Building a Workforce Where Belonging Is the Rule — Not the Exception

Organizations with a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment are better prepared to meet the complex demands of today’s dynamically changing, digitally-driven business world. By challenging existing conventions and practices, your company can find innovative ways to enrich collaboration, heighten performance, and fuel profitable growth.
A major shift is underway. Everywhere you look, organizations are leveraging digital technology and thinking to remodel processes, refine work and working relationships, and create and connect assets in new and better ways. In the midst of all this change, it’s important to remember that the main engine for this transformation is not the technologies; it’s the people who bring their diverse viewpoints together to spark breakthrough thinking.

From a business standpoint, diversity incorporates a wide variety of perspectives that are not just generational, gender-related, or ethnic in nature but also professional and personal. Diversity can signify a range of skills and experiences, as well as different ways of thinking and problem-solving. A diverse and inclusive workplace encourages an empathetic culture that focuses on respect, connection, and involvement. Employees feel like they belong, and are free to contribute their ideas and talents on a level playing field.

To better understand the future of work in the digital age, we examined the role that diversity and inclusion play in innovation. We did this by assessing the following:

- The complex relationship between diversity and business performance.
- Specific actions organizations can take to leverage a diverse workforce, create a culture of inclusion, and foster a sense of belonging among key stakeholders.
- Ways to advance diversity by weaving it into the very fabric of an organization’s culture.

Organizations with a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment are better prepared to meet the complex demands of a dynamically changing business environment. They challenge old practices, ask more questions, and actively seek out market opportunities. They are more creative, and rely heavily on collaboration to fuel higher performance and drive positive growth.

While the journey to inclusiveness is different for every organization, it typically starts with the same question: What actions can we take to foster an empathetic and inclusive work culture that welcomes and leverages unique backgrounds, talents, and perspectives to inform and drive business decisions? This white paper provides a context for leaders seeking to answer this question, as well as actionable guidance on how to move forward.
Organizations with a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment are better prepared to meet the complex demands of a dynamically changing business environment. They challenge old practices, ask more questions, and actively seek out market opportunities. They are more creative, and rely heavily on collaboration to fuel higher performance and drive positive growth.
Part 1: The role of diversity & inclusion in innovation

Rarely does a new product or service concept spring fully formed from the mind and capabilities of one individual. A diverse and inclusive workforce has been shown to be crucial to encouraging different perspectives and ideas that drive innovation and effective execution.

A 2013 study by the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI) concludes that serial innovation — the kind that drives and sustains growth — is highly correlated with two dimensions of diversity: inherent diversity (the traits that you were born with and have been conditioned by, such as gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation), and acquired diversity (the influence of your experiences and what you’ve learned from your behavior). Cross-pollinating ideas from diverse people can work as a catalyst for innovation.

In fact, people who work in publicly traded companies that emphasize two-dimensional diversity are 75% more likely to have a marketable idea implemented, 70% more likely to see their organization capture a new market, and 45% more likely to see their organization improve market share. At the same time, 78% of employees report that they work in organizations that lack two-dimensional diversity (see Figure 1).

So what drives the relationship between diversity and performance?

Research indicates that simply having a diverse workforce is not enough to feed innovation and heighten performance. Diversity is an important but passive view of workforce composition; inclusion is an active view that focuses on creating an empathetic workplace environment nourished by trust and encouragement. When we work alongside others with attributes similar to ours and we see them succeed, we start to feel a sense of belonging.

A culture of inclusion fosters an atmosphere of trust; gives employees a say in decision making; involves them in work processes; and provides the information, resources, and tools they need to succeed — inspiring motivation, commitment, engagement, and ultimately higher performance for everyone in the organization. Creating a sense of belonging and nurturing a culture of inclusion can also become a competitive advantage.

When we work alongside others with attributes similar to ours and we see them succeed, we start to feel a sense of belonging.
Diversity, innovation, & market growth

Diversity is two-dimensional

**INHERENT DIVERSITY**
- Nationality
- Religious background
- Gender
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Race/ethnicity
- Socio-economic background
- Disability

**ACQUIRED DIVERSITY™**
- Cultural fluency
- Generational savvy
- Gender smarts
- Technological literacy
- Cross-functional knowledge
- Global experience
- Military experience
- Language skills

Employees at companies with 2-D diversity are 75% more likely to have a marketable idea implemented.

Diverse teams drive innovation

- Share credit for team success.
- Make it safe to propose novel ideas.
- Ensure everyone gets heard.
- Give actionable feedback.
- Take advice and implement feedback.
- Empower decision making by team members.

22% of employees work for companies with two-dimensional diversity.

78% of employees work for companies without two-dimensional diversity.

Diverse leaders unlock innovation

Employees in publicly traded organizations with 2-D diversity are 70% more likely to see their organization capture a new market than employees in publicly traded organizations without 2-D diversity.

45% more likely to see their organization improve market share than employees in publicly traded organizations without 2-D diversity.

Figure 1
Source: The Center for Talent Innovation
Diversity has shifted from a talent challenge for human resources to a business opportunity. Organizations with inclusive cultures are six times more likely to be innovative, to anticipate change and respond effectively, and are two times more likely to meet or exceed financial targets. In an ultra-competitive business environment where it is already difficult to even identify the next challenge on the horizon, organizations need to be both diverse and inclusive — committed to fostering the development of a high-energy, highly motivated workforce driven by differences that fuel breakthrough thinking.

The biggest barriers to female participation in IT

Women working in technology fields around the globe say that they:

- Lack female mentors: 48%
- Lack female role models: 42%
- Experience gender bias in the workplace: 39%
- Lack growth opportunities: 36%
- Have limited networking opportunities: 27%

Figure 2
Source: ISACA

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Gender differences encourage various perspectives and ideas from individuals that foster innovation. Different voices and views lead to new ideas, the creation of new services, and provide valuable insight into customers.”

Fiona Woods, Cognizant’s Head of Human Resources, Europe and Africa
Do companies have a responsibility to accelerate and embrace equal gender representation in their industry? We think so.

In today’s digital world, we need technical professionals more than ever. In the U.S. alone, there will be 1.4 million jobs in technology-related fields by 2020. But at current college enrollment rates, the U.S. will only be able to fill 29% of those jobs; and of those, women will only fill 3% of them. Women make up 40% of the world’s workforce, but just a quarter of the global STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) workforce is female. Even fewer women are represented in software and services companies, particularly at the leadership level. And the discrepancy is even greater for women of color.

“We know that attracting women to the company is no longer a nice-to-have; it’s a business imperative,” says Colleen Doherty, Vice President of Human Resources for Cognizant Digital Business. “A lack of diversity will impact our ability to grow and innovate. At Cognizant, we are committed to improving gender equity in the leadership in our company and in the broader industry through our Women Empowered group.”

Because we know it’s critically important to mentor young women as they consider STEM careers, we partnered with Million Women Mentors – an important part of our outreach agenda. But we also know that it’s not enough. Once out of school, women need the same kinds of tools, support, and training that men require to succeed in their careers. According to a recent ISACA survey, 43% of women indicated that they are not getting the type of support they need to advance their careers (see Figure 2, previous page).
Empowering women to thrive in the technology field

Women Empowered (WE) is Cognizant’s BRG group. WE focuses on diversity and inclusion of women — providing training, collaboration, support, mentorship, and professional development opportunities.

Programs such as “WE at the Table” offer inspiration, support, and networking, plus a wide range of professional development programs and tools for supporting career success. It’s not unusual for our business leaders to leverage WE members’ insights and ideas to develop new products or crack new markets.

WE encourages members to participate in professional or civic organizations as part of their outreach efforts. Like many global programs, WE inclusion efforts are customized to reflect the specific needs of different geographic regions. WE members from Odecee, a Cognizant Digital Business located in Australia, recently led a “Code Like a Girl” robotics workshop for local girls to share their knowledge and encourage their peers to pursue careers in technology. “WE is a grass roots effort that was started by a small team in the U.S. and is now a global effort — taking on its own character in each region. We rely on women’s passions to drive specific practices, programs and activities that are relevant to them,” notes Cognizant’s Carol Cohen, Global Head, Executive Talent and Development.

For women, entering and navigating a technology career is difficult. Companies that focus on understanding what women need to thrive, grow, and succeed in their professions — and can provide the appropriate tools and resources — will be in a better position to attract, engage, and retain a critical pool of talent. By promoting a high-performing culture of women, Cognizant can drive important business outcomes while advancing a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Women Empowered recently hosted a dinner in Los Angeles to connect with clients and share strategies on personal reinvention during times of disruption. We received positive reviews on the event and the topic and established a relationship with the CIO of a prospective client. As the CIO said, “I never knew Cognizant would offer this type of program. My team didn’t know much about Cognizant ... they do now. My team liked meeting your team here.” This event led to a breakthrough in our relationship, and we are now working on a business proposal.
Part 2: Making inclusion actionable in the digital age

Increasingly, companies recognize the importance of purposefully bringing together all the elements that impact people on the job. When employees believe they can be their true selves at work, they are more likely to experience a sense of belonging — actively engaged, more likely to share their ideas, and less likely to leave the organization.

Here are five specific actions your company can take to leverage a diverse workforce, create a culture of inclusion, foster a sense of belonging and, in turn, fuel individual and organizational performance:

- Create an inclusive mindset.
- Develop the capabilities.
- Create opportunities that facilitate collaboration.
- Expand the knowledge base.
- Embrace new rules for engagement.

These actions (elucidated below) can empower your organization to capitalize on the wide variety of employee ideas and perspectives — providing the impetus to respond more rapidly and creatively to key business opportunities.

Create an inclusive mindset

Leaders who model inclusive behavior ensure that employees can freely express their views and opinions, feel secure in proposing novel ideas, are empowered to make decisions, are able to give and receive actionable feedback, and are given credit for their contributions. Of employees who say that at least three of these traits are present in their leader, 87% report feeling welcome and included, and comfortable expressing their views and opinions, while 74% believe their ideas are heard and recognized. They feel like they belong, and are 42% less likely to leave their job.  

When employees believe they can be their true selves at work, they are more likely to experience a sense of belonging — actively engaged, more likely to share their ideas, and less likely to leave the organization.
Creating mature, unbiased relationships among employers and employees encourages groups of individuals to engage and contribute, in part by leveling the playing field and democratizing the workplace.

At L’Oréal, a French cosmetics company and an acknowledged leader in diversity and inclusion, an inclusive mindset comprises six key components:

- **Everyone has a voice**: People across the organization are expected to share their thoughts to improve ideas and generate meaningful innovations.

- **Bonding is essential**: Team bonding exercises reveal individuals’ strengths, weaknesses, and interests in stress-free activities.

- **Collaboration is the key to learning**: The company relies on a 70:20:10 learning model. Seventy percent of skill development comes from actively collaborating with others, 20% comes from being coached by L’Oréal leaders, and 10% from employees sharpening their skills through e-learning.

- **Trust is essential**: L’Oréal gives its employees opportunities to own their projects on day one, and equips them with tools to help them succeed. For example, the company now gives more employees the option to work virtually, and provides flexible schedules because L’Oréal is more interested in getting the work done than monitoring the time employees spend at their desks in the office.

- **Feedback is frequent and constructive**: Employees receive constructive feedback via interviews with managers, 360-degree feedback (from subordinates, colleagues, supervisors, self-evaluation) and informal conversations.

- **Respect for differences**: Multiculturalism and respect for diversities are a vital element of the L’Oréal culture and a source of innovation.

Creating mature, unbiased relationships among employers and employees encourages groups of individuals to engage and contribute, in part by leveling the playing field and democratizing the workplace.

**Develop the capabilities**

There is no question that work as we know it is undergoing a profound change, in ways we do not yet fully understand. Although we rely more than ever on technology to get work done, winning requires talent that can thrive in an increasingly digitized world. This obliges organizations to continually develop, hone, and capitalize on uniquely human capabilities, including collaboration, creativity, curiosity — and importantly — empathy. Empathy plays an important role in an inclusive culture; it shows people that they are both heard and valued.
While an open and transparent culture can capitalize on employees’ natural creativity, curiosity, and inventiveness, empathy must be cultivated. Research indicates a disparity between how CEOs and employees in their organization perceive the organization’s level of empathy. While 60% of CEOs believe their company is empathetic, only 24% of employees would agree. This gap suggests that leaders need to work harder to convey empathy, in a way that employees can sense and trust.

At Midland Memorial Hospital in Texas, 50 executives gather each morning in the hospital lobby to hear what they call the “promise” of the day, an ideal they agree to work on implementing that day. A similar gathering occurs in every department of the 64-bed facility. These employee huddles are an outcome of a two-year initiative to increase patient satisfaction. The hospital built a $165 million medical center, but patient satisfaction hovered at 1%, according to Chief Operating Officer Bob Dent. To improve this dismal performance, the hospital ran 16 hours of empathy training. That investment, and creating a culture of servant leadership (focusing on the growth and well-being of the people and communities one serves), plus moving away from a command-and-control operation, helped produce a remarkable turnaround in patient satisfaction, which is now at 90%.

---

**IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

“Empathy is a big part of what we do at Cognizant. We need to put ourselves into the shoes of our client and their client. It’s not enough to work with the client and ask what they want. They don’t necessarily know what they want. Empathy becomes critical, particularly in the digital space. It caused us to take a different look at the composition of our workforce. To connect, engage, and deliver what the client needs, we needed to have a diverse set of employees with a varied set of experiences that mirrored our clients. The empathy that comes from sharing similar experiences is a very human angle that you cannot replicate any other way.”

*Karthik Krishnamurthy, Global Head, Cognizant Digital Business*
While research on the relationship between diversity and empathy is still in its infancy, early studies suggest that an empathetic company culture can bring substantial bottom-line value. The Empathy Business has conducted annual surveys for the past three years, aimed at creating an index based on analysis of five empathy categories: ethics leadership, company culture, brand perception, and public messaging through social media. The 2015 Global Empathy Index survey findings reveal that the top 10 companies in the index rose in value more than twice as much as the bottom 10%, and generated 50% more earnings, as defined by market capitalization. Empathy Business founder Belinda Parmar says that the company’s research has revealed “a correlation as high as 80% between departments with higher empathy and those with high performers.”

Create opportunities that facilitate collaboration

Simply having a diverse workforce isn’t enough. Leaders must also ensure that diverse individuals interact with one another across time and geography. Relationships facilitate the flow of information and ideas. The paths for connecting must make it easy for anyone to find the right people to help them contribute their talents, skills, and experience to achieve strategic goals. We suggest making significant and thoughtful investments in programs, processes, and technologies that facilitate collaboration, including:

- **Events that provide opportunities for people to meet.** In a survey by Crown Plaza Hotels, which included more than 2,000 respondents in the UK, U.S., United Arab Emirates, China, and India, 81% of business professionals said face-to-face meetings are better for building long-term trust and ensuring strong relationships. Bringing people together can also create an environment in which people feel they belong. Even a small amount of face-to-face contact goes a long way toward developing an atmosphere of trust — a precursor to collaboration. One way to get new employees into the flow of the organization is to make sure they not only meet individuals on their own team, but also those in other departments with whom they will likely have to work.

- **A physical architecture with informal, open space for colleagues to congregate.** It is widely acknowledged that much of the tacit knowledge shared and received happens informally, and that open spaces can facilitate that process. Steelcase creates “we” spaces around its most important issues. These areas can be allocated to teams working on a merger or a product launch, for example. This promotes eye-to-eye contact, provides everyone with equal access to information, and allows people to move around and participate freely.

- **Technology that allows workgroups to communicate easily, personally, and professionally.** When face-to-face contact is not possible, technology can help create rapport as a first step toward building trust. Our knowledge-sharing platform, built on Microsoft Yammer, allows remote employees to connect with one another worldwide. They can share tips on IT, business processes, best practices, and products. Informally, they can share where they are having dinner, review the latest concert they attended, or ask colleagues for recommendations on vacation destinations. The more we know about someone, the more we are willing to engage and collaborate with them.
In a digital world, social collaboration platforms may be one of the most effective ways to increase employee engagement, productivity, and innovation. These platforms provide a place for community members to comfortably voice their opinions, share their knowledge and ideas, and collaborate. Done well, social collaboration can break through organizational silos, flatten hierarchies, and create unexpected business opportunities.

I Organizational structures that permit people to know one another, understand the organization, and have a voice. Over the years USAA, a large financial services group of companies, has developed a set of formal and informal mechanisms for engaging employees in an ongoing dialogue. An online platform serves as a forum for the company to pose questions to its employees about various business challenges and innovation opportunities. In turn, employees are encouraged to initiate discussions on their own and vote on differing ideas. Complementing this process are regular pulse polls designed to capture feedback on specific initiatives occurring in the company, as well as an annual engagement survey. Finally, “Pride Teams” offer a rotating set of USAA employees nominated to represent their area of the business within a face-to-face, grassroots feedback process with the leadership team. By leveraging multiple communication and feedback channels, USAA can draw upon a diverse set of backgrounds, skills, and perspectives to help increase individual and organizational performance.16
Expand the knowledge base

Executives at healthcare provider Kaiser Permanente became concerned when data showed a disparity in health-related outcomes for African-American and Latino populations. The company decided to expand its knowledge base to find a solution. To close its service delivery gaps, Kaiser Permanente reached out to a diverse network outside the organization — doctors, nurses, care teams, hospitals, and patients. “If we had just designed solutions ourselves in isolation, we may miss the boat on critical levers that need to be pulled to get results,” noted Dr. Ronald Copeland, Senior Vice President and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

Organizations no longer own the expertise and technology they need to effectively innovate in today’s digital economy. Successful companies identify opportunities and execute against them by sharing knowledge and tapping into expertise in-house and beyond. By expanding their knowledge base to include broadly diverse networks, organizations sense opportunities, produce smarter results, adapt to new challenges, and avoid missteps.

For these companies, collaboration is not a way of acting; it’s an integral part of their culture, leadership style, communication processes, and rewards system. The organization that authentically views its employees and network partners as valued resources fosters a sense of belonging, and a commitment to “bring something to the table.”

Embrace new rules of engagement

As organizations embrace digital, there is an unprecedented opportunity to establish competitive advantage through a workforce that is rich with diverse individuals and talents. Today’s employees actively seek a work environment that is collaborative and connected — that extols the value of open communication; leverages technology to break down barriers; encourages self-expression; shares knowledge; and sources innovation openly and without discrimination.

Organizations with the most engaged employees effectively capitalize on the strengths, differences, and unique values of each. Furthermore, employees with the highest level of engagement perform 20% better and are 87% less likely to leave the organization, according to a survey by Willis Towers Watson. And a study by the Hay Group found that engaged employees were as much as 43% more productive.
Idea Couture: making inclusion real

We are entering another industrial revolution that is driving significant changes in human-computer interactions. Helping organizations to imagine, design, and produce next-generation technologies requires a different approach — with deep insight into the impact human motivation and behavior have on digital design and use. Idea Couture (IC), a Toronto-based design firm that we recently acquired, uses human sciences research to help clients develop innovative capabilities around artificial intelligence, mobility, business analytics, cloud services, and the Internet of Things (IoT) by understanding how those technologies are used in people’s lives.

In IC’s experience, what prevents many organizations from being truly innovative is how they think about, engage with, and understand the people most important to them. IC’s practice is designed to connect with people empathetically — to understand how a client’s business or brand touches its consumers’ lives. The company’s success in doing so lies in its ability to leverage what has become a truly diverse interdisciplinary team.

“We wanted to build an organization that was the most diverse on the planet. We do that by pulling in people from different walks of life, people who don’t work together in corporate life, to develop a truly creative environment — anthropologists, designers, engineers, futurists, and data scientists, along with those who have more traditional business backgrounds,” notes Scott Friedmann, IC’s chief innovation officer and EVP. “We looked for people who are curious, empathetic, and wanted to learn from others. It works because real innovation requires so many different skills, in different ways, and in different places. It’s everybody’s job to be creative, to have an opinion and a perspective. We all contribute to the snowball effect of diversity and inclusion.”
Part 3: Increasing your diversity and inclusion quotient

Set clear goals for your company’s diversity and inclusion program this year. Begin by assessing your progress over the past decade and establishing the next level of organizational maturity you plan to achieve going forward. Organizations committed to increasing their diversity and inclusion quotient tend to go through stages, with a distinctive focus and programs in each.

Stage one: intent

Your organization wants to attract and retain a more diverse population. In this stage, companies move from a homogenous group of employees to a more heterogeneous talent pool, with both inherent and acquired diversity.

If your company is at this stage, two initiatives take priority. The first is recruiting. Companies must look for new channels of talent — using new locations or new pools of talent. They may engage new recruiting specialists and re-shape key messages to appeal to the new audience.

Diversity can also play a critical role in a company’s acquisition strategy. Gaining new skills through an acquisition has in many ways been the easy part; the hard work is embracing differences in work cultures.

The percentage of companies offering diversity & inclusion training

Figure 3
Source: Women in the Workplace Study

What is Diversity Training and Why Is It Important?
Employee resource groups reimagined

As diversity initiatives become more prevalent, employee resource groups (ERGs) in the workplace have multiplied. According to a 2017 Women in the Workplace study, 83% of the companies surveyed currently sponsor ERGs. These affinity groups are one way that many corporations engage and retain diverse employee populations. Originally designed as event-driven organizations, affinity groups have historically provided social support and networking opportunities for their members. Over time, however, the value proposition for ERGs has changed.

Some organizations are “shaking things up” by opening membership in their affinity groups to the broader workforce, hoping to encourage more employees to care about diversity and inclusion. Research indicates that diversity practices can reach beyond minority groups to positively impact all employees. Inclusion councils serve to create an environment in which all types of people feel they can get ahead.

Australia’s Origin Energy, for example, decided to use a crowdsourcing approach to fill its Diversity Collaborative. A group of 55 diverse employees made a 12-month commitment to use their voice and ideas to help speed the organization’s diversity and inclusion efforts. Members chose five focus areas: gender diversity, regional diversity and inclusion, indigenous relations, flexibility, and culture. The collaborative enabled Origin Energy to look at its culture in a different way by stretching thinking, uncovering hidden or undiscussed issues, and eliminating fundamental barriers to diversity.

Increasingly, affinity groups are becoming strategic partners for a wide range of business initiatives — acting as BRGS. Because BRGS are designed to help diverse employees establish connections across organizational silos, they offer companies an opportunity to access previously untapped insights. Members may act as early spotters and developers.
The diversity of new perspectives and the inclusiveness required to recognize the legitimacy of different views are critical to the success of these acquisitions.

The second initiative is to build awareness. This is an educational activity; companies may recruit diverse workers, but fall into the trap of assuming that individuals from different backgrounds have the same preferences and expectations as the majority group (see Figure 3, page 16).

Stage two: engagement and retention

Individuals from diverse backgrounds are likely to have a wide variety of work preferences and expectations, and will require additional support to develop productive careers. In this stage, customization-based programs take priority. Many companies assign onboarding buddies, mentors, sponsors, or coaches to help with integration and career development. Some create specialized career tracks, perhaps to supplement specific skills or provide exposure to key areas of the organization. Other companies must add the important goal of inclusion to their priorities — creating an environment in which a wide range of individuals feel comfortable and grounded, and see clear paths to personal and professional success.

Stage three: legitimizing differences

At this stage, companies appreciate the “rightness” of multiple points of view and acknowledge the legitimacy and benefits of individuals’ differing values, views, and behaviors. This requires moving far past political correctness — beyond the goal of simply not offending or harassing those with different perspectives — to acknowledging that differences are vital to fully appreciating an issue and its potential outcomes. This only becomes possible through an organizational culture that emphasizes the underlying logic and value of individual views.
W.L. Gore & Associates: a culture of conscious inclusion

W.L. Gore & Associates has been on Fortune’s 100 Best Companies to Work For since 1998 — one of the few to make the list each year. The company credits its success to a business culture that puts people at its center. Consciously designed in the 1950s by founders Bill and Genevieve Gore, the company’s core set of values and operating principles guide the decisions Gore Associates make, the work they do, and their behavior towards one another.24

I **Belief in the individual:** Every associate has the potential to help Gore grow and succeed. Product innovation often happens as a result of “dabble time” — the time associates are given each week to devote to an idea of their choosing. At Gore, breakthroughs can happen at any moment, and any associate can be an innovator.

I **The power of small teams:** The thinking at Gore is that the business would see diminishing returns — and quality — if teams got too big. Even though the company has continued to grow and expand with offices around the globe, its locations remain small, typically employing no more than 200 people — small enough so that people can get to know one another and what everyone is working on, and know who has the skills and knowledge they might tap to accomplish a task, whether it’s creating an innovative product or handling the everyday challenges of running a business.25

I **A sense of shared responsibility:** Everyone has a vested interest in Gore’s success. Each associate is charged with identifying a “core commitment” to a role, task, or project designed to meet a business need and drive personal growth. At Gore, a commitment is a promise that each associate makes — and keeps.

I **Taking a long-term view:** Gore is certainly in the business of making money, but it does so by focusing first on driving innovation through “an inclusive environment where every associate can contribute creative ideas and take calculated risks to explore new opportunities.”26 Time after time, the company has demonstrated its willingness to make the necessary long-term investments in employee ideas that take time to fully develop.

(continued on next page)
Along with these four basic values, Gore Associates uses a set of operating principles to guide its day-to-day work: freedom, fairness, commitment, and cross-checking. It is a culture “where people feel free to pursue ideas on their own, communicate with one another, and collaborate out of self-motivation rather than a sense of duty.” These cultural pillars still guide the company’s associates’ work decades later.

Gore is not immune to the ups and downs that come with the global economy, and guiding the company into the digital age on a global scale remains a challenge. As it grows, Gore has been slower to adopt cutting-edge technologies and establish structures and consistent processes in an effort to maintain the right balance between operationalization and innovation. Recognizing the need to adapt to a digital environment and the changing workforce demographics, Gore partnered with the Institute for the Future to conduct a strategic refresh. As CEO Terri Kelly shares, “Gore is aiming to become more connected but is doing so in a way that maintains its cultural heritage.”
Looking forward: Keeping diversity & inclusion top of mind

The starting point for accepting and capitalizing on diversity is different for every organization. The continuum will range from making incremental progress to ultimately transforming the work environment and work processes.

As you plot your organization’s journey, consider the maturity of your current diversity profile. Do you need to add people with new perspectives to the mix, or are you at a point where your greatest opportunity lies in leveraging your company’s diverse insights in powerful ways? Wherever you find yourself, the practical tips we’ve offered can provide a menu from which to assemble a plan that enables your organization to realize the next level of diversity and inclusion benefits. Consider ways to develop a community of connected, “switched-on” employees who can improve opportunities for collaboration and help redefine the rules of engagement. Move beyond having diversity to using diversity to fuel innovation and drive success.

Winning companies use diversity and inclusion as key ingredients in their operating strategy. By embracing different perspectives, they can anticipate challenges before they become issues. Gender-diverse companies innovate more effectively and tend to post superior financial results across a variety of dimensions compared with their peers. While findings do not establish a causal link between diversity and performance, they do provide a factual snapshot that can only argue in favor of greater diversity.

Companies that embed diversity and inclusion into the fabric of their culture avail themselves of a rich tapestry of employee, customer, and partner insights. Diverse perspectives can change the perception of collaboration and innovation as simply a buzzword to a fundamental aspect of success. History will show that the future of work is inclusive.

Consider ways to develop a community of connected, “switched-on” employees who can improve opportunities for collaboration and help redefine the rules of engagement. Move beyond having diversity to using diversity to fuel innovation and drive success.
Acknowledgments

This white paper was written in cooperation with Tammy Erickson Associates, a management consulting and research firm committed to helping business leaders understand and build more intelligent organizations. Learn more @ http://tammyerickson.com/.

Endnotes

7  Ibid.
8  Ibid.
10 “The Teams Behind the Success at L’Oréal.” Medium, November 2016.
“Success is Easier When Employees Believe These Three Things.” Aimee Lucas, August 29, 2016.


Ibid.


www.gore.com/about/working-at-gore.


About Cognizant

Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSH) is one of the world’s leading professional services companies, transforming clients’ business, operating and technology models for the digital era. Our unique industry-based, consultative approach helps clients envision, build and run more innovative and efficient businesses. Headquartered in the U.S., Cognizant is ranked 195 on the Fortune 500 and is consistently listed among the most admired companies in the world. Learn how Cognizant helps clients lead with digital at www.cognizant.com or follow us @Cognizant.