chance to succeed, we can create a more just and equitable world for everyone.

Equity is something we all strive for in our lives, and it's a concept that isn't always easy to understand. By taking the time to learn about equity, you can ensure that you make informed decisions for your own finances and investments and how you treat others. Always remember that everyone has different resources, so take those into consideration before you jump into a situation. Investing in yourself by educating yourself and becoming self-aware will put you on the path to true equity and success.

When you work for equity, organizations can create a diverse and inclusive environment where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued for their contributions. By ensuring that all people are treated with respect and understanding, by being mindful of potential bias in decision-making processes, by giving employees the tools they need to succeed without barriers or discrimination, and by having clear diversity policies, organizations can best ensure equality. In this way, companies can cultivate a culture of fairness while creating opportunities for professional and personal growth.

Promoting equity in the workplace is an invaluable tool for companies looking to improve their competitiveness. A diverse and inclusive workforce can bring different perspectives and skills that help a company succeed. Promoting equity also builds trust within the organization and creates an engaged and satisfied team, leading to better job performance and productivity. In addition, promoting equity helps with recruitment, as companies are seen as socially responsible employers by potential employees. Overall, the return on investment in promoting equity comes from increasing a company's competitiveness.

Equity in the workplace is important because it ensures that all employees are treated fairly and with respect. This can help create a positive work environment where everyone feels valued and recognized for their contribution to the company. Equity also plays an important role in promoting diversity and inclusion by enabling people from different backgrounds to have equal opportunities in the workplace. When equity is established in the workplace, job satisfaction increases for all employees involved. Ultimately, equity should be a core value for any company that wants to remain successful and competitive in today's marketplace.

About the Author

Dr. Julie Ducharme is a sought-after keynote speaker, author, business consultant, entrepreneur, instructor, and special consultant in women's empowerment. She is the creator, founder, and CEO of Julie's Party People, JD Consulting, Synergy Learning, and Taylor Elite Sports.

Maximizing Potential through Equity

Lynn Hoerauf

When discussing equity, to bring clarity, it's often compared and contrasted with equality.

Whereas equality is about being equal—for example, equal opportunities or providing the same resource for everyone—equity is about providing people with what they specifically need. So, one is about being equal, and one is about meeting the needs of the individual. Both allow for opportunities and a chance to accomplish and be a part of something. Still, they are different because one provides for more specific needs and is more individualized or customized, you could say.

Often, these ideas are discussed in terms of how they affect success and opportunities. Giving people a chance to do or become what anyone else could or become someone with varying circumstances, backgrounds, or wealth, for example. When practicing equity, we provide people with what they individually need to have the same opportunity as someone else.

Here is another example delineating equality and equity: Let's say there is a building with six steps leading up to a locked front door that allows access only to those with a key. This means that the access to this building is not equal. If the door is left unlocked, there is equal access for everyone. However, the entrance is not equitable because someone in a wheelchair cannot get into the building.

Equal means that everyone has the same opportunity, while equitable means that everyone has a fair chance at that opportunity. Accommodations are made for individuals, allowing for an equitable work environment and enabling them to have a chance to succeed.

As Naheed Dosani puts it, "Equality is giving everyone a shoe. Equity is giving everyone a shoe that fits." What a great definition to bring understanding to these concepts that, in essence, provide people the same

things—both have shoes—yet it is very different in that they ‘fit’ the individuals for their specific needs.

Have you ever had someone else’s shoes on? I have, and I’ve found it to be usually uncomfortable, except when I put my mom’s slippers on as a kid. Ah, to be in mom’s shoes was a step closer to being more like her. The slippers were big and comfy but also sloppy as they engulfed my tiny feet. I loved wearing her slippers, and it was fun to pounce around in them, but it really wasn’t functional. Equity is about seeing someone as a person and meeting their needs according to specifics. It can make all the difference in the world because it brings things together to provide functionality that otherwise could not have been.

One of our most basic instincts as humans is to want things to be fair or equitable. We compare with our siblings or those close to us and may demand our parents’ attention. “Mom, tell Johnny to let me” Or we may want to help mom to bake, and she makes some accommodations so we can get the flour into the measuring cup without getting the flour all over the table or floor. Humans are interested in being involved and being able to function fully and freely. Perhaps there is an innate desire to meet our highest potential.

Sometimes we need a leg up or to level the playing field, so to speak, like having a handicap in golf. I love to engage in many sports, but I don’t understand the love of golf. It’s always been frustrating to me, but that’s okay; we don’t all need to love everything. Luis has written an interesting and humorous article in The Range blog for TheGrint. The article is titled, “Here Are the 10 Reasons Why Having a Golf Handicap is Essential to Any Golfer.”

The first reason Luis mentions is that a golf handicap helps the golfer to know their own golf potential and have more fun. In one line under the second reason, he writes, “Enabling players different levels to compete on an equitable basis is the common response... Only your golf handicap will even the terrain among players.” It sounds like leveling the playing field is helpful in all kinds of arenas.

This is true in the workplace as well, to provide an environment that can allow people to bring out their best and feel good about it. Morale, job satisfaction, and longevity could all result from having equity as a part of the workplace.

If a workplace does not consider equity, it will most likely miss out on some very positive talent. For example, an architectural firm on the third floor of a building without an elevator could miss out on a gifted architect in a wheelchair.

There can be preconceived beliefs about what qualities are necessary to succeed in a particular position, but these beliefs can be limiting. For example, a single parent attending college part-time while working full-time may not be able to get into the prestigious university that an organization admires. However, this individual's raw talent and potential may eventually outshine another.

It's important to step back and examine biases so that we can adjust the playing field and allow for a fair chance for everyone.

Leaders in an organization often determine the path of their organization and their employees.

Therefore, if the leader doesn't embrace equity, most likely, the organization won't either. They may take the outward steps of following the rules of equity, but without the leader's support, these actions will be empty.

A leader embracing equity is a prospector constantly searching for that priceless gem that may be hidden from untrained eyes. This leader looks beyond the outward appearance of background, gender, and culture and searches for the potential of every individual.

I have a nephew who is in a wheelchair. He is very friendly and personable. He is so excited about his job because they have made him feel very welcome. His place of employment has made accommodations to the office so that my nephew has the same opportunities as the other employees. Had this leader not hired my nephew, they would be missing out on the incredible qualities he brings to the organization. Had they not made his employment situation more equitable, he would not be able to enjoy his

work as much. And that difference could have made my nephew feel less important to the company. In turn, that could have turned his upbeat attitude into a dismal one and instead have an employee unengaged in his work.

We could say that the leadership embracing equity is doing great things for the employee's positive morale, job satisfaction, and longevity. And isn't that the kind of employee people would like in their organization?

When everyone on a team has the same background, experience, and training, the team can become overly homogeneous. This is one reason why diversity is so crucial in an organization. An intentional focus on equity allows an organization to draw and create a diverse workforce. Expanding the employee base will open the door to new levels of innovation and creativity. A diverse workforce brings a whole new depth to the resources available for problem-solving and innovation.

I've heard about others who have no limbs doing incredible things, like Gabe Adams. Gabe was born with Hanhart Syndrome. He has no arms or legs but aims to be as independent as possible. He uses a wheelchair to get around more quickly, but he can walk, run, and even dance. He can dress himself, get into his wheelchair, and do many surprisingly difficult things, but his parents would tell him things like "you can do it" and "you'll figure it out." And he has. He has figured it out with the proficiency of an engineering student working to solve a problem in class. He has made things work for him so that he can do what he wants and be as independent as possible.

Imagine this kind of ingenuity in every workforce. This positive energy is determined to solve whatever problem comes our way. The question wouldn't be what problems we can solve but rather what questions can't we solve. In other words, the solvable ones could become limitless, whereas the ones we couldn't solve would be a much smaller number.

Perhaps for a cultural shift to happen, a belief in equity must be embraced by the leadership and then translated down to everyone within the organization. It may begin with leadership, but it is also a personal choice to look at everyone as a human being. To have an empathic stance on the world as a whole and to realize that needs that are met enable a team

member to accomplish more. We are all in this together, and together, we can truly make the world a better place—but we can also accomplish that individually.

An organization that decides to promote equity simply because of the legal requirements takes the chance of falling short in meeting the requirements that they are trying to fulfill. It's possible to do the right things for the wrong reasons and completely miss what you are aiming for. Creating a more equitable environment without caring for the people you are helping will probably cloud your vision and not allow you to see the value they bring to your team.

While the translation of this belief may begin with education, it can also go beyond. Since there are many equity subgroups, it can touch every one of our lives in some respect. Some equity delineations include education, health care, gender, and physicality, as discussed earlier. If promoted in the workplace, these are just a few of the many ways that equity can affect lives and businesses positively.

Equity modeled can demonstrate its value to all employees. In addition, everyone benefits from an equitable work environment, so it is helpful to celebrate these benefits.

Equity in hiring and promotion opens the door to a broader base of talent for a business. This expands the potential pool of ideas for problem-solving, innovation, and the creation of new products and services. This diverse workforce can also reach more customers and grow the influential and financial base of the organization.

It is like looking at something from another perspective. Imagine looking at an object from the front and then going around to the side, then the back, and then to the other side. Each stance provides another perspective. Each point of view gathers new information, allowing for new thoughts and an increase in answers to solve problems or create new and exciting ideas.

Equity provides opportunities like that. The vast experiences and perspectives that come together in a workforce offer a rich supply of talent, problem-solving abilities, and viewpoints that multiply resources over and

over again. Equity is a way of harnessing that potential and capitalizing on it.

An organization has an identity or personality of its own, and it is crucial to get to know that identity. The ability to make changes for a business is like making changes as an individual. We need to see where we are at present in relation to where we would like to be and then develop a plan on how to get there.

Perhaps the first step is to take stock of the present culture of the organization. This can be done internally by using surveys, interviewing individuals and teams, or by talking with trusted clients. Self-reflection can be so valuable, but it can also be somewhat tricky to be honest with ourselves. Here is where the opportunity to consult with others can be helpful. Maybe this is the opportunity to bring in an outside source to evaluate the present cultural conditions. For example, how has the organization handled equity in the past? Was equity considered previously, and if so, what was the attitude surrounding the idea?

After clearly understanding the present, it is time to understand where you would like to be and how to get there. Clear and defined goals allow you to create a more concrete plan for achieving those goals since changing a culture takes time and effort, along with a well-defined plan. Conceivably, a consultant with experience and expertise in this area could also provide resources and ideas on moving your organizational vision into a reality.

As an organization transitions, its mindset toward equity, which embraces hiring, promotion, and client development, will begin to discover a change in its values and practices. As team members are viewed as individuals with unique gifts and talents, potential leaders will be better positioned to empower their team members even more, reaching new heights as their organization leverages an equitable workforce. They may restructure teams to fulfill the vision better or reevaluate those in leadership positions, or they may decide to adjust and expand the organization's vision.

I have a friend who lost half her right arm in a horrific work-related accident. She is strong, intelligent, and capable, but it takes her longer to do some things as she only has her left hand and arm and one-half of her right

arm. Does this slow her down? Yes. Does this reduce her ability to accomplish some tasks? Yes. And yet she is tenacious, independent, and competent. My friend has found ways to overcome these limitations. I have seen her use other parts of her body to compensate for not having another hand. I have seen her use humor, too, as she asks for help while lifting her partial arm and saying, “I’m a little short-handed.”

We all have strengths and weaknesses and come from various backgrounds. Perhaps there are places where we are a little short-handed in one way or another. Maybe not, but if we have identified an area where we can provide equity and meet the need, perhaps underlying gifts and strengths can more easily come to the forefront.

Providing equitable access to opportunities is a continuous process. We don’t all have the exact needs, and the same solutions won’t work for everyone. We start with multiple advantages and disadvantages, and it takes awareness to see what is required. So, to achieve equity, we need to ascertain the different needs and provide for them. It can take a lot of work and energy to make a process that will work well and provide for each individual. Still, the rewards can be significant, providing a sense of empowerment and allowing each person to contribute their very best.

About the Author

Lynn M. Hoerauf is a speaker and award-winning author of the Rom-Com *Miss Snickers*. She enjoys sharing humor and insight while cheering people on as they flourish in their lives, work, and relationships. For more information, tune into her *Relational Effectiveness* podcast on the Strategic Advisor Board channel or go to LynnSpeaks.com.

Is Equity Really Fair?

Brianna and Ryan Jackson

When people talk about equity, there is a lot of confusion about what that means. People often confuse equity with equality. However, they aren't the same thing. Equity refers to fairness and what resources you have for an opportunity. Equality is more about having an opportunity in the first place.

Equity means that you understand that people come from different backgrounds and that everyone needs different resources and support to achieve a level playing field for their circumstances for a given opportunity. It's about more than just the opportunity to succeed. It's about more than removing barriers you thought existed; it's about providing the right resources for each person to have an equal opportunity regardless of their circumstances. If the playing field isn't level and the tools aren't tailored to each individual, there is still disparity.

All of these nuances are an integral part of solving the same kind of overarching problem when you think of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It's really just making sure that everybody can have the opportunity to participate (equality), the resources to participate equally (equity), and to be heard, to contribute, and to be valued (inclusion).

A good example is picking fruit from an apple tree. There are two people under the apple tree, one on each side of the tree. Both have ladders of equal height to climb the tree and reach the apples. Although both people seem to have an equal chance of picking apples, only one of them can actually reach the apples, while the other cannot because they are shorter, and their ladder isn't high enough for their circumstances. Access to the apples on both sides of the tree wasn't fair. This example shows you that even if you give both people the same ladder, that doesn't mean it's fair. Make sure that access to opportunities is fair to truly achieve equity.

This points to the systemic problems that still plague our society. Until these barriers are removed, there will be no equity for the two people under the tree. This everyday scene is called a victory because people only see the

ladders on the ground and think that an equitable solution has been reached. The extra step of looking at each individual to determine if the ladder is the right size to give them access to the apples is often overlooked.

In the workplace, this disparity can lead to resentment. Individuals will want to know why they cannot have a ladder tall enough to reach the apples. Those who have access to the apples will fear getting the short end of the stick and defend themselves with how they got their ladder, arguing that it's not their fault the other person can't reach them because the ladders are the same. They'll not want to help the other person get apples. The feeling of scarcity spreads instead of them realizing that there are too many apples for them anyway and that sharing doesn't reduce meeting their own personal needs. If you can encourage your organization to focus more on the abundance of opportunity, you can counteract the fear of missing out and help create a more equitable distribution among your teams. When there is no fear or resentment, teamwork can thrive, and productivity can flourish, making equity a key component of any diverse workplace.

Equity in the workplace is important because an organization should have a commitment and desire to give each of its members the opportunity and resources to achieve an equal outcome. It's an important part of any team. Not everyone can play on the field if one team member doesn't have a helmet and another doesn't have pads. Equity is equipping everyone equally for success based on their circumstances.

To enable equity in their organizations, leaders should strive to be servant leaders. To properly serve those who follow us, we should focus on providing each person with the right resources and support relevant to their individual circumstances so they can achieve the same success as their colleagues. This builds the trust and respect people have in your leadership. This focus on fairness allows you to be more effective as a leader.

It's important to recognize that the people you lead have different circumstances and are doing their best to perform the same as their peers. If they aren't performing the same, a leader needs to respect their individual circumstances enough to find out why they aren't performing the same and to determine if there are underlying obstacles and barriers that can be addressed. It's important to approach an individual directly to understand

their situation. If you rely solely on the advice of others, their bias may prevent you from truly understanding and appreciating the person's circumstances.

When you're trying to understand the person's particular circumstances, you need to go into listening mode. Listening means you listen more than you talk, and when you talk, you ask more than you tell. When you ask, you need to ask for more details about their situation. Don't question their circumstances. It's important to build trust in order to demonstrate that you're genuinely interested in their situation and want to understand them better so you can help. They may have been asked similar questions many times before that were later held against them, or the equity gap may have widened. Therefore, it's important to approach the conversation with care and a lot of patience to find out the true cause of the obstacle or barrier leading to the gap in equity that they are currently experiencing.

Once you have reached the point where the person feels that you truly understand and acknowledge their situation, then it's time to discuss with them what resources or support they need to be as successful as their peers. A simple "How can I help?" can be all it takes to figure out how you can better support the individuals on your team. Open dialogue can help them identify what they need from the resources you can provide. Solutions can range from a higher ladder to counseling to help them cope with past pain and trauma. By understanding the wide variety of solutions, you can figure out what is best for the circumstances at hand.

Once you know what they need, it's time to take action. It's not enough to just have a conversation because that's just the beginning. Leaders need to do everything in their power to find solutions. If it's not within their capabilities or authority, they need to find those in the organization who have the right capabilities or authority to make the changes.

There will be situations where it's not possible for an organization to provide a needed resource. While this may not be common, there is likely an alternative solution that the organization can find, or the need will be met due to subsequent effects of other actions taken. It's important to continue to recognize and address the need for the resource rather than ignore it.

The individual must decide when his/her circumstances have changed, and the resource is no longer needed. Making an assumption, without verification from the individual, that the resource is no longer needed can lead to the individual feeling that the organization doesn't really care about them and their particular situation. As with the ladders, this fosters resentment and risks undermining teamwork within an organization, something no true leader wants to see. If you consistently work to achieve equality, you can avoid these negative consequences. The key is to take real action that affects the entire organization.

A critical factor for success in establishing equity for the employees who report to you is that you engage with the individual. If resources or opportunities aren't working as planned, it's time to ask again, "How can I help?" If you stay engaged, it'll help the culture truly develop into a more inclusive and equitable environment.

It's important to note that a leader must be careful not to give a particular person so many resources or opportunities that they exceed the equity of their peers. The goal is fairness and equal access, and that can be a fine line in some circumstances, so leaders must remain vigilant in their decisions and their effects.

When cultural issues arise in a company, one factor may very well be a lack of equity. When people from different backgrounds and circumstances come together, it's easy to assume that they all have the same basic skills to perform as a team. Depending on where they come from, their experiences, and the opportunities they've had, that may not be the case.

By watching your teams closely, you can find the areas where equity is lacking. Once you know the root cause, you can look for resources (training, support, certifications, and other tools) to achieve a better balance in your teams. Be aware that lack of equity may not only apply to individuals on the team but also to the team as a whole compared to other teams.

When teams are equitable, they can focus on the problems they're solving for the business instead of struggling with internal issues. When they return

their focus to execution and process, their productivity and even creativity can flow smoothly.

Teams that run smoothly are much more efficient at tackling big problems. They know how to work together and build strategies and solutions on the strengths of each member. The better the equity in the group, the more each individual's strengths emerge!

My favorite example that shows how equity can solve problems is a bike race. Four people are taking part in a bike race. One is very short, one is very tall, one is very heavy, and the last one is in a wheelchair. Each of them has the same standard adult bike. This bike is too big for the short person, too short for the tall person, structurally weak for the heavy person, and too focused on foot power for the disabled person. Each person enters the race at a complete disadvantage to participate because they don't have equipment that fits their individual circumstances.

The equality is that they were all given the same bike, but the distribution isn't fair because they're at a significant disadvantage with the equipment provided. To have a fair and equitable race, you need to give each of these people a bike that fits their circumstances. The short person needs a smaller bike, the tall person needs a taller bike, the heavy person needs a stronger frame and tires, and the disabled person needs a hand-pedaled bike. Now each of them has a working tool to have a level playing field relative to their circumstances.

When everyone in the field has the resources designated for their particular circumstances, it's much easier for you to identify individual strengths within the team. With this knowledge, you can shape and build teams for each new round of production. By shaping and refining your teams to focus on individual strengths, you'll achieve better problem-solving and increase productivity. You can also swap personality types in teams to prevent groupthink. This keeps the team creative in problem-solving and your company on the cutting edge.

Paying attention to what an equitable distribution of resources looks like when building your teams ensures that no one on your team is prevented from fully committing to solving the problem. You need to look at the

distribution of resources and skills on your team to determine if everyone has the right bike to perform to their individual potential regardless of their personal circumstances. Of course, this doesn't mean that employees won't differ individually, but it's important that they all have the right set of tools individually to get started if you want to achieve comprehensive results.

Let's take an example where your company needs to solve a very technical problem that requires many creative solutions. If only certain team members are familiar with the technical aspects, not only will they have an advantage, but they'll likely only drive the solutions from their perspective, which can lead to groupthink and fewer creative options. However, if you've familiarized the entire team with the technical aspects to create a common baseline understanding, each team member can fully use their skills because you've given them an equitable starting point of knowledge that allows them to apply their own unique perspectives and skills to develop potential options for a solution. This way, each team member can contribute more confidently because they know they started with the same minimum level of background knowledge.

If people feel they aren't on the same page as others, even if only one or two of them have more information, they'll be more inclined to just go along with the flow rather than contribute and risk being wrong or humiliated by a misunderstanding. If you establish common ground and even open yourself up to initial questions so that everyone can give their best, they'll be more engaged as the process progresses. Everyone feels more included because they started with a solid baseline. When everyone feels included and on an equitable stance, they're more motivated to contribute, and your organization gets more creative solutions.

In the example with the bike, the problem was participating in the race. In your industry, the problem might be to make sure that a product line doesn't just launch like a regular adult bike but something that a diverse group of customers can use. If you have a diverse group and they have equitable roles in your business, they can help you develop solutions that make your product or service better for a much larger customer base. If your product or service is better at serving more different customers, then you can out-compete competitors who instead focus on a narrow, generic focus.

Making sure everyone is treated fairly can be done in different ways, but it depends on the company. It's important to check if the things the company is doing to be fair are actually working and making a difference.

Promoting equity by focusing on team-building and basic skills is critical. This way, you avoid challenging a person for a skill they didn't possess before, preventing hurt pride or hurt feelings. No one desires to start at a disadvantage. Unfortunately, historical and systemic issues that continue to influence today have ensured that these inequities still exist. Rather than devoting energy and resources to removing obstacles from the past that only lead to further division, focus instead on fostering a growth mindset in your organization.

When you focus on a growth mindset, you can put in place more equitable tools and resources to promote the development of the entire team, not just one person. People want to feel valued and that they have contributed to a larger vision. In a diverse team, there are many moments when individuals want to be seen for what they can bring to the team, not only for what makes them stand out. So give them tools, give the others at the table tools, provide an opportunity for team members to educate their team on their skills, and watch what magic the team can unleash.

Organizations should also analyze their hiring practices, policies, leadership, middle management, supervisors, and cultural norms in the workplace to identify anything that might pose barriers or risks to ensuring equitable practices. Not only do you need to provide a baseline for teams dealing with big issues, but you also need to take a hard look at your company's development programs and promotion criteria. Do the programs focus only on a specific area of the company, or does your company have cross-flow? When you allow cross-flow, you not only increase your candidate pool but also create the opportunity for someone from another area of the company who has the desired skills to prove their value. While they may not have had equal access to that area of work before, you've now given them a fair chance to prove themselves.

Not everyone has the experience necessary to come into the company on the best path to maximize their personal skills, but if the company is looking for ways to provide more equitable access to other paths or areas

within the company, you're enabling and encouraging a much broader range of individual growth and development and opening a much wider door for talent to come from within. This same flexibility also makes you more attractive to candidates who aren't part of your organization and want to expand their skills or knowledge.

Companies can promote equity by ensuring that the resources and tools available to their teams can actually be used by all team members. One way to gather data about the team's needs would be through a survey, but simple things like measuring height and adjusting the chair and desk to fit the individual or offering alternative solutions, such as a standing desk, are also great. Even if these are just minor physical adjustments to the workspace, people feel more comfortable when they're comfortable in their space. (As a side note, a more ergonomic workspace also makes for healthier team members who take fewer sick days and can also reduce health insurance costs) When your employees are confident and healthy, they produce.

Another option is to conduct team training on specific skills you expect team members to have in order to complete certain productivity tasks. If everyone has at least the same starting point, you can give everyone the opportunity to develop and grow with their unique perspectives on the same baseline. This way, you can also find out how quickly each individual adapts so you can learn more about their strengths and build the strongest teams.

Companies can best embrace equity by encouraging conversations that some might find uncomfortable. Returning to the bike race: The organization hosting the bike race can explain to the entire group why each person gets a different bike. Reasonable people with sound values and ethics will understand why everyone gets a different bike. If the organization shows that it's happy to have these open, sometimes uncomfortable conversations, it'll show the members of the organization that it's good to have these conversations. Over time, they become the norm and less uncomfortable, if at all. It shows your employees that they all want to succeed, which helps to improve collaboration and reduce feelings of fear and lack of opportunity. It's also important to have an ongoing program that promotes education, open discussion, and evaluation of equality

throughout the organization at all levels. That's how you can create a culture of equity.

Here is a final example and a real success story in the making. For some women, being a mother is one of life's greatest achievements, but it often comes at the expense of other interests and pursuits they desire. If we go back just thirty years, social opportunities were still very much shaped by the view that you couldn't have a career and be a mother at the same time. Support structures weren't overly flexible. Corporate policies had loopholes through which women could be "let go" on maternity leave, and even if they kept their job, many women felt guilty about the inconvenience of breastfeeding, lack of sleep, or doctor's appointments, and felt insecure about what they were offering as an employee. Not to mention the social pressures and dynamics of who should run the household and the questioning of their own maternal priorities.

For a long time, it was easy for those in charge to view the problem as a woman-only issue. The woman decided, and her circumstances were her decision, so why should the organization change? However, this rigid and non-inclusive mindset would have only resulted in fewer mothers and less diversity in the workplace. If we punish or exclude someone for who they are, or if they're in a very normal life situation, we cannot benefit from the amazing things these people can offer the world.

Fortunately, as our society has evolved in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion, there has been a need for change. Leaders took notice, and more importantly, they acted. While there are still nuances of old practices, more and more companies have taken action to create a more equitable environment for new mothers. There are lactation rooms, some even with hookups so they can pump privately while working in a clean and sanitary space. They no longer have to pump in the car or in a restroom stall.

Not only have companies improved their maternity leave policies, but they have also improved their paternity leave policies so that new fathers can also help, support, and bond with their child. This has even been extended to adoptive parents. We stopped thinking of the issue as a women's issue and instead recognized that it's a general life issue and that more equitable support needs to be created across the board. These improvements have

helped people feel less stressed, more supported, and more valued. When people feel valued, they work even harder to give back. So not only have you kept these great people who just need some flexibility in their lives, but you've also increased their productivity for your business.

It's all about the people! When your employees feel valued and trust that you're looking out for their best interests, they feel you're supporting them both professionally and personally. They'll give you 110%—in fact, they'll even give you 120%. They'll give you everything they have because they're grateful to be part of such a wonderful organization. They'll be more able to do this because you have reduced the stressors that may marginalize them or prevent them from being fully present, or just make them feel uncomfortable. When people are stressed or uncomfortable, they don't perform nearly as well as when they can find a point of neutrality and feel safe.

The key to this balance is to bring equity to your organization. To truly reap the benefits of your diverse team, you need to figure out the nuances and commonalities, understand what special circumstances your team members have, and what resources, skills, or even nursing rooms they need to stay confident, productive, and engaged. It can be challenging for a leader to identify all the problems, but the best leaders listen to where the obstacles are and look for ways to remove them. It took a courageous leader to advocate for nursing rooms. It took a courageous leader to advocate for gender-neutral restrooms. It took a courageous leader to find a higher ladder. It takes courageous leaders to make changes so that diversity can thrive in their company, and it doesn't just remain statistics and metrics.

An equitable organization will realize benefits that will provide a competitive advantage within its respective industry. They will attract better talent, develop better talent, and retain better talent. They will have a more efficient, productive, and creative workforce. These are the things that will make it more profitable in the long run than its competitors. That is why it's so important for any organization to maintain equity.

It's all interrelated, and it creates this wonderful cycle. When you increase your diversity and you really care about creating an equitable and inclusive workplace for your teams, you increase cohesion, productivity, creativity,

retention, recruitment, the sense of value, and the trust that they have in your organization. It's the only formula where you can't lose. It's what puts you at the top of your industry. It's the companies that care about their employees and their products and services that truly stand out. The ones where employees enjoy going to work every day, face challenges together, and are grateful to be part of a team that values them as individuals and as someone who can contribute. When you show you value your employees, the rest goes much more smoothly. The final and third book in this series will address why inclusion and accessibility are essential to a truly diverse and equitable organization.

About the Author

Brianna Jackson, founder and CEO of Sonas, is a master at developing strategic frameworks that take an organization to the next level. A mother of four boys with 20 years of leadership and management experience in the federal government, she knows how to manage resources, build and empower teams, tackle the most daunting problem sets, and realize the maximum potential and profits for any industry.

Ryan Jackson retired from the U.S. Navy after 24 years of service within the enlisted and officer ranks. He is currently a small business owner and pursuing various entrepreneurial ventures.

Creating a Culture of Equity in Business

Mike Jackson

Leadership and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are closely linked. At the heart of DEI is the idea that everyone has unique needs and experiences and that it's the responsibility of leaders to recognize and address those needs. This means providing equal access to resources, opportunities, and support to all people, regardless of their background.

DEI is about creating a culture of kindness and empathy where leaders and individuals alike prioritize the well-being and success of others. By fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, leaders can empower their teams to reach their full potential and drive positive change in their organizations and communities.

Leadership is about more than just getting tasks done and supervising a team; it's also about recognizing and supporting the individual needs of each employee. This not only leads to greater unity in the workplace but also enables each individual to be successful in their professional and personal lives.

Central to this approach is the idea of creating equal access to resources and opportunities. This includes ensuring that each employee has the specific equipment and tools he or she needs to perform his or her job effectively. In this way, leaders create an environment where everyone succeeds and contributes to the overall success of the organization.

It's important to note that this approach isn't just about workplace benefits. By focusing on the needs of others, leaders show that they're committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment. This not only drives positive change within the organization but also fosters a culture of empathy and kindness that extends beyond the workplace.

It is the leader's responsibility to create a workplace culture that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion. This means that you treat every employee

with an open mind, treat everyone equally, and provide them with the support they need to succeed in their professional and personal lives.

Besides supporting employees, managers must also encourage positive interactions among employees. This includes fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging employees to help each other, as well as ensuring that everyone treats each other with professionalism and respect.

By prioritizing equity in the workplace, leaders can build strong, inclusive teams that are better able to drive positive change and achieve their goals. It's a win-win scenario where everyone benefits from a supportive work environment.

As a leader, it's important to understand that everyone has their own needs and challenges, whether they're related to physical abilities, mental health, or other aspects of their lives. For example, as someone who served in the military and experienced multiple deployments, I struggled with hearing and vision issues.

My own experiences have taught me the importance of recognizing and accommodating the individual needs of others. Although I wear hearing aids, I still have difficulty hearing certain frequencies, and I often have to explain to people that my hearing aids don't always provide a complete solution. This has given me insight into the difficulties others may face in the workplace and how important it's to provide them with the support they need to be successful.

For example, someone with a visual impairment needs special software or equipment to perform their tasks effectively, just as someone with a hearing impairment needs adaptations to take part in meetings and presentations. When leaders recognize and address these needs, they can create an inclusive and supportive work environment where everyone succeeds and contributes to the team's success.

By understanding our own challenges and those of others, leaders can create a workplace that is more inclusive and supportive, where everyone can thrive and reach their full potential.

One of the most important ways to do this is to set the tone through your own actions and words. Leaders have the unique ability to influence the behavior and attitudes of their employees, and by showing respect and professionalism, you can encourage others to do the same.

It's not only important that you set the tone but also provide support and resources to help employees succeed in their jobs. This may include providing specialized equipment or access to certain aspects of their work so that everyone has the tools they need to perform their jobs effectively.

By prioritizing respect and professionalism in the workplace, leaders can create an equitable and supportive work environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to succeed. It's a simple but powerful way to drive positive change and ensure your employees thrive and reach their full potential.

As a leader, promoting equity within your organization has far-reaching benefits that extend beyond your employees and affect the entire business community. By championing DEI, you show both customers and competitors that your company values its employees and is invested in their success.

In doing so, you send a clear message to current and future employees that your company is worth working for. When employees feel valued and supported, they're more likely to be engaged, productive, and committed to the company's success. This not only benefits the employees themselves but also helps drive positive change within the company and creates a healthy work environment.

A commitment to equity can also help attract talented employees who are looking for a company that values diversity and inclusion. By promoting equality and treating all employees equally, you can create a workplace that is more attractive to a broad range of people and better suited to recruit and keep the best talent.

When you champion equity as a leader, you drive positive change in your company and show your commitment to your employees, your customers, and the broader business community. As a leader, it's important to lead by example to promote DEI in the workplace. This means not only

communicating your values with words but also showing them through your actions and behavior.

One of the most important ways to do this is to have a zero-tolerance policy for employees who don't adhere to equality and don't treat their colleagues and customers with respect and professionalism. Not only does this help create a supportive work environment, but it also sends a clear message to employees that this behavior isn't acceptable.

By leading by example, you can help foster a workplace culture that values DEI and promotes positive relationships among colleagues. This not only benefits the employees themselves but also helps drive positive change within the company and creates a more attractive and desirable workplace for future employees.

Promoting equal opportunity in your workforce is an important part of creating a diverse, inclusive, and successful company. By ensuring your employees have access to the resources and equipment they need to perform their daily tasks, you create an environment where everyone succeeds and contributes to the team's success.

In a competitive business environment, companies that value equity have a better chance of succeeding. That's because customers and employees are attracted to companies that value and support their diverse workforce. When you create an equitable workplace, you can better leverage the unique strengths and perspectives of your employees and drive positive change in your organization. You can also better attract and keep talented employees and show your commitment to your customers and the broader economy.

As a leader, it's important to approach your work with empathy and understanding, especially for promoting equity and diversity in the workplace. This means treating everyone, including your peers, employees, and customers, with the same respect and professionalism that you'd expect for yourself.

For many leaders, this can be shaped by their own experiences and challenges, such as growing up with a learning disability. For example, as

someone who struggled with dyslexia, I know how important it's to support people and help them manage their daily tasks.

By following the Golden Rule and treating others as you'd want to be treated, you can create an equitable workplace where everyone succeeds. This includes providing the resources, time, and equipment necessary to get the job done effectively and make sure everyone feels valued and respected.

About the Author

Mike Jackson's experience includes developing and implementing policies and procedures, enforcing leadership standards, and assisting clients in implementing quality programs. He is also a regular facilitator and guest speaker at national and international healthcare conferences. He also consults for the Department of Defense, where he is one of the senior advisors to the Special Operations community on all things medical.

Embracing Equity: A Guide to Inclusive Leadership

Michael Markiewicz

Equity is more than just a buzzword. It's a fundamental principle that ensures all people have the same rights and responsibilities, regardless of their background, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. When you embrace this concept, you not only create opportunities but also set the expectation that everyone will contribute and thrive.

The beauty of diversity is that everyone brings unique perspectives and ideas to the table. With a diverse workforce, you can draw on a wealth of experience and knowledge from around the world. For example, learning from education systems in other countries or understanding how certain communities approach problems can help you develop new solutions and bring a fresh perspective to your business.

When you promote an inclusive culture, you not only ensure fairness and equality but also open the door to a world of opportunity. You'll be surprised at the new solutions and insights that emerge from a group of people who all bring their own experiences, ideas, and perspectives. If you're committed to equality, you'll be on your way to becoming a dynamic, innovative, and successful company.

As a visionary leader, being open to diversity and new ways of doing things is critical to your success. After all, if you're open to learning from people who bring different perspectives and approaches, you can quickly and efficiently find solutions to problems that others may still struggle with. That's why the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace cannot be overstated.

In the past, many companies have made the mistake of only hiring people who have similar backgrounds and beliefs, but this has proven to be a stumbling block to creativity and innovation. When you hire employees based on their skills and experience, regardless of their background or

personal beliefs, you can tap into a wealth of knowledge and problem-solving expertise that can move your company forward. That's because different perspectives and experiences bring new ideas and approaches that lead to more creative and effective problem-solving.

Including DEI in your hiring process is an important step in promoting equity in the workplace. This means you shouldn't let differences in ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, gender, or sexual orientation keep you from finding the best people for the job. Instead, value the unique talents and experiences that each individual brings and watch your company soar to new heights.

When you create a workplace that values diversity and promotes equality, you not only attract the best talent but also foster a culture of inclusion that encourages employees to be themselves. That leads to greater productivity, creativity, and employee satisfaction. In addition, a workplace that values diversity and equality is more likely to be seen as an attractive place to work, which can help attract top talent in the future.

As a leader in today's fast-paced business world, it's essential to embrace change and be open to new and innovative ways of doing things. After all, the solutions to many of today's problems and the development of new and innovative products and services often come from people with vastly different backgrounds and perspectives. By fostering diversity in the workplace and leveraging the talents and expertise of people from diverse backgrounds, we can quickly bypass the time and effort required to solve complex problems.

Diversity not only saves us valuable time and resources but also expands our understanding of the world and helps us see things from new perspectives. By adopting the concept of DEI, companies can build a more diverse and inclusive workforce that can drive innovation and growth. This is because DEI focuses on hiring people based on their skills, abilities, and experience rather than their ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, gender, or sexual orientation. This approach should be a key factor in the hiring process, considered alongside all other relevant factors to ensure that companies find the best possible candidates for each job.

However, promoting DEI isn't just about hiring the right people; it's also about creating a workplace culture that values and welcomes diversity. This includes educating and training employees about the importance of DEI and creating a positive, inclusive environment for all. Such a workplace culture is important to the success of businesses and also promotes a more equitable and inclusive world for all.

To successfully promote DEI in the workplace, leaders must actively work to create an inclusive culture. This includes providing training and resources for employees, building diverse teams, promoting diversity throughout the organization, and advocating for DEI, both inside and outside the workplace. In addition, leaders should actively listen to the opinions and experiences of diverse individuals, including underrepresented groups, to gain a deeper understanding of different perspectives and approaches.

In summary, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion is a critical aspect of leadership in today's rapidly changing business environment. By focusing on DEI during the hiring process and creating a workplace culture that values diversity, leaders can build a more inclusive and equitable organization that fosters innovation and success. In doing so, we create a more inclusive world for all.

The Difference Between Equity and Equality of Opportunity

Dr. Bruce Rippee

When people ask me what equity means, my honest answer is that it appears to have many definitions but primarily refers to the idea of fairness and impartiality. It also encompasses the perceived or known value that a person has in a business or an asset owned by that business. When we discuss societal or political equity, we refer to the principle of fairness and justice in the distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges. This form of equity is concerned with ensuring that all individuals and communities have an equal chance to succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Most of us agree that if a person desires to succeed according to our definition, we want them to have that chance. Equity in the workplace is whole other philosophy. It is an issue plagued by division, conflict, and even a militant faction intent on tearing down meritocracy and replacing it with their own sense of right and wrong.

So, is equity important in the workplace? If a business can handle the doling out of extra resources to help someone succeed without bankrupting the business, absolutely. If a business puts all other employees and its own mission and vision in harm's way by trying to take on an employee just for the sake of equity, then absolutely not. In fact, I believe that equity in its current sociological form, with all of the sign-waving and grandstanding, is incredibly damaging to the small business work environment.

Instead, what we need is equality of opportunity. Let me put it this way—imagine we were talking about your favorite sports team. Equity would mean everyone plays the same amount of time, in the position they want, for the same amount of money, and with equal input into the plays. We know that would just lead to chaos and an ineffective team without any specialized positions or skills or a pouring out of resources for which there

is no gain. The moment we establish a hierarchy, equity becomes impossible, and any pursuit of it will be in vain.

Have you ever heard someone say that equity is important in the workplace? From my perspective, equality is important, but equity requires very specific definitions and an understanding of the factors involved. There's a misconception that if we provide equity in the workplace, everyone will be motivated to work hard and contribute to the company's goals.

Unfortunately, we all know that this is not always the case. There are far too many people who believe that they are owed something by the business just for having the grace to show up occasionally. People should have equal access to opportunities, but equity, especially when it is driven by resentment, has no place in business until that business can absorb the deficit.

Today's mainstream version of equity would have all businesses spending resources to help those less fortunate—a noble wish to be sure. However, when a business is forced to show solidarity by expending energy it does not have for those who cannot do the job that they were hired to do or to create a job unnecessary for the operation of that business, we expose that business to an even greater likelihood of failure.

At first glance, the concept of equity in a business setting may seem appealing, but in reality, it often leads to more harm than good. Instead of pushing for equity, we should be striving for equality of opportunity. This means that every individual should have access to the same opportunities for growth and advancement within the company based on their desire to work, their loyalty to the company, their willingness to learn, their ability to adopt and immerse themselves in the culture of the business, as well as their skills and abilities. I believe that the burden of equity that lies with our politicians and our society as a whole is a very different phenomenon than equity in a business.

For example, let me share my own story where equity was afforded me in a higher education setting. I have a degree in English Writing from St.

Edward's University in Austin, Texas. Many would assume that this education would set me on a path toward academia or writing.

However, I also have ADHD, which makes it difficult for me to sit still for long periods of time—a necessary component of writing. This led me to pursue a career in the fields of biology, chemistry, and physiology, mostly because these classes had labs and movement and interaction that had not been afforded me as a writer. During my undergraduate at University, I had a professor in abnormal psychology who was so forward thinking as to offer me alternative resources long before ADHD was considered a real thing.

Dr. Cherry is and was one of the most brilliant people I have ever met. She embraced knowledge as a living system and would not only listen to an opposing view but give it credence until she found either flaws in the logic or common ground. About fifty of us were sitting in a large auditorium-style classroom and were handed our syllabi and a questionnaire on the very first day of class to be returned the next day that we met. The questionnaire was about our ability to focus, absorb and process information in a didactic setting. Like everyone else, I turned in my questionnaire the next day, and on the third day of class, nine of us were handed a note. The note read, “as long as you don't disrupt the class and are willing to participate, you may stand at the podiums in the back of the class and move around as you wish. You may also sit at a desk if you wish to do so. I will have more questions for you at the end of the semester.”

The semester came and went, with three of the top scores in the class coming from the group of us that usually chose to stand and move around. We now know that proprioception stimulates cognition more in some people than others, but at that time, it was truly unheard of. Those with ADD or ADHD need to move to learn and holding us still in a classroom environment hinders our ability to process information. This was groundbreaking at the time, and I owe a great debt to Dr. Cherry for her ability and her desire to offer this resource to me. I was empowered in a way that helped me do something for myself, but it was up to me to put in the work. It is important to note that the opportunity offered me came with a willingness and desire on my part, was not going to bankrupt the company, and came with important caveats. For example, class participation, further

questions at the end of the semester to mine the data, and no class disruption, or I would be taken out of the experiment.

Now, imagine that I had my current skill set and personal cognitive challenges, and I took a job as a diesel mechanic. If today's current mainstream definition of equity was to force a company to give me a chance to work on diesel engines, they would have to make many concessions and pour resources into me that would not likely bear fruit. The truth is, not only do I have no desire to be a mechanic of that sort, but I also lack the patience, problem-solving skills, and spatial awareness necessary to work on such machinery. Equity would not empower me to be to do better but would give me the opportunity to fail, and it could also put the company at risk. This is why it's so important for individuals to pursue careers that align with their skills, desires, and abilities rather than forcing them into positions that they are not equipped to handle.

When it comes to equity in the workplace, it's important to understand what it truly means in a healthy work environment. While the concept may seem honorable at first, it can actually create more problems than it solves. Even if an employee is willing to learn, they may lack the ability to do so in a timely fashion. Businesses only have a certain amount of time to train before an employee is expected to be able to add to the workplace. This is hard to say, but it is true. In another example, an employee may understand the job and be able to do it but not be able to get along with the rest of the employees and customers. Hiring and firing would have nothing to do with those who are less capable nor race, color, creed, or sexual orientation but a willingness to adopt the culture of the enterprise.

One aspect of equity in a business setting does work for most situations. The realm of discipline and promotion. As a leader, it is crucial to approach problems with an open mind and be willing to listen to all perspectives. This is where true equity can come into play. A great leader will not only listen to any issues brought to their attention but also actively seek out solutions that benefit the company as a whole. Equitable treatment for infractions is often overlooked, yet it is paramount to a healthy business. I have consulted with many businesses that have this or that employee that can "get away with anything." Punishments, kudos, and recognition should truly be as close as possible to equitable. There are many ways to offer

recognition and conflict resolutions in a company, but I generally ask for good documentation of incidents and infractions with as much openness as possible.

An example of establishing equity in conflict resolution comes from our flagship clinic. We have a form called “We can be better,” and all new employees are trained and retrained on how to fill it out, what to expect from its use, and where to put the documentation. We encourage our employees to write down any problems they encounter with each other, the process of doing the jobs, the patients, or the leadership, and present them in the format of a company problem followed by a proposed company solution. This allows leadership to remain impartial and make decisions that are truly in the best interest of the company, both in terms of reprimands and finding a resolution. It is also a great way to update processes and allows for immediate conflict resolution. A culture of equity, in this instance, must be trained many times because our employees come from different backgrounds, communities, families, and education systems, all of which have different ways of dealing with obstacles. A business must have a culture that is so strong and forward facing as to overwhelm the past ways of doing things and insert an equitable and just way.

Along that vein, equitable recognition and remuneration commiserate with loyalty, skills, and experience is vital to a business. There is nothing more important than giving people a chance to reach their full potential and rewarding and recognizing their efforts accordingly. If two people are doing the same job with the same level of skill, experience, time with the company, and effort, they should get paid the same wage. There is also a movement to recognize those who are going above and beyond the call of the job by staying off of social media while on the job. It seems odd that we need to reward those who lay down their distractions while at work, but that is truer today more than ever before.

I am concerned about the current idea of equity in the workplace because it is different than the old definition. It is often fueled by bitterness, resentment, and entitlement, which can be a recipe for disaster in a business. It seems almost mandated that businesses take on people who are not capable of doing the job, do not want to work in the first place, or do not want to fit into the culture of the business.

Every business with which I have consulted has the story of the employee(s) that just wanted to get fired in order to get paid by either filing a lawsuit or through unemployment. Most of these businesses have a hard enough time building and handling the ever-changing world of taxes and regulations. They really suffer when they are accused of actions that have no basis in reality but carry with them such social sticking points that they are guilty until proven innocent.

The truth is that most CEOs would tell you that the people they work with are both the best and worst part of their job. Those who feel entitled and those who are always looking to work or break the system are a constant threat to good enterprise and forcing equity would give them another chance to sue.

So, while equity can be useful in decision-making and discipline, it's not always the solution. In my opinion, small companies that rely too heavily on equity often end up with poor performance and outcomes that are often tragic. Organizations cannot leverage an equitable workforce in the true sense of the word. They can, however, provide equal opportunities for growth, learning, and earning to all employees. The main challenge with equity is the underlying foundation of resentment that fuels much of its philosophy. I have far too many stories of a person hired with the desire for equity who will often balk at criticism and just punishment when it comes to failures.

I often work with CEOs and start-up business owners, and during our coaching sessions, I always begin by discussing the issue of bullying. There's a close connection between bullying and equity, as the latter is based on the belief that a certain group in society has been coerced, marginalized, or made to feel inferior.

I always ask my clients the same questions. *Have you ever been bullied? And, when you were away from the incident, did you think about it later on?* In almost every case, the answer to both questions is yes. The next step is more difficult. If they're being honest, what did they want to do or say to the bully after the incident when they had time to reflect? Almost without fail, they want to demonstrate their superiority over the bully, punish and belittle them, and show that they won't be marginalized again.

This is precisely what's happening today in the equity movement. Those who have been marginalized want to bully those who have bullied them, and it's an unfortunate cycle that only perpetuates resentment and negativity.

It's a commonly held belief that there's a stark difference between various groups of people, but in reality, there's more diversity among individuals within a group than between the groups themselves. Focusing on these differences and granting certain privileges or advantages to one group over another will not lead to a harmonious future and may result in business blunders. The pursuit of equity often leads to misguided attempts to appear virtuous or to gain higher societal status by intervening in issues that one has little understanding of or connection with.

For those who are asking for equity, it's important to understand equality better. Those who feel mistreated should examine their own behavior and ask themselves if they're contributing to a divisive or unifying atmosphere. Were you willing to come in early, stay late, and adopt the mission, vision, culture, and strategies of the business that hired you?

In my opinion, equity is a hindrance to any business too small to absorb an unwilling or incapable employee. Those people still have every societal merit and are to be loved and cared for as we would any other human being but causing the failure of the business harms the many for the temporary needs of the few. However, this doesn't mean that individuals who feel marginalized or belittled should stay silent. On the contrary, speaking openly about differences, teaching others about them, and explaining how they can positively impact society is crucial to growth and creativity.

In the business world, it's essential to prioritize those who are capable and willing to carry out the company's mission and vision, as this directly impacts the company's output. There's a delicate balance between subjective and objective realities, but in a business setting, objective reality and the ability to execute tasks efficiently take precedence.

About the Author

Dr. Bruce Rippee is a sought-after speaker, author, supplement formulator, and business development specialist. He spent the last thirty-one years

researching and developing techniques that optimize how we sleep, think, eat, and move. His favorite patient is one who asks, “What can I do for myself?”

Building an Inclusive Workforce

Luba Sakharuk

“See that pile of resumes? Not a single one is from a female. There is no pipeline.”

That was my boss’s answer when, at nineteen, I asked him why I was the only woman among the twelve engineers on his team. The answer made sense. Besides me, there were only a few young women studying computer science at my college. It was 1997, and STEM wasn’t highly advocated for women. By the time I was hired as an intern, I had already met most of my teammates and that wasn’t an obstacle for me. When I asked him why I was the only woman, I did so more out of curiosity than interest. I knew nothing about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). I didn’t think about that. I had just come to the U.S. from Lithuania a few years ago and, frankly, had no mental capacity for anything other than learning English and trying to make ends meet every day.

I acknowledged he had a daughter my age and hired me, so it couldn’t be because he had something against hiring women. His response was that there was no pipeline, and he just wasn’t getting applications made sense. I shrugged and didn’t think about it again until two and a half decades later.

The year is 2023, and I’m interviewing Melissa D. White, a DEI expert who advises companies on this topic. She begins by explaining that she isn’t a certified HR expert, and everything she says comes from her twenty-plus years of experience in the technology industry. She shares with me her perspective on diversity and inclusion. She talks about the mindset of executives who believe they have checked off the diversity recruiting box and that they believe there are equitable opportunities.

I tell her about how diversity affects innovation and that I recently collaborated on a book about business leadership and diversity. I confess to her I’ve never thought much of equity and actually don’t even know exactly what it means. I’m a little ashamed, but I’m happy to admit it to her. I know it means equal access to opportunity, but all the examples I can think of

from my experience fall under diversity and inclusion. I tell her about the example of the lack of applications and ask her how she handles situations where she discovers problems with DEI, but the manager says she just can't get applicants. What role does equity play in this example? How does she coach leaders to be more intentional?

"Leaders are looking for two things," Melissa says, "how to make more money and how to be challenged. And when you challenge an executive's mindset in a way that shows them how to act more consciously and make more money at the same time, you've accomplished something. It's disrupting their thinking."

As for advising companies on this topic, Melissa says the burden of proof is always on the organization and leadership.

"If there's ever going to be a claim of fair hiring practices or at HR, the first thing we have to do is challenge hiring practices from a legal perspective. Beyond empathy or equal opportunity, hiring practices are scrutinized from a legal perspective in risk mitigation. Does the leader work with a knowledgeable HR team on fair recruitment and hiring practices, which means going beyond their own personal network and perhaps even their internal network of leaders with the same educational background, ethnicity, and all other factors? If you find that your recruitment is still the same, what is the intent of diversity?"

"Is the intent to recruit from diverse places?"

Melissa used the phrase "equitable network" and described that if your golf buddies all have the same background, you worship in the same place, you live in the same neighborhood, and your kids go to the same school, your network isn't very diverse.

"The intent is to consider who is outside of this group. You can search your organization from top to bottom and bottom to top. Most of the fringe or diverse groups in your organization are living at a level you don't know, where you no longer have a vantage point. Have intentional conversations with your field staff, your on-site staff, and so on to create equitable opportunities to be more diverse in leadership. When you talk about lateral hires, are there leaders in your peer group who don't look like you, who

don't have your background, but are you consciously looking for them to give them the opportunity?"

Melissa came back to my original example of being the only woman on the team. She asked if there are any business organizations, affiliations, and associations for women in technology. If we're aware of the importance of creating equal opportunity, and if we aren't just checking a box for legal reasons, we need to be intentional about looking for equal opportunity and proactively look for candidates in a variety of places outside of our usual sources. If a leader isn't getting the applications they'd like, they need to get creative. A shrug of the shoulders isn't good enough.

This interview made me think of my own experiences as a leader building teams of Scrum Masters and Agile Coaches on multiple occasions. I realized that I only relied on the resumes that landed on my desk and never questioned the proactivity of our recruiting team that made sure we were looking for people in different places. It never occurred to me to question that because I didn't think that was my job. I wondered how many other leaders didn't think they were responsible for DEI.

In the first book of this three-part series, I said a sentence that pretty much sums up what I live and breathe every day.

"When we create an environment where all voices are heard, and solutions are co-created, our customers get better products."

I explained how diversity and inclusion are directly related to innovation and how important innovation is for companies to stay relevant in our rapidly changing world. To innovate, companies need talent, and talent comes in all ages, shapes, genders, ethnicities, backgrounds, and communication styles. Creating equal opportunity and being intentional about it leads to a more diverse work environment, where when we say "all voices are heard," we really mean *all* voices.

We can promote equity in the workplace by creating awareness and transparency. We can bring in experts to review our hiring practices and suggest how we can do better. We can invite keynote speakers to talk to our employees about DEI. Storytelling is a powerful tool for building awareness. When we tell case studies that resonate with people, we're more

likely to inspire them to pay attention and take action to do their part wherever they can. We can be creative in raising awareness of DEI and its importance in our operations.

As equity came to the forefront, I began paying attention to related articles and recalled several conversations related to the topic. I recalled a chance conversation with a friend, Costa, who works for a minority-owned company called HCH Enterprises. He shared he was one of the few middle-aged white men at a conference and doubted he could say anything meaningful to the audience on equal opportunity broadband access for diverse underserved communities. At first, I didn't think this conversation had anything to do with equity in the workplace, but after interviewing Melissa, I talked with him to expand on the topic, and the dots connected.

This conference was to show the importance of education and how lack of access to broadband is directly related to lack of education and poor grades, especially during the pandemic. When he found the courage to speak at the conference, which he did with passion, as he recalled during my interview with him, he expressed how important education is to creating wealth for generations and that the children of certain communities aren't getting a fair chance at education because of the lack of internet access.

"I work in the largest minority business enterprise in the state of Rhode Island. And we find that in diversity, equity, and inclusion, there are several specific underserved groups that are struggling. And the pandemic has exacerbated that, particularly in terms of the communities and the citizens in those communities and the children of those citizens when it comes to education. We look at that as broadband equity. We do surveys in these communities to find that the street is wired, but the last hundred feet to the house isn't there. They have problems with old routers, and they have problems with old operating systems. They might have problems with old computers. They might not have computers.

These are all challenges that underserved populations face when it comes to broadband for equity. Then there's the issue of housing for equity. For housing, there were a lot of laws that prohibited access to homes for people of a certain sociodemographic group, which resulted in them ending up in a certain neighborhood because that was the only neighborhood they could go

to. That's a real challenge, not only in terms of the present but also in creating wealth for generations. The city of Philadelphia is doing a lot of interesting things to keep housing affordable by helping people of color access low-interest loans or making sure home prices don't go up too much.

I asked Costa to pause. While listening to all these challenges and the different ways people are struggling, as well as possible solutions, I wanted to know what the culture was like within the company that clearly cares about equity and supporting underserved communities. Have they led by example internally? Who have they hired? How have they contributed to equality in the workplace? So I paused and asked, "What's the culture like within the company, and how do they address equality in their people and opportunities?"

"I'd say 60% to 70% of the population is minority," he said. "We actively hire minorities and actively hire veterans. After Covid, we've hired a lot of veterans and a lot of veterans of color. We have hired men and women of color and put them in places where they can make a difference. It's not an old boys' club. It's a melting pot of people from all different backgrounds. There are many people of color that I work with. There are a lot of women I work with. It's about doing what you say you're going to do and implementing it internally and externally. It's about leading by example."

When Costa mentioned he hires people from underserved communities and places them where they can make a difference, I realized his company isn't only looking at equity but also using the people it hires to gain the trust of the communities it serves. However, I've mentioned many times that innovation is key for companies to stay competitive. I believe that trust in the values and integrity of the company may actually trump innovation.

The best way for companies to champion equity is to lead by example. Lead by example and be aware. Create awareness. Be creative in your talent search when you're not getting applications. If employees don't have the right skills, look for opportunities to train them. Don't do anything to check off a box. Check those boxes regularly to make sure they're not outdated, and don't be afraid to challenge the status quo.

If equity hasn't been on your agenda until now, that's okay. As the saying goes, being self-aware and knowing the problem is half the battle to solving it. Recognize it. Embrace it. Be proactive about it. It is important to be proactive when advocating for justice in the workplace.

About the Author

Luba Sakharuk holds a master's degree in computer science from Worcester Polytech Institute of Technology and started her career as a software engineer. The unique insights and abilities she gained in her career led her to agile coaching, facilitation, training, leadership, and digital transformations. While working full time as a senior lead consultant, she published two books and founded RALM3 Consulting LLC, focusing on public speaking, facilitation, and mentorship.

Building Stronger Teams with Equity

Jon Macaskill

Equity is about more than equality. It's about creating an environment in which all people are treated with respect and fairness, regardless of their background, identity, or other personal characteristics. This requires active efforts by all stakeholders, especially leaders. It's not enough to avoid prejudice or discrimination. We must actively seek to understand and value the experiences and perspectives of all people in our organization and society.

As leaders, it's our responsibility to promote equity in the workplace. This means creating policies and procedures that ensure everyone is treated fairly and setting an example through our actions and words. A workplace that values equality is a workplace where everyone feels seen and heard and feels they have an equal opportunity to contribute and succeed.

Promoting equality in the workplace isn't only the right thing to do, it has many benefits for the entire company. It promotes collaboration, reduces stress and barriers, and creates a sense of psychological safety. It helps us connect with the people we work for and makes us more attractive to potential customers, employees, clients, and even future employees.

The impact of equity goes far beyond the workplace. By promoting equity in our organizations and society, we can create a more inclusive, supportive, and empowering environment for all. Whether in our professional or personal lives, equity serves the best interests of the people and organizations we interact with. So we should attempt to actively promote equity in everything we do.

As a leader, it's important to strive for impartiality and bring everyone together as one. This helps achieve the common goal more efficiently and effectively. Inequity creates barriers between individuals and prevents the organization from achieving its goals.

As a leader, remember you're leading a diverse group of people from different backgrounds, races, genders, religions, and sexual orientations. If you don't practice equity in your leadership style, you risk alienating some of your employees and leading only some of your employees. That's why it's important to recognize and value the differences in your team and work to create an inclusive and equitable workplace.

Practicing equity in the workplace promotes collaboration, breaks down communication silos, and helps the organization achieve its goals faster and easier. It avoids unnecessary stress and obstacles. It fosters a sense of psychological safety that is important to any effective organization. It makes "the machine" run more smoothly!

As leaders, we can, of course, establish policies about equity and these can be helpful, but they aren't nearly enough. We need to be active with implementation, and we need to model what equity means. We must live it, breathe it, and implement it in everything we do—in our professional lives and our personal lives. In the lives where others see us and in those we don't, it must become a part of us—a part of who we're—a part of our DNA.

When everyone feels seen and heard, when they feel they're given an equal opportunity to contribute, when they feel they're an equal part of something and not just a part, the team will work together more smoothly and achieve its goals much faster. Leaders need to practice this, and not tolerate anything else, by living it and not just putting a cheery "Equity" poster on the wall or the door of the restroom stall. It's not enough to put it on the non-discrimination page of their website. It has to be active. That's how it has always been, and that's how it'll always be.

A just workforce helps us connect with those we serve. When we are equitable with and through our workforce, it's perceived by potential customers, employees, clients, and even future employees. This can and will only make us better as an organization!

I've seen equity in action, and I've seen inequity in action. Equity serves the good of the organization, but just as important (if not more so), it serves

the good of the people who make up the organization. Inequity does just the opposite; it undermines the organization, and its people serve us all.

About the Author

Jon Macaskill is a retired Navy SEAL Commander turned mindfulness teacher. He's taking what helped him excel in his professional life and heal in his personal life and now sharing this with others to help them do the same!

Dear Entrepreneur,

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