

Diversity and Inclusion Programs to Promote a Diverse Workforce and Create an Inclusive Environment in China: Lessons from Case Study of Google and Alibaba



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ABSTRACT: Corporate businesses are paying more and more attention to the value of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the context of faster globalization. In addition to bringing fresh viewpoints and creative ideas, a diverse workforce helps corporate organizations become more competitive and adapt to changing market conditions. This article uses case studies on Alibaba and Google to illustrate its goal of encouraging diversity in the workforce and building inclusive environments in China. Promoting diversity and inclusivity presents special opportunities as well as problems for China. In addition to being crucial components of corporate social responsibility, diversity and inclusion are also necessary for businesses to thrive sustainably. According to this survey, global businesses with a diverse workforce outperform others in terms of employee performance and innovation. But for many Chinese and international businesses, the question of how to successfully advance diversity and inclusion initiatives within the framework of Chinese corporate culture continues to be a major concern. In order to effectively support Chinese companies in promoting diversity and inclusion programs, this paper carefully selects two representative companies, Alibaba and Google, as case studies. The goal is to analyze the diversity and inclusion practices of these two global tech giants and examine their successes and shortcomings. Alibaba, one of the top Chinese corporations, is likewise well-known for its diversity and inclusion initiatives, and Google, a major player in the computer industry, is widely praised for its initiatives in this area. This paper's study goals include summarizing the experiences and flaws of Google and Alibaba, as well as analyzing and assessing the efficacy of their unique diversity and inclusion initiatives. To suggest inclusion and diversity initiatives that are appropriate for Chinese businesses. Data analysis, case studies, and literature reviews make up the bulk of the research process.

KEYWORDS: diversity, inclusion, diverse workforce, inclusive environment, China, Alibaba, Google

INTRODUCTION

Businesses and organizations are confronting previously unheard-of opportunities and difficulties as a result of the rapid development of globalization and information technology. Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is now a key component that boosts competitiveness and spurs innovation. While inclusion guarantees that these diverse individuals can participate equally and are recognized and included inside organizations, diversity refers to the inclusion of people from different backgrounds, genders, ages, ethnicities, faiths, and cultures in organizations and society.

With the population's continued social advancement and rapid economic development, more individuals will be employed in China's businesses and organizations, creating a shortage of jobs as well as a trend toward greater diversity in the labor market. The aging population brings multigenerational work environments; the emergence of a young, fresh workforce brings new ideas and innovations to Chinese society; the process of urbanization and internal migrations increases the diversity of regional cultures; and some of the old and corrupt social issues will be improved as society moves forward. Furthermore, a more diverse workforce in terms of knowledge and skills has resulted from the overall increase in educational attainment. Though women are now more prevalent in the workforce, they are still underrepresented in senior management roles, and gender equality has not yet been entirely achieved. These developments also present new obstacles. For organizations, the question of how to fully utilize each employee's potential while respecting and embracing diversity has become crucial.

In addition to reflecting social justice and fairness, the adoption of diversity and inclusion initiatives in Chinese society is essential to boosting corporate innovation and competitiveness. Studies have indicated that diverse teams within organizations foster greater creativity and adaptability, enabling them to address complicated issues and market shifts with

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greater efficiency. But in reality, gender inequality, regional disparities, and ingrained cultural attitudes continue to be significant barriers to the implementation of D&I initiatives.

This essay discusses the implementation of successful diversity and inclusion initiatives in China as a means of fostering organizational and economic innovation and competitiveness. After analyzing China's current state of workforce diversity and the obstacles it faces, as well as merging successful local and foreign examples, we have developed a set of implementation techniques and recommendations that businesses and policy makers may use as a guide. By implementing systematic D&I programs, it is hoped to create a more diverse and inclusive work environment, which will boost enterprise effectiveness and contribute to China's sustainable development and prosperity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Association of American Research Libraries published a report titled "SPEC Kit 356: Diversity and Inclusion" based on a study of the support provided by its member libraries for diversity and inclusion. This paper has research value and reference relevance for the development of diversity and inclusion support practice in China's college libraries. An analysis of it can provide light on the current state of diversity and inclusion support provided by North American college libraries. A diverse team consists of individuals with varying backgrounds, experiences, viewpoints, and skill sets. These distinctions may pertain to gender, age, race, sexual orientation, religion, educational background, or work experience, among other things. A diverse team is more likely to generate more ideas and suggestions to help build more ideal solutions. A multifarious team has an advantage in invention and creativity. Diverse team members can enhance the decision-making process by providing a wider view on the demands of the clientele. Diverse teams can improve market competitiveness by better understanding and meeting the demands of different client groups. On the other hand, an inclusive workplace fosters a sense of respect and value for team members from different backgrounds, fosters tolerance and understanding, raises motivation, lowers attrition, and enhances overall team performance. China currently prioritizes creating an inclusive society, which will require a diversified staff to be effective over the long run.

2.0 Definition and Benefits of an Inclusive Environment

Diverse teams—composed of individuals from various backgrounds and throughout the globe, each with unique upbringings that have shaped their personalities and worldviews—benefit from inclusive work settings because they foster a more positive and productive work environment. Establishing an atmosphere at work where each worker is treated with dignity, encouraged, and appreciated. Not only do inclusive environments value variety, but they actively search out these distinctions. By fostering candid and open conversation and teamwork, inclusive workplaces improve teamwork and communication. Enhanced Employee Engagement: When workers feel that their ideas and opinions are acknowledged and valued, they are more inclined to participate actively in business decisions and operations. Establishing a healthy work environment is essential for both overall business performance and employee happiness and productivity. In addition to attracting and keeping top personnel, a healthy work culture also makes a company more innovative and competitive. It is undeniably a great working environment for employees when prejudice and discrimination are reduced, and managers should aggressively promote and foster cultural diversity among employees in addition to making sure that each employee is treated properly. Establishing unambiguous anti-discrimination policies and offering training to all staff members to improve their knowledge of diversity and inclusion are also important. Talent with tremendous potential can also be absorbed by an inclusive environment. Top social talent may not understand the masses due to a wealth of cultural and theoretical knowledge; instead, their greater awareness of theories will cause others around them to become cynical and feel under constant pressure. Even though these gifted individuals may not be good communicators or adept in the human world, the inclusive atmosphere and variety of the team will inspire them to create their own worth in the workplace.

METHODOLOGY

The case study method is applied in this work. Two businesses were located and examined. A broader research project that concentrated on diversity and inclusion at Alibaba and Google led to the case studies of the companies on how they implemented the concept of "diversity and inclusion" in China. The concept of examining large organizations stems from their requirement to engage in open communication with a wide range of stakeholders, and they utilize formalised distribution channels to a higher degree than smaller companies. Google has long been recognized for leading the way in promoting gender diversity and progressive ideals. In Google's inaugural diversity report, which was published on June 15, 2018, female employees made up 30.9% of the workforce globally. Black employees made up 2.5% of the workforce in the United States, followed by Latino employees (3.6%), Indian employees (0.3%), and employees of other races (4.2%). As shown in Figure 1

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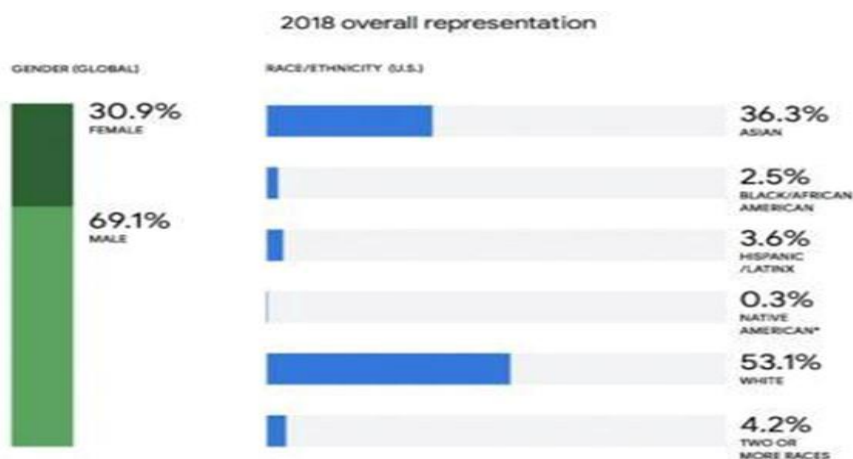


Figure 1. Gender and ethnic diversity distribution of Google employees (US) (screenshot from TechCrunch)

Alibaba Group's Diversity & Inclusion rating, derived from 827 anonymous employee evaluations gathered from reliable data supplied by glassdoor.com, is 3.3 out of 5 stars. This is in line with the industry average D&I ranking for information technology. Over the previous 12 months, 827 employees' average D&I rating has dropped, as depicted in Figure 2. According to the research charts, 30% of team members gave Alibaba Group employees a rating of 5 out of 5 stars, the highest possible, when asked about the company's diversity and inclusion (D&I). These employees also believed that Alibaba Group had a relatively high level of maturity in D&I. Nearly 70% of the remaining workers gave Alibaba Group an average rating of 1-4 stars, and they largely agree that Alibaba Group still has to make improvements in terms of the inclusive and diverse work environment it provides for its employees. The information presented here highlights several problems facing Alibaba Group, which the business needs to closely monitor and address in order to establish a more comprehensive and diverse workplace.

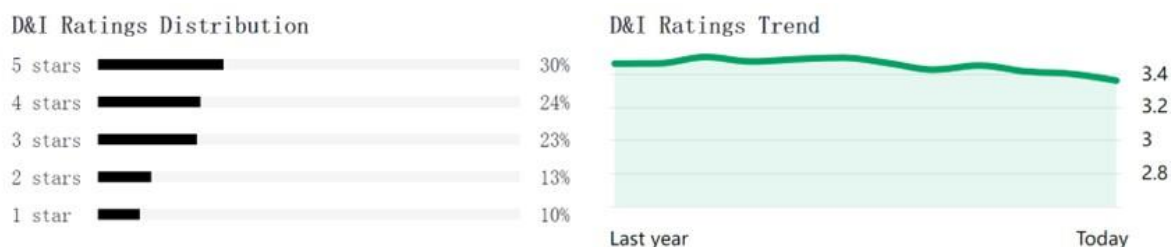


Figure 2. Chart courtesy of glassdoor.com.hk

CASE STUDY

A. Google (Liu Zhen, Research on the role and impact of diversity and inclusion in corporate human resource management, 2024)

(1) Background

Users of Google come from a diverse spectrum of origins, ethnicities, and languages worldwide. Google is realizing that, in order to remain competitive in the market and provide better service and retention for these consumers, it needs a varied workforce that matches the diversity of its user base worldwide. In Google's 2019 Diversity Report, the percentage of female employees rose from 30% in 2014 to 33.9%.

(2) Strategy implementation

Transparency: One of the first businesses to openly release data demonstrating the diversity of its workforce was Google, a well-known worldwide corporation. Due to this transparency, more businesses have been inspired to release their statistics, which has sparked industry-wide initiatives to broaden diversity. For instance, Statista reports that after Google started sharing and showcasing its diversity statistics, businesses like Facebook, Apple, and Amazon have been progressively revealing their own staff ratio data to the public.

Unconscious Bias Training: To assist staff in recognizing and overcoming unconscious biases like sexism, gender inequality, and the exclusion of homosexuals, which can all have a detrimental effect on an organization's employee diversity, Google

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has created a series of focused and specialized training programs. Participating in these trainings helps foster a more inclusive workplace while also increasing employees' knowledge of cultural differences.

Recruitment strategy: Google partners with several varied institutions and organizations to discover highly educated individuals of all shapes and sizes on its diverse campuses, ensuring that its recruitment channels are diverse. Furthermore, Google offers its hiring staff training to guarantee that there is no bias throughout the interview process. The Pew Research Center reports that the proportion of non-white workers at Google in technical roles increased from 16% in 2014 to 23% in 2019.

Employee organizations: Google sponsors and provides funding to a number of employee organizations, including Gayglers, Women@Google, and the Black Googler Network. These clubs give staff members a forum to exchange stories, create relationships, and encourage positive career growth.

(3) Results and Impacts

The outcomes of Google's diversity and inclusion initiative are impressive; the company's ability to create is enhanced by the diversity of its personnel, which also increases employee satisfaction and a sense of belonging. More significantly, Google's effective approach serves as a workable model for other businesses, demonstrating the significance of inclusion and diversity for business success. A diverse range of talents will increasingly actively enter the company from outside of their own networks to contribute to the team within the organization.

B. Alibaba (Liu Zhen, Research on the role and impact of diversity and inclusion in corporate human resource management, 2024)

(1) Background

Not only has Alibaba, the well-known Chinese e-commerce behemoth, achieved remarkable strides in technological innovation and business model development, but it has also managed to stay competitive with the best corporate levels globally in terms of inclusivity and diversity. In Alibaba's 2022 annual report, the percentage of female employees reached 49.5%, with 39% of those women holding managerial positions.

(2) Strategy Implementation

Diverse Staff: Alibaba places a strong emphasis on hiring workers of all ages, genders, ethnicities, and cultures. The organization benefits from the rich social resources and creative thinking that this diversified workforce brings, as well as the ability to view things from a variety of perspectives. For instance, Alibaba's Women's senior Program seeks to guarantee gender diversity in the company's senior ranks while also fostering and improving the leadership abilities of female employees.

Employee Relationship Management: Alibaba has always prioritized "customers first, employees second, shareholders third" in its corporate culture, making sure that each and every employee is valued and acknowledged. One of Alibaba's basic principles is "teamwork," which indicates that the corporation cherishes each individual's contribution to the organization, regardless of background.

Support and promotion from the top: Jack Ma, the creator of Alibaba, has long been a fervent advocate for inclusive and diverse workplace policies. Since he has publicly emphasized the crucial role that women play in the company, a rising number of women are joining Alibaba's workforce and their representation in the company has increased to varied degrees. Ma and other senior leaders make sure that the values of inclusion and diversity are taken into consideration when making decisions. Gender equality and diversity are considered in the company's talent development program and promotion system, for instance.

(3) Results and Impact

On several fronts, Alibaba's diversity and inclusion policy has produced noteworthy outcomes. First, the company's diverse leadership team has contributed to better reflecting the variety of its worldwide user base, strengthening its services and products and sharply lowering overall customer unhappiness. Second, the company's success in the global marketplace may be attributed to the more inventive staff that has resulted from the diversity and inclusion policy. This workforce is more equipped to comprehend and satisfy the demands of many markets.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The diversity and inclusion initiatives implemented by the Google and Alibaba companies have yielded some positive results, as shown below:

Both of the companies have seen improved representation of women, ethnic minorities, and other underrepresented groups across their operations in China.

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By offering a flexible and open work environment, Google fosters creative thinking and the collision and interchange of ideas. Contrary to the widely held misconception, Google is a high-tech company that hires people without a degree in computer science. During the hiring process, Google gives extra weight to applicants' capacity for problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork in order to promote diversity and creative thinking. Google also gives staff members the opportunity to work on personal projects during downtime and encourages them to take part in a variety of training programs to advance their careers. Google actively explores new avenues while upholding tradition when it comes to diversity assurance. The company has implemented several strategies to close the gender gap in order to promote gender equality between men and women. Creating and enhancing a comprehensive and effective strategy for pregnancy and postpartum care, as well as encouraging a work-life balance, are some of the specific steps it has taken to lower the number of women choosing to quit the workforce. Google has emerged as one of the trendsetters of the modern era with its diverse corporate culture. The world's greatest talent have been drawn to Google by its open, welcoming, appreciative of diversity, and dedication to the pursuit of excellence in the workplace. Google has also consistently encouraged innovation and progress. This diversified culture has become one of the important factors for Google's success and will continue to play an important role in the future. (Google's diverse corporate culture: creating an open and inclusive work environment)

Alibaba aspires to create a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and polite workplace atmosphere. In the most recent Alibaba 2022 ESG report ("2022 Alibaba Environment, Society and Governance Report"), "Supporting Employee Development" is ranked second among Alibaba's ESG "Seven Petals" and is considered the company's most significant social responsibility approach. By the conclusion of the 2022 fiscal year, women made up 49.5% of Alibaba's workforce, and over 39% of directors and senior management were also female.

Furthermore, 2,007 individuals with impairments are employed by the Alibaba group. Alibaba Park has specifically completed more than 30 barrier-free modifications to make their work and lives easier. In addition to offering pleasant benefits and competitive pay, Alibaba offers its workers abundant chances for personal development through learning, advancement, and training. Alibaba employees received 49 hours of training per person in the fiscal year 2022. Internal transfers have been accomplished by over 7,000 workers in order to improve internal work and development space flow. Alibaba improved employee benefits at the end of the previous year and introduced the "Warm Heart Plan," which was the first in the industry to offer a 7-day "fully paid companionship leave" in addition to a range of other benefits like 20 days of fully paid long-term service leave, parental leave, and extended maternity leave. A flexible office system was also being tested at the same time, giving workers the freedom to select their workplace location for up to one day per week. As of March 31, 2022, over 28,000 Alibaba workers had requested companionship leave, which enables them to spend more time with their families. The policy went into effect on January

1, 2022. In the past, Alibaba spearheaded the introduction of the "Carnation Parents Physical Examination," which prioritized the well-being of workers' parents and relatives. It is acknowledged that 65,000 parents of employees and the elderly took part in the Carnation Health Examination in fiscal year 2022. Alibaba relaunched its "Million-level Medical Insurance" program last year, allowing staff members to enroll their kids. (Focusing on the diversified development of talents and social responsibility, Alibaba was once again named the world's best employer in 2022 by Forbes)

RESULTS

1 . Awareness-raising and education Campaigns:

To promote an inclusive workplace for diverse teams in China's societal setting, several foreign companies operating in the country have launched a number of programs to educate employees about the importance of diversity and inclusion. These programs, which seek to promote cultural understanding and reduce unconscious prejudice, usually include workshops, training sessions, and seminars. The primary subjects of the educational programs that have been implemented are the value of diversity and the benefits of an inclusive workplace. These programs usually include training on topics like gender equality, disability inclusion, and LGBTQ+ awareness.

2. Diverse Recruitment Practices

a. Recruitment Policy:

To make sure it draws in a wide pool of applicants, the corporation updated its recruitment guidelines. This entails interacting with underrepresented populations and forming alliances with institutions that promote diversity.

b. Equal Employment Opportunity:

There has been an attempt to guarantee parity in hiring, advancement, and professional growth. Fair assessment standards and open hiring procedures are part of this.

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3. Inclusive Workplace Culture

a. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):

ERGs are designed to give employees from all backgrounds a sense of belonging and support. These organizations frequently concentrate on particular topics, like support for workers with disabilities, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and gender equality.

b. Inclusive Policies and Practices:

The business has put in place inclusive practices like parental leave, flexible work schedules, and accommodations for staff members with impairments. These regulations contribute to the development of a more encouraging and welcoming workplace.

4. Leadership and Accountability

a. Diverse Leadership:

An effort has been made to broaden the diversity of those in leadership roles. This includes making an attempt to elevate women and members of underrepresented groups to positions of leadership.

b. Accountability Measures: To monitor advancement toward D&I objectives, the organization has implemented accountability measures. This entails providing frequent updates on diversity measures and holding executives responsible for fostering an inclusive workplace.

5. Acknowledgment from Outside and Collaborations a. Honors & Awards:

Businesses that succeed in their diversity and inclusion initiatives frequently get prizes and certifications from outside sources. The company's reputation may be improved and a varied talent pool may be drawn in by this acknowledgment.

b. Collaborations:

Businesses can improve their diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategies by utilizing outside resources and experience through partnerships with industry associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

DISCUSSION

a. Difficulties

i. **Cultural norms and stereotypes:** Implementing D&I projects in China might be significantly hampered by cultural norms and stereotypes. The adoption of diversity initiatives may be hampered by conventional wisdom regarding gender norms and hierarchical systems.

ii. **Framework for laws and regulations:**

The D&I legal and regulatory environment in China is constantly changing. Even though laws exist to uphold gender equality and prohibit discrimination, they are not always consistently enforced, necessitating the need for more thorough restrictions.

iii. **Knowledge and comprehension:**

Even with greater awareness, some aspects of diversity—especially those related to LGBTQ+ inclusion and disability rights—remain poorly understood and accepted. It will need continued education and societal shift to remove these obstacles.

iv. **Opportunities**

Economic benefits: More creativity, innovation, and better decision-making can result from an inclusive and varied workforce. Businesses that successfully carry out D&I initiatives stand to benefit from a competitive edge in the marketplace.

v. **Worldwide effects:**

China may improve its standing as a desirable location for international talent and investment by implementing D&I processes that adhere to international norms as it continues to integrate into the global economy.

vi. **Effect on society:**

D&I initiatives can lessen discrimination and advance equality in China, which will advance the country's social progress. Businesses have the power to significantly impact societal change through their actions and influence.

b. Best Practices

i. **Cultural Adaptation:** Successful D&I programs in China are those that adapt to the local cultural environment while keeping the essential principles of diversity and inclusion. This requires knowing and respecting cultural differences and finding culturally relevant approaches to promote diversity and inclusion.

ii. **Dedication to Leadership:**

Programs promoting diversity and inclusion must have strong leadership support. It is imperative for leaders to proactively promote diversity initiatives and exhibit inclusive conduct.

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iii. Ongoing Enhancement:

Inclusion and diversity are continual processes. Companies need to be up to date on current trends and best practices, as well as continuously assess and enhance existing programs and take employee feedback into account.

CONCLUSIONS

In an increasingly globalized and competitive corporate world, diversity and employee inclusion have emerged as critical criteria for Chinese enterprises seeking to achieve sustainable development. In this research, we may derive some significant findings and understandings by thoroughly examining the diversity and inclusion policies of Alibaba and Google. China's business success and creativity are positively impacted by diversity and inclusion. In addition to diversifying its workforce, Google's systematic diversity and inclusion initiatives have fostered a more welcoming and cooperative work atmosphere, which has boosted creativity and competitiveness in the market. Alibaba's inclusive culture and varied recruitment approach have helped it successfully draw in and keep a significant number of talented individuals. It has given the business's quick development tremendous support. Companies must consider their own cultural background and current circumstances when implementing diversity and inclusion programs. For example, Google, a large international company, has a global perspective and standardised processes in its D&I program, while Alibaba concentrates on localised diversity strategies and flexible inclusion measures within the framework of Chinese culture. This demonstrates that certain businesses must create strategies that fit their unique circumstances and rules and take into account cultural and geographic variances when promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives.

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