

Diversity for small businesses



The Voice of Small Business

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What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word Diversity?



We will explore:

- What is diversity
- The challenges of diversity
- The benefits of diversity
- Diversity and transgender employees
- Diversity and international employees
- Resources



What is diversity

What is diversity?

Diversity is a shorthand word that relates to a mix of employees in the workplace, it is inclusive of all employees when it comes to gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, family status and so forth.

Diversity is a positive action from a business when they create an inclusive work culture through its recruitment and retention practices and policies.

Is diversity the same as equality?

Equality is a legal requirement to ensure that employees are protected against discrimination under the 9 grounds.

Diversity is a step beyond equality, it is positive commitment to create an inclusive work culture

The 9 grounds under the Equality Act

Gender	This means male, female or transgender
Age	Refers to people of all ages from 16 years upwards
Family status	Refers to a parent of a person under 18 years or primary carer / parent of a person with a disability
Disability	Includes people with physical, intellectual, learning or emotional disabilities along with a wide range of medical conditions
Race	Includes race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin

The 9 grounds under the Equality Act

Religion	Means religious belief, background, outlook or none
Sexual orientation	Includes gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual
Civil status	Includes single, married, separated, divorced and widowed person, civil partners and former civil partners
Member of the traveller community	All members of the traveller community

Examples of diversity in action

- The business creates a diversity strategy
- Recruitment and retention practices
- Policies and procedures
- Diversity training
- Diversity awareness events

The challenges of diversity

Challenges of diversity

- It could turn into a box ticking exercise
- Resistance
- Increased upfront costs
- Requires time and energy for effective diversity management

The benefits of diversity

Benefits of diversity for employees

- Increased productivity
- Higher retention rates of employees and increased loyalty
- Improved communication
- Reduction in conflict / grievances amongst employees
- Increased innovation and creativity

Benefits of diversity for your business

- Better understanding of customer needs
- Enhanced business reputation
- Brand loyalty
- Increase in profits

Diversity and transgender employees

Transgender terminology

Transgender – individuals whose gender identity and / or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth

Non-binary - an umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the gender binary of male or female. This includes individuals, whose gender identity is neither exclusively male or female, a combination of male and female or between or beyond genders



Transgender terminology

Transitioning – Is a process which some transgender people begin to live as the gender that they identify with.

Pronouns - Trans people may indicate a preferred pronoun when referring to their gender such as he/him, she/her or for those who identify as non-binary they may prefer the use of third party pronouns such as they/them. If in doubt ask respectfully what is their pronoun of choice



More definitions are available from TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland) at www.teni.ie

TENI employment experiences survey 2017

According to TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland), it is estimated that at least 1% of the Irish population will experience gender variance.

TENI conducted a survey in 2017 to gather experiences of trans people in employment. They identified the following:

- One in four trans people in Ireland are unemployed and actively seeking work
- 55% had experienced or witnessed transphobic bullying in the workplace
- 54% thought about skipping or actually skipped work because of the negative treatment due to being trans

The gender recognition act

In September 2015 the Gender Recognition Act came into effect. Gender recognition legislation provides a process that enables trans people to achieve full legal recognition of their gender and they can acquire a new birth certificate that reflects this change.

The Gender Recognition Act allows all individuals over the age of 18 to self-declare their own gender identity

How to create a trans friendly work environment

1. Educate yourself on the transgender community – the TENI guidelines for employers and employees is an excellent starting point
2. Create trans friendly policies
3. Let potential candidates know your business operates trans friendly policies
4. Be supportive and maintain confidentiality if a trans employee decides to transition. Work with them on a transition plan – see *resources for more information on this*
5. Provide transgender specific training to staff and managers. TENI provide bespoke training and support to employers.

TENI 5 simple guidelines

1. Respect the person's wishes around the name and pronoun they would like you to use. If you are unsure, ask in a respectful manner
2. Some trans people are open about their gender identity, others are not. Never share this with others unless you have explicit permission from them to do so.
3. Maintain their privacy. The trans status of an employee is sensitive personal information
4. Allow employees to use facilities (restroom, changing rooms) which match their gender identity
5. Review your policies on equality, bullying and harassment to explicitly include trans people.

Diversity and international employees

The case for embracing a multi-cultural workplace

The 2016 Census indicates that over 500,000 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland originate from 200 different nations.

According to Eurostat, in 2014 Ireland had the fourth highest proportion of foreign-born residents in the EU after Luxembourg, Cyprus and Austria.



10 tips to embrace a culturally diverse workforce

1. Let potential candidates know your business welcomes international applicants subject to a valid employment permit
2. Many international employees are over-qualified for the work they do in Ireland. Did you know you can compare their 3rd level degree against the Irish equivalent – *see resources section for more information*
3. Create a pre-arrival pack that helps international employees understand the Irish tax, housing and other administrative systems
4. Provide full in-depth induction. Consider a buddy system to help the employee settle in and understand how your business works and its culture
5. Host a series of round the world events that recognise your diverse workforce

10 tips to embrace a culturally diverse workforce

6. Implement and action a zero tolerance approach to racism and discrimination
7. Host cultural awareness training or regular one hour workshops where an individual can share where they come from and what their culture is
8. Create plain English policies and procedures so that international employees can easily understand them
9. Ensure that any Health and Safety training is delivered in clear, easy to understand terms
10. Avail of translation services to help deal with miscommunication or grievances

Additional resources

Resources

- **Dublin Bus workplace gender transition policy and guidelines:**
<https://www.dublinbus.ie/Global/Gender%20Transition%20Policy%20and%20Guidelines%20Sept%202017.pdf>
- **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission –** www.ihrec.ie
- **QQI– Recognition of Foreign Qualifications in Ireland -**
<https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Qualifications-Recognition.aspx>

Resources

- **Small Firms Association** – www.sfa.ie/advice
- **Transgender Equality Network Ireland** - www.teni.ie
- **TENI Employer and employee guidelines** -
<http://www.teni.ie/attachments/422b4a34-78af-4b62-9818-aced13ed58ca.PDF>
- **Workplace Relations Commission** – www.workplacerelations.ie

Need further advice?

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Thank you

