

MENTAL HEALTH FOR PERFORMANCE

TERI DENNIS-DAVIES

Create environments where people thrive, achieve and want to stay.

EDI EXPLAINED

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are concepts that most of us would like to understand better so that we can do better and lead better.

How are the Toronto Raptors, the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Toronto Argonauts and TFC dealing with these areas? Teri Dennis-Davies, Chief People and Inclusion Officer, works with some of Canada's most influential organizations, and she gifts us with understandable, relatable explanations of these concepts. Consider this your EDI glossary for the real world.

"As leaders, it's our job to understand how to get the most out of our workforce and create the best environment for [everyone] to be who they are – the best versions of themselves – to give to the organization."

EQUITY

How should we understand it?

"Equity is about understanding starting line and whether access to the starting line is comparable for everyone."

Why is it important?

The barriers that existed for each person just to get to the starting line vary dramatically and can severely affect the ability for some to excel. These systematic barriers are so ingrained in historical and modern culture, that they are able to greatly impact how many people live and what opportunities they will have over their lifetime.

What should we do?

Study your industry or workplace honestly. What systematic barriers exist that prevent some people from reaching their full potential or from arriving on the landscape at all? If you want the most talented people and the best outcomes, you need to start dismantling those barriers.

DIVERSITY

How should we understand it?

Diversity is an outcome of Equity, and not the other way around.

"Without equity, you won't achieve diversity, you won't achieve diverse outcomes, because your starting point is the wrong starting point."

Why is it important?

Diversity spans infinite directions including physical characteristics, cultural background, gender, physical and mental abilities and challenges... and the list goes on and on and on. When everyone at the table is fairly similar, outlook is inherently limited. The more an environment invites a variety of life experiences to the table – and promotes the potential for everyone to thrive – the more possibility exists.

How do we do it?

You will attract more diversity if everyone feels welcome, safe and valued at work.

"You won't get diversity, true diversity, unless you have dealt with the inequitable practices and systemic barriers that exist."

INCLUSION

How should we understand it?

Firstly, it's important to remember that you can't have inclusion if you don't have diversity.

As you increase diversity within an organization, the goal of inclusion is to ensure that everyone feels welcome and truly valued.

"It's really part of building a focus on wellbeing into an ecosystem of support [to create] an overall high engagement for our workforce. We are seeking to create the most thoughtful, safe, and enjoyable work environment for our employees."

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Why is it important?

Think of the last time you felt unwelcome, or like you didn't quite fit in a particular environment. Did you do your best work? How motivated were you to give your all?

Everyone's mental health improves when they feel valued and supported. When we believe that the people around us want to see us succeed, there's a far better chance that you will.

"I think when people come to work, they want to work hard, they want to know that there are people that they can relate to colleague to colleague and grow networks and community, and that they can rely on their manager for support to grow professionally, and that the organization is going to provide access to those opportunities."

How do we do it?

Does your organization have this kind of big picture perspective? Who's talent might you be missing out on?

Remember that in order to have inclusion, you must first have diversity. In order to have diversity, you must first look at the barriers affecting equity. Overall, EDI considerations might seem daunting. But it is important to remember that even small steps towards progress make a difference!

"We look into the different experiences that our employees have from the moment they apply for a role. We look at the experience of what it's like to apply to our organization; what signals are we sending explicitly, subtly, unintentionally, that tell people if they are welcome. How do we make them feel like they belong in our organization and feel part of it, and see aspects of themselves reflected in the organization and in leadership so that they know 'Okay, there's a pathway for me here, I see people that look like me, have similar experiences to me, I can grow in this organization.' And so we do a focus on that experience."

EVOLVE

When was the last time your workplace did a workshop or learning opportunity on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion? How much of a focus is this?

Are people at all levels of the organization aware of the systemic barriers that exist in your industry? What is currently being done to address those barriers?

Does everyone feel welcome, safe and valued?

Are organizational decisions made based on consideration of a variety of viewpoints?

EXPLORE

[Gender Diversity, Elliot Gray](#)

[Physical Ability Diversity, Tim Frick](#)

[Cultural Diversity, Chau Pham](#)