Setting a New Standard for Diversity and Inclusion Outcomes


In 2020, multiple events, including the death of George Floyd, shook societies all over the world leading organizations to renew commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion. But without a common baseline or defined diversity and inclusion (D&I) set of international standards, building and scaling a successful global program would be nearly impossible.

To solve this problem, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) recently culminated years of work to develop and publish ISO 30415:2021, a Human Resource Management (HRM) standard devoted to providing guidance on what is required to create a diverse and inclusive organizational culture and leverage the benefits that it brings.

"Diversity and inclusion means that the work environment is a mirror of society," says Lorelei Carobolante, Global HR expert and Project Leader of ISO 30415 who led Workgroup 8, the team of international experts from 14 countries that developed it. "When we notice a disparity between what society looks like and what the work environment looks like, there's almost always an unresolved tension and a perception of unfairness."

Implementing the new HRM standard can help identify and address workplace inequities and improve experiences for all employees. It is intended to help organizations achieve D&I objectives; evaluate the impact on people, communities and society; and meet sustainable development goals. ISO 30415 can also support independent and external validation of organizational approaches to embedding D&I in the workplace.

“Without a defined standard, it makes it very difficult for people across the world to come to an agreement about what is acceptable,” says Cristina Schwenke, a Registered Expert of Workgroup 8 from Australia that developed ISO 30415. “You get a lot more dissonance.”

Here's how to use ISO 30415 to improve diversity and inclusion outcomes at your organization.

Determine Where Your Organization Stands

The new standard provides guidance on improving diversity and inclusion for your organization, regardless of location, size or industry. ISO 30415 was intentionally designed to be implemented by organizations of any size. The Annex includes a self-assessment checklist to assess an organization’s current status compared with recommended D&I actions, which should be evaluated with example measures and potential outcomes to identify the means to evidence their
achievement. The document helps guide the implementation of the standard at your specific organization, Carobolante says.

"This standard can be useful as a tool to assess yourself and see where you are falling short," says Heather Bond-Shuhaibar, a Registered Expert of Workgroup 8 and Senior Advisor, Standards, at CIPD, United Kingdom. "It's a toolkit we're providing." Use ISO 30415 to see where your organization's diversity and inclusion efforts fall against the baseline it sets — and where there are opportunities for improvement.

Measure Success With Diversity and Inclusion Standards

ISO 30415 is written as an actionable blueprint for HRM. Each sub-clause is divided into actions, measures and outcomes:

- **Actions**: What should you do to achieve expected outcomes?
- **Measures**: What could you measure to determine whether your actions actually resulted in the desired outcomes?
- **Outcomes**: What potential D&I outcomes do you want to achieve?

Yet, fostering an inclusive culture requires consistent commitment from all organizational areas, particularly at the top. Sensitive issues inevitably arise, differing cultural norms need to be considered and non-inclusive or discriminatory behavior cannot be ignored. Yet, an inclusive culture not only brings many benefits, it touches on some fundamental human rights.

The standard offers a framework that can be incorporated into your existing HR management policies, processes and practices, and promotes evidence-based practice by presenting potential key outcomes to measure progress toward your goals. "If we are going to get anywhere, we have to have targets," says Helge Hoel, a Registered Expert of Workgroup 8 and Emeritus Professor at the University of Manchester, United Kingdom. "We need to move systematically." Using the standard helps your organization progress in a measurable way.

Implement and Commit to Create Change

Leading sustainable change at your organization requires regular iterations and follow-through. ISO 30415 lays out diversity and inclusion recommended actions, example measures and potential outcomes that can be monitored and improved over time. "This standard is important for HR management because it helps HR practitioners learn how to foster development of an inclusive organizational culture," Carobolante says. "[That] requires a constant commitment from all areas of the organization — especially at the top."

With leadership's commitment and the necessary resources to implement, maintain and measure actions recommended by the standard, HR teams can use ISO 30415:2021 to strategically improve diversity and inclusion to support a more productive, healthy and innovative workplace environment.
Developed in accordance with ISO 30415:2021, HRCI’s Certificate in Diversity and Inclusion in HR Management provides a foundation for creating a workplace where all employees are respected and appreciated as valuable members of the organization, are able to participate in work-related opportunities, can follow career paths that use their skills and knowledge to the fullest, and receive fair compensation.

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