



# Creating a Human Resources Strategy that Incorporates Diversity & Inclusion



## OVERVIEW

When Destination BC was renewing their three-year corporate strategy (2017-2020), they developed a human resources strategy to align with their corporate goals. They did this by engaging their collective people power. This human resource strategy highlights how diversity and inclusion are fundamental in their commitment of building employee engagement, developing and recruiting talent, and supporting the health and wellness of all employees.

## OBJECTIVES

Destination BC's objectives in creating a human resources (HR) strategy that specifically cited diversity and inclusion includes:

- Attracting the best talent with effective and inclusive recruitment and retention practices.
- Continuing to foster a culture of organizational effectiveness by embracing diverse ideas, providing flexible work options, and responding to individual learning and development needs.
- Implementing a formal leadership development program targeting core leadership competencies, including better promotion and incorporation of diversity and inclusion in everything they do.
- Increasing awareness of mental health in the workplace and resources available to employees and supervisors.
- Aligning their commitments with the Province's Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

## APPROACH

Destination BC took the following approach when developing their HR strategy:

- Identified an opportunity to raise awareness about diversity and inclusion in the workplace and better incorporate best practices to achieve Destination BC's HR goals.

- Identified the key people and development pillars required to support corporate goals. Each of these pillars is supported by targeted action items to incorporate and advance diversity and inclusion. These pillars include: Employee engagement, talent development, organizational effectiveness, and health and wellness.
- Developed a three-year HR strategy and a one-year action plan.
- Presented the strategy and action plan to Destination BC's executive team for review and then to the board for review and approval.

### Raising Awareness about Disability in the Workplace

Destination BC undertook a number of initiatives to start raising employee awareness about diversity and inclusion in the workplace:

- Celebrated disability employment month by sharing an employee's personal story with mental illness in their family in Destination BC's internal newsletter (The Fresh News), and by inviting Kristin Bower (Diversity and Inclusion Consultant with Vancity Credit Union) to speak to their employees about the importance of mental health and its role in the workplace.
- Included a statement regarding Destination BC's commitment to being an inclusive employer to all job postings and job descriptions.
- Continued to include new content in their internal newsletter regarding their commitment to being an inclusive employer and what being inclusive means.
- Shared the BC Government's new Diversity and Inclusion Plan with employees.
- Developed several student/youth summer employment opportunities across the organization, with a commitment of making each of these accessible to students/youth with disabilities.

### Integration of Diversity & Inclusion into the HR Strategy

Once receiving approval from the Executive team, the HR team developed and actioned a one-year plan with targeted activities to support HR strategic goals. These goals included the advancement of diversity and inclusion in Destination BC's people development practices (recruitment, talent development, diversity and innovation, health and wellness, etc.). By doing so, they are achieving their goals to:

- **Keep a Competitive Advantage:** The acquisition of diverse talent allows Destination BC to become more effective and efficient, by strengthening capacity to innovate and perform in an environment that promotes inclusion. In representing the diversity of the communities Destination BC serves, it has a strong employee value proposition (offerings to current and prospective employees) including flexible work options, comprehensive benefits plans, and a work environment that upholds courage, learning, and innovation.
- **Employee Engagement:** This is their #1 goal. A diverse workforce supports Destination BC's culture and values of learning and development, innovation, collaboration, and achieving results.
- **Health and Wellness:** By continuing to lead a diverse talent base, Destination BC actively supports the overall health and wellness of its workforce - from creating

open dialogue around disabilities in the workplace to increasing awareness of available employee health and wellness resources.

- **Improving Efficiency and Driving Innovation:** Destination BC strives to be innovative and agile –by ensuring a diverse and inclusive workplace HR supports these corporate goals, fostering a culture where diverse ideas and approaches to work are embraced and lead to innovation.

### Executive Team Approval

Destination BC's HR team provided a proposal to their executive team around leadership and development, including diversity and inclusion as a stand-alone learning area for all employees. In order to gain the executive team's support, the HR team demonstrated the business case behind hiring people with disabilities and increasing the diversity of the organization's overall talent pool. The HR team also demonstrated the direct connection between the HR plan and the overall corporate strategy and showed the benefits of their plan in achieving the overall vision.

### OUTCOMES

Destination BC is in the early stages of implementing targeted activities to promote and better incorporate diversity and inclusion in their workplace and practices. Aside from receiving positive employee feedback on activities to date, the HR team is exploring meaningful ways to gauge Destination BC's success on this key goal and commitment over 2017-2020. Metrics will likely be evaluated in the form of targeted questions on their annual employee engagement survey regarding diversity and inclusion, as well as, in their success in recruiting and supporting individuals with disabilities.

### LESSONS LEARNED

Destination BC has learned some lessons early on that will help the organization as it continues to execute its strategy.

#### Create Goals that are Measurable and Achievable

Keeping goals realistic, measurable, achievable and clear was essential in the development, approval and implementation of Destination BC's HR strategy and action plan. It also ensured that there was a mutual understanding and support amongst the team.

#### Keep Things Flexible

Destination BC found that creating high level goals that allow for flexibility in approach (the how to) is key to staying innovative and being able to explore best practices to achieve positive results. Allowing employee feedback to help determine the *how*, ensures that employees are bought in to the approach.

### Have Honest Conversations about Readiness and Commitment

It was important for Destination BC to understand their readiness and commitment to diversity and inclusion. Testing the appetite of the organization can be done by piloting diversity initiatives (e.g. the mental health lunch and learn), and seeing how employees respond. Another way to test an organization's appetite, is to run ideas past the executive team to understand their response. It is important that an organization understands its readiness levels when it comes to diversity and inclusion and any required resources and/or new processes before formalizing a plan.

### Decide How to Measure Success

Measuring success in diversity and inclusion is not always easy, but it is important to determine outcomes and intended results. To do this, Destination BC included a new question on their 2017/18 employee engagement survey that was specific to diversity and inclusion. The responses will help them to gauge employee's thoughts and adjust as needed.

### NEXT STEPS

Destination BC is in the process of implementing its three-year HR strategy and one year action plan. Next steps include looking at future employment opportunities and how to target a more diverse audience and how to ensure their hiring process is inclusive. They will also be delivering learning opportunities for all staff to increase awareness and understanding on what being an inclusive employer means and how each employee plays an important role in to upholding this organizational commitment.