

Introducing D&I Initiatives in a Globally Diverse Workplace

A View of D&I Around
the World



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Introduction

The topics of diversity and inclusion (D&I) are at the forefront of emerging dialogue about forward-thinking work cultures, where all employees feel equally valued, seen for who they are, and able to maximally fulfill their potential. Research from renowned institutions, such as Harvard Business School, reveals that this kind of work environment yields both happier employees and better business outcomes.¹

However, the concept of D&I can mean different things in different countries or regions; it is a global issue, yet it both influences, and is influenced by, local culture. The multiple dimensions of a region's unique culture, as well as its social, historical, and religious development, can greatly impact how people from that part of the world think about diversity, and either approach or resist creating inclusive workplace environments.

When running a business overseas, or managing a globally diverse team, it is critical to understand this perspective in order to build a workplace founded on globally-informed principles of diversity and inclusion, instead of solely focusing on what that phrase means in your own culture.

In doing so, you'll broaden your company's ability to encompass multiple views of inclusion, and will be therefore better positioned to understand and overcome obstacles that can arise on globally diverse teams when introducing and implementing D&I initiatives.

This will give you a significant head start at augmenting your team's levels of engagement, collaboration, and productivity.

This white paper offers insight into a globally informed approach for introducing D&I initiatives on multicultural teams, and explores the meaning of D&I around the world in three parts: *Understanding D&I Through a Cultural Lens*, *Understanding D&I Through a Hyperlocal Lens*, and *Implementing D&I Initiatives on Diverse Teams*.

¹ Harvard Business Review: High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety: Here's How to Create it

Part I

Understanding D&I through a **CULTURAL LENS**



CultureWizard's Intercultural Model illuminates 8 Cultural Dimensions© (Figure 1), each of which represents a set of observable behaviors that both arise from, and greatly influence, a country or region's collective social and professional culture. A country's position in each of these dimensions can also impact its cultural perspective on diversity and inclusion.

FIGURE 1

8 Dimensions of Culture®

RW3's Intercultural Model® is a business-friendly learning system. It consists of eight dimensions of culture. It enables you to recognize the visible signs of deeply held cultural values. With that understanding, you can correctly interpret messages and adjust your own behaviour accordingly.

The 8 Dimensions of Culture® are observable behaviors that give clues to underlying beliefs.



<p>HIERARCHY</p> <p>Hierarchy vs. Egalitarianism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How a society is structured. • How power and authority are delegated. • The amount of social mobility that exists. • The level of personal control individuals hold and feel comfortable with. 	<p>FORMALITY</p> <p>Formality vs. Informality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether a society prioritizes the well-being of the group or the individual. • Whether it most strongly encourages autonomous accomplishment or team effort. 	<p>GROUP</p> <p>Group vs. Individualism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society's emphasis on building relationships and trust, as opposed to conducting business solely based on money, time, and task accomplishment. 	<p>RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>Interpersonal vs. Transactional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How directly people communicate. • How much context and background is required. • Whether communication is conveyed verbally or non verbally.
<p>COMMUNICATION</p> <p>Direct vs. Indirect Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How societies think about time as something that is either controllable, and should be controlled, or something that is fluid and takes less priority than relationship-building and group-orientation. 	<p>TIME</p> <p>Fluid vs. Controlled Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How open or closed a culture is to accepting change, risk, and uncertainty. 	<p>CHANGE</p> <p>Change Aversion vs. Tolerance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society's attitudes and behaviors about outward appearances and adherence to protocol. 	<p>MOTIVATION</p> <p>Status vs. Work-Life Balance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What motivates people in a society. • Whether they are focussed on attaining status and power or achieving a work-life balance.

Hierarchy vs. Egalitarianism

This dimension characterizes how cultures structure power and authority. In addition to shaping individuals' perceptions about their positions in society, this dimension also determines the level of personal initiative individuals feel comfortable taking in the absence of a manager's direction.

Hierarchical

In hierarchical cultures, organizational structures are stratified, and it is important to know the rank of one's professional position relative to others'. People in authority are treated with deference, and titles and visible displays of power are common. Those in hierarchical organizations tend to wait for direction from supervisors before acting.

Egalitarian

Egalitarian cultures tend to be fluid in distribution of power. There are not many structural barriers to personal achievement, and authority is earned. Everyone is expected to take initiative to work towards personal goals. Leaders act as coaches rather than authoritative managers. Demarcations of power are not blatant.

Impact on Perception of D&I

Egalitarian societies can be prone to behaviors that uphold diversity and inclusion, as these cultures maintain that every person has inherent and equal value. Though bias can still be strong in these cultures, it is sometimes easier to get those from egalitarian cultures on board with D&I initiatives, since they are typically more accustomed to connecting with people at all levels of an organization.

While employees from hierarchical cultures also have the capacity to act inclusively, it might be difficult for some to foster connections across certain divides such as rank and status. When discussing D&I initiatives, it's best to begin by acknowledging the importance of hierarchies, and then to explore how elements of hierarchical culture can be authentically flexed and adapted (rather than erased) in order to encourage greater diversity and inclusion. It can be helpful to also present statistical evidence that shows diverse and inclusive teams are consistently the most high-performing.



Group–Orientation vs. Individualism

This dimension distinguishes whether a culture prioritizes the group or the individual, and whether it most values autonomous accomplishment or team effort.

Group–Orientated

Group-oriented cultures prioritize the well-being of the collective more than individuals, and tend to emphasize conformity and communal effort. Decisions are typically made by consensus, and progress is achieved in teams. Individuals tend to seek harmony with other group members, and to collaborate instead of compete.

Individualistic

Individualistic cultures prioritize personal achievements. Decisions are made by majority, or by those in leadership. Individuals are expected to take personal responsibility and tend to be comfortable with competition. In the workplace, it is common to express opinions and share accomplishments, regardless of rank or position.

Impact on Perception of D&I

Group-oriented cultures can in certain ways lend themselves to inclusive mindsets as a result of the value placed on group harmony. However, while this value helps create a culture of belonging, it can also leave out a critical element of D&I: celebrating rather than overlooking individual differences. Group-oriented cultures can also be tribal, which means there might be an instinctive preference to interact with those who have shared cultural context. When working with individuals from these cultures, it can help to reframe the idea of the “group” to be the team itself.

Individualistic cultures can be conducive to inclusion in the sense that personal differences are often acknowledged instead of blending into group identity. The opportunity for D&I is therefore readily available; however, because individualistic cultures can lack an innate drive to create group harmony, prioritize belonging, and ensure the wellbeing of the collective, they can sometimes fall short of true equity and inclusion. Employees from these cultures might honor everyone’s personal skill sets and backgrounds, yet might not have a natural focus on group unity.

Harnessing the perspectives and mindsets of each of these two kinds of cultures can help create a balance that fosters greater inclusion on the team.



Interpersonal vs. Transactional Relationships

This dimension measures a culture's emphasis on either building interpersonal relationships or the successful completion of tasks and transactions as a path to trust.

Interpersonal

In interpersonal cultures, there is a need to establish connection with others, even in professional interactions. Relationships often continue outside the workplace. In these cultures, building relationships is perceived as more valuable, and even more efficient, than the speed of a transaction.

Transactional

In transactional cultures, people often work with colleagues they might not know at all, and there are usually protective legal structures in place. People tend to conduct business quickly, and relationships are often short-term. Transactional cultures usually have clear boundaries between work and personal lives.

Impact on Perception of D&I

People from relationship-oriented cultures will likely be motivated to understand each other's unique backgrounds and life experiences, and to foster relationships that go beyond professionalism to create more collaborative and productive connections. However, since many relationship-oriented cultures are also group-oriented, individuals might identify most with those who have shared cultural context, which can inhibit inclusion. Again, extending the meaning of "group" to include the whole team can help.

Transactional relationships often don't emphasize inclusion, since they don't prioritize personal connection. It can be challenging to create an inclusive work environment when relationships are solely transactional, since there is less opportunity for diverse team members to get to know each other. However, those from transactional cultures can often develop trust more quickly, and trust is a critical element of inclusion.

Harnessing characteristics from both groups can help build authentic connections, and can potentially increase the speed of relationship-building for the sake of stronger business outcomes and team collaboration.



Direct vs. Indirect Communication

This dimension addresses how much context and background is required to convey a message, and whether messages are conveyed solely verbally, or with the aid of body language and other nonverbal forms of communication.

Direct

In direct communication cultures, people tend to say what they mean as clearly and succinctly as possible. Nonverbal language might be used, but it is not critical to conveying the core message, and it is usually not necessary to couch communications with careful language.

Indirect

In indirect communication cultures, tone of voice, facial expressions, body language, and even silences can be integral additions to spoken messages. Communication is more nuanced, and the listener needs to interpret both verbal and nonverbal cues. Negative messages are often softened or avoided.

Impact on Perception of D&I

In direct communication cultures, since openness and clarity are valued, individuals might more readily get to know others. However, there also exists greater potential for implicit bias or unintentional verbal microaggressions to interfere with the development of inclusive work cultures when communications are less filtered.

In indirect cultures, where the way communication is delivered is of utmost importance, there is a tendency to also be relationship-oriented, which can support inclusion. However, people might take more time to develop interpersonal relationships. Also, the uplifting of personal voice, an important part of inclusion, might not be encouraged in these cultures, in the name of protecting group and personal dignity.

As an inclusive leader, you can create protocol that taps into the inclusive strengths of both cultures, such as inviting and encouraging individual vocalization of personal thoughts and open communication in relationship-building, in union with sensitivity towards others' feelings and awareness about the delivery of communications.



Fluid vs. Controlled View of Time

This dimension gauges how cultures think about time—either as controlled and having monetary worth, or fluid and of less significance than people and relationships.

Fluid

In fluid time cultures, people tend to feel that time is not controllable. Relationships are considered more important than deadlines, and schedules are seen as guidelines rather than fixed. There is more flexibility in how work is accomplished, and expectations for punctuality can vary by situation, as well as by individual status or rank.

Controlled

In controlled time cultures, people view time as a quantifiable commodity – something that can be saved, spent, or wasted. Promptness and adherence to schedules are highly valued. Being late is often considered a sign of poor time management skills. People are expected to make sacrifices to be on time, and scheduling changes must be communicated.

Impact on Perception of D&I

While a cultural view of time might not have a direct impact on openness to diversity and inclusion initiatives, there are some potential correlations.

Cultures with a controlled view of time tend to also be more transactional. Since there is the expectation that certain sacrifices will be made in order to accommodate schedules, those sacrifices are often in the realm of personal relationships. People from these cultures might not feel they can spare the time it takes to get to know colleagues. However, they can also sometimes be quicker to trust colleagues for the sake of professional success.

Cultures with a more fluid view of time often tend to be relationship-oriented, prioritizing connection above the rigidity of schedules. This perspective can lend itself to developing stronger bonds and a higher level of inclusion among colleagues. However, these cultures are also often group-oriented, so can focus more on group wellbeing than individual uniqueness.

It can help to highlight to your team how D&I practices support both relationship-building and business transactions, and to build D&I into the concept of what it means to be successful so that all employees feel the value of devoting specific time to these initiatives.



Change Aversion vs. Change Tolerance

This dimension refers to how open or closed a culture is to change, risk, and uncertainty.

Change Averse

In change averse cultures, people aim to maintain traditional values and systems, and change can be seen as threatening. New ideas might be met with skepticism, and risk is evaluated before benefit. Introducing new systems requires well-planned implementation and high-context explanation. Change requires time and effort to achieve.

Change Tolerant

In change tolerant cultures, change is viewed positively, and is expected. People tend to be receptive to new ideas and ways of doing things, and opportunity is typically evaluated before risk. Risk-taking is often rewarded, and failure is viewed as a learning experience. Leaders are expected to be agents of change.

Impact on Perception of D&I

Employees from certain change averse cultures might have challenges with some D&I initiatives, since collaboration across differences requires openness to new situations and people, and inclusive practices sometimes eliminate the status quo. Since our brains are programmed to favor familiarity, it takes considerable retraining to become comfortable with the unfamiliar. However, change averse cultures also often lean towards group- and relationship-orientation, so individuals from these cultures might possess mindsets that are conducive to connection. If this is the case, it can be helpful to use a relationship-oriented focus to highlight the importance of D&I.

Individuals from change tolerant cultures might be more open to new practices that uphold D&I principles, and might be more accustomed to adapting to unfamiliar mindsets. This quality can be harnessed to create a platform for building a progressive workplace culture. However, keep in mind that change tolerant cultures are also sometimes more individualistic, so with people from these cultures, it might be helpful to emphasize how interpersonal relationships and group connection are integral to furthering inclusion initiatives.





Formality vs. Informality

This dimension describes attitudes and behaviors regarding adherence to protocol, appearances, and interactions across status and rank, among other aspects of daily social and professional life.

Formal

In formal cultures, honorific titles, clothing, and background are important cues about rank and expectations for how to interact with others. This etiquette is strongly observed in both professional and social situations. There is usually little discussion of personal issues at work, people in positions of authority are easily recognized, and there is a formal structure for participation.

Informal

In informal societies, everyone typically receives equal respect, and status is not reinforced by external formalities. People are encouraged to express themselves freely in conversation, and to dress for personal style and comfort, rather than as a demonstration of respect. Honorifics are not often used, outward signs of authority are subtle, and people participate across rank and status.

Impact on Perception of D&I

Employees from formal cultures are often also more hierarchical, which can sometimes inhibit transcending status demarcations to cultivate inclusive relationships. In formal cultures, it might be a less comfortable idea to collaborate across certain differences, or to get to know colleagues' diverse backgrounds and experiences at a deeper level that facilitates inclusion. It can help to establish as official team protocol that connecting authentically is not only okay, but beneficial to company success.

Informal cultures can create a stage for D&I to flourish, since there are often fewer barriers to connecting with colleagues across backgrounds and status levels. Informal cultures are also often egalitarian, and more likely to recognize the equal value of every person. However, informal work cultures can also lend themselves to more interpersonal bias and conflict. These situations can be used as opportunities to learn to navigate difficult conversations, and to help facilitate effective communication and inclusive practices in the future.



Status vs. Work-Life Balance Motivation

This dimension explores what motivates people in the workplace--whether they are driven by attaining status through hard work, or by achieving a work-life balance and maintaining a healthy personal life.

Status-Motivated

In status-motivated cultures, people strive for status through achievement. They might make personal sacrifices in order to achieve work-related goals, work long hours, and allow work to cross over into personal time. Employees often check emails and return calls on weekends and holidays, and vacations are usually shorter. Professional achievements are important to individual identity.

Balance-Motivated

In balance-motivated societies, people value work-life balance, spending time with family and friends, and doing things that provide personal satisfaction. Personal commitments often take precedence over work, and career achievement is secondary to quality of life. Vacations tend to be longer, and there are often laws that enforce family leave and set work hours.

Impact on Perception of D&I

Employees from status-driven cultures might focus on career advancement more than interpersonal relationships, which can sometimes hinder collaboration or buy-in for D&I initiatives. However, status-driven cultures might also tend to highlight and celebrate individuals' unique accomplishments, which can help everyone feel valued. With status-driven employees, it can help to highlight how D&I can lead to greater success for each individual team member.

Employees from work-life balance cultures tend to value interpersonal connection, and might take a more natural interest in colleagues' personal lives and unique backgrounds, which can help support better working relationships and a stronger culture of inclusion. However, work-life balance cultures can also be group-oriented in a way that excludes those without shared cultural context, which can hinder collaboration across diversity. Reframing the team as the primary group can be helpful.

It's important to harness and balance these tendencies for individual recognition, interpersonal relationship-building, and group harmony to create unity around new D&I initiatives.



Part II

Understanding D&I through a **HYPERLOCAL LENS**



A View of Specific D&I Landscapes

- INDIA
- THE NETHERLANDS
- ISRAEL
- THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
- SOUTH AFRICA
- THE UNITED STATES
- MEXICO



Local D&I Landscapes

In addition to rankings in the dimensions previously outlined in [Part 1](#) of this whitepaper, each country or region's historical, social, and religious backgrounds also have a critical impact on what diversity and inclusion mean to the people there, and potential obstacles to inclusion that might be deeply embedded in the country's culture.

For example, even if a country is egalitarian and relationship-oriented, which are cultural attributes that can often lend themselves to inclusion, aspects of the country's social and historical development could pose unique challenges to D&I; this would require a highly informed and specifically tailored approach to address.

Below are examples of countries from some primary geographical regions, whose historical, social, and religious backgrounds create important nuance in their view of and approach to diversity and inclusion.

**These examples are taken from CultureWizard's database of country profiles. They are overviews of each country, and do not represent the views and perspectives of all individuals from a given region.*



INDIA

India is inherently characterized by diversity, with a wide range of cultural customs that vary by region, age, education, religion, socioeconomic background, and ethnic or racial identity. Globalization in India has also yielded more diversity and progressive perspectives.

However, modern Indian culture is still influenced by the rigid hierarchical caste system that was in place for centuries, and while it was banned when India gained independence from Great Britain, and modern laws prohibit class discrimination, this aspect of India's history remains influential.

There are still marked class distinctions based on education background, socioeconomic status, and race or ethnicity. Indian businesses also tend to be very hierarchical, with clear rankings and protocol for interaction with superiors. Though India continues to change rapidly, these vestiges of imperialism still impact daily life, and can sometimes create barriers to inclusion through implicit bias, even for those who value D&I.

India's history has also yielded systemic racism, with greater privileges often afforded to lighter-skinned people. Darker-skinned people are often presumed to be African immigrants of a lower socioeconomic status, and are more likely to face discrimination regardless of actual home country or economic status.

India's religious culture both maintains traditional views, and yet sometimes also lends itself to inclusive perspectives. Historically, India has recognized many religions, and is now officially a secular state. Some of its primary religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—are based on compassion and karma (the idea that every action creates consequences, which can even determine social ranking in future lifetimes). So while traditional religious views in India can create bias, many who identify with these religions also practice compassion and tolerance.

Attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community in India are also complex. While gay marriage is still not legal, the legalization of same-sex relationships led the LGBTQ+ culture to flourish more publicly, especially among younger generations and in urban areas. The beliefs of early Hinduism have led to legal recognition of non-binary individuals called "hijra" (roughly translated as "intersex"), who historically held special status. In modern India, hijras are still sometimes respected, although they also sometimes face significant discrimination.

In recent years, corporate India has taken steps to establish stronger inclusion policies regarding maternity leave, engagement programs for impoverished workers, and quotas for hiring marginalized groups such as women and LGBTQ+ individuals. However, there still remains a long way to go to achieve true inclusion and equal opportunity.

These complex aspects of India's culture are critical to take into account when collaborating with colleagues from this country.



THE NETHERLANDS

Since the Netherlands has an egalitarian culture, the Dutch are generally accepting of diverse groups of people, and the government has instituted non-discrimination laws and programs that contribute to its reputation as a tolerant, progressive society. In 2021, for example, there were notable advances in inclusion among members of parliament, such as the first black woman party leader, the first person to wear a hijab, and the first transgender woman.

However, the Netherlands' long history of colonialism is also a critical aspect of the collective culture. The nearly three centuries often portrayed as a "Dutch Golden Age," were also marked by Dutch rule and enslavement of people living in Indonesia, South Africa, Curaçao, New Guinea, Guyana, French Guiana, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Suriname, and slavery wasn't banned until 1863. There are still visible signs of this period throughout the Netherlands, including public art and historical sites that some feel glorify this time in history.

Furthermore, while the majority of Dutch individuals might possess tolerant mindsets, there is also a demographic that distinctly opposes immigration and the integration of diverse peoples into traditional Dutch society. Reports of discrimination have increased in recent years, and there has been a rising social movement that has included protests and demonstrations against instances of police brutality and other forms of prejudice.

There is also a complexity of cultural racism in the Netherlands, since national and religious bias are sometimes intertwined. For example, the experience of a black American might be different from that of a Muslim black African.

One example of culturally embedded racism in the Netherlands is Black Pete (Zwart Piet), a caricatured portrayal of a chimney sweep in blackface, with accompanying stories commonly known throughout the country. While this implements racial stereotyping, some feel it is an important cultural tradition, leading to significant social debate in recent years.

So while the Netherlands' progressive reputation often accurately reflects its atmosphere of tolerance and egalitarianism, it is important to be aware of the nuanced social and historical factors that still impact Dutch society, both collectively and individually.



ISRAEL

Israel is a relatively young nation with many first and second generation immigrants. Jews from Europe, Africa, and other regions of the Middle East have sought refuge there, creating a diverse demographic where many still practice traditions of their respective birth countries.

Combined with this influx of immigrants, Israel's history of self-protection from surrounding countries has led to nuanced views of D&I. Israelis tend to welcome diversity, yet maintain a strong protectiveness of their country and culture.

Furthermore, while Israel is a very egalitarian society, the religious and ethnic tensions that characterize daily life can also impact attitudes towards inclusion. Tensions are particularly strong between Arabs and Jews. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 led to strong and lasting conflict with neighboring Arab states, including periods of war with the territory that is now Gaza.

Racial stigmas also exist in Israel; black or darker-skinned individuals often experience higher levels of bias and discrimination.

Religion is another important aspect of D&I in Israel. The establishment of Israel as a Jewish state has created many strong tensions among diverse religious and ethnic groups, who all feel connected to the "Holy Land". This socio-political conflict has created strained and violent relationships between Jews and Muslims, which greatly influence daily life, especially in Jerusalem.

While the Israeli government recognizes same-sex civil unions, and there are some legal protections for the LGBTQ+ community, hate crimes are not prohibited and same sex marriages are not legal. The Israeli LGBTQ+ community continues to publicly advocate for equality, and progress varies by region, with Tel Aviv considered one of the most LGBTQ+ friendly cities in the world, while Jerusalem is often a less tolerant and even dangerous environment.

These cultural complexities mean that Israeli colleagues might demonstrate egalitarian and inclusive perspectives, though there might also be instances of cultural protectiveness, and social or religious bias, due to the country's history and development.



SOUTH AFRICA

Often called the Rainbow Nation, South Africa is home to many diverse ethnic groups. Although the impact of colonization and Apartheid is still present, modern South African society celebrates its cultural diversity. The constitution recognizes 11 languages, and there is a melding of indigenous African, and colonial Dutch and British cultures. To foster successful relationships, personally and professionally, it is important to understand South Africa's history and current culture.

Until 1990, almost all schools were racially segregated. Post-Apartheid South Africa has become more equitable for many due to advances in legislation against racism. However, white privilege does continue, and there remains considerable inequality. Also, despite South Africa's inherent diversity, many socialize and live in areas with their own ethnic groups, who share the same languages, religions, and customs.

While urban English schools are often racially diverse, Afrikaans schools are usually attended by mostly white South Africans, while students in rural and township schools tend to be mostly black. In areas that are predominantly Indian or Coloured (the term South Africans use to mean "mixed race") schools are also often less diverse. Therefore, though the country is very diverse, it's not necessarily common to experience diversity within one's smaller community.

While South Africans are generally welcoming towards diverse groups, the history of discrimination against people of color in the country still influences society. Especially in rural areas, residents might be wary of white outsiders, and there is sometimes tension between black South Africans and Africans from other countries; foreigners might be perceived as competition for local jobs, which can result in discrimination.

Although over 70% of the population identifies as Christian, the South African constitution guarantees religious freedom. The African Independent Churches, started by the local population, are Zionist in nature, and often blend Christianity with more traditional African beliefs such as ancestor worship.

South Africa has laws to protect the LGBTQ+ community from discrimination, and was one of the first countries to legalize gay marriage. The LGBTQ+ community has a generally strong presence in South Africa, though discrimination and hate crimes, especially towards black women, are more common in rural areas.

When working with people from South Africa, it's important to understand its history, and to consider how it has impacted different people's perspectives on diversity and inclusion, which are bound to vary across the country's diverse ethnic groups.



UNITED STATES

Since the US was founded and developed by immigrants from around the world, it's known for its international demographic of diverse racial, ethnic and religious groups. It is the number one recipient and sender of expatriates, and multiculturalism is often celebrated through international festivals, food, film, and literature, especially in urban areas.

US individualism and egalitarianism have led to a cultural belief that it's possible to achieve status through hard work, with many heroes in American stories overcoming adversity to achieve success. The constitution guarantees equality for all citizens, with a focus on equal opportunity. However, despite the US's diversity, egalitarianism, and individualism, people of certain racial and ethnic groups can still face mild to severe prejudice depending on others' sociopolitical views. Since there is a strong cultural distinction among states, the level of discrimination can vary significantly by region.

Also, the US's founding story, history of slavery, and shared border with Mexico have all yielded deep racial and ethnic divides that influence society, especially pertaining to black, Hispanic, and indigenous communities. Economic hardship disproportionately impacts these communities, and the wealth gap continues to expand. Systemic racism in the US is a common catalyst of discussion, debate, and social justice movements.

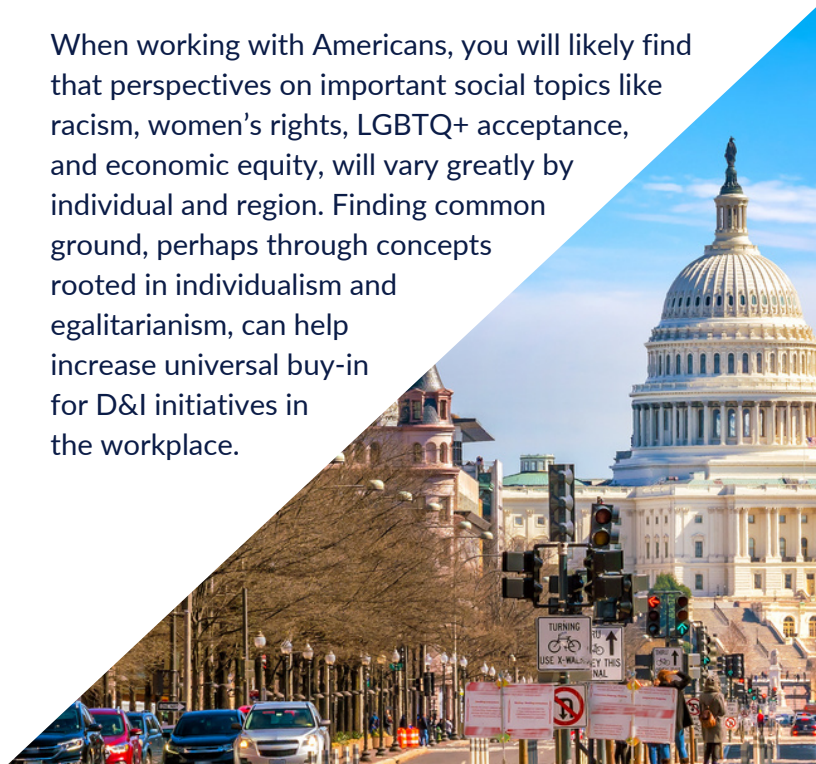
The US government has a history of abusing power when it comes to the country's indigenous peoples. Upon arrival to the region, white Europeans took the lives of many Native Americans, stole their land, and relegated tribes to privatized regions in exchange for legal protection outlined in treaties that were later broken. Today, indigenous communities are still marginalized through property violations, poor education and healthcare, and a lack of inclusion in society.

While the US's colonial history created a dominance of Judeo-Christian faiths, the constitution guarantees religious freedom. Many speak openly about religion, with the expectation of tolerance from others, although this is not always the case. There have been many instances of religion-driven hate crimes and violence in the US.

The LGBTQ+ community in the US has had increasing support and visibility, although the climate has also intensified in recent years due to political polarization, and subsequent violence and discrimination towards this community. Though LGBTQ+ culture in the US continues to thrive, tolerance varies greatly by individual and region.

Many US companies have begun to focus on D&I, though these programs have yet to create systemic change in the workplace. Younger employees often prioritize company culture, which can impact companies' acquisition and retention rates. Women are well-represented in educational and middle management positions, but not in executive positions or on boards, and there is often a gender- and race-based wage gap.

When working with Americans, you will likely find that perspectives on important social topics like racism, women's rights, LGBTQ+ acceptance, and economic equity, will vary greatly by individual and region. Finding common ground, perhaps through concepts rooted in individualism and egalitarianism, can help increase universal buy-in for D&I initiatives in the workplace.



MEXICO

Mexico's complex history has resulted in a modern culture that weaves ancient indigenous backgrounds with the influence of Spanish colonists. Customs and traditions vary by individual, lineage, and region.

Cultural and political views of diversity in Mexico are influenced by race, ethnicity, gender, and many other aspects of identity. Even though many Mexicans have qualitatively reported that they don't feel racism impacts their daily lives, other surveys have revealed that lighter-skinned Mexicans tend to have greater wealth, privilege, and access to education than darker-skinned and indigenous peoples.

Government corruption and political unrest throughout the last century have also led to vast economic inequities that currently persist. And although the Mexican government has established policies that advance women's empowerment and protect indigenous rights to "self-determination," these groups continue to face social stigmatization and systemic barriers to equality.

Mexico is a secular country that has allowed freedom of religion since the mid-1800s, though nearly most Mexicans identify as Roman Catholic. Atheist or agnostic beliefs comprise about a small percent of the population, and rural areas often integrate Christianity with indigenous religions. Because Catholicism is so dominant in Mexico, religious minorities often stand out more, and might experience discrimination.

In the workplace, women have achieved representation in advanced education, but not in professional leadership positions or on advisory boards. Some women face harassment, discrimination, or wage disparities that inhibit career advancement, as well as hiring discrimination in general. Pregnant women are sometimes pressured to quit.

While the Mexican government recognizes same-sex marriages and provides some discrimination protections for the LGBTQ+ community, it does not prohibit hate crimes. And while Mexico has become increasingly accepting of the LGBTQ+ community in recent years, individuals still often face a high risk of violence or harassment, especially in rural areas.

Despite bias towards non-conforming gender identities, though, there is an officially recognized third gender known as "muxe," originating from the culture of the indigenous Zapotec people of the Juchitàn. Traditionally, muxes played an important societal role, and though they now face discrimination, they still sometimes maintain a respected status, and have inspired LGBTQ+ advocacy in Mexico.

Although Mexican society has a relatively hierarchical structure, Mexican Millennials and Zoomers tend to value flexibility and egalitarianism more than previous generations, and therefore often demonstrate different workplace behaviors and communication styles.

When collaborating with Mexican colleagues and introducing certain D&I initiatives, it's important to keep in mind all of these nuances of Mexican culture.



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Since most of the working population in the UAE is comprised of foreigners, diversity is part of daily life in more progressive emirates like Dubai. However, inclusiveness is sometimes inhibited by the valued preservation of social or religious protocol and national identity. Because the UAE is a federation of seven states, views of diversity and inclusion vary by emirate, with some commercially developed and diverse, and others fundamentalist Muslim states.

Cultural tribalism influences views of D&I in the UAE, which has evolved from ancient Bedouin tribes who had to work together for survival. This history has contributed to strong group loyalties, and legal policy against granting citizenship to foreigners, for example.

Since the UAE is an Islamic country, religion is a pivotal part of daily life. Islam governs religious, legal, and social behavior. Emiratis might find it difficult to relate to other belief systems, though in general, they tend to be relatively tolerant of other views.

The UAE has an historically challenging relationship with the Jewish community. However, in 2019, the government formally acknowledged the Jewish Emirati population, and held discussions about constructing a synagogue in Dubai, and instating inclusion policies.

In the 21st century, legislation was passed to prevent discrimination based on religion, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, and there has been increasing acknowledgment of the need for diversity and inclusion in the workplace. However, racism is still an issue, especially in the private sector and towards migrant workers.

Women's rights is a complex issue in the UAE, recognized as the Gulf country that most strongly supports gender equality. In the last few decades, there has been progress for Emirati women, who participate in all sectors of national life, and have helped fuel the country's economic growth.

The government has taken action to increase women's access to education, and in 2012, there was a mandate passed for companies and government entities to include women on the Board of Directors. However, despite ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, other UAE laws require women to obtain permission from male guardians to marry, work, or travel, and to obey their husbands. Disobedience of many kinds can result in legal or domestic consequence. While women visiting the country will likely find an equitable environment, expats are sometimes held to local laws.

The treatment of the LGBTQ+ community in the UAE is largely governed by Islamic perspective. Same-sex relationships are illegal and can result in fines, up to 10 years in prison, or even death. Hate crimes towards this community are not prohibited, and LGBTQ+ individuals don't have protection against discrimination. Given this context, although there is a vibrant underground LGBTQ+ scene in large cities like Dubai, there are no public pride events or festivals in the UAE.

Collaborating with Emirati colleagues, or with expats working in the UAE, will be greatly facilitated by understanding these aspects of the country's background, as well as the differences in perspective that can exist across individuals. This understanding will also help navigate nuanced conversation regarding the introduction of diversity and inclusion initiatives in the workplace.



SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HYPERLOCAL LENS

Although everyone is different, by exploring a country's social, historical, and religious backgrounds – which can either coincide with or differ from its cultural dimensions – you can come to understand how certain perspectives and attitudes about diversity and inclusion might develop in individuals from that region. These are usually deeply embedded in all aspects of the culture, with both overt and subtle messages often communicated to members of that society from a young age, by parents, schools, peers, and media.

Gaining buy-in for D&I-informed practices requires understanding the backgrounds of all team members.



In the workplace, this means that managing globally diverse teams and **gaining team buy-in for D&I-informed practices requires really understanding the detailed backgrounds of all team members.** It also requires viewing them without bias or judgment, with the singular goal of gaining more information to improve understanding of employees' attitudes, behaviors, communication styles, and work approaches – and how certain perspectives can either open or close the doors to cultivating diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Once this is accurately assessed, it becomes easier to initiate conversations that can meet all team members where they are, and communicate about D&I in a way that is meaningful to them.

Part III

Implementing D&I Initiatives ON DIVERSE TEAMS



Parts 1 and 2 of this whitepaper explore the complexities that can arise on intercultural teams due to differences in cultural dimension rankings, as well as the social, religious, and historical backgrounds of each employee's native country. Due to these extensive cultural nuances, successfully implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives on globally diverse teams can sometimes be challenging. However, following a few simple steps can bring greater ease to this process.



Tips for Intercultural Team Building

Here are six basic tips for creating a culture of D&I on globally diverse teams:



Start with a neutral and informed view of all team members' backgrounds.

Do your best to **explore and override your own cultural biases** about others before attempting to communicate to your team the importance of diversity and inclusion. You will be most successful in your own communication if it is free of judgment, and if you really understand the deep cultural roots that impact how your team members see the workplace and the world.

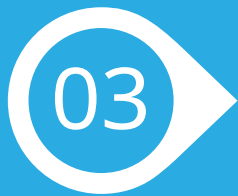


Validate everyone's unique cultural experiences and mindsets.

As we explored above, attitudes and perspectives develop for a reason. Even if they are not conducive to inclusion or ultimate business success, they are nevertheless still valid, and the only way to reach your team members with proposed changes to perspective – something that will require significant effort on their part – is to **first acknowledge that their experience and perspective matter.**



Tips for Intercultural Team Building



Lead a group discussion about the impact of D&I on professional success.

Initiate and lead a teach-in, where you speak to the positive effects that greater inclusion is proven to have on diverse teams. Consider talking about the many different kinds of diversity (both visible and invisible) that exist, so that those who have certain cultural aversions to inclusion in one domain of diversity, might still be open to receiving the concept of the message as it pertains to other domains.

It is best to **provide statistics that show inclusive teams are consistently the most high-performing**. Follow up the talk with an invitation for discussion, and make sure to establish that this is a safe place for everyone to respectfully share their thoughts and feelings without repercussion. You could also instead send out an anonymous survey later on.

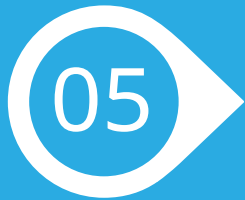


Create a clear, concise set of guidelines for diversity and inclusion on your team.

D&I is an expansive and challenging arena, especially when navigating multiple cultural expectations and behaviors in the same workplace. It is critical to establish foundational guidelines for everyone to adhere to and refer back to when necessary. These should be simple and well-explained. **It's best to explicitly state each guideline's positive impact on the team and the company.** You might consider holding a group meeting after everyone has had a chance to digest these guidelines, to process them as a team and to offer the opportunity for employees to ask questions or voice concerns.



Tips for Intercultural Team Building



Conduct one-on-one check-ins with each team member, and continue this on a regular basis.

Remember that some employees might not feel comfortable speaking up in a group setting, especially about such a complex and often personal topic. Holding private conversations with each person is a good way to **understand how each team member perceives the new guidelines, and if there remain unvoiced concerns or challenges.** These check-ins are helpful at this point in particular, yet should ideally continue regularly going forward.

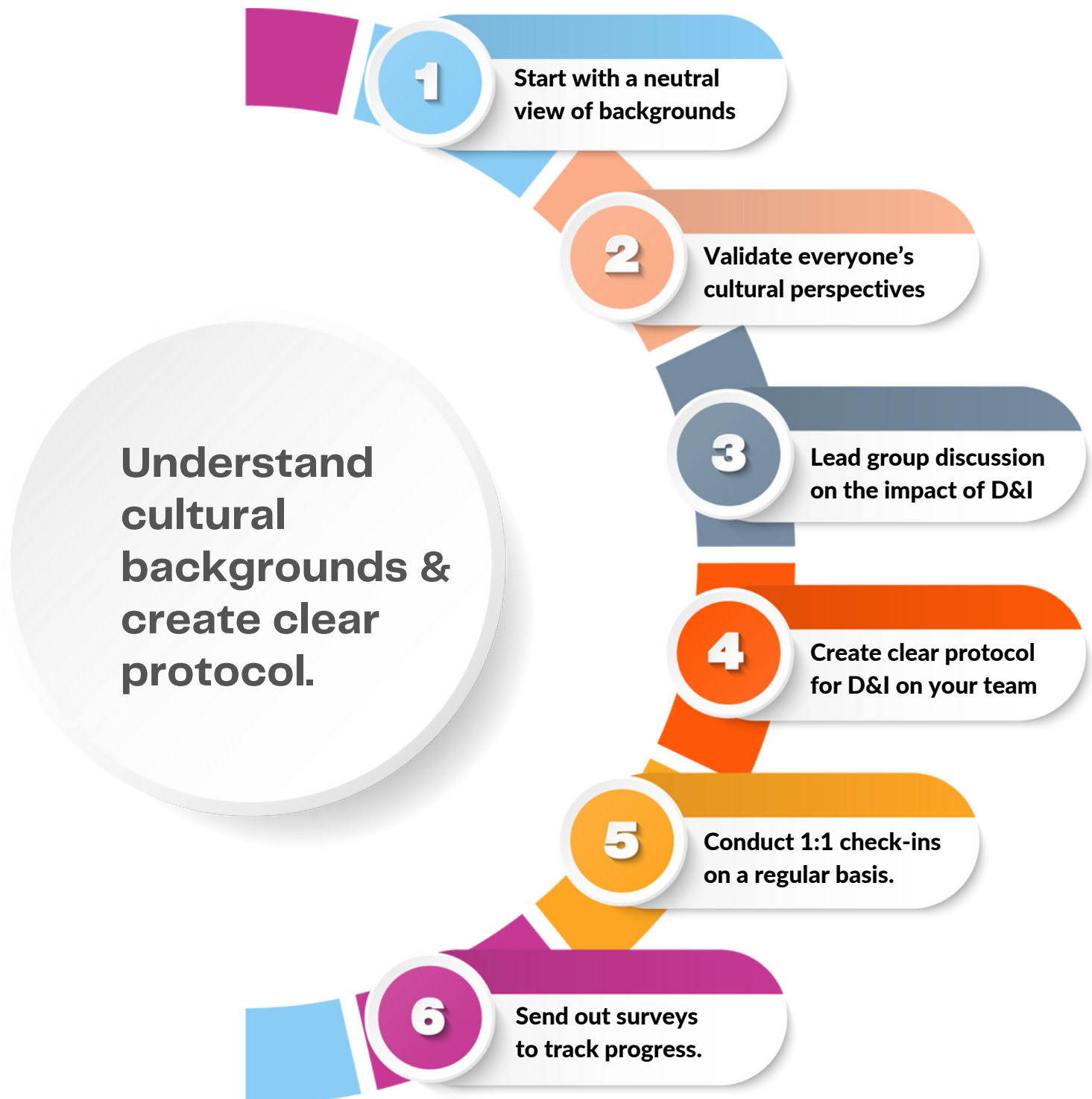
This will help your employees feel that you care about them as individuals, are open to their thoughts and opinions, and are there to help navigate any difficulties when it comes to operating in accordance with the new team guidelines for diversity and inclusion.



Send out follow-up surveys to track progress.

Regularly occurring anonymous surveys can be used to **track progress both for business outcomes and team collaboration markers.** Qualitative data can also be collected to reflect team members' personal experiences of the new diversity and inclusion guidelines, and any resulting changes, whether positive or challenging, in the work environment.

Guide for Introducing D&I Initiatives





Developing a Globally Inclusive Mindset

While the steps above provide a solid foundation for creating a globally inclusive team and workplace culture, developing a **mindset** that is naturally geared towards global inclusion is an endeavor that takes considerable training and practice in order to rewire the brain's unconscious bias and engrained cultural perspectives.



Given the right tools and support...

**...everyone can access their inherent levels of
inclusivity and leadership.**





How CultureWizard Can Help

CultureWizard offers a plethora of resources and tools to help cultivate your inclusive leadership style.

E-learning

Self-paced virtual courses and personalized assessments that address both intercultural and D&I awareness, and offer a foundation for creating global inclusion in the workplace

Country Profiles

Detailed information on over 160 countries and regions around the world, including local history, cultural essentials, view of D&I, and best business practices

CultureWizard Live

Customized programs and trainings led by our learning experts, virtually and in-person, that offer the opportunity to explore the nuances of global inclusion in your workplace

Global Inclusion Analytics

Highly tailored company-wide assessments, data analysis, and guidance to help enhance your organization's culture of inclusion, and improve business outcomes

About RW3 CultureWizard

Today's workforce faces a complex world where people work across distances with people that have different cultural values, styles, and behaviors—often remotely. RW3 CultureWizard prepares them to excel in that world. Since 2001, we have helped our clients to create inclusive work environments and to prepare their people to be productive, effective, and engaged no matter where they are.

Drawing upon real-world scenarios, we customize immediately actionable tactical business applications. At the same time, we provide the most comprehensive digital library of global skill-building tools, integrated on-demand courses, assessments, and learning games guided by instructors both virtually and in-person.

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