Case Study: Transportation and Manufacturing Privately Held Company

Flexability delights in working with companies who are either initiating or jumpstarting their equity and inclusion efforts. A nationally known business strategist recommended us to this client because we had done work with other clients of this strategist.

We listen. Our first task is to build relationships, create trust, and demonstrate our expertise and capacity. Flexability initiated a phone call with the head of Human Resources. Initial calls focus on getting to know the company's industry, company objectives and values, interpersonal frameworks, and strengths and crisis point(s). The leadership and management teams are predominantly white, while its employees identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color. Though not uncommon, this raised a hiring and promotion "red flag." Set against the COVID and racial pandemics, the company liaison expressed deep concerns about the company's absence of equity and inclusion efforts, expressed apathy and hostility to identity inclusion, and a perception that equity and inclusion efforts are a "fad."

Implementing Flexability's central approaches to (i) move deliberately and compassionately, (ii) meet people where they are, (iii) avoid blaming or shaming, and (iv) amplify existing strengths, the Flexability Team recommended and facilitated a single 90-minute conversation with the leadership team. The team identified why and where company resistance existed, discussed the business and moral benefits of centering equity and inclusion, the ramifications for neglecting to do so, and some easy techniques to implement inclusion and anti-discrimination policies. Flexability provided clarification about and depoliticized equity and inclusion throughout the facilitated discussion. The firm listened to the concerns, identified some reasonable and practical next steps.

We align. Flexability conducted three more educational sessions to spotlight foundational equity and inclusion education that helps leadership teams identify organizational-wide equity and inclusion gaps that inhibit company cohesion, innovation, and productivity. The leadership team embraced the education and skill learning and decided that the implementation of equity and inclusion initiatives are essential to company success.

The Flexability Team recommended an organizational-wide cultural climate survey to explore equity and inclusion strengths, opportunities, and pain points. The company sought to elicit unvarnished employee perspectives on leadership, management, and long and short-term goals to achieve an authentic portrait of the current equity and inclusion strategy. In collaboration with the leadership team and HR, the Flexability Team developed a research-supported, quantitative, and qualitative survey tool, with specifically designed and refined foundational demographic and equity questions to maximize participant interest and engagement.

Interview and survey questions focused on demographics, employee positions, interpersonal experiences, hiring and retention, inclusion along the interacting and intersecting "Big Eight" identities, unproductive workplace norms and language, knowledge of existing anti-discrimination policies and processes, and suggestions for how the company might "do better." Flexability scheduled ten 30-minute interviews with employees from across the company. Because process transparency is crucial for achieving trust and buy-in, the firm built relationships across the company in multiple cities and engaged in confidential conversations to learn more about workplace inclusion and exclusion.

We deliver. Equity and inclusion efforts must be built with everyone in mind, not just the loudest or single segment of the employee population. A proven strategy for sustainable inclusion, the Flexability Team listens to and considers employees' broad views, concerns, and ideas--from acceptance to hostility. We believe in collaboratively and compassionately getting people to "row in the right direction." Imposing inclusion results in backlash and confirmation bias. Equity and inclusion are dependent on everyday interpersonal employee interactions. Building upon this simple fact is the difference between equity and inclusion success and failure. The company receives a readable report based on collected data that outlines the company culture and suggested next steps. In collaboration with the leadership team, the strategic plan outlines equity and inclusion priorities, company initiatives, and best practices processes execution of the plan to achieve the company initiatives goals.