Diversity & Inclusion - solving a hard problem

Company 2017 OKR: *Improve workforce representation of Women, Blacks and Hispanics within each PA/Function and close the gap with market supply by 2020.*

tl;dr to truly achieves the vision of diversity and inclusion requires more than an okr, we must operationalize d&i so that it is part and parcel of all of our key people development processes

Why do Googlers consistently rate their peers and our culture highly in Googlegeist even as Google continues to grow in number of employees? That at to 70,000+ employees, Googlers continue to expect and get Googleyness? It is because Google has institutionalized the way we recruit, hire, onboard and develop Googlers to a certain level of expectations, behaviors and "bar". This bar continues to be reinforced by peers, hiring committees, perf, promo, feedback (MFS, GG, etc.) and other internal processes. Hence, the key to achieving Diversity & Inclusion vision is to evolve our Google culture and people processes to embrace it fully. Changing our culture organically is too slow, hence we need to "inject" our culture with a serum that in essence institutionalize D&I. If we are successful in institutionalizing D&I by 2020, then maybe we no longer need to treat it as a special OKR. To institutionalize D&I requires us to operationalize it into all of our people development processes and track with metrics. In that regard, it's not too different from running and changing an operations.

The vision for D&I is simply compelling. Google wants to reflect the diversity of our users and the communities that we operate in. We want everyone at Google to feel respected and included with equal chance of success irrespective of class, gender and race. Different Google orgs have started to set D&I OKRs for 2020. For example, in GMS, the global OKR is to have equal gender representation at every level by 2020. Research shows that diversity leads to higher performing teams and avoids group think. It just makes business sense. It makes Google a much more compelling place to work. And it is the right thing to do!

But the problem is hard. Mention D&I and there is no lack of input on why this is a hard problem. We often hear comments like - "It's a pipeline issue"; "Recruiting can't find diverse candidates"; "It's quota-setting"; "It's borderline reverse discrimination"; "We may alienate Googlers"; "We can't share the diversity data, it's too sensitive"; "There are legal implications"; "We can't lower the bar"; "I don't have the bandwidth to participate"; "Is this in perf?"; "Where's the data that shows more diversity leads to higher performance?" To solve the problem, we need to systematically take these questions on and make it a priority to institutionalize D&I.

For D&I to be BAU, it needs to be embedded into people, performance and career development processes all across Google. PeopleOps recommended 5 levers in tackling D&I: Tone at the Top, Inclusive Culture, Equal Opportunity, Hire Diverse Talent and Integrating Inclusion. I would propose an additional perspective - to look at this is through the lens of the Googler "lifecycle" from Recruiting -> Hiring -> Onboarding -> Developing -> Performing -> Promoting -> Leading. Let me comment and highlight specific ideas for each stage.

Recruiting
Google is willing to and has intervened to influence the market supply of candidates for the future. The market supply for women, Black and Hispanics (or URM) are constrained due to disproportionately smaller number of graduates in tech degrees in these communities. For women, Google has actively encouraged more females to study computer science ranging from sponsoring various coding academies to helping portray females positively in technical roles in ads, YT and movies. To combat unintentional bias, we also reduced the number of bullet points in requirements for roles as studies show that women are more likely to apply if they fit most of the requirements as compared to men. For Blacks, Google has set up engineer-in-residence programs in predominantly Black colleges to improve level of computer science graduates - latest initiative being Howard West.

We tended, however, to have a localized view of market supply and yet Google recruit globally and relocate Nooglers into various hub sites such as Mountain View, Dublin and Singapore (i.e. candidates are still willing to relocate to join Google). Together with high internal mobility, it has enabled these sites to be much more diverse than comparatively possible within the constraint of local market supply. Ann Arbor is a good example of this - every year through the BOLD internship program and also college recruiting, Nooglers move to Ann Arbor to join Google. Hence beyond simple economics, we need to be cognizant and intentional on how we build the diversity of hub sites and thus affecting the composition of the community - this would be an important element for new sites such as Boulder. Hence a supportive internal mobility approach is an enabler for diversity. And yet, currently an overall understanding of the impact is not really taken into account in one-dimensional approach such as looking at cost and finance. For example, a contentious issue is how we approach offshoring just from a cost perspective and lead to not just long-term migration of jobs but also diversity of teams. Even as we move Nooglers to hub sites, it also creates onboarding challenges highlighted later on in this doc. Immigration and relocation are positive for diversity and Google should continue to encourage and support them and have a way to value them in the overall cost and value equation - this is increasingly important as Google finance continues to push headcount and opex to be fungible. Today, it is treated more as an afterthought or an after-effect to react to.

In recruiting, it is essential to have a diverse pipeline of candidates. Roles typically focus on responsibilities, experience and skills - hence we can consider candidates that vary by career, education, gender, socio-economic and ethnicity as being the most obvious indicators of diversity. In the spirit of "we manage what we measure", how do you measure that the hiring manager has considered a diverse pipeline of candidates? A simple yet indicative metric is % of gender and/or ethnic representation in the pipeline. We can develop an internal diversity index metric such as % of minority gender x % of minority ethnicities. One can also multiply another factor such as % of unique schools (this may be more useful for college recruiting compared to executive recruiting). For example, in a pipeline of 10 candidates in phone screens with 2 females and 3 minorities, the index would be 0.2 x 0.3 = 0.06. The index can be used to indicate diversity at the 3 key stages of recruiting which are resume screens, phone screens, and on-site

interviews. To use the same example, if 4 were ultimately brought on-sites with 1 female and 2 minorities, the on-site interviews index would be .25 x 0.5 = 0.125 - which is an improvement. Obviously if either gender or minority were 0, the index would be 0. Once the metric is agreed, it should be included into the hiring packet and used as feedback for the hiring manager and perf input for the recruiter. The point is that we need metrics to operationalize D&I.

A common push-back is that building a diverse pipeline is harder and takes longer - and "slows down" hiring to compromise OKRs such as meeting sales quota. But we don't lower the bar so that we can hire someone faster, do we? Then why would we compromise in picking the best person for the job from a diverse pool of candidates? For example, when I recruited a Director in India, a notoriously difficult market for gender diversity, the first review of pipeline only had male candidates. We went back to the drawing board and expanded the search so that the pipeline eventually had equal gender representation. The best person for the job whom I hired was a Director who happened to be female - she has performed incredibly well and improved the diversity of India leadership. We need to recognize and reward the right behavior for it to stick and reinforce through the transparency of metrics.

Hiring
The hiring process in Google is by and large already designed to limit bias (and "buddy hiring"). Specifically: a) the hiring manager doesn't have the ultimate authority to hire - it is determined by multiple levels of hiring committee, b) the hiring committee is composed of diverse set of peers who read the candidate packet formed by detailed notes and assessments from the interviewing panel, and c) the interviewing panel is composed of peers with diversity of background and function. All well and good but we can do better specifically on how the interviews are done for the sake of diversity.

Some hiring managers interview candidates one by one as the recruiters find them candidates that they like sequentially. While this may be more accommodating to hiring manager's schedule, it is open to recency bias. There is also a tendency to be more "accepting" of recent candidate being interviewed the longer the recruiting drags on. Instead, a better approach is to get a sufficient list of diverse candidates who passed the phone screens and do the on-site interviews close to one another preferably within a week or two. I have used this approach in all my recruiting of Directors and found them helpful in limiting my recency bias.

Interviewers have to be trained in "Interviewing at Google 2.0" and shadow interviews before conducting interviews themselves. We should also make unconscious bias and bias busting trainings a prerequisite for interviews. IMHO, one of the worst decision, in the name of productivity is shortening the interview time to 30 min. I refused to do 30 min interviews, I insisted on 45 min to an hour long slots. Why is that? Ignoring the fact that Googlers are usually not on-time, we need to give time to assess the candidate objectively. When there is lack of time, it is human nature to rely on fast thinking and judge based on visible attributes - which is full of bias. An effective interview should rely on slow thinking. For example, I spend the first 5 - 10 min of the interview to be consciously aware of my own biases and reaction to the candidate

- and actively avoid jumping to quick conclusions. This internal unbiasing [checklist](#) has further techniques. At the end of the interview, give 5 - 10 min for questions from the candidates. Then randomly do CSAT on candidates to get feedback from their experience. More explanation in a recent linkedin [article](#) I wrote.

We should measure the pass and acceptance rates from recruiting to hiring by gender and URM so that we can identify with data any systemic or isolated issues. In my team, the BOLD internship program has been a great source of hiring. Given our interview process, these interns may not do well in our normal interviews (we don't have the data but this is similar experience to Eng Res [Lesson 1](#)). The recruiters canvas a large set of colleges and we get a more diverse pipeline of candidates. During the internship, the candidates are trained and put on the core job - for them to understand the role better and it also provides tangible signals to gauge their capability and skills - over and above the interviews.

Onboarding
The happiest Googlers are the Nooglers and it's all downhill from there according to Googlegeist survey. ;-) All Nooglers go through the same one week orientation program. The orientation would have included go/saysomething, unconscious bias training (as optional self-study) and hopefully Google's values on diversity and inclusion. It is also important for a manager or leader in the org to welcome the Nooglers and set the right expectations of behaviors in particular on Respect@ (in GCE, this is incorporated into our Services Academy training) and our focus on D&I. Inclusion, in particular, should be stressed and strong focus on encouraging psychological safety.

An important part of onboarding is how well is the Noogler settling not just in Google but in the community. For hub sites like Mountain View, Ann Arbor, New York, Dublin, Singapore, where the local market supply is constrained, a significant number of Nooglers had to move to these locations for their jobs with Google. In addition to figuring out Google, these Nooglers also have to deal with the logistics of settling in a new area while establishing social ties with the community and making new friends. Using US as an example, there are differences in diversity of the community by area such as Asians are predominantly settled in urban areas especially coastal cities, Hispanics are concentrated in states of California and Florida while Blacks are more established in urban areas South and East of the US. Hence the Noogler's experience is also impacted by the ability to settle in a new area. For example, in the exit interviews that I had with Black Xooglers - a driving factor for moving back to their home state was the lack of strong community connections in the Bay Area. A useful metric for us to track is the % of Nooglers who had to move because of a job in Google.

One idea is that we should ensure that these Nooglers are set up with mentors or buddies who can help them establish a social network and settle well. The buddies can do regular check-ins apart from the managers so that the Nooglers are comfortable sharing their common challenges. A mentor is a higher commitment - but can help with the development of the Noogler and have a stake in the Noogler's success in their career at Google. While Google has

coaching and mentor resources which are typically driven by ERGs (such as Sage and AGN mentor programs) - there isn't a formalized and structured Google-wide program on mentorship. And there is no formal avenue for sponsorship either beyond your manager. Ideally this should be assigned to take into account both introvert and extrovert Nooglers.

Developing
How does a Googler become successful in the role? By being able to collaborate in teams is a big factor. To collaborate, the Googler needs to be accepted by the team and feel that it is a safe environment. In GCE, we are organized by SMT (self-managed teams) of around 7-10 Googlers each where the team OKRs are paramount. We have found this way of organizing conducive to the development of each Googler. In SMT, peers help each other to be successful and they feel a high level sense of ownership to their mission while being supported by a manager that assist primarily with coaching. As per Eng Res [Lesson 2](#), a support network is crucial and we should not assume that acceptance is the default behavior.

This is where aggregate data can be useful, possibly tracked but not available due to sensitivity such as women and URM perf data over the course of their development in Google (d-dash has promo data). A useful metric would be the consumption of training programs in go/grow - do women and URM seek development in the same rate as others? If not, why not? Also data on rate of transfers and mobility can give insight into any issues of development and acceptance in a team.

Looking at my own d-dash data, my org has gender parity at levels up to L6 - but L7+ is less represented. This is similar to GMS data (issue from L6+). GMS has committed to the OKR of gender parity at every level by 2020. A factor for less women at senior levels could be due to women starting a family and being on maternity leave. Google has one of the best maternity leave policy and Googlers can be promoted even on maternity leave if they are ready for the next level. While we assume that Googlers who come back from maternity leave can bounce back into the role, it may be worthwhile checking and ensuring that they onboard well back into the org - and offer support. It is not just the individual that needs support but managers and peers should be well-versed to adjust to possible different style of working from returning mothers (i.e. breaks, WFH, family commitments).

I love the inclusion of inclusion questions in GG - this is what I wrote to my team:
> *"While our Culture theme is similar to the rest of Google, **inclusion**, a subject close to my heart, deserves a separate mention. Googlegeist included some new questions to reflect the importance of inclusion to our evolving [Culture](#):*
> - *Google is a place where coworkers treat each other with respect 91% - although we're above Google average, my bar is that **Google should be a place where Googlers treat everyone with respect** given our daily interaction with customers, partners and stakeholders.*
> - *Google is a place where all types of Googlers can succeed to their full abilities 83% - as we're one of the most diverse teams in Google (our representation is higher than Google average), **it is incredibly important that we get close to100% for this question**.*

- *I feel included at Google 82% - similarly, **as far as I'm concerned, this is another question to get 100%** with the right level of peer support and psychological safety. This is the number 2 lesson learnt from the Eng Residency program - "Your team may not be as welcoming as you think".*

While it seems getting 100% for the 3 questions seem aspirational, it's not really - especially if Google's is serious about inclusion. I continue to be shocked by stories in G+, Yes at Google and new initiatives such as no-missing-stairs are welcome. With persistent reinforcing and call-out of behaviors, the first and third question is solvable. Let me share some examples:

- My team's Diversity Allies hold open-mic events, discussion topics (yes, including taboo topics such religion, political affiliation, etc.), staged events like die-ins, etc. - It is risky but it can work if the team and leadership focused on creating high level psychological safety. These are not debate sessions but rather one of understanding and acceptance.
- Google Inspire (aka Humans of SMB) is a wonderful initiative where we take a stunning photo of the Googler and in their own words shared a narrative that defined who they are - again often the most compelling stories come from teams with high level of trust. We even managed to hold a session for our "red badges" partners in Ann Arbor - which highlighted that we touched even a wider spectrum of community that Google employees alone can't.
- Role modeling is absolutely critical in inclusion. Every act of a leader is observed, dissected and perceived. A simple example is interrupting may seemed like just normal extroverted Google behavior of being "smart" (I would argue opinionated is more accurate description) but could be perceived as less inclusive to introverts. My bar to aim for as a leader is whether Googlers at all levels can feel free to approach me.

The second question is much harder as it is not just about analysing the promo rates by race and gender in d-dash. It is also visual - for example, at leadership position. Basically, do I see leaders that either look like me or that I can identify with as an indicator of whether I have an equal chance of success in the company. Google has a way to go no different than the majority of US companies. I recently learned from Ascend the metric called Executive Parity Index - essentially the number of execs divided by the number of workers of that representation (be it gender, race, etc.). It's basic but it's trying to measure if workers are essentially progressing their careers in the management ranks. Using this measure for the Tech industry, we are making positive strides on gender - i.e. women in both supply and development. Blacks and Hispanics are dire especially in the denominator in Tech - we're trying to solve the supply problem. While Asians have been "lost in aggregation" and in numbers - the problem I would argue is the numerator (and the worst off being Asian Women). This would be an interesting metric for us to look at and add to d-dash.

Performing
Periodically, as you review the performance of everyone in your team, it is worthwhile to check on the performance trends with a diversity lense just in case there are revealing patterns. For example, if a certain group is consistently under-performing, then dig deeper to figure out if it's

related to individuals, the group's experience in Google or other factors. This is particularly important for large teams.

In GCE, we have strong level of D&I participation from our Googlers - in fact this can be a proxy of the level of psychological safety in the team and their ability to bring the best of themselves to work. We should measure, track and recognize these participants with the aim of having the majority of the org participate in some D&I related activities. This is a good indicator of whether D&I is sticking to the DNA of the org. For example, each site in my org has volunteers for Diversity Allies who help to spark activities such as - celebrating festivities, organizing Gratitude days, and making everyone feels represented. Great ideas have come from bottoms-up participation including Google Inspire and open-mic sessions as mentioned above.

A culture of safety is a prerequisite to increase participation of Googlers. A culture that is dependent on openness, respect, tolerance and "assuming the best intent". can tolerate has many avenues to support inclusion. There are many initiatives and training in this area in Google so I'm not going to repeat here. The key, however, is how do we hold leaders accountable in creating this culture of safety and measuring progress. Should we take elements of gTeams and incorporate into MFS for example?

Promoting
The Tech org has a self-promotion process and studies have shown that women (what about URM?) are less likely to put themselves up for promotion. It was not until Alan Eustace sent out periodic emails nudging women engineers to put themselves up for promotion that the rate improved. The presence of women and URM leaders are extremely important because they serve as visual role models to others in the community of Googlers - they indicate that it is possible to get to the leadership level. Studies show that we are more likely to be successful if we can see success - hence it's a no-brainer that diversity at the top is so important. For example, Indian Googlers felt a sense of pride and ambition because of Nikesh, Sundar, Sridhar, etc. In contrast, Apple for a long time only had white males in the leadership team. Hence ensuring the promotion process is fair is important as it makes everyone feel that we have an equal chance of success.

I do this in a couple ways. Firstly, write perf reviews and promo packets to be as objective as possible and avoid emotional language. In GBO, there are 6 attributes we consider in perf including Problem Solving, Execution, Thought Leadership, Presence, Leadership and Googleyness. Presence is the most woolly and tends to be defined by the prevailing culture of the majority - hence it is really important to review the write-ups and feedback on presence. Feedback from my team indicate that this attribute is the hardest to act on. For example, how do you compare the style of an introvert vs an extrovert with regard to presence? Secondly, look at the data - d-dash in particular. For example, after the promo list is decided but before being finalized, I do a quick check and compare the % of women and UFM being promoted to the % in my org. It is a good sanity check to ensure that there is no unintended skewing because of bias or other inherent reason.

In GCE, we're also relying on our SMTs to give each other feedback and use them as development tools. It would be interesting to run an experiment to see if we're willing to go the self-promotion or team-promotion route.

Leading
D&I should be part and parcel of each people leader's toolkit and process. All leaders should have a diversity narrative that they can share authentically. This wonderful [video](#) shows that we are all unique beyond the parochial view of diversity - and yet we have common groupings beyond the physical boundaries. Last year, in GMS, all Directors committed to a one-pager to use the 5 levers of D&I and having a diversity narrative. This year we committed to the global goal of gender parity and regional goal of market supply parity by 2020.

As we increase the leadership ranks of women and URM, we do need them to lean in. Yes, we sometimes "over-rely" on these leaders because there are fewer of them. But their stories are compelling and Googlers who identify with them have instant affinity to what's possible. We want everyone of our leaders to understand, champion and support D&I. Leaders then need to commit to D&I OKRs, track and measure them and also increase their own understanding of the experiences of women and UFM in Google (i.e. the "Decoding Race" and "UnTownHalls" are good examples of ways to increase our understanding). In GMS, there are Director-level Champions who help and support other Directors in their functions to achieve this.

I'll be more blunt. Every single VPs in Google must have D&I as part and parcel of the people management process. And yes, even if there are scant number of non-majority VPs - they have to do more and they should be encouraged to do so. Examples like Lisa who is trying to do more in AGN is a good example. Just to drive it home, D&I could be part of a GBO attribute and/or the people element of perf.

On leadership, I haven't even addressed the international dimension. The acnedote I shared before is when I came to MTV 4+ years ago to lead an Americas team, my peers in APAC were pleasantly surprised. They congratulated me and even mentioned "your move gave us hope that we, as Asians, have a future in Google". Sounds odd doesn't it if you're sitting in Americas as Asians are considered to be a majority and not a specific area of focus? While I'm proud of Google's D&I OKR, it seems incredibly US centric. Beyond US, does our international talent feel included and have an equal chance of success in Google? I don't have the data but I just need to take a look at our VPs, Product execs and Regional and Country Leads and I can perceive that we have a long way to go in developing local and mobile leadership talent. Nevertheless, I personally believe in this as I come from a previous global company that is strong in leadership mobility and succession planning. As an example, while I don't know if I will be successful but I have a shared OKR with my Director in LATAM Rob (kudos to him for willing to move countries) to develop a local successor before he leaves LATAM for his next gig. Do Regional Heads have similar OKRs? I hope so. Why would a local talent join or remain in Google if they don't see an equal chance of success?

Just my 2 cents…

Rough notes (not all incorporated)

Leadership by example
Culture of safety
External vs Internal
- People using Google to promote themselves
- Act in conjunction with other companies
- Avoid black and white view
External engagement
- Learn from others
- Work with others, influence others
Parochial view of diversity - country, physical,
External view of diversity based on equality and fairness rather than diversity.
What's the cultural shift that we need?
Open conversation without judgement. Forget victimhood
Unconscious bias, bias busting - are we inferring something that may not be there?
Example of the West point experiment of grouping folks together. Didn't group by race, or just group by capability
Controversies - how to address
Role of people-ops, diversity bp
A possible illustration:
- Sourcing - More diverse colleges, business residency program, BOLD internship, etc.
- Recruiting - All recruiters should find 50-50 female-male candidates. For a role, the pipeline on on-site candidates should reflect diversity.
- Hiring - The hiring packet should clearly show the diversity of pool of candidates considered for the role (i.e. hiring committee should be able to push back if pipeline wasn't sufficiently diverse). Maybe it should also show the current makeup of the hiring manager team in relation to this candidate.
- Onboarding - Buddies can be identified
- Developing - Mentors can be identified
- Performing -> Perf and calibration - check for bias
- Promoting -> Look at diversity and data and check for bias. Is pipeline strong enough?
- Advancing -> Programs like Stretch, Take Charge, etc.
The bar for institutionalization is that it should be a well established process that we can measure. What matters, we manage. What we manage, we measure. So input and output metrics need to be introduced.
We can rely on the coalition of the willing (i.e. Diversity champions, ERGs) but this is not sufficient
Example from GMS
Incentive program