

# Intersectionality

Intersectionality highlights the effects of the interplay between an individual's different identity characteristics and how these result in equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes. The different identity characteristics combine to potentially lead to disadvantage that is greater each individual characteristic.

## UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality guides us to consider every person as an individual with their own unique identity. Identity comprises various characteristics which influence social outcomes. Intersectionality predicts that diversity and inclusion cannot be fully understood if the focus rests upon just one characteristic.

Intersectionality emphasises disadvantage at individual, organisational and societal levels arising from the combination of different traits. Women, for example, experience the workplace differently depending upon intersectionality with ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and/or other aspects of their identity.

While intersectionality emphasises disadvantage at the individual level, the flipside is that it also highlights the privileged elite.

## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Legislation governs equal opportunities by identifying protected characteristics. It

is illegal to discriminate on grounds, for example, of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, and disability.

Diversity celebrates difference. The business case diversity argument recognises the positive benefits that flow from a diverse workforce. It presents a strong rationale for incorporating different individual and protected characteristics as a valuable objective within talent management.

Inclusion goes further than a legislative framework providing equal chance of employment opportunities. It also goes beyond employing a workforce representing diverse characteristics demonstrating equal access to the workplace. Inclusion means all with intersectional identities gain an equal share of the opportunities that employment can offer.

## MEASUREMENT

The collection of statistics can provide a measure of the efforts made and success achieved in employing a range of people with different protected characteristics. Employment data may be kept, for example, on gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation (if disclosure is given).

Differences in pay are traditionally recorded linked to one protected characteristic. The gender pay gap provides an example of this. Pay gaps are recorded by some employers for ethnicity and disability. Once a gap is identified, action can be taken to address it. Yet, pay gaps are affected by membership of multiple disadvantaged groups. It is likely that disabled women of colour, of example, will experience greater pay disparity than Caucasian, non-disabled women.

## PRACTICAL INTERVENTIONS

Collecting and analysing some measure of intersectionality may be undertaken

from employment data but the combination of different characteristics can lead to multiple classifications, rendering the data difficult to use.

Notwithstanding this, practical steps must be taken to ensure that talent objectives are met. Understanding the nature of disadvantage across multiple characteristics is necessary if diversity and inclusion objectives are to be achieved. For example, performance management and access to development interventions, career growth and leadership opportunities all provide examples of where intersectionality can help to enact policy and practice to further inclusion.

## GLOBAL MOBILITY IMPLICATIONS

The international assignee workforce is traditionally male, white and middle aged. Although the representation of women has increased, more effort is needed to widen the assignee profile through inclusion of different ethnicities, age groups and sexual minorities. Such action can widen career and leadership opportunities for minorities.

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