

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING IN FOOD PROCESSING AND HANDLING ENVIRONMENTS

COURSE OUTLINE

- **In the workplace, the words “diversity”, “equity”, “inclusion” and “belonging” are often used together.**
 - But they are not interchangeable.
- **Each of them has a specific meaning and purpose.**
 - And all of them must be addressed to give an employee the best chance to succeed.
- **Let’s take a look at these terms and see how they relate to one another in a workplace setting.**
- **To put it simply, “diversity” is about differences. It refers to anything that sets one person apart from another, such as:**
 - Race.
 - Gender.
 - Age.
 - Ethnicity.
- **But diversity isn't just about people who look different from each other. A truly diverse workplace also contains people with different...**
 - Levels of education.
 - Socioeconomic statuses.
 - Religious beliefs.
 - Life experiences.
 - ...and more.
- **Having a “diverse” workplace means that you’re working alongside people who don’t necessarily come from the same background as you.**
 - This lets your company address opportunities and solve problems using different perspectives and life experiences.
 - However, “diversity” is only beneficial if everyone's feedback and contributions is valued.

- **Having a workforce from different backgrounds is helpful.**
 - But people can be biased against someone else’s characteristics or beliefs.
 - This could cause them to receive fewer opportunities than other employees.

- **Providing fair opportunities for all employees based on their individual needs is called “equity”.**
 - Although this word sounds similar to “equality”, it is not the same.
 - “Equality” seeks to provide everyone with the same resources and opportunities.
 - “Equity” recognizes that employees can need different things to be successful.

- **For instance, if a company gives every employee one day a week to work from home, that’s an example of “equality”.**
 - But if an employee has a health condition that makes it difficult for them to be at work even four days a week, they might need to work from home more than others in order to be successful in their job.
 - When a company provides additional work from home time for this employee, they’re creating “equity”, by giving them what they need to perform at their best.

- **Now let’s take a look at the ideas of “inclusion” and “belonging”.**
 - “Inclusion” means making an effort to give each employee a "voice" in the workplace.
 - It focuses on building a culture that values contributions from everyone.

- **Making sure that their opinions are heard and considered can show employees that they’re an important part of the team.**
 - It also benefits a company, by getting a variety of perspectives and opinions about what is being discussed.

- **When you create a workplace culture that values inclusion, it also results in a feeling of "belonging".**
 - This is the feeling that employees get when they know that they can bring their “whole selves” to the table without fear of judgment.
 - Every time you make an effort to be inclusive, you're helping someone feel like they "belong" at work.

- **Having a diverse group of people at your workplace can offer many benefits for both you and your company.**
 - In fact, recent research has shown that companies with a diverse group of employees and leadership teams make 36% more money than companies with little or no diversity.
 - And 79% of new college graduates rate workplace diversity as “very important” when applying for jobs.

- **Many people think that a company's diversity is determined by the percentage of employees that come from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.**
 - But actually, there are four major “types” of diversity that can exist in a workplace.

- **The first is called “internal diversity”.**
 - This relates to situations that people were born into, not things that a person chooses for themselves.
 - And they are impossible to change.

- **Some examples of "internal diversity" are...**
 - Race.
 - Ethnicity.
 - Age.
 - National origin.
 - Physical capabilities.
 - Mental ability.

- **"External diversity", on the other hand, describes things that are related to a person but aren't things that they were born with, including things like...**
 - Personal interests.
 - Education.
 - Appearance.
 - Citizenship.
 - Religious beliefs.
 - Socioeconomic status.
 - Life experiences.

- **The third major type of diversity, “Organizational diversity”, describes an employee’s position within an organization. These are the things in a workplace that distinguish one employee from another, such as their...**
 - Employment status.
 - Pay type.
 - Job function.
 - Location in the facility.
 - Management status.
 - Seniority.

- **The fourth type of diversity is commonly known as "worldview diversity".**
 - Each person has an outlook on life that is influenced by all of their internal, external, and organizational situations as well as their own experiences.
 - And that outlook can change as they have new experiences and learn more about themselves and others.

- **Some examples of worldview diversity are a person's...**
 - Moral compass.
 - Knowledge base.
 - Political beliefs.
 - General outlook on life.

- **So why is this all so important?**
 - The diversity that employees from different backgrounds can bring to a company is becoming more and more valuable in today's globalized and interconnected world.

- **Different experiences and perspectives can lead to different challenges that people face.**
 - So a diverse group of employees can have developed a broader range of skills than a homogenous one.

- **This can give rise to more ideas, and the ability to implement them in more ways, which can greatly increase the potential for a workplace to become more productive.**
 - Discussing different approaches to an opportunity or problem can also force employees out of their “comfort zones” and help them to see situations in a different way.

- **But employing people from a broad range of backgrounds doesn't just benefit the decision-making process in your workplace.**
 - It can also make a company better able to serve its customers and clients.
 - For instance, if your company works with people whose native language isn't English, it would be very beneficial to have employees who speak other languages as well.

- **Companies that have a diverse workplace often have a more positive reputation as well.**
 - Now-a-days most people want to work for an employer that is accepting of all backgrounds and treats all employees fairly, regardless of who they are.

- **The goal of having a “diverse” workplace is for employees with many different types of experiences and talents to come together to address opportunities and solve problems.**
 - Unfortunately, there can be a tendency for people to make assumptions about others who have particular traits and characteristics.
 - These assumptions are known as “biases”, and they can often defeat the purpose of having a diverse workplace.

- **Diversity only benefits a company if everyone’s opinions are valued.**
 - Bias can keep some employees from getting a chance to provide input because of who they are.
 - So it's important that we all do whatever we can to overcome any biases that we have.

- **But before you and your coworkers can overcome bias, you need to understand...**
 - What bias really is.
 - Where it can come from.
 - The ways that it can affect how people are treated.

- **“Bias” is all of the attitudes about a group of people that influence how we perceive, interact and behave toward them.**

- **It's usually based on the information that we have gathered from sources such as...**
 - Our own life experiences.
 - What other people tell us.
 - What we see and hear in the media.
 - What we are taught in our institutions, such as school or church.
- **Some examples of bias include sexism, racism and ageism. But people can be biased based on almost anything, including...**
 - How someone dresses or talks.
 - Their economic status.
 - Where they live.
 - Their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **While most biases are negative in nature, they can be positive as well.**
 - But even this can have a negative outcome.
- **For example, an employer might hire someone solely because they are impressed that the candidate graduated from an Ivy League college.**
 - But just because they attended a prestigious school doesn't necessarily mean they will be a good fit for the position they're interviewing for.
- **There are two main types of bias... "conscious" bias and "unconscious" bias.**
 - "Conscious bias" is based on our attitudes that we are aware of. This bias is intentional and it can result in "discrimination".
- **For instance, an employer with a "conscious" bias might only seriously consider applicants if they come from certain racial or ethnic backgrounds or are of a certain age.**
 - A manager might also deliberately withhold opportunities from an existing employee because they are biased regarding one or more of the employee's characteristics.
- **"Unconscious" bias is bias that operates outside of our awareness and control.**
 - It can be difficult to recognize these biases because they occur naturally in the brain.
 - When our "unconscious" biases come into play, we can have trouble acknowledging someone's capabilities or potential if they don't "fit" into our "expectations".

- **For example, if someone was brought up to believe that going to college is a measurement of intelligence, they might have an unconscious bias against a person who didn't go to college.**
 - So they may automatically perceive them as less intelligent than someone with a college degree... which may not be true at all.
- **So how can we overcome our biases?**
 - In a diverse workplace, our coworkers can be a great resource for identifying and overcoming both our conscious and unconscious biases.
 - All we have to do is ask them.
 - Talking with different types of people can help us learn to make decisions about others that are based on facts, instead of preconceived notions.
- **In a workplace, “one size” does not fit all.**
 - People can have all sorts of different characteristics and personalities.
 - Which means that employees can need different resources to do their jobs successfully.
- **“Equity” seeks to provide a workplace that treats employees “fairly”, by acknowledging that not everybody faces the same challenges or has the same privileges as others.**
 - And to provide resources and flexibility to those who need it to perform their best.
- **For instance, a single mother who has to go pick up a sick child from daycare in the middle of the day could be "written up" because she missed work.**
 - But a woman in the same situation who has someone else available to pick up her child might not have to disrupt her workday.
 - Since she is able to remain at work, it can seem like she is more committed to the company than her coworker.
- **A company that treats its employees with "equity" would understand the situation that the single mother is facing.**
 - Instead of penalizing her, they would find some way for her to make up the time she had to take away from work to get her child.
 - They could also consider providing on-site daycare options which could help all of their employees who face these types of situations.

- **Another important way that a company can practice "equity" is by offering to reimburse tuition for employees who aren't able to pay for college themselves.**
 - Earning a college degree could help them do their jobs even better, with the knowledge and skills that their colleagues who are college graduates already have.

- **The company could also partner with a college to implement a “workforce education” program.**
 - This provides employees with continuing education opportunities that are specific to their profession.

- **You may think that it's your supervisors' or your managers' job to create an "equitable workplace".**
 - But they aren't the only people who can help to promote equity in an organization.
 - There are also ways that you and your coworkers can help.

- **To start, you need to take the time to understand each person's individual situation.**
 - A colleague who comes in late and leaves early every day might be perceived as "lazy"... and the arrangement could seem "unfair" to some.
 - They might have made that arrangement because they have something going on in their life that makes it impossible for them to be at work during all of the normally scheduled hours and are putting in time working at home instead.

- **Before you judge them, you should find out enough about the situation so that you can “put yourself in their shoes”.**
 - And remember that "fair" doesn't always look the same for everyone.

- **But the best way you can help to create a workplace that provides equitable treatment for everyone is to speak up!**
 - Point out any behavior that you see or experience that doesn't take someone's individual needs into account.

- **Be on the lookout for expectations that are set by your company that might be unrealistic for an individual or a group of people to meet.**
 - And become an advocate for those who are negatively affected.

- **Another thing you can do is challenge behaviors and biases that you might encounter in yourself or your coworkers that can cause inequitable treatment and encourage other employees to do the same.**
 - It takes effort from everyone to ensure that all employees get the resources and opportunities that they need.
- **A “diverse” workplace has employees with many and varied character traits.**
 - When all of them offer their opinions and perspectives, it can be the perfect recipe for success.
- **But some employees might not feel comfortable pursuing opportunities or even expressing their opinions.**
 - They don’t believe it will make any difference in the decision-making process.
 - That's where "inclusion" comes in.
- **“Inclusion” means providing a work environment where everyone not only feels that they are treated fairly and respectfully but are valued enough that they can contribute feedback and opinions comfortably.**
- **The more diverse an organization gets, the more important inclusion becomes.**
 - You can't benefit from diversity without establishing a workplace culture that embraces different perspectives.
- **That's why one of the most essential “building blocks” of inclusion is making sure that everyone “has a voice”.**
 - When employees feel like they are heard, they’re more likely to share their opinions with others.
- **But an inclusive workplace doesn’t just “happen”.**
 - All employees, including you, have to make a commitment to help their colleagues feel that they are important and valued.
- **One way that you can support inclusion in your workplace is by becoming “culturally competent”.**
 - Take the time to learn about different cultures, races, religions and backgrounds.
 - Ask your coworkers to share some of the customs and practices that are associated with their culture.
 - It’s easier for people to feel comfortable in a workplace when their coworkers try to understand the types of experiences that they have... and have had.

- **You can also practice inclusion by welcoming ideas that are different from your own, and by supporting your fellow teammates.**
 - Taking advantage of all of the diverse perspectives that your coworkers have, and the creativity that comes with it, can help to make work more interesting, engaging and productive!

- **But all of this isn't up to you alone.**
 - Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can be a great tool for providing assistance and support in career or personal development.
 - They help to create a safe space where everyone can bring their “whole selves” to the table.

- **These groups usually consist of employees who share a particular characteristic, whether it's...**
 - Gender.
 - Ethnicity.
 - Religious beliefs.
 - Lifestyle.
 - Or something else.

- **Coworkers who want to learn more about the diverse groups of people that exist in their company can also attend ERGs.**
 - This can help them learn more about and support their colleagues.

- **Remember, the ultimate goal of inclusion is to give all employees a sense of “belonging”.**
 - Belonging is not an "action"... it's a "feeling".
 - It is how someone feels when they believe that they are valued for who they are and what they have to offer.

- **It's the feeling that they get when they aren't afraid to show their real personality at work, because they truly are a member of the team.**
 - And it's when they feel that they are seen for their unique contributions and are connected to their coworkers, knowing that they can just "be themselves" in their workplace.

- **By actively supporting your company's inclusion efforts, you can help to ensure that everyone in the company really feels like they "belong" there.**

*** * * SUMMARY * * ***

- **A diverse workplace has employees with a broader range of skills, which can lead to more innovative ideas and the ability to implement them in different ways.**
- **Having a diverse workplace can boost a company's creativity and productivity. But companies can't reap the benefits of diversity without “equity” and “inclusion”.**
- **Whether they're “conscious” or “unconscious”, we all have biases. But getting to know a diverse group of people can help us to make decisions about our coworkers that are based on facts, not opinions.**
- **Inclusion can help employees feel comfortable about contributing their ideas and opinions, and give them a sense of belonging... while still recognizing and celebrating their differences.**
- **When you can see people for what they are, and help everyone in your workplace get what they need to be successful, you're doing your part to support diversity, equity and inclusion.**