

Change Together

A Diversity Guidebook for Startups and Scaleups

A collaboration between TechGirls Canada and TWG



Welcome

A few quick notes about...

The Author and Project Partner

About TechGirls Canada









TGC is the hub for Canadian women in Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM). Proudly supporting Women of Colour, LBTTQ, and Aboriginal trailblazers. TGC is committed to fostering collaboration in designing solutions to address the barriers for diversity and equity in the technology sector.

About TWG

TWG is a world-class team of product managers, designers, and software engineers, located in downtown Toronto. We believe software is the most powerful and effective tool to drive progress, and our vision is a world where every organization has software in its DNA. Our work wins awards, but most importantly it is used and loved by millions.

Illustrations by Andréa Crofts

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Preface

Change Together

We're glad you're here

From the early days of TechGirls Canada (TGC) work, whenever we would present at a media engagement or keynote or event panel, for the following few days we would have our inboxes full of requests and questions from business owners in tech, with an exchange that was always some slight variation of this:

“They realized now what they hadn’t for many years, that their workplaces were indeed very homogenous*. They now had daughters, and that alone made them think twice about upholding ideas about whom they fathomed doing certain types of work versus not—and they wanted to do better.”

** Read: mostly straight, able-bodied white men*

Their earnest (albeit unintentionally myopic) requests over the years made one thing abundantly clear to our team: that there was nowhere for us to guide them to where they didn’t need a huge budget and a sizable HR team to even engage with the notion of diversifying their organizations. As a result, most of these well-intentioned individuals would just not start this work at all.

TGC specializes in pilot projects that aim to solve underlying structural nuances in issues and reframe the conversation around challenges related to talent and diversity in science and technology workplaces. Through these exchanges with business owners we realized two very critical gaps:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Number</i>
One | Lack of diversity does not have a “turn-key” solution like “ <i>hire more women.</i> ” Diversity and inclusion require <u>a cultural shift in the entire organization.</u> |
| <i>Number</i>
Two | Small- to medium-sized businesses have very specific challenges that hinge on resourcing. It’s nice to read about Google and Microsoft, but it’s hardly transferable to a 50-strong software development company in Saskatoon. |

Out of this, #**ChangeTogether** was born. TWG had identified that addressing a lack of diversity on their team was a priority. TGC partnering with TWG to launch this pilot banked on their long history of community involvement and ample evidence of working hard towards building a workplace their employees would love belonging to. And though this project focused on gender diversity, we acknowledge that this guide does not address the full spectrum of diversity work (for example: accessibility needs) that are an integral and non-negotiable part of creating true inclusivity.

The TGC team is very honoured to have engaged and led this project, and for TWG’s partnership. This guide would not be possible without the leadership and support of Steph Guthrie, whose work in gender justice in workplaces is both nuanced and thorough.

We hope that this guide helps you reimagine what diversity work means and gives you some remarkably impactful and tangible places to start.

In solidarity,

Saadia Muzaffar

on behalf of the TechGirls Canada team

Project Change Together

About

The Project

an introduction

A Diversity Guidebook for Startups and Scaleups.

In May of 2015, TechGirls Canada (TGC) joined forces with TWG to launch Project Change Together, a pilot designed to explore, test and report on a set of strategies for addressing intersectional gender diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace in accessible ways.

Over the last year, TGC has recommended and supervised the implementation of a set of 11 unique policies and initiatives to support TWG in improving workforce equity and diversity. With TGC's guidance, TWG operationalized these strategies in effort to boost hiring of underrepresented groups in the technology sector.

Project Change Together was designed as a do-it-yourself on-ramp to help TWG and other small-to-medium-sized businesses take steps toward diversifying their workplaces. Businesses of this size have:

<i>Number</i> One	Progressed beyond the startup stage
<i>Number</i> Two	Begun to look at hiring and workplace culture through a more systematized and less nepotistic lens
<i>Number</i> Three	No formal Human Resources department, or have limited human resource capacity, to design and implement the desired policies and procedures
<i>Number</i> Four	Limited budget for extensive third-party consulting hours and lengthy series of team-wide training

With these limitations in mind, we designed strategies that could be implemented using the company's existing administrative and operational resources. Some of these strategies fit more snugly into TWG's existing corporate structure. To this end, some strategies that worked well at TWG may not find success at peer companies.

As such, this guidebook does not walk the reader step-by-step through each of the implemented strategies (although a list of possible strategies, some of which we used, can be found in Appendix A). There is no such thing as a paint-by-numbers plan for diversifying the mix of people within a given workplace.

Instead, this guidebook documents the key successes and lessons gleaned over a 12-month collaborative discovery and test-and-learn implementation period. In the spirit of open-source, we share our project's ups and downs so that other employers may iterate on our experiences as our industry community works toward a more inclusive tech sector.

Company Snapshot

About

The Studio

an introduction

TWG is an independent Canadian software studio with headquarters in Toronto. It was founded in 2002, starting life as a web development company before gradually expanding its services to include mobile development, APIs, cloud infrastructure, product design, and strategy.

When #ChangeTogether began in April 2015, the team was comprised of 45 people, with seven women working across design, marketing and administration. All but one person on TWG's dev team—the company's largest group—were men.

With market demand for software expertise at an all-time high, it is unsurprising TWG has grown substantially since this project's inception. Today, the total team size is 84. New hires include software engineers, product managers and mobile developers. TWG's international footprint has also evolved, with team members now located in the USA, India and the Dominican Republic.

The number of women on TWG's team now totals 25. This is an 87 per cent increase from project kickoff. TWG's development team now includes 10 women, out of a total of 53.

The Statistics

Areas of focus

**as of November 28, 2016*

The total number of women at TWG has increased from **4 of 45** to **25 of 84** since the project began.



Before the project



87% ▲

Total increase in the number of women at TWG since the project kickoff.

After the project



TWG's development team now includes **10** women, out of a total of **53**.

People Win: *Hiring*

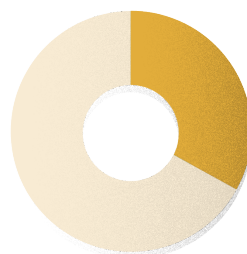




Hiring

The project timeline coincided with a period of significant hiring at TWG, resulting in a noticeable shift in staff demographics. Specifically, one year after project kickoff, representation of women on staff at TWG had increased by over 60 per cent, with women now comprising 30 per cent of the team. The hiring decisions over the last year (shaped in large part by TWG's implementation of TGC strategies) are a major step in the right direction.

The surge in hiring women is creating a ripple effect that has made the workplace a palpably friendlier and more welcoming place for women.



women comprise

30%

of the TWG team

*as of November 28, 2016



Quotes from

TWG Staff

One female staff member expressed surprise at learning that

“Sheer numbers actually do count for something, because you get a body of people in the office that then fight for the causes that they believe in, or fight for the *cultural changes* that they want, and there’s a little bit of *power in numbers*.”

Another female team member shared that the higher concentration of women on staff has helped nurture

“a culture of women supporting women and women helping each other *get higher* in our careers.”

While women of colour (more so than white women) remain underrepresented, one team member said,

“We’ve had a lot of women of colour being hired in the past few months, which is really awesome.”

Another staff member discussed...

“plans to go out for lunch to talk about our experiences as women of colour at TWG”

...although she noted that more spaces for that kind of discussion inside the office would make the work environment feel more inclusive.

This feedback aligned with comments from other staff members who felt that despite the intersectional design of many project strategies and measurement tools, internal communication about the project seemed primarily focused on representation

of gender. This in turn created limited space in the conversation for staff members who are marginalized in other ways (or in addition to gender) to share their experiences.

Three strategies *for* improving hiring



Number
One

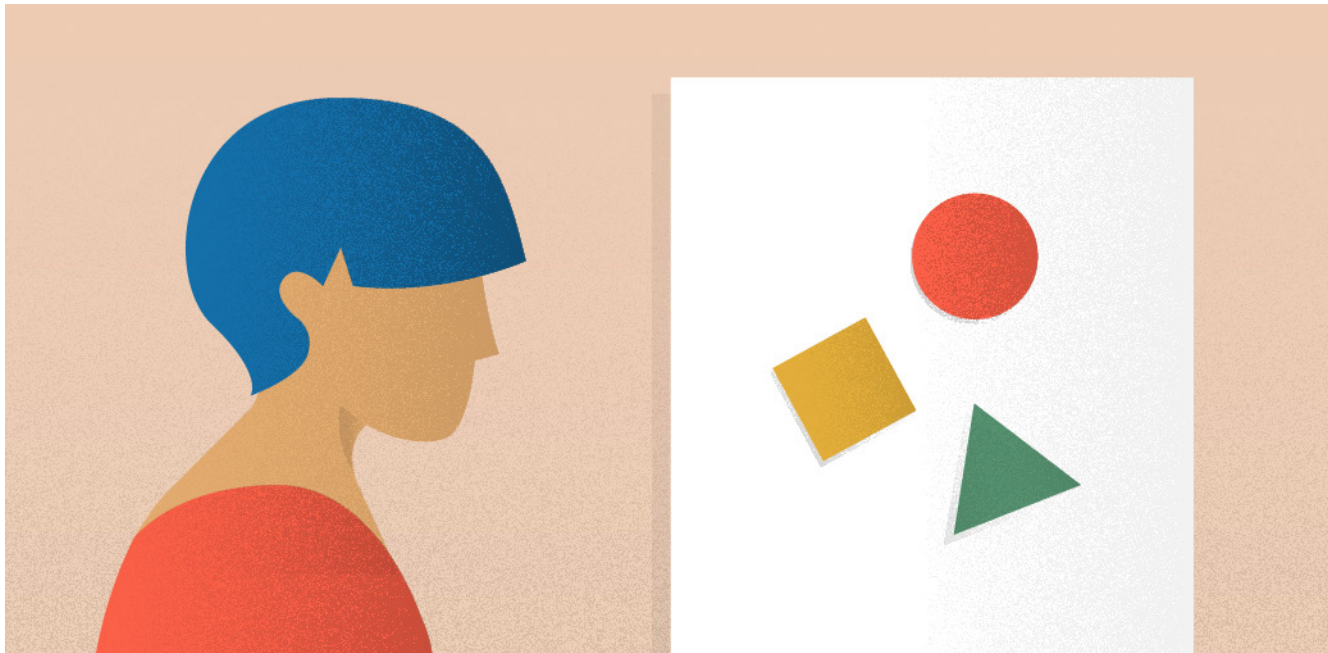
Remove names and other identity signifiers from job applications

Number
Two

Prioritize interviews for applicants from severely underrepresented groups

Number
Three

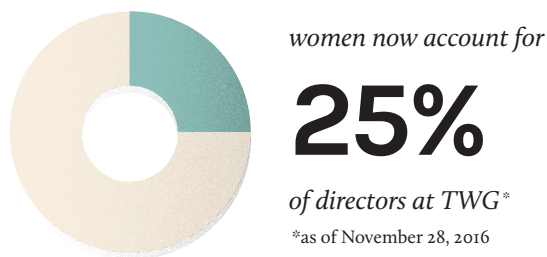
Formalize a hiring partnership with a community initiative focused on marginalized groups within your industry



Roles *and* Retention

Hiring wins also include the expansion of roles for which women are brought on board and the extent retention is measured and improved. While work remains, TWG has made significant strides.

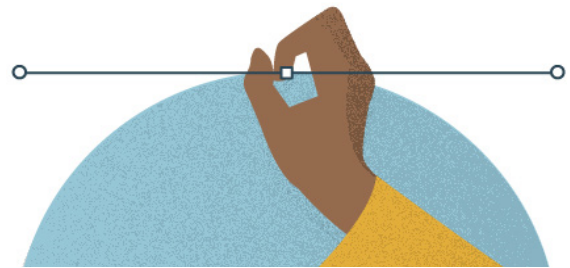
The Director of Human Resources is one of two women hired at the directorial level in the past year. Women now account for 25 per cent of directors at TWG.



One female employee remarked,

“It’s nice to see that there are women in leadership positions”

because it makes it easier for her to see a future for herself with the company.



Another staff member highlighted the far-reaching impact of women in leadership roles:

“The women [leaders] that were hired were very strong, so I feel like then it was a domino effect.”

For example, this team member described her own orientation with the company as hands-off and self-directed in a way that felt somewhat intimidating. When one of the new female directors noticed that this was a common experience, she introduced a new on-boarding initiative to make the experience of joining the company more supportive and friendly.



Given that director-level roles are few and far between, one team member expressed a desire to see the trend of hiring female leaders continue:

“Not necessarily [just] director roles, but also roles that [involve] day-to-day overseeing of teams, like Design Leads or Engineering Leads.”

Other staff members echoed this wish, with one lamenting that she has

“yet to see women in leadership roles on the engineering side of things.”

Another employee noted that the team of tech leads is

“almost exclusively white men, in contrast with traditionally feminized roles such as marketing and human resources, which are led by women.”

However, all employees who expressed concern about the representation of women in leadership felt strongly that male leaders at TWG have been open to feedback as to how they can best support women on staff. This openness to feedback has inspired hope among female employees that TWG will continue to support their growth within the company to assume technical leadership roles as the company expands.

Three strategies *for* improving hiring

Number
One

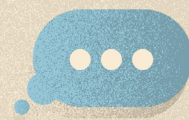
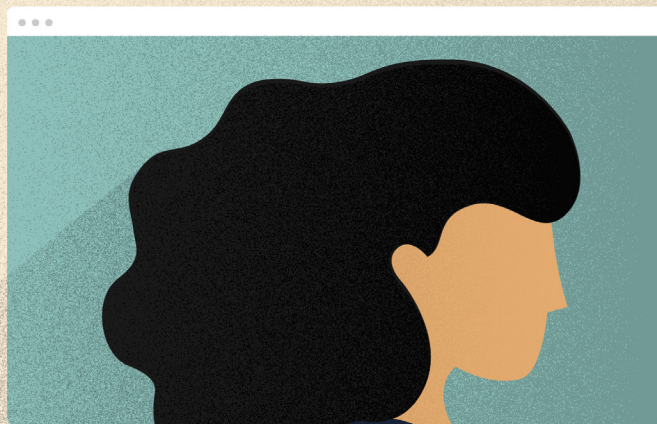
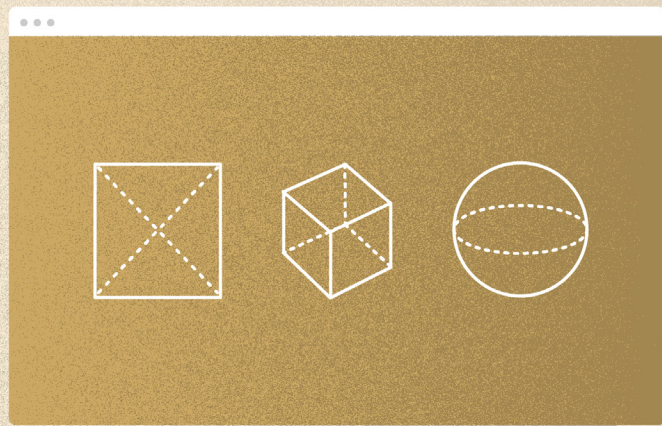
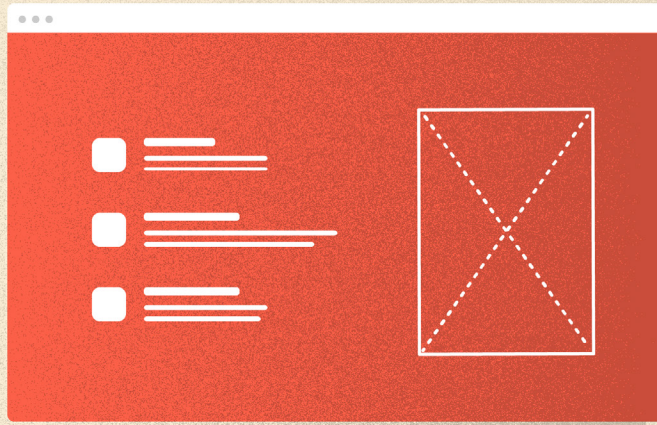
Formalize skill matrices to serve as barometers for promotion to minimize potential for bias

Number
Two

Reserve private spaces in the office exclusively for prayer, meditation, breastfeeding and/or breast-pumping

Number
Three

Sponsor talented junior employees from underrepresented groups



Culture Win: *Legitimacy*





Culture win: *Legitimacy*

The visibility of Project Change Together and the discussion it inspired at TWG has legitimized diversity and inclusion as important threads in the TWG fabric. Many interviewees noted that TWG employees increasingly pursue discussions about workplace equity and diversity with one another. Some conversations took place in designated spaces, such as the

“Diversity” channel in TWG’s Slack team, or a series of weekly opt-in “Diversity Chats.” In these chats, staff facilitated face-to-face discussions about relevant issues.

Many other conversations have proliferated organically in desk-side or water-cooler contexts as the topics were gradually integrated into TWG’s organizational culture.



5 possible discussion topics and resources

Number One

Intersectionality

understanding identity at the intersections

Number Two

Privilege

what it means, how it manifests, how to stay mindful

Number Three

Micro-aggressions

how minor slights and stereotypes add up

Number Four

Intent vs. Impact

why good intentions are not always enough

Number Five

Ally

is a verb, not a noun; when to listen, and when to speak up



With the uptick in conversation has come a marked increase in staff comfort levels. One staff member observed that the Change Together project philosophy

“disseminated into everything, so we have a lot more conversations now, publicly, about issues that might have been hard for us before.”

One female staff member remarked that the openness to these discussions she has observed in her male colleagues at TWG has been “really refreshing.” A managing partner noted that the increased level of discussion about diversity around the office has opened the door for staff to ask questions that might have gone unasked before the project began.

Some of this confidence may be attributed to the support from TGC, which equipped TWG staff (particularly the core project team) with direction on the priorities and challenges in the workplace equity sector. A member of the TWG project team felt that, while TWG staff likely would embark on these discussions sooner or later, “the quality of the conversation was better because of the pilot; the conversations were more well-informed.”

As one senior employee reflected,

“We have a collective intelligence about this topic now that we didn’t before.”

With conversations pertaining to diversity and inclusion permeating the workplace, one management-level staff member feels that these factors have become “a natural part of the decision-making process” in areas ranging from hiring to planning community events.

In many workplaces, efforts to increase diversity in hiring are met with complaints about “reverse sexism” or “reverse racism” from staff members who enjoy strong representation in the workplace. Indeed, some interviewees noted a pervasive sense of imposter syndrome among newly hired staff members from underrepresented groups who were either unsure as to whether they were hired for their skills or their identities, or felt a sense of suspicion from colleagues that they might be a “diversity hire.”

To quell these kinds of concerns, we recommend that other employers communicate more openly with staff about how diversity considerations are factored into hiring decisions, and clearly convey that they do not trump considerations of technical skills and professional experience.

To quell these concerns,
we recommend that

“...other employers
communicate more openly
with staff about how
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decisions.”



Despite these concerns, a TWG leader noted that she felt encouraged upon witnessing workplace conversations that indicated staff members are aware that hiring to improve diversity and hiring the best person for the job are compatible goals.

As a result of these changes, TWG's vision for workplace diversity is moving beyond the dated zeitgeist of passive "tolerance" toward an active, invitational approach. One key example is the language of TWG's inclusion statement. Previous statements used industry-standard neutral terminology like, "We do not discriminate based on race, gender, sexuality, etc."

Over the course of the project, the team learned the value of an affirmative posture that implicitly acknowledges the unique barriers faced by marginalized groups in tech. The inclusion statement was reworked to state, "We especially encourage applications from women, candidates of colour, candidates with disabilities, etc." Two interviewees described this discussion as an "a-ha" moment, and think these lessons have broad implications beyond the language of job advertisements.

The inclusion statement

was reworked to state:

"We encourage applications from candidates of colour, women, queer candidates, candidates with family caregiving responsibilities, immigrant candidates, transgender candidates, and candidates with disabilities."



Three strategies for increasing legitimacy

Number
One

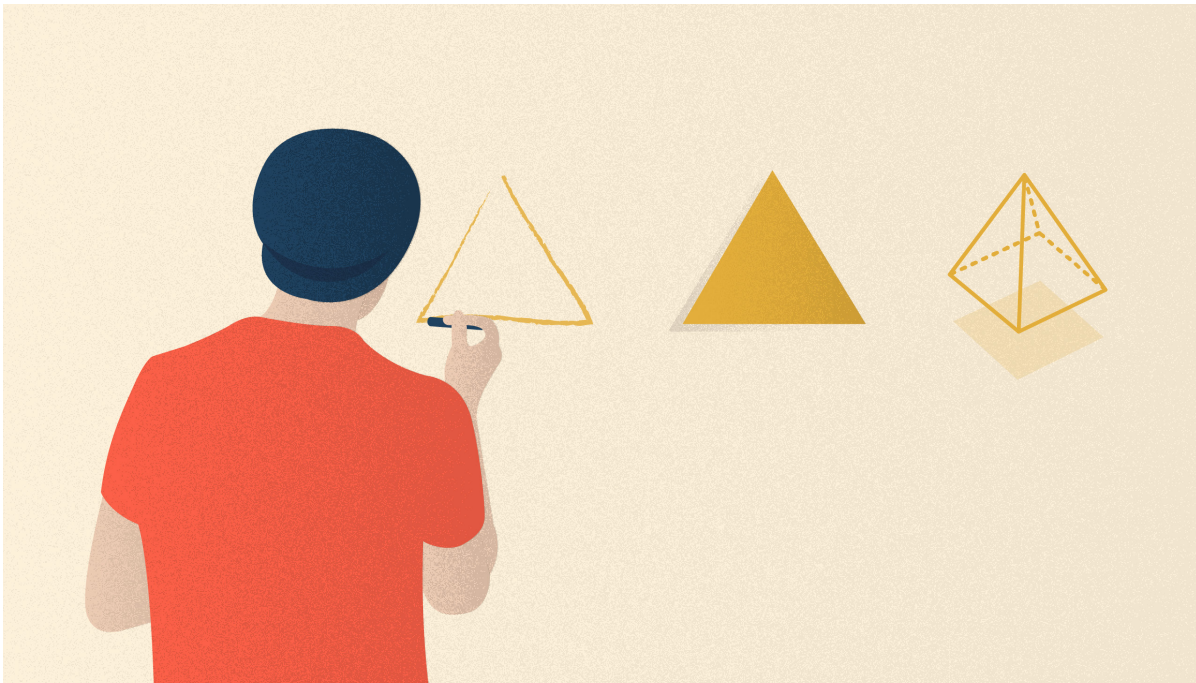
Create safe spaces for discussion among marginalized employees

Number
Two

Create spaces for reflection among employees with privilege

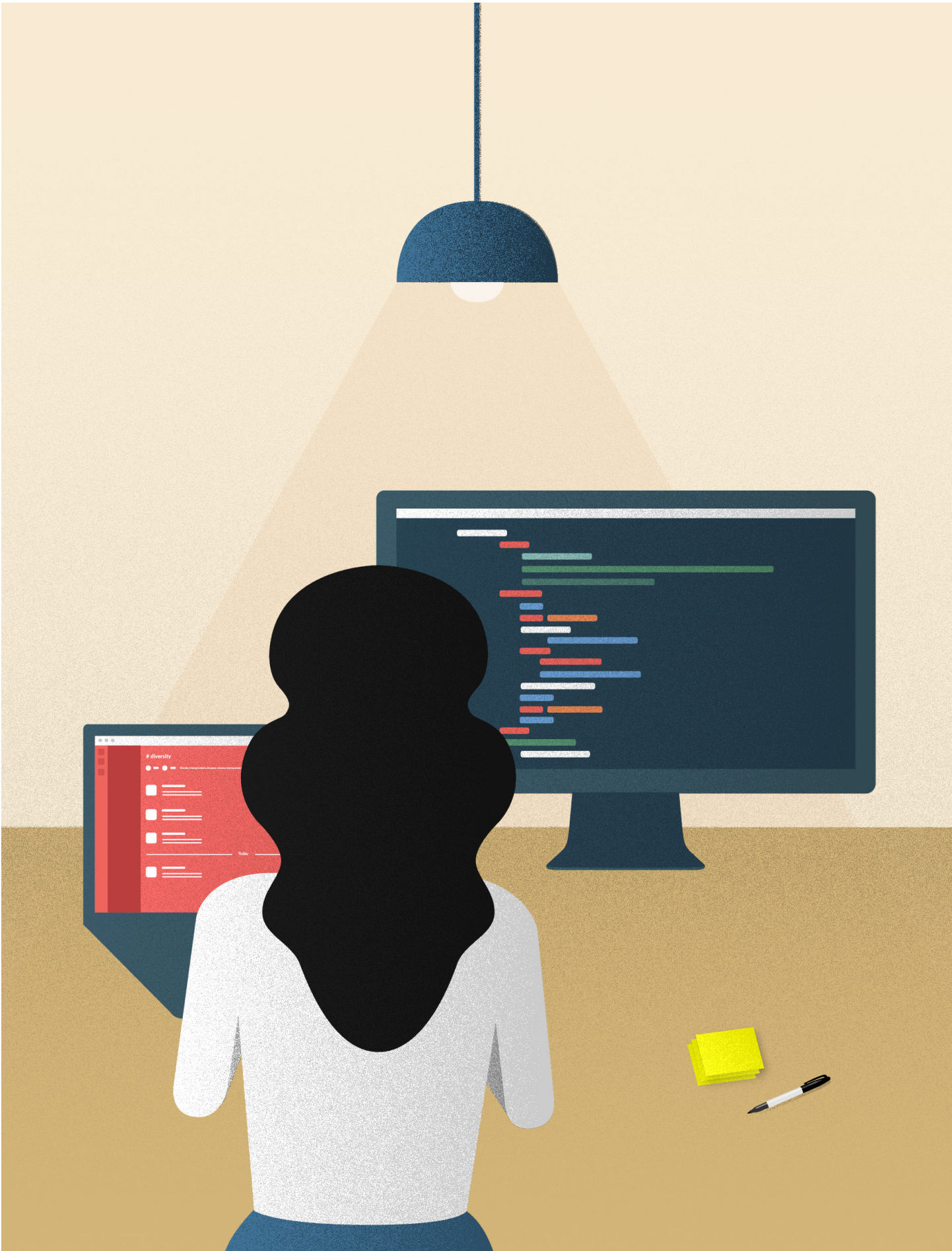
Number
Three

Select and train a staff member to serve as a key source of support for employees experiencing domestic or state violence



Culture Win: *Environment*





Culture Win: *Environment*

With more conversations about diversity and inclusion filtering through the workplace, TWG staff members are developing greater literacy with the language and concepts of privilege and oppression. This increased literacy is beginning to prompt critical self-reflection among team members as to the ways privilege (or lack thereof) can shape one's thinking, behaviour and experiences.

This self-reflection has gone hand-in-hand with a gradual increase in empathy toward the perspectives and experiences of other staff members who do not share their privileges. One male staff member has noticed this process playing out on the

company Slack, where team members frequently post viral articles and memes for their colleagues' entertainment.

This staff member (who has been with TWG for many years) observed that in the past, team members might flippantly post "edgy" memes or GIFs that had offensive connotations for certain groups. As team members have become more sensitive to their colleagues' different life experiences, these types of posts have become far less common.

Another staff member noted that, while these types of posts are occasionally still shared, he increasingly sees his colleagues point out the problems with them.

This self-reflection

has led to

**“a gradual increase in empathy
toward the perspectives and
experiences of those who do not
share their privileges.”**





There is, of course, still progress to be made. A notable example is the privileging of some communication styles over others. Many female team members describe the prioritization of blunt, direct and authoritative communication and confident verbalization of one's accomplishments. Both sets of behaviors are often more socially acceptable for some groups. For example, women and many racialized people are discouraged from adopting this communication style and, in fact, are often perceived as "arrogant," "angry"

or "bossy" for interacting this way in a workplace context. However, interviews showed a promising openness among TWG staff to critically examine their own subconscious biases. One female staffer noted that when she has voiced concerns about communication norms with her male leaders, she has "only been met with really great responses." This suggests that a teamwide workshop on different socialization and valuation of communication styles would be a positive step for TWG, and perhaps for other employers.

On defensiveness

and its potential to thwart valuable learning

“when people get defensive,
they kind of close off.”



Self-reflection, such as examining our privileges and subconscious biases, is a deeply necessary but vulnerable process. Critical third-party feedback or scrutiny amplifies the sense of exposure that can accompany self-reflection. Third-party criticism of one's oppressive behaviour can sometimes induce feelings of defensiveness.

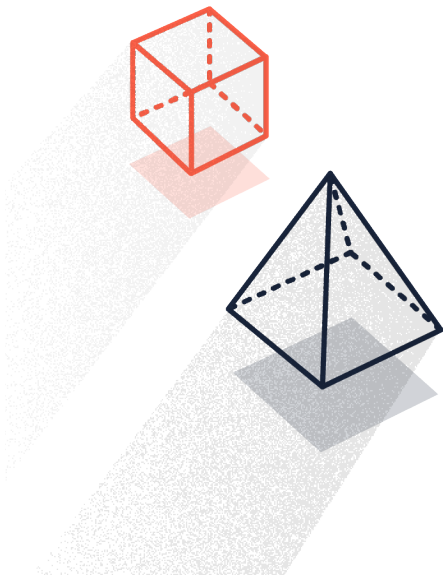
Defensiveness can manifest in many ways, ranging from hostility to stonewalling to excessive, approval-seeking apology that centres the feelings of the privileged. For example, one staff member expressed a

reticence about challenging any unintentionally marginalizing treatment from colleagues, “because then you have to delicately tiptoe around them.” The most potent danger of defensiveness lies in its potential to thwart valuable learning.

However, call-outs and critical self-reflection also have the potential to spark transformative learning experiences. A male team member coped with the discomfort he felt when reflecting on his privilege by learning to listen more, describing this process as “an interesting revelation” that crystallized some of his long-standing subconscious concerns.

Another staff member reflected candidly on her complicated feelings in response to a participant in one of her projects who characterized her efforts to incorporate diversity as insufficient: “That was a hard thing for me, where I realized it’s really hard to do diversity work. But I also realized my own privilege [as a white middle-class woman].”

“That’s been a big revelation for me; I have to recognize my privilege, and always try to be a strong ally for people who don’t have that privilege.”



A core project team member summed up his trajectory of personal growth as learning to “feel comfortable being uncomfortable” while examining his privilege. He described his mode of self-talk as, “I’m just going to do this anyway; I’m not going to shrink away from it or not address it. I’m going to just roll with that level of discomfort.” He mused that this learning experience has “come at a good time in [his] life” and has helped him become a stronger and more empathic person at work and at home.

“I’m just going to roll with that level of discomfort.”

Toward the end of Project Change Together, TGC hosted a workshop on empathic communication, which further supported TWG staff in

“feeling comfortable being uncomfortable”

when third-party feedback induces reflection on one’s privilege. The workshop garnered a strong degree of positive engagement from staff, and many interviewees referenced it as a high point of the pilot for them.

One team member followed up her praise of the workshop by noting that staff might have benefitted from earlier preparation on how to cope with the criticism that may arise when one engages in diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Since the workshop equipped staff with the emotional skills to treat criticism as a teacher rather than a threat, we recommend that other employers provide this kind of learning opportunity for staff earlier in their implementation periods.



A strategy for
improving the environment

Set diversity-based
criteria for the
company's participation
in industry events.

*E.g. "Our staff will only participate in
panel discussions with a minimum of 40%
speakers of colour"*



Key Lesson:

Resourcing





Key Lesson: *Resourcing*

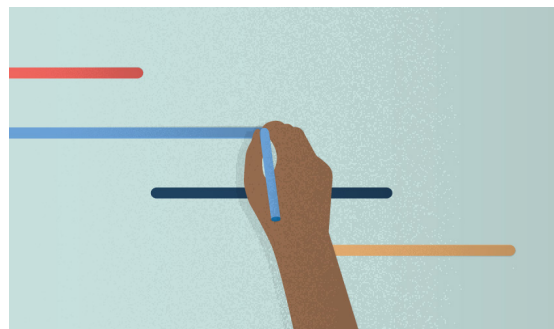
Our goal with Change Together was to pilot an approach to workplace diversity and inclusion that could be accessible to small- to medium-sized businesses. We aimed to create an on-ramp for employers without a Human Resources department or an expansive budget for third-party consultants.

“While a Human Resources department may not be necessary, employers embarking on similar projects will garner the greatest value if they engage at least one employee to manage the project full-time.”

An internal project manager is preferable to engaging a consultant as project manager, because an internal staff member’s immersion in the work environment equips them with ease of access to key personnel and a more nuanced perspective on the company’s operations.

An insider’s depth of understanding about workplace operations, internal communication norms and mechanisms, corporate culture and other facets of the workplace are critical to successful implementation of any strategies for increasing diversity and a sense of inclusion in a workplace.

The need for a full-time internal project manager was the number one lesson cited by virtually every member of the project team. One staff member believed that the lack of an internal resource to keep things on track contributed significantly to momentum losses that occurred at various periods during implementation. Another member of the project team agrees that a full-time project manager at TWG who could do “follow-ups on a regular basis” and “really push for this initiative to be resourced and committed to” could have enhanced the project results.



A strategy for
improving resourcing

“The need for a full-time internal project manager was the number one lesson cited by virtually every member of the project team.”



Everyone agreed that the TWG team members who took the lead on co-ordinating the project on a volunteer basis did a fantastic job with the time they had available.

But, as one leader pointed out,

“it’s challenging [for anyone] to prioritize and focus on things that aren’t [their] core business.”

Toward the end of the implementation period, TWG hired a staff member who, while not exclusively devoted to Change Together, holds accountability for managing the project as a core component of her job description. Her contributions have created a consistency in communication and clarity of expectations that vividly illustrate what value Project Change Together may have accrued from engaging such a team member at the pilot outset, and building adequate time into their schedule to quarterback the project.

When the project manager is not at a senior decision-making level, their role is largely limited to providing feedback and follow-up to senior leaders, who are ultimately in the position to influence policy and culture change.

One team member put it bluntly:

“You need the people at the top, because these are the people to whom middle management are accountable.”

This team member recommended assembling “a team of stakeholders who are at a true decision-making level, and then they can create a team or committee of people to [execute] smaller individual tasks.”

TWG’s Managing Partners were very supportive of the project concept and championed Change Together at key points in the project cycle.

One senior leader reflected,

“The direction of our values and what’s important [to us], it’s amazing that when you set those intentions and you live them [...] they actually manifest in positive ways.”



Senior leaders' enthusiasm for the project was crucial in building team buy-in, and we recommend any employers undertaking similar projects ensure they have these kinds of champions. For example, bi-weekly or even monthly

status updates with the project manager could equip senior-level champions with the granular information they need to influence senior decision-making regarding policy and culture change.

Key Lesson: *Scope*





Key Lesson: *Scope*

We conceptualized Change Together as a beta test with a broad scope: 11 strategies for improving diversity and inclusion at TWG, implemented over the course of one year. We strategically chose to implement a large number of strategies because we anticipated that some of these strategies might not produce the desired results.

However, the broad scope proved to be logistically burdensome, particularly given that (until the final phase of the project) TWG staff coordinating Change Together did so on a volunteer basis.

One member of the project team suggested that other workplaces embarking on similar projects

“only do one or two [strategies]. And once you check those off, you do another one or two.”

This staff member felt that narrowing the scope would create a more manageable workload for the project manager.

Another benefit of a narrowed scope is that it simplifies internal communication. A project team member found it difficult to answer staff questions about project status with clarity because

“There were so many things [happening] that it was hard to keep track.”

Some strategies were designed to produce gradual changes, so we chose a one-year timeline to accommodate ample time for measurement. However, multiple team members felt that the project lost momentum at certain points.

One team member reflected,

“A year is a lot of time, and in this case it felt like *too much* time.”

He felt that the lengthy timeline, coupled with the absence of a full-time project manager on the TWG side, resulted in an uneven implementation approach.

Another key facet of the project's objective was to pilot a do-it-yourself approach to workplace diversity and inclusion that did not require extensive, constant and expensive oversight from an external consultant. As such, TGC curated a list of strategies and provided detailed guidelines for implementation, but left the operationalization of those strategies in the hands of TWG.

One project team member said,

“We used [TGC’s] guidance in terms of what we were trying to accomplish, but then how we achieved that, I think requires a lot of nuance to be able to make it fit into an organization.”



Our broad scope of IT strategies would have made collaborative design incredibly time-consuming, particularly without a full-time internal resource at TWG. It also would have required many additional consulting hours, adding significantly to the total project cost. However, our experience indicates that these additional costs are worthwhile and, indeed, necessary to produce desired results.

In summary, a project team member said

“A more collaborative approach to strategy design might have simplified the implementation process.”



In retrospect, our
key learning

“To maximize momentum, depth of collaboration and return on investment, we recommend other workplaces implement a smaller number of related strategies (*e.g. four*) over shorter periods (*e.g. six months*).”



Key Lesson:

Communication





Key Lesson: *Communication*

As with any project with far-reaching implications for the workplace, effective internal communication is vital. The project team strategically built in several team-wide announcements, presentations and workshops to keep TWG staff apprised at key points in the project cycle. As the project comes to a close, we have learned that a firmer and more consistent plan for internal communication may have harmonized the project team's efforts as well as amplified the project's visibility and the capacity for staff engagement.

While project team check-ins occurred semi-regularly, these were scheduled on an ad-hoc basis.

A core project team member reflected,

“We could have benefitted from more in-person check-ins.”

perhaps on a bi-weekly basis, during which the project team could brainstorm solutions to minor challenges and regroup on emerging priorities.



Another project team member derived valuable support from his interactions with TGC consultants, expressing that

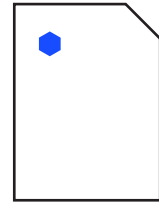
if he had the opportunity to start from scratch, he

“would have tried to have more of those interactions.”

Many staff members not directly involved with coordinating the project voiced a desire for more frequent progress reports and opportunities for involvement. One employee recommended these updates come at “smaller intervals.” Other staff members seemed to agree, suggesting updates on Friday demo days or Tuesday stand-up meetings anywhere from every month to once per quarter.

Additional recommendations included weekly or bi-weekly project updates on the company Slack. We believe each company will have its own internal communication needs, but we have provided an internal communication plan template in the appendices.

Conversely, providing staff members with too much information about each strategy and its goals may promote “demand characteristics,” a form of bias in which participants exhibit what they believe to be the organizers’ desired behaviours, rather than behaving in ways that come naturally to them.



View the plan in

Appendices

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This form of bias can invalidate measurements of project success, so prudence is required when considering how much information to share with employees about project progress.

A strategic internal communication plan is crucial to securing team-wide trust and buy-in for cultural change. The importance of such a plan increases when openness and transparency are core components of the employer brand and a point of pride and job satisfaction for staff. This appears to be the case with TWG.

One employee commented,

“A lot of places are really secretive about what they work on, whereas here it seemed very open and I loved that.”

A colleague echoed this sentiment, expressing that

“a big part of our culture is open-sourcing things and letting people be involved at key touch-points.”

She wished for “more touch-points” on Change Together, “because there are so many people that want to help shape this.” In workplaces that regularly invite employees to contribute their ideas, a staff member warns that “an external group making recommendations can definitely [produce] a little push-back.” Her colleague agreed, suggesting that more opportunities for input would have made the project feel “more crowd-sourced.”

Many employees referenced the empathic communication workshop facilitated by TGC as a crucial moment that helped them understand the roles they could play in building a more inclusive workplace. Several interviewees suggested hosting more of these workshops over the course of implementation, noting that plenty of staff members were eager to continue the conversation, ask more questions and derive more insights from the facilitators and from one another. The workshop was valuable not only for the learning opportunities it facilitated, but for the “sense of an alliance or a shared goal” that it created, according to a team member. Opportunities to engage with the third-party consultants helping to shape the project builds a sense of trust and rapport that only stands to serve the project goals positively.

In retrospect, our
key learning

“The workshop was valuable, not only for the *learning opportunities* it facilitated, but for the “*sense of an alliance or a shared goal*” that it created.”



Final *Thoughts*





Final Thoughts

Are you ready to

Change together?



As a leading-edge, rapidly growing technology firm with a broad client base, TWG was the ideal space in which to pilot an initiative like Project Change Together. As an organization that aims to develop products that will meet the needs of a wide range of users, they have a vested interest in attracting and retaining a diverse staff pool.

As a TWG managing partner says,

“Software has to reach a broad audience, so we want many different perspectives in the studio.”

In their startup stages, technology firms often hire people they connect with on a personal level. *As one leader put it,*

“Would I enjoy having a beer or meal with this person?”

This can unintentionally result in fairly homogenous staff. Over the course of the project, this leader realized that he didn’t want to “create a club of all the same people” with whom he feels social affinity. Instead, his focus turned toward hiring people that “challenge [him] in a whole bunch of other ways, and challenge the business in all sorts of

other ways, and have totally different perspectives on life.” This impetus to create products and services that meet a diverse range of needs makes TWG and its peer companies natural sites to test methods for improving workplace diversity and inclusion.

Another feature of TWG that positioned them well for an intervention like Project Change Together is their philosophy of iteration: boldly testing new methods where success may not be guaranteed, documenting the results (positive and negative) and applying the lessons learned in order to continuously improve. Such an approach may be less suitable for risk-averse, bureaucracy-heavy employers, but it was a natural fit with TWG’s corporate culture. A core member of the project team expressed a sense of pride in the team’s willingness to take risks with Project Change Together.

In her words,

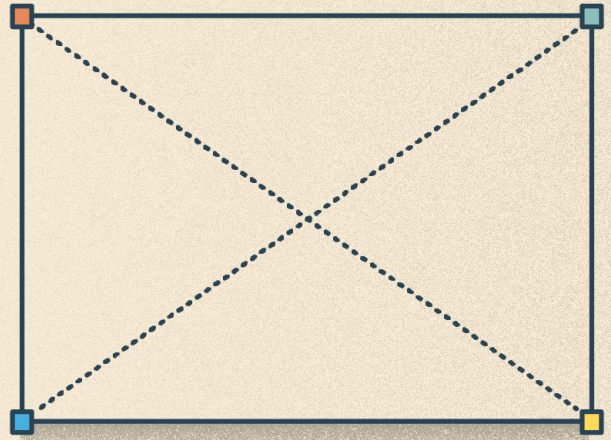
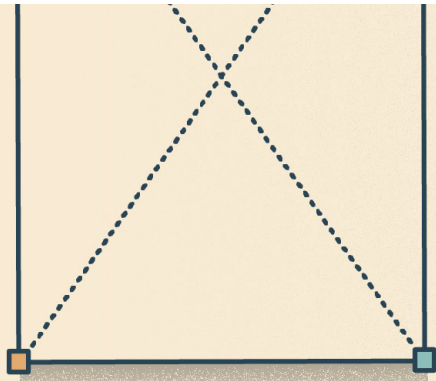
“[Project Change Together] is no different than anything else we do here. Just try, and if it doesn’t work, you try something else. I think that mindset is very important to establish as a baseline off the bat for other people who do this.”



For businesses with an appetite for iteration and critical self-reflection, Project Change Together provides a solid blueprint for working toward a team environment capable of attracting and retaining talented staff members of all genders, backgrounds, sexualities and identity groups. We wish you the best of luck in changing your own ratio, however you choose to do it.

Appendices & *Resources*





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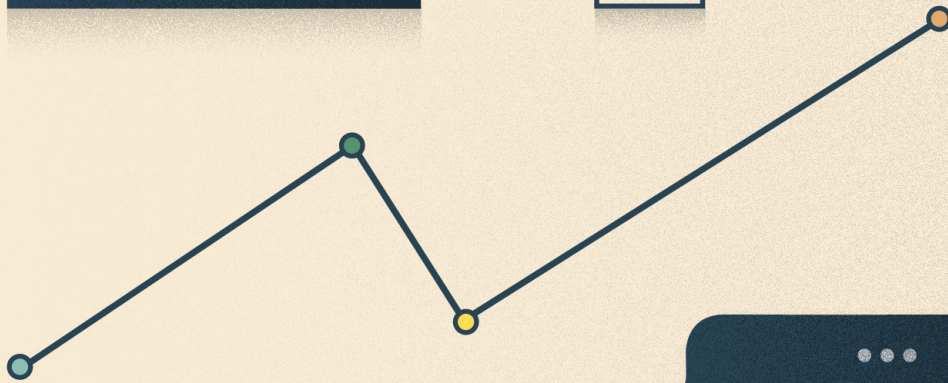


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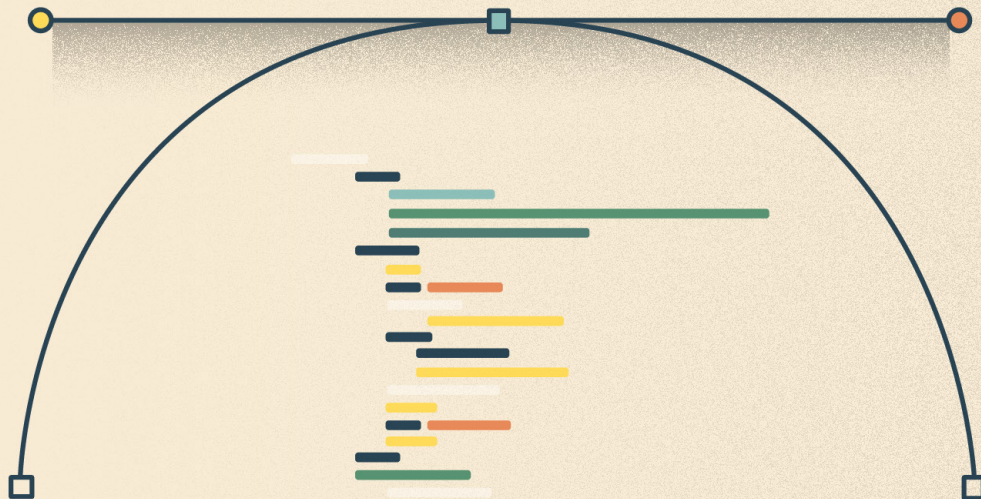
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Pre-Implementation Checklist

- ☐ Select a **project manager** whose job description is wholly or primarily devoted to coordinating the pilot project
- ☐ Select a **member of the senior-most leadership team** to influence senior decision-making and champion the pilot internally and externally, and clear sufficient time in this leader's schedule to attend to the pilot project's needs
- ☐ **Assemble a project team** that includes a diversity of personnel in terms of identity (e.g. gender, race) and role (e.g. engineering, operations, marketing), and clear sufficient time in project team members' schedules to attend to the pilot project's needs
- ☐ **Select strategies** that account for a variety of intersecting identities (e.g. gender, race, sexuality, gender identity, dis/ability, religion, immigration status)
- ☐ **Select strategies** that target the attitudinal shifts and **demographic groups** that are of highest priority according to baseline staff measurements
- ☐ Agree upon a **degree and mode of staff input** that would be most valuable to the pilot project, with consideration of existing workplace culture
- ☐ **Design tools for information capture** and measurement that fit within existing operations, and/or provide training to the project team on any new tools
- ☐ **Select workshop topics** that align with staff learning needs according to baseline measurements and staff feedback (particularly marginalized staff)
- ☐ **Create a strategy and schedule** for external communication
- ☐ **Agree upon a schedule** and format for project team meetings, leader update meetings, and staff mini-updates that work for the team

Possible Workshop and Discussion Group Topics

- Number One* — **Privilege**
what it means, how it manifests, how to stay mindful
- Number Two* — **Criticism and Call-outs**
what they can teach us and how to respond
- Number Three* — **Intent vs. Impact**
why good intentions are not always enough
- Number Four* — **Intersectionality**
why we cannot compartmentalize pieces of our identities
- Number Five* — **"Benevolent" Oppression**
why flattering stereotypes are still harmful
- Number Six* — **"Confident" vs. "Bossy"**
how socialization impacts workplace communication
- Number Seven* — **"Ally" is a Verb, not a Noun**
when to listen and when to speak up
- Number Eight* — **Microaggressions**
how minor slights and stereotypes add up
- Number Nine* — **Bystander Intervention**
how to support (and not “rescue”) our colleagues
- Number Ten* — **The Problem with "Humanism"**
why true justice and equity means embracing our differences

Strategy *Ideas*

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Number One</i> | Limit job descriptions and criteria for promotion to “must-have” qualities |
| <i>Number Two</i> | Revamp the language in job descriptions for greater inclusivity |
| <i>Number Three</i> | Prioritize interviews for applicants from severely underrepresented groups |
| <i>Number Four</i> | Implement policies that facilitate caregiving (including but not limited to parental leave) |
| <i>Number Five</i> | Allow employees paid days off for non-Christian religious holidays (without requiring that they use vacation days for this purpose) |
| <i>Number Six</i> | Remove names and other identity signifiers from job applications |
| <i>Number Seven</i> | Standardize job interview questions |
| <i>Number Eight</i> | Make workplace restrooms gender-neutral |
| <i>Number Nine</i> | Formalize skill matrices to serve as barometers for promotion to minimize potential for bias |
| <i>Number Ten</i> | Increase allotment of sick days/personal days for employees with chronic conditions and mental health issues and/or employees who menstruate |

<i>Number</i> Eleven	Sponsor talented junior employees from underrepresented groups
<i>Number</i> Twelve	Iterate workplace perks based on feedback from employees and job applicants, prioritizing feedback from those who are marginalized
<i>Number</i> Thirteen	Create safe spaces for discussion among marginalized employees
<i>Number</i> Fourteen	Create spaces for reflection among employees with privilege, guided by discussion questions provided by marginalized employees
<i>Number</i> Fifteen	Reserve a private space in the office exclusively for prayer, meditation, and breast-feeding and/or breast-pumping
<i>Number</i> Sixteen	Formalize a hiring partnership with a community initiative focused on marginalized groups within your industry
<i>Number</i> Seventeen	Provide exclusive advance access to new job postings for initiatives focused on marginalized groups in your industry (e.g. Facebook groups, listservs)
<i>Number</i> Eighteen	Select and train a staff member to serve as a key source of support and referrals for employees experiencing domestic or state violence
<i>Number</i> Nineteen	Add one diversity-focused event (workshop, meet-up, conference) to each leadership team member's annual learning plan
<i>Number</i> Twenty	Set diversity-based criteria for the company's participation in industry events (e.g. "Our staff will only participate in panel discussions with a minimum of 40% speakers of colour")

Internal Communication Guidelines

What	Who	Where	When	Why
<i>Preparation</i>				
Initial planning meetings	Project team, including senior leader(s)	Face to face	Minimum of 3 times	Solidify project goals and internal messaging, select strategies to pilot, determine ideal degree and mode of staff input
Baseline measurement	All staff, led by senior leader(s)	Online	In tandem with initial planning meetings, before strategies have been chosen	Obtain baseline measurement of staff diversity and attitudes, shape strategy selection and implementation
Project announcement	All staff, led by senior leader(s) and project manager	Face to face	After choosing strategies, but before creating implementation plan	Obtain baseline measurement of staff diversity and attitudes, shape strategy selection and implementation
Staff input on strategies	All staff, led by project manager	Online and/or face to face	In tandem with implementation plan meetings, concluding before final meeting	Mobilize staff around the project, build excitement, identify key opportunities for staff to contribute
Implementation plan meetings	Project team, including senior leader(s) (at minimum one).	Face to face	After announcement, min. 3-5 times	Collaboratively develop implementation plan, select workshop topics, select tools for data capture and measurement
Announcement of workshop schedule	All staff, led by project manager	Online	After solidification of the implementation plan	Keep staff apprised of group learning schedule, include an article or resource to prime staff for first workshop

Internal Communication Guidelines

What	Who	Where	When	Why
<i>Implementation</i>				
Progress meetings	Project team	Face to face and/or by phone	On a regular basis (e.g. bi-weekly) throughout implementation	Share emerging priorities and challenges, brainstorm solutions and enhancements, identify items requiring approval from leadership
Leader update meetings	All staff, led by senior leader(s)	Online	In tandem with initial planning meetings, before strategies have been chosen	Obtain baseline measurement of staff diversity and attitudes, shape strategy selection and implementation
Project announcement	Project manager and senior leader(s)	Face to face and/or by phone	On a regular basis (e.g. bi-weekly) throughout implementation	Outline items requiring leaders' review and approval, providing any necessary background material
All-staff workshops (mandatory)	All staff, leader(s) to be selected by project team	Face to face	On a regular basis (e.g. monthly) throughout implementation, min. 3	Equip staff with nuanced perspectives on issues relating to the strategies, build staff emotional intelligence/sensitivity
Staff mini-updates	All staff, led alternately by project manager and senior leader(s)	Online and/or face to face	On a regular basis (e.g. bi-weekly, monthly), woven into existing internal communication mechanisms (e.g. Slack, weekly meetings)	Inform staff of relevant details on initiatives that are underway, notify staff of chances to get involved
Formal mid-range staff update	All staff, led by senior leader	Face to face	Halfway through implementation	Share key success metrics with staff, outline any challenges encountered so far, solicit feedback

Internal Communication Guidelines

What	Who	Where	When	Why
<i>Wrap-Up</i>				
Review and wrap-up meetings	Project team	Face to face	Minimum of 3 times	Review project metrics and staff feedback, assess key lessons and successes, chart next steps, outline final pilot report
Pilot wrap-up	All staff, led by project manager and senior leader(s)	Face to face	After pilot report is complete	Share project's key lessons and successes, gather staff feedback and celebrate!

Notes



A series of horizontal lines for taking notes.



Let's change together.

*#changetogether
changetogether.io
hello@changetogether.io*