

**Canadian** Centre for Diversity and Inclusion  
Centre **canadien** pour la diversité et de l'inclusion



# Addressing Fear and Resistance

Toolkit for Diversity and Inclusion Practitioners.

December 1, 2014.



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### Employer and Individual Participants.

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- Air Canada.
- Alberta Health Services.
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- ConocoPhillips Canada.
- Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).
- CRC Consulting.
- Culture Connect.
- D&D Inclusion Consulting.
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- Dentons Canada LLP.
- Diversity Recruiter.
- DiversityWorks Organizational Consulting, Inc.
- Edmonton Region Immigrant Employment Council.
- Enbridge Pipelines Inc.
- Enterprise Rent-a-Car Canada.
- Frame & Associates Consulting.
- Global.
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- Husky Energy.
- Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC).
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- Monster Canada.
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- Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG).
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- Pride at Work Canada.
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- Provision.
- QMUNITY.
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- Sodexo Canada.
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- Spinal Cord Injury Ontario.
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- Toronto Police Service.
- Toronto Public Library.
- TransCanada.
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## About the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

Founded in 2013, the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (“CCDI”) is a national non-profit organization that has become the trusted advisor for all issues related to Diversity and Inclusion, and Human Rights and Equity within Canada’s workplaces.

Effectively managing Diversity and Inclusion (“D&I”) is a strategic imperative for all Canadian employers. In many organizations human resources and D&I practitioners are responsible for achieving substantial performance goals as well as transforming their organizations into inclusive work environments; however, they are often under-resourced creating challenges in achieving their organization’s strategy.

CCDI helps employers, business leaders, human resources (“HR”) and D&I practitioners effectively address the full picture of diversity within the workplace by providing innovative and proven strategies, research, tools, events, and educational supports with the goal of helping improve the overall inclusivity of the Canadian workforce.

CCDI’s six key areas of focus include the following:

- » **Supporting our Members** (individual members and Employer Partners) on their D&I journey. The CCDI provides monthly webinars, as well as in-person Community of Practice events across Canada, which provide engaging, productive networking and promising practice sharing where business, HR and D&I professionals come together to share and

learn. Additionally, CCDI is a central resource providing ad hoc advice to members on an array of issues related to managing D&I in their organizations.

- » **Education.** Providing employers with a library of practical, effective learning solutions for leaders, management teams, Diversity Councils, ERG leaders, HR and D&I professionals, and all people.
- » **Knowledge Repository.** A centralized online library of D&I research, data, and promising practices information, with a specific focus on Canada.
- » **Research.** Cutting-edge exclusive research that contributes to the Canadian conversation on diversity and inclusion.
- » **Legislative Support.** Providing practical experience to help employers with compliance with current and future D&I related legislation (Employment Equity Act, AODA, etc.).
- » **Consultancy.** Practical, credible, and sustainable consulting, training, and measurement services specific to D&I in Canada, provided by a team of subject matter experts with decades of experience delivering D&I work inside organizations.

To learn more about CCDI, please visit our website at [www.ccdi.ca](http://www.ccdi.ca).





## Founding 25 Partners.

CCDI is a member-supported organization, providing services to both individual members and Employer Partners. We would like to acknowledge the exceptional support and dedication of our Founding 25 Employer Partners.



For more information on becoming an Employer Partner with CCDI, please contact us or visit [www.ccdi.ca](http://www.ccdi.ca).





## Advisory Board.

The commitment, drive and passion of our Advisory Board is critical to the success of CCDI. We thank them for their continued support and dedication.

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## Introduction.



We are pleased to present our third toolkit, *Addressing Fear and Resistance*, which provides practical suggestions and strategies for the challenge of dealing with fear and resistance to

diversity and inclusion initiatives in your organization.

Diversity and inclusion champions are agents of change within organizations and communities. This is a challenging position to be in, because we know too well that people resist change – even when it is change for the better. Sometimes change agents can feel discouraged, isolated, and even attacked when dealing with opposition. In our experience, we have found support in connecting with networks of others who are dealing with the same issues. That’s why our Community of Practice events are a core support service offered by CCDI to diversity and inclusion practitioners and champions. They are a safe space where D&I champion can share their challenges, seek support, and learn from others.

Last year, in our “getting to know you” Community of Practice (“COP”) events, we asked participants to identify some of their major “pain points” – the challenges they were facing that affected their ability to succeed when it comes to D&I, or human rights and equity in their respective organizations.

Our first two toolkits sought to address some of the major issues that were raised, namely: buy-in, prioritization, and resources allocated for diversity and inclusion. We aimed to address these challenges by creating toolkits to help diversity champions develop useful business case or strategy documents to help advance their inclusivity objectives in their organizations.

Another major challenge that diversity practitioners across the country identified was dealing with fear

and resistance to D&I initiatives. So, in our most recent round of Community of Practice events, we engaged participants in brainstorming effective strategies for addressing fear and resistance.

While the other toolkits walked you through the process of how to create a planning document in the form of a business case or strategy, this one provides you with many strategies, ideas and tactics that may be useful in your organization. Every suggestion in this report may not be appropriate in your workplace, but we invite you to try to the ones you think will be most useful and practical in your organization.

**A note about verbiage:** As in the previous toolkits, we recommend that you customize your verbiage so that it will be meaningful and valid in your organization. If human rights and equity (“HR&E”) is the more appropriate term in your organization, by all means, use it. However, for ease of reference, throughout this report, we will refer to “D&I” – with the understanding that we mean diversity and inclusion or human rights and equity in an organization.

We hope you enjoy and find value in our third Toolkit of 2014. We look forward to bringing you more tools and resources as we move forward with engaging hundreds of people across Canada in developing the solutions to our biggest inclusion challenges.

Thanks.

Michael Bach, CCDP/AP  
Founder and CEO  
Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion  
December 1, 2014.





## Developing the Toolkit.

### The Methodology.

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Like CCDI's previous toolkits, the contents of this document are crowd-sourced – derived from a collaborative effort with input from over 180 professionals across Canada. We gathered their input through our Community of Practice events held in 7 cities across the country.

CCDI's COP events bring together D&I, human resources ("HR") and HR&E professionals, as well as people in other functions who are dedicated to improving the inclusivity of their organizations. Participants come from public sector, non-profit, and private sector employers, and represent almost every major industry in Canada.

One of the major issues experienced by diversity and inclusion practitioners across the country involves the challenges of being a change agent and the difficulty of dealing with fear or resistance to D&I initiatives. In order to address these challenges, we hosted a series of Community of Practice events in the late Spring and Fall of 2014 and asked participants to brainstorm approaches to dealing with fear and resistance. This report summarizes their generous contributions.

Resistance can be caused by a lack of understanding or awareness, defensiveness, or negative experiences with diversity initiatives in the past. Diversity has sometimes been framed in terms of certain demographic groups, and as such, many employees may not see the applicability to themselves personally or may not see the importance of it to the entire organization. Also, for many people, there is still a lack of understanding around the language and concepts discussed in diversity and inclusion.

In our "getting to know you" COP events in 2013, participants reported that fear manifests itself in different ways: the fear of difference, the fear of saying the wrong thing or offending someone, and finally the fear of dealing with resistance and opposition.

Another reason some people within organizations may be fearful or resistant to D&I programs is that

they see diversity as a zero-sum game where if someone wins, someone else must lose. They may fear that they will personally lose something. In order to engage all employees and break down this resistance, we need to change our verbiage from a focus on diversity to a focus on inclusion, and help them see that inclusion elevates us all, that it is about them, it involves them, and it should be important to them.

Prior to our Addressing Fear and Resistance COP events, we sent all participants two articles for pre-reading to introduce the topics of resisting change and dealing with fear and resistance: "*Ten Reasons People Resist Change*" from Harvard Business Review ("HBR") Blogs; and "*Five steps to overcome resistance to diversity initiatives*" from HR Daily. These articles helped to provide a baseline from which to move forward into our discussions.

In the HBR Blog, "*Ten Reasons People Resist Change*," Rosabeth Moss Kanter outlines the most common reasons why people resist change:

- Loss of control.
- Excess uncertainty.
- Surprises.
- Everything seems different.
- Loss of face.
- Concerns about competence.
- More work.
- Ripple effects.
- Past resentments.
- Sometimes the threat is real.

Our COP event participants were instructed to keep these barriers in mind as they discussed ways to overcome the resistance to change. Most of these concerns were addressed by the great suggestions provided by our COP event participants.

In the HR Daily blog post, "*Five steps to overcome resistance to diversity Initiatives*," Christa Sutter outlined the following 5 steps for addressing resistance:





1. **Engage all employees** in the process of creating a diverse and equitable workplace that provides an opportunity to work and grow.
2. **Involve employees** in developing a workplace diversity policy. Once policy is established, teams and committees can be formed to ensure fair workplace policy and laws are upheld.
3. **Help employees recognize** that diversity is a strength and a core competency in the global marketplace.
4. **Teach employees** how to use diversity to improve problem solving, decision making, innovation, creativity and, ultimately, organizational effectiveness.
5. **Emphasize the value** of diversity management as a sought-after competency in leaders, and help employees develop it.

Not surprisingly, the one thing all these steps have in common is engaging and involving more people.

At our community of Practice Events, we assigned each group with one of these 5 steps and asked them to brainstorm ways to deal with their specific area of focus. Once again, our participants came up with some great ideas.

**Helpful Resources:**

- ➔ HR Daily Blog post: Five steps to overcome resistance to diversity initiatives. [http://www.hrdaily.com.au/n106\\_news\\_selected.php?act=2&stream=0-5&selkey=1783&hlc=2&hlw=](http://www.hrdaily.com.au/n106_news_selected.php?act=2&stream=0-5&selkey=1783&hlc=2&hlw=)
- ➔ HBR Blog. Ten Reasons People Resist Change. <https://hbr.org/2012/09/ten-reasons-people-resist-chang/>





# Five Steps to Overcoming Fear and Resistance.

## 1. Engage All Employees.

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*“Engage all employees in the process of creating a diverse and equitable workplace that provides an opportunity to work and grow.”*

One of the downfalls of many diversity initiatives is they are sometimes created in isolation by a small group or just one person. This can have many effects.

Sometimes people hear about a “best practice” and decide to implement it in their organization, even though it may not be connected to any larger strategic objective or the right initiative for their organization. Sometimes D&I initiatives are developed without consultation or input from others in the organization. In both cases, the initiatives might not be practical or applicable to the real issues in that organization, and this can cause resistance or even lower the credibility of D&I initiatives within the organization.

Another effect of the “one-person diversity team” can be a lack of accountability by anyone else in the organization. When all diversity initiatives are driven by just one person or a small team, others in the organization may not see inclusion as their responsibility, and further, this can lead to isolation and burnout of the person or people who has responsibility for D&I.

But how do we engage all employees? Here are some of the suggestions from our community of practice event participants.

- Leaders must drive any engagement initiatives, including diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure that leaders understand the imperative to engage employees at all levels and in all business units and functions throughout the organization.
- Work with leaders to establish strategies to engage all employees.
- Involve employees in establishing a business case or imperative for inclusion in your organization and ensure that it is communicated to all employees so they understand the importance.
- Encourage employees to share their stories of how they personally benefit from inclusion, and share the “what’s in it for me” message with all.
- Ensure that the focus is on inclusion for all, not just specific cohorts or demographic groups.
- Ensure that diversity and inclusion events and initiatives are open to all.
- Create opportunities for listening and communication (i.e., chat sessions, conversations) between different groups of employees and between different levels of employees within your organization.
- Develop awareness campaigns, posters, and communications that appeal to, represent, and reflect all employees.
- Engender sharing, fun, and care in diversity events.
- Establish mentorship and sponsorship programs.
- Host events for all major cultural and religious celebrations and ensure all employees are invited to participate. This creates an opportunity to learn and celebrate together.
- Provide all employees a multicultural / multi-religious calendar and communicate the significance of different cultural and religious holidays, as well as why we should avoid scheduling major work meetings or events on certain days. Relate it to them personally, i.e. “Imagine if your work scheduled an important meeting on Christmas...”
- Ensure that employees learn about ways to get involved in diversity and inclusion initiatives in their new employee orientation.
- Include employees in developing and nurturing partnerships with different community agencies.
- Invite internal diversity and inclusion champions to share key messages throughout the organization, and external D&I champions to speak at events to inspire employees.



- Include diversity & inclusion initiatives in organizational awards programs, i.e., recognize the work that employees are doing to advance inclusion within the organization or the community.
- Work to create an environment where it's okay to talk about differences.
- Openly discuss limitations of Canadian culture, such as individualism and privacy, as well a tendency to minimize differences.
- Connect diversity and inclusion with values or initiatives that are already important to the employer, such as social responsibility, sustainability, community involvement, quality, client focus, etc.

## 2. Involve Employees.

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*“Involve employees in developing a workplace diversity policy. Once policy is established, teams and committees can be formed to ensure fair workplace policy and laws are upheld.”*

There are many ways to involve employees in the development and execution of diversity and inclusion business cases, strategies, policies, or initiatives. In fact, we suggest that these initiatives will *only* be successful if they involve as many employees as possible across your organization. Ultimately we want all employees to feel that they are involved in diversity and inclusion. As a diversity change agent within your organization, here are some good ideas to involve employees:

- Collect information from employees through as many methods as are available in your organization.
  - Employee Demographic Census.
  - Surveys.
  - Focus Groups.
  - Interviews.
  - Exit interviews.
  - Advisory councils or committees.
- Create a D&I committee with an executive sponsor and diversity ambassadors across the organization, in every business unit and at every level of the organization to work together to develop the business case, strategy and initiatives.
- Create role portraits for multiple employees across the organization to take on specific tasks – at 5% to 15% of their time. Tasks may include:
  - Collecting and analyzing data.
  - Assisting with communications.
  - Leading committees or employee resource groups.
  - Engaging groups of employees to become diversity trainers across the organization.
  - Celebratory events.
  - Community engagement initiatives.
- Considerations for involving employees:
  - Provide opportunities to give input, provide feedback, and translate theory into practice.
  - Review, redefine, and refine your approach at regular intervals to ensure employees are still engaged.
  - Enlist champions and allies. When people ask “how can I help?” or “what can I do?” give them tasks to help move your inclusion goals forward. Identify areas of interest, leverage their skills and influence.
  - Understand languages and preferred verbiage within various business groups / departments and use this customized verbiage to reach different audiences in ways that are meaningful or impactful for them.
  - Utilize “plain language” versus “corporate speak”.



### 3. Help Employees Recognize.

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*“Help employees recognize that diversity is a strength and a core competency in the global marketplace.”*

Articulating the imperative or business case for your organization is essential to the success of any endeavor. We recommend you reference CCDI’s Toolkit – *Locking in Your Leaders, Developing the Ironclad Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion* – as a guide for how to create a solid business case or imperative document.

Additionally, in brainstorming this topic, COP participants came up with the following suggestions:

- Establish inclusive behavior as a core competency in annual performance reviews. Articulate what inclusive behavior looks like and how employees can develop this competency.
- Articulate why inclusive or culturally competent behaviours improve sales, customer service, and employee interactions.
- Articulate the risk of not focusing on D&I (i.e. lost contracts, loss of competitive edge, lower engagement, higher turnover).
- Draw on emotions.
- Provide recognition to champions who support inclusion efforts.

- Measure the progress and impact of D&I initiatives (e.g., using a diversity score card).
- Leverage the passion and knowledge of those who do understand to pass information along. E.g., real life examples – financial and emotional satisfaction.
- Quantify benefits at your organization (provide both general and organizational-specific info re: impacts to your organization).
- Show return on investment: how does it impact the bottom line?
- Use qualitative data and powerful storytelling as well as quantitative data to get the message across.
- Focus examples of impacts on all levels and departments of the organization to make it more tangible and applicable to more people. Highlight:
  - Testimonials,
  - Stories, and
  - Connections.
- Use any communication vehicle available within the organization including social media and open forums
- Normalize diversity and inclusion vs. showcasing or promoting it.

### 4. Teach.

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*“Teach employees how to use diversity to improve problem solving, decision making, innovation, creativity and, ultimately, organizational effectiveness.”*

While diversity training is essential in every organization, we recommend that employers use many avenues for teaching employees about diversity and inclusion – not just formal training.

Here are some great ideas from our COP participants:

- Create a curriculum that starts with awareness and builds to skills development, differentiating for distinct segments or audiences and by different topics.

- Segments/Audiences may include:
  - Leadership.
  - HR and recruiters.
  - People managers.
  - All employees.
- Topics may include:
  - Diversity 101.
  - Accessibility.
  - Inclusive leadership.
  - Cross-cultural, inclusive and accessible recruiting.
  - Cultural competence.
  - Managing a diverse and multicultural workforce.
  - Unconscious bias.



- Embed D&I and accessibility learning in all training programs, e.g.:
  - New employee orientation.
  - Leadership development.
  - Management training.
  - Annual ethics & compliance training.
  - Project management training.
  - Customer service training.
  - Communications training.
- Include employees from different business units and functions in developing your diversity training – not just the HR folks.
- Create simulation exercises to allow people have different experiences they might not normally encounter.
- Provide real life examples and case studies in training.
- Ensure all leadership has training on the importance of diversity and inclusion to the organization, what it is, and what their role is in promoting it.
- Balance between outside consultants & trainers (for initial training of leaders and managers) and internal employees.
- Develop a train-the-trainer program where internal diversity champions from all levels and all lines of business are trained as diversity trainers. They might only deliver training periodically, however this allows you to extend your pool of trainers, to engage and provide developmental opportunities for more employees, and to reach more geographic regions without actually having to hire more trainers.
- Create tools and resources that can be accessed by any employee at any time, such as:
  - Conversation guides.
  - Managers' toolkit to support D&I.
  - Inclusion and accessibility analysis framework for assessing new initiatives and projects. (aka "inclusion lens" in some organizations).
  - E-Learning modules.
  - Videos (vlogs) and blogs.
  - Materials for "diversity and inclusion moments" in team meetings and events.
- Establish and train a team of champions or ambassadors (e.g., engage those involved in D&I councils or committees, networks, employee resource groups, and others who have expressed interest):
  - Support conversations on the ground in informal ways.
  - Facilitate "diversity moments" in team meetings and events.
  - Increase comfort, reduce fear and resistance by having more people talking about it throughout the organization. This alleviates the "it's just another HR thing" objection.
- Find a way to make it relevant to everyone: use the power of humor and stories.
- Ensure workplace policies clearly articulate what respectful behavior is, i.e., "Here's what we don't tolerate."
- Associate diversity differences with concepts employees may already know, i.e., communication styles or personality styles differences.
- Use a familiar, comfortable platform to bring in D&I lenses.
- Change the venues for corporate events or staff meetings, i.e., not the usual bar, hotel, or golf club. Some examples:
  - Aboriginal venue, led by Aboriginal leader.
  - Restaurant with no light and blind servers (learning experience).
  - Muslim Community Centre.
  - Different ethnic restaurants.
- Focus on personal stories, e.g., senior leadership sharing story about gen Y kids, or kids with special needs, or LGBT family member.
- Include diversity information in corporate social responsibility or sustainability training – i.e., remind people that diversity-related social indicators are an important part of the CSR/Sustainability report, and part of the social responsibility or sustainability performance of your organization.



## 5. Emphasize the Value.

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*“Emphasize the value of diversity management as a sought-after competency in leaders, and help employees develop it.”*

We cannot stress enough how important it is to develop a business case or formal imperative document to emphasize the value of focusing on diversity and inclusion or human rights and equity within your organization. That’s why our first toolkit was focussed on developing a business case for diversity and inclusion. It’s important that all diversity champions in your organization know what the imperative is for your organization and also are able to articulate it clearly when they encounter resistance or questions. If your champions cannot succinctly explain your organization’s imperative, how can you expect other employees to?

A theme that was discussed in several groups was the idea that we all want to live and work in a fair and equitable environment, so we can all achieve a sense of personal satisfaction or fulfillment. One approach involved engaging resisters in ensuring that we create and maintain such an environment.

Additionally, here are some great suggestions from our COP event participants for emphasizing the value of diversity to your organization.

### **Accountability and Values.**

One group suggested that emphasis be placed on two key components: accountability and values.

- 1) **Accountability:** We are all accountable to create an inclusive workplace for all.
  - Demonstrating inclusive behaviors and supporting inclusion should become a performance competency for leaders, managers, and all employees.
  - Leaders, managers, and all employees should be accountable to uphold policies and practices to ensure fairness.

2) **Values:** Leaders and all employees should strive to model behaviors that support organizational values (because most organizational values are consistent with respect and inclusion.)

- Leadership has to understand their role, and publicly champion organizational values and D&I.
- Incorporate connection of organizational values to D&I in all types of communications: event promotions, corporate communications, organizational announcements, job descriptions, town hall meetings, email blasts, etc.

### **Allies and Champions**

Another theme that was discussed was the importance of engaging allies and champions from all demographic groups to support and communicate the inclusion message in as many venues as possible.

Provide materials and preparation to your allies and champions so that they can help you spread the word, and also so they are prepared for the challenges of facing others’ resistance. Among that preparation, it’s important that you help them articulate not just why it’s important to the organization, but also the “what’s in it for me” argument in order to respond to any opposition on a personal level. When dealing with a particularly vehement or challenging detractor, champions can always invoke your organization’s respectful behaviour in the workplace policy, which all employees should be familiar with.





## Conclusion.

Our mandate at the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion is to assist Canadian employers in creating more inclusive workplaces.

Since most organizations are not currently fully inclusive, creating more inclusive workplaces requires organizational change. And people can be fearful or resistant of any kind of change.

As we know, organizations do not become more inclusive without the concerted effort of change agents – like you.

Yet being a change agent can often be daunting, challenging and isolating. That's why we created this toolkit to provide you with ideas for dealing with fear and resistance, and methods for involving more of your organization's employees. The more people are

involved, the more effective your change strategies will be and the less isolated you will feel.

In addition to toolkits and resources, we know that diversity change agents can also use emotional supports as well. That's where your network comes in. Events like the CCDI's Community of Practice events can help connect you with a network of D&I change agents in other organizations so you can share stories and experiences, and learn from each other.

We hope that the ideas, strategies and tactics we have provided in this document are valuable and useful in helping you gain the support you need both within your organization, and with a broader network, to address fear and resistance to diversity and inclusion, equity and human rights initiatives.



