DEI Will Not DIE!



*For those worried by the latest SCOTUS ruling, here is why.*

By: Donna Hamlin, CEO, Boardwise

and

Marilyn Nagel, DEI Advisor/Co-Founder, Chief Advocacy Officer RISEQUITY

The buzz among HR professionals since the recent US Supreme Court (SCOTUS) ruling related to Affirmative Action is the question: Is this the beginning of the end of all our efforts for DEI?

While a first gut-reaction may be that the long arc of change seems even more elastic than ever, let’s first clarify the facts.

* The recent US Supreme Court (SCOTUS) ruling is about Affirmative Action.

In this ruling, the SCOTUS determined the use of race as a factor in undergraduate admissions was unconstitutional. The move has presented a new legal test for colleges and universities trying to achieve diverse student bodies. Unfortunately, this has reignited political debate about Affirmative Action and DEI in companies today.

* Affirmative Action or AA is a US Government policy intended to increase racial diversity and equity in institutions such as universities and government agencies. It was created to combat discrimination against minority groups, particularly Blacks and Latino/a individuals.
* Corporate DEI is not an Affirmative Action program. Unlike AA, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is the conscious and deliberate design, development, and management of an inclusive culture for the *benefit of all employees* and most importantly *the benefit of the company*. It is critical to the economic and social well-being of companies, workplaces, and communities. DEI is not just a proxy for fairness, it is about building better companies by maximizing the potential in everyone and minimizing employee attrition through more inclusive cultures.

The social media commentary has confused and misrepresented DEI work in corporations, which is causing confusion, questions and concerns in companies and, especially, among HR professionals.

Why DEI Won’t DIE

For all working on DEI in your companies, take a breath. DEI efforts are valuable. Wise company leaders will continue with DEI because of the improvements that come from it.

To highlight this, Marilyn Nagel, advisor and DEI expert for companies globally, offers key points.

“Multiple studies continuously confirm that diverse talent helps companies understand customers' needs and deliver on those needs. Also, diverse workplaces create a culture of innovation, and help drive the company towards goals through collaborative methods. The best teams include people with diverse skills and backgrounds and research consistently shows diverse teams make better decisions. Successful companies understand the business value of developing *all* employees by growing talent at all organizational levels to fulfill its mission while aligning with its values.

The confusion arises when companies focus solely on and share diversity goals/targets through talent acquisition (TA). This is short-sighted in many ways. First, numeric goals for TA can drive bad behavior on the part of a hiring manager who may want to meet a goal and then hire someone less qualified, who ends up being unsuccessful. This is bad for the new hire who is labeled a “diverse hire” and bad for the overall culture by suggesting underrepresented candidates are not qualified or cannot succeed at the company.  Suggesting a *hiring target* is neither advisable nor beneficial.

The goal of increasing team diversity is to increase overall quality by adding new perspectives with people who can bring new points of view and avoid group think. Developing your existing talent and casting a wider net for qualified candidates that bring both skills and new thinking are great DEI strategies that add value. Organizations can aspire to be diverse in multiple ways, including being best in class in diversity of thought, particularly on leadership teams.

Many companies are also rethinking educational requirements tied to socioeconomic factors but may not impact on career success. These actions might take longer, and leaders need patience and must build new networks to create opportunities for those outside their usual circle. These are not affirmative action, nor quotas or targets to be met. DEI is not affirmative action and should not take on its characteristics A company’s DEI strategy must focus on **Inclusion** and **Equity**, not simply a **Diversity** numbers initiative. It must ensure everyone has opportunities to work towards their full potential, that leaders create an inclusive culture and are representative of the whole organization as well as reflective of clients and customers.”

Carry On!

Wise leaders of organizations commit to practices that improve the overall performance of their enterprise. DEI is soundly understood for its contribution at many levels. Wise executives will count on DEI for the future.

In our climate of reductions in force, agility, and globalization, HR leaders must create holistic strategies to tie DEI to advancing business goals which integrate into the rhythms of the business. Look forward to the DEI work ahead and the value it will bring!

If you are interested in support for your DEI efforts in your organization, feel free to contact us. We are pleased to help.

A person smiling at camera

Description automatically generatedDonna Hamlin, Ph.D.

Dr. Donna Hamlin is CEO of Boardwise, Inc. She leads the corporate governance best practices services, education, director certification and placement, and independent evaluations for companies across a wide range of industries. She has worked with companies in more than 54 countries and brings a cultural insight for solutions globally. She has served on 14 corporate boards and is an avid author and speaker on governance and management topics.

A close-up of a person

Description automatically generatedMarilyn Nagel Marilyn Nagel

Co-Founder, Chief Advocacy Officer RISEQUITY

Prior to co-founding RISEQUITY, Marilyn served as CEO of Watermark launching their Conference for Women and created breakthrough programs while Chief Diversity Officer at Cisco. She was recognized as a thought leader in shifting the focus to inclusion, launching the first Inclusion Index, flexible work practices, and developed the Maturity Model for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion that has become an industry standard.  Marilyn has co-chaired the Conference Board Global Diversity Group, formed a consortium in Silicon Valley for STEM Diversity Officers and was a senior advisor to the Center for Talent and Innovation.

Marilyn consults with pre and post IPO companies, fortune 500 and global multinational companies on developing and implementing diversity strategies. She is an internationally known speaker and workshop facilitator on topics such as Inclusive Leadership, Building Intentional Connections, Inclusive Hiring, Creating Influence, as well as Board Accountability and Women’s Leadership.  She has been a regular blogger for the Huffington Post and Medium, and frequently contributes to numerous publications.