

Strategies for Success: Inclusion and Diversity Best Practices for Working with the Asia Pacific Region

Inclusion and Diversity can be perceived as a ‘Western’ Concept

1. Framing D&I for the local context

- **Challenge:** In many Asia Pacific countries, the notion of *diversity* seems to go against some of their cultural values such as: belonging, collectivism, being a member of a group and desire to avoid conflict
- **Best Practice:** Demonstrate how *inclusion* meshes perfectly with these values. It is about being in flow with each other. So, inclusion could be about being harmonious in the way they work with each other and how groups can better collaborate with each other.

By speaking to their values in the context of *inclusion and belonging*, you will help people to relate to and buy in to cultivating inclusive workplaces.

2. Ensure training and awareness-raising content is either local or truly global

Challenge: In the early days of global I&D training, USA and UK-based companies (for example) would send training consultants to deliver global training. However, as the content was designed in ‘the west’, it was often not culturally sensitive to other parts of the world. Participants in Asia Pacific felt that the company/trainers were insensitive to their issues and context. If flying people in from other regions, participants will often be polite but may not necessarily understand the key messaging. Nowadays, digital content is increasingly used around the world with consistent global messaging. However, ensure you don’t the old mistakes.

Best Practices:

- If you are doing in-person sessions use the local language where possible, particularly in Japan, South Korea, Thailand, China.
- You will need to develop facilitators in the region and in each country where possible who know how to facilitate deep discussions in the context of the culture – facilitation approaches and techniques need to be varied accordingly.
- In all I&D training or communications content, make sure your characters and images don’t look like a typical USA diverse group (for example) – this alienates other parts of the world. Have a truly global suite of content – base case studies and scenarios in different parts of the world, with different diverse characters. This will ensure that participants from around the world will feel they are represented, and they will relate to the universal issues better. By featuring different diversity and geographies, participants in the USA-based organisation will also gain a better understanding of how those issue play out in different locations.

3. Make it more than lip service

Challenge: In Asia Pacific, it can be hard for people to really believe the company means what it says about inclusion when they feel they are not being included. For instance, when training is only in English, or when they are always the timezone which has to be on the late night calls. Asia Pacific team members are at the end of a long day and it can feel disrespectful if there is a lot of chat at the beginning of the call when they have been waiting all evening to take part. Similarly, they may be nervous about presenting in English as it is not their native language, so waiting to present later in the call is an uncomfortable and exhausting time. Remember that participation in global meetings is essential to build relationships and visibility. Your colleagues in Asia Pacific are facing strong headwinds to raising their profile and being seen as high potential talent – they are functioning in non-native language, may have an accent, and on top of that they are participating in meetings past their bedtime!

Best Practices:

- When it is a global call, maybe there is no option to vary the time, but a best practice could be that the speakers on the call go in order of timezone – latest timezone goes first. If there are USA specific topics on the agenda, let team members not based in the USA drop off if the topics are irrelevant to them.
- Balance out the timezone pain if possible. Sometimes it can be the USA on late calls and Asia on the morning shift. Inclusion is about empathy and putting yourself in someone else's shoes. If you don't want to do a call later than 7 or 8pm in your evening, then imagine the struggles of your Asia Pacific team members on 11pm calls. Try to find an alternative way to share the pain.
- A business trip to Asia Pacific is a great opportunity to show some empathy and walk in your team members shoes. Work the long day with them and schedule one of those global calls during your trip. Join the call with your Asia Pacific colleagues. Being on that call shows an effort to try to understand what that feels like and to show your truly empathise with your colleagues in this part of the world.
- By demonstrating empathy and trying to find inclusive solutions to the problems of global working and timezones, you will create an environment where Asia Pacific colleagues feel that the company culture is indeed inclusive.
- In Asia Pacific there is strong value around respect for hierarchy. Don't expect your Asia Pacific team members to push back on a call scheduled at 11pm their time. They will often fit in without pushing back. You need to take the lead in genuinely recognising headwinds and by making plans to mitigate as much as possible.



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- Price Global is a change agent specialising in Inclusion and Diversity (I&D Emotional Intelligence, Resilience and Mental Health and Leadership Development
- Based in Tokyo with delivery capacity across the globe, we partner with local and multi-national organisations to develop and deliver state of the art I&D initiatives targeting Organisational, Managerial and Individual levels in alignment with your mission and business goals
- With a background in applied psychology, we incorporate different approaches to develop authentic and inclusive mindsets focusing on attitudes, emotional intelligence, intentions and impactful behaviours
- Through consulting, training, coaching and assessments, our clients report enhanced leadership and management capability, improvements in attraction and promotion of diverse talent, increased representation of diverse talent in the leadership pipeline, higher resilience and engagement scores and more competitive solutions and presence in their markets connecting with diverse customers

To sample and learn more about our in-person workshops, e-learning and situational video toolkits and how they can be used to develop a more inclusive culture in your organisation, get in touch with us now. We look forward to hearing from you.

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