Implementing a D&I program

Having looked at the preparation and planning for a Diversity and Inclusion program, we now come to the most visible part of the process, its implementation and the desired results.

Implementation has at least two main areas, training and operational changes. Of course a company can choose to redistribute the steps or to add areas to make it work better for its needs.

Training includes general awareness, and development of skills and can make use of published materials, newsletters, outside speakers, lunchtime learning events and webinars, to name a few. To help under-represented groups move throughout the organization without barriers, a pro-active program of mentorship and sponsorship can make it easier to gain diversity at all levels and in all areas of the organization.

The operational areas of the company now need to be examined to see if there are D&I limitations unconsciously built-in. Policies and procedures need to be reviewed in detail to see if processes or language pose barriers to inclusion or to diversity. How are staff recruited and are there artificial limits on where or how recruiting is done? Do the hiring standards or processes form unintended barriers to hiring a diverse staff. For example, is the process purely based on a merit ranking, or does the company use a "fully qualified" standard where, once qualified, no ranking is done and the company can choose from the fully-qualified list of candidates based on current need, thus having a better chance to ensure a balanced representation of different groups.

The performance management appraisal process should be looked at to see what attributes are assessed. For example, are D&I skills and results part of the executive appraisal process? Are some groups held back because of what is assessed? This naturally leads to promotion standards – what opportunities are there for everyone to develop and advance, or are there barriers for some? What qualifications for promotion are preferred, and do they limit some groups?

Retention of employees is worth investigating – do people who leave actually tell the company the real reason they are leaving, and has it anything to do with how engaged they feel or how they see existing attitudes within the company?

Finally, the implementation process should include a measurement component to assess progress, and the results of that lead one right back to the Research part of the process to determine areas for improvement, then re-planning and implementation, and so the cycle continues. ∎