



DEI Bytes

Pronouns and
What We Need
to Know

Speakers



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Why should you care about
diversity, equity and inclusion?

What if I told you there was a way to...

- have employees outperform peers by 147%?

Gallup, 2013

- retain and promote more untapped talent?

Center for Talent Innovation, 2019 | Journal of Applied Psychology, 1982

- make better decisions as a company?

Cloverpop, 2018 | Organization Science, 2013

- get more work shipped?

Financial Management, 2018

- generate better financial returns?

Strategic Management Journal, 2012 | Group & Organization management, 2003

Everyone has pronouns!

Definition of Pronoun Merriam-Webster Dictionary

1. *plural* **pronouns** : any of a small set of words (such as *I, she, he, you, it, we, or they*) in a language that are used as substitutes for nouns or noun phrases and whose referents are named or understood in the context
2. **pronouns** *plural* : the third person personal pronouns (such as *he/him, she/her* and *they/them*) that a person goes by

Fun Facts!

- Around three quarters of the languages spoken around the world do not use grammatical genders
- The use of “they” as a gender neutral pronoun in English goes as far back as 1375

Why is this tricky?

- You cannot tell someone's pronoun 100% of the time by looking at them
- You cannot always tell someone's pronoun from their name
- Pronouns are not a "preference"; they are very personal and can lead to not feeling included (or offense)
- Asking can be awkward

Creating Space for Respect

- Introduce yourself using your own pronouns first
- Open space for others to share theirs
- How can you facilitate proactive sharing in IT systems?
(email signatures, HR systems, chat, video conferencing)
- You will never go wrong by using the pronouns someone asks you to use for them

Multiple Pronouns

- What does it mean when you see **she/they**, **they/he**, etc?
- This person is okay with either pronoun for personal reasons
- They *may* be in order of preference (or may not)
- It makes folks happy to mix it up and use the non-binary pronoun sometimes!

Changing Habits is Hard

- If you get it wrong: apologize, promise to do better, and move on quickly
- You can change any habit with practice, practice, practice
- Pro-tip: if you mess up, try practicing on your own by giving that person six compliments by name

Breakout

Breakout #1: Introductions

- **Time:** 5 minutes
- **Instructions:**
 - Introduce yourself: Name, organization, role
 - Share where your organization is today related to gender pronoun usage:

Not Started - Ready to Start - On the Way - Leading the Way

Breakout #2: Your Next Step

- **Time:** 10 minutes
- **Instructions:** Brainstorm that critical next step.
 - What can you do this afternoon to get the ball rolling?
 - How can you introduce this concept to your team or organization?
 - Are there “quick wins” you can secure?
 - If you’re already “on the way” how can you take it a step further?

Breakout #3: Anticipating Objections

- **Time:** 10 minutes
- **Instructions:** What could go wrong?
 - Look at your next step? What could be standing in your way?
 - What potential objections could you mitigate ahead of time? How?
 - Where are these objections coming from? Leadership? Peers? Specific teams or departments?

Q&A

Recap

- What is a pronoun?
- Pronouns are tricky!
- Create space for respect.
- You can change your habits, we believe in you!
- Go forth and make change....

