



Creating an inclusive environment by using DEI principles: Case of Lindström laundries

Noora Alarauhio

2023 Laurea





Laurea University of Applied Sciences

**Creating an inclusive environment by using DEI principles: Case
of Lindström laundries**

Noora Alarauhio
Leading Transformational Change
Thesis
September, 2023

Noora Alarauhio

Creating an inclusive environment by using DEI principles: Case of Lindström laundries

Year	2023	Number of pages	73
------	------	-----------------	----

The purpose of this thesis is to help Lindström's Finnish laundries to have a diverse, inclusive and equitable work environment through modern leadership skills and transformational change. The goal is to offer improvement suggestions and tools for people in managerial positions and also other staff, so that diversity, equity and inclusion are taken into account in day to day work life. Nurturing an environment of diversity, equity and inclusion is an important goal for case company and they want to have better employee retention and have happy content workers through DEI initiatives.

Results from this thesis benefit the case company locally firstly in the laundries, but can easily be put into implementation nationwide in other functions as well. Results can also benefit global functions as an example how to research DEI base situations in all operating countries.

The bottom line from the theory is that the workers need to feel they are included, appreciated, celebrated and they feel like they belong. If the workers feel these emotions, they are more likely to stay at their place of employment which leads to better employment retention in the case company. When workers are content there are less disagreements among the staff as there is an air of respect as well. But if there are conflicts or changes, the workers are not in arms immediately but rather they can weather the change and even enable it.

Through qualitative research methods; interviews and questionnaire, it was discovered that especially recruitment and hiring, learning and growth were segments where there is a need for improvement. It is recommended that all improvements are executed at personal-, group- and organizational level with good tracking and measurable goals. Also the improvement should be tied to core business decision, so they are dealt with regularly.

Keywords: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Transformational Change, Change Management, Bias

Contents

1	Introduction	8
1.1	Purpose and scope of research	8
1.2	Key concepts.....	9
1.3	DEI Audit Tool	13
1.4	Introduction to Lindström	14
2	Research ethics	14
3	DEI theories.....	15
3.1	How companies benefit from Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.....	15
3.2	Employee happiness through DEI.....	19
3.3	COVID-19: Why are DEI matters even more important during a crisis.....	23
4	Management Theories	25
4.1	Recruiting theories	25
4.2	Bias in decision-making and work-life.....	26
4.3	What can be done to combat bias?	30
4.4	Engaged management	33
4.5	Change management and transformational leadership	35
4.6	Conflicts in change	38
5	Summary of key theories.....	39
6	Research methods.....	41
6.1	Semi-structured personal one-to-one interviews.....	42
6.2	Questionnaire.....	44
6.3	Deductive research method.....	44
7	Research process	44
7.1	Selecting of the pre-interview questionnaire (DEI Audit Tool)	45
7.2	Interview campaign.....	46
7.2.1	Selection of interviewees.....	46
7.2.2	Interview process	46
7.3	Structured self-report questionnaire campaign	47
7.3.1	Selection of people for self-report questionnaire.....	47
7.3.2	Questionnaire process.....	48
7.4	Anonymization of gathered data	48
7.5	DEI audit tool analysis.....	49
8	Research findings and improvement suggestions	50
8.1	Recruiting and hiring	51
8.2	Benefits and work conditions	53
8.3	Assessment and promotion	53

8.4	Meetings and social connection	55
8.5	Learning and growth.....	56
8.6	Other findings	57
8.7	Improvement suggestions to have in DEI programs	57
9	Discussions and conclusions	61
9.1	Limitations	62
9.2	Future and opportunities	63
	References	65
	Figures	71
	Tables	71
	Appendices	72

1 Introduction

The thesis idea emerged during my master's studies in diversity management. A course had an assignment to evaluate a company's diversity, equity, and inclusion and it was done by using a ready-made DEI audit tool. DEI stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion. I chose to do the course assignment about my employer Lindström. This course work opened my eyes to some shortcomings in DEI matters by my current employer and gave me the idea to develop new practices with research work. To be able to develop something, first one needs to find out the current situation, so I needed to conduct research to be able to attain that.

The case company was eager to have the first mapping of DEI matters performed, in order to make these matters more transparent to management and Human Relations, HR, in Finland. The aim was to have the mapping made and after that make improvement suggestions based on current DEI theories and modern HR theories and target them towards the findings. Improvement suggestions based on theory would be taken into implementation in Finnish laundries.

Based on the interviews and the DEI audit tool evaluations by both business unit managers and the laundry- or production managers, I have suggested specific improvements on how to incorporate DEI into the subject matters that received the lowest scores in evaluations. The thesis will go through how to nurture the environment of diversity, equality, and inclusion at the Finnish business unit laundries and how the managers can lead without biases in their daily work.

In Chapter 1.1 I will go through the aim and scope of my research and then in Chapter 1.2 I will go through all key concepts to this thesis and I will introduce the DEI audit tool in Chapter 1.3. After this, the theoretical framework will be introduced in Chapters 3 and 4. After the theoretical framework, I will share my research methods in Chapter 6. Then I will open up the research process and how it was conducted in Chapter 7 and finally the results of the research in Chapter 8. After the results, I will discuss the conclusions in the thesis and then I will open out about the future possibilities and the limitations of this work in Chapter 9.

1.1 Purpose and scope of research

The purpose of this thesis is to help the case company's Finnish laundries to have a diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environment through modern leadership skills and transformational change. The goal is to offer improvement suggestions and tools for people in managerial positions and also other staff so that diversity, equity, and inclusion are taken

into account in day-to-day work life. Nurturing an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusion is an important goal for the case company and they want DEI to be a part of the national HR strategy and functions. The case company wants to have better employee retention and happy content workers through DEI initiatives.

The thesis concerns Finnish business unit laundries. It does not include other functions or employees at the business units, so white-collar workers outside laundries are not included in this research. The scope of the thesis does not include learning how laundries and business units operate as this is a great task in itself. Improvement suggestions have been made to such a level that they are easy to take into use with rather small investments.

The scope of the thesis does not include the see-through of any improvements in Finnish laundries or follow-up of the suggested improvements later. Follow-up would take at least another year and this is not in the scope of time that can be spent for the thesis.

To be able to reach the purpose of this thesis, the following research questions need to be answered:

1. What is the current situation with DEI matters in the Finnish laundries according to the DEI audit tool?
2. What are the DEI tools and processes that can be used in Lindström laundries to have more engaged, committed, and happier workers?
3. How can DEI make Lindström a better company and in which aspects?
4. How should improvement suggestions be implemented into everyday work life?

1.2 Key concepts

In this Chapter, I will explain the key concepts used in this thesis. This Chapter has a brief overview of the concepts, while they are described in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

DEI

The most used concept in this thesis is DEI, which stands for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Cambridge Dictionary (2023) describes DEI as an “abbreviation for diversity, equity, and inclusion: the idea that all people should have equal rights and treatment and be welcomed and included so that they do not experience any disadvantage because of belonging to a particular group, and that each person should be given the same opportunities as others according to their needs” (Cambridge University Assessment & Press, 2023b). McKinsey & Company (2022) defines diversity, equity, and inclusion as three closely linked values held by many organizations that are working to be supportive of different groups of individuals, including people of different races, ethnicities, religions, abilities, genders, and sexual orientations. These three are often linked together because they are interconnected and

together are a great influence in the business world and other organizations. A more detailed description of DEI according to McKinsey & Company (2022):

Diversity

This means who is represented in the workforce. Diversity can be viewed in these issues: Race, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, and age among others. Examples of few diversities in workplaces are: (McKinsey & Company 2022)

- Gender diversity: What is the composition of the organization? From what gender the workers are comprised? Are they women, men, non-binary, or something else? The workforce is gender diverse when all of these are represented in the population of the employees.
- Age diversity: How many and of what age are the people in the organization? The workforce is age-diverse if there are people of many different ages from different generations.
- Ability diversity: People of different ability levels are represented in the organization. Different kinds of disabilities with people do not affect their talents and they can do work from home remotely.

Equity

This means fair treatment of the people in the organization so that their individual circumstances are taken into account. The difference between equality and equity is in the means how to achieve equality. An Equitable workplace ensures that there are practices and or policies in place that make sure that the person's identity does not foretell any future opportunities or outcomes. (McKinsey & Company 2022.) An example of good equity at a place of work is if the company provides additional support hardware to employees who need special ergonomics while working. Another example is to provide a room for nursing mothers to nurse during the workday so they can return to work earlier while the baby is still small. The result in both examples is that the workers are equal and have the same possibilities as other workers. They are not in the same circumstances, but the means to get equal is through equitable deeds despite peoples' disadvantages. To have equity in an organization is to provide the means to be equal with others whatever that may look like.

Inclusion

This means that all the peoples' voices are heard and they are included in the organization's functions. People want to be seen and heard and have a sense of belonging. People want to feel they are included in matters in the organization. An inclusive environment exercises a culture of openness. (McKinsey & Company 2022.)

Bias

Mariam Webster dictionary (2023) defines bias as “an inclination of temperament or outlook, especially, a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment, prejudice”. We have a built-in system of biases, which are remnants of our past lifestyle when we were still early humans. Many of these biases have kept us alive as a species because we can make immediate decisions about other people and situations and thus keep ourselves alive during dangerous or novel situations. In the current world of business and the workplace, this is very rarely the case that our lives or family’s life is threatened, so all of these instinctive biases are no longer serving us properly. In the modern world, we need to exercise a more thoughtful existence and be above all those biases, so they do not affect us in the workplace. (Bazerman and Moore 2012 & Kim and Roberson 2021.)

Bias is also named implicit bias, cognitive bias, unconscious bias, or implicit attitude, but they all mean the same thing: The split-second judgment or evaluation we make about a person when we first see them and the situation we find ourselves with these people. This act of evaluation and association is a deep instinct, but the outcome, the thoughts, and the evaluations we form are learned. They come from the environment, family, television, social media, friends and acquaintances. In short, we stereotype people. Stereotyping is learned and some biases or stereotypes we use in a group context e.g. Swedish people like to negotiate in length. Even if we are not specifically taught these stereotypes, they are learned through association even if represented passively continually in our surroundings e.g. in advertising billboards. There are dozens of different biases psychologists and researchers have recognized in our thinking, and I will go more in-depth into these in sub-Chapter 3.2. (Bazerman & Moore 2012 & Kim and Roberson 2021.)

System 1 and system 2 thinking

Bias thinking is categorized as system 1 thinking. This categorization originates from Bazerman & Moore (2012) when they describe two ways we as people think. We have system 1 thinking and system 2 thinking. System 1 is instinctive thinking and response, a quick judgment of people and situations. This system can lead us to error judgments if we do not stop to think for a while. We need to understand our thoughts and our behaviors in the work environment as it can have consequences for other people and their wellbeing. System 1 thinking gets us through everyday life such as processing verbal language or visual information for example during grocery shopping. No need to use more energy- and time-consuming system 2 thinking for judging that the red color on the spice bottle means more spicy because the bottle also has three chilies on it, so it must be spicy.

System 2 thinking is when we use our higher consciousness, logical reasoning, our rational mind to evaluate people and situations. This thinking system we would need to use in more

important decision-making situations. In a working environment, if we want to treat people fairly, we need to use system 2 thinking. A start in the right direction is to recognize when we are biased and should stop system 1 thinking and instead use system 2 thinking because then you are already starting to think about the issue at hand and using a slower rational path. (Bazerman & Moore 2012.)

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is described by Bagga, Gera, and Haque (2023) with four main traits. These are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence is a leadership trait with role models that are admired, copied, and respected by people. Inspirational motivation in a leader means they use a futuristic approach to work and provide workers with challenging work tasks so they are inspired by themselves. Intellectual stimulation in a leader is to inspire followers to adopt new thoughts and forget about their old assumptions, values, and traditions. This in my opinion is a key trait that a transformational leader should have in DEI management, as DEI brings about new thoughts and the goal is to have workers reject the old, possibly discriminative ideas and thoughts. The fourth trait is individualized consideration where the leader takes into consideration the worker's needs and capabilities and is willing to mentor the worker forward. Based on Busari et al. (2020) and Islam et al. (2021) research written by Bagga et al. (2023) transformational leaders are described as heralds for change, proactive leaders who spur workers to aim for exceptional goals. Good transformational leaders can change workers' behaviors from negative to positive and to change-oriented (Bagga et al. 2023).

Change management is a much-used concept nowadays as the world keeps changing at a faster pace, so the need for management that is capable of leading teams and organizations through changes is a must in any company. Change management is very closely linked to transformational leadership according to Bagga et al. (2023). Rousseau and Have (2022) describe any change as transformative. Managing change is done better with transformational leaders than merely managing, as they inspire the workers to step into the change train and transform themselves with the inspiration and help from their transformational leader. Transformational leadership enables good and smooth change management. Change management is needed so leaders do not make poor decisions based on unworthy information. (Rousseau & Have 2022.) Change should be based on good quality evidence, which helps the management to have a good knowledge base that they can share with all stakeholders in the company. Proper change manager is trustworthy, reflective, critical, and honestly curious about their organization and has evidence-based processes. (Rousseau & Have 2022.)

Outgroup

Outgroup means a group of people that are not belonging to the set-up of that specific organization. Outgroup people are usually minorities or discriminated against e.g. black people, LGBTQ+ people, etc.

Ingroup

Ingroup means a group of people that belong to the same community in some aspects as other people, e.g. race, age, sex.

1.3 DEI Audit Tool

According to Härme (2023), it is very important to recognize problem points and to be open about them and their existence. Improvements can start to happen when problem points are recognized. Some groundwork needs to be done to find out the problem points. I have used the DEI audit tool in the acquisition of the primary data for my research to identify the problem points. The DEI audit tool form is made by a company called Life Labs Learning. Life Labs Learning is a company that offers management training and coaching to leaders and future leaders (LifeLabs Learning 2023.) The DEI audit tool is a spreadsheet where there are sections that users need to fill to be able to see a bigger picture of DEI matters. DEI audit tool is used to find out the status quo or the current state of affairs concerning DEI matters. I was introduced to the tool on a DEI management course during my master studies in 2021. The DEI audit tool can be found in Appendix 1.

There are five (5) main themed sections in the DEI audit tool:

- Recruiting and hiring
- Benefits and work conditions
- Assessment and promotion
- Meetings and social connection
- Learning and growth

Each of these five main themed sections contains from seven to 10 more detailed issues within the specific theme. Each detailed issue is evaluated and analyzed based on how things are in the organization in question and then given a numerical value. The user fills in numerical evaluations per each issue with a numerical value between zero and five. Zero means nothing of the issue is present or good in the organization or not applicable. For some sections, there is an option to evaluate a mean for all the detailed issues inside one theme, but this was not required from the participants.

1.4 Introduction to Lindström

The case company Lindström is a Finnish textile service company with over 175 years of experience in the textile industry. The company first started as a fabric dyer house and is now the leading textile rental business in Finland. Rental services function so that the products themselves are owned by Lindström and are rented to customers. Lindström washes maintains and changes all the products as long as a contract is valid between the company and customer.

Lindström operates in 23 countries in Europe and Asia and has personnel of around 5000 people and has a turnover of almost 500 million. Lindström is a B2B company and offers a wide variety of services ranging from workwear, mats, restaurant textiles, and hotel textiles to industrial wipers, and cleanroom services. Lindström offers workwear services in all its countries of operation and mat services in 20 operating countries. In addition to workwear, the service selection of Lindström Group includes shop towels, hygiene hardware, hygiene textiles, and restaurant textiles as well as the textiles of hotels and the healthcare industry. There are also specialty products like industrial wipers and cleanroom workwear and services. (Lindström Group 2023).

Lindström has global centralized functions and the head office is in Helsinki. Global human resources, global HR, is run from Lindström's head office. Each country has its HR department or person to handle local HR matters and decisions based on local legislation. Regional HR can make their own campaigns and decisions on how to run their HR, but the strategy, mission, values, and overall instructions come from head office global HR. Finnish HR is also located in the Helsinki head office.

In Finland, there are six business units. All business units have a managing director called a business unit manager (BUM). All units have a laundry or several laundries. There are 24 laundries in Finland and they are situated in a service center where there are also other functions. Service centers have many different professions: Salespeople, customer service, laundry workers, laundry managers, and route managers among others. My thesis is focused on the Finnish laundries and the textile workers. Laundries employ ethnically diverse people such as immigrants.

2 Research ethics

When doing research, one should be aware of responsible conduct in research and how it affects the research work. One should practice good research ethics during the research. Researchers should have a good understanding of how to cite the information used properly and give credit to those whose information is used in the research text. One should know how

to officially agree on research with all stakeholders and in which instances to get permission from the participants or any other instance e.g. when a preliminary ethical review is needed. (HTK Ohje 2012.)

This thesis is done according to the guidelines of The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, TENK in short. All participants have agreed to be interviewed and nobody has been coerced or recorded in secret. Participants were informed beforehand that the interviews were recorded and transcribed and the language of the interview is English. The thesis has been agreed on with the case company's Finnish head of HR and the Finnish board of directors at the time of the starting of the thesis work in late autumn 2021. (HTK Ohje 2012.)

3 DEI theories

In this Chapter, I will go through the main DEI theories used in the research work in this thesis. I will talk about diverse executive teams and leaders and how they affect the bottom line and profitability of companies. I will elaborate on how diversity, equity, and inclusion can make staff happier, and doing so can improve worker retention and commitment to employers. I will also touch on the subject of epidemics and pandemics how they have changed working life and what can companies do to mitigate the effects.

3.1 How companies benefit from Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

I found dozens of articles on the internet from reputable instances about how companies with diverse teams, inclusive work environments, or a good DEI strategy that is properly implemented outdo those companies that don't. Everyone seems to be in consensus that harboring a culture of inclusion, diversity, and equity, benefits everyone in the company and the company's performance. Even though I found these articles, the main source was missing from some of them and so I had to use some skepticism towards them without the original sources. Happily, I found original sources for many of the articles. Many rely on the research done by McKinsey & Company.

McKinsey & Company is a firm that advises the world's leading businesses, governments, and institutions (LinkedIn 2023). They consult private organizations and also public and social sectors. They are the oldest and largest management consultant firm in the world. For these reasons, McKinsey & Company is a trusted entity for business studies and research. They have done three extensive research studies on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the business world. Reports are from 2015, 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2023. I chose to use McKinsey & Company's research because they have the largest sample of companies worldwide. In their most extensive report from 2020, they had data from 1000 large companies from 15 different countries. (McKinsey & Company 2018, 2020, 2022, 2023.)

The newest research from this year 2023 was done together with the World Economic Forum and Global Parity Alliance. World economic forum is an international organization for public-private cooperation. They are an independent party; they are also impartial and without ties to any special interests. They highlight entrepreneurship to the global public, have a high standard of governance, and have strong moral and intellectual integrity. (World economic forum 2023.) Global Parity Alliance is a cross-industry group committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. They are a global alliance and work within organizations and across the corporate ecosystem. (McKinsey & Company and Global Parity Alliance 2023.) They have launched a DEI lighthouse program, where they research and identify DEI initiatives that have resulted in significant, quantifiable, scalable, and sustainable impact (McKinsey & company 2023).

McKinsey & Company and Global Parity Alliance report (2023) estimates that spending on DEI-related matters was \$7.5 billion in 2020 and they estimate that this number will be \$15,4 billion in 2026, more than double from 2020. Although companies are spending a lot of money on DEI initiatives, it is shown that money spent on these initiatives brings more back to the company. Because the initiatives are monetarily lucrative, management teams globally have realized the importance of having DEI conversations in their organizations and taking action toward better diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Below is Figure 1 with findings from McKinsey & Company's first DEI research in 2015 where a clear indication was found in performance and being a more diverse company. More gender-diverse companies were 15% more likely to outperform those companies that didn't have gender-diverse staff. Ethnically diverse companies were 35% more likely to outperform compared to those that weren't ethnically diverse. This 2015 research is a starting point for the outperformance percentages found in the research.

Diversity's dividend

What's the likelihood that companies in the top quartile for diversity financially outperform those in the bottom quartile?¹

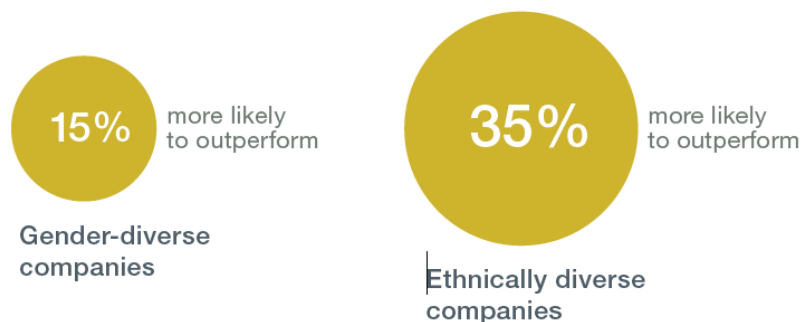


Figure 1: McKinsey & Company (2015) [analysis of diversity and companies' financial performance.](#)

New research by McKinsey & Company (2022) suggests that these outperformance percentages are only growing and have now a bigger impact on the bottom line of businesses. Companies that have executive teams in the top quartile in gender diversity were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability. This number has risen from 15% as shown in Figure 1 in five years (McKinsey & Company 2018). If comparing the most gender-diverse companies to the least gender-diverse companies, the most gender-diverse ones see a 48% likelihood of outperformance as seen in Figure 2. According to Bond (2022) at Great Place to Work, very inclusive workplaces where people feel they belong, grow revenue three times faster than those workplaces that are not inclusive and people have no feeling of belonging. These are concrete numbers found in the research so all the DEI programs and initiatives in companies could increase their revenue and profit. (McKinsey & Company 2022.)

Exhibit 5

Executive teams with more than 30% women are more likely to outperform those with fewer or no women

Likelihood of financial outperformance¹, 2014, %

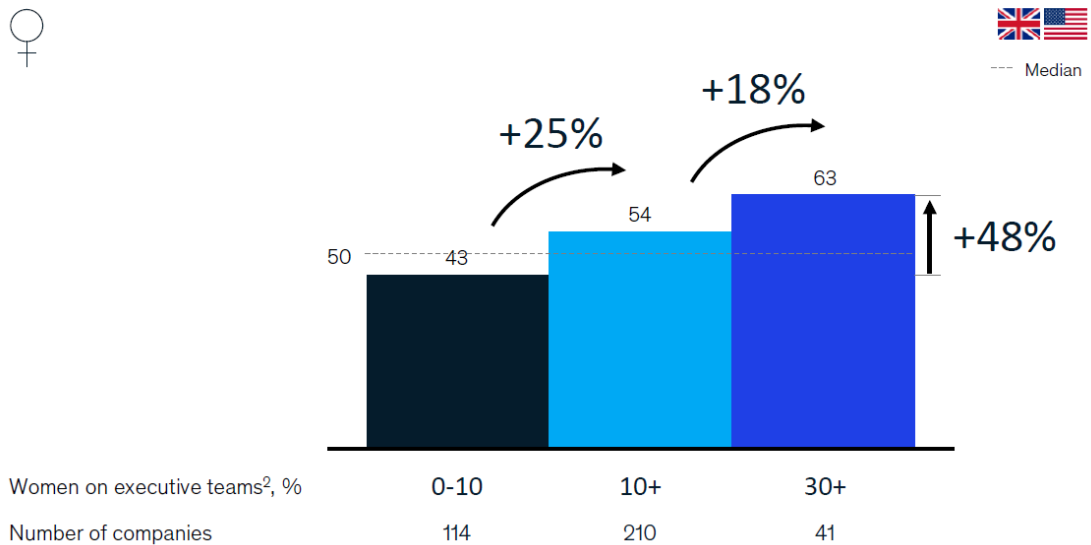


Figure 2: McKinsey & Company. 2020. [Analysis of diversity and companies' financial performance.](#)

The companies that have ethnically and culturally diverse teams the outperformance is even higher than with gender diversity. The most ethnically and culturally diverse companies enjoyed a 36% higher profitability compared to the least diverse. It would be very beneficial for a company to have gender- diversity and racial- and culture-diversity. (McKinsey & Company 2022)

A challenge to diversity and equity in the workplace is shrinking jobs as automation is accelerating. Meaning there are continually fewer jobs in certain industries. These shrinking jobs are affecting mostly women and minorities, and this trend is also accelerating. Growing job markets are currently dominated by men. Such fields as engineering, computer sciences, environmental sciences, and construction would benefit from a more diverse workforce. This is a challenge for diversity and equity in workplaces and a challenge in societies: how the gender gap can be closed. (McKinsey & Company 2020)

An inclusive and diverse company brand can also bring more profit to a company. A good example of inclusive and diverse marketing, and how profitable it can be to a company, is the Nike campaign called dream crazy, where they featured an American footballer Colin Kaepernick. This happened in 2018 when the black lives matter campaign was new and brewing hot. There was a scandal when in one football game Kaepernick took a knee, meaning kneeled with one knee to the ground, during the American national anthem. The kneeling indicated that he supported the black people in protest rather than the police who were accused of brutality against black people. (Eyada 2020.)

In the Nike campaign, Kaepernick was featured with his face pictured in black and white with the text “Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything”. There was an immediate negative pour of comments and hashtags in the media. So much so that the hashtag #nikeboycott and #boycottnike got more than a billion impressions. The boycott turned viral and created a lot of publicity for Nike. Ten days after the campaign started, it was announced by a stock market news outlet Bloomberg, that Nike’s stock had reached an all-time high, a five percent increase in the month the Kaepernick advert was released (Vox 2018 & Bloomberg 2023). Nike made six billion dollars with that campaign despite all the negative publicity (Eyada 2020). This example shows how being inclusive towards a group, you can earn their support, improve the brand at the same time, and make a profit. Profit-making with a strong brand image also needs the help of marketing professionals. Efficient marketing can increase the value of a brand.

Why is the profitability of diverse companies better? Because there are multiple ways diverse staff affect the working in companies. Hewlett, Marshall and Sherbin (2013) show us in Harvard Business Review that diverse teams are more creative, and innovative and can reach more new markets and thus expand more and be more profitable against those companies that are not diverse. Employees at a company with diverse leadership have a likelihood of 70% to reach new markets. This research was conducted in the US with 1800 professionals and 40 case studies. When leaders are diverse they can make better business decisions in new markets because the diverse employees understand the diverse customer base better and so can meet the needs of the new client base better (Hewlett et al. 2013).

Similar findings were made by McKinsey & Company (2018, 2020, 2022, and 2023) and by Stahl (2021) in Forbes magazine. Stahl (2021) and McKinsey & Company (2020, 2022, 2023) note that diverse teams perform better in creative solutions and they boost innovation because different thoughts, backgrounds, and experiences in life give different perspectives to any dilemma or situation at work. Very homogenous teams might not understand customers so well because they lack diverse thinking. These kinds of teams might always solve problems the same way even if the situation requires novel ideas because they cannot see any other solutions.

3.2 Employee happiness through DEI

Employee happiness and employee retention walk hand in hand. Happy employees do not feel the need to leave. In Chapter 4.5 I will talk about Engaged management which is very closely related to employee happiness. Here I want to highlight other issues for employee happiness in addition to having great management.

McKinsey & Company (2020) found that even with the most diverse companies, the employees had a negative outlook toward inclusion at 61%. This means that diversity by itself is not the answer, but after recruitment, the staff needs to be trained to understand and practice inclusion. This enables a great working experience for the diverse staff. Even with managers, the thoughts towards inclusion and equity were negative in 56% of cases. This number shows that there needs to be more effort toward true inclusion even with management.

McKinsey & Company (2020) also wonders if the negative sentiment derives from jealousy and a feeling of unfairness towards others having something they don't have, even if they don't need it. For example, people feel jealous of custom hardware for working e.g. anatomically designed keyboard, even if they do not need it. A good way to visually represent how equity works is shown in Figure 3 where there people are watching a baseball game with different starting points. To be equal they all need different solutions to help the situation. On the right, there is a depiction of what is the reality in today's society.

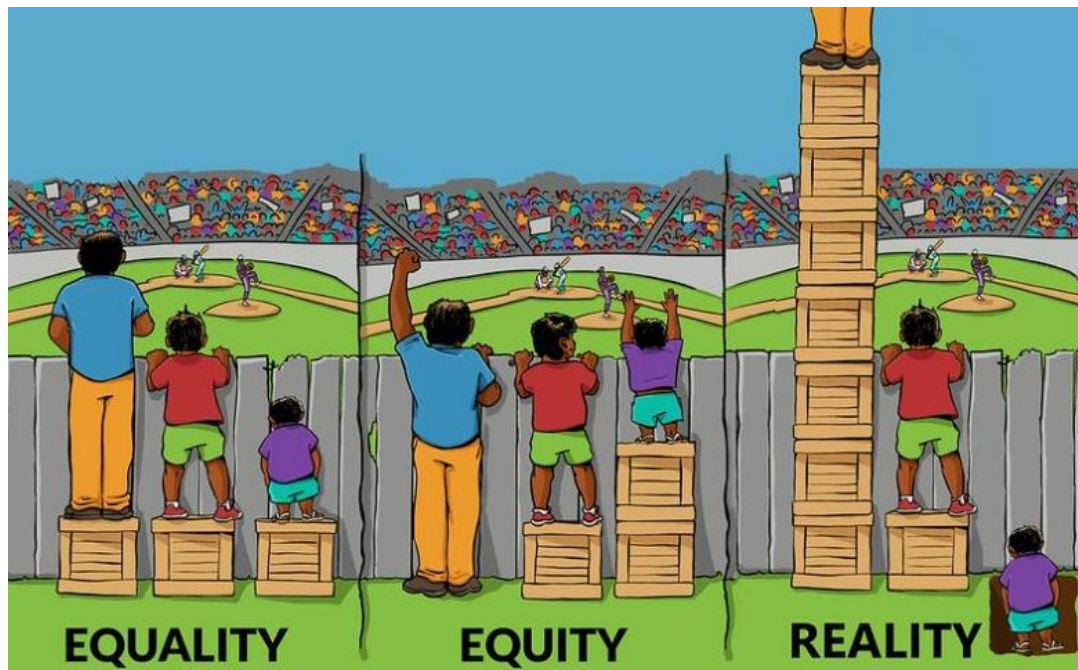


Figure 3: Angus Maguire. Equality, equity, and reality.

People want to be fulfilled, happy, and feel satisfied in their work. If this cannot be attained, people will change jobs. Mosley-Williams (2023) instructs businesses to have a plan on how to keep a diverse workforce because many companies invest in diverse hiring. So it is important for workers to have a culture at work where all these attributes can be met. If workers need to hide a component of themselves from co-workers or management, they will not be very satisfied and happy in that place. So true inclusion is a key issue to employee happiness (McKinsey & Company 2022).

McKinsey & Company (2022) say that employee engagement is strongly linked to feeling included. Gupta, Sihag, and Singh Pangtey (2023) say that when a worker is acknowledged, heard, and valued, they are more committed to any changes happening in the company. If people feel included, they are accepted the way they are, heard, and respected, and they are more committed to their employer. Bond (2022) at Great Place to Work tells us that belonging is also closely related to diversity, inclusion, and equity. He argues that belonging is a deeper feeling than feeling included. It is a feeling that they, as the unique self as they are, are accepted and treasured by colleagues. Long careers are one of the case company's values. If people feel like they belong and are included Bond (2022) says they are five times more likely to want to stay at their workplace for a long time. Workers are nine times more likely to believe people are treated fairly regardless of their race. Some laundries have a very diverse staff, so this would be a very important thing to understand for management.

Inclusion should reach all levels of staff. One way to add a feeling of inclusion according to Mosley-Williams (2023) and Bond (2022) is to involve staff in decision-making so they can plan

DEI initiatives and be involved in implementations as well. I watched an interview about DEI where Lewis (2021) talks about diversity, equity, and inclusion. He is an Assistant Vice President of Culture & Inclusion at Ensemble Health Partners. He is a DEI influencer and has helped his employer Ensemble Health Partners win Top Workplaces awards in the US for 5 previous years (Top Workplaces 2023). Lewis (2021) says that diversity in a workplace brings different people and their experiences and their knowledge to that job and the same space. According to him, inclusion is to value all the different cultures and practices. Equity is about differences, and treating people differently when they are different. The company needs to take the differences and help to bring value to those different people who are valuable parts of the team. Lewis (2021) further elaborates that it is ultimately about the leaders creating an inclusive environment to value all workers. He is challenging management by asking how the workers could be included in decision-making and how top leaders could be asking workers' opinions on difficult issues and decisions.

One good example of including workers in important decision-making was a strategy for 2020 at Lindström. They had a global initiative for a new strategy for 2020 and before creating a new strategy with only top management, the strategy was built together with all workers globally instead. Lindström arranged two sets of workshops online for all workers so that workers were divided into groups of five people. People were choosing the group randomly, so nobody knew beforehand who they were with. You could end up in the same group with the CEO. First workshops were held so that the most important, bigger themes would be unearthed. The second round of workshops was more fine-tuning of the already chosen strategy components.

People could choose a timeslot suitable for them: This meant that people globally could participate because time differences were taken into account. The platform that facilitated the workshops also had tasks for the group: among others writing tasks. There were interactive graphs where the group could show their preferences for issues. After the two rounds of workshops were held, the top management went through all the material and worked on it to create a strategy that looked like its workers. The new strategy was very well received and people were proud to tell about it forward to others. I also was very excited about the new strategy because it looked like Lindström workers.

Stahl (2021) elaborates that the younger generations value a more diverse company and a culture of inclusion, as they are diverse themselves. Younger people don't feel the need to fit into one mold as much as older generations and want to more freely express themselves at work. According to Bourke and Dillon (2018), inclusion at a very high level is when workers say they can express themselves freely without fear of ridicule or retaliation. Workers need to feel empowered in their work and grow to do their best. Accommodating new generations requires a free and accepting work culture because they are unlikely to accept a job that

doesn't have an inclusive culture. Additionally, they need to know they can have opportunities in the company and grow professionally within the company. (Stahl 2021.)

Nearly 40% of McKinsey & Company (2022) survey participants say they have turned down a job because of a lack of inclusion. 84% of respondents say they have experienced microaggressions at work and a high number of them say that they have met with implicit bias at their work. Around 40% of LGBTQ+ workers and people in racial or ethnic minorities have had an uncomfortable experience at work concerning their sexual orientation, gender, or their racial or ethnic background. According to this research, almost half the workforce felt they weren't included and faced uncomfortable situations. This means that the whole staff of companies need to be trained so they start to understand how to include fellow workers. Many times non-inclusion can happen just by ignorance and not out of spite.

Pohjanpää (2013) writes that approximately 5-15% of all people in Finland are part of a sexual minority. Marttinen (2022) tweeted: that 11-15% of secondary education students are other than heterosexual. That's one to three pupils per study class. How does this show in your work, talk, and attitude? It's a valid question because these people need to be included and feel appreciated in their place of work. Many students are seasonal workers in the laundries and these same students can continue working in the laundry.

If we take this number and apply it to the context of the biggest laundry in Finland, Hämeenlinna, which has 93 workers. According to this approximation this laundry can have up to 14 people who are part of a minority and would need inclusion from others to feel they are accepted and included at work without any prejudice or harassment.

McKinsey & Company (2022) sees that workers need to feel more included to be happier and they have suggested these four improvements.

1. A company needs to have diverse and inclusive leadership because representation matters. If the leaders represent the diversity of the staff, the staff feel more included and happy because of it.
2. A company culture that is led by very able people, a meritocratic company is strongly associated with people feeling included. People advancing should do so only because they have earned it fairly. Unfair promotions to relatives are seen as very unfair because they did not move ahead on their merits. People need to know that promotions and evaluations don't happen because of who people know but how capable they are.
3. An organization that has a program in sponsorship makes people feel they have a strong sense of inclusion. If there are leaders that can help create opportunities for workers to move forward, there is a feeling of inclusion.

4. When an organization has a low threshold to access top leaders, people feel it can create career advancements for them. People feel this is important, so access to senior management should be opened.

Deloitte is a company that provides audit, consulting, financial advisory, risk advisory and, legal services to other companies. Bourke and Dillon (2018) at Deloitte have researched on diversity and inclusion and found out the same, that diversity by itself is not enough to reap the benefits of DEI to business outcomes. Their research highlights that when people are treated with respect and without favoritism in the company, and they feel they can be their authentic selves, they feel a strong sense of belonging and commitment. Commitment means better worker retention. Bourke and Dillon's research in 2013 also confirmed that respect and fairness are the cornerstones of inclusion.

Bond (2022) tells us that committed and happy workers are five times more likely to stay at their company for a long time. There is a gap in understanding how important belonging is between workers and employers because research says that a sense of belonging is one of the three most important reasons to leave a job. Employers don't have this reason even in their top 10 in why people are leaving their jobs.

Bond (2022) gives us seven ways to build belonging in a workplace.

1. Avoid favoritism: Avoid favoritism and bias in decision-making
2. Involving employees in business decisions
3. Transparency: Everyone needs to have access to the same information and have open and honest communication.
4. Fair promotions: Fair and transparent promotions
5. Celebrating accomplishments: Recognize and celebrate employee achievements and milestones.
6. Welcoming new employees: From day one: thoughtful onboarding, introduction to all, and inclusion to other activities in the company.

Embracing the whole self: Total embracement of people's differences creates belonging

3.3 COVID-19: Why are DEI matters even more important during a crisis

DEI matters can help mitigate the impacts of global crises. McKinsey & Company (2020) say that companies invested in inclusion and diversity will bounce back more easily from the crisis as the diverse workforce will strengthen the performance and increase the health of the organization. Companies that have discarded their DEI programs lose innovation power and make so lose opportunities to strengthen their business recovery.

The pandemic gave rise to a generational loss in gender parity. Before the pandemic gender parity was to be achieved in 100 years. McKinsey & Company (2023) expects the global parity for gender equality has now increased to 132 years. COVID-19 has increased social and economic inequality and led to social and political polarization. According to McKinsey & Company (2022), one in three women considered downshifting their careers or leaving their jobs because of stress, burnout, or exhaustion two years into the pandemic.

The COVID-19 example is to show that a company-wide DEI program could be seen through with equity. If every company had a robust DEI program and could cater to everyone's different needs more easily, the impact of COVID-19 would have been diminished. Because companies could e.g. offer programs for daycare for parents of young children so the mothers would not have had to stay at home. The pandemic disproportionately affected women as the care burden fell to them as the care infrastructure was not there during lockdowns and after. (McKinsey & Company 2020) The daycare solution would have meant less disruption to companies especially where people are physically needed to be present at the workplace.

There are some drawbacks to remote working for diverse people as McKinsey & Company (2023) found out. Non-inclusive dynamics can grow if people do not see each other physically. According to McKinsey & Company's (2020) research, complete remote working can reinforce unconscious biases and diminish inclusion. The remote-work possibilities are offered more to higher-income positions. As earlier discussed, the higher we go in most organizations, the less diverse the positions filled are. This can further impact diversity negatively in a company and reduce their innovation capacity and have a direct impact on their revenue.

A growing trend and shift is happening on the job market and lower-paid jobs are decreasing as automation is increasing. This change affects mostly minorities and women, but there is also a chance to re-train these people to the emerging white-collar jobs inside the company. (McKinsey & Company 2023.) And when given an opportunity, people usually shine in their work and are more committed to their employer as discussed previously in this Chapter.

McKinsey & Company (2022) found that diverse employees were disproportionately experiencing work-related challenges 1.4 more likely and they even experienced gender-based harassment. The pandemic has given rise to more race-based hostility at least in the US according to McKinsey & Company's (2022) findings, but a similar wave can be seen in Europe and Finland in growing far right-wing opinions being normalized publicly (Henley 2023). And because of this, it seems to me more important for companies to cater to a diverse staff, because a workplace can be a safe haven for a diverse workforce and thus have them be very committed to their employer.

At the rate that we are urbanizing, it is predicted that a new pandemic is not far away according to Airfinity (2023b), a disease forecasting company tracking and predicting disease

outcomes on the population level (Airfinity 2023a). This is because humans need more space for food and housing development so we push ourselves more into animals' territories by cutting down forests. Living very close to lots of animals is a risk for infectious diseases and so is living very close to other people. Most epidemics or pandemics start spreading efficiently in densely populated areas. Airfinity (2023b) predicts that a new pandemic might loom just ten years from now in 2033 with an almost 30% chance. We do have cases closer to home: just this summer there are new bird flu incidents in Finland within mink farms (Kallionpää 2023).

Businesses need to think about epidemics and pandemics more because they can happen many times within one's career, not just once in a century. An inclusive workplace can help workers be more committed and want to work even if work circumstances are difficult, like a global pandemic with lockdowns.

4 Management Theories

In this Chapter, I will go through important theories, with the leaders and management in mind. I will also go through biases in decision-making and the most suitable ways to combat them. I will elaborate on recruitment with DEI matters in mind and also how conflicts in change are inevitable, but can be harnessed to the betterment of the organization.

Managing personnel and leading requires a different set of tools and capabilities on top of the same ones needed to be a good co-worker and colleague, which are practiced by non-management. Management and leaders need to understand how to diffuse volatile situations and how to keep the working environment cordial and inclusive. They need to recognize biases and combat them, they need to understand how to communicate DEI matters in every situation to employees and see through all the DEI improvements, and also keep an ongoing evaluation. (Chang, Milkman, Zarrow, Brabaw, Gromet, Rebele, Massey, Duckworth & Grant 2019; McGirt 2019.)

All my research sources on DEI agree that if management is not aboard the DEI program or initiative and engaged in it, then it is going to fail. There will be no long-term benefits, if management is not living the DEI program, leading by example and, also following through the status of the program continually (McKinsey & Company 2022).

4.1 Recruiting theories

It is not enough just to recruit diverse talent and it is not enough to "just" recruit diverse people according to McKinsey & Company (2020, 2023). The recruitment process also needs to be impartial, so no biases can affect the recruitment (Kim & Roberson 2021 & Bazerman & Moore 2012). Mosley-Williams (2023) also instructs that recruitment that starts with a good

job announcement should be with inclusive language and without bias. The job announcement should be posted in multiple outlets to get the attention of different people than before. If companies want their diverse talent to be happy and stay with their employer, they need to have a good working experience. This means there needs to be authentic inclusion, not only recruitment. (McKinsey & Company 2020.) One way to also include the recruitment process as a good experience is to make sure that the application review process is objective (Mosley-Williams 2023.)

Companies that boast they have recruited diverse people to various positions and have those recruitments in numbers, cannot boast that they have harnessed that talent unless the workers are happy. Those DEI programs that only look at numbers: diverse people hired or percentages, are not the whole answer, because there needs to be a comprehensive DEI program with all the components of DEI taken into consideration. (McKinsey & Company 2020.) The three components of DEI reinforce one another so they should always exist together in any company that wants to diversify their staff. But there is a place for having metrics in hiring diversity. According to McKinsey & Company (2020), only two-thirds of companies hold senior leaders accountable for their hiring practices and less than half of companies see there has been no progress in diversity metrics in performance reviews. Diversity goals should be followed and leaders held accountable continuously.

Recruiting diverse people should happen at all levels, but especially at business decision-making levels. McKinsey & Company (2020) found out that if the core business leaders and managers at every level were diverse, the DEI initiatives would be seen through better than if there were no diverse management. More homogenous management seems to put the DEI initiatives on the back burner and instead focus only on the business priorities. (McKinsey & Company 2020.)

The DEI impacts are seen in employee retention and -happiness which mean less money spent on recruitment and orienting new people. Content and happy people who are engaged are also more resistant to change and thus are resilient workers in a hectic environment.

4.2 Bias in decision-making and work-life

We use biases and system 1 thinking to carry on in our daily lives. As introduced in Chapter 1.2 system 1 thinking is fast to process through the brain, it uses less energy and so is very efficient. We are not conscious of it happening so it does not strain us. It is an old way of thinking i.e. millions of years old way to see us through lives with predators and possible dangerous situations. This way however does not serve us in modern work-life situations. (Bazerman & Moore 2012.)

Why is bias recognition and its' correction so important to an inclusive work environment? When the ego is stripped away from any person, and there is left an honest and sincere person, who wants only good things to happen to all people, the work atmosphere will be inherently better for all. When people have honest and good intentions and do not discriminate, neglect, or have microaggressions towards other people, everyone can trust that the messages are coming from a place of honesty. (Bazerman & Moore 2012, Kim & Roberson 2021.)

Modern working life requires something different from us. We need to be good thinkers and good leaders. To be a good leader and cultivate a fair atmosphere at work, leaders & workers need to step away from the instinct of stereotyping people or using system 1 thinking. This separation of the two thinking systems can be shown in a question: Do you want to make split-second, too-fast decisions that affect other people at work, where you might be wrong all the time, or do you want to think about what you are doing, and then make the decision? I would think most people who want to be good co-workers or good leaders choose the latter and would want to stop and rationally think about any important decisions they are about to make. (Bazerman & Moore 2012, Kim & Roberson 2021.)

The road to recovery from system 1 thinking starts from realizing our biases. For us to realize them, we need to get to know them. I will go through some of the most used biases in working life that I see relevant to the Finnish laundries. There are dozens of known biases but I have chosen four common biases to explain. I will share some of the best ways to do that. When one recognizes these biases they can negate the effects and move towards a logical, rational, fair, and inclusive way of working. (Bazerman & Moore 2012.)

In Table 1 I have compiled a list of the most common biases per Bazerman & Moore (2012) and four which I will take into more close inspection.

Vividness and recency	Anchoring	➔	Availability
Availability/retrievability	Conjunctive and disjunctive events bias		Affect heuristics
Insensitivity to base rates	Hindsight and curse of knowledge		Representativeness
Misconception of chance	Overconfidence		Confirmation heuristic
Insensitivity to sample size	Bounded awareness		
Regression to mean	Framing and the reversal of preferences		
The conjunction fallacy	Fairness and ethics in decision making		
The confirmation trap	Making rational decisions in negotiations		
The escalation of commitment	Common investment mistakes		
Motivational and emotional influences on decision making	Negotiator cognition		

Table 1: Bazerman & Moore. 2012. The most common biases and four which were chosen for further inspection.

The book by Bazerman & Moore (2012) is a good read. All the biases are best read directly from their book, so I will not go through all the biases in this thesis. I will concentrate on availability, affect heuristics, representativeness, and confirmation heuristic. These biases were chosen for closer inspection because of how often they occur in working environments in laundries. This is based on my experience and understanding of the working environment after 10 years of working experience and through interviews and questionnaires. For example, common mistakes in investments or negotiator cognition are biases that do not occur in laundry work environments, or occur very rarely.

With availability heuristics people estimate the likeliness, frequency, or probability of an event based on how readily available it is in their memory. Memories are more available if they are vivid, bring about strong emotions and are specific. Boring, vague, or hard-to-imagine memories are harder to evoke. This can show in a work context so that a boss will evaluate a close-by sitting subordinate more critically than one that is sitting farther away. A boss who has more interaction and sees more of the subordinate's workings has a lot of vivid and recent memories. This can be avoided if we understand that we think this way because we can rationally and logically remove any fallacies from our evaluations for example when we know this heuristic. (Bazerman & Moore 2012.)

Representativeness is to categorize people by traits of another individual and start stereotyping a group of people. In work, this can show in rating performances of people belonging to the same group thinking they all have the same traits. For example, all Swedish people are very talkative so I wouldn't want to hire any Swedes to a job that doesn't require a

lot of talking, or think all Russians are untrustworthy and management doesn't want to hire any because they think all Russians are in this category or stereotype. This bias can result in racism, so it's important to recognize it and take people as individuals. (Bazerman & Moore 2012.)

Confirmation heuristic means that people tend to interpret evidence in such a way that the outcome will favor whatever we were thinking in the first place even before seeing the evidence. This can be called stubbornness as people who suffer from this bias may never change their minds because they can always see the evidence in a light that favors their opinion of the world. (Bazerman & Moore 2012.) A good example of this are many Trump supporters who thought his daughter was kidnapped and a clone of her was on TV when she agreed that the attorney general was correct about there being no election fraud. Supporters could not see the correct way things were even with evidence because they were certain that the election fraud happened. (Asher 2022.)

Affect heuristic is a way of system 1 thinking so that many things affect the person. An example of this is a recruitment scenario where the manager has had a bad day; their car broke on the way to work and they were late, then their whole day's schedule was turned upside down because of this. After an eventful morning and knowing they are behind schedule they might feel angry and frustrated. A recruitment interview might not be a very fair one to the candidate because there are so many underlying issues with the interviewer. This bias has many things affecting, but the common denominator is that those many things affect the person and then the situations at work might not go smoothly because of them. (Bazerman & Moore 2012.)

Now that these biases have been introduced, it is easier for anyone to recognize them in one's behavior and take steps to consciously unlearn them.

As with any good initiative or program, implicit bias programs should also be executed at:

- Personal level
- Group level
- Organizational level

Well-organized and effective DEI programs are multi-branched, meaning they reach multiple levels in multiple ways in the organization's matrix. Good programs concentrate on individual barriers, but also group- and organizational barriers to inclusion as Kim and Roberson (2021) reference from Kalev et al. (2006) research. Even good programs can have pushback, so there should be a plan of action for the inevitable pushback and how to handle it with grace (Kim & Roberson 2021).

These are the same findings that a group of researchers discovered in their experiments. Chang, Milkman, Zarrow, Brabaw, Gromet, Rebele, Massey, Duckworth, and Grant (2019) had DEI training with a Fortune 500 company and over 3000 employees globally and studied its effects afterward to see changes in attitudes. They found out that the best training should be multipronged, diverse, and transformed along the way with previously discovered data and needs per each company. As mentioned in Chapter 4, researchers in this experiment reinforced the knowledge that DEI initiatives should have a good follow-up, and the results, and data should be collected to know the effects in the company. Chang et al. (2019) recommend experimenting with DEI trainings to see if improvement can be detected in fields where it's needed.

Some individual barriers are invisible to the people. It has been shown in studies that less discriminated people aka white males are less likely to detect bias in the environment compared to people of color or women, or women of color as white men have not been targeted for racial bias as studied by Ashburn-Nardo et al. 2008 by Kim and Roberson (2021). If there are discussions about discrimination, it can be that a very homogenous worker pool does not recognize any discrimination in their organization, if the workforce is mostly white males of similar age. This can happen even if this workplace had few people belonging to a minority, and they have experienced a lot of discrimination. The voice of the minority experiencing discrimination can be overlooked if the majority does not even recognize the wrongdoings. This is a very important matter to consider if there is a survey of some kind and most participants are white males and answer that they have not seen or experienced discrimination. Because this does not mean there isn't any.

When an organization has made some efforts toward an inclusive work environment or has had some kind of DEI program, it makes the white decision-makers see less discrimination and they are less attentive (Kim and Roberson 2021). This is a double-edged sword and a difficult hurdle to cross: Even if a company had a program on DEI matters or one training, it's not a guarantee that the implicit biases are conquered. It means that there should not be just a one-off program or training day to tick the box "we have had a DEI training", but rather there should be an on-going evaluation that requires attention frequently. (Kim and Roberson 2021.)

4.3 What can be done to combat bias?

There are many ways to try to alleviate the impact of biases. Kim and Roberson (2021) have suggested seven methods to do this based on research.

- **Stereotype replacement**

Just being aware of one's thoughts and recognizing them. This helps in battling the stereotyping and not giving into the wrong mode.

- **Counter typical examples**
Show admired people of minorities. Show people in minorities in valued positions and titles to normalize this set-up. Representation matters.
- **Expand and diversify one's network.**
Some employers who have a youthful target audience recommend this to their workers.
- **Individuate outgroup people**
Get to know outgroup people better. Learn tidbits about their lives, hobbies, etc. Peel away the stereotype and replace it with knowledge about that person and their life.
- **Perspective-taking**
To think and write the feelings and thoughts of another person. This helps the writer to see the points of view from another perspective and lessens the stereotyping. This kind of exercise can increase a sense of closeness to the outgroup member.
- **Increase structure**
Decision-makers often make recruiting decisions based on specific demographic attributes, having the assumption that the candidate will better "fit" the organization. This method encourages the decision-maker to write down clearly and specifying selection criteria for the employee. Removal of certain attributes from the resumes is recommended: Race, gender, age. Hiring criteria should be specified ahead of time and there should be a structured set of questions for future employees to be asked in an interview. This is to ensure all those listed attributes are being asked about from all interviewees and so that the interview is not inferior to the standard needed. This method also helps in removing bias from ingroup members for example in promotions inside the house. Studies have shown that hiring criteria are looser to ingroup members, so increasing the structure will ensure the promotion is going to the correct person.
Increased structure can also be used for meetings and group decision-making techniques so everyone is heard and has an equal way of participating.
- **Increase accountability**
When decision-makers are accountable to someone, they have to justify their decisions to someone. This reduces the likelihood of bias. This method has been shown successful in studies to increase rational and careful processing and decrease any stereotyping. It has been shown that DEI programs are more successful in increasing minority workers in management when more accountability is in place because hiring people are accountable for their decisions to others.

Mosley-Williams (2023) also recommends combating bias by standardizing the interview process with a question template to use. The way to interview should be also the same to all whether it be in-person or virtually.

According to Kim & Roberson (2021) even if there is a good program in place, one of the most important skills is having good interpersonal skills. They feel that the identification of our biased thoughts is a critical skill to have and learn, so that needs to be addressed in any program a company has. The best way is to show examples of behaviors and comments that are biased and the cues on how to identify them. Any DEI or bias training should guide the employees in how to confront bias and give a common framework and language to use in these situations so they know what to say and how to act.

Different aggressions happen with biased people without them understanding that they are being racist or dismissive. Kim & Roberson (2021) call these expressions and transgressions of implicit bias as bloopers. In Finnish, they would be called letting the frog out of your mouth. These aggressions leave the hearer doubting the other's intention and even if the biased person thinks they are only complementing the recipient, this is not the case. People can believe they mean well and are well-mannered. Being confronted about their bias when they think they are well-meaning can leave the person complementing, feeling threatened and it can create a dissonance in their self-perception.

Interpersonal skills are important in interaction if bloopers happen, be it intentional or unintentional. Even with an unintentional blooper, interpersonal skills play a role in how to handle the situation. Because the situation can be very uncomfortable for both parties, it needs to be diffused properly. The person with a bias needs to be trained in how to handle themselves. Kim & Roberson (2021) have through their studies concluded that the best way is to take responsibility for one's actions in words and apologize sincerely. These skills can be attained and improved through behavioral modeling.

Through implementation intentions practices behavior can be modeled. These behavior scenarios are best acted out with a script. This helps the common language and makes all people more prepared to identify bias, act on it, diffuse a situation, and not just be a bystander. One goal is also to have a sincere attitude change for those people who have strong biases. Proper inclusion in the workplace needs to have all workers at all levels equally trained on these matters. All these ways need to be put through a think tank and think about which means are best suited for their organization. Good programs have multiple ways of training. (Kim & Roberson 2021.)

4.4 Engaged management

As discussed in sub-Chapter 3.2 employee happiness is closely entwined with engaged management. Good manager can keep their team happy if they are invested and engaged in what happens in the workplace.

There are many studies including Chang et al. (2019) & McGirt, (2019) where there is doubt that DEI initiatives even help companies. Are the initiatives just made to fail from the start? Management needs to make sure that the suggestions will run through the whole company and all its tiers. It seems many companies have started good initiatives, but nobody really sees them through. This can be from a lack of responsible persons e.g. sustainability leaders, DEI officers etc. When it is no one's job to check the implementation of initiatives and nobody to follow the plans through, the initiatives will have been presented but not taken into use. If already resolved initiatives are not put into action and seen through into everyday work, it is a waste of resources, probably also a loss of money if the initiatives came from a consultant company, and a loss of potential.

Loss of potential I consider a big loss because part of the hard work for having good DEI practices has already been done at that point by research and thought work on the initiatives. If a company has seen the trouble of researching the current state of DEI affairs and figured out what things need to be improved in their current situation at the workplace, it is really a big waste of everybody's time and effort, if the initiatives or plans of action are not seen through by someone responsible for them. (Chang et al. 2019.)

A company can have responsible people appointed to see through the DEI initiatives. DEI management is still a bit of a new idea; only one person who is solely responsible for DEI matters in a company. From S&P 500 index companies only 47% have a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). Because for many companies for example (CDO) positions are new, many are lacking sufficient data from their company e.g., demographic data to ease their work and also resources and organizational support. (Paikeday 2019.) Many companies do not prioritize DEI as a business priority, which they absolutely should, based on all the data supporting DEI improving business outcomes (Paikeday 2019 and McKinsey & Company 2020).

Paikeday (2019) further elaborates that interviewed leaders said that diversity and inclusion came last in their respective companies' business priority lists. This means other leaders in the company might not be on board with the same issues, if it is not a high priority. It has been shown that if the company's top management is not committed to supporting the necessary changes throughout the company at all levels, a change is not going to happen. This also includes middle management, which is sometimes forgotten. (Bourke et al. 2018.) If managers in charge of DEI matters do not get support internally from their company, and also

do not have enough resources to implement the change to shift into a more diverse, equal, and inclusive workplace, the set goals are not going to be achieved. (Paikeday 2019.)

Happily, there is research that can help management to be successful. McKinsey & Company and the World Economic Forum (2023) followed through global DEI initiatives in different companies. These cases were real-life initiatives in the companies and they submitted the initiatives themselves to McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum to be evaluated. This project was called DEI Lighthouse Program and its purpose was to share the best practices from the best global cases so other companies and organizations could benefit from all the knowledge gathered. McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum (2023) had four key criteria in evaluating all cases. A panel of DEI experts with diverse backgrounds and expertise were judging all admissions. Below are the four criteria.

1. Significance
2. Quantifiability
3. Scalability
4. Sustainability

When these were achieved at a high level the DEI program was deemed to be successful by the panel. 15 cases were chosen from all the submissions. These were researched further to see the common factors. The initiatives need to have a big enough impact on the people affected and or big enough impact of changes. They also need to be measurable so impact could be tracked, and there needs to be clear metrics. Measurability allows easier accountability. The panel also judged how scalable the initiatives were, meaning the initiative could be used outside the organization and could reach a broader impact. Lastly, the panel evaluated the possible long-term path of the initiatives, and how sustainable they were in the long run. Below in Figure 4 are the five common success factors in the initiatives that the panel found. (McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum 2023.)

First in the success factors is understanding the root cause. There needs to be an understanding what are the issues in the organization. Secondly, there should be a clear definition of what is to be achieved and in what time frame. Thirdly, there should be accountability for each goal set and owners to every program. Leaders should lead by example so the rest of the organization will follow. Fourthly, the solutions in the programs should be designed so that they touch on the issues found in the first point. Lastly, all programs or initiatives should have rigorous tracking and course correction based on the tracked data. Key performance indicators should be tied to the success of the programs. (McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum 2023.)

1. Nuanced understanding of root causes	2. Meaningful definition of success	3. Accountable and invested business leaders	4. Solution designed for context	5. Rigorous tracking and course correction
<p>Understand the problem with a deep fact base</p> <p>Identify the root causes</p> <p>Get input from the target population, initially and throughout</p> <p>Prioritize and sequence problem areas</p>	<p>Set clear and quantifiable aspirations (what and by when)</p> <p>Articulate a clear case for change that moves employees to action</p>	<p>Set initiative as a core business priority</p> <p>Hold senior leaders accountable for outcomes, not just inputs or activities</p> <p>Model and lead desired change, starting with the CEO and senior leaders</p> <p>Ensure resources for longevity in the budget, expertise and timeline</p>	<p>Develop solutions that address the root causes, with scalability in mind</p> <p>Integrate changes into key processes and ways of working, so impact is sustained</p> <p>Equip and encourage employees to contribute</p>	<p>Define KPIs and implement rigorous tracking process</p> <p>Use data and feedback to course-correct as needed</p>

Figure 4: McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum. 2023. The DEI Lighthouse Program with five common success factors.

McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum (2023) say that every company should think of these five elements through their own organization and make it their own, because there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution.

4.5 Change management and transformational leadership

Dr. Phil famously said in his program that “the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior”. For change to happen, something needs to be changed that did not happen before. How this relates to companies is that no company can expect changes, if they actively don’t do anything differently than before. Change management is to carry out any changes going through the company. Starting a journey to improve DEI matters in the company needs a program. Yes, it may be called a DEI program but it is still a program that creates change in the company. This is why companies need to understand change management and transformational leadership.

Gupta, Sihag, and Singh Pangtey (2023) state in their article that two-thirds of change programs fail because employees do not react to change well and they do not continually put into practice the changes wanted by the company. Bourke et al. (2018) have highlighted the role of middle management and everyone agrees that if the top management is not on board with the changes, the initiatives will certainly fail. Change is scary to people and many want

the status quo, so to mitigate negative feelings arising from employees, there needs to be excellent leadership and management.

Management should be differentiated from leadership as stated by Dr. John P. Kotter (2012) who introduced us to the award-winning 8-step process to lead change originally in 1996, shown in Figure 5. According to Kotter (2012) implementing a change through an organization successfully, is not just change management, but specifically leading change. This is a much-used process and one of the biggest theories in leading change. Through my studies, research, and experiences at work as a project manager, I see there is a place for both. Good management is everyday organizing, problem-solving, monitoring, planning, budgeting, and providing procedures to help people execute needed tasks to advance the change. A leader on the other hand is a communicator of vision and strategies, they are a motivator and inspire people to overcome barriers in the change initiative. Leaders also establish a direction and help staff achieve the vision by giving them strategies for the changes. Vision is often further in the future and leaders are those who look ahead, not only a monthly budget. (Kotter, 2012.)

Leaders do not involve themselves in the daily maintenance work of keeping the change on course. But leaders produce change nonetheless by being innovative and having new ideas, and having that vision. Management is there for day-to-day guidance and they are the dependable consistent producer of short-term results to all stakeholders in a change project. (Kotter 2012.) Because both leaders and management are needed to make changes happen, both of these two should be present in any change initiative and that's why they are also closely intertwined. Leaders need reliable and competent managers to execute the initiative towards the given vision.

Below is Kotter's (2012) 8-step model for change in Figure 5. Kotter goes into great detail to describe all the needed steps that are in his 8-step model and why it's important to go through the steps in order and not skip any steps as they have been studied and tested. But he also explains issues arising from his clients' change programs where they might have skipped a step or ran the model in a different order. From real-life samples introduced in Kotter's (2012) book, it's easy to see why the steps are in this order and why all of them are needed.

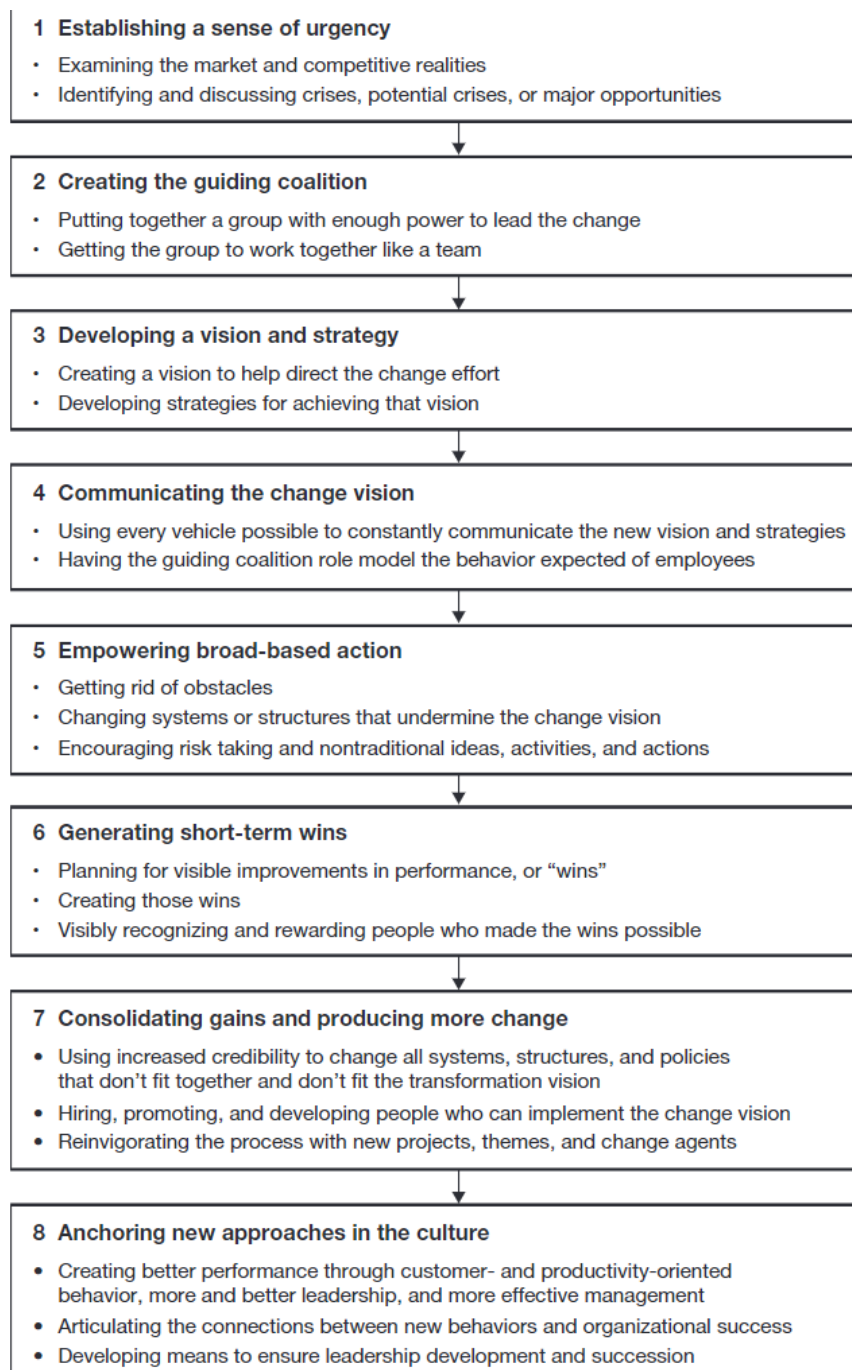


Figure 5: Kotter. 2012. 8-step process to leading change.

Bourke and Dillon (2013) have done research on DEI in companies and leadership as well and have put together a framework for inclusive leadership which is a style of leadership under the umbrella term transformational leadership. Anyone who covets to be a transformational leader needs to understand inclusive leadership as shown in Figure 6.

The Deloitte Inclusive Leadership Competency framework

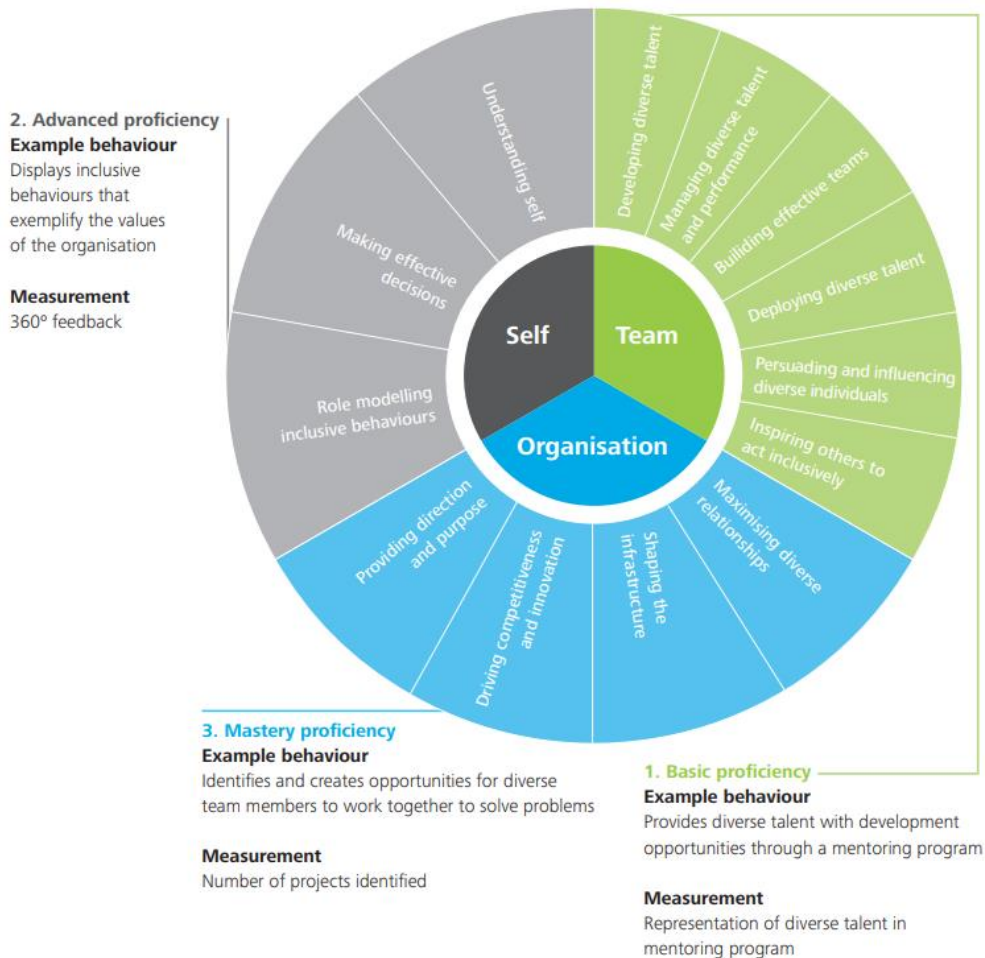


Figure 6: Bourke and Dillon. 2013. Inclusive leadership competency framework.

Bourke and Dillon (2013) wanted to visualize a framework for developing inclusive leadership so that it can be also measured. There are three steps in proficiency in inclusiveness. Each step has clear goals to achieve and also how the success is measured. When these parameters are measured, there is a possibility to gather DEI data from the leaders. Tangible data can be followed and it can show how well a leader is performing with DEI in mind. These metrics are good to have if a company wants to reform and have a DEI strategy as discussed in Chapter 4.4. If management is not on board with the changes, they will not happen.

4.6 Conflicts in change

Conflicts are inevitable when there is systematic change as people fear change. This is hardwired to humans because we have needed to be vigilant to any changes as it may require a reaction to save our or our familie's lives. But we humans need to know how to deal with change so we can be okay with change and even start to feel positively towards change. Rossi

(2021) encourages us to change our perspectives on conflicts, mitigate the negative consequences, and bring out the possibilities and understanding but also create new action. Rossi (2021) recommends bringing the conflicts out into the light so people and the organization can learn from them. She paints us a picture where the conflicts are on a line and the further one person goes on the conflict line, the more powerful emotions occur. She goes further to say that conflict is an experience of oneself, as a human, with their identity, differs from someone else or if one cannot act or function according to their values, or mode of operation. For example if one values more simple life with no smart electronics, having to use more advanced tech at work might bring about powerful negative emotions like irritation, anger, fatigue, indifference, and being disheartened.

Rossi (2021) elaborates that there is always an element of power in conflicts: someone or a group has more power, for example, status, to decide whose values are being used in decision-making. In a work context, this can be a supervisor or high management who is making decisions based on their own or the company's values, processes, beliefs, and goals. So conflicts and how people react to them always go back to the experiences of a person. This is why management needs to understand change, conflict, and leading. It is important too for the other staff to learn these similar skills as when they understand these, changes in their environment will not induce fear, and if the DEI matters are well in order the reaction to change can be even less, as the staff feels they belong and will be involved in the change somehow.

5 Summary of key theories

Here I will summarize the key theories in this thesis. The used theories are intertwined together and around DEI matters. All of the above theory framework is needed to help in understanding why DEI matters are good for the company, what is DEI, and how to improve the company towards a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace.

I discussed the benefits of DEI to companies in Chapter 3.1. One thing that most company heads will understand from DEI research if nothing else, is that having proper DEI strategy and programs brings about cold hard cash into the company. Companies can through DEI have a more diverse staff which will bring about different ideas, experiences, and problem solving but also a better understanding of a diverse customer base. When workers are happy they will stay with their employer longer as discussed in Chapter 3.2. Workers are happy when they feel included, appreciated, and heard. Also, it is recommended to include workers in any big decision in the company and ask their opinions as discussed in Chapter 3.2. and 4.2.

The business world can be tough if a company is not willing to change with the times. This is why it is important to understand change, change leading, managing it, and how to mitigate the possible negative feelings arising from change as discussed in Chapters 4.5 and 4.6. Management needs to have good tools to be able to navigate through changes with their staff and themselves as well. Management needs to understand their very important role in being the supporters of the change. As shown in Chapter 4.4 management needs to be engaged in the change or the change will not happen.

COVID-19 brought about uncertainties and changes to working life and the future might bring more uncertain times as discussed in Chapter 3.3, which is why good workers can be kept through equity and inclusion. When taking into consideration workers' different needs, a company can still have a diverse thought force and turn a pandemic into a good account. I have shown in Chapter 4.1 why it is important to know how to hire a diverse workforce and also how to do it. How to do it is also discussed in Chapter 4.3.

One thing that is hard to change is our thoughts. This is why it's important for all to understand implicit biases and the steps towards acknowledging them, combating them, and evolving into a more logical, rational, and fact-based decision-maker as discussed in Chapter 4.2. All the theories are important to be able to make DEI part of a company's strategy and way of working. The theoretical framework will guide anyone towards understanding DEI and why it's important in business and to people working in those businesses. Below is a model of how different aspects, actions, and potential outcomes are connected to each other and DEI through the theoretical framework.

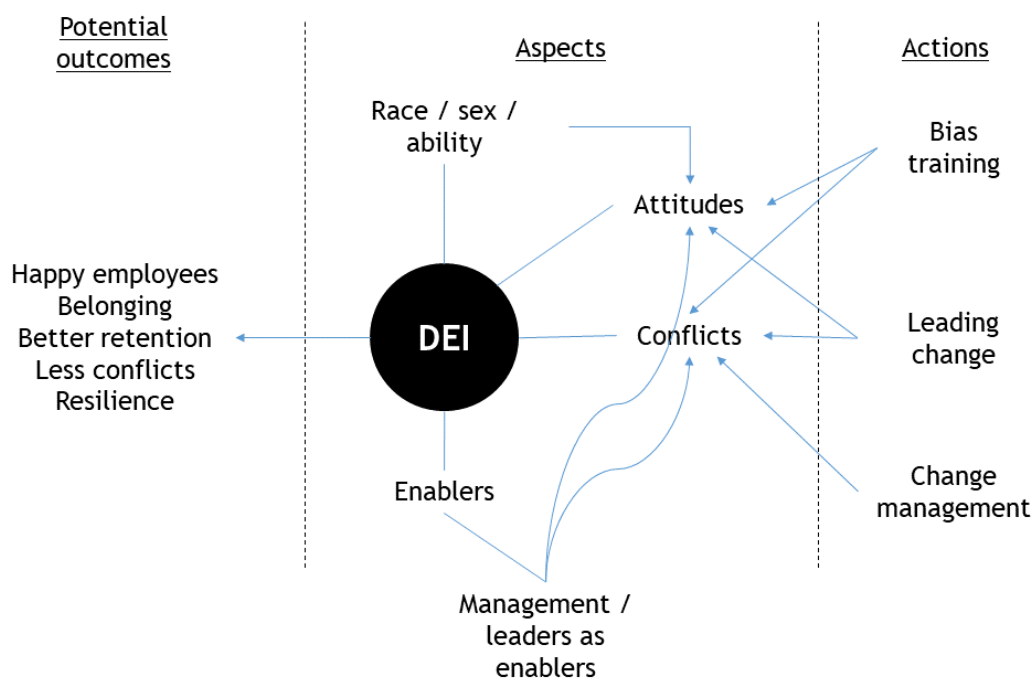


Figure 7: Theoretical framework connections to each other and DEI.

6 Research methods

In this thesis, I am using qualitative research methods. More on what I have used and how is explained in the research process in Chapter 7. Qualitative research is a study of the way people see their own experiences in life and how they can express it with their own words from their own minds. This makes the data a narrative of the people. A narrative is an account of a person's real-life events. This is most common with interviews. Narrative can also be diaries, letters, or non-verbal forms of people's communication. (Elliot & Timulak 2005.)

Elliot & Timulak (2005) describe qualitative research as descriptive, which means it is depends on linguistics more than numerical data. However, in the DEI audit tool, there are numerical values given to every issue, so some numerical data is calculated for this thesis. Even though there is numerical data, the broad research method is still qualitative as the sample size is not big enough to make any reliable quantitative data analysis. Qualitative research can have quantitative content and thus research can be a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, as Galletta (2013) describes. Quantitative data can be used to bring out the issues from the data for development. Cropley (2022) says qualitative research is interested in the patterns that form from the gathered data. Galletta (2013) writes that quantitative data can be used as a tool to help bring the patterns from the data and that data can be researched with qualitative research methods. Since the business unit managers' evaluations were followed by interviews, the same quantitative data could have also been acquired verbally/orally.

Cropley (2022) describes three main weaknesses of qualitative research:

- Arbitrariness; Qualitative research seems to some to depend as much on the inventiveness and fantasy of the researcher as on hard facts.
- Lack of objective proof; Qualitative methods do not permit the testing of hypotheses via objective statistical procedures.
- Banality; Qualitative research is accused of doing no more than repeating what everybody already knows.

These above-listed weak points Cropley (2022) suggests should be dealt with the scientific rigor that meets proper scientific standards. I have used in this thesis Cropley's suggested methods to overcome the pitfalls of qualitative research: I have used multiple sources to validate the theory base and suggestions. I have not merely repeated what everybody else knows, because I have conducted interviews with people who have not been interviewed on

DEI matters before. Copley's (2022) statement assumes everyone knows the research subject as well as the researcher, which is not true. Work environments have changed, and people are expected to be busy with their own field of work. So, people have no extra time to delve into other subject matters but their own. Other peoples' research helps in that they can bring the knowledge in a nice tight package to the working environment in a way that suits that workplace.

6.1 Semi-structured personal one-to-one interviews

The most common ways to obtain data and information through qualitative research are semi-structured and structured interviews, according to Elliot and Timulak (2005). Participants are asked to explain and elaborate on some specific experience and subject. A good way to have a good rapport during the interview is to provide the interviewees with a list of the questions beforehand. (Elliot & Timulak 2005.)

There are many ways to conduct interviews. Kothari (2004) describes personal interviews as a rigid procedure that is carried out in a structured way. However, Walle (2015) lists four main categories: structured, semi-structured, unstructured, and computer assisted interviews. Unstructured interview by definition is not structured and involves open-ended questions for the interviewee. Semi-structured interview is only partly structured, so they are not as rigid as Kothari (2004) mentions. Galletta (2013) sees endless possibilities in semi-structured interviews, as the researcher can focus on theory-based issues and still focus on the lived experience of the interviewee.

A structured interview is the most efficient in time and money spent but can be so rigid that the participants don't have the freedom to elaborate on the issues asked. Questions need to be very specific to the issue, so prior knowledge is needed from the interviewer to form the questions. If the questions are done by others, the interviewer does not need so much skill as the interview can be conducted just by asking the questions made ready. (Walle 2015 & Kothari 2004.)

According to Elliot & Timulak (2005) and Walle (2015), the interviewer needs to have training and skills in open-ended interviewing. Very skilled interviewers can cost a lot of money especially if the skilled interviewer needs to be hired outside of one's organization. The interviewer should leave room for open ended-questions in semi-structured interviews. The interviewer and or researcher needs to study all the pros and cons of each type of interview and then decide on the appropriate method to use (Walle 2015).

In Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey's (2015) book Adams (2015) recommends using semi-structured interviews if the issue at hand is new and unknown, and needs good probing, interviewees would not be comfortable in opening up about the issues asked in a focus group

setting and there is need to get the opinions of administrators. These parameters are just a part of the settings Newcomer et al. (2015) is recommending why to use semi-structured interviewing as methodology.

In interviews, the success of the mode of communication depends on multiple factors. Natural communicators with plenty of rehearsed time with video interviewing, do not suffer from the ill effects of video interview mode. This aspect can affect people who are not natural communicators or the video platform used is not familiar. Good rapport is made possible by a good quality computer and good software to conduct the video interview (de Villiers, Farooq, and Molinari 2021).

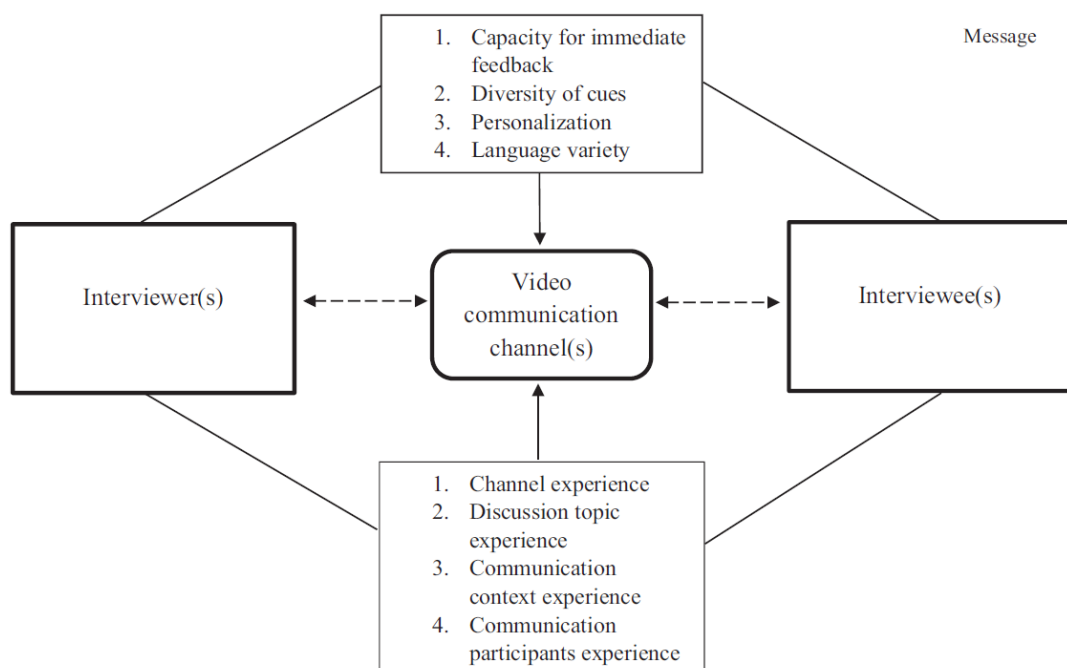


Figure 8: de Villiers et al. 2021. Social, relational, and cultural context in online video interviewing.

The richness of a medium is the function of the following four factors such as the capacity for immediate feedback, the diversity of cues, personalization, and language variety as explained in Figure 1. Therefore, using a diversity of cues, personalization, and language variety represents useful techniques in maintaining rapport with our interviewees (Daft & Lengel 1986, cited in de Villiers et al. 2021).

More tech-savvy people benefit from their experience with computers as all the technical aspects can be run smoother compared to a novice with computers. A high-resolution camera is also needed as in video communication facial cues and body language is needed to be seen to have as authentic interaction as possible. Most authentic being face to face in person. All

these aforementioned issues have a big effect on the smoothness and richness of the interview (De Villiers et al. 2021).

The speed of the internet connection also has an effect on video interviews. The richness of the interview is lost if the possibility of proper visual and verbal communication is made more difficult by a poor internet connection. It has an ill effect on the interview even though the interview was rehearsed beforehand. Richness means experience with the used channel, the topic under discussion, and the communication context. In Addition communication participants are instrumental in shaping the perceptions of video communication as pointed out in Figure 1. All of these aforementioned things that need human interaction during the interview, need a camera on so the interviewee and the interviewer can see each other (De Villiers et al. 2021).

6.2 Questionnaire

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016) underline the importance of letting the interview participants know what they are participating in in advance. The interviewer has a responsibility to open up the use of the gathered data and to explain to the interviewees how their answers are used and how it will benefit the company they work for (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2016).

6.3 Deductive research method

Bingham (2022) describes that all qualitative research data is in two main categories: deductive and inductive. For my research, the deductive method is more suitable. Deductive analysis is generally the application of theory to the data to test the theory. Deductive analysis can help sort data into categories (e.g. interviews), organize data so that it aligns with research questions, and apply theoretical or conceptual frameworks. (Bingham 2022.)

The DEI audit tool (life labs) is already organized into categories, so part of the deductive work has already been done, so no need for preliminary inductive work to be able to arrive at organized data according to Bingham (2022).

7 Research process

I approached the Finnish head of HR for my thesis idea. The head of Finnish HR identified the research participants as the research needed to consider only Finnish laundries.

I chose to use semi-structured and one-to-one personal interviews with deliberate sampling and a structured questionnaire with the same question base as in the semi-structured interview for my primary data collection. This is what I chose, so I could acquire additional

information in case interviewees wanted to elaborate. I felt I would have missed possible critical information if there had been no room for additional questions and discussions with the interviewees.

Because of my ten years of work experience at the case company, I have personally spoken to and met all except one interviewee and I have had correspondence with most of the questionnaire participants. This helped almost all participants to be more relaxed and the atmosphere was cordial.

COVID-19 has changed the settings of how work is conducted. Previously I travelled more and had meetings with people in person. I could have done the interviews in person, as this thesis was ideated in the autumn of 2021. But as lockdowns were implemented in Finland and the recommendations for not meeting people in person became the new norm until the virus was more researched, I, with other white-collar or knowledge workers started to work almost completely remotely and online. This transformation was also made at Lindström and the meeting protocol was changed within a month.

At the time of the interviews, spring 2023, the custom of working remotely and having video meetings was very well established at Lindström and the most used meeting method for people not working in the same building for the last three years.

I used comparative analysis for all the data from interviews and questionnaires. Comparative analysis was chosen as a method because I needed to compare the data received from the business unit managers to the data from the laundry managers. I needed to see if there were any differences in any of the evaluations because that would have indicated that something is not seen in the same way by the laundries and business unit managers. On the other hand, I needed to have validation to the business unit managers' answers from the laundries. Meaning if the answers from both were along the same line, it would have meant that the issues were seen in the same way, and I could be certain of the issues that needed improvements.

7.1 Selecting of the pre-interview questionnaire (DEI Audit Tool)

I chose the DEI audit tool as the basis for my interview because I had already used it before to analyze DEI matters as described in Chapter 1. Because I used the tool before, I had good experience with how well it worked. I found the DEI audit tool to be a good all-around questionnaire for gathering the base level of DEI matters in Finnish laundries. Kothari (2004) recommends the classification of data to data analysis. The DEI audit tool already has five main themes classified to ease analysis into categories. The same themes are used in the results in Chapter 8.

7.2 Interview campaign

De Villiers et al. (2021) recommend using video technology for interviewing in case the interviewees are diverse and dispersed. One-to-one personal interviews via a video platform, Teams, was chosen as the interview method because all the participants in the interview campaign were dispersed geographically across Finland.

Walle (2015) recommends preparing for interviews by discussing with the stakeholders who use the research results. In my case, this was the Finnish head of HR. We established goals for the interviews in Teams calls and emails.

The case company wanted me to interview all business unit managers and all the laundries in Finland. As discussed in Chapter 1.4 Lindström has 24 laundries and six business units in Finland. In the scope of this thesis, it was not feasible to interview all business unit managers and all the laundry heads. It was agreed with my thesis supervisor that the scope of the thesis better accommodated six business unit managers' interviews and one mutual interview for all laundries. All together it would have been seven interviews.

The schedules of the laundries are hectic and it turned out that we were unable to agree on a mutual date in the next three months that would suit enough people to get a good enough interview. My thesis supervisor and I agreed to send the same questionnaire which was used as a base in the semi-structured interviews to the laundries to fill and return to the author.

7.2.1 Selection of interviewees

The interviewees were chosen based on their position and title in the business units. To acquire the information from the business units and their laundries I needed the correct people in positions of leadership. Business unit managers are the highest authority per business unit, so it was natural to get their views on the DEI matters as they handle issues of the whole business unit and also the laundry.

7.2.2 Interview process

For my research, multiple points from Adams's (2015) list of when to choose semi-structured interviewing as a methodology for research were fulfilled. So choosing semi-structured interviewing as a method was well-founded. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016) say that in an interview setting it is important to let the participants know what they are participating in as mentioned in Chapter 5. I sent the DEI audit tool to every interviewee beforehand and asked them to fill out the tool. I requested them to send the filled-in tool back to me via email latest a day ahead of the interview. I asked for this arrangement so that I had time to go through the DEI audit tools properly, make notes, and prepare my interview questions per each interviewee based on their evaluations. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016.)

First, I arranged a Doodle to fix a few dates to conduct the interviews. Doodle is an online meeting date arranger, where the arranger suggests dates and times and the participants can choose from the options given a suitable time and date for their meeting. Few participants found a time and date with Doodle. For the rest of the interviewees I arranged meetings via email to suit their calendars better.

Eriksson & Kovalainen (2016) recommend transcribing interviews so the data can be visited later at all times. All the interviews were recorded via Teams. Recordings were saved only in authors' personal space, so no leak of personal data could be possible. Eriksson & Kovalainen (2016) say it is important to keep the personal identifiers safe in research material. All saved recordings had a transcription mode on, so all interviews were transcribed and they were saved in the authors' personal space. Interviews were held in English because the DEI audit tool is in English and my study program is in English. This suited all the participants as their English skills are at a high level. All interviews were transcribed in English.

In my research, there was not so much preliminary information on the DEI subject matter before the interviews, so it was better to choose a ready-made interview and questionnaire base a.k.a the DEI audit tool. Then I used a semi-structured interview method to get additional information in the subject matter if interviewees elaborated on any subject matter. I asked additional questions if any subject needed it. These additional questions were not planned beforehand.

7.3 Structured self-report questionnaire campaign

As established earlier in this Chapter, the interviews with the laundry heads did not materialize. So, I needed to find another way of collecting the input from the laundry heads to validate the business unit managers' answers and have the data comparable. To be able to compare the business unit managers' answers, there needed to be the same questions. I, together with my thesis supervisor, decided to use the DEI audit tool for the questionnaire as well. The laundries are all across Finland, so a questionnaire via email was an efficient method to gather the needed data.

7.3.1 Selection of people for self-report questionnaire

Laundry managers or production managers were chosen to answer the questionnaire because of their position in the laundry. Laundry managers or production managers are the highest authority or authorities in the laundries to decide on day-to-day decisions, problem-solving, and recruiting. So, they extended my understanding of all possible issues emerging from business unit managers' interviews.

The titles differ from laundry to laundry because each unit is organized per each unit's needs. So I am using different titles from the heads of the laundries because even if they have very similar job descriptions, the responsibilities can vary a little bit. In some laundries, there is only one responsible manager and some laundries can have two responsible people for each function. By functions I mean all the different services. Laundries may have different responsible people for each function, or one person responsible for multiple functions. All Lindström heads of laundry functions were sent the questionnaire.

7.3.2 Questionnaire process

After it was established with the participants of the questionnaire that there was no possibility to get a mutual meeting with laundry heads in the time frame needed for this thesis, the DEI audit tool was sent to all laundry contacts and it worked as the questionnaire base. No changes were made to the original DEI audit tool themes or individual issues. Participants of the questionnaire were informed that the business unit managers were still interviewed and that laundries' replies for validation could be done by the DEI audit tool electronically via email.

I could not ask the additional questions in person from the questionnaire participants in the same way I could for the business unit managers in the interviews. But, I encouraged the laundry heads in my emails to elaborate on any part of the questionnaire they felt needed clearing up or further explanation. I also gave an option for me to help with the questionnaire should it be too difficult to answer in case of a language barrier. I offered additional help to fill out the questionnaire via video meeting, but no one needed this option. I received six replies and two of them were elaborated questionnaires and no need for help with language.

7.4 Anonymization of gathered data

Cambridge Dictionary defines anonymization as "the fact or process of removing any information that shows which particular person something, particularly something such as a record on or message from a computer"(Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2023). It was important to make the gathered data anonymous and randomized, so as not to reveal the identities of the participants. Eriksson & Kovalainen (2016) say it is essential that the identities of the participants are not revealed and any personal information from the gathered data should be removed. This is because the interviewees were business unit managers and the participants of the questionnaire were laundry managers or production managers working directly under business unit managers.

If the data was not be anonymous, it could compromise getting honest answers from the questionnaire participants for worry of repercussions. In Newcomer et al. (2015) book Adams (2015) explains that it is easier to get an in-depth answer in a semi-structured interview

setting rather than in a focus group setting where people might not want to reveal their true thoughts. It is harder to get honest feedback, especially if it is negative if there is a possibility of negative consequences to the subordinates of the business unit managers. Business unit managers are direct line managers of the laundry heads. I have also made the business unit managers' answers random and anonymous to keep the same data manipulation method throughout the thesis and also make sure their answers were anonymous even if they were not so sensitive to the data being personified.

I used a website Number Generator (2023) to randomize my data. I had the interviews and questionnaire answers in an order of interview and questionnaire answer by date. The first interview was number one and the first returned questionnaire answer was number one, etc. These numbers I put into a randomizer and received new random numbers. Interviews and answers to the questionnaire are used in the new order given by the number generator in this thesis. This way data is used anonymously and people cannot deduct answers by their numbering.

7.5 DEI audit tool analysis

I analyzed the DEI audit tool data by going through the evaluation numbers given by interview and questionnaire participants. I have collected numerical evaluations from the interviewees and questionnaire participants per each themed section and each individual issue. The aim was to find the outlier numbers from the DEI audit tool so I could identify issues that people at the case company knew to be at a poorer level and needed development.

I have given attention to those issues that are valued at 3.00 or below and those were targeted in this thesis for development. The highest scores meant those issues were already at a good level, participants had mainly good things to say and needed no further development in this thesis.

In addition to analyzing the numerical values and mean for every point in the tool, I calculated the mean for every issue per participant group. I calculated the mean for business unit managers and laundry heads separately to see if the values fall into a similar vein.

I also calculated the means for the five main themes in the DEI audit tool, to get an idea if there were broader issues per theme that needed improving. I again handled the answers of business unit managers and laundries separately, so I could see if these have any differences or if they noticed the same issues. However, I also calculated an overall mean for the themes on all evaluations. I wanted to validate the answers of the business unit managers with the laundry answers and vice versa. The purpose of this was to ensure that the areas that seemed to need development would be the correct ones.

I analyzed the elaborated answers that two of the DEI audit tools had. These answers were taken into consideration in a similar way that I went through the interview transcripts.

8 Research findings and improvement suggestions

In this Chapter, I will go through the findings from the interviews and the DEI audit tools. I will present the numerical data from the DEI audit tools and highlight issues emerging from the interviews and the elaborated DEI audit tools. I have divided the chapters into the same themes as in the DEI audit tool. Improvement suggestions are given by theme and according to findings. In the Chapter 8.7, I will present general improvements for the case company to use. Before the themes, I will go through the general situation with the given values from the DEI audit tool. Other issues that stemmed from the interviews and DEI audit tool questionnaire I will handle after the DEI audit tool themes. I have lifted a few quotes from the interviews and from the elaborated DEI audit tools to show the voices of the participants.

There are altogether 12 responses to DEI audit tools, six from the business unit managers and six from laundries. All business unit managers participated in the interviews and filled out the DEI audit tool. Six laundries out of 24 answered the DEI audit tool. Generally, all themes' calculated mean was above average value ranging from 3.45 to 3.51 as seen in Table 2. There are however differences between the responses from the laundries and business unit managers. This shows that issues are sometimes seen from different points of view.

Three themes were given the lowest evaluation only once, learning and growth received the two lowest evaluations, but recruiting and hiring got five lowest scores. In Table 2 shows the lowest scores per theme divided between Business unit managers and laundries.

The mean of each themes (BUM)	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean		All mean
Recruiting and Hiring	3.4	2.9	2.9	4.1	3.2	2.8	3.22		3.45
Benefits and Work Conditions	3.29	3.57	3.43	3.86	4.29	3.14	3.60		3.51
Assessment and Promotion	3.3	3.4	3.4	4	3.5	3.1	3.45		3.49
Meetings and Social Connection	3.56	3.44	3.44	3.67	3.56	2.89	3.43		3.51
Learning and Growth	3.78	3.22	3.11	4.33	2.78	3.33	3.43		3.51
The mean of each themes (Laundries)	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean		
Recruiting and Hiring	4.4	2.3	4.2	4	3.7	2.8	3.57		
Benefits and Work Conditions	3.86	3.29	4.29	4	3.86	2.43	3.62		
Assessment and Promotion	3.6	2.3	4	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.45		
Meetings and Social Connection	3.78	3.2	3.56	4	3.3	3.67	3.59		
Learning and Growth	3.44	3.1	3.78	4.1	2.89	3.22	3.42		

Table 2: All mean values per theme together with a total mean.

Also, there were clear individual issues that received low scores across the board. I have focused the improvement suggestions on issues that are valued at 3.00 or under. I have marked all of the issues needing improvement in Table 3 below.

Theme	Mean	Drivers/Individual issues
Recruiting and hiring	1.83	Unbiased application review: We remove identifiers from resumes and/or applications (e.g., names, extracurricular activities).
	2.92	Interview process: We have a structured, documented interview process that ensures all candidates are assessed in the same manner, using clear grading rubrics all interviewers
	2.25	Interviewer training: We provide training to employees on behavioral interviewing.
Benefits and work conditions	2.75	Benefits: Benefits take into account the different needs of different employees.
	2.92	deliverables / ways to measure work output (e.g., start work earlier in the day, take longer breaks).
Assessment and promotion	2.83	Inclusion skills: Our managers and employees have received training on behaviors of inclusion.
	2.25	Self-evaluations: If self-evaluations are used, employees are trained how to write them and assess them well.
Meetings and social connection	2.83	Rotating roles: Facilitator, note-taker, and time-keeper roles are rotated.
	2.92	Onboarding: Employees are deliberately introduced or given access to cross-functional connections across the company within the first month.

Table 3: Individual issues with a mean of 3.00 or under needing improvement.

One big issue that came out from the interviews was that the case company has had three different Human Resources directors in under two years. This has had a deteriorating effect on the basic HR functions. Business units feel they don't receive enough help with HR issues from the centralized Finnish HR. They feel that even the basic help for them is falling behind and lacking. Many trainings that normally were arranged got canceled because of COVID-19, but also because of a lack of HR resources.

8.1 Recruiting and hiring

This is the first theme in the DEI audit tool. Five respondents out of 12 gave the recruiting and hiring section the lowest scores. The mean to the theme was 3.22. None of the means to the themes were 3.00 or below. Business unit managers have this category as their lowest of all the categories. Many individual issues are in good condition, but also some issues received very low evaluations, the lowest of all, which explains the mean as being in the middle.

Unbiased application review received the lowest score as an individual issue for both laundries and BUM's. Everyone knew that the case company was not doing that at all. All participants were familiar with the current electronic job application system where applicants need to fill in everything about themselves. One interviewee wished that they would like to have some way to check for biased language in job ads. This could be improved by a list of recommendations from HR on what to look out for when posting job ads. If the case company wants to recruit a diverse workforce and be unbiased, they would need to have

an application system where applicants don't need to fill in any mandatory identifiers as shown in Chapter 4.3.

Including the unbiased application, also interview training needs to be added to the improvement list because interview training is non-existent. This issue received the second lowest score of all individual issues. Interviewee 6 elaborates on interview training hiring criteria, and consistent standards and unbiased application review.

“I've created my own kind of interview process which I follow every kind of occasion and I try to develop it, but I would appreciate if the company would kind of give me a framework. I'd like to be objective, but I'm not sure if the questions I use are objective. We don't currently have a strong HR support for the laundries and how to do job interviews, so they (laundries) are quite alone in this kind of matter.”

Most interviewees felt that there should be some interview training for the laundry supervisors. This includes interview training and training on how to be unbiased throughout the recruiting process. Interviewee 5 elaborates on the basic training.

“I would like to see some interview training for laundry supervisors: how to lead the conversation with the candidate so that you can get every information that you want to move forward with that decision making.”

BUM's felt there should be interview training for the customer interface supervisors. Some BUMs train their management on the sales side to do interviews but this also is not structured in any way from the case company's side, rather each makes their own structure how they are able to. Having interview training would improve diverse recruitment because all interviewed candidates would notice the use of inclusive language and also the interviewer would not ask questions which are not okay to ask in job interviews. The interviewer would also be aware of their implicit bias in an interview setting which can alter the attitude away from any preconceptions in the interviewer towards any diverse candidate.

There was a congruent sense that it is hard to find good workers for laundries. Interviewee 4 says that “the competition for good workers is tough”. One interviewee said they felt the basic HR functions need to be improved first and not DEI issues. While I understand this sentiment, it can be that the DEI issues will solve some recruiting challenges and broaden the applicant pool when the laundry makes improvements in DEI matters. This same thought was also in some of the interviewee's minds. They thought the Audit tool was eye-opening and saw the DEI improvements as a competitive edge to the case company. All the improvements done should be highlighted in marketing material, job ads and, job interviews. As discussed in Chapter 3.2 diverse workforce appreciate true inclusion.

In job ads and interview settings, the case company's values are shared with applicants. This is instructed from the case company's head office globally and this works well as interviewee 1 tells us.

“When we are looking for new people, our values come out extremely well. When I have been hiring people, very many applicants say that they like our values and the values are very clear.”

8.2 Benefits and work conditions

Basic benefits e.g., family leave and sick days are in good condition in the case company as the worker healthcare is quite extensive and also covers mental health issues. Working hours are also in good condition. Laundry workers do not work “dark time”, meaning they are not obligated to monitor digital communication as they do not have company phones or computers.

In the interview, there was highlighted one position that has greatly improved the escalation and reclamation process. There is a person in one laundry who has taken a role as a person who gathers complaints, and they will take them forward or handle personally what they can. This has improved the process and made employees happier because it reduces their workload and stress. Other laundries do not have a person in this kind of position and they could also benefit from a pilot that this business unit has done with this position.

The case company has a code of conduct and In Interviewee 4 described the situation with new employees as follows.

“Every new employee is introduced to the code of conduct. It's part of our induction program. When a new person starts here, we are going through the code of conduct and what it means.”

8.3 Assessment and promotion

Almost everyone rated performance criteria high, as the criteria for the laundry workers' jobs are very well established. Laundries need to be like a very well-oiled machine in order to have good efficiency throughout the processes. Lindström has a whole department in the head office for process development and efficiency research for laundries. Laundry workers are given very clear criteria on how to perform and what is expected of them.

According to interviewees, only a few people seldom rise ranks from the laundry. They have the same opportunities and every open vacancy is open for them to apply to. All open vacancies are notified in the company intra, which is accessible to laundry workers through the communal computer. Laundry workers do not have their own computers or smartphones

like all white-collar workers do. At one laundry they print all open vacancies to their bulletin board for all to see so they don't miss an opportunity. "It's a simple but effective way to give access", as interviewee 5 explains.

Managers do not have separate inclusion skill training. They have management training, and coaching leadership, by a partner and Finnish HR can provide more training as need to have basis. Some management uses this to educate themselves better, but not all laundry management use this opportunity to better themselves. So the level of training differs from one laundry supervisor to the other. The management trainings and coaching leadership trainings should have a DEI aspect in it. The partner of the case company could weave DEI matters into the training. But as discussed before there has only been one management training in three years as interviewee 5 describes, so trainings in general would need improvement.

Diversity and inclusion are growing issues in the laundries as interviewee 6 tells us.

"This laundry world is getting more diverse and we want to get more immigrants and different nationalities and this will be a big thing in the future. If you think about the working language, one solution could be to give working instructions in English. But then we would be having a dual kind of system with Finnish and English. Local language in place, but the material would be in English and then we would need more visual induction solutions."

When laundries are recruiting immigrants, sometimes there is a lack of a mutual language. Laundry managers are proficient in English, but some immigrants do not have proficient English language skills. Laundry has all their processes' instructions written in Finnish so everyone can go and check how a process should be done according to interviewee 6. This however means that when a mutual language is missing and instructions cannot be given in everyone's mother tongue, some of the workers might not get proper education about the laundry processes as there are no understandable written language instructions to them and also no verbal instructions because of the lack of mutual language skills.

Interviewee 6 sees that it would be beneficial to immigrant workers to get step-by-step visual instructions alongside the written ones, which would serve most of the workers. It is a common saying, backed up by science, that a picture tells a thousand words. What this means is that what could take up half an A4 page to write in instructions could be explained with one picture instead. This would eliminate the need to have a high standard of language skills. Here we can use system 1 thinking to our advantage as discussed in Chapter 1.2 because humans process visual information faster.

An easy and manageable way to make visual instructions available for all laundry workers could be a folder with only the visual instructions for processes. This folder should be placed in the same place where other written instructions are, so all similar information is in the same place. And when workers' language skills improve, they could start using the written instructions folder. High-tech solutions were also thrown in in the interview by interviewee 6. A worker could learn how to do the work processes in augmented reality with a virtual reality headset.

In addition to DEI values, there are other benefits at work, for example getting paid for your work. Interviewee 6 tells us that laundry people have requested salary twice per month, instead of once a month. If one starts as a textile worker, the next salary can come in the worst cases in six weeks and that is too much time for many new workers to wait. Paying twice a month would also benefit the seasonal workers. Some applicants have turned down a job because they don't have the funds in advance to wait for the next coming salary. Bi-monthly salary would be a big deal for the textile workers and the supervisors as well. Interviewee 6 says if they could change one thing in the laundries, they would change this. It's one of the key elements that make the workers happy. This kind of assent could be something that differentiates the case company from other companies and could be a job perk with new recruitments. It could make recruiting easier because some obstacles have been removed. This act would be a good move towards more equity in recruitment.

In the interviews, it was uncovered that the laundries have an annual survey, *siqni*, which tracks certain laundry metrics. However, in this survey, there are no DEI-specific metrics. If this survey is put together by Lindström, it could be a good continual way to do follow-up and see how the progression of the initiatives shows in the survey. I recommend adding specific DEI-related questions to the existing survey and analyzing those as part of the existing survey. Based on the results of my interviews and questionnaire, I recommend focusing on asking about growing inside the company, learning possibilities, and hiring and recruiting. The survey could also ask about attitudes towards immigrant, sexual-, racial-, or other minorities. The information gathered from the answers would enable pinpointing of the DEI initiatives towards the uncovered issues. And if something changes in the numbers given in the survey, the company can see it annually and react to it accordingly.

8.4 Meetings and social connection

On rotating roles, the same people take the roles of taking the notes in some of the laundries, so roles are not rotated. I don't have information if this situation is a good one or if there are people who would like to rotate roles and take notes. If everybody is happy with this situation then it might not be a problem, but this should be asked at the beginning of every meeting. On the other hand, it was revealed in interviews that some people that are more vocal tend

to have the center stage in laundry meetings and the more silent ones are not being consulted. This seems laundries would benefit from inclusion skills on how to make sure everybody is heard. The meeting behavior can be changed so that every meeting the arranger actively chooses to ask from the more silent workers their opinion on matters.

One participant noted that Master's meetings were discontinued due to COVID-19, and they have not restarted. They feel like these were an important social event for all laundry workers and would like them to continue.

In the laundry, according to one questionnaire answer, there are meetings with every shift starting. All workers need to be present to do their job, so all participate in the meetings in person and no technology is needed. Only at supervisor level there are personal computers and smartphones in use and for them there is good access to any meeting.

As established earlier, laundry workers do not have their own laptops but have mutual computer access. Interviewee 4 tells us this excludes the laundry workers in many cases from participating in white-collar meetings and trainings. Also, they can only participate when it's their break or on their own time or during laundry meetings which are held on premises, so there is little chance to participate. For similar reasons it is not possible to give the same cross functional information to all laundry workers as all white-collar workers during the first month of working. In the onboarding stage new workers can use the mutual computer to access company information via company intra, Linet. The case company is very transparent and every new employee has quite extensive access through intra. Interviewee 4 comments this:

"I would say that as a company we are giving more information than many many of the companies have worked with. We are very transparent in terms of information."

8.5 Learning and growth

Interviewees 2, 3, 5 and 6 see that there should be more benchmarking with the laundries. Not only sharing the production numbers, but good practices and methods also. They see that asking laundry workers how some processes should be done would be valuable, because they know the work best. Asking workers input on important issues is encouraged by theory that workers feel more included if they are involved in important decisions as in Chapter 3.2.

Developing their work processes is an important matter as it can change their work for the better. Benchmarking best practices and developing the processes further should be backed up by the head office laundry process department. Laundries should not be left alone with process development or good ideas. Having a head office team help bringing good ideas forward and helping with piloting would enable the best practices to transfer ideas even

globally if they are very effective. In addition to developing global processes to be effective, employees would be able to show what they have been achieving, their skills and they could grow inside the case company and get to the next step in their career.

It was revealed in the interviews that supervisors have an increasing number of standalone tasks. One interviewee had calculated that within a decade the time spending in reporting has six-folded. This time is away from the workers and might lessen the accessibility to their leaders. I see a benefit in looking at the needed reporting very closely if they could be streamlined in any way and dedicate that time to spending with their staff.

According to one elaborated DEI audit tool, in the laundry production area there is a once a year HEPA-discussions, where performances are evaluated. These conversations are also had if there is underperformance. Laundry supervisors do one-to-one discussions monthly and once a year an individual scorecard. Laundries don't however have any self-assessment. Self-assessment received the second lowest score combining laundries' and BUMs' answers. This could be one tool to remove any bias from workers and honestly evaluate their input to their work.

Interviewee 4 says that in their laundry there is a nominated mentor appointed to every new worker, but this is not the case in other laundries, so this is again something that could be beneficial to showcase as a best practice and have it as part of induction in every laundry because it would increase inclusion and feeling of belonging.

8.6 Other findings

In general, many of the points in the DEI audit tool were not directly applicable to laundry workers, as their work is so much dictated by the process and time limit the processes need to be executed. "Laundries are run like military bases and it's all about efficiency" as one interviewee said. This is sometimes forgotten with white-collar workers. The laundry work is at the heart of the case company's rental business and one of its strengths. Understanding the demands in the laundry would grow empathy towards laundry workers. One interviewee suggests we should have more rotation between the laundries and head office. At this moment every new employee, even the white-collar workers, are spending only one day at the laundry as part of their induction. A regular laundry day for example once a year could be a preventative method to making any bad decisions concerning laundries and their work in the head office.

8.7 Improvement suggestions to have in DEI programs

I have gathered here in this Chapter all improvement suggestions arising from theory, DEI audit tools and interviews. The presented suggestions should be scaled and accommodated to

fit Finnish laundries needs. Härme (2023) says best DEI work is based on the strength of the organization, so Finnish HR and business units should select those suggestions into use they see suited best. The chosen improvement suggestions should still maintain the keys to successful DEI programs. These were researched and recognized by McKinsey & Company and the World Economic Forum (2023) and were mentioned in Chapter 4.4. Successful DEI programs need to be:

1. Significant in size and impact so that the company can attain real benefits from the DEI program.
2. Quantifiable with measurable metrics and regular tracking. This way accountability can be had. There should not be a program that cannot be tracked or is not measurable in some way.
3. Scalable so the program can be scaled in the future to have more impact.
4. Sustainable in nature so the program can have a long-term impact and with possibilities to maintain the program's structure and governance.

All DEI programs should follow Kotter's (2012) 8-step program on how to lead change. Kotter's model for leading change was seen in the other research material, so any program should be seen through the 8 steps.

Any DEI program must start with understanding the current situation. Which is why the DEI audit tool other annual surveys, and possible other questionnaires to find out the current atmosphere are important. When there are quantifiable evaluations, problems can be detected. After realizing the problem points it's important to understand the root causes for the problems. For this, the target population of the program should be heard. The target population should help in the planning of the data acquisition, and also in the planning of the program. Not all problems can be solved at once, so all the programs or initiatives should be prioritized. Evaluating which programs should be prioritized can be done with the four main evaluation criteria they used in the Lighthouse program. (McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum 2023.)

A program should be very clear about the goals and the goals should be measurable. When a company can set quantifiable goals they are easy to communicate to the whole organization. Kotter (2012) recommends short-term and long-term goals, and McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum (2023) recommend the same. DEI goals should be discussed as they would be a core business priority. This means that DEI matters should be discussed quarterly and annually. The programs should tell people what should happen and by when. These goals and the time to achieve them should be also clearly articulated to every level of the organization in a way that each understands what the value is for them in the change.

There should be an owner to all the DEI initiatives or programs so that one person is responsible, because there needs to be accountability. Without an owner, a program can fall into a black hole and never see the light of day and nobody will follow it or be responsible for it. In other words, it will fail. McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum (2023) recommend that the senior leaders who are the owners of programs should also be the public face for their programs. This is a way to signal to the whole organization to follow suit. Many leaders also have a wide audience in social media so this is a way to affect all followers on their platforms.

All DEI programs should be tracked. The progress of the programs can be evaluated when they can be tracked. All the measuring of the programs should be tied to key performance indicators, so there is a real incentive to succeed with the programs. The owners of the programs should be responsible for tracking and also adjusting them at regular intervals according to the gathered data. If some program is not performing well, the owner can think of a corrective move to get the program back on track. On top of the numerical evaluations, there should be qualitative data gathered from target populations. (McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum 2023.)

Data collection should be semi-structured as Galletta (2013) and Newcomer et al. (2015) recommend if the matter needs a good prodding. The semi-structured questionnaire would give numerical data but also leave an open window for the participants to elaborate on any matter or even disclose other issues that should see the light of day in the organization. This would be the qualitative data part.

There are levels in how DEI programs can be executed. I have comprised a figure where it's shown how an organization can have programs and implement them at different levels. Figure 8 shows how everyone is responsible for their actions on a personal level. On top of that, the management has additional responsibilities because they are responsible for managing and or leading other people and their subordinates. Then the organizational level has more responsibilities because the organization needs to enable all DEI activities, encourage DEI culture, and support all staff in change. Effective DEI programs need to be multipronged and reach multiple levels of organization in multiple ways, so it is not enough to just write a letter about DEI to staff and say from now on we will have DEI culture. (Kim & Roberson 2018.) Programs should be designed so that they can be scaled in the organization to have a proper impact. (McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum 2023.)

The organization and management need to be proficient in communication. There cannot be too much communication about changes, so when there is any program that disrupts the status quo in the company, it is the job of the top leaders to govern and guide proper communication.

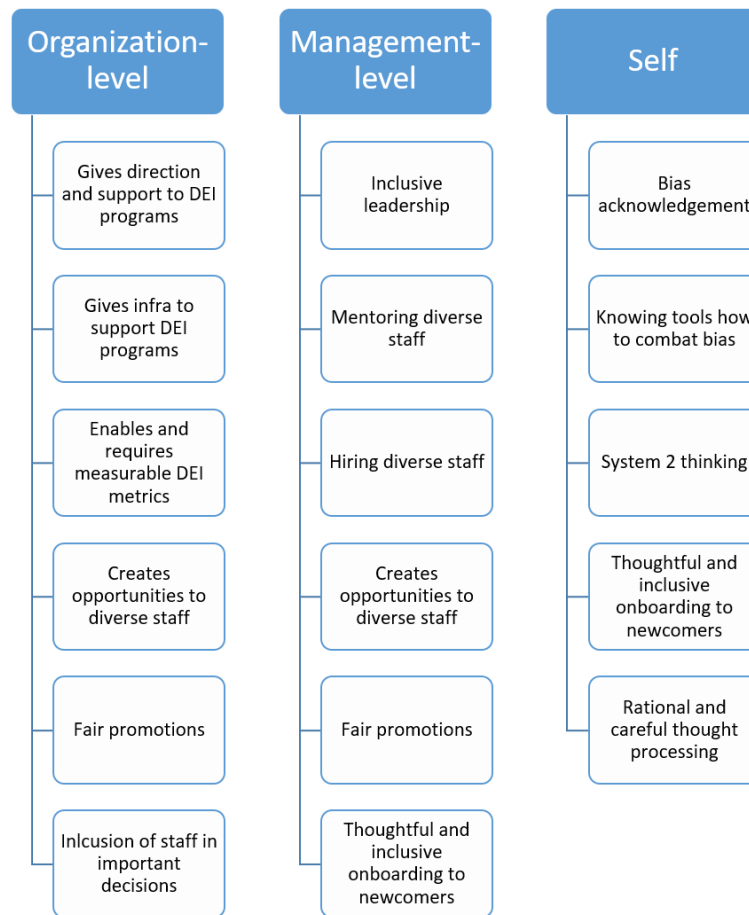


Figure 9: Matrix of responsibilities comprised of theories from McKinsey & Company (2022), Kim & Roberson (2021), Bourke & Dillon (2013), Kotter (2012) and Rossi (2021), Paikeday (2019) and Bond (2022).

The organization has other things it needs to do when reaching true diversity, inclusion, and equity. As representation matters, it is important to have diverse leadership. Recruitment metrics can help in reaching more diverse leadership, as per research, it is the top places that are missing diversity. If recruitment metrics to seek out diversity are not used, then it is important to avoid favoritism, stereotyping, and certainly blatant racism in having recruitment as anonymous as possible. Hiring criteria must be very well specified so there is no fear of recruiting someone not “fitting” the organization. (McKinsey & Company 2022.)

Organizations should make it clear that no kind of favoritism is enabled in the company, and they should keep transparency to these things so people can see there is no favoritism. If there are different rules for some teams or people, this should be openly declared. This way people at least know what are the parameters to them and can strive for other jobs if some other parameters are more attractive. (Bourke & Dillon 2018 and Paikeday 2019.)

If laundries have employee of the month type of recognitions, they could have the workers acquainted with others so that there would be interesting facts about them and or their culture if they are immigrants. This would lessen the stereotyping and make the person feel more accessible because their culture is being familiarized to other employees. (Kim & Roberson 2021.)

A sponsorship program should be launched by the case company to open up new possibilities to workers (Bourke et al. 2018.) Workers should be included in any DEI trainings.

The management level could benefit from their partner's leadership trainings as DEI trainings could be requested by the case company to be included in them. But other staff should enjoy DEI trainings as well, so a company-wide program should be also launched. As shown in above Figure 8, there are different levels of what staff, or the organization can do.

All members of staff should receive bias training to be able to recognize them and then be able to unlearn them. (Bazerman & Moore 2012.)

The case company should openly celebrate minorities' celebrations to show they are happy to have a diverse workforce. Minorities' celebrations are such as national pride-event, national days of immigrant workers, and International Women's Day. (Kim & Roberson 2021.) The case company could have for example cultural appreciation day where everyone in the laundry environment is taught something about the target workers' culture on the info TV in the laundry.

9 Discussions and conclusions

The need for the thesis arose after realizing that the case company does not have any DEI matters in its vision or strategy. Laundries struggle to keep the diverse workforce to stay. The case company's HR already had some programs to target this too-fast worker rotation, but felt that DEI matters' improvement might improve the situation even more. The company wanted me to suggest improvement ideas based on theories that would suit their organization. As a worker for the case company for 10 years, ideas for suitable solutions came from experience.

Results from this thesis benefit the case company locally firstly in the laundries, but can easily be put into implementation nationwide in other functions as well. Results can also benefit global functions as an example on how to research DEI base situations in all operating countries.

Some laundries have a very diverse staff, so feeling belonging to their employer is important for long careers, which is an important value for the case company. How to make the staff feel like they belong to their workplace and would like to stay there?

The bottom line from the theory is that the workers need to feel they are included, appreciated and celebrated and they feel like they belong. If the workers feel these emotions, they are more likely to stay at their place of employment which leads to better employment retention in the case company. When workers are content there are fewer disagreements among the staff as there is an air of respect as well. But if there are conflicts or changes, the workers are not in arms immediately but rather they can weather the change and even enable it. They are more resilient in changes because they see the possibilities in change and have a more positive outlook on changes in general.

Younger generations demand more things from their employer. They want to be accepted as who they are in their workplace and do not stay if there is no real acceptance. Younger generation is also more proud to be a part of their minority and does not want to be mistreated.

All changes that the case company wants to make should follow the theory of leading change. Change and conflict management are also needed along with leading change. All the programs towards true DEI need to be measurable so the progress can be tracked, have enough impact on the company, and have all the support structures made in place by top leaders and management. All programs need to have accountability and they should be part of KPIs and core business decisions. This way the programs can be sustainable in the future too because there is a structure throughout the company and a top-level routine to check on them.

Even with strict tracking of the change programs, the seed of true DEI acts arises from the self. We have implicit biases which we can combat to be more open-minded and only use rational and logical thinking together with reliable data when making decisions at work.

9.1 Limitations

Here I will discuss the limitations of the thesis. One limitation was that from the 24 laundries, only six answers were received. This means the sample size for laundries is not very big. On the other hand, all six business unit managers filled out the DEI audit tool and participated in the interviews.

Processes with the case company can be slow and must be taken through the board of directors and other levels of decision-making, so iterative development work to see through all the recommendations is unfeasible in the scope of this thesis.

Because business unit managers were not all on top of the day-to-day events of the laundries, there is a limitation to some of the knowledge they have in answering the DEI audit tool and discussing the themes in the interview. They were open about this issue during the interviews. Every business unit is different, and every laundry is different, so is the way the managers run their laundries, and how much information the business unit managers want and get from the laundry is varied. Some of the laundries are very independent and there is no need for the business unit manager to be involved in many issues. Some business unit managers like to involve themselves more in the laundry happenings. So, there are differences in the knowledge level of the laundry issues by the business unit managers.

The DEI audit tool worked great as a structured base for interview questions to get first-level data on DEI matters. But when the interviews went further, I noticed that some of the questions were more intended for white-collar workers, not blue-collar workers. This can be noted e.g., in flex time question. Production workers are measured very closely on how efficient they are and production work is fast-paced. Every process is timed with a stopwatch and a mean time is given how fast any process should be handled. It is difficult to get someone to fill in if anyone is having flex time off work. The shifts have been planned carefully for the laundry workers' capacity and extra workers are not waiting behind the corner able to fill in, so the flex time question is a bit irrelevant to the laundry workforce. On the other hand, if this question were asked from the white-collar workers in the service centers where the sales force is working, there is a possibility to have different kinds of arrangements in work time flexibilities.

9.2 Future and opportunities

Finnish HR has an opportunity to resend the DEI audit tool to all those laundries that did not participate in this questionnaire to this thesis. The evaluations would be easy to recalculate and get a more accurate picture of the situation in the laundries.

For the future, it's easy to broaden the knowledge base with the same DEI audit tool, and asking the questions from the white-collar workers and management. All the office workers globally could be covered by the DEI audit tool and there would be a lot of data that could be analyzed. This way a base level for DEI issues would be established for white-collar workers.

The wish of the author is for the Finnish laundries at the case company to put the recommended actions into good use and integrate a new culture of diversity, equality, and inclusion in all actions. Progress should be followed annually or even more to ensure ongoing development and make sure newcomers are properly trained and included in the onboard stage.

Global functions at the case company can take this research to get inspired. They can do their own interviews and research for the other 23 operating countries' laundries and offices. Based on collected data, global HR can understand what issues other countries have and suggest recommendations based on each country's situation. If HR does not have the resources to make a global survey, other students could do the research for them as part of their studies or master's thesis.

The author recommends adopting DEI principles in white-collar work environments. In white-collar jobs the DEI culture can have a more direct impact in terms of more revenue to the company e.g., acquiring new customers and selling more services to existing customers thus making more revenue.

It is important to know if the practices have been assimilated into everyday work life (Bandyopadhyay 2022). This should be researched in a few years.

I bumped into interesting further research subjects when researching my thesis. There are possibilities in helping grow leaders more in their work through neurobiology to develop empathy in leaders. Also, another avenue of research could be servant leadership: how this could help leadership evolve even more and improve the work atmosphere. These are interesting possibilities in my opinion.

References

Printed

Bazerman, M, H & Moore, D, A. 2012. Judgement in Managerial Decision Making. 8th edition. Wiley publishing.

Eriksson, P & Kovalainen, A. 2016. Qualitative Methods in Business Research: A Practical Guide to Social Research. 2nd edition. Sage publication.

Electronic

Abad-Santos, A. 2018. Nike's Colin Kaepernick ad sparked a boycott- and earned \$6 billion for Nike. The kaepernick "gamble" has turned into a big win. (Sept 28. 2018). Vox.com. Accessed 22 July 2023. <https://www.vox.com/2018/9/24/17895704/nike-colin-kaepernick-boycott-6-billion>

Airfinity. a2023. About. Accessed 24 July 2023. <https://www.airfinity.com/about>

Airfinity. b2023. Infectious Diseases. Accessed 24 July 2023. <https://www.airfinity.com/articles/a-strong-pandemic-defence-system-could-reduce-the-chance-of-another-covid#>

Asher, A. 2022. Trump fan pushes wild theory Ivanka Trump who appeared at Jan 6 hearing was 'a clone'. The independent. An article from the independent online. 27 June. Accessed 19 August 2023. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/jordan-klepper-jan-6-ivanka-clone-b2110196.html>

Bagga, S., Gera, S., Haque S. 2023. The mediating role of organizational culture: Transformational leadership and change management in virtual teams. Asia Pacific Management Review, 28, (2), 120-131. Accessed 21 July 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2022.07.003>.

Bloomberg company page. 2023. What we do. Accessed 22 July 2023. <https://www.bloomberg.com/company/what-we-do/>

Bond, T. 2022. Belonging in the workplace: What does it mean and why does it matter? Accessed 29 July 2023. <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/belonging-in-the-workplace-what-does-it-mean-and-why-does-it-matter>

Bourke, J., Dillon, B. 2013. Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup? A new recipe to improve business performance. Research report. Accessed 30 July 2023.

<https://www.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/human-capital/deloitte-au-hc-diversity-inclusion-soup-0513.pdf>

Bourke, J., Dillon, B. 2018. The diversity and inclusion revolution. Deloitte review, 22. January 2018. Article from Deloitte review online. Accessed 28 July 2023.

<https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/our-thinking/insights/deloitte-insights-magazine/issue-22/diversity-and-inclusion-at-work-eight-powerful-truths.html>

Cambridge University Press & Assessment. a2023. Accessed 2 July 2023.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/anonymization>.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment. b2023. Dictionary. Accessed 16 July 2023.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dei>

Chang, E., Milkman, K., Zarrow, L., Brabaw, K., Gromet, D. M., Rebele, R. Massey, C., Duckworth, A. L., Grant, A. 9 July 2019. Does diversity training work the way it's supposed to. Harvard business review online. Accessed 10 January 2021.

<https://hbr.org/2019/07/does-diversity-training-work-the-way-its-supposed-to>

Cropley, A. 2022. Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A practice-oriented introduction for students of psychology and education. Accessed June 28 2023.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285471178_Qualitative_Research_Methods_A_Practice-Oriented_Introduction

Eyada, B. 2020. Brand activism, the Relation and Impact on Consumer Perception: A Case Study on Nike Advertizing. International Journal of Marketing Studies, 12, (4). Accessed 22 July 2023.

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9425/fd5b7a7769ecd2e6a035fac20b6ab72e02f6.pdf>

Galletta, A. 2013. Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond. From Research Design to Analysis and Publication. New York and London. New York University Press. Accessed 17 June 2023.

https://books.google.fi/books?hl=fi&lr=&id=NdbtHg6sPgIC&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=semi+structured+interview+in+research&ots=dzEyYP_IWg&sig=s5EmwMb9S2aK6eleXMWfEb6_JGs&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

Global Parity Alliance. 2023. Global Parity Alliance home page. Accessed 24 July 2023.

<https://www.globalparityconsortium.org/home>

Gupta, B., Sihag, P., Pangtey, R, S. 2023. If I feel valued, I am committed to change: perceived supervisor support. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*. Vol. ahead-of-print. No. ahead-of-print. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJOA-10-2022-3448/full/html>

Henley, J. 2023. How Europe’s far right is marching steadily into the mainstream. *The Guardian*, 30 June. Article from *The Guardian* online. Accessed 25 July 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/30/far-right-on-the-march-europe-growing-taste-for-control-and-order>

Hewlett, S, A., Marshall, M., Sherbin, L. 2013. How Diversity Can Drive Innovation. *Harvard Business Review*. December 2013. Article from *Harvard Business Review* online. Accessed 27 July 2023. <https://hbr.org/2013/12/how-diversity-can-drive-innovation>

HTK Ohje. 2012. Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland. Guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. Accessed 4 July 2023. https://tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK_ohje_2012.pdf

Härme, P. 2023. Paras DEI-työ rakentuu organisaation vahvuuksille. Posted 17 February. Accessed 31 July 2023. <https://fibsry.fi/ajankohtaista/paras-dei-tyo-rakentuu-organisaation-vahvuuksille/>

Kallionpää, K. 2023. Lintuinfluenssa levisi turkistarhoihin ensimmäistä kertaa Suomessa - “Erittäin huono uutinen”, sanoo professori. *Helsingin Sanomat*, 19 July. Article from *Helsingin Sanomat* online. Accessed 24 July 2023. <https://www.hs.fi/hyvinvointi/art-2000009724312.html>

Interaction Institute for Social Change. 2023. Equality & Equality: Cartoon Gallery. Angus Maguire. Accessed 24 July 2023. <https://interactioninstitute.org/equality-equality-cartoon-gallery/>

Kim, J. Y., & Roberson, L. 2021. I’m Biased and So Are You. What Should Organizations Do? A Review of Organizational Implicit-Bias Training Programs. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*. Advance online publication. Accessed 17 July 2023. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000211>

Kothari, C, R. 2004. *Research Methodology*. 2nd edition. Accessed 4 July 2023. <https://ccsuniversity.ac.in/bridge-library/pdf/Research-Methodology-CR-Kothari.pdf>

Kotter, J, P. 2012. *Leading Change*. Harvard Business Review Press. Boston Massachusetts. eBook Collection. EBSCOhost. Accessed 28 July 2023. <https://web-s-ebsohost->

com.nelli.laurea.fi/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzY3NTE5NV9fQU41?sid=4939aae6-80e1-41ba-bdd7-eefb7d234306@redis&vid=2&format=EB&rid=2

Lewis, R. 2021. Youtube. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Workplace DEI Best Practices. Operator insights. Accessed 17 March 2022.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=AjLEHY04t4M&ab_channel=EnsembleHealthPartners

Life Labs Learning. 2023. Accessed 19 April 2023. <https://home.lifelabslearning.com/dei-playbook>

Lindström Group. 2023. Company pages. Accessed 12 August 2023.

<https://lindstromgroup.com/>

LinkedIn. 2023. McKinsey & Company. Accessed 16 July 2023.

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/mckinsey/>

Marttinen, S. 10 February 2022. Tweet. Twitter. Accessed 20 April 2022.

<https://twitter.com/SMarttinen/status/1491850940332322818>

Mcgirt, E. 2019. <https://fortune.com/2019/03/04/chief-diversity-officers-are-set-up-to-fail/>

McKinsey & Company. 2020a. Diversity wins: How inclusion matters. Accessed 16 July 2023.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters#/>

McKinsey & Company. 2020b. Diversity wins: How inclusion matters report. Accessed 16 July 2023.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/diversity%20and%20inclusion/diversity%20wins%20how%20inclusion%20matters/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters-vf.pdf>

McKinsey & Company. 2018. Delivering through Diversity.

https://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/mckinsey/business%20functions/people%20and%20organizational%20performance/our%20insights/delivering%20through%20diversity/delivering-through-diversity_full-report.pdf

McKinsey & Company. 2022. McKinsey Explainers. What is diversity, equity and inclusion? Accessed 16 July 2023.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/diversity%20and%20inclusion/diversity%20wins%20how%20inclusion%20matters/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters-vf.pdf>

McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum. 2023. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lighthouses 2023. Insight report. McKinsey & Company & World Economic Forum. January 2023. Accessed 24 July 2023.

https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Parity_Alliance_2023.pdf

Merriam-Webster. 2023. Dictionary. Accessed 18 July 2023. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bias>

Newcomer, K, E., Hatry, H, P., Wholey, J, S. 2015. Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation. Fourth Edition. Chapter nineteen. Conducting semi-structured interviews. Book from eBook Central. Accessed 14 July 2023.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/laurea/search.action?query=Newcomer%2C+Kathryn+E.%2C+et+al.+Handbook+of+Practical+Program+Evaluation%2C>

NumberGenerator. 2023. Accessed 2 July 2023.

<https://numbergenerator.org/6randomnumbersbetween1and6>

Oikeusministeriö. 2021. Tutkimustietoa seksuaali- ja sukupuolivähemmistöjen tilanteesta Suomessa. Policy Brief 5, Syrjintä Suomessa. Ajankohtaista tietoa syrjinnästä ja yhdenvertaisuudesta. Accessed 11 August 2023.

https://yhdenvertaisuus.fi/documents/5232670/5376058/OM_policy_brief_5_web.pdf/aced140e-d940-b37b-a4ce-ad59cf92be1b/OM_policy_brief_5_web.pdf?t=1661178046022

Paikeday, T,S. 2019. A Leader's Guide: Finding and Keeping Your Next Chief Diversity Officer. Russel Reynolds. Accessed 10 January 2021.

<https://www.russellreynolds.com/en/insights/reports-surveys/a-leaders-guide-finding-and-keeping-your-next-chief-diversity-officer>

Perna, M, C. April 25, 2023. The latest DEI Research And How To Find An Employer Who Shares Your Values. Forbes. Accessed 24 July 2023.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/markcperna/2023/04/25/the-latest-dei-research-and-how-to-find-an-employer-who-shares-your-values/>

Pohjanpää, Kirsti. 2013. Sateenkaariperheet tuovat väriä tilastoihin. Tilastokeskus. Accessed 11 August 2023. https://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2013/art_2013-09-23_001.html?s=0

Rossi, P. 2021. Konfliktit auttavat ymmärtämään systeemistä muutosta. Tietoasiantuntija-lehti. Nr 5. Accessed 28 June 2023.

<https://www.tietojohtaminen.com/sites/default/files/rossi-ta5-21.pdf>

Rousseau, D, M., ten Have, S. 2022. Evidence-based change management. Organizational Dynamics, 51, (3). Accessed 21 July 2023. [https://www.sciencedirect-com.nelli.laurea.fi/science/article/pii/S0090261622000067](https://www.sciencedirect.com.nelli.laurea.fi/science/article/pii/S0090261622000067)

Stahl, A. 2021. 3 Benefits Of Diversity In The Workplace. Forbes. 17 December 2021. Article from Forbes online. Accessed 27 July 2023. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashleystahl/2021/12/17/3-benefits-of-diversity-in-the-workplace/>

Top Work Places. 2023. Ensemble Health Partners. Accessed 28 July 2023. <https://topworkplaces.com/company/ensemble-health-partners/cincinnati/>

de Villiers, C., Farooq, M, B., Molinari, M. 2021. Qualitative research interviews using video technology - challenges and opportunities. Meditary accountancy research. Article from Emerald group publishing. Emerald insights. Accessed 5 July 2023. 1764-1782 <https://www.emerald.com/insight/2049-372X.htm>

Walle, A, H. 2015. Qualitative Research in Business : A Practical Overview, Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ProQuest Ebook Central. Accessed 9 June 2023. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/laurea/detail.action?docID=2076546>.

Wikipedia. 2023. McKinsey Company. Accessed 16 July 2023. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McKinsey_%26_Company

Wikipedia. 2023. Deloitte. Accessed 14 August 2023. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deloitte>

World Economic Forum. 2023. Our Mission. Accessed 24 July 2023. <https://www.weforum.org/about/world-economic-forum>

Unpublished

Interview with participant 1.2023.

Interview with participant 2. 2023.

Interview with participant 3. 2023.

Interview with participant 4. 2023.

Interview with participant 5. 2023.

Filled DEI audit tools. 12 pieces. 2023.

Figures

Figure 1: McKinsey & Company (2015) analysis of diversity and companies' financial performance.	17
Figure 2: McKinsey & Company. 2020. Analysis of diversity and companies' financial performance.	17
Figure 3: Angus Maguire. Equality, equity, and reality.	20
Figure 4: McKinsey & Company and World Economic Forum. 2023. The DEI Lighthouse Program with five common success factors.	35
Figure 5: Kotter. 2012. 8-step process to leading change.	37
Figure 6: Bourke and Dillon. 2013. Inclusive leadership competency framework.	38
Figure 7: Theoretical framework connections to each other and DEI.	41
Figure 8: de Villiers et al. 2021. Social, relational, and cultural context in online video interviewing.....	43
Figure 9: Matrix of responsibilities comprised of theories from McKinsey & Company (2022), Kim & Roberson (2021), Bourke & Dillon (2013), Kotter (2012) and Rossi (2021), Paikeday (2019) and Bond (2022).	60

Tables

Table 1: Bazerman & Moore. 2012. The most common biases and four which were chosen for further inspection.....	28
Table 2: All mean values per theme together with a total mean.	51
Table 3: Individual issues with a mean of 3.00 or under needing improvement.	51

Appendices

Appendix 1: DEI audit tool 73

Appendix 1: Dei audit tool

5 Key DEI Systems	Drivers	Evaluation 0-5 (5 = all criteria met) 0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Recruiting and Hiring	<p>Job ads and descriptions: We screen all job ads and descriptions for biased language (e.g., using software, feedback from diverse teams).</p> <p>Hiring sources and networks: We use diverse hiring sources and networks (e.g., a candidate referral program from diverse pools, networking events, partnerships with professional associations).</p> <p>Marketing materials: Our marketing materials reflect our values of diversity and inclusion (e.g., inclusion statement, diverse representation in photographs).</p> <p>Unbiased application review: We remove identifiers from resumes and/or applications (e.g., names, extracurricular activities).</p> <p>Interview process: We have a structured, documented interview process that ensures all candidates are assessed in the same manner, using clear grading rubrics all interviewers use in the same way.</p> <p>Hiring committee: Decisions related to hiring are made by more than one person (e.g., panel, hiring committee).</p> <p>Hiring criteria: We assess candidates based on observable skills and knowledge (rather than years of experience, past employers, or education level). We describe concrete desired behaviors rather than looking for "culture fit."</p> <p>Consistent standards: All candidates are held to the same criteria and qualifications are not waived in special cases (e.g., for friends of coworkers).</p> <p>Interviewer training: We provide training to employees on behavioral interviewing.</p> <p>Compensation: Compensation is based on standardized criteria (e.g., market pay), and we do not negotiate salaries.</p> <p><i>Sample metrics to track: Demography of the candidate pool through the hiring process, from initial contact to resume review, interviews, and hiring.</i></p>	
Benefits and Work Conditions	<p>Paid time off: We encourage our employees to take personal time off (e.g., use of PTO days, family leave).</p> <p>Mental health: Employees have coverage for mental health services. Sick days can be used for mental health recovery.</p> <p>Benefits: Benefits take into account the different needs of different employees.</p> <p>Flex time + clear deliverables: Employees have flex time options available along with clear deliverables / ways to measure work output (e.g., start work earlier in the day, take longer breaks).</p> <p>Work hours: We set expectations of "dark time" or time when employees are not required to be monitoring digital communication (e.g., before 9am and after 6pm).</p> <p>Codes of conduct: We share codes of conduct with all employees so it is clear what behaviors are considered unacceptable (e.g., harassment, hate speech).</p> <p>Escalation / complaint process: Employees know what steps they can take to safely share a complaint about unsafe work conditions, harassment, or discrimination in the workplace.</p>	
Assessment and Promotion	<p>Performance criteria: We have clearly articulated performance expectations and metrics for each role.</p> <p>Inclusion expectations: Specific behaviors of inclusion (e.g., "My manager asks for my perspective") are set as performance criteria.</p> <p>Behavior-based evaluation: We use a performance review system that collects and evaluates specific behaviors and outcomes (e.g., Good = "provides project updates at the beginning, middle, and end of each project." Bad = "communicates well.")</p> <p>Distributed decision-making: Decisions related to promotions, salary increases, and terminations are made by more than one person (e.g., panel, committee).</p> <p>Manager skills: Our managers have received training on how to provide actionable, specific, equitable feedback and how to have development conversations (e.g., coaching, 1-1s, career growth).</p> <p>Inclusion skills: Our managers and employees have received training on behaviors of inclusion.</p> <p>Self-evaluations: If self-evaluations are used, employees are trained how to write them and assess them well.</p> <p>Recognition: Employees are recognized for their work, including tasks indirectly related to their role (e.g., participation in voluntary task forces, committees, think tanks, equity/belonging initiatives).</p> <p>Access to opportunity: When there are opportunities for new roles and responsibilities, everyone knows about it.</p> <p>Compensation: We have a clear and transparent compensation structure (e.g., salary band structure, benchmarking).</p>	
Meetings and Social Connection	<p>Meeting and event times: Meetings and other events are scheduled during times that work across employees' time zones and roles.</p> <p>Access: Meeting notes/recordings are available to participants who could not join.</p> <p>Technology: All meeting members have access to the necessary technology and technology training to fully participate in meetings.</p> <p>Inclusion skills: Team members are trained in inclusive meeting skills (e.g., creating equal turn-taking, making sure all voices are heard).</p> <p>Agendas: Agendas are shared in advance of meetings.</p> <p>Decision criteria: Decision criteria are clearly articulated around who is being asked to join and why and how decisions will be made.</p> <p>Rotating roles: Facilitator, note-taker, and time-keeper roles are rotated.</p> <p>Belonging opportunities: There are opportunities for all employees to connect, get to know one another, and feel a sense of belonging.</p> <p>Onboarding: Employees are deliberately introduced or given access to cross-functional connections across the company within the first month.</p> <p><i>Sample metrics to track: See the Meeting Quality Assessment</i></p>	
Learning and Growth	<p>Regularly scheduled 1-1s: Managers are expected to have regular one-ones with all members of their team.</p> <p>Feedback norms: There are established feedback norms for when and how often to give feedback (e.g., in 1-1s, retros), as well as feedback skills training available.</p> <p>Growth opportunities: Employees have equal access to support for professional development and learning (e.g., workshops, funds, time to participate in learning experiences, stretch projects).</p> <p>Mentorship: Employees have access to formal and/or informal mentorship.</p> <p>Work demos: Employees have opportunities to showcase their work and progress.</p> <p>Role-models: We display and celebrate examples of company culture role models with diverse backgrounds and identities (e.g., posters, speakers).</p> <p>Leadership access: Employees have access to senior leaders (e.g., all-hands, skip level 1-1s, Ask Me Anything sessions, open office hours).</p> <p>Decision-criteria norms: Managers provide clear decision criteria and processes for work distribution (e.g., based on skills, rotation, volunteering).</p> <p>Access to information: Employees have equal and timely access to company and team-level objectives and priorities.</p> <p><i>Sample metrics to track: See the Growth Opportunities Assessment</i></p>	