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Writing a Diversity and Inclusion Statement: How to Get It Right

A DEI statement is a great starting point for small businesses seeking to improve the experience of both employees and customers.

By Emily Hanley, Contributor



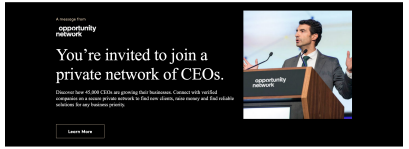
Diversity and inclusion statements are a great first step for small businesses seeking to improve the experience of both employees and customers.

A **diversity and inclusion statement** demonstrates a company's commitment to holding an inclusive, varied workplace where everyone is proud of all backgrounds. Much like a vision and values statement, diversity and inclusion statements are, ideally, more than just a marketing exercise. It should guide everything: employee benefits, customer service and workplace culture.

CO— speaks to how diversity and inclusion experts for their tips before to craft a statement on diversity and inclusion. Here are some tips for getting started, some mistakes to avoid and some resources to help you create a great DEI statement.

[Read more: Looking for Diversity? How to Build a More Inclusive Small Business]

The purpose of a DEI statement



As you approach your diversity and inclusion statement, it's important to understand who you are accountable to: the business. "Your focus is on your business goals, and DEI— that authenticity made it at the very foundation of your statement.

"Authenticity comes a little for everyone and a different," said Hanley. "If you just show up for business, there can be a lot of people to make it connect with it properly. (Include your contributions in diversity) to your culture, rather than just being a statement. Leverage your time, energy and resources to create results."

“A clear strategy should contain what DEI means to us, why DEI matters to us (now and for the future) and how we approach DEI (now and activities planned for the future).”
— John Arata, CEO, Next-Proof Inc.

John Arata, CEO of Next-Proof, agrees. These statements must serve a bigger purpose. To call them DEI statements diversity, equity, inclusion, and equity. "And Arata: "Small business owner should have a DEI statement to show how they plan to represent their community and how they view equity, which is a human issue, not a political issue. It's about to represent customers, community members and employees who the business stands for and who and how it intends to serve the community."

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A great DEI statement aligns with your company's mission, vision and values. What do you want to say about your business, and what do you want employees and customers to know about your values?

What goes into a DEI statement?

How can you best measure each statement's success? In the business, there's really no simple or standard for that. Instead, you need to define your own DEI statement. "Consider what your own goals look like— diversity, equity, inclusion," said Hanley. "From there, the action steps will reveal themselves."

John Arata: "A clear strategy should contain what DEI means to us, why DEI matters to us (now and for the future) and how we approach DEI (now and activities planned for the future)."

Many small business owners find it helpful to start with a vision and build an action plan from there. Arata suggests holding a day-long plan, a vision statement and other plan that will include internal activities, such as training, and public-facing commitments, like volunteering or community events.



Check out this article of CO- Blueprint to learn how and why to create a more diverse and inclusive business world.

"This is a link to how diversity and inclusion your processes are as well," recommended Hanley. "This allows you to leverage your resources to create a right effort, rather than working through with individuals in your organization. Therefore, the way you do business will then give you your people experience too."

Avoid these common mistakes

Kevin noted that many organizations overemphasize their DEI statement. It doesn't need to be longer than a page, because what matters is the action that comes from the statement.

Kevin also says that some businesses make the mistake of not leveraging their energy and innovation behind the statement. He suggests implementing your vision in the following ways:

- Create an "investment process" as part of the vision. Ask for your employees' input and feedback when crafting your DEI statement.
- Include elements of the DEI statement in hiring, onboarding and employee performance reviews.
- Review the statement and strategy at least once a year. If you have any, this reflects your commitment and holds you all employees are aligned.
- Implement some KPIs to measure the statement and strategy's success.

Kevin also noted the importance of including all of your employees and asking for input as you build your DEI statement and activities. Your company needs to be built. Offer training on topics like communication, feedback, dispute resolution and office politics. You may even consider bringing in a coach who can help assess communication bias and create accountability, understanding and workability.

[Read more: 7 Tips for Writing a Great Diversity Statement]

Resources to help you get started

Ready to start working on your diversity and inclusion statement? These experts checking out the work of **Coalition**, an organization that helps business leaders learn more deeply about diversity, equity and inclusion.

CO— offers to help you implement your DEI strategy. Owners, before making any business decisions, we should consult a professional who can advise you based on your individual situation.

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