DIVERSITY – EQUITY – INCLUSION – BELONGING
KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

TALENT DIMENSIONS

A

ACCULTURATION
The process of becoming familiar with and able to function effectively in a different culture or environment – without losing one's own cultural identity.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
Action taken by an employer to promote the employment and/or advancement of people who have been historical targets of discrimination.

ALLY
Advocates for individuals from underrepresented or marginalized groups. Allies take actions that support people outside of their own group. They stand beside those they represent. They stand with the people they support. They do not speak for them.

ASSIMILATION
Giving up of one's own culture or self-identity in order to fully adopt the culture, values and patterns of another group.

ASSUMPTIONS
Ideas and beliefs that are taken for granted to be true or real. Deeply-held perspectives about what matters, how things happen, what people are like and what can be expected of others.

B

BELONGING
The sense that you are valued, treated fairly and honestly, seen as an individual with something to offer and made to feel you are a part of things.

BIPOC (BLACK, INDIGENOUS AND PEOPLE OF COLOR)
Term commonly used to describe individuals who are not considered white.

BLACK LIVES MATTER (BLM)
A social movement begun in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman (2013) in the death of Trayvon Martin focused on building local power, seeking social justice and intervening when violence is inflicted on Black communities by systemic racism.

C

CHANGE AGENT
An individual whose commitment, skills, knowledge and formal or informal influence can effect change.

CISGENDER
Often abbreviated as cis, the term describes people whose gender identity (and often gender expression) matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

COLORBLINDNESS
The process by which a person attempts to ignore the existence of race or skin color, often expressed as "I don't see color." Although the intention may be to see past skin color to just see the person, this deemphasizing of race, ignores the real, lived experience of people of color.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE
The ability to interact effectively across various elements of diversity and to flex with differences those elements present. It requires awareness of one's own and others' cultures, assumptions, values, styles, biases, attitudes and areas of privilege. A culturally competent individual understands their potential impact on others and interacts in appropriate and effective ways that promote inclusion.

CULTURE
A total way of life for a group of people. Culture is developed and communicated, consciously or unconsciously from generation to generation. It consists of ideas, belief systems, habits, attitudes, language, customs and traditions that help to create the "rules" for a group of people to coexist.

D

DISABILITY
A mental or physical difference that impacts an individual's everyday activities. Increasingly, disability is being discussed as a social construct, meaning that physical and mental norms are arbitrary factors from which we then determine what is different or what is a functional versus perceived disability.

"No matter what people tell you, words and ideas can change the world."

- ROBIN WILLIAMS

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DISCOUNTING
Causing someone to feel or be viewed as less valuable or less important.

DISCRIMINATION
The denial of equal and equitable treatment to individuals or groups based on their race, national origin, religion, age, color, differing abilities or gender.

DIVERSITY
The differences and similarities of people. Diversity includes many visible features such as race, gender and age and some less obvious such as personality style, ethnicity, cognitive functions, etc.

E

E.E.O. (EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY)
Means freedom from discrimination for members of protected classes based on factors such as race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability or genetic information.

EMOTIONAL TAX
Effects on health, well-being and ability to fully engage and thrive in the workplace that result from a combination of being on guard to protect against bias and feeling different or excluded due to gender, race, ethnicity or other dimensions of diversity.

EQUALITY
Treating everyone the same way, sometimes referred to or resulting in a "one size fits all" approach.

EQUITY
Ensuring people have an equal opportunity and access to things, resources and opportunities. It doesn't mean everyone gets the same thing – but instead, gets what they need. There is an understanding that one size does not fit all.

ETHNICITY
A group of people who identify with one another based on shared culture.

ETHNOCENTRISM
The feeling and belief that one's own culture should be the primary frame of reference when understanding others.

F

FRAME OF REFERENCE
A particular way of perceiving and making sense of the world around us. A set of filters – developed over time from our life experiences – through which thoughts, actions and decisions pass.

G

GENDER EXPRESSION
The way that someone outwardly displays their gender through style, demeanor and social behavior.

GENDER IDENTITY
Refers to the internal perception of one's gender – how people label themselves.

GENDER NON-BINARY
Relating to or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither solely male nor solely female.

GENERALIZATION
Taking one or a few aspects or facts and making a broader, more universal statement about a group without acknowledging or appreciating the individuality of group members.

I

IMPACT
The actual effect or results of an action or behavior.

INCLUSION
Creating a workplace of mutual respect, trust and commitment where everyone feels free to, and is encouraged to, contribute based on their unique talents, experiences and backgrounds.

INDIGENOUS
A person or group of people whose culture, identity and, often, spirituality are rooted in a particular place.

INTENT
The purpose for which an action is taken.

INTERSECTIONALITY
The intertwining of social identities — such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. — which can result in unique experiences, opportunities and barriers.

J

JUDGMENT
One's own opinion about whether another person's behavior or characteristics are "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong," "normal" or "abnormal."

L

LATINX/O/A/E
Relating to or marked by Latin American heritage — used by some as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina.

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LGBTQIA/LGBTQ+
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (one's sexual or gender identity), intersex, and asexual/aromantic/agender.

M

MANAGING DIVERSITY
The management of an organization's culture and systems to ensure that all people are given the opportunity to participate in and contribute to achievement of organizational goals.

MARKETPLACE DIVERSITY
A consumer base that is made up of individuals who have a range of distinctive backgrounds, needs and preferences and purchase and/or utilize the goods and services that meet those needs.

MELTING POT
A concept, frequently used in the United States, that implies people from other countries or regions blended their cultures and practices into a common way of life and work after relocating.

MICROAGGRESSIONS
Subtle, often unconscious, behaviors that often unintentionally denigrate someone from a historically marginalized or non-dominant group. They are sometimes small; but, if experienced regularly or repeatedly, can result in the targeted individual feeling excluded, devalued and disengaged. Experiencing microaggressions continuously has been described as "death by a thousand tiny cuts."

MUTUAL ADAPTATION
A process by which both individuals and the corporate culture adjust to differing needs so that neither is expected to take on the entire responsibility for changing.

N

NEURODIVERSITY
The concept that there is great range of differences in how people's brains are wired and work and that these distinctive neurological processes should be valued in the same way we value any and all unique characteristics and dimensions.

NORM
A standard, model, pattern or average behavior of a larger group.

O

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
The prevailing beliefs, assumptions, values, norms and attitudes that are shared by members of an organization. They often operate unconsciously in a basic, "taken-for granted" fashion and define an organization's view of itself and its environment.

P

PEOPLE OF COLOR
Individuals who do not identify as only white or Caucasian under the current U.S. Census ethnicity categories.

PREJUDICE
The inclination to cast a group of people in a favorable or unfavorable light, usually based on a superior/inferior belief system and without just grounds or sufficient information. Prejudice can be directed at many different groups. For example, it can be race-based (racism), gender-based (sexism), age-based (ageism), ethnic-based (ethnocentrism) or based on other factors.

PRIVILEGE
Access to resources, experiences, opportunities and advantages a person has, consciously or not consciously, by virtue of being part of a dominant group in society. Privilege provides freedom from stress, anxiety, fear or harm related to your identity.

PRONOUNS

The pronoun that a person chooses to use for themselves to describe their gender identity.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY
Exists when individuals know they can interact with others in a group without fear of negative reactions, repercussions or reprisals.

R

RACE
A social construct that artificially divides individuals into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation or history, ethnic classification, and/or the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Scientists agree that there is no biological or genetic basis for racial categories.

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S

SEXUAL ORIENTATION
The type of attraction one feels for others, often based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to.

STEREOTYPE
Blanket beliefs and expectations about members of certain groups that present oversimplified opinions, prejudiced attitudes or uncritical judgments. Stereotypes are typically negative, based on little information and highly generalized.

T

TEAM
A group of people who pool their knowledge, skills and creativity to achieve collective and/or shared goals.

TRANSGENDER
An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy or how one is perceived in daily life.

U

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS
Beliefs and opinions about certain groups of people formed outside conscious awareness based on one's experiences. Biases are a part of and the result of the brain's need to categorize and efficiently process incoming stimuli but can lead to automatic exclusionary behaviors, actions or decisions.

V

VALUES
Sets of internal guidelines, principles and standards a group uses to define right and wrong, establish norms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and provide foundational elements of the culture.

VALUING DIVERSITY
Creating productive and respectful relationships with others and demonstrating through our actions that differences are welcomed and appreciated.

W

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY
The range of unique and different skills, resources and perspectives individuals bring to the workplace.

NOTES

> "Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words"
>
> - RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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