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## **People First: The Business Case for Measuring Workforce Diversity**

I often tell my clients that "that you need to get comfortable being uncomfortable if you're going to want to advance and accelerate your diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. I know this might be an over-used phrase, but it's the absolute truth! The thing that makes companies the most uncomfortable when it comes to DEI is sharing workforce planning data such as workforce diversity. It's an inconvenient and uncomfortable truth – any serious DEI strategy must **count people**. It's awkward, but only because most companies don't know how to "count people" or the business case for analyzing workforce diversity.

### **Intent vs. Impact**

Even companies who have been on their DEI journey for several years get a little nervous and face some internal backlash regarding counting people. You often hear things like: "*Are we doing quotas now?*" "*It's dehumanizing to treat people like a number!*"

I get it! DEI is not about counting people—it's making sure people count. Everyone understands and accepts that employees are more than numbers. But we also understand that numbers are how companies measure progress. Think about all the ways companies measure progress with numbers: GDP for economic progress. Carbon emissions for environmental protection progress. Customer conversions for your sales team's progress.

I know it's different — you're not counting *people* in those instances. But that's where a perspective problem lies: the goal of *counting people* to measure diversity is not about measuring the *people* but measuring your *progress*. The goal is to measure the effectiveness of recruitment and retention efforts. Measuring the workforce's diversity is one way to identify anything about the company's culture or workplace that act as barriers to the recruitment and retention of women or people of color. A company can not answer those questions or workforce planning questions if it does not measure its workforce diversity. The company needs to regularly take its workforce snapshots to see where the company stands relative to its available labor pool customer expectations. This will help companies know what to change to remain competitive today and in the future.

### **Measure Smartly**

I often inform my clients that the important thing is to measure your workforce diversity in a way that makes sense for the company: What's the racial and ethnic breakdown of the company's leadership team compared to the overall employee population? What's the makeup of the company's workforce compared to the labor pool you routine recruit from? How does it compare to the expectations of customers, communities, vendors, and other stakeholders?

Remember it's not a competition, nor are certain "counts" better or worse than others. This is about workforce planning. Be curious — what does the company's workforce diversity suggest to *you*? If you are not sure, consider hiring an outside consultant that specializes in workforce strategy and planning.