TempusResource
by ProSymmetry

Optimize Your Resource Management to Enhance Workplace Diversity and Eliminate Bias

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Part 1

Diverse Teams Bring Innovation and Profit

A wealth of research on diversity in the workplace reveals employee wellbeing, increased satisfaction, and improved business performance among its many benefits. One of the most commonly cited outcomes of diverse teams is increased innovation and creativity.[1] The diversity itself is the cause: when different talents, perspectives, and skillsets work together, they can generate a wider range of original and useful ideas.[2]

Additionally, "diverse teams are more likely to constantly reexamine facts and remain objective. They may also encourage greater scrutiny of each member's actions, keeping their joint cognitive resources sharp and vigilant."[3]

And the benefits continue on even after a discrete task or project is complete. The successes achieved via increased innovation and creativity promote a feeling of camaraderie among team members and encourage successful cooperation in the next company venture.[4]

> *By breaking up workplace homogeneity, you can allow your employees to become more aware of their own potential biases — entrenched ways of thinking that can otherwise blind them to key information and even lead them to make errors in decision-making processes.[5]*

Gender diversity in particular has produced powerful results. One recent study found that companies whose R&D teams were comprised of more women were more likely to introduce radical new innovations into the market over a two-year period.[6]

Overall, diverse teams have shown an almost 20% increase in revenue, better problem-solving and decision-making, and improved ability to compete globally and strengthen brands.[7] One specific advantage of diverse teams is that they're found to be "more likely to have some common experiences with their end user"[8], and therefore able to make better and more appealing products for them.

A Diverse Team Needs Diverse Leadership

To truly leverage the advantages of a diverse team, leadership must be equipped to navigate differences, manage conflicts, and elicit team members' best performances. True diversity will bring together an array of voices and opinions, which will naturally call for negotiation and collaborative compromise.

Team leaders must be adept at cultivating healthy engagement in conflict and resolution. This is a "psychological process that enables individuals to set aside their agendas to cooperate with others for the common benefit of the team, articulating the natural tension between our desire to get ahead of others and our need to get along with others."[9] Gender diversity in leadership is an important place to start. A 2016 study showed that while women made up more than 50 percent of white-collar workers, they represented only 4.6 percent of executives.[10]

Leaders must be the ones who help their teams overcome biases, as well as know how to manage their own. When leaders themselves come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, they help companies innovate even more. Diverse leaders have been shown to be "more likely to create an environment where new, creative ideas were considered. With this advantage, teams created better products.[11]

One specific leader used resource management software to help create standards across all teams and all departments. It helped the organization understand what each individual could do every day and what each individual could not do every day. It helped guide the workload without bias and it did not overstretch his team.

"We use a resource management tool called Tempus Resource, and the biggest impact is the teams themselves definitely feel comfortable with their workload. The teams that are using the tool have a much better way to articulate their assigned tasks. And a much better way to say *I am good* or *I'm really busy and can't take on any work*. Now as a leader I can prove it."
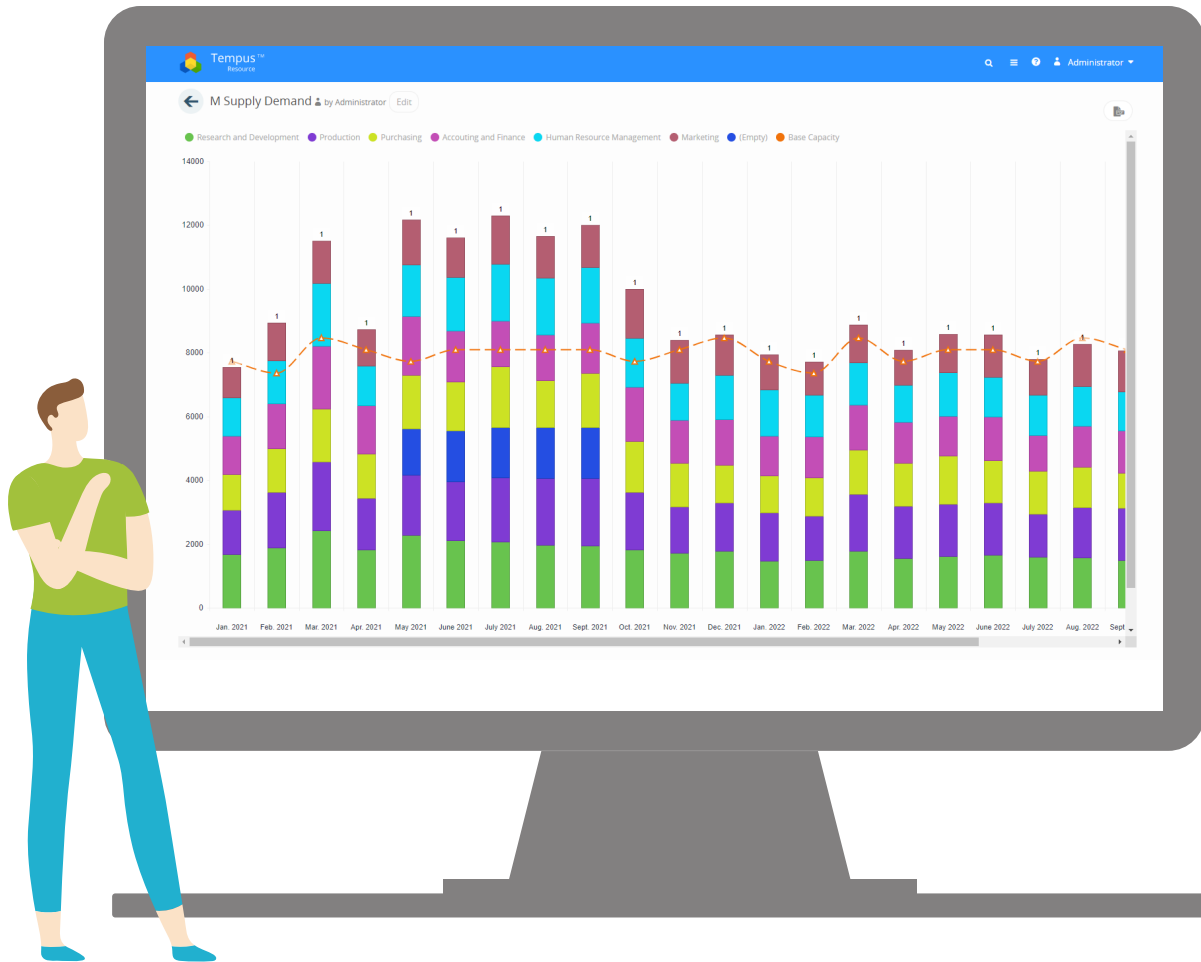
People Want Diverse Workplaces

One recent study found that nearly 70% of job seekers consider workforce diversity when evaluating offers, and over 60% of female candidates scrutinize the overall gender diversity and the leadership gender diversity of a company when making career decisions.[12] "The most talented individuals go to places that do better with diversity, and this may be what is driving diverse firms in certain contexts to outperform their peers."[13]

Diversity Must be Met with Equity and Inclusion

While it's easy to see the financial and human reasons for creating diverse workplaces, organizations must not be satisfied with simply hiring diverse teams. Diversity itself does not guarantee benefits and gains. Diverse teams must be managed well with intentional programs, data assessment, and resource management strategies. Otherwise, workplace bias may still present itself and derail your diversity efforts.

Part 2

How Unconscious Bias Hinders Diversity

Unconscious or implicit bias is "the mental processes that cause us to act in ways that reinforce stereotypes even when in our conscious mind we would deem that behavior counter to our value system."[14] Harvard Business School professor Youngme Moon explains that "there are so many industries that have a history of relying on the soft stuff . . . the truth is the soft stuff is often a euphemism in many cases for bias."[15]

Unconscious human biases are both normal and common. Scientists have found that our brains are hardwired for certain biases, which may have once been a mechanism for survival and forming communities for safety.[16]

However, teams today must excavate and examine their biases honestly, and they must enact policies that counter biases and ensure equity and diversity in hiring.

Understanding Types of Unconscious Bias

While organizations may desire and even work toward hiring diversity, the practice of doing so requires rigorous assessment of the hiring team's biases.

Of the many unconscious biases we hold, the most common are:[17]

Confirmation bias: Only taking in information that confirms your beliefs and ignoring evidence that conflicts with your beliefs.

Affinity bias: Identifying with and favoring a candidate based on a similar or likable trait.

The Halo effect: Believing that since a person is good at A, they will also be good at B, C, and D, without proof of those abilities.

The Pitchfork effect: The opposite of the halo effect, where you see or hear something negative and then assume all the candidate's other traits are negative too.

Status quo bias: Favoring candidates who you believe will help maintain the status quo.

These biases emerge when applications are being reviewed and during candidate interviews, which "leads to significant unconscious bias against women, minorities and older workers."[18] Even the recruiting process can be fraught with unconscious bias, seen in screening processes that favor Ivy League universities and employee referral programs, which are known to be "much less diverse than the broader pool of applicants submitting résumés."[19]

Skills Matrix information

Counter Unconscious Biases with Clear Structures

Studies have shown that biases can be reversed, and our brains can be re-wired. In order to slow our impulses toward making quick and biased decisions, structures can be put into place during multiple phases of the hiring process, in order to "allow for more deliberative actions . . . and give peers the opportunity to point out times when unconscious biases may be seeping in."[20] These can be as simple as stripping candidates' identifying information from their applications, standardizing interview questions, and refusing to screen candidates based on affiliations to schools or other networks.

Additionally, AI may begin to play a bigger role in countering biases in the workplace, offering perhaps "the greatest promise for eliminating bias in hiring."[21] When designed to be audited, AI can be constantly improved, removing previously undetected biases from its human programmers. Moreover, AI can "assess the entire pipeline of candidates" without biased processes to shrink the pool in favor of some candidates.[22]

Once diversity is addressed at the recruitment and hiring phase, organizations can then turn to their internal practices. Diversifying leadership, creating truly diverse teams that can innovate together, and managing diversity strategically are all components of fulfilling the promise of a diverse workplace culture.

Part 3

Diversity Management is Resource Management

Diversity management "refers to organizational actions that aim to promote greater inclusion of employees from different backgrounds into an organization's structure through specific policies and programs."[23] Beyond simply hiring for diversity, your people need to be given structures and tools to maintain employee wellbeing and leverage all of the benefits of diversity.

Best Practices for Organizations and Leaders

Measure Outcomes

One of the most commonly recommended best practices is carefully measuring outcomes. A system to audit diversity and assess current practices is crucial. Organizations should "identify a set of metrics based on your customized vision and strategy and ensure that your metrics are measuring both inputs and outputs. Review key performance indicators at least quarterly at the executive level.[24]

Common success metrics include employee turnover, morale, and productivity,[25] **and important diversity metrics to track include:**[26]

• Representation across company and by department

• Applicant pool diversity

• Hiring diversity

• Resource Management Software

• Employee engagement
  • Are certain employees engaging more or less than others?
  • Do you notice any trends?

• Which employees tend to be promoted more than others and why?

• Do diverse candidates stay at your company long-term?

• When employees voluntarily leave your company, why do they leave?

• Does your brand represent the diversity at your company?

• Is there a pay gap among different employees with the same role? How about compared to other companies?

• Who submits harassment claims? What is the claim for?

Create Employee Feedback Structures

Another best practice is building and utilizing outlets for feedback. "Formal avenues for feedback between managers and team members make everyone accountable for speaking up . . . They also give managers access to insights about challenges facing your team members or faults you can improve on. Whether you implement digital surveys or a 1:1 meeting, on a diverse team, you're opening the door for differing opinions to be voiced. In an environment where the identity of your team or direct reports differs from yours, you might not see or understand something that causes an issue for other people."[27]

Onboarding

"The biggest test of team culture is how the team onboards a new member."[28] Organizations need to examine any inefficiencies or gaps in their onboarding processes and make onboarding tasks discrete and visible to not only the new member but the entire team so they can be of assistance.

Allocate Roles

By designing roles clearly, with defined language around competence and skills, organizations will ensure "an equal opportunity representative position"[29] is created. By keeping track of many different kinds of diversity, resource managers can create teams with not only racial and gender diversity, but representation from individuals of various ages, abilities, education levels, and backgrounds.
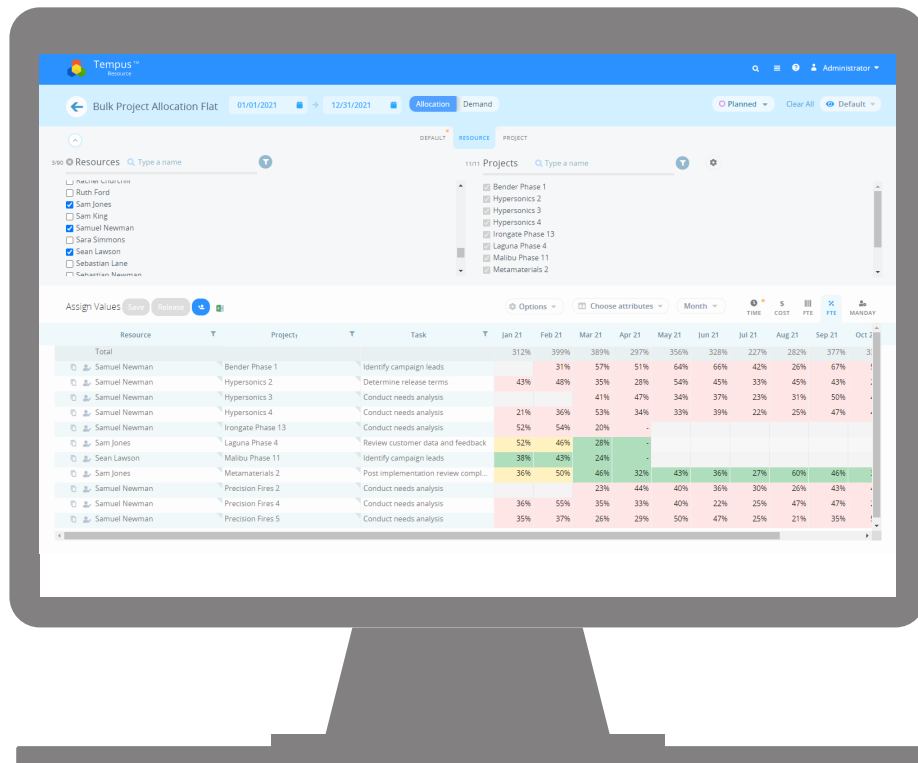
People Resource Management for Diversity

One of the easiest ways to measure outcomes and achieve all of the above-mentioned best practices for diversity management is with a robust PPM tool. Organizations should use a tool that can track their diversity goals and outcomes, as well as generate reports for regular assessment.

As one key leader noted, "Our resource management tool, Tempus Resource, was the key to transparency. We could see how our resources were being leveraged and how resources were not being used efficiently. The software allowed us to track very specific goals and generate reports for easy assessment."

Your resource manager can also help you identify diversity gaps, needs, and achievements. For example:

• Using a skills and competencies matrix to build truly diverse teams and re-allocate resources as needed to complement team structures

• Updating the skills and competencies matrix regularly to ensure accurate and up-to-date diversity measures

• Tracking success metrics like productivity using employee utilization rates and heatmaps for under- and overallocation

• Creating onboarding projects and tracking their task completion by hours or percentage of time

• Creating an employee feedback project and tracking completion rates of surveys and/or feedback meetings

• Measuring managers' diversity achievements with accountability structures

• Running reports to assess diversity progress and achievements

• Using complete resource data to determine HR initiatives like hiring, training, onboarding, etc.

Optimize Your Resource Management to Enhance Workplace Diversity and Eliminate Bias

A workplace culture that reflects the values of diversity and equity, while actively rooting out unconscious bias, should be a goal for all organizations who desire optimized performance and happier people. With the right systems and structures in place, a powerful PPM tool can give you the intelligence, data analysis, resource allocation, tracking, and reporting capabilities needed to bring diversity to your workplace and manage it expertly.

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More Information

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- Run powerful "what-if?" scenarios in real time
- Quickly gauge over and under-allocations of resources
- Create fast, intuitive infographic data
- View the full project portfolio in one place
- Work stand-alone or synchronize with PPM/HCM/HRIS systems

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About Prosymmetry

ProSymmetry was founded in 2007 by passionate resource management experts who continue to solve the resource management challenges that slow down, damage, and overwhelm organizations. We do this through our flagship product, Tempus Resource, which is a purpose-built resource forecasting and capacity planning solution, helping you simplify data capture, improve project visibility, and break down even the most complex of project plans and data sets to assist in making more informed decisions with less effort. Tempus Resource is used by Fortune 500 companies, was praised a "resource management solution accessible to the masses," and was named a 2016 Cool Vendor by Gartner.

To schedule your free demo, contact Prosymmetry today.