

Diversity in the Publishing Workplace—What Can We Do To Make Systematic Changes at the Top?

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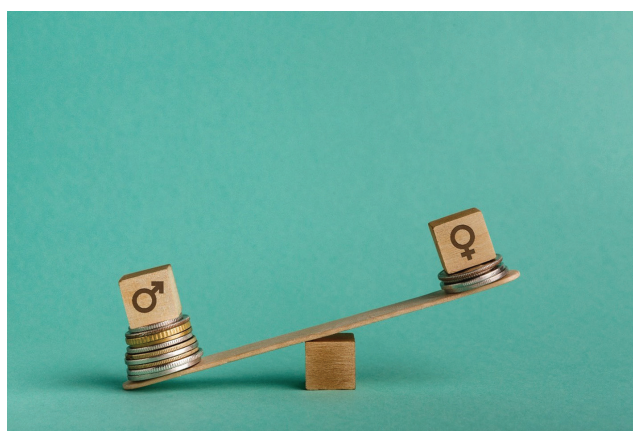
Workplaces around the world have been making a greater effort to better their hiring practices and increase diversity on their teams. While this is something that will continue to need work, we are all better off making each workplace a fair, respectful, and great place to work. To keep our great employees, we need to make sure they all have equal access to development opportunities and promotions. There is more that can be done to make sure that our equality and equity practices go beyond hiring and start to make a difference at the top levels.

Early types of publishing (i.e., newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets) in the United States began as a predominantly male profession, with female participation being illegal or hidden until the late nineteenth century.¹ With the rise of more publishing houses, more women joined the publishing industry, though they were kept to the low-paying jobs, since it was felt they could not handle the pressure of anything else. Women continued to join the publishing field throughout the years, but in lower positions, without hope of advancement. Men, on the other hand, had much higher chances of promotion. Today, women are now the highest demographic in the scholarly publishing field, but still tend to hold lower-level positions.¹ Moreover, scholarly publishing is predominantly White, with a recent survey finding over three-quarters of the respondents identifying as such, providing for even less diversity throughout the workforce.²

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In order to achieve meaningful diversity throughout the publishing industry, the focus must be on systemic changes, and particularly those that impact upper levels of leadership.

Major Deficiencies Are in Leadership and Systemic Control

A study that looked at the employee demographics from 287 of the nation's 500 biggest companies found that White women were 4.5 times more likely to hold a leadership position than Black women.³ White men were almost 8 times more likely to be an executive than Black women. This is due to fewer opportunities in training and career advancement, even though reports show Black women are even more likely than White women (and just as likely as White men) to want to become executives.³

In the publishing world, we also have a leadership diversity problem. The Workplace Equity Project conducted in 2018 showed that while 76% of the scholarly publishing landscape was female, only 21% of the leadership was.² The same goes for other diversity categories. The survey did not find anyone identifying as Black indicating they were in senior or executive management roles. Inequities

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in compensation, age discrimination, and lack of diversity training are some other issues contributing to the overall demographic issues surrounding publishing offices.

Diversity Trainings Focuses on the Individual Level, not on Making Systemic Changes

There isn't a great way to measure success through these diversity training programs, and they often rely on individual change, rather than systemic change. However, it is found to be more effective when paired with diversity initiatives put in place by leadership.⁴ A recent article on diversity training improving the well-being of LGBTQ+ employees was published, and it highlights the effectiveness of training for the lives of people in the gender minority.⁵ Another study found small success in attitude or behavior change toward women, but recognized that one-off diversity trainings are not enough to make any real change.⁶

When thinking about diversity training and diverse candidates, certain categories can stand out more than others. While sex or gender, race, and ethnicity tend to be the focus of diversity outreach programs, there are multiple other categories to keep in mind. Disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, parent/caregiver status, veteran status, educational experience, and socioeconomic background are a few others to consider (this is not an exhaustive list). A person can feel disadvantaged for many reasons, even if the reasons are not always visible. In the instance of disability, 90% of companies indicate that they prioritize diversity and inclusion, but only 4% consider disability in their initiatives.⁷ Having a diverse group of people—whether in leadership positions or in an employee base—has been shown to provide more experience and viewpoints, which facilitates innovation.⁸ Understanding and valuing all types of diversity is important.

Indirect Discrimination on the Institutional Level Can Easily Out-Weigh Any Workplace Trainings

Indirect discrimination happens when a policy applies to everyone but disadvantages a group or an individual with a protected characteristic. An example of this would be requiring all employees to have a clean-shaven face and not taking religious beliefs into consideration. Another would be not promoting a person to a higher position if they are unable to work late hours due to a disability or having children. Make sure everyone is considered fairly when looking at promotions or policy changes.

The Workplace Equity Project provides excellent suggestions regarding mentoring programs, networking, realizing when we are biased, and challenging exclusionary practices.² Mentorship is an important tool for growing

and networking in your career. However, according to the Harvard Business Review, women tend to be over-mentored, and under-sponsored.⁹ Sponsoring someone can ensure that a candidate receives jobs and opportunities in leadership positions that they otherwise might have missed out on. Both mentoring and sponsoring play vital roles in removing barriers for career growth. Moreover, if you are in a position of power, sponsoring diverse candidates can lead to a change in the demographic of leadership positions.

You may have one or more implicit biases of which you are not aware. The same goes for the leadership in your organization. While no one likes to think of themselves as having bias about anything, we simply might not be aware of where we fall short. Harvard provides a free test that can point out any bias you may have, though caution should be used when interpreting the results.¹⁰ Consider ways of blinding the hiring or promotion process to ensure that only the important information is being considered when making these decisions.

Stereotypes of a Leader Should Be Questioned

When considering candidates for promotion, we need to recognize that many people have a preconceived idea of what a good leader looks like. In addition, if you are a leader yourself, you may tend to gravitate more towards people who have the same characteristics as you.¹¹ When this pattern continues, it can lead to the same personality types, mindsets, and other characteristics in leadership positions across an organization.

The stereotypical traits of a leader (e.g., assertiveness, ambitiousness) that come across as favorable to a male candidate, can appear to be a negative trait in a female (the same assertiveness can be seen as being "bossy"). Because of this, women can be seen as inappropriate as leaders.¹² The situation is even worse for Asian-American women, who must also contend with the stereotype of being demure and subservient.¹³ People in marginalized groups may have learned that showing the stereotypical leadership traits like assertiveness had negative consequences in other aspects of their lives. By considering only specific traits as good leadership qualities, you are putting people at a disadvantage.

A Focus on the Individual Level often Results in Over-burdening the Very Groups Who Are Already Under-privileged

Often, diverse employees are called upon to serve on committees or in leadership roles for diversity efforts. This places additional burdens upon them, usually without additional compensation. This "minority tax" creates more

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demands on their time as well as mental stress.¹⁴ While working to increase diversity, be aware of the time demands you are asking of people, and question if you are expecting too much from one person.

Making sure everyone has equal opportunities for promotion and growth in their careers helps retain the best employees and makes sure we see the representation of everyone, especially at the top of the leadership ladder. Representation matters, and by having leadership take on a more active role in making broader changes, we can begin to see systemic changes.

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