



# How to Keep Your Diversity Equity and Inclusion Process from Becoming a Casualty of COVID-19

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The quarantine measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 are impacting organizations from corporations and universities to hospitals, churches, mosques and synagogues. In this time of upheaval, demanding virtual work and bringing financial crises, it is easy for Diversity Equity and Inclusion to be relegated to the bottom of the priority list. When organizations and staff are worried about basic needs and facing immediate crises, it is often hard to maintain a focus on DEI. If your DEI Councils and ERGs are not meeting, your leadership team has forgotten it and your DEI strategy has been put on hold, the momentum and energy of your change process may flag.

However, inclusion remains a critical business need and exclusion a significant threat. The impact of Covid-19 and the measures it has required have put a spotlight on inequities and disparities in our society and organizations. If there ever was a time not to abandon DEI, it is now. So, what can your organization do to prevent DEI from becoming another casualty?

- 1. Reap the benefits from this unusual situation.** Use this time to analyze where quarantine restrictions and rules have had disproportionate impact on your staff and/or customers. Focus on the systemic and procedural changes that might alleviate or rectify these inequities.
- 2. Use this time to do online work.** Analyze data regarding disparities in areas such as hiring, promotions, lay-offs, furloughs disciplinary actions. Conduct a pay

equity survey. Review messaging and check out unintentional biases in language.

**3. Keep DEI on the radar.** Send out messages and information about DEI issues and progress. Publish regular factoids about DEI that impact your organization such as marketplace demographics, customer feedback and staff changes. Suggest strategies for inclusion such as processes teams can use at virtual meetings to keep people connected and included.

**4. Spend time working with thought leaders devising systems changes for the organization.** Conduct virtual meeting with DEI Council members and leaders discussing structural changes to increase inclusion focusing on systems such as recruitment, promotion, reward and accountability.

**5. Line up resources for the future.** Now is the time to locate help for your DEI process such as computer programs that examine job descriptions for gender bias, relevant training resources and search firms that specialize in diversity recruitment.

**6. Get information.** Conduct interviews and surveys with staff to check in with them about their needs and issues and what challenges they are facing as they prepare to return.

The best way to keep things moving, is to take action. These steps can help your processes stay energized and vibrant even in the face of significant challenges.