

➔ MANAGING  
WORKPLACE  
DIVERSITY

A toolkit for organisations



CREATING  
INCLUSIVE &  
HARMONIOUS  
WORKPLACES

# MANAGING WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

A toolkit for organisations



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# i. Introduction

**S**ingapore's workforce has become increasingly diverse over the last decade. Employees from different generations, gender, nationalities and cultures often work together in the same organisation.

With such workforce diversity, it becomes important for organisations to put in place policies and practices to build an inclusive and harmonious workplace. An inclusive and harmonious workplace is one that appreciates differences amongst workers and works towards maximising their potential.

This toolkit aims to help organisations:

- ➔ Understand why managing workplace diversity is important;
- ➔ Assess how your organisation is managing diversity;
- ➔ Implement practices and policies to manage diversity and build an inclusive and harmonious workplace.

## How do I use this toolkit?

- 1** Take the self-assessment on **page 8** to understand how your organisation is managing diversity.
- 2** The section "How do I build an inclusive and harmonious workplace" on **page 10** outlines practices which organisations can put in place to manage diversity. Select the practices most applicable to your organisation.

## ii. Why Should I Care About Managing Diversity?

In the study on Inclusive and Harmonious Workplaces conducted by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) in 2010, 87% of companies surveyed agreed that workplace harmony was important to business outcomes.

Research has shown that well-managed diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams as they tend to be more creative, and effective at problem solving. However, when diverse teams are not managed well, communication and trust can break down, resulting in lower performance.

## ii. Why Should I Care About Managing Diversity?

You should care about managing diversity because:

- i. Organisations which create an inclusive and harmonious environment enhance their reputation with job seekers, allowing them to attract the best workers in the market.
- ii. Employees who feel included, valued and rewarded are more engaged and motivated. In a worldwide survey<sup>1</sup> of 3 million employees on diversity, employee satisfaction and organisational performance, it was found that creating an inclusive and harmonious environment was a key driver in employee engagement and commitment.
- iii. Greater employee engagement leads to reduced turnover. A 2008 study<sup>2</sup> by Gallup Management Group in the United States revealed that engaged employees had 51% lower turnover on average.



1: David Pollitt, Diversity is About More Than Observing the Letter of the Law: A Climate of Inclusion Benefits Business Performance Human Resource Management International Digest, Volume 13, (2005)

2: Dervovsek, Darla, 'Engaged Employees' Credit Union Magazine 74(5) p. 42, (2008)

## How Han's has benefited from managing workplace diversity

Han's F&B Pte Ltd (Han's) operates a chain of bakeries, full-service restaurants and cafes. In response to labour shortages and other operational challenges, Han's started diversifying its workforce in 2006 with the following initiatives:



- ➔ Redesign of jobs for its of mature workers, for example, by tapping on technology to reduce the physical requirements of certain roles;
- ➔ Recruitment of employees from over 10 countries;
- ➔ Recruitment of People with Disabilities through job attachment programmes and
- ➔ Recruitment of ex-offenders through the Yellow Ribbon project.

### Han's diversity management strategy

To manage its diverse workforce, Han's takes active measures to build an inclusive culture.

- ➔ Han's makes a conscious effort to ensure that teams are well diversified, comprising employees across generations and nationalities. According to Han's Managing Director, employees of different profiles often have different strengths and attributes. Diverse teams allowed employees of different profiles to learn from each other.
- ➔ The company culture and work ethos are emphasised as part of the orientation programme to all new hires.
- ➔ An open-door policy is practised where employees are encouraged to raise concerns or challenges faced at work.



### **Benefits of its diversity management strategy**

Han's diversity management strategy has brought business success. Within a span of 3 years, the productivity of Han's workers has increased by 40% and the net earnings per wage dollar have more than doubled. Han's Deputy General Manager also shared that having an inclusive workplace improves employee engagement – staff absenteeism is extremely low and staff turnover has dropped fivefold between 2006 and 2009.

Source: Interview with Han's F&B Pte Ltd, November 2010 – January 2011



### iii. How is my organisation managing diversity?

**T**o find out how your organisation is currently managing diversity in the workplace, take the Diversity Management Assessment. The assessment does NOT measure the effectiveness of diversity management in your workplace. Rather, it serves as a means to review your organisation's existing practices and to highlight gaps and opportunities for improvement.

### iii. How is my organisation managing diversity?

#### **Who should complete the Diversity Management Assessment?**

Business owners, Human Resources Managers and/or Managers in charge of your organisation's diversity management.

#### **What does the Diversity Management Assessment measure?**

The Diversity Management Assessment areas assesses whether your organisation has put in place diversity management practices in the following areas:

- ➔ Strategic importance of diversity management in an organisation, and the extent of leadership commitment and support
- ➔ Practices/policies in staff recruitment, development and performance management
- ➔ Practices/policies to create an inclusive and harmonious workplace
- ➔ Tracking and monitoring of effectiveness

You can take the Diversity Management Assessment online at ←insert link→, or offline using the hardcopy provided at Appendix I

After taking the self assessment, use the results to help you identify gaps and areas of improvement in diversity management within in your organisation.

Select the relevant areas in Section 4 for possible practices which you can put in place to address the areas of improvement identified.

## iv. How do I build an inclusive and harmonious workplace?

**T**his section describes the practices you can put in place to embrace diversity and build an inclusive and harmonious workplace. You should select the areas of highest priority and relevance to your organisation.

## iv. How do I build an inclusive and harmonious workplace?



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Workplace activities

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Not sure which areas to focus on? Take the self-assessment test ([page 8](#)) first to assess your organisation's gaps and opportunities for improvement!

New to diversity management?

Focus on **foundational practices** first.

In this section, the practices with the  symbol are the 5 foundational practices which all organisations should put in place to build an inclusive and harmonious workplace.



## Establish business case

It is important to start by establishing the impact managing diversity has on your organisation's business goals. This involves a 3-step process.

### **1 Identify your organisation's need for an inclusive and harmonious workplace.**

Some aspects which you can consider are outlined in the insert on the next page.

### **2 Have a clear vision of what your organisation wants to achieve in diversity management**

Define the desired outcomes. For example, is it to improve service delivery to customers? Improve employee engagement and retention? Facilitate penetration into a new market?

### **3 Set out the implementation plan for your strategy.**

Develop the action plan and implementation timeline, and assign responsibilities. Provide an estimate of the resources (e.g. manpower, cost) to carry out the initiatives.

# Establish business case

## Questions to consider in establishing a business case

- 1 What are the key priorities of your organisation in the next 3-5 years? For example: market expansion, branding, etc.
- 2 Is your current workforce well poised to help your organisation achieve its priorities?
- 3 What are the key challenges/opportunities facing your organisation? Some areas to consider include:
  - ➔ Market knowledge (e.g. to deepen understanding of clients and markets)
  - ➔ Staff retention and engagement issues (e.g. low staff morale, high turnover rate)
  - ➔ Staff effectiveness and cohesion (e.g. productivity, silo mentality)
  - ➔ Staff recruitment (e.g. difficulty in recruiting the right people)
  - ➔ Cost containment and/or financial performance
- 4 How will more effective diversity management benefit your organisation and help you achieve your objectives?
- 5 What are the consequences of inaction?



Denotes foundational practices which all organisations should put in place to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace.



# Management commitment

Senior management plays 3 key roles in building an inclusive and harmonious workplace:

## 1 **Demonstrate commitment and accountability**

Demonstrate commitment and accountability by:

- ➔ Identifying relevant performance measures in diversity management and monitoring progress regularly.
- ➔ Assigning of resources (e.g. personnel, budget) to diversity management initiatives

## 2

### **Communicate**

Communicate the importance of an inclusive and harmonious workplace to set the tone for the organisation. This can be articulated during management meetings, company events, or informal sessions with employees

## 3

### **Be a role model**

Be a role model for behaviour expected of managers and employees by:

- ➔ Participating actively in initiatives to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace (e.g. training, workplace activities, employee network groups, etc.)
- ➔ Living the organisation values and demonstrating inclusive behaviour



Denotes foundational practices which all organisations should put in place to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace.



## Senior management support for an inclusive and harmonious workplace at Qian Hu

**Q**ian Hu Corporation Limited is a Singapore-based company that farms, trades and distributes ornamental fish. Its headquarters in Singapore currently employs 140 employees.

The Executive Chairman and Managing Director places a heavy emphasis on, and is personally involved in promoting an inclusive, family-style working environment in Qian Hu. He conducts quarterly staff dialogue sessions with all employees, during which he reinforces organisational values, the importance of teamwork, and the need to create an inclusive and harmonious workplace. These sessions are also used as a platform to share company information and to recognise outstanding employees.

“I liked the work environment here as colleagues’ relations are positive and the superiors are very supportive”, says Qian Hu’s Farm Operator.

The Executive Chairman and Managing Director's support for and active communication of these values with his staff is important in creating an environment where all employees feel valued regardless of their background. As a result, employee engagement is high and staff turnover is fairly low.

Says an Operations Executive, "Our management is pretty transparent and forthcoming. We are better able to understand the reasons behind management's actions."

An Operations Supervisor adds, "Without these communication channels, it would be difficult to learn from each other and strengthen our practices, and the divisions would tend to act in silos"

Source: Interview with Qian Hu Corporation Pte Ltd, November 2010



## Build a team of champions

Building an inclusive and harmonious workplace is not just the responsibility of the HR manager. To facilitate organisation-wide ownership, diversity champions could be appointed.

For larger organisations, diversity management committees could be set up to:

- ➔ Develop, implement and monitor initiatives to promote workplace inclusiveness and harmony
- ➔ Raise awareness of the benefits of an inclusive and harmonious workplace for the organisation and employees
- ➔ Understand the needs of different employee populations and work with HR and senior management to address them

### **Who should be appointed?**

These committees could be chaired by a senior executive. Employees at all levels should be involved, including senior and middle managers.

# Reinforce employee competencies

To build inclusive and harmonious workplaces, both employees and managers play important roles. Organisations should equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills, and encourage them to display attributes and behaviour to foster inclusive and harmonious workplaces.

Organisations can build competencies to foster inclusive and harmonious workplaces by embedding them in formal HR practices:

- ➔ **Recruitment** – hiring candidates which fit in with the organisation's values on inclusiveness
- ➔ **Learning and Development** – equipping employees with the knowledge and skills to work effectively in diverse teams
- ➔ **Performance management** – assessing employees on their ability to work effectively in a diverse team and/or manage a diverse team

# Reinforce employee competencies

**What are key attributes and behaviours which employees and managers should display to foster an inclusive and harmonious workplace?**

## **Managers should:**

- ➔ Be aware of different generations, cultures and values
- ➔ Understand how their preferences may affect decisions especially when choosing the next level of supervisors
- ➔ Make fair HR decisions
- ➔ Be able to communicate sensitively and effectively
- ➔ Lead by example

For more details on Managers' Competencies in leading diverse teams, please refer to Appendix II on **page II-1**

## **Employees should:**

- ➔ Be able to appreciate the differences and needs of others
- ➔ Be able to adapt to different working styles
- ➔ Be able to communicate sensitively and effectively
- ➔ Be willing to learn about other diverse groups

For more details on Employees' Competencies in working in diverse teams, please refer to Appendix III on **page III-1**.

# Reinforce employee competencies

## Recruitment

Organisations should adopt recruitment policies which are consistent with the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices.

To build an inclusive and harmonious workplace, organisations need to recruit candidates who are able to work with or lead diverse teams.

The following are some suggestions on how organisations can incorporate this in their selection process:

- ➔ **Identify which workplace diversity management values/competencies are most important to your organisation.** You can refer to the workplace diversity management competency frameworks on Appendix II and Appendix III for some ideas. The competencies identified may vary depending on the position you are recruiting for.
- ➔ **Build into the recruitment process a means of assessing candidates on these values/competencies.** Some commonly used measures include behavioural interviews, reference checks or situational judgement tests.
- ➔ **Train your interviewers** to be able to effectively administer these measures. Sample recruitment interview questions may help to prepare the interviewers (**Appendix IV on page IV-1**).

### Additional resources

Check out the Fair Recruitment & Selection Handbook and Tripartite Guidelines on Non-Discriminatory Job Advertisements published by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices.



Denotes foundational practices which all organisations should put in place to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace.

# Reinforce employee competencies



Recruitment

Learning & Development



Performance management

## Learning & Development

### Inducting new employees into your workforce

A good orientation programme is useful to help an organisation ‘jump start’ the employee to get him/her up to speed. Organisations should include their vision for diversity management to help new employees understand the values and behaviours expected of them.

### Orientating foreign employees

For foreign employees who are working in Singapore for the first time, organisations should facilitate their entry not only into the workplace, but also into a new country.

Organisations can:

- ➔ Provide an orientation package which includes relevant information such as rental and housing, laws and regulations, social and cultural norms to new employees before they arrive in Singapore
- ➔ Introduce the new employee to existing employee(s), who can help to address questions and provide reassurance prior to arrival
- ➔ Conduct an orientation programme about living and working in Singapore upon commencement

### Additional resources for orientating foreign employees:

←**Orientation Programmes**→ “Homebound” and “Singbound” are orientation programmes that the Ministry of Manpower has co-developed with a service provider to provide a seamless relocation experience for returning Singaporeans and incoming Employment Pass holders and their family. For more information, please check [www.singbound.sg](http://www.singbound.sg)

←**Welcome Booklet**→ The Welcome Booklet is a publication designed to help newly arrived Employment Pass holders and their family navigate their relocation to Singapore. It is distributed to all EP holders at the Employment Pass Services Centre. An online version of the Welcome Booklet is available at ←insert link→.

## Facilitating communication in English at HSL

**H**SL Constructor Pte Ltd (“HSL”) is a Singapore-based company that provides construction and maintenance solutions for marine foreshore structures. HSL’s 500 strong workforce hails from 7 different countries.

The bulk of HSL’s operations staff from foreign countries are Work Permit holders. Many of them are not able to communicate fluently in English. Even when English is used, communication challenges can occur due to differences in accents or lack of familiarity with technical terms.

In order to facilitate better communication between staff, HSL has developed a basic workplace programme which is compulsory for all new foreign employees. This programme is also open to all local employees.

The programme equips employees with basic English skills as well as common technical terms (e.g. terms for equipment, tools, safety processes and symbols) used in their course of work.

HSL has found the programme very useful in facilitating communication between staff and enhancing staff productivity.

“I feel a great sense of satisfaction when the workers were able to demonstrate the ability to speak functional English at the end of the Programme. What makes our in-house programme different is the course content which focuses on terms and short phrases that are industry and safety specific.” – Supervisor (Bangladesh)

Source: Interview with HSL Constructor Pte Ltd, January 2011



# Reinforce employee competencies



Recruitment

Learning & Development



Performance management

## Training for Employees and Managers

Organisations should develop training programmes to equip employees and managers with the skills to be more effective in working with and leading diverse teams. In developing a training framework for your organisation, there is a broad range of training for employees areas which you can consider

### For All Employees:

- ➔ Organisational vision, strategy and values in creating an inclusive and harmonious work environment
- ➔ Self awareness: understanding one's preferences and how it affects their decisions and relationship with others
- ➔ Understanding others (nationality, culture, generation, gender)
- ➔ Communication skills and strategies

### For Managers:

- ➔ Coaching and mentoring team members from different profiles
- ➔ Inclusive recruiting, training and performance management
- ➔ Managing employee populations (e.g. mature employees, different nationalities)

In determining the type of training, consider the issues and/or goals which your organisation is grappling with. For example, is there a lack of understanding of different cultures and generations, communication and teamwork skills, or awareness of organisational values?

You can also leverage informal platforms in addition to formal training. For example, managers can be encouraged to join employee networks (**page 32**) to facilitate understanding and interaction.

## Equipping managers and employees to work in diverse teams at IBM

IBM is a global company that provides integrated solutions that leverage information technology and knowledge of business processes. With 400,000 employees worldwide, IBM believes that diversity in its workforce and the personal leadership of every employee are important for its business success as differences in thinking and ways of doing things are drivers of innovation.

To support its employees to work well in diverse environments, IBM has put in place the Cultural Adaptability Programme. This programme aims to help employees enhance their skills in communication, in motivating others and in managing cross-cultural teams. Key initiatives include:

- ➔ **Country Navigator™** - This is a web-based tool that provides IBMers with valuable insights on how to interact with people from different cultures. The tool also provides access to country-specific knowledge and tools that enable networking across borders.
- ➔ **Inclusion in the Workplace for Employees** - This is a one-day workshop to enhance IBMers' awareness, knowledge and skills for addressing local challenges and opportunities associated with diversity.
- ➔ **Inclusion Leadership for Managers** - Leading in a diverse environment - A two-day workshop for IBM Managers worldwide. It enhances awareness, knowledge and skills to enable managers to lead more effectively in diverse environments.

Source: Interview with IBM Singapore Pte Ltd, December 2010

# Reinforce employee competencies

Recruitment

## Performance management

Ensure that the career planning and performance management systems within your organisation facilitate inclusive and harmonious workplaces.

Learning & Development

### Tips on putting in place a fair and objective performance management system

- ➔ Include measurable standards for evaluating job performance
- ➔ Make sure that opportunities for training, assignments and postings are made available to all employees using objective criteria.
- ➔ Ensure that what is considered within the promotion process is clearly linked to job requirements.

Performance management

In addition, organisations could **take into account employees' ability to work well with and manage a diverse team** in assessing performance.

- ➔ A sample performance appraisal form to assess inclusiveness competencies is available at Appendix VI on **page VI-1**.
- ➔ Expectations of competencies and behaviours should be communicated to employees on a regular basis (e.g. during performance appraisal discussions).



Denotes foundational practices which all organisations should put in place to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace.

# Actively facilitate inclusiveness

It is important to create an inclusive and harmonious environment to facilitate positive interaction and understanding between colleagues of various profiles. This section outlines practices which organisations can put in place to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace culture.



**Workplace activities** – organise formal and informal activities to facilitate interaction between employees of different profiles and departments

**Workplace design** – design workplaces to facilitate interaction between employees

**Buddy system** – assign incumbents to new employees to facilitate the settling-in process

**Employee networks** – set up employee groups and/or mentorship programmes to provide a support system for employees to seek help or advice

**Awards and recognition** – recognise exemplary leaders who promulgate values and behaviours that foster inclusive and harmonious workplaces

**Manage employee grievances** – set up formal and informal channels for employees to raise concerns and obtain assistance



Denotes foundational practices which all organisations should put in place to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace.

# Actively facilitate inclusiveness

Workplace activities



## Workplace activities

Workplace activities facilitate interaction between employees of different profiles.

In the study on Inclusive and Harmonious Workplaces conducted by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) in 2010, companies in Singapore rated workplace activities as the most effective practice in promoting an inclusive and harmonious workplace culture.

To maximise the benefits of workplace activities to create an inclusive and harmonious workplace, organisations can:

- ➔ Organise workplace activities around common interests to encourage employees to bond on common themes. Common themes could include sports (e.g. jogging clubs, competitions), children (e.g. family day, excursions, expert talks on effective parenting), or hobbies (e.g. culinary tours).
- ➔ Encourage participation at all levels. Senior management should also be involved.
- ➔ Be sensitive about the organisation of workplace activities. For example, making provision for different types of dietary restrictions.
- ➔ Organise events to facilitate greater understanding. For example, through celebrating major holidays of various nationalities and ethnicities.



Denotes foundational practices which all organisations should put in place to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace.

# Actively facilitate inclusiveness

## Workplace design

The design of a workplace can facilitate an inclusive and harmonious culture by encouraging interaction between employees, as well as being sensitive to the needs of various employee populations.

Organisations can design their workplaces to facilitate inclusiveness and harmony by:

- ➔ Creating spaces for employees to interact and meet informally (e.g. pantries with sufficient space and facilities)
- ➔ Creating an open office environment which minimises walls or barriers
- ➔ Designing the workplaces with needs of different employee populations in mind (e.g. nursing rooms for mothers, handicap access for the disabled, workplace ergonomics for older workers)



Workplace activities

Workplace design

Buddy system

Employee networks

Awards & recognition

Manage grievances

# Actively facilitate inclusiveness



Workplace activities

## Buddy system

Buddy programmes are usually put in place to help new employees settle into the organisation. The programme provides a means of obtaining information, asking questions and voicing concerns through a safe channel. The programme can be incorporated as part of the orientation process.

Workplace design

## Buddy assignment

Organisations could pair new employees with incumbents who are well integrated in the organisation.

Buddy system

If the new employees are new to Singapore, buddies can also help them settle in by sharing with them social and cultural norms.

Employee networks

## Ensure that the buddy is aware of his/her responsibilities

- ➔ Specific guidelines should be provided to buddies so that there is consistency in the way the buddy system is implemented across the organisation. Guidelines could include:
  - ➔ Invite the new employees to an introduction meal
  - ➔ Introduce them to colleagues
  - ➔ Invite them to formal and informal workplace events
  - ➔ Share insights about the organisation's initiatives, programmes, policies, procedures
  - ➔ Be a point of contact for questions, feedback or to provide guidance
  - ➔ Check in with the new employees regularly for the first few weeks of work to ensure that they are settling in well

Awards & recognition

Manage grievances

## **Workplace activities and design at muvee Technologies**

muvee Technologies (“muvee”) is a Singapore-based software company that produces automated video editing software for the consumer PC market.

The home-grown company has a staff strength of over 50 workers of 13 different nationalities.

muvee actively promotes and encourages employee interaction at the workplace through organisation of workplace activities and workplace design.

### **Organisation of workplace activities**

muvee regularly organises team-bonding activities, such as team lunches and celebration events for major cultural holidays. Team Departments are also provided with a ‘brown bag’ allowance every quarter to plan their own gatherings and team building activities.

To help new employees assimilate into the organisation, muvee provides support to newly arrived foreign employees, helps them with accommodation arrangements, administrative requirements and shares with them places to eat or visit in Singapore. An employee portal on the intranet also allows new employees to quickly get acquainted with others in the company.



## **Workplace design**

muvee renovated its workspaces in 2009 to create an open office concept to enhance interaction between employees. Almost all employees, including the CEO, sit in the open office where workspaces are separated only with low partitions. The well-stocked pantry and diner provides a conducive environment for employees to take a break, play foosball, have meals together and engage in work discussions. The diner has become an important place where employees socialise and build bonds, and has come to epitomise the family culture of muvee.

The success of these efforts has been visible. Employee interaction is high, and many socialise outside work settings and even organise holidays together. muvee also has one of the lowest turnover rates in the industry. Employees typically stay for at least 4 – 5 years, a significant length of time in the fast-moving IT industry.

Source: Interview with muvee Technologies, September 2010



# Actively facilitate inclusiveness

## Employee networks

Employee networks can help facilitate an inclusive and harmonious environment by providing employees with opportunities to connect, obtain support and get career advice. Organisations can build employee networks through setting up employee resource groups and mentorship programmes:

(A) **Employee resource groups for employees** who share a certain interest or characteristic (e.g. working parent network, women's network, network of employees of the same nationality) can help to:

- ➔ Facilitate the career development of individuals by providing an avenue to share personal experience and obtain advice
- ➔ Provide a support system where employees can learn how to respond to challenges and obtain advice
- ➔ Highlight to management important issues facing a particular employee group



Workplace activities

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# Actively facilitate inclusiveness



Workplace activities

## Employee networks

(B) **Mentorship programmes** provide employees with an opportunity to tap on the mentor's experience. In some organisations, it is used to target certain groups which are under-represented at senior levels of the organisation.

The following are some strategies to establish a mentoring culture in your organisation:

- ➔ Establish clear goals for the programme and desired outcomes  
Top management should be involved to underscore its importance
- ➔ Provide training and support for mentors to be effective in their roles
- ➔ Provide guidelines to mentors on their expected roles and responsibilities. (For example, defining the desired outcomes, how regularly meetings should take place and how they should be conducted)
- ➔ Provide recognition to those who volunteer as mentors, for example, by incorporating it into annual performance reviews

## Reverse mentoring

The traditional notion of mentoring usually involves a more experienced mentor developing a junior mentee. Reverse mentoring recognises that junior employees also have insights which more senior employees can benefit from.

Workplace design

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# Actively facilitate inclusiveness

## Awards & recognition

Awards and recognition reinforce positive attitudes and behaviours by recognising exemplary leaders in creating an inclusive and harmonious workplace.

Organisations which already have employee awards in place can consider including values and behaviour that foster inclusive and harmonious workplaces as part of the award criteria.

Tips for achieving effectiveness implementing awards and recognition:

- ➔ Be clear about the context and expectations
- ➔ The recognition should demonstrate to employees the specific behaviours or actions which are being recognised by the organisation
- ➔ Team-based recognition or rewards can encourage teams to work towards a common goal and foster greater bonding

# Actively facilitate inclusiveness



Workplace activities

## Manage grievances

Workplace disputes or discrimination/bullying at work can have significant negative impact on employees and organisation effectiveness. It is therefore important to put in place policies and clear procedures for handling disputes or complaints of discrimination.

- ➔ State clearly the organisation's stand on equality and mutual respect
- ➔ Put in place clear escalation channels for raising problems, making complaints and resolving conflicts
- ➔ Put in place channels that employees can turn to for help or guidance, such as an employee hotline or counseling service
- ➔ Make sure that communication channels are well communicated and understood by employees
- ➔ Assure employees that all matters will be dealt with confidentiality
- ➔ Ensure that staff who are involved in providing support or advice are trained to do so.

Organisations can also approach the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices for advice if they need help in resolving disputes involving workplace discrimination.

Workplace design

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Manage grievances

## Managing employee concerns at The Marriott

**T**he Marriott is an international hotel chain that operates in 67 countries. Its 146,000 employees across the world are known as “associates”. In Singapore, The Marriott Singapore has over 500 associates of diverse backgrounds and profiles.



To ensure that their associates are treated with dignity and respect, and that fair treatment is guaranteed for all staff, The Marriott has in place three channels to enable employees to raise concerns:

### **Guarantee Fair Treatment (GFT)**

The GFT states that all employees have the right to bring up issues and concerns to the next level, bypassing their own supervisors if necessary. The process of escalation to higher levels can continue to take place until the issue(s) are satisfactorily resolved.





### **Speak out!**

This channel allows associates to raise issues directly with the General Manager in Singapore, or with the Chairman and CEO of the global company. Prominently displayed in the staff lobby are two letterboxes for staff to place sealed letters. Letters in one box go directly to the General Manager, while letters in the other are directed to the Chairman. Administrators of Speak Out! are not allowed to open the sealed letters. All issues are investigated by the relevant departments, who report to the respective leaders on how the matters had been resolved.

### **Open door policy**

The Marriott also adopts an open door policy where employees can go up to any member of the management to raise issues/concerns.

These channels are well publicised to all new and existing staff, to ensure that they are aware of their rights and the recourse they have should they encounter issues such as discrimination or unfair treatment.

Source: Interview with Singapore Marriott Hotel, November 2010

# Communicate effectively

Organisations can consider including the following key messages in their communication:

- ➔ Why it is important for the organisation to have an inclusive and harmonious workplace
- ➔ How an inclusive workforce will benefit all employees
- ➔ The role which all employees play in creating an inclusive and harmonious workplace
- ➔ Strategies and tips for employees on how to enhance their working relationship with colleagues of diverse backgrounds
- ➔ How employees can deal with sensitive areas (e.g. misunderstandings, discrimination) and employee channels to raise concerns
- ➔ Key progress and achievements

# Communicate effectively

It is important that senior management is involved in delivering the key messages to highlight their commitment.

These can be done through:

- ➔ Incorporating key messages at company-wide events (e.g. corporate retreat, annual review, townhalls)
- ➔ Updates on the company intranet
- ➔ Internal milestone training programmes, such as the induction programme or new manager training
- ➔ e-newsletters, posters, brochures.

## Resources for managers and employees

The following materials serve as a reference point that organisations can use to communicate to staff on workplace inclusiveness and harmony. You should adapt and customise the materials based on your organisation's staff profile and needs:

- ➔ A Manager's Guide for Building Inclusive and Harmonious Workplaces (Appendix M1) provides tips and strategies for managers to lead diverse teams.
- ➔ Employee communication materials (Appendix V) provides tips for employees to work effectively in diverse teams.

The materials are available for download from ←insert web link→

## **Raising employee awareness on the importance of inclusiveness at Ernst & Young**

Ernst & Young is a global professional services firm in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. The organisation has 141,000 employees across 140 countries. The Singapore office has over 2,000 employees, with approximately one-third of the workforce made up of international employees. It also has a good distribution of employees spanning across different age groups.

Ernst & Young believes that embedding an inclusive culture in the organisation will enable its employees to achieve their potential and make a difference, and better enable the organisation to deliver high quality services to its clients, create competitive advantage and drive market leadership.



The organisation is active in raising awareness of the importance of diversity management and inclusiveness to its employees through the following:

- ➔ Defining clearly the vision for diversity and inclusiveness in the organisation, and how it will impact the business, its clients and all employees
- ➔ Regular communication from senior management and the HR department on the importance of having an inclusive workplace and bringing examples to life through stories in staff communications
- ➔ Producing thought leadership on diversity and inclusiveness for industry stakeholders and participating in similar-themed forums to share leading views on the subject

Making available communication materials and resources such as:

- ➔ Slipsheets and posters on what it means to be inclusive
- ➔ Toolkits and guides on how to work with various employee groups (e.g. working with colleagues with disabilities, strategies on managing diverse teams)

In addition, the organisation also actively communicates its diversity and inclusiveness commitment to external stakeholders. Ernst & Young has been recognised for its efforts in diversity management through a number of awards and accolades in various countries.

Source: Ernst & Young LLP, January 2011



# Evaluate effectiveness

It is important to track the progress of your organisation's diversity management programme to evaluate if the objectives are being met and to identify areas of improvement. This could include monitoring the results in the following areas:

## **Workforce management**

Organisations can track whether the diversity management strategy has enabled it to be more effective at workforce management. This could include:

- ➔ Recruitment – e.g. recruitment success rate, average time to hire
- ➔ Employee engagement – e.g. absenteeism rate, employee surveys
- ➔ Promotion rate – e.g. proportion of cohort promoted
- ➔ Retention rate – e.g. percentage of turnover in a period

These statistics can also be tracked in each employee group, to provide information on how successful you are at retaining and promoting employees from various backgrounds. It can help highlight issues faced by certain employee populations and gaps in the design or implementation of HR policies.

# Evaluate effectiveness

## Effectiveness of diversity management initiatives

The diversity management initiatives should also be tracked to identify areas of improvement. The following areas can be monitored:

- ➔ Employee awareness of diversity management initiatives
- ➔ Employee feedback and perception of practices/policies
- ➔ Commitment of senior management in supporting the initiatives
- ➔ Effectiveness of managers and employees in working with colleagues of diverse backgrounds

These can be tracked through:

- ➔ Inclusiveness Pulse Check (Appendix VII) – The Pulse Check assesses employees' perception of the organisation's state of workplace inclusiveness and harmony. This should be completed on a periodic basis. The pulse check can be combined with existing employee surveys which are conducted in your organisation
- ➔ Employee focus groups to gather feedback
- ➔ Number of complaints escalated through employee grievance channels
- ➔ Exit interviews to obtain feedback on employees' perception of the organisation's inclusiveness. Sample exit interview questions are available on Appendix VIII on **page VIII-1**

# v. Additional resources

## **Ministry of Manpower (MOM)**

MOM formulates and implements manpower policies in Singapore. The MOM website provides various resources relating to our workforce and workplace, including resources to foster inclusive and harmonious workplaces. All materials in this toolkit are available for download at ←insert weblink once confirmed→.

## **Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP)**

TAFEP was set up to promote the adoption of non-discriminatory and responsible employment practices among employers, employees and the general public.

TAFEP provides a range of services, tools and resources, including training workshops, advisory services, and educational materials, to help organisations implement fair employment practices and to comply with employment legislation. It also provides tools and training to help organisations manage diverse populations. Visit the TAFEP website at **[www.fairemployment.sg](http://www.fairemployment.sg)** for more information.

## v. Additional resources

### **National Integration Council (NIC)**

NIC was set up in April 2009 to promote and foster social integration among Singaporeans, and with new Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents.

It seeks to promote initiatives that comprehensively meet integration needs in schools, workplaces, the community, and through the media; create a sustainable, active network for effective social integration efforts across Singapore; and internalise core Singaporean values among Singaporeans and others living, working and playing in Singapore.

NIC launched the Community Integration Fund (CIF) on 16 September 2009 to encourage ground-up social integration efforts from the people, private and public sectors. Companies can apply for the funding to co-fund projects that provide opportunities for new immigrants, foreigners and locals to interact and communicate with each other, and improve their understanding of each other's culture, values and norms.

For more information, visit the website at

**[www.nationalintegrationcouncil.org.sg](http://www.nationalintegrationcouncil.org.sg)**

### **National Integration Working Group for Workplaces (NIWG-W)**

NIWG-W is one of the four working groups set up to support the National Integration Council (NIC). NIWG-W works closely with our partners in industry and the unions to pursue various measures to help employers understand the benefits of an integrated workplace, and to build capabilities to manage diversity. For more information, visit the website at **<http://app.nationalintegrationcouncil.org.sg/WorkingGroups/Workplaces.aspx>**

### **Human Capital Singapore (HCS)**

HCS is the approved national centre for Continuing Education and Training. It trains and develops people managers so that they can re-design critical HR processes, identify and build needed competencies and deploy best HR practices to meet the changing expectations of the industry.

HCS conducts a HR WSQ certified training course ("Develop a Strategy for Managing Diversity") which is targeted at HR practitioners to guide them in implementing workplace diversity management practices. Visit the website at **<http://www.hcs.com.sg/>** for more information.

# vi. Appendices

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# Appendix I - Diversity Management Assessment

The Diversity Management Assessment assesses whether your organisation has put in place diversity management practises in the following areas:

- ➔ Strategic importance of workplace inclusiveness and harmony in an organisation, and the extent of leadership commitment and support
- ➔ Practices/policies in staff recruitment, development and performance management
- ➔ Practices/policies to create an inclusive and harmonious workplace culture and environment
- ➔ Tracking and monitoring of effectiveness

The assessment does NOT measure the effectiveness of diversity management in your workplace. Rather, it serves as a means to review the existing practices your organisation has put in place, to highlight gaps and opportunities for improvement.

## **Who should complete the Assessment?**

Business owners, Human Resources Managers and/or Managers in charge of organisation's diversity and inclusiveness management.

## **How should I complete the Assessment?**

If you have access to the internet, complete the Assessment online at ←insert link→. The results will be auto-generated and a series of recommendations will be provided based on your answers. Rest assured that the results will be confidential and accessible only to you. Results of individual companies will not be retained or recorded.

If you do not have access to the internet or prefer to complete the Assessment offline, you can use the hard copy provided in this Appendix on the next page.

There are two sections in the assessment. For each section, check all statements which apply to your organisation, and tabulate the scores at the end of each section.

The first section measures the extent to which your organisation has put in place foundational practices. These are essential workplace practices that organisations should adopt to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace.

Organisations which have scored well in the first section can then proceed to the second section, which is a more comprehensive assessment of the extent to which your organisation has put in place practices to manage diversity.

## **What should I do after I complete the Assessment?**

The results will help you identify gaps and areas of improvement in diversity management within your organisation. Use the results to prioritise the areas which you would like to focus on. Read Section 4 of the Toolkit, "How do I build an Inclusive and Harmonious Workplace?" for some ideas on practices and policies that your organisation can implement.

## Section 1: Foundational practices

Complete this section first to assess whether your organisation has put in place all the foundational practices essential to build an inclusive and harmonious workplace.

<b>Foundational practices</b>		
		Check all statements that apply to my firm
<b>Leadership and Commitment</b>		
1	We have defined and communicated the strategic link between workplace inclusiveness and harmony, and business success	
2	Our senior management models and articulates their commitment to workplace inclusiveness and harmony through their actions and communications	
<b>Staff recruitment, retention and development</b>		
3	We recruit employees which have the most appropriate qualifications and experience for the job, regardless of their age, gender or nationality	
4	In our recruitment process, we take into consideration the ability of candidates to work with or lead diverse teams	
5	All employees are assessed based on their ability to perform their tasks, regardless of age, nationality or gender	
6	All employees are required to set developmental goals and monitor results tied to workplace inclusiveness and harmony. This could include their ability to work with employees of different backgrounds.	
7	All line managers are required to set developmental goals and monitor results tied to the effectiveness with which they manage and promote workplace inclusiveness and harmony within their teams.	
<b>Workplace culture</b>		
8	We organise regular workplace activities (e.g. team building, family day) that provide opportunities for employees to interact with one another	
<b>Please add up the number of checks in this section</b>		<b>/8</b>

## What do my scores mean?

Please tabulate your scores.

**If you received a score of 6 and more**, do proceed to the next section.

If you did not receive a score between 0 and 5, identify the questions which you did not place a check against, and read the following table for suggestions for improvement.

Foundational practices	
Identify the question you did not check	What does this mean?
1	It is important to define how diversity management will impact your business outcomes. Refer to Page 4 of the toolkit to find out how diversity management benefits organisations, and Page 12 of the toolkit which helps you identify the business case for diversity management within your organisation.
2	Senior management plays a key role in building an inclusive and harmonious culture. Refer to Page 14 of the toolkit for more ideas on key roles which senior management can play.
3	It is important to have a fair recruitment system which is fair and objective. <b>Refer to the Fair Recruitment &amp; Selection Handbook</b> published by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices for more resources and tools.
4	To build an inclusive workforce, the recruitment appraisal process needs to take into account candidates' ability to work with or lead diverse teams. Refer to Page 20 of the toolkit for some ideas on how your recruitment process can incorporate this.
5	It is important for the performance management system to be fair and objective. Refer to Page 25 of the toolkit for some ideas. You can also refer to the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices published by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices for more resources and tools.
6	To build an inclusive workforce, employees need to be effective in working with diverse teams. Refer to Page 25 of the toolkit for ideas on how your performance management system can incorporate this.
7	To build an inclusive workforce, managers need to be effective in leading diverse teams. Refer to Page 25 of the toolkit for ideas on how your performance management system can incorporate this.
8	Organisation of workplace activities which encourage employees of different profiles to interact are one of the most effective ways to build an inclusive culture. Refer to Page 27 of the toolkit for more ideas on organising workplace activities.

## Section 2: Comprehensive assessment

Now that you've completed the foundation assessment in Section 1, complete this section to assess how comprehensive the diversity management practices are in your organisation.

<b>Comprehensive assessment</b>		
		Check all statements that apply to my firm
	<b>Leadership and Commitment</b>	
1	We have put in place an explicit vision and strategy to promote workplace inclusiveness and harmony	
2	We have concrete and measurable goals on what we want to achieve in workplace inclusiveness and harmony. This could include demographic targets linked to recruitment/promotion, targets of workplace culture, or targets linked to business outcomes (e.g. sales)	
3	We have appointed senior executives who look into reviewing and introducing policies and practices to promote workplace inclusiveness and harmony	
4	We have set aside a dedicated budget on initiatives to promote workplace harmony and inclusion	
5	We have dedicated staff assigned to track and develop initiatives to promote workplace inclusiveness and harmony	
6	The business case for workplace inclusiveness and harmony is clearly articulated and communicated within the organisation	
	<b>Please add up the number of checks in this section</b>	<b>/6</b>
	<b>Staff training and development</b>	
7	We have put in place training programmes to help our employees improve their ability to communicate and work in a team with members of different backgrounds	
8	We have put in place training programmes to help our line managers manage teams of diverse backgrounds, including managing team of different nationalities and age groups.	
	<b>Please add up the number of checks in this section</b>	<b>/2</b>

<b>Comprehensive assessment</b>		
		Check all statements that apply to my firm
	<b>Workplace culture</b>	
9	We have a buddy system that pairs up new employees with existing employees to help them understand workplace culture and social norms	
10	We make an effort to help our foreign employees settle into Singapore, by providing them with written guides or orientation programmes that contain information about working and living in Singapore	
11	We facilitate the set up of networks or support groups that allow employees of similar profiles to interact and share their tips and experiences (e.g. women's committee, minority networks, expatriate networks)	
12	Our workplace is designed to be open with common areas to encourage socialisation amongst staff	
13	We design our workplace to take into consideration the needs of various employee populations (e.g. nursing rooms for mothers, prayer room, anti-slip flooring for mature workers)	
14	We regularly conduct activities to build awareness and promote positive staff attitudes to promote inclusiveness and harmony (e.g. talks, posters, programmes to promote positive staff attitudes and equip staff with tools/tips on working with colleagues of different backgrounds)	
15	We have a mentorship programme to ensure that employees of different backgrounds receive development support and guidance in their careers	
16	We have a conflict resolution process to manage and resolve conflicts between employees	
17	We have channels for employees (e.g. counseling support) to raise instances of conflicts or abuse and obtain confidential advice and support	
	<b>Please add up the number of checks in this section</b>	<b>/9</b>

	Measurement	
18	We regularly measure the culture of workplace inclusiveness and harmony in the organisation (e.g. through employee surveys, focus groups, tracking of disputes) to identify areas for improvement	
19	We regularly track employee demographics and measures the rate of recruitment, retention and promotion of employees of different profiles (e.g. gender, nationalities, age) to identify, address and prevent any discriminatory practices	
20	We regularly measure how workplace inclusiveness and harmony contributes to the business outcomes of our organisation (e.g. sales targets, market penetration)	
21	The data collected is used at senior management levels to monitor the organisation's performance	
22	Initiatives to promote workplace inclusiveness and harmony are regularly reviewed for effectiveness and improvement	
<b>Please add up the number of checks in this section</b>		<b>/5</b>

## What do my scores mean?

<b>Leadership and Commitment</b>	
If you scored between 4 to 6	Your organisation places a strong strategic importance on workplace inclusiveness and harmony, and your senior management demonstrates commitment and support. This is the most important foundation to cultivate an inclusive and harmonious workforce.
If you scored between 0 to 3	Your organisation can explore how to strengthen the business case for workplace inclusiveness and harmony in the organisation, as well as how senior management can demonstrate their support and commitment. This is important to set a strong foundation for cultivating an inclusive and harmonious workforce. Do read Pages 12 to 14 of the toolkit for some suggestions on how to do this.
<b>Staff training and development</b>	
If you scored 2/2	Your organisation's training and development practices are supportive of an inclusive and harmonious workforce.
If you scored between 0 and 1	Your organisation can explore how to strengthen practices in staff training and development to promote a more inclusive and harmonious workforce. Do read Pages 21 to 23 of the toolkit for some suggestions on how to do this.
<b>Workplace culture</b>	
If you scored between 7 to 9	Your organisation has taken a comprehensive approach to promoting an inclusive and harmonious workplace culture and environment.
If you scored between 0 to 6	While your organisation has made some strides at putting in place practices to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace culture and environment, more can be done. You can read Pages 26 to 39 of the Toolkit for more ideas on practices which you can put in place to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace culture and environment.
<b>Measurement</b>	
If you scored between 3 to 5	Your organisation takes a comprehensive approach to monitoring and evaluating initiatives to promote an inclusive and harmonious workplace culture and environment.
If you scored between 0 to 2	If your organisation is committed to creating an inclusive and harmonious workforce, there needs to be stronger monitoring of the state of workplace diversity management to assess success and implement improvements. You can read Pages 42 to 43 of the Toolkit for more ideas on measures which you can put in place.

# Appendix II – Managers’ competencies – leading diverse teams

To build an inclusive and harmonious workplace, it is important that managers are able to effectively lead diverse teams, and supervise colleagues of different backgrounds (e.g. age, nationality, race/culture, gender). The key competencies and behaviours which managers should display to foster an inclusive and harmonious workforce are outlined in Figure 1 below. More details of the behavioural indicators of each category are set out in the table on the following page.



Figure 1: Manager’s competencies – leading diverse teams

## Managers' competencies – leading diverse teams (behavioural descriptors)

Competency area	Behavioural indicators
<p>Self-awareness: the ability to understand oneself and the impact that one's perceptions and attitudes have on others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Examines own behaviour styles, beliefs and attitudes</li> <li>➔ Expresses feelings and emotions appropriately and in a way that does not cause undue problems for others</li> <li>➔ Thinks about own negative feelings before reacting</li> <li>➔ Reflects and learns from experience</li> <li>➔ Demonstrates a positive attitude towards others</li> </ul>
<p>Understanding others: awareness of different generations/cultures, styles and values; the ability to understand differences in team and help them feel valued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Flexible and open to other perspectives, even when these conflict with his/her own</li> <li>➔ Aware of, respects and relates well to others from varying backgrounds</li> <li>➔ Communicates in a way that encourages trust and cohesion between people with different backgrounds and beliefs</li> <li>➔ Avoids offending people in verbal and non-verbal communication that are based on religion, race, gender, age etc.</li> <li>➔ Recognises that people have their own individual communication style</li> <li>➔ Understands that communication problems may be rooted in language and style rather than underlying motive or intent</li> </ul>
<p>Developing self and others: the ability to ensure both self and others are able to achieve their maximum potential in a diverse team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Open to learning new values, attitudes and feelings</li> <li>➔ Willing to change own patterns of behaviour in the interests of the organisation and the people who are affected by it</li> <li>➔ Takes initiative to give feedback to help people understand others' point of view</li> <li>➔ Takes action to ensure that all employees are given the opportunities to learn and develop</li> <li>➔ Regards working with people from different backgrounds as an opportunity for mutual learning</li> </ul>
<p>Communication: the ability to communicate sensitively and effectively in a respectful manner with employees of diverse backgrounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Examines own communication style when working with people of different backgrounds and adapts as necessary</li> <li>➔ Ensures that there are clear communication channels where all employees can feel safe to give input and feedback</li> <li>➔ Communicates own thoughts and feelings to others sensitively and respectfully</li> <li>➔ Surfaces tensions, deals with conflicts, biases and intolerable behaviours and produces a positive outcome for all groups of employees</li> <li>➔ Shows commitment in communicating effectively when faced with difficult people and situations</li> </ul>

<p>Commitment to inclusiveness: display of exemplary behaviours and taking lead in matters relating to inclusive and harmonious workplaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Plays a lead role in organisational programmes and initiatives to create and support an inclusive and harmonious workplace</li> <li>➔ Displays actions or speak of words that supports inclusiveness in organisation</li> <li>➔ Shows a strong commitment to making the workplace inclusive for team members</li> <li>➔ Encourages staff to work in diverse teams and to acknowledge others</li> </ul>
<p>HR disciplines: the ability to make fair employment decisions and to provide equitable opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Understands HR issues which are related to diversity of workforce (e.g. promotion, placement on projects, career development, compensation and benefits, performance appraisal, etc.)</li> <li>➔ Makes HR decisions for team or department based on merits and competencies</li> <li>➔ Acknowledges and recognises individual and team contributions</li> </ul>
<p>Flexibility in management: the ability to adapt working styles and make work arrangements to cater to the needs of different groups of employees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Creates and develops an environment in which all employees can express themselves and act without fear regardless of their background</li> <li>➔ Values the benefits that different people bring to the organisation</li> <li>➔ Understands and acts on what motivates people as individuals and adapts communication styles accordingly</li> <li>➔ Be sensitive to emotions of team members and responds accordingly taking their backgrounds into consideration</li> </ul>

# Appendix III – Employees’ competencies – working in diverse teams

To build an inclusive and harmonious workplace, it is important that employees are able to work effectively with colleagues from various backgrounds (e.g. age, nationality, race/culture, gender). The key competencies and behaviours which employees should display to foster an inclusive and harmonious workforce are outlined in Figure 1 below. More details of the behavioural indicators of each category are set out in the table on the following page.



Figure 1: Employee’s competencies – working in diverse teams

## Employees' competencies for working in diverse teams: behavioural descriptors

Competency area	Behavioural indicators
<p>Self-awareness: the ability to understand oneself and the impact that one's perceptions and attitudes have on others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Examines own behaviour styles, beliefs and attitudes</li> <li>➤ Expresses feelings and emotions appropriately and in a way that does not cause undue problems for others</li> <li>➤ Thinks about own negative feelings before reacting</li> <li>➤ Reflects and learns from experience</li> <li>➤ Demonstrates a positive attitude towards others</li> </ul>
<p>Appreciating needs of different generations/ cultures, styles and values; the ability to understand and embrace differences in a diverse team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Demonstrates empathy and sees things from other people's perspective</li> <li>➤ Takes the initiative to know colleagues</li> <li>➤ Understands the social, psychological or cultural forces that shape other's views</li> <li>➤ Able to appreciate and respect people from different, backgrounds, values and beliefs</li> <li>➤ Knows that treating people fairly may mean treating them differently according to their ability and background</li> <li>➤ Be mindful of others' emotions and responds accordingly</li> <li>➤ Engages in behaviours that reflect a general understanding of inclusiveness at the workplace</li> </ul>
<p>Communication: the ability to communicate sensitively and effectively when dealing with a diverse team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Examines own communication style when working with people of different backgrounds and changes as necessary</li> <li>➤ Communicates own feelings to others sensitively</li> <li>➤ Shows commitment in communicating effectively when faced with difficult people and situations</li> </ul>
<p>Flexibility and adaptability: demonstration of creativity when solving problems and adaptability when working with a diverse group of people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Adjusts one's expectations of working style and pace when working with diverse groups of people</li> <li>➤ Sensitive to the stress encountered by people who are the minority</li> <li>➤ Openly values the benefits that different people bring to the organisation</li> <li>➤ Adapts communication style accordingly upon sensing the emotions of others</li> </ul>
<p>Developing self: the ability and willingness to seek out opportunities to learn about other diverse groups and learning to conduct oneself appropriately in a diverse team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Open to learning about new values, attitudes and feelings</li> <li>➤ Willing to change own patterns of behaviour in the interests of the organisation and the people who are affected by it</li> <li>➤ Takes active steps to request for feedback to understand other people's point of view and seek right opportunities to learn and develop</li> <li>➤ Regards working with people from different backgrounds as an opportunity for mutual learning</li> </ul>

## Appendix IV - Sample recruitment interview questions

To build an inclusive and harmonious workplace, the recruitment of candidates is an important first step. Organisations should go beyond selecting candidates based on their skills, knowledge and experience, to also include their ability to work with or manage diverse teams in the assessment criteria.

Some sample questions which organisations can use to assess the ability of candidates to work with or manage diverse teams are as follow:

### **For employees:**

- ➔ Can you share what the culture of your last organisation was like? What did you like or dislike about it?
- ➔ Can you provide an example of an instance where you had to work with a colleague of a different background (i.e. age, race/culture, gender, nationality). How did you manage it?
- ➔ What do you think is important in making such a working relationship work?
- ➔ Can you give an example of how you adapted your own working or communication style to work with different team members or work situations?
- ➔ How well do you work with new colleagues of a different background? What do you do to establish a working rapport with them?
- ➔ Can you provide an example of an instance where you found it difficult to get your colleague(s) or supervisor(s) to agree with your recommendation/decision due to differences in values, cultures or background? What did you do about it?

### **For managerial positions:**

- ➔ Have you ever managed a team which comprised individuals of very different profiles and backgrounds? How did you facilitate a culture of teamwork? What do you think is important in managing such a team?
- ➔ Can you provide an example of how you adapted your own management style to work with different team members?
- ➔ Can you provide an example of an instance where you had difficulties managing a subordinate due to differing backgrounds? What did you do to overcome it?
- ➔ If you had a few team members who were not able to work together or get along, what would you do in this situation?

# Appendix V - Communication materials for employees

It is important that organisations take actions to increase the awareness of and educate managers or employees on how to manage or work in diverse teams.

This set of materials has been developed as a reference point for organisations. Individual organisations should adapt the materials and customise the terminology and/or language according to their needs.

## Appendix V - Communication materials for employees

# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE AN INCLUSIVE AND HARMONIOUS WORKPLACE?

An inclusive and harmonious workplace is one which embraces the value which all employees bring to the organisation, regardless of their age, nationality, race/culture, gender.

Have an inclusive and harmonious workplace is integral to the success of our people and our organisation because it:

- Allows all of us to maximise our potential in an environment where everyone is valued, treated with respect and provided with fair opportunities.
- Makes our team more effective with open communication, mutual trust and better team work.
- Improves our organisation's performance when we are able to harness the collective potential of our team.
- Makes our organisation a great place to work in thereby making our employees more motivated to work.



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# Appendix V - Communication materials for employees

## FIVE WAYS TO BE INCLUSIVE

### RESPECT OTHERS

Value every individual. Remember that what one individual finds acceptable, others may find offensive. Be open to all viewpoints.

### DO NOT JUDGE WITHOUT CONFIRMATION

Do not make assumptions about other colleagues. Understand further before jumping to any conclusions.

### KNOW YOURSELF

Understand your own preferences and how they may affect the way you treat others. Ask for feedback to understand other's point of view.

### WATCH YOUR WORDS

Be careful of what you say. You may offend someone without realising it. Be sensitive when using words that may have different meanings in different cultures.

### LISTEN AND ASK FOR EXPLANATIONS

Listen carefully. Clarify any doubts immediately. Ask questions such as "When you say this, do you mean...."



# Appendix V - Communication materials for employees

## TIPS TO BUILD TEAM HARMONY

### DO:

- **Focus on similarities and common goals.** Work towards a common team goal. Create bonds on common interests (e.g. sports, food).
- **Make friendships and help one another.** Get to know your colleagues individually. Understand their strengths and priorities. Share information about common hobbies and interests. Help one another and share experiences on working in the organisation.
- **Have an open mind.** Be open to new ideas and understand that there is no "tried and tested" way to follow.
- **Open communication.** Be open and ask questions. Share feedback with supervisors and colleagues.

### DON'T:

- **Allow your emotions to affect how you behave.** Do not let past experiences or biases affect your relationship with new colleagues.
- **Be certain that everyone thinks like you.** Do not demand others to change first. Be willing to give in.
- **Give up when there is a conflict.** Talk to each other to solve the problem. Be patient and take responsibility to maintain cordial relationships.

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## Appendix V - Communication materials for employees

# 8 THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY TO **BUILD** A MORE **INCLUSIVE** AND **HARMONIOUS** WORKPLACE

1. Get to know a colleague whom you do not know well. Ask him/her out for coffee or lunch.
2. When you are not sure about what a colleague is saying, ask questions like "When you say this, do you mean..."
3. If you have difficulties communicating with your colleagues, try using a different style. Rephrase your question, use hand signals or different forms of communication (e.g. written language).
4. Be patient when talking to colleagues, especially those with a different mother tongue.
5. Do not make jokes about other nationalities, race/cultures or age which may upset your colleagues.
6. Ask colleagues of different profiles to provide feedback on your work.
7. When somebody offers a different opinion, keep an open mind. Consider the merits of the suggestion and ask for more information if necessary.
8. If you meet a colleague behaving in a disrespectful way towards another, inform him/her gently that his/her behaviour is not appropriate.

# Appendix VI - Sample performance appraisal form

Organisations should take into account employees' commitment to work well and manage a diverse team in the performance management system. To do so, the competency areas and behavioural descriptors outlined on pages VI-2 to VI-3 can be customised and incorporated into the appraisal system. A sample template is outlined below for reference.

## Sample performance appraisal template

Rating scale	Descriptor
1 – Outstanding	Exceptional performance in all areas of responsibility. Planned objectives were achieved well above the established standards and accomplishments were made in unexpected areas.
2 – Exceeding expectations	Consistently exceeds established standards in most areas of responsibility. All requirements were met and objectives were achieved above the established standards.
3 – Met expectations	All job requirements were met and planned objectives were accomplished within established standards. There were no critical areas where accomplishments were less than planned.
4 – Needs improvement	Performance in one or more critical areas did not meet expectations. Not all planned objectives were accomplished within the established standards and some responsibilities were not completely met.
5 – Did not meet minimum standards	Did not meet minimum job requirements. Performance was unacceptable. Responsibilities were not being met and important objectives had not been accomplished. Required immediate improvement.

## For Employees

Competency area	Descriptor	Rating					Evidence
		1	2	3	4	5	
Self-awareness	Demonstrates an ability to understand oneself and the impact that one's perceptions and attitudes have on others.						
	Demonstrates awareness of different generations/ cultures, styles and values; has the ability to understand and embrace differences in a diverse team.						
Communication	Demonstrates the ability to communicate sensitively and effectively when dealing with a diverse team.						
Flexibility and adaptability	Demonstrates adaptability when working in a diverse team.						
Developing self	Able and willing to seek out opportunities to learn about other diverse groups and to conduct oneself appropriately in a diverse team.						

## For Managers

Competency area	Descriptor	Rating					Evidence
		1	2	3	4	5	
Self-awareness	Demonstrates the ability to understand oneself and the impact that one's perceptions and attitudes have on others.						
Understanding others	Aware of different generations/cultures, styles and values; able to understand differences in the team and help them feel valued.						
Developing self and others	Demonstrates the ability to ensure both self and others are able to achieve their maximum potential in a diverse team.						
Communication	Demonstrates the ability to communicate sensitively and effectively when dealing with a diverse team.						
Commitment to diversity	Displays exemplary behaviours and takes the lead in matters relating to building an inclusive and harmonious workplace.						
HR disciplines	Demonstrates the ability to make fair employment decisions and to provide equitable opportunities.						
Flexibility in management	Demonstrates the ability to adapt working styles and make work arrangements to cater to the needs of different groups of employees.						

# Appendix VII - Inclusiveness Pulse Check

The Inclusiveness Pulse Check assesses employees' perception of the state of workplace inclusiveness and harmony, and identifies whether organisations' practices and policies have been effective. Specifically, it provides organisations with an assessment of the following:

- ➔ Employee awareness – whether your organisation's message on workplace inclusiveness and harmony has been getting through
- ➔ Employee perception of effectiveness of practices/policies
- ➔ Ability of managers and employees to work with colleagues of diverse backgrounds
- ➔ Employee perception of the inclusiveness of workplace culture

## **Who should complete the Pulse Check?**

It is recommended that the Pulse Check be completed by all employees in the organisation.

Organisations could also randomly select a good representation of employees across different departments and levels of the organisation to complete the Pulse Check.

## **How should my organisations go about completing the Pulse check?**

The Pulse Check is appended on the next page. A soft copy can also be downloaded online at [←insert link→](#) Organisations are encouraged to adapt the questions to suit their needs. Companies can also identify relevant questions for incorporation in existing employee surveys (e.g. employee satisfaction survey, employee engagement survey, organisation climate survey).

The survey can be distributed via hard copy or email to the selected respondents. For easier compilation and analysis, organisations can use survey tools available publicly or in-house. Organisations can also contract independent companies to conduct the survey.

It is strongly recommended that survey responses be kept anonymous and strictly confidential. For more accurate results, organisations are encouraged not to ask for the name or designation of individuals, or any information which will serve as identifiers. All results should be collated and reported on an aggregate basis.

Section 1: Personal information	
<b>Please indicate which department you are from</b> _____	<b>Please indicate how long you have been with the firm</b> <input type="radio"/> < 1 year <input type="radio"/> 1-5 years <input type="radio"/> 5-10 years <input type="radio"/> > 10 years
<b>Please indicate your gender</b> <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female	<b>Please indicate which age group you fall into</b> <input type="radio"/> < 30 year <input type="radio"/> 30-39 years <input type="radio"/> 40-49 years <input type="radio"/> > 60 years
<b>Please indicate your nationality</b> _____	<b>Please indicate your race</b> _____
<b>Are you married?</b> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<b>Do you have children?</b> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

Section 2: Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the statements below.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure
<b>A</b>	<b>Perception of company policies and practices</b>					
1.	←My company→ is committed to creating an inclusive and harmonious workplace					
2.	←My company→ has a clearly articulated vision and strategy to achieve workplace inclusiveness and harmony					
3.	I believe that having a diverse workforce comprising people of various ages, nationalities and gender will improve the performance of ←My company→					
4.	←My company→ supports my professional development and growth					
5.	I find that ←x policy/practice – e.g. inclusion training→ is effective at enabling me to work better with my colleagues of different backgrounds					
<b>B</b>	<b>Senior management support for workplace inclusiveness and harmony</b>					
6.	Senior management demonstrate their support for workplace inclusiveness and harmony through their words and action					
7.	Senior management respects all employees as individuals and values their differences					
<b>C</b>	<b>Workplace culture</b>					
8.	I fit in well at ←My company→					
9.	Colleagues at ←My company→ are pleasant and co-operative to work with					
10.	My colleagues of different nationalities are generally easy to work and communicate with					
11.	My colleagues of different generations are generally easy to work and communicate with					
12.	I am sometimes concerned with the way some people treat others at ←My company→, e.g. making cultural jokes					

Section 2: Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the statements below.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure
13.	Sometimes the way people treat me at ←My company→ upsets me					
<b>D</b>	<b>Relationship with supervisor</b>					
14.	I work well with my immediate supervisor					
15.	I am able to communicate well with my immediate supervisor most of the time					
16.	My supervisor treats me fairly and with dignity					
17.	My supervisor values my contribution to the team					
18.	My supervisor provides me with feedback and guidance					
19.	I am evaluated fairly at work, based on my performance, regardless of my background (i.e. nationality, gender, race)					
<b>E</b>	<b>Relationship with subordinates</b>					
20.	My subordinates understand my instructions and communications most of the time					
21.	I am generally able to work well with my subordinates					
22.	I find it occasionally challenging to manage employees of different generations					
23.	I find it occasionally challenging to manage employees of different nationalities					
24.	I find it occasionally challenging to manage employees of different gender					
<b>F</b>	<b>Overall</b>					
25.	←My company→ is an inclusive and harmonious place to work in					

## Making sense of the results

Once the employee survey is completed, the results can be analysed as follows:

- ➔ As an aggregate, to provide information on areas which the organisation is doing well, or opportunities for improvement
- ➔ At the department-level, to provide department heads with an understanding of areas which the department is doing well, and opportunities for improvement
- ➔ Segmented into employee populations (e.g. employees with families, by age groups, by nationality), to identify segments of populations which may be facing higher degree of challenges at work

In addition to the survey, follow-up focus group sessions can be conducted with employee groups to provide more in-depth analysis and qualitative information on key sources of challenges and barriers, as well as to obtain their perception on opportunities for improvement.

# Appendix VIII - Sample exit interview questions

## **BASIC QUESTIONS**

- ➔ Why have you decided to leave the company?
- ➔ What does your new company offer that encouraged you to accept their offer and leave this company? (This can be in terms of opportunities for advancement, salary, annual leave, working hours, maternity/family leave).

## **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- ➔ Do you feel you had the resources and support necessary to accomplish your job? If not, what was missing?
- ➔ Do you feel you were given equal access to opportunities that arose, either relating directly to work, training and/or learning and development, or to chances of advancement?
- ➔ Were your job responsibilities characterised correctly during the interview process and orientation?
- ➔ Did you feel a part of the team you were working with and the company culture?
- ➔ Describe factors that limited your ability to contribute effectively.

# Appendix VIII - Sample exit interview questions

## **MANAGEMENT SUPPORT**

- ➔ The quality of supervision is important to most people at work. How was your relationship with your manager?
- ➔ What could your supervisor do to improve his or her management style and skill, especially pertaining to the management of diverse employee populations?
- ➔ Did you feel that the management helped you accomplish your personal and professional development and career goals?
- ➔ Was the management understanding of your needs (be it age, race/culture, gender or nationality) when it came to assigning roles and responsibilities?

## **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT AND NEED**

- ➔ What would you recommend to help us create a more inclusive and harmonious workplace?
- ➔ Do you have any recommendations regarding work-life balance, maternity/family leave, working hours for older workers, or integrating employees of different backgrounds into an inclusive and harmonious workplace?

**N**NATIONAL  
**I**INTEGRATION  
**W**WORKING  
**G**GROUP  
FOR  
**W**WORKPLACES



# creating inclusive and harmonious workplaces

A Manager's Guide

creating  
inclusive and  
harmonious  
workplaces

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# INTRODUCTION

Managing teams is becoming increasingly challenging with the rising diversity of our workforce. While diverse teams collectively present a greater wealth of experience and ideas, they often have a greater variety of communication styles, motivations, working approaches and norms, making for more complexity in team management.

The purpose of this guide is to provide managers like yourself with strategies and tips to be more effective in managing your diverse teams.

## Who is this guide for?

If you are a supervisor who manages an individual or a team who has a profile different from your own (for example, different age group, nationality, race, culture and gender), this guide is for you!

## How to use this guide?

This guide has been organised into two main sections:

**Section 1** tells you can be more effective at understanding and managing your diverse team members. You will learn more about:

- How to be a more inclusive manager (**page M8**)
- Managing across generations, nationalities and cultures (**pages M11-M15**)

**Section 2** focuses on how you can help your team members work better with each other. You will find out more about:

- How to create an inclusive and harmonious team culture (**pages M16-M19**)
- How to resolve team conflicts (**page M20**)

A series of self-reflection exercises are included to help you assess the extent to which your decisions, behaviours and team cultures are inclusive. Use these to identify areas where you would like to change or improve. Read the tips to give you ideas of actions or strategies you can adopt in your identified areas.

## Challenges of managing diverse teams

The following are some typical challenges faced by managers and supervisors. Have you encountered any of them?

- Challenges in communication between employees of different nationalities
- Difficulty in recruiting, managing or retaining individuals of different generations
- Lack of teamwork and cooperation between team members
- Formation of in-groups and out-groups within teams

These challenges can impede the performance of your teams and affect employee engagement and team morale.

It is therefore important that you, as a manager, are able to effectively manage your diverse team and create an inclusive and harmonious environment to maximise your team's performance.

# MANAGING TEAM MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS

Having a diverse team brings fresh ideas and innovative approaches. The challenge is that these members will also have different communication styles, understandings and expectations. Effective management is important to enable the team to work effectively together and help all members reach their full potential, thereby harnessing the advantages of a diverse team.

## **A look within: how inclusive are you as a manager?**

All of us have preferences based on our experience and level of awareness which influence our decisions and behaviours as managers. It is important to understand how your preferences affect your decisions as they influence your effectiveness at managing diverse teams.

Take a minute to reflect how your preferences may have affected your decisions as a manager. Use the reflection exercise (**page M6**) to help you.

Identify areas where you would like to change or do better to be a more inclusive manager. Think about strategies and actions which you can take to be more effective at managing your diverse team. You may find the tips and strategies on **pages M8 to M10** helpful.



## REFLECTION EXERCISE #1:

# HOW DO YOUR PREFERENCES AFFECT YOUR DECISIONS AS A MANAGER?

Recall recent work situations you faced. Take a moment to think about the decisions you have made as a team leader:

### **In recruitment...**

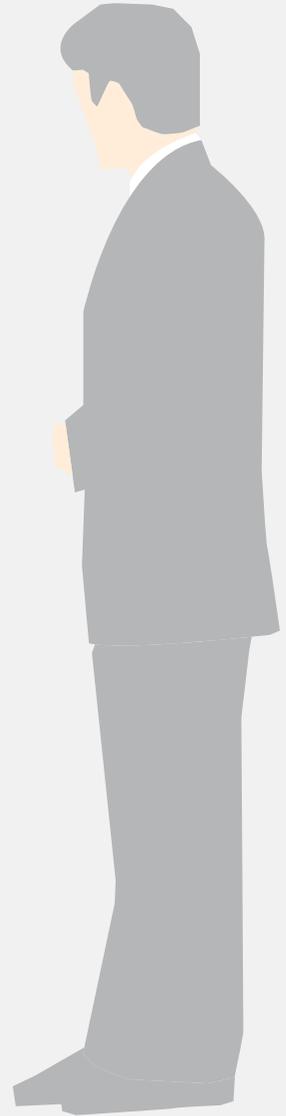
- Do you typically hire the same “type” of person? Do factors such as age, nationality, race/culture, gender affect your decisions?

### **In team arrangements and work assignments...**

- Are your decisions on work allocation based on the task specifications and capabilities of the staff?
- Are you providing the best development and skill-building opportunities to all in your team?

### **In providing feedback and evaluating performance...**

- In evaluating performance, do you consider factors based on the profile of the person unrelated to his/her demonstrated results?
- How well do you know each of the employees you supervise? Do you know what motivates them, how they like to be recognised, how they learn best?
- Do you prefer people with styles or backgrounds similar to yours?
- Do you offer more feedback to certain members of your team more easily or more regularly? Why?



**In your day-to-day interactions...**

- Do you make assumptions about your colleagues and team members based on their profile (e.g. age, nationality, race/culture, gender)? Do you test or clarify your assumptions before making decisions based on them?
- Do you believe there is only one right way of doing things? Are you open other ways which may accomplish the same goals?
- With whom do you eat lunch with regularly? Are your lunch buddies of a certain background/profile?
- Do you take immediate action with people you supervise when they behave in ways which show disrespect for others (e.g. cultural jokes?)

After reviewing these questions, are there specific areas where your preferences for certain profiles, styles or backgrounds, which are not related to team members' performance or capabilities, have affected your decisions as a manager?

Identify the areas which you would like to change or improve. For ideas on strategies and tips to address them, read **pages M8 to M10**.



## TIPS AND STRATEGIES

# HOW TO BE A MORE INCLUSIVE MANAGER

- 1. Respect differences.** Value the uniqueness of every individual.
- 2. Keep an open mind.** Be open to new ways and approaches and encourage your team to do so.
- 3. Build self-awareness.** Be aware of your own behaviour and beliefs and how they may affect the way you treat others. Be proactive in asking for feedback to understand other people's point of view.
- 4. Get to know your team members on an individual level.** Be careful not to stereotype someone based on his/her profile. Get to know and understand your team members and adapt your management style to meet their needs. (Go through the reflection exercise on page 7 to ascertain how well you know your team members).
- 5. Acknowledge differences in communication styles and languages.** Be mindful that some employees may have difficulty expressing themselves in our business language, English. Be attentive and take time to clarify any doubts. Be prepared to vary your communication style to communicate effectively with your team members if necessary. Consider enrolling these employees for English language courses.
- 6. Make decisions based on team members' abilities and task specifications.** Avoid assigning projects, assessing performance, selecting training participants or assigning roles and responsibilities based on factors such as gender, nationality, culture, or age, unless specific traits are necessary to perform the job.

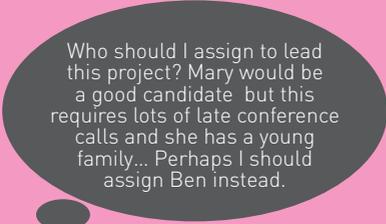
# TIPS AND STRATEGIES

## HOW TO BE A MORE INCLUSIVE MANAGER



### Caution

Be careful in making assumptions about team members based on your preconceptions, even when well intentioned. Make sure to clarify the assumptions before making decisions based on them.



Who should I assign to lead this project? Mary would be a good candidate but this requires lots of late conference calls and she has a young family... Perhaps I should assign Ben instead.



**Boss**



Sigh... I got passed over for yet another plum project... Why are all the good opportunities given to Ben? After all the hard work I've put in, perhaps it is time to move on...



**Mary**



## REFLECTION EXERCISE #2:

# HOW WELL DO YOU UNDERSTAND EACH OF YOUR TEAM MEMBERS?

Being effective in managing diverse team members is not just about managing others the way you would like to be managed. It is also about understanding them well enough to treat them the way they would like to be treated.

Take a minute to list down all the members in your team and think about how well you understand them.

Team member	Motivation	Communication	Preferred management style
Name of team member #1	What motivates this team member? Some examples are: → Compensation → Recognition → Challenging work → Meaningful work → Development opportunities → Flexibility → Strategic decision making → Supportive colleagues → Autonomy → Organisational vision	What is the preferred communication style of this team member? For example: → Individual one-to-one discussions → Team meetings → Email → Telephone → Text messaging → Memos	How does the team member like to be managed? → How often, and in what form, does he/she like to receive feedback? → What do they value from a supervisor? (e.g. clear direction, democratic approach, coaching and advice)
Team member #2			
Team member #3			
.....			

# MANAGING ACROSS GENERATIONS AND NATIONALITIES

A study on Inclusive and Harmonious Workplaces conducted by the Ministry of Manpower in 2010 found that managers and organisations faced the greatest challenge in managing diverse teams of different generations and nationalities. This was often due to differences in culture, communication styles, attitudes, perspectives and social norms.

To improve your understanding of your team members of different generations and nationalities, Boxes 1-1 and 1-2 on **pages M12** and **M14** highlight the different characteristics of the different employee groups, and provide tips on how you can be more effective in managing them.

Note: These groupings are not intended to stereotype individuals based on their profiles. Rather, they serve to provide insights into the patterns of differences between generational groups.

There are great variations amongst individuals and each individual may not demonstrate all the characteristics identified with their profile. It is important to get to know all team members at an individual level to understand their personal characteristics and how you can bring out the best in each of them.

## BOX 1-1: MANAGING ACROSS GENERATIONS

### Gen Y

**Born after 1980**

#### Perceived strengths:

- Good at multi-tasking
- Technologically-savvy
- Confident
- Short attention span
- Global world-view
- Achievement-oriented
- Likes to have fun at work

Gen Y



#### Tips for bringing out the best in them

- Involve them in decision making
- Provide mentorship, coaching and advice
- Show willingness to embrace and consider their ideas
- Provide a fun, employee-centered workplace
- Be flexible – find ways to allow them to pursue the activities they enjoy (e.g. unpaid leave to travel)
- Provide stimulation through a variety of roles
- Set ground rules early, particularly around social networking and technology usage.
- Provide clear direction, support and regular feedback

### Gen X

**Born between 1965 and 1980**

#### Perceived strengths:

- Ambitious
- Adaptable
- Technologically literate
- Independent and likes autonomy

Gen X



#### Tips for bringing out the best in them

- Be approachable, encourage ideas.
- Provide challenging and varied work
- Use performance-based rewards and promotion
- Take time to be personal and acknowledge them individually for contributions
- Involve them in decision-making
- Offer professional development opportunities
- Help them see how their contributions achieve organisation's goals
- Provide mentorship
- Provide clear direction and support
- Provide regular feedback

## BOX 1-1: MANAGING ACROSS GENERATIONS

### **Baby boomers** **Born between 1946 and 1964**

#### **Perceived strengths:**

- Dedicated and hardworking
- Good team players
- Respect for authority and hierarchal structure
- Experienced

#### **Tips for bringing out the best in them**

- Provide challenging and varied work assignments
- Be prepared to be flexible to allow them to balance family and work responsibilities
- Provide recognition for their contributions
- Show respect for their inputs, knowledge and experience
- Use them as mentors to transfer knowledge and experience to younger generations
- Be coachable. Tap on their experience

### **Baby Boomers**



### **Traditionalists** **Born before 1946**

#### **Perceived strengths:**

- Strong work ethic
- Experienced
- Disciplined
- Stable
- May be reluctant to speak up
- Avoids conflict

#### **Tips for bringing out the best in them**

- Be prepared to be flexible in work arrangements and working hours
- Provide recognition for their contributions
- Show respect for their inputs, knowledge and experience
- Provide freedom and flexibility for them to do their work. Avoid micromanaging them
- Provide clear and direct communications
- Continue to offer development opportunities
- Use them as mentors to transfer knowledge and experience to younger generations
- Be coachable. Tap on their experience

### **Traditionalists**



## BOX 1-2: MANAGING ACROSS NATIONALITIES AND CULTURES

The following are some differences between cultures/nationalities which may cause challenges at work:

**Language** - Languages differ across cultures. Even when a common language is used, the same words may have different meanings. Non-verbal communication (e.g. body language, gestures) also differ.

- ➔ **Direct vs indirect** - The degree to which communication is made explicit across cultures may vary. Some cultures assume more commonality of knowledge than others, and communicate in more indirect ways.
- ➔ **Perception of time** - In some cultures, time is seen as a limited resource whereas others view time to be more plentiful. This may result in differences in the sense of urgency in tasks.
- ➔ **Perception of hierarchy** - The extent to which hierarchy is respected and valued varies across cultures.
- ➔ **Perception of individual vs collective** - Some cultures value individual uniqueness and independence, whereas others expect people to prioritise the collective good over their own preferences.

### Example of differences in communication style

Pursuant to our request for my opinion regarding my personal availability for a face-to-face meeting to discuss our mutual concerns about the matter in question, I would like to propose for your consideration that the best utilisation of our time would be to multitask by holding said meeting concurrently in conjunction with the consumption of the mid-day meal.



**Indirect**

Let's have lunch



**Direct**



## Tips on how to manage challenges arising from differences in communication and perspectives

- Listen carefully and clarify. Ask: “When you say this, do you mean...?”. Ask team members to go over their assignment with you.
- If necessary, change your communication styles to accommodate other members in the team. Rephrase your sentence. Use alternative forms of communication. Solicit feedback about your own communication and management style.
- Be approachable. Develop an atmosphere where team members are comfortable asking for assistance
- Avoid jargon and slang. Using Singlish can be confusing. Keep the message simple and straight to the point.
- Help team members understand the organisation values and norms. Share organisational values, structure, working norms and expectations at the onset.

# BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AND HARMONIOUS CULTURE WITHIN YOUR TEAM

In addition to being able to effectively manage your team members, it is also important to build a culture of inclusiveness and harmony within the team to facilitate effective communication, trust and teamwork between team members.

## **How well does your diverse team work together?**

First, think about how well your diverse team is working together. You can use the reflection exercise on the next page to help you.



# HOW WELL DOES YOUR TEAM WORK TOGETHER?

The following are some dimensions which indicate how well a team works together:

## 1. Level of communication and interaction

- How effectively and frequently do your team members communicate with one another?
- Do all your team members interact with one another in informal settings (e.g. during lunch, company activities, after work)?
- Do conflicts or misunderstandings occur often?

## 2. Level of collaboration

- Does your team work towards a common goal, or do individual interests prevail?
- Do you notice any cliques, within your team?
- Are team members willing to share information and resources with one another?

## 3. Mutual care and support

- Are team members proactive in offering help to those who need it?
- When a new team member comes on board, are the incumbent members proactive in helping them settle in?
- Do team members treat one another with respect?

## 4. Team morale

- Are team members energized about coming to work? Do they appear to enjoy working together?





# TIPS AND STRATEGIES BUILDING A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVENESS WITHIN YOUR TEAM

The following provide some suggestions on how you can foster a more inclusive and harmonious team culture:

- 1. Focus on common goals.** Establish a common team vision or objectives which will transcend team members' differences and encourage all to work towards a common goal.
- 2. Remove “us” and “them”.** Do not draw the line between different employee populations within the team.
- 3. Communicate to your team members the importance of sustaining an inclusive culture.** Emphasise the importance and benefits it brings, such as enhanced team productivity and a more harmonious work environment.
- 4. Emphasise behavioural expectations that are likely to foster an inclusive environment.** Have regular conversations with team members (e.g. during mentoring sessions, performance review, team meetings) on their ability to work effectively as a diverse team and discuss possible areas of improvement.
- 5. Recruit with inclusive values and behaviour in mind.** Beyond recruiting team members based on merit (relevant skills, knowledge, experience, etc), you should also keep in mind the attitudes and behaviours which new members may bring to the team. Refer to box 2-1 for some sample interview questions.

## Box 2-1: Sample interview questions

Some questions which you can ask to gauge candidates' inclusive values and behaviour include:

- ➔ Can you provide an example of an instance where you had to work with a difficult colleague? How did you overcome it?
- ➔ Give an example of how you adapted your own working or communication style to work with different team members or work situations.
- ➔ How well do you work with new colleagues? What do you do to establish a working rapport with them?
- ➔ Have you worked with colleagues of different profile (e.g. generation, nationality)? What do you think is important in making the relationship work?

## TIPS AND STRATEGIES

- 6. Orientate new team members.** When bringing new team members on board, clearly define team values and expected behaviours at the start. Encourage incumbent team members to welcome and help new team members settle in.
- 7. Seek out perspectives of team members of different profiles.** Diverse groups provide greater variety of insights and experiences. Encourage full participation and involvement by all team members. For example, invite more participation during team meetings by doing a quick go-around to invite every person to provide an opinion, or form break-out groups for discussion.
- 8. Address biases and intolerable behaviour promptly.** Behaviour that are offensive to other team members should be addressed quickly.
- 9. Provide opportunities for employees to increase understanding and interaction with each other.** Provide opportunities for employees to bond on common interests. Some things which you can do include:
  - Organise regular team lunches bearing in mind dietary restrictions due to cultures or religions.
  - Organise informal activities to help employees interact (e.g. sports activities, family outings)
  - Celebrate special holidays of the nationalities/ cultures of team members, and encourage them to share more about their respective cultures to facilitate understanding between colleagues.
- 10. Be a role model.** Walk the talk and practise what you advocate.

# TIPS AND STRATEGIES MANAGING CONFLICTS WITHIN YOUR TEAM

Even when teams are effective in working well together, conflicts can arise. Within diverse teams, conflicts often result from differences in values, social norms and languages. It is important to resolve matters quickly so that they do not spiral downwards to affect team cohesion.

The following are some tips on resolving workplace conflicts arising from differences in team members' backgrounds, values and communication styles.

- 1. Identify the root of the problem and clarify each party's position to avoid ambiguity.** Sometimes, misunderstandings lead parties involved to believe that a conflict exists when actually it does not. Listen and articulate respective positions clearly so that each party agrees on and is clear about the root of the issue.
- 2. Facilitate understanding of the other party.** If the root of the conflict is due to the difference in cultural norms or values, focus on helping each party understand each other's needs, cultural norms and values. Encourage both parties to discuss the issues, collaborate and/or compromise.
- 3. Involve a neutral mediator.** If the conflict is due to a difference in values or languages of different nationalities/cultures, it is sometimes helpful to enlist the help of a trained mediator who understands both nationalities/cultures.
- 4. Commit to the solution.** Once a mutually agreeable solution has been reached, summarise and review what the parties have agreed upon. Identify where potential issues may arise and the role each party must play in being aware of his or her own communication styles or behaviour. Reiterate the inclusive values and behaviour they should commit to as a team.
- 5. Resolve conflicts quickly.** This will minimise impact on morale, communication, cohesion and trust in the team. Stay committed until the conflict is resolved.

# SUMMARY

In summary, the following are the top 10 things to keep in mind in managing diverse teams:

## **To be a more inclusive manager in your behaviours and decisions:**

1. Know yourself. Understand your preferences and how they affect your decisions and behaviours towards your team members.
2. Respect differences
3. Understand your team members at an individual level. Do not stereotype or make assumptions about team members.
4. Make decisions based on team members' qualifications and task needs.
5. Acknowledge differences in communication styles and languages

## **To build a culture of inclusiveness within your team:**

6. Focus on common goals
7. Communicate to your team members on the importance and expectations of an inclusive environment
8. Address and resolve biases, intolerable behaviour and conflicts promptly.
9. Create opportunities for team members to understand and interact with each other
10. Walk the talk. Be a good role model

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## **Ministry of Manpower (MOM)**

MOM formulates and implements manpower policies in Singapore. The MOM website provides various resources relating to our workforce and workplace, including resources to foster inclusive and harmonious workplaces.

### **For more information, log on to:**

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/>

### **Address:**

18 Havelock Road Singapore 059764

### **Contact number:**

(+65) 6438 5122

## **Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP)**

TAFEP was set up to promote the adoption of non-discriminatory and responsible employment practices among employers, employees and the general public. Those who have encountered workplace-related discrimination are invited to contact TAFEP for advice and assistance.

TAFEP provides a range of services, tools and resources, including training workshops, advisory services, and educational materials, to help organisations implement fair employment practices and comply with employment legislation.

### **For more information, log on to:**

<http://www.fairemployment.sg/>

### **Address:**

122 Middle Road, #05-02 Midlink Plaza Singapore 188973

### **Contact number:**

(+65) 6838 0969

### **Human Capital Singapore (HCS)**

HCS is the approved national centre for Continuing Education and Training. It trains and develops people managers so that they can re-design critical HR processes, identify and build needed competencies and deploy best HR practices to meet the changing expectations of the industry.

HCS conducts training programmes under the HR Workforce Skills Qualifications programme developed by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency. One of the courses conducted by HCS “Develop a strategy for managing diversity”, helps learners to:

1. Identify key issues and characteristics of diversity to support the development of diversity management strategies;
2. Facilitate the development of policies and procedures targeting specific diversity needs within an organisation; and
3. Identify criteria to evaluate the performance of diversity management strategy and define specific measures to be used.

#### **For more information, log on to:**

<http://www.hcs.com.sg>

#### **Address:**

15 Hoe Chiang Road #23-01 Tower 15 Singapore 089316

#### **Contact number:**

[+65] 6423 0388

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