

Support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with Proactive Information Governance



Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become hot topics, particularly in the wake of civil unrest in the United States in 2020. Investors increasingly demand that businesses disclose data demonstrating DEI. And the federal government and nearly every state have passed anti-discrimination laws. [Information governance](#) helps organizations put good intentions into action.

Diversity in this context refers to differences such as gender, age, race, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic status. It also refers to physical disabilities and neurodiversity. Inclusion, on the other hand, involves the practice of embracing diversity. And equity refers to removing barriers to ensure that historically marginalized groups can participate fully.

Data Plays Key Role in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

When collected ethically and managed effectively, data delivers several essential benefits to DEI efforts. Some of these benefits include:

- Identifying and measuring gaps and biases – Data can reveal patterns of discrimination or underrepresentation of marginalized groups. For instance, careful analysis of data can expose barriers that prevent women, people of color or people with disabilities from advancing in their careers.
- Driving decision making to improve equity – For example, data can help organizations identify ways to improve hiring practices to ensure a diverse workforce.

- Monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of initiatives – Once organizations have implemented diversity initiatives, data can also provide evidence of what works and what does not. This allows organizations to make necessary adjustments to programs and practices as they reach toward DEI goals.

On the other hand, low quality or misused data can negatively impact diversity and inclusion. In fact, when data collection does not take into account context and nuance, it can reinforce existing inequalities or stereotypes. Incomplete, inaccurate, or outdated information can also be misinterpreted or manipulated, thus supporting harmful narratives or agendas.

Therefore, data practitioners and stakeholders need to use [information governance best practices](#) to ensure high quality data. This includes promoting accessibility of data while protecting privacy. It also involves paying special attention to metadata and working to build data literacy across the organization.



Balance Accessibility with Privacy

Effective decision-making requires that DEI stakeholders have access to quality data. Various factors influence data accessibility. For instance, decision makers must be able to locate relevant data. They must also have the necessary permissions in place to view and share that data appropriately.

Poor data accessibility can undermine data quality by limiting feedback and correction. Further, when policy makers do not have access to all relevant information, the resulting policies will not have the desired results.

At the same time, access management and data security programs must preserve privacy. And companies have a legal and ethical obligation to ensure [protection of sensitive information](#).

Metadata Management is Critical

To use data to drive diversity and inclusion, data practitioners need information about the data. This [metadata](#) can include information about the type of data involved, how and when the data was collected, and its intended purpose and audience. Metadata can also include data classifications such as sensitivity labels.

When properly managed, metadata allows organizations to find and use data more effectively. For instance, it can facilitate the process of breaking down data into smaller and more specific units, such as age, gender, or race.

Additionally, metadata plays a vital role in enforcing regulatory compliance, as well as internal policies regarding data retention, archiving and security. For instance, policies for accessing or sharing information can be tied to certain data types. Likewise, sensitivity labels make it possible for organizations to monitor and protect sensitive information.



Promote Data Literacy and Education

For employees across the organization to access, interpret and communicate data effectively and ethically, they need to know how to properly use and understand data. Thus, an important aspect of a well-rounded information governance strategy involves ensuring [data literacy](#) at all levels. This proves especially important in relation to promoting DEI.

For instance, employees need to know where data lives, both inside and outside the organization. They also need to know how to determine the quality and relevance of the data presented. And they need to know how to collect, use and communicate data both ethically and effectively.



A data literacy program requires leadership from the C-suite, and it involves all levels of the organization. Educational initiatives should incorporate engaging teaching methods and a role-based curriculum that identifies the skills needed for each work area.

Strengthen Information Governance with Expert Help

Implementing an [information governance](#) strategy that supports diversity, equity and inclusion involves a host of factors. Whether improving data security, protecting data privacy, fine-tuning metadata management, or building a data literacy program, organizations can turn to the information governance experts at Messaging Architects.