

## Nurturing Diversity and Inclusion in the Hospitality Industry

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Before promoting an environment of diversity and inclusion, leaders in the hospitality industry must support the mission of creating and nurturing internal environments that are diverse and inclusive where all employees will thrive and successfully serve their external clients at an optimal level.

To nurture diversity and inclusion, leaders must first commit to the mission of building a diverse workforce to service diverse clients. Only then will they be able to build their strategic plan around the vision of the organization as it relates to diversity and inclusion. Leaders will then have the ability to integrate diverse, equitable, and inclusive practices into that plan to build and foster a workforce that will thrive and deliver optimal service internally and externally. Once the commitment is solidified and supported, building that diverse workforce is the next step.

And finally, nurturing that vision through training and development and leading by example will result in motivation, engagement, and retention of employees in addition to increased profitability for the organization.

### Leadership Commitment

Some industries have appointed a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) or a Chief Inclusion Officer (CIO) to lead the charge and focus specifically on the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion to improve their culture, their retention, and the guest experience. If an organization has not hired an individual to solely focus on diversity and inclusion, leaders in that organization must understand that setting the tone for their workforce by communicating often about diversity and inclusion and committing to building and nurturing a diverse and inclusive workforce and work environment is critical for success.

Leaders must not only make a commitment to integrate diversity and inclusion as the core of the organization's values, but they must lead by example by actively participating in building a strong foundation where all employees and clients feel they have a voice. In addition, it is important for employees to feel that they add value to the organization. Leaders must advocate for and participate in diversity and inclusion initiatives, and they must actively speak about diversity and inclusion openly to create a foundation of trust in a space where all employees can thrive and perform at their optimal level.

Once the foundation is created, leaders must "walk the walk," to serve as the example, and it starts by committing to attracting and nurturing a diverse workforce of employees who are also committed to diversity and inclusion and delivering exceptional service to a global client base.

### Attracting a Diverse Workforce

Since the hospitality industry services clients of diverse cultures and backgrounds across the globe, an organization's diversity and inclusion strategic plan should include a strategy for recruiting and retaining internal employees. In serving a global client base, an internal workforce must be culturally competent. That is, the internal workforce must be diverse, understand how to collaborate effectively internally, and be versed in how to communicate with and service their external client base.

In the hospitality industry, diverse recruitment teams who understand the culture and the needs of their organization in any given area are beneficial to the success of the organization. Understanding how their behavior will affect the bottom line is crucial in attracting candidates from diverse markets. As stated in "The Importance of Diversity at all Levels of the Hospitality Industry," by Glenn Skolnick, Stephanie Piimauna, Chief Diversity Officer at Hard Rock Entertainment states, "We want to create a safe and productive environment where all people thrive. Diversity and inclusion is at their best when they are so deeply embedded that employees don't realize that they are doing them..." and "In the end, it also helps with the organization's bottom line. How diverse and inclusive you are will ensure you make everyone feel welcome when they walk into your hotels, and this helps you to attract a diverse group of clients for conferences, weddings, and other special events."

## **Nurturing a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace**

Once a diverse recruitment team is in place and they are able to attract and onboard a diverse workforce through relationship building, pipelining, or connecting with a recruiter who has a relationship with viable candidates who are committed to diversity and inclusion, the organization can begin to build that foundation of trust where employees feel they add value and are truly contributing to the bottom line in an organization which is infiltrated with leaders who believe in diversity and inclusion. Leaders and employees will then behave in a way that shows their commitment to diverse and inclusive experiences.

"Living" the organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion and actually setting the example every single day is what is emulated by others. If leaders believe in and display the behavior that supports their commitment, others will follow their example naturally. It's a trickle-down effect, and then and only then will the workforce be effective in servicing their global client base.

### **Training and Development**

Training and development are essential in fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. And that is not a one-time or once a year training. That is continuous training and reinforcement of organizational values. Training managers is key. Educating them on what it means to build a diverse team internally where all employees feel they are treated equitably and valued will benefit the organization. It will also allow for that convergence of different ideas to build relationships that Eva Lacalle spoke about in her Mews blog post. Employees will then take what they have learned and use the tools they have acquired through learning and development opportunities when they are servicing clients.

Note that leaders must support and participate in all diversity and inclusion training. Commitment, involvement, continuous communication, and leading by example will contribute to others emulating their behavior. If others see leaders behaving in a way that supports the mission and the vision, they will follow and behave the same way. If everyone is on the same page and moving in the same direction to support the organization's vision, the organization will enjoy the benefits of success.

### **Delivering Optimal Service to Clients**

As stated in the blog entitled "What is cultural diversity and why is it important in the hospitality industry," by Eva Lacalle in 2021, "Having guests and staff from different backgrounds brings diverse perspectives to your hotel, allowing for a convergence of different ideas and a wonderful way to create connections." Eva also says, "Differences spark curiosity and represent a great way for both guests and staff to interact and learn new ways of doing things." Eva also states, "By hosting guests from different backgrounds, you make your hotel experience richer and more interesting because at the end of the day, one of the key motivations people travel is to experience different cultures."

We know that guests in the hotel industry specifically are from different cultural backgrounds. If employees are trained in the area of cultural diversity, they will be better equipped to deliver quality service to a diverse client base. For example, if your hotel hosts guests on a regular basis from a specific country, your employees should be trained to understand the cultural differences and perspectives of that country to allow for the optimal experience while the guest(s) is/are on the premises. The experience may be one that is memorable for a guest or a group of guests, which may turn into referrals for your hotel. Providing that level of service will set your hotel apart from others.

### **Conclusion**

Understanding the importance of diversity and inclusion in the hospitality industry is essential for organizations to be successful. First, and as is confirmed in Hospitality Business Review in "Embracing Diversity and Inclusion: The Hospitality Industry's Journey Towards a More Equitable Future," organizations in the industry must place value on hiring a diverse workforce representing different ethnicities, genders, ages, and backgrounds. A diverse workforce will offer different perspectives and experiences that will resonate with visitors from around the world.

In addition, leadership must commit and set the tone. They must "walk the walk" and behave in a way that supports their commitment and that behavior will trickle down to managers. If leaders are committed to education in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the "walk the walk" and display their commitment to managers who lead their organizations by training their managers to embrace the same values, those managers will be able to build diverse teams to foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment.

Leadership efforts and ongoing training for all employees in all areas of cultural awareness will be beneficial to any organization in the hospitality industry. Employees will then connect at all levels, share different experiences, and only then will they be able to provide the optimal level of service to their internal and external client base.

Most importantly, when employees feel they are valued, they will be motivated to engage and produce for the organization. Nurturing an internal diverse and inclusive workforce will result in retention of employees. And if employees understand their client base, they will be successful in servicing that client base which will garner glowing reviews, returning clients/guests, attraction of new guests, and great economic and social benefits.



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**[Extended Biography](#)**

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