

ADWEEK

5 Steps for Instilling a Diverse Culture in Your Agency

It needs to go further than the steps taken in recruitment

By Alisha Goldstein | 1 day ago



Diversity in the workplace needs to go further than just putting in the initial effort.

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If innovation is the brains behind a modern global agency, then diversity is certainly its heart.

As my startup has grown, I've come to realize that a commitment to culture is just as important as a commitment to clients. And I have seen firsthand how diversity can drive innovation and creativity.

The need for diversity is not new to our industry, but our definition should be. Like many entrepreneurs, my own definition of diversity was initially too narrow, focusing solely on inherent traits such as race and gender. Instead, teams also require acquired diversity—traits gained through experience, such as cross-functional and international experiences—to fuel dynamic engagement among team members, drive innovation and potential and stimulate ideas that can stand out in the current complex media landscape.

A 2017 survey of 171 companies by the Boston Consulting Group agrees, finding “a clear relationship between the diversity of companies’ management teams and the revenues they get from innovative products and services.” The innovation boost isn’t limited to a single type of diversity, the study notes. “The presence of managers who are female or from other countries, industries or companies can cause an increase in innovation.”

To quote Steve Jobs, “The more varied the input, the more original the output.”

But hiring alone isn’t enough. It’s also important to focus on encouraging and rewarding individual growth and promoting teamwork across the board. This approach is key to creating a non-competitive, supportive work atmosphere where all employees have each other’s back and where managers actively mentor and encourage advancement.

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To that end, here are my strategies for nurturing (and amplifying) a diverse group of voices.

Mentor

As a creative leader, it is necessary to develop talent through mentorship. To me, that means challenging each individual to break out of their comfort zones, pushing them and their potential into new territories and expecting growth and self-sufficiency at all levels. Regular and proactive reviews are a great way to monitor accomplishment.

Encourage debate

Invest in team building and create opportunities for everyone at all levels to have an opinion. Brainstorms both with and without leadership are important. Know that fostering a high degree of trust will allow you to perform better and more productively, with more knowledge sharing and innovation.

Celebrate successes

Acknowledge the success of the individual as well as the team to build confidence, trust and moral. Celebrating and rewarding good work is a big part of encouraging and ultimately achieving both individual and company growth. Leaders should never be threatened by their team’s successes—giving credit and accolades for a job well done should be a pleasure and is a sign of the leader’s success as well.

Give constructive feedback

Not every idea is going to work. Take time on even the busiest projects to give feedback on why an idea or approach didn’t quite work. Sometimes the process is as important as the idea and is often overlooked. Offering feedback on efficiency and approach to process is valuable, especially in a service business, and includes all team members in achieving our goals.

Learn from your team

As agency leaders, it is our job to seek out, observe, absorb and digest new thinking and perspectives. As entrepreneurs, we know we don’t get it right every day and that there is always a lot to learn. I quickly figured out that my team is a limitless resource offering incredibly valuable insight.

Simply put: Diversity propels innovative thinking, and globalization demands it. Creating a culture of difference is no longer a choice but a requirement to building a modern global business.



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