



USER FRIENDLY

Inclusion and diversity in tech

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Hanish Patel: I'm Hanish Patel and this is User Friendly—the show where we explore emerging trends in tech, media, and telecom, and how they impact business, operations, and the world around you.

Companies today are being challenged to translate the need for diversity and inclusion into impactful actions and meaningful conversation. While most business leaders believe having a Diverse and Inclusive Culture is critical to performance, they don't always know how to achieve it.

Today we are discussing Inclusion in the Workplace, specifically in tech companies (0:01:00), and what individuals and businesses are doing to implement a positive change. Joining me on this episode of User Friendly are Julia Silva, Diversity Program Specialist at Google, and Sharon Harris, VP of Alliance Relationships for Google Marketing Platform at Deloitte.

Julia, Sharon, welcome to the show.

Julia Silva: Thank you.

Sharon Harris: Thanks for having us.

Hanish Patel: Awesome.

Julia Silva: Excited to be here.

Hanish Patel: I could not be more excited about what we are going to cover today, this is such a hot topic, such an important topic, so let's just dive straight into it, right? Diversity Inclusion programs are not a new thing, that's for sure, so what does it mean in the workplace today?

Julia Silva: So, something that has recently come about and then changed from the initial inception of diversity and inclusion is this addition of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and it's really important that we don't use these words interchangeably because they mean different things right, so diversity is the differences and variations within a group, really important that it's within a group (0:02:00). An individual cannot be diverse, and I hear that all the time and drives me nuts, it's within a group context.

And then Equity is really getting at the difference between equity and equality, so equality aims for fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and if everyone has kind of the same needs and needs the same type of help. And so equity is really giving everyone the tools needed to succeed, and so I wanted to call that distinction out because I think it's something that's new and it's really becoming much more prevalent in this type of work.

And then inclusion is the piece of—do people feel included, do they have that seat at the table—that's something that has a recent kind of shift, I think, in the dialogue as looking at it in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Sharon Harris: I'm glad you brought up equity because we're all going to experience it differently, but how do we all have the same tools in order to find solutions to overcome challenges, or just to even have a voice at the table, and equity is so critical. I think it's really about driving that additional awareness to those individual experiences and understanding, okay, we may need to do something different in order to drive equity for this individual, or this group of people versus another group of people.

Julia Silva: Yes, I think there has been a shift and how it's being perceived in the sense that diversity is one thing, and inclusion is another, and making sure to educate on the importance of both. And I always like to use the phrase, "diversity is being invited to the party, but inclusion is being asked to dance." There is this idea that we need to focus on having a more representative workplace, but also when we get those people to your organization, to your company, do they feel included, do they feel

that they have the same tools, the same career growth opportunities, leadership potential, are they actually being included so that they want to stay? I think that it's really important to note the differences because there is a lot of effort and that we're all at least in Tech and at Google, specifically, we're really working hard to have a more representative workforce.

However, we have another team that's solely focused on the inclusion aspect and that idea of we want to retain those people once they actually arrive. That's something to focus on with this conversation on diversity and inclusion. It's really important to know these two parallel paths but with the same goal of really making a great culture for everyone.

Sharon Harris:

That's such a great point when you bring up inclusion because at the end of the day, in order to really be successful, you have to have these differing viewpoints. Everyone has to feel empowered to share their ideas, to share their voice, and to really be a part of the decision making.

Inclusion is that next level up that companies are really aspiring toward because it's about, do we have the right representatives at the table, does everyone feel empowered to share their ideas. It's an interesting conversation because Inclusion is something I think here at Deloitte that we are making a lot of strides around. We certainly, like every other company out there, have a lot more work to do. But I'm really proud of the efforts that we're making and the strides that we're taking to really build a truly inclusive culture.

Hanish Patel: (0:05:00) You know I really love what you said there earlier, Julia, about being invited to the party and then being asked to dance. If I may continue with that analogy, Sharon, and take it one step further, we actually have the ability to change the music, right? So I think that's the power of the analogy if I've understood it correctly. That diversity is kind of only the first step, with the inclusion perspective being that next step that needs to be taken.

Julia Silva: Absolutely.

Sharon Harris: Yes.



Hanish Patel: Given that growing recognition about the criticality of diversity, as well as inclusion, what might be the impact that these changes are going to have on business performance as a whole? Because, ultimately, companies/organizations are still going to say, well how does that benefit the bottom line? How is this going to change us as a company and involve us as a company? What challenges do companies face in translating that into value and impactful actions? What can companies really do and change in their workplace to make that happen?

Julia Silva: (0:06:00) So we actually talk about this a lot in our #IamRemarkable program about how diversity is no longer nice to have, this is business-critical at this point. There is tremendous business value that can come from these types of efforts.

So #IamRemarkable is an initiative that really focuses on empowering women and underrepresented groups to learn the skills necessary to self-promote in the workplace, but really in every aspect of your life. And within that, we're also trying to challenge this social perception around gender modesty and what it means to self-promote, specifically for women. Because there is a social perception that it's seen in a negative way, and we have seen that self-promotion is a skill that's needed for your professional development. And so, the way that the initiative actually works is we host a 90-minute workshop, and in that workshop, we go through the program itself. How it started, the research behind it, as to why self-promotion is really important (0:07:00). Then we go into an exercise and I will say that the program started back in 2015 and, by the end of 2016, we had about 200 participants. As of today, we've had nearly 35,000 participants, specifically in regard to the #IamRemarkable workshops.

We also want to make sure that you are able to control that narrative and showcase that unique value that you bring to the table. And within that, organizations over time will start to realize, well, we need to invest in these individuals; we need to continue to grow and expand in their professional development. But you have an obligation in that as well. I think something that's really powerful is, I am taking

the opportunity to showcase me, Julia, "I am Remarkable," for all of these accomplishments, all of these things that I've done. It's going to continue to benefit my organization and then there are true business implications as to why we need to support these communities.

Companies with more women board directors outperform others by 53%. (0:08:00) Like there is statistical information that shows having more women at the table results in getting more things done. When we have those leadership positions, we help companies over-perform. There's also a statistic that shows that companies that are in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity have 35% higher financial returns than the national median. So, from a numbers standpoint, there is proof that diversity is important and it's not just money and numbers. We want to continue to grow as an organization but it's also—Google is a global company, just to take a step back. We are a global company. We have a global consumer base. How are we going to continue to innovate and develop products for a global consumer base if we ourselves aren't representatives of that community. And so, it goes into this idea that diversity allows you to be more flexible, more creative, more innovative. You're able to have more perspectives at the table, you're going to continue to build great products, and that's a fundamental (0:09:00) aspect of Google that I'm super proud to be a part of. It's that we truly want to build for everyone, but we also want to make sure that we're representative of who we're building for.

Sharon Harris: I think when we think about business impact, there is a fundamental reality about the demographics of the universe. They are changing, and many of the groups that we consider today to be underrepresented are ethnic groups and women who are becoming a larger percentage of the population. Therefore your consumer base for any company, any brand out there is changing. So how do you market, how do you message to that audience, how do you grow that audience so that they, number one, find value in your product, and they are continually spending with you. The numbers, yes, they definitely do matter, because business is still business. But if you're going to be successful, you must have a culture and business practices that are not

only representative of your consumers, they're respectful of your consumers, and, ultimately, they're relevant to your consumers. (0:10:00)

Without having those voices, those faces, and those people at the table when you're conceiving new products, when you're developing products, when you're testing products, you're going to miss out. Because the experiences across all these spectrums are very different. How different is it seeing something as a Black Woman versus a Latina Woman versus an Asian Woman versus an Asian man? And in our daily lives, whether it's picking up our kids from school, or the groceries that we buy, or the products that we need most, there are nuances and subtleties that you're not going to pick up unless someone was at the table when that product was being developed and said hey, this name choice doesn't work or this commercial is going to offend someone. That's the importance of having that representation at the table, but once again, you've got to have representation, you've got to be respectful, you've got to be relevant. (0:11:00) That's the real business impact of having a diverse and inclusive culture.

Hanish Patel: Let's double click into that. I mean there are so many companies in tech space, even our own. You've got all these resource groups, you've got industry councils. Are they moving that inclusion needle forward to be represented at the table or are those resource groups and those councils trying to achieve something different within the organization?

Sharon Harris: Well, the idea is that everyone needs to have a personal experience with someone who is "other than," and this allows for much more dynamic conversations; it allows for greater understanding and it provides a truly safe and open environment to have those discussions.

I don't expect everyone to understand everything about everyone. Until you've had a conversation with someone who may be from a different part of the world than you, who has different beliefs than you, it's going to be very difficult for you to find that understanding, and certainly in the world that we live in today. I am a big believer in open dialogue. (0:12:00) We

have to have those conversations. I think also for us at Deloitte, inclusion councils have been helpful in terms of highlighting and spotlighting that talent they may not have noticed.

You know, Julia touched upon, you know, “often women aren’t speaking up for themselves.” This is often the case in many other groups where culturally it’s not the norm to be vocal or outspoken in your conversation. So, these inclusion councils allow, once again, for a really comfortable environment for those moments of coaching and sponsorship to really occur and they can often open the doors for other opportunities. And I think for us, we’re continuing to grow our inclusion councils and we are just finding really good success in that effort. But this is not a journey of a single day, this is something that has been created over years and years. And it’s going to take a lot of additional work and more time until we really start to see and benefit from all those changes.

Julia Silva: So, I love that Deloitte also does the inclusive councils (0:13:00). We do, as well, at Google, and we also have employee resource groups (ERG). I just want to highlight the experience I’ve personally had with being a part of different ERG groups.

So, I’m half Brazilian and half Portuguese. My dad is from northeastern Brazil and my mom is from Portugal. I’m the first person in my family born in the US, so I have a very unique identity in the sense that I really don’t fit into one category. I’m always the “other,” and I’ve felt this way for as long as I can remember. Something that’s interesting for me with how I’ve come to leverage and utilize the ERGs is just that sense of community where I’m able to find someone who has had a similar life experience. That connection is so rare especially with my unique background, but we have Women@Group, we have our Familia@Group, we have our BlackGooglerNetwork. All of these are focused on that idea of community building (0:14:00). Because we all have our own lived experiences and sometimes you just want to have a person you can connect with who’s had a similar background or similar experience as you. One of the nice things about Google is there is a lot of overlap. So, we do kind of have multiple, cross ERG gatherings where everyone can kind of share.

You know, what are some of the experiences that you are going through now and how can we help one another? I think the idea of allyship is really important as well, understanding how I can uplift someone’s voice that maybe isn’t being heard. What you said about being in the room and you notice that someone isn’t at the table. And being that person to say, hey, I’m going to assess this space and I notice that there might not be representation of this individual. Open dialogue is really key, and I think that the allyship between all of the different ERG groups is something that’s really phenomenal. It just continues to build on this idea that we all need to have a stake in this, (0:15:00) we all need to push this forward, it can’t just be on the backs of those who are underrepresented. It really needs to be a collective effort.

Hanish Patel: So, I want to go into an area that you touched upon about Google being global. Deloitte is global as well, right, and you’ve got the #IamRemarkable hashtag. How does that transfer internationally? I’d love to hear how this translates in different cultures.

Julia Silva: Yeah, that’s a great question. So, I’ll give you a little context on #IamRemarkable so that everyone understands how it started. It started back in 2015 as a 20% project, so one of Google’s infamous 20% projects, where you can dedicate 20% of your time outside of your core role toward a passion area, a side project. Gmail is an example of a 20% project. And so #IamRemarkable was started by two women named Anna in our London offices, so this actually started in EMEA. Over time, based on doing a few pilots, they really homed in (0:16:00) on this idea of self-promotion and A) just bringing awareness to the fact that this is something a lot of people show up with, but also B) trying to challenge the social perception around what it means to self-promote. They realized that this is not just something for EMEA, and so they wanted to expand this globally.

And so, since 2015 we have scaled tremendously. We are now in the US, we are in Latin America, APAC. We recently did our International Women’s Day Summits and featured #IamRemarkable across 12 global summits. And in that experience, that same

question came up: How does this translate in different cultures and different countries? I think the concept like #IamRemarkable absolutely resonates, but it’s really critical to be mindful of the fact that there are cultural expectations that come into play that will make it much more challenging for certain individuals to do this skill.

For example, I was working with our team in Tokyo and the cultural expectation for women (0:17:00) in Japan to be modest is much more heavily defended there. So, it’s even another step that you must take to change the perception around what it means to just talk about your accomplishments. We’re just talking about things that we are proud of. But you look at Japan versus the US. In the US, it’s a little easier being more open, forthcoming, and passionate, and leadership skills are always really welcomed. You have to look at the differences between those cultures and I do think that it still resonates but we are doing a lot of work and making it more localized. We recently just got translations in Portuguese, in Japanese, we’re working on translations in Russian, so that we can have this more specialized for each location. I do think that the overall concept absolutely resonates with everyone. It is something that I’m very mindful (0:18:00) of, that you always need to consider where you are and the environment you’re in, to make sure that we’re being respectful of those cultural differences.

And a great thing for me is, recently, I went to Brazil for our International Women’s Day Summit there and we did an #IamRemarkable session and it was the first time I heard it in Portuguese. I speak Portuguese fluently so it’s really exciting for me just to see the differences and how it’s translated right? So in Brazil, their translation of “#IamRemarkable” is “eu sou foda” and that basically means like “I’m the shit,” like I’m . . .

Hanish Patel: I love it.

Julia Silva: That’s how it’s translated.

Sharon Harris: I love that.

Julia Silva: And it worked so well because the women in that audience were just so excited to be there and I could just feel the energy of I'm the shit, I know that I'm incredible, I do this work, and it was just great to kind to step outside of that US lens. Right? I finally kind of got to see it in a different culture, but again everyone still got a lot out of the exercise. They left the workshop saying wow, (0:19:00) I didn't realize I had such a hard time talking about myself, thank you for bringing this to my attention. But then also you leave feeling so empowered right? And that's great because it shows how translating something sometimes is a little better in a different language.

Hanish Patel: I'm going to use that, I have to use that.

Sharon Harris: That's the hashtag of the day.

Hanish Patel: When I think about diversity and inclusion, I think you both just touched upon that it's not just about women, and it's not just about the benefit of women. It's about the benefit of everybody and what's the role that we can all play. And, in particular, I'm going to sort of click in here and say particularly when it comes to men, what's the role that we can play, and how can our listeners really get involved if they are not quite sure?

Julia Silva: Yes, absolutely, and I know #IamRemarkable started originally for women only, but when we started to do pilots we realized men absolutely can benefit from this. I've done sessions where I had a 50%-50% split of men and women, and the men actually came up to me afterwards and they said thank you. (0:20:00) They didn't realize that they also struggled with this, and they didn't realize that these were the experiences of women in the workplace. Because we go through a lot of research during this workshop that describes the experiences of women and underrepresented groups in the workplace. I think it's just a matter of awareness and education because oftentimes there's a bit of gap and men will say I don't know how to be helpful. But then there is this kind of hesitation to start or to just go and start to learn. And I think the biggest thing is really, just show up, be open to listening and learning, but also kind of self-educate, because you can't really expect everyone to always want to share their experiences. and have to educate again. I use this term of you can't have this burden on those who are minoritized.

Sharon Harris: Absolutely.

Hanish Patel: Given what both of you covered, there's just so much material here. Usually I would have some closing remarks but I don't even know where to begin. But again, I'll use your analogy of "let's be (0:21:00) inviting more people to the party, let's be asking them to dance, and let's give them the opportunity to change the music."

Hanish Patel: I absolutely want to thank both of you. Julia, Sharon, thank you for joining me today on such an important topic. Thank you ever so much and until next time, happy listening.

Sharon Harris: Thank you.

Julia Silva: Thank you.

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