

Cultural Diversity vs. Cosmetic Diversity

Cutting Out the Lip-Service and Looking at What Counts

“You don’t build a business. You build people, and then people build the business.”
Zig Ziglar

In the article from our Diversity & Inclusion segment this month, [“9 Diversity And Inclusion Practices to Leave Behind in 2019,”](#) you’ll come across a term that might be unfamiliar: “cosmetic diversity.”

What on earth is that?

Cosmetic diversity describes a common practice within the business world which aims to develop the appearance of a diverse workplace, but lacks the depth and administrative drive to cultivate those cultural differences as a foundational component of its structure and philosophy.

It is entirely superficial and can often do more harm than good.

Recruiters actively seek out potential employees that come from minority groups with the goal of adding variety to the payroll. By doing so, a business can claim to be “diverse” and “inclusive.” A company able to tout itself as welcoming to culturally diverse employees tends to hold greater appeal and has stronger marketing power. It’s a major advantage in the current B2B and, especially, the B2C climate.

It’s a false narrative, however.

In such environments diversity is treated as an appealing statistic rather than an opportunity for growth and improvement.

True **cultural diversity**, by contrast, is the authentic effort to welcome employees who represent disparate cultural backgrounds. It is the first step leading to inclusion and embracing the discourse that comes from bringing a variety of viewpoints together to create something better.

In such a workspace, employees are valued not just for their demographic, but the new direction and ideas they bring to the table. When diversity is brought up by its leaders, it’s a positive reflection of the company’s core values, not merely lip service.

Unfortunately, genuine cultural diversity can seem to be rather rare. Business owners can sometimes view the effort required to dig down and tap into this vital resource as a daunting challenge or shy away from the perceived cost instead of viewing it as an investment. Once its



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effects are felt, however, the reinvigorated community of the diverse workplace can never be mistaken for its ineffective counterpart.