



How Brands Win by Being More Inclusive and Accessible to Everyone

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There are countless audiences around the world who are marginalized by an equally diverse number of factors. Therefore, it's imperative that more organizations around the globe emphasize a commitment to both diversity and inclusion as they strive to make their workplaces, products, and services more inclusive and more accessible to everyone.

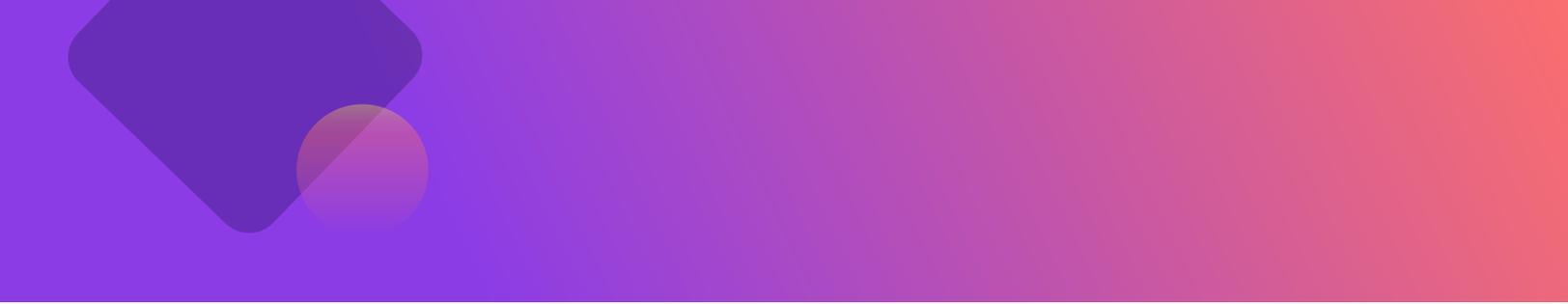
Many of the world's most successful brands have committed to putting diversity and inclusion on their business leadership agenda and are making public commitments to tangible change. Some of the most influential companies have taken it even further and joined networks such as the Valuable 500, whose mission includes playing a leading role in driving such change.

But what does that mission look like in less abstract terms when translated into customer experience (CX) and employee experience (EX)? Finding that out is the focus of today's conversation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE EXPERIENCES

An inclusive experience is of vital importance from every possible viewpoint. Its ethical importance is self-evident, and fortunately, it is now also commonly understood that fostering a diverse and inclusive company culture benefits businesses as diverse minds and abilities make companies more innovative, more resilient, and therefore better equipped for growth.

Building a balanced workforce when it comes to gender, age, ethnicity, values, education, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and other characteristics is key to an employee experience that helps organizations get the best from their workforces. Actually achieving that goal, though, requires organizations to embed their diversity and inclusion strategy into every part of the employee journey.



For example, the communication channels considered when attracting new talent are as important as writing job specs in a gender-neutral way. Hiring managers need to be trained for unconscious bias in order to recruit effectively. Additionally, onboarding processes should include an induction to all companies' diversity and inclusion initiatives.

The development phase should also include training specific to diversity and inclusion, and should make use of different channels and tools to ensure that everyone can access learning materials. All organizations' leadership and career progression stages should allow for diverse talent to move up the ladder so that representation is guaranteed at all levels. Finally, brands should conduct exit interviews to understand why employees are leaving, as well as company culture's influence on that decision.

In addition, a diverse and inclusive company culture helps brands outperform competitors, as a diverse workforce inevitably drives a more inclusive customer experience. The incentive for organizations to undertake this work is that companies with inclusive brand, product, and service experiences are quicker to respond to the mistakes that may unfold while attempting to connect to audiences.

To some extent, these mistakes are inevitable as companies and brands learn how to better reach certain audiences, but adopting a culture, methodology, and platform all built around accessibility will make organizations much better equipped to respond when a customer raises an issue. And, considering how quickly word of such mistakes can spread across social and other media these days, organizations cannot afford not to be in this position.

MAKING INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS A REALITY, NOT JUST A STATEMENT

Half the inclusion battle is taking a step back to remember that you may not necessarily belong to the audiences you're attempting to reach, and that it's therefore important to let them tell you how they prefer to reach out.

A truly inclusive customer and/or employee experience program begins with considering the right channels and signals when gathering feedback from all participants. The idea here is to ensure that no one risks being excluded from providing valuable feedback. This strategy also calls for using software that provides accessible font sizes, contrast flexibility, and other elements when powering surveys.

Another important aspect is language. When it comes to the wording used in questionnaires and surveys, many customer experience program surveys today lack diversity with respect to ability, gender identity, language, race, socioeconomic status, and other characteristics. The end result is customers, employees, and prospects feeling uncomfortable, confused, or even excluded.

An effective and inclusive experience program collects feedback from all respondents, analyzes that feedback, and acts on it with the assistance of financial metrics, operational metrics, and other company-wide data. To ensure that everyone can use this information to analyze and act on data, it needs to be disseminated using software platforms that comply with international accessibility standards.



INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES DEMAND CONSISTENT COMMITMENT AND ACTION

All told, aspirational statements are insufficient for creating more inclusive experiences for customers and employees. Laying the groundwork for more inclusive experiences demands consistent commitment and action. Design with the end in mind—it's a good principle for experience program design in general, and vital to greater inclusion in particular.

Additionally, diversity and inclusion aren't important 'just' for diversity and inclusion's sake. When organizations invest time and resources into more inclusive interactions with both customers and employees, they gradually build a culture of accessible experiences and therefore Experience Improvement (XI). It's important to bear that spirit of accessibility in mind when evaluating experience vendors and platforms as well.

In summary, diversity and inclusion done right lead to meaningfully improved experiences. Lived consistently, it means more customers and happier employees. It means greater customer and employee loyalty and commitment. Finally, it means fundamentally connective relationships, more profitable business and sustainable marketplace leadership that inevitably comes about as a result of more diverse and inclusive experiences.

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