CS468112

Blacks and Minorities in AEC: Perspective of Diversity and Inclusion

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Learning Objectives

- Define diversity and inclusion
- Gain insight into a perspective of people of color who hold AEC roles
- Examine why people of color are not in AEC or leadership roles
- Discuss the experience of being a person of color in construction

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Description

This session will feature minorities that are employed in various AEC industry-related roles. The panelists will highlight the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the AEC industry. Interviews will discuss equity and inclusion issues and provide solutions to address this systemic problem within the industry. We will review methods to promote greater diversity while maintaining and expanding future opportunities for qualified minorities. This class will bring awareness, establish dialogue, and engage all stakeholders in the AEC community.

Speaker(s)

Kim Bates

Kim Bates has been in Construction Technology for over 20 years, starting in the mid-1990s before it was a thing. After exploring options on the hardware and infrastructure side, she found she had an affinity for data.

Always partnering with general contractors, she started her consulting firm while prioritizing starting a family. This allowed her to be home with her young children and continue to lead in the digital transformation that was occurring in the industry. Making data-driven decisions is a critical success factor in construction and most vital now, as we continue to feel the impacts of what was once solely a paper-based industry. Building systems, processes, and governance that provide a single source-of-truth ensures that wherever people are looking for information, they get the most accurate, complete data available. In addition to data, she has led initiatives driven to adopt state-of-the-art infrastructure solutions for project sites and security measures and introduced artificial intelligence to identify insights that allow the business to have fruitful discussions and make informed decisions.

Her commitment extends beyond her CIO role, though. Kim believes that people are one of our most treasured assets. She creates pathways for all voices, most notably women and underrepresented groups, to feel heard and understood. She has been instrumental in the development of wide-reaching Diversity & Inclusion plans within the industry. As a Black woman, she has provided insights to construction executive teams and boards that have helped guide meaningful change.

Follow Kim on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/kimb8s/

Lorrin Blair, PE

Lorrin manages the Technical Solutions Executive (TSE) team for Autodesk Construction Solutions, with team members located across the eastern United States and Europe. TSEs are experts knowledgeable in both the construction industry and the entire Autodesk Construction suite of products and workflows. Prior to joining Autodesk and PlanGrid in 2017, Lorrin spent the better part of a decade supporting jobsites all over North America, first as a Civil Field Engineer and then as a Project Manager. She spent the majority of her field career working for Bechtel, a top ENR 400 contractor and the largest construction company in the US. During her time in the field, she also gained experience working as a PM in the speciality contractor realm and, most recently, was a Construction Project Manager for the University of Michigan.

Lorrin is a Licensed Professional Engineer and holds a B.S. in Civil Engineering from Purdue University. She's also an advocate for construction jobsite safety and believes all accidents are preventable. Lorrin lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with her husband and their two labs.

Follow Lorrin on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/lorrinblair/

Dwayne G. Sellars, CM-BIM, LEED AP
Dwayne is the Senior VDC Manager at W. M. Jordan Company and has led their VDC/BIM operations since 2009, bringing previous construction knowledge into this role from his experience as a Field Engineer, Superintendent, and Project Engineer. Dwayne holds a Bachelor's of Science in Architectural Engineering from North Carolina A&T State University. He is a LEED Accredited Professional and holds an AGC certificate for BIM Management.

Since joining W. M. Jordan, the company has been ranked among the nation's top 50 BIM Contractors. Dedicated to the pursuit of positive change in the AEC industry, Dwayne has focused on bridging the gap between technology and people. Named a Virtual Innovator in BD+C's "Forty Under 40" class of 2016, he is a recognized leader in his industry. Dwayne constantly develops innovative methodologies that help W. M. Jordan Company maintain a competitive edge, such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and similar tools.

A champion for integrating technology into the design and construction process, Dwayne serves as a teacher, mentor, and facilitator for several organizations. He is a founding member of the Hampton Roads Revit User Group, an active member of Virginia Revit User Group and Charlottesville Revit User Group, Autodesk University, AUGI, and AGC BIM Forum. Dwayne is a former member of DBIA BIM Committee, a member of the Models & Implementation Guidance (MIG) team for the National BIM Standard (NBIMS), and the Building Smart Alliance.

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Vincent J. Spencer, AIA | LEED AP | CPTED-CPD
Vincent J. Spencer is an Associate Principal with LS3P Associates in Charlotte, NC. Vincent has 20 years experience in design for educational and investment commercial clients.

A member of Charlotte's K-12 designs design studio, he is a expert in the best practices for the design of state of the art learning environments. His guiding philosophy is that high performing schools show our communities the paramount emphasis and passion for education. He is involved in all aspects of the design and construction process, from advance planning, design, and production of contract documents to quality reviews to ensure the project meets environmental, zoning, and regulatory standards.

The 4th of five children, born and raised in Greensboro, NC. Vincent holds a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Engineering from the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, NC, and a Master of Architecture from the University of Illinois in Urbana - Champaign.

His calm, polite, and optimistic demeanor is the cornerstone of his positive working relationships with large and small technical teams. He is always willing to spend his time and expertise to provide guidance and elevate others' confidence within and outside the AEC industry. As a consummate listener, Vincent is attuned to his clients' needs and seeks creative and cost-effective solutions that fulfill and exceed the client's expectations.

Follow Vincent on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/vincent-j-spencer/

Panel Summary

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion have been a hot topic for the last couple of years. Today, Black people are underrepresented in the construction industry. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, black people account for about 12% of the U.S. population but comprise just 6% of the U.S. construction workforce. According to the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), this low percentage is due to a lack of familiarity with the industry. Furthermore, the Center for Talent Innovation analysis indicates that blacks occupy only 3.2% of the senior leadership roles at large companies in the U.S. and just 0.8% of all Fortune 500 CEO positions.

Another significant issue is that Black and minorities have commonly experienced racism, discrimination, and bias in the AEC industry. As one example, ENR reports, "Black leaders say they more often see an underlying systemic racism that disadvantages Black workers in everything from training opportunities to reaching the C-Suite."

Over the last several months, the topic of "Racism in Construction" and numerous high-profile racist incidents on job sites have been well published. As Construction Dive reports, "I have seen and heard countless acts of racism on jobsites," wrote one reader. "I am now in the office and sitting in on job site meetings and still seeing and hearing the same nonsense." [1]
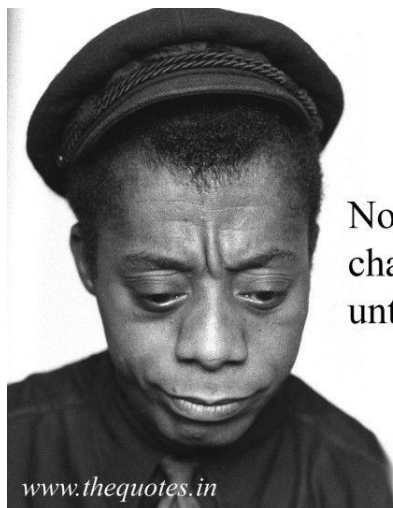
Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.

James Baldwin

www.thequotes.in

This session brings together a group of Black professionals from different backgrounds to bring awareness to diversity, equity, and inclusion issues within the AEC industry. Four engaging conversations will cover various topics, including racial discrimination, bias, and organizational responsibility. The panelists will provide insight into their experiences as black professionals in the AEC industry, their perspective of the industry's landscape, and their suggestions for improving the AEC industry's culture.
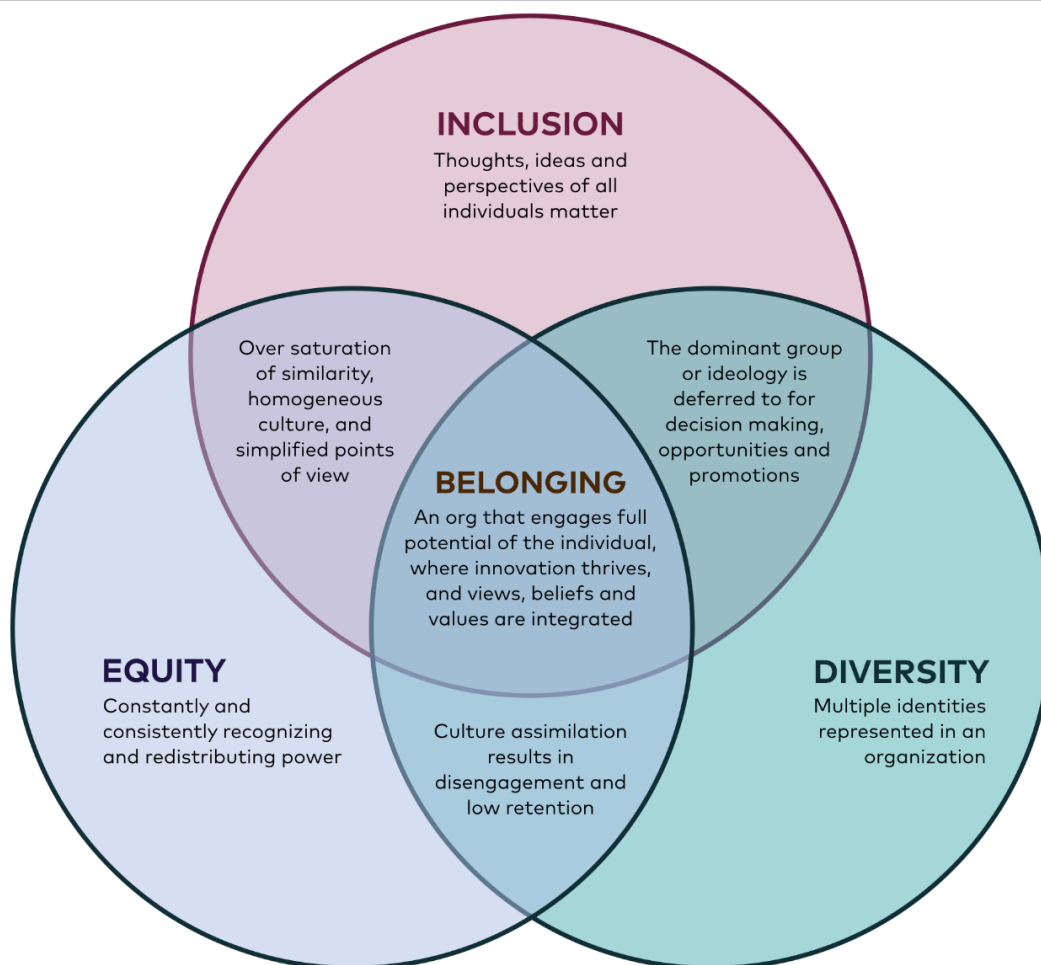
This handout looks to answer specific questions and hopefully bring more perspective on the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Included in this handout will be a link to an engaging blog article written by Autodesk's Alyssa Jaber that provides an overview of this session. I recently participated in a new and exciting podcast called "Digital Builder," hosted by Autodesk's Eric Thomas. You will find more detail on the podcast below.

Define Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective.

Equity promotes justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

Inclusion is an outcome to ensure those that are diverse feel and are welcomed. Inclusion outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are genuinely inviting to all. To the degree to which diverse individuals can participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group.

INCLUSION
Thoughts, ideas and perspectives of all individuals matter

Over saturation of similarity, homogeneous culture, and simplified points of view

The dominant group or ideology is deferred to for decision making, opportunities and promotions

BELONGING
An org that engages full potential of the individual, where innovation thrives, and views, beliefs and values are integrated

EQUITY
Constantly and consistently recognizing and redistributing power

Culture assimilation results in disengagement and low retention

DIVERSITY
Multiple identities represented in an organization

Imaged provided Krys @ Medium.com

Why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is Important to the AEC Industry

Having a diverse and inclusive organization is not "just the right thing" to do but also is a competitive business advantage. Diversity and Inclusion have a significant impact on your organization. The business benefits of diversity are well documented, even though there is still much progress to be made.

Four key areas in which Diversity and Inclusion will play a significant role in your organization: [1]

Attract and Retain Talent

Sixty-five percent of employees who experienced exclusive behaviors said they would leave or seriously consider leaving if they found a different job. In an industry with an employee turnover rate of almost 25 percent and a skilled labor shortage, worker retention is vital. Companies can gain a competitive edge in hiring and mitigate employee turnover through an authentic culture of Inclusion. [3]

Innovation and Productivity

Innovation derives specific strengths from diverse team inputs. Homogeneous teams may unknowingly develop products, technology, or services designed to benefit one type of user, limiting their customer base. In contrast, when employees think their company is committed to diversity and feel a sense of belonging, there is an 83 percent increase in their ability to innovate. Innovation leads to better results. And results drive company performance and profit. [3]

Reputation and Culture

Documentation supports that workers who have not been integrated into workplace culture or who perceive themselves as "outsiders" are more likely to have accidents because of the increased psychological and emotional stress of being excluded. Safety is the top priority for the construction industry. Leveraging the construction industry's already strong safety culture to build an equally strong inclusion culture will help ensure the safest possible job site. [3]

Tangible Financial Results

A McKinsey study found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams are 25 percent more likely to have financial returns above the national industry average. Companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity on executive teams are 36 percent more likely to have financial returns above the national industry average. The likelihood of outperformance continues to be higher for diversity in ethnicity than for gender. [2]

The Business Value of Diversity in Organizations

There is a tangible impact of diversity on a company's bottom line. According to the Center for American Progress [5], here are the top 10 ways diversity in the workplace influences a company. [4]

- A diverse workforce drives economic growth.
- A diverse workforce can capture a more significant share of the consumer market.
- Recruiting from a diverse pool of candidates means a more qualified workforce.
- A diverse and inclusive workforce helps businesses avoid employee turnover costs.
- Diversity fosters a more creative and innovative workforce.
- Businesses need to adapt to our changing nation to be competitive in the economic market.
- Diversity is a crucial aspect of entrepreneurialism.
- Diversity in business ownership, particularly among women of color, is key to moving our economy forward.
- Diversity in the workplace is necessary to create a competitive economy in a globalized world.
- Diversity in the boardroom is needed to leverage a company's full potential.

The Business Value of Inclusion in Organizations

In a report by Salesforce Research, The Impact of Equality and Values-Driven Business, companies that actively work to make their cultures more inclusive are better positioned to achieve strong customer loyalty and boost employee engagement and productivity. [4]
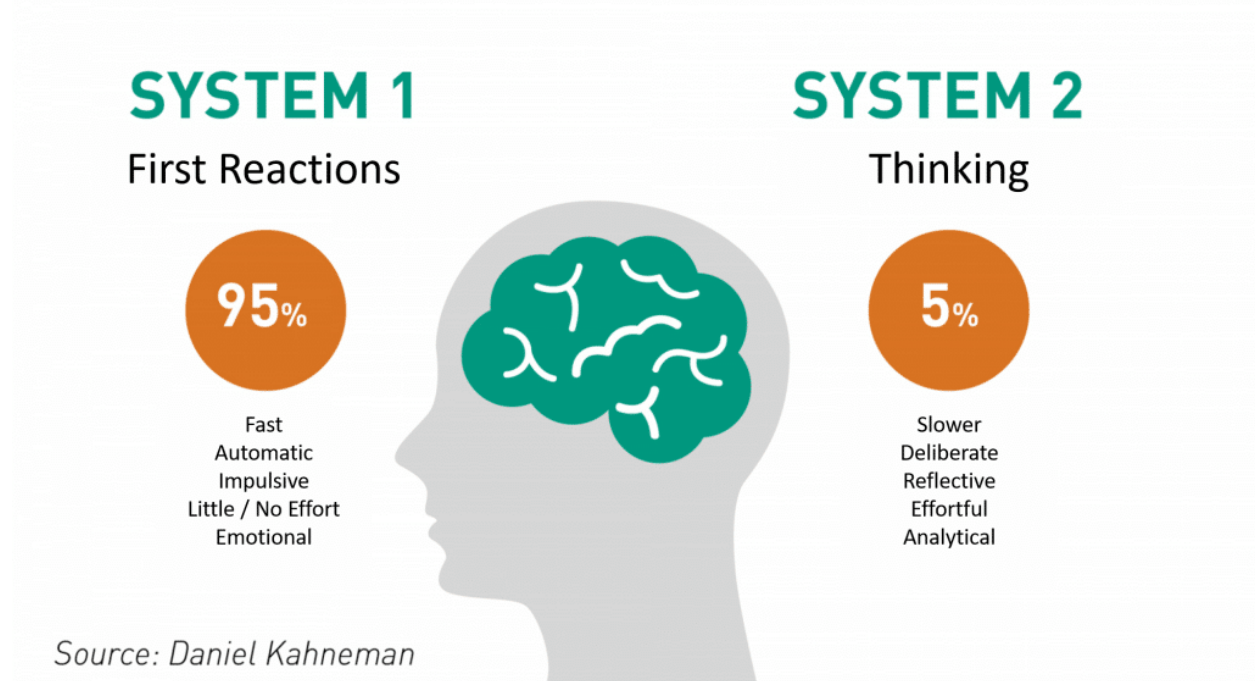Here are a few key stats:

- Employees who feel their voice is heard at work are nearly five-times (4.6X) more likely to feel empowered to perform their best work.
- Employees who say their company provides equal opportunities are nearly four times (3.8X) more likely to say they are proud to work for their company.
- Employees who say they're able to be their authentic self at work are nearly three times (2.8x) more likely to say they are proud to work for their company — and almost four-times (4.4x) more likely to say they are empowered to perform their best work. [4]

How to Deal with Unconscious Bias

Bias is a preference in favor of or against a thing, person, or group compared with another. It may be held by an individual, a group, or an institution, and it can have negative or positive consequences.

Unconscious bias is often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgments made between different qualities and social categories such as race, gender, or disability and are conclusions made without conscious awareness. These automatic preferences or stereotypes are a significant contributor to a lack of workplace diversity. [1]

The best way to prevent yourself from succumbing to these unconscious biases is to become aware of them and take action to avoid them when recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees. Doing so will help your team build a more diverse and inclusive workplace. [2]

SYSTEM 1 — First Reactions — 95% — Fast, Automatic, Impulsive, Little / No Effort, Emotional

SYSTEM 2 — Thinking — 5% — Slower, Deliberate, Reflective, Effortful, Analytical

Source: Daniel Kahneman

Take Action to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity
Below you will find ten steps businesses can take to improve diversity in the workforce. [1]

Education
- Acknowledge the lack of diversity in the first place
- Make diversity training an available option for managers, without being forceful
- Change your language

Hiring and Recruitment
- Adjust how you screen and search for candidates
- Establish mentorship programs to grow diversity

Culture
- Change the grievance and compliant system
- Celebrate all religions and cultures
- Implement cross-training programs

Promotions
- Generate transparency in raises
- Hire diversity managers

To truly improve diversity, executives, senior leaders, and employees with influence need to set the example. Leaders must recognize the need to improve diversity, bring awareness to the diversity issues in their organization, and educate employees about diversity. The best resource for understanding how to improve diversity in your organization is your employees. Engage in meaningful conversations with your employees and allow them to have a voice. [2]

How to Promote Equity in the Workplace

Equity is a process that begins by acknowledging the unequal starting place and makes a commitment to correct and address that imbalance.[1] Organizations that promote equity in the workplace level the playing field for all of their employees - and benefit from the competitive advantages of employing diverse talent. A culture of equity and Inclusion is critical to diversity efforts but creating an equitable and inclusive workplace also creates a positive employee experience. [2]

Real-World Examples of Inequity

A study of a hiring process found that candidates with "white-sounding names" (Greg and Emily) were 50% more likely to receive a call back than candidates with "African-American-sounding names" (Lakisha and Jamal). Another study asked faculty scientists to evaluate candidates' competencies, whether they would mentor the candidate, and what they'd suggest as a starting salary. The study found that female candidates with resumes and criteria identical to male candidates were deemed less competent, less worthy of being hired, offered less career mentoring, and offered a lower starting salary. [1]

Fostering equity in the workplace looks the same for each organization: equal opportunities and fair representation for everyone. However, beneath the surface, there are differences for each organization; differences will determine how you can successfully promote equity in your workplace. [2]

Below you will find tips to help promote equity:
- Do your research on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Review your company data
- Set measurable targets and hold yourself accountable
- Evaluate your hiring practices
- Engage executives and leaders in conversation on how to improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the organization
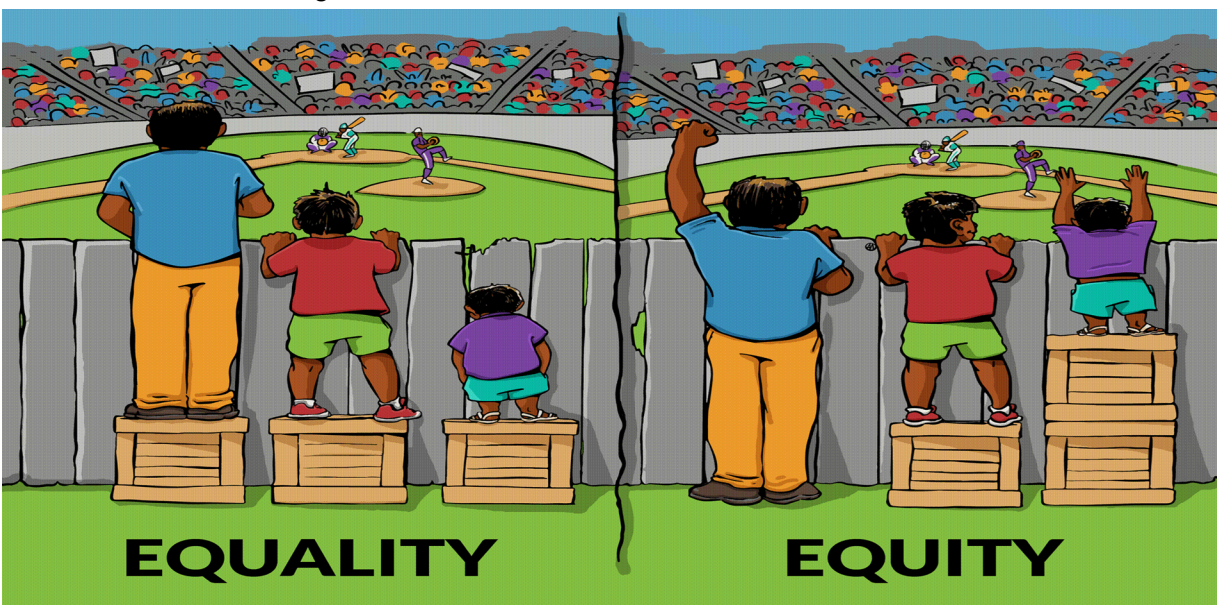
How to Foster an Inclusive Work Environment

Creating an inclusive work environment is an effective way to make all employees feel comfortable and welcome within your workspace.

DEI educator Verna Myers states that diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance." You can have a diverse team of talent, but that does not mean that everyone feels welcome or are valued, is given opportunities to grow, or gets career support from a mentor. Building an inclusive culture enables a diverse workplace to thrive. [1]

"There are issues that marginalize inclusivity – from racism to the gender wage gap – but vigilance and voice are key to rise above and create a diverse and inclusive environment," says Allison Scott, Director of Construction Thought Leadership and Customer Marketing at Autodesk. [2]

Empowerment is key. Having a diverse workforce will not increase results if every team member cannot contribute to their ideas. Excluding employees from contributing to decision-making can bring a loss in profits. An employee's productivity decreases when they are excluded from contributing to the company's mission in a meaningful way and are subject to a hostile work environment. [3]

Here are five additional ways to foster an inclusive work environment that drives diversity:

- **Educate your Leaders** - Executives and managers are instrumental to diversity and inclusion efforts
- **Form an Inclusion Council** - Carefully select members and leaders for their passion and commitment to Diversity and Inclusion
- **Celebrate Employee Differences** - Show you respect employees different backgrounds and traditions by inviting them to share in the workplace
- **Listen** - Create employee surveys that drill down on engagement and inclusion issues. And then put the findings into an actionable plan
- **Measure Progress** - Put in place measurable and time-bound goals as you would with any other strategic plan

Call to Action for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

THE AEC INDUSTRY MUST STAND TOGETHER TO TAKE MEANINGFUL AND EVIDENT STEPS TOWARDS CREATING A DIVERSE, WELCOMING, AND INCLUSIVE INDUSTRY.

Action Item 1: Executives and Senior Leaders Need to Champion Change
Emphasize the business case for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Make these initiatives part of your business strategy. Communication your vision on diversity to the company.

Action Item 2: Have Open and Honest Conversations
The most crucial step to take towards improving Diversity, equity, and Inclusion is to keep the conversation going. The conversation around Diversity and Inclusion can be difficult; discussing racism can be uncomfortable. These conversations are needed to embrace a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment. Listening to your employees will bring awareness to the issues, build trust, and improve the company culture.

Action Item 3: Provide Training, Education, and Learning Resources
Training can help build awareness of unconscious bias, cultural competence, or additional barriers to Diversity, Inclusion, and belonging. It can also motivate positive behaviors and attitudes and foster an environment where folks feel comfortable bringing their full, authentic selves to work.

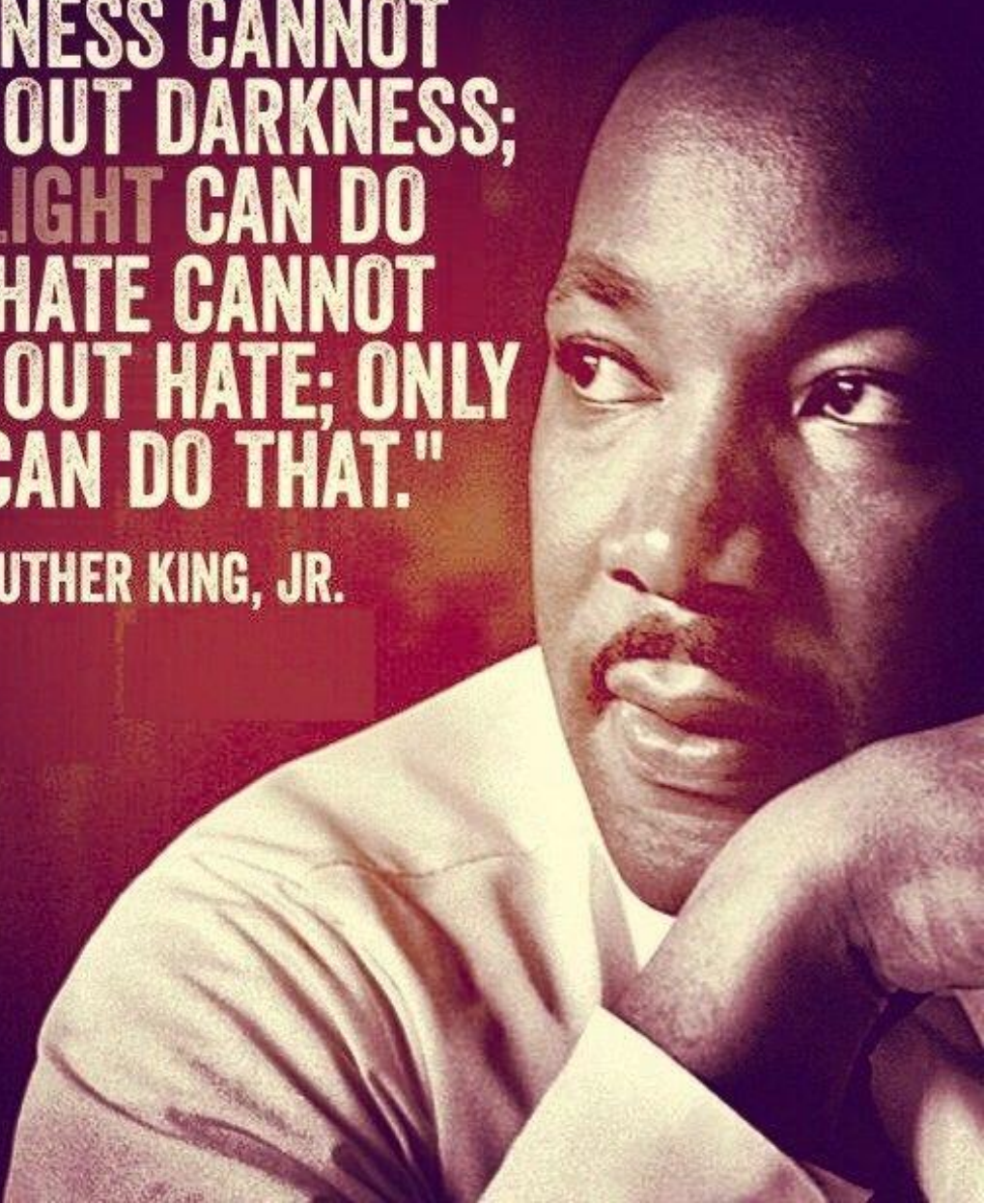### Action Item 4: Form a Diversity and Inclusion Group
Create a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion group of passionate, committed, and influential employees in the company. At least two Executives are required to lead and actively be involved in the group. Ideally, the Diversity and Inclusion group should be involved in goal setting around hiring, retaining, and advancing a diverse workforce and addressing employee engagement problems among underrepresented employee groups. D&I groups should meet regularly to review organizational feedback, troubleshoot challenges, and, most importantly, carry messages about their work to their senior peers and company executives.

Action Item 5: Formal Sponsorship Programs
Sponsorship programs are an effective way to overcome network gaps. Sponsors are senior-level leaders who advocate for employees, earn promotions, and raises and get credit for their successes. Sponsors put skin in the game, using their network and connections to help advance employees via guidance and endorsement.

Action Item 6: Promote openness and tackle microaggressions
Companies should uphold a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory behavior, such as bullying and harassment, and actively help managers and staff identify and address microaggressions. They should also establish norms for open, welcoming behavior and ask leaders and employees to assess each other's living up to that standard.

Appendix A
Autodesk References
Autodesk Construction Cloud Blog: [How to Promote Diversity and Inclusion: Insights from Black Construction Professionals](#)

Digital Builder Podcast officially launches on November 2nd, 2020
The Digital Builder Podcast is for construction professionals working on the forefront of construction. If you are looking for conversations centered on where the industry is headed, this podcast is for you!

Each episode features an interview with top construction professionals discussing themes related to connected construction and the future of the construction industry.

Industry Diversity and Inclusion Resources
AGC Diversity & Inclusion: https://www.agc.org/diversity
National Association of Minority Contractors: https://namcnational.org/
National Association of Women in Construction: https://www.nawic.org/nawic/default.asp
AGC Culture of Care: https://buildculture.org/
Construction Center of Excellence: [Implicit Bias, Equity, Diversity](#)

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[1] Construction Dive: [Readers Respond: Construction faces a 'racism pandemic'](#)
[2] CFMA: [Racism in Construction](#)

Define Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: [What is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)?](#)

Why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is Important to the AEC industry
[1] Catalyst: [**Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter: Quick Take**](#)
[2] McKinsey: [**Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters**](#)
[3] AGC Diversity and Inclusion: [The Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion in the Construction Industry](#)
[4] Salesforce Trailhead: [The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion at Work](#)
[5] Center of American Progress: [**Top 10 Economic Facts of Diversity in the Workplace**](#)

How to Deal with Unconscious Bias
[1] Allegis Group: [Unconscious Bias in the Workplace](#)
[2] Builtin: [Unconscious Bias Examples and How to Avoid Them In The Workplace](#)

Identify Ways to Take Action to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity
[1] Forbes: [10 Steps businesses can take to improve Diversity and Inclusion in the workforce](#)
[2] SocialTalent: [4 Simplest Ways Improve Diversity Organisation](#)

How to Foster an Inclusive Work Environment
[1] Chron: [How to Create an Inclusive Work Environment](#)

How to Promote Equity in the Workplace?
[1] General Assembly Blog: [What's the Difference Between Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity?](#)
[2] Qualtrics: [Fostering Equity in the Workplace](#)

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- 12 Examples of Unconscious Bias & Tips to Reduce Them .... https://builtin.com/diversity-inclusion/unconscious-bias-examples
- The Value of Bringing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion https://www.15five.com/blog/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/