



Diversity challenge: An integrated process to bridge the ‘implementation gap’

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Abstract At this time of crisis, companies rediscover the key role people play in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. Taking into account the heterogeneity of their workforces, boards of directors and managers alike face the challenge of understanding how to manage diversities such that the benefits outweigh the costs. This article argues that companies can deal with this challenge by adopting an integrated process of change across strategic, tactical, and operational levels. Indeed, people’s differences and diversity management need to be introduced and integrated within company values and vision (strategic level). This vision has to be translated into strategies, a specific policy, and its associated practices to promote the development of synergic cultural and organizational changes that affect the whole company (tactical level). Finally, this policy and its associated practices need to be turned into real actions (operational level). Herein, we propose and discuss an integrated process to implement diversity management in a detailed and sufficiently flexible way such that it can be personalized and adapted to a specific organization. From a managerial standpoint, the proposed model could be a guide for bridging the ‘implementation gap’ of diversity management.

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1. The relevance of diversity management and the ‘implementation gap’

For over 20 years now, professionals and academics around the world have been facing challenges from a wide array of factors. These include demographic

changes, socio-political concerns regarding people’s lives and quality of work, globalization, technological advances, international and national anti-discrimination laws, and stakeholder pressure for corporate social responsibility (Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007). As a result, they became interested in discussing how people’s differences can be managed in an efficient, effective, and equitable way, thereby raising the issue of diversity management. This ongoing debate has highlighted that diversity management implicates both opportunities and costs. When properly applied, the management of

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people's differences is said to provide the opportunity to attract talented candidates; enhance staff motivation and retention, reducing employee turnover costs; and improve the performance and innovative capacity of individuals, teams, and the organization. In addition, it can foster better customer relations, enhance the company's image and reputation, and increase shareholder value (Armstrong et al., 2010). The costs of diversity management include opportunity losses, increased conflict management for overcoming resistance to cultural change, lower group cohesion, additional planning and organization to make necessary alterations within the company, and the financial weight of implementing new solutions (Slater, Weigand, & Zwirlein, 2008). The legal ramifications of poor diversity management must also be taken into account when comparing the benefits and costs. As disclosed by the website Law360.com, companies often underestimate the trouble and expense associated with the unfair or ineffective management of people's differences. For example, in February 2012 Home Depot settled a class action at a cost of \$925,000 for a disability discrimination suit brought by deaf workers. In 2006, C.H. Robinson paid \$15 million for a gender discrimination class action that demonstrated the company was a hostile work environment for women. Likewise, in 2000 Coca-Cola agreed to pay \$192.5 million to resolve a federal lawsuit brought by black employees. At present, many U.S. companies are closely following the Wal-Mart gender discrimination lawsuit: in September 2012, after 10 years of legal wrangling, U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer of the San Francisco Federal Court gave legal permission to proceed (Levine, 2012).

Despite the lively discussion of practitioners and academics regarding diversity management and all its associated pros and cons, many businesses continue to view people's differences and their management as non-issues. However, more and more companies are coming to understand the importance of diversity management, but find it difficult to translate the concept into practice. Indeed, firms are faced with different indications of what is seen to be typical of the diversity management approach. These include a sort of benchmark to develop diversity-related initiatives (e.g., Hamdani & Buckley, 2011), diversity management best practices (European Commission, 2005), and even different processes that should be followed to achieve diversity management (e.g., Cox, 2001; Friday & Friday, 2003; Gonzalez, 2010). Despite elements of support, companies that want to manage people's differences are still asking a key question: How can we put diversity management into practice? This question expresses the 'implementation gap' felt

by companies moving from a cost/benefit assessment to actual implementation.

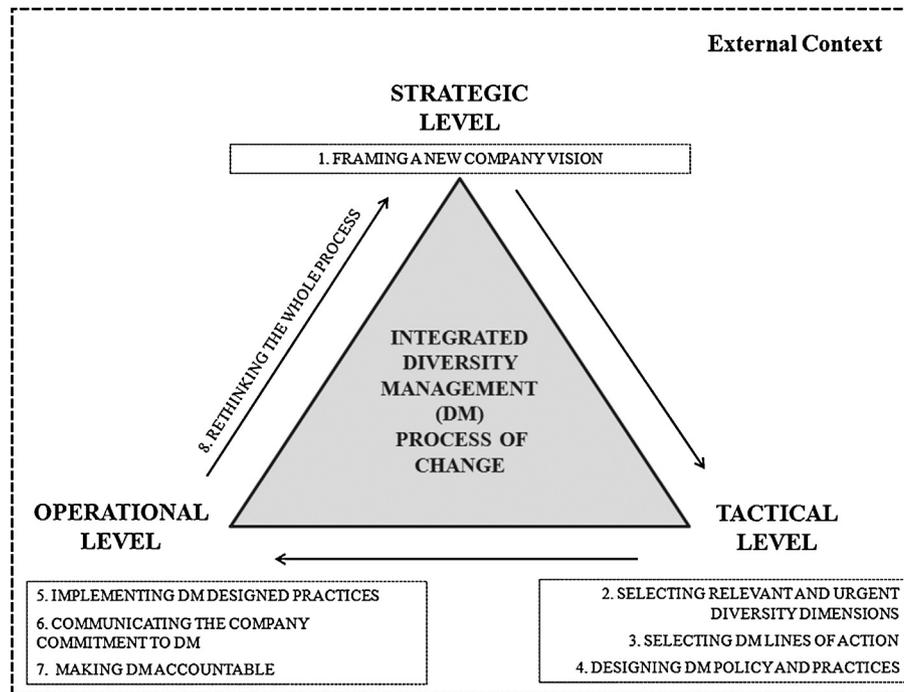
Based on our review of extant literature and recognizing there is no single best strategy (Dass & Parker, 1999), we suggest that companies should embark upon a process of change in order to successfully implement diversity management. During this process, the management of diversity is introduced at several different levels, from a strategic level (values and vision), to a tactical level (design of the policy and practices), to an operational level (implementation of the policy and practices) whereby the process engages all people in the company (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, & Monga, 2009).

This article aims at supporting managers who wish to adopt such an approach and, consequently, bridge the previously outlined implementation gap by proposing an integrated process of change. For each stage of the process, we report the core actions, key actors, and expected outcomes, providing examples from global organizations.

2. Bridging the implementation gap by an integrated process of change

According to Riccò (2012), *diversity management* is an organizational approach with the strategic aim of achieving better organizational results by creating an inclusive workplace where people's distinguishing qualities and needs are managed in a diversified, effective, efficient, and equitable way. This approach requires companies to create an 'inclusive workplace'—that is, a place where people are aware of the existence of diversity and have a high regard for the feelings and rights of others, where everyone can express themselves freely, and heterogeneity can be combined imaginatively to create new ways of communicating and collaborating (Pless & Maak, 2004). IBM's slogan "none of us is as strong as all of us" aptly captures this idea. However, diversity management cannot simply be forced upon an organization; rather, all the people in the company must be encouraged to participate actively in creating an inclusive working environment. To achieve this, diversity management must fulfill a cultural and organizational change that affects individuals, group and organizational mindsets, types of behavior, processes, and outcomes (Friday & Friday, 2003; Gonzalez, 2010). As stressed by Schneider, Brief, and Guzzo (1996, p. 12), "only by altering the everyday policies, practices, procedures and routines, thereby impacting the beliefs and values that guide employee actions, can change occur and be sustained." Lastly, as stressed by Olsen and Martins (2012, p. 1169), the successful adoption of diversity

Figure 1. Diversity management implementation: The proposed integrated process



management “will depend on how well it meshes with other characteristics of the organization (both internal and external) and its members.” The case of Coca-Cola North America provides a good example of the extent of change required. Starting in 2002—and most likely prompted by the negative experience of their racial discrimination lawsuit of 2000—Coca-Cola began rolling out a holistic plan of action to integrate people’s differences. This essentially embedded diversity into Coca-Cola’s values, resulting in a new ‘secret formula’ composed of inclusion and fairness. The company approached diversity management as a business strategy, introduced into its vision and translated into practices through a defined policy and set of plans and operational solutions covering the recruitment, selection, reward, performance management, training, and use of business resource groups. A Diversity Advisory Council was set up to encourage meaningful attention toward diversity issues and to increase the involvement of management. As Steve Bucherati, Coca-Cola’s Chief Diversity Officer, said in the company’s 2010 U.S. Diversity Stewardship Report: “Diversity to us is not just about Human Resources policies and practices. It’s an integral part of who we are, how we operate, and how we see our future” (Coca-Cola, 2010, p. 6).

Coca-Cola’s experience illustrates how diversity management is a complex and dynamic process that affects the whole organization and, at the same time, is affected by internal and external environments and the historical and socio-political

moment. For successful implementation, required change within the company’s general strategy should be leveraged on the synergies between the coordinated actions that take place at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels.

We propose a model of an integrated process of change with the following three key features: (1) the process is normative in all its stages, while at the same time giving companies leeway to adapt it to their specific situations; (2) the process is flexible in terms of participation so that companies can implement it in a more-or-less participative way; and (3) the process integrates the strategic, tactical, and operational levels in a coordinated way. The proposed process (shown in Figure 1) is composed of eight phases that cross the organization at different levels (strategic, tactical, and operational).

Each stage of the proposed integrated process for implementing diversity management will now be presented together with an explanation of the core actions, key actors, and expected outcomes, and illustrated with relevant examples from global organizations.

2.1. Diversity management at the strategic level: Framing a new company vision

Applying diversity management at the strategic level entails re-thinking and redefining corporate principles and company values in order to embrace

people's differences as a source of competitive advantage. It also involves detailing exactly why the company regards these diversities as influential to its success.

The first stage of the process starts with defining the company mission and clarifying both its underlying values (how people in the organization are expected to act) and the reasons why the company has chosen to introduce diversity management. The board of directors and senior management then outline the company's new vision and allocate the necessary resources (e.g., economic-financial, technological, human, time) to this effect. For instance, ABB has a vision, which—underpinned by values such as inclusion, respect, dignity, fighting discrimination, and promoting equal opportunities—uses diversity management to help employees achieve their maximum potential, foster innovation, and understand and better meet the diverse needs of customers. ABB's 2009 Diversity and Inclusion Statement reads:

ABB recognizes that a diverse and talented workforce is a key competitive advantage. As a truly global company, our business success reflects the quality and skill of our people. We believe that the wide array of perspectives that results from a diversity and inclusion focus promotes innovation and business success. (ABB, 2009, p.1)

So that the board of directors and senior management are better prepared to formulate a vision, it is useful during this stage to offer them focused learning opportunities such as training/educational workshops. Research carried out by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reveals the importance of such learning opportunities: Of the 177 companies that carried out training on diversity issues, 95% promoted training for top-level executives (68% mandatory and 27% voluntary) (SHRM, 2010).

According to Chavez and Weisinger (2008), the most effective learning opportunities are those conducted in a practical and proactive way. Topics covered may include the extent of heterogeneity, individual mental patterns, personal mindsets and prejudices, interpersonal relationships, and diversity management—usually illustrated with case studies. These training/educational initiatives are valuable vehicles for the learning process, used by the board of directors and senior management to become aware of the opportunities and problems inherent in people's differences and how they can be managed, thereby securing their commitment to the effort. The commitment of board members and senior management is crucial, since not only must they act in accordance with the planned change

(e.g., providing the needed resources), but also they are responsible for instilling the awareness, attention, and commitment that will lead all employees to respect, include, and integrate diversity in the workplace (Gonzalez, 2010). The importance of training/educational initiatives is well recognized by Sodexo (2012): the company held 60 'Spirit of Diversity' classes attended by 1,848 managers and trained a further 8,548 in 253 'Diversity Learning Labs.'

Once a company has clarified the principles of diversity management that should underpin people's choices, behavior, and performance within the organization (strategic level), the next step is to define its medium-term goals and plans to translate those principles into policy and practices by outlining features of the planned process of change (tactical level).

2.2. Diversity management at the tactical level: Defining diversity dimensions and diversity management lines of action, policy, and practices

At the tactical level, the company must define the key elements of its implementation process: 'who' will be involved in the diversity management process (key actors); 'what' diversities will be managed in a differentiated way; 'when' they will be managed (conditions); 'where' they will be managed (throughout the company, only for a single country, or only within specific departments); and 'how' they will be managed (lines of action, policy, and relative practices).

To steer the tactical level of the process properly and effectively, the company's management may decide to establish specific organizational roles, clarifying their responsibilities within the implementation process. Indeed, the most advanced companies in the field of diversity—such as Citigroup, Coca-Cola, IBM, L'Oréal, and Sodexo—have created dedicated organizational units or roles. Examples of these include diversity and inclusion leaders (managers in charge of diversity and inclusion) and diversity and inclusion boards/committees. A diversity and inclusion board/committee is a dedicated body with an independent operating budget, headed by a diversity and inclusion leader and involving several senior managers, which discusses and outlines the main directions for the company's strategies, policy, and ongoing projects to manage diversity. In addition, a company can create diversity and inclusion steering committees (groups of people from every business function who are responsible for ensuring implementation of the company's policy) and employee network groups (self-initiated and voluntary employee groups, open to everyone, organized around specific

affinities/common interests, and aligned with the company vision).

As revealed by [SHRM \(2011\)](#) research, not all companies introduce a dedicated function or position: of 674 U.S. sample firms, only 13% have staff devoted solely to managing diversity. This percentage decreases with the size of the company, ranging from 48% in companies with at least 25,000 employees to 3% in small and medium enterprises.

2.2.1. Selecting relevant and urgent diversity dimensions

During the second stage, the company analyzes its external and internal context to identify the diversities on which it wants to focus. Analysis of the external context will reveal the diversities typical of the company’s existing or prospective customers. Resulting findings may prompt the company to broaden the diversity of its workforce to more closely mirror the makeup of its customer base. The institution will consequently better understand the expressed or unexpressed needs of its customers, thus improving customer relationships and customer satisfaction. Capturing the diversities that exist in the external context requires mapping and examining current and forecasted diversities relating to the national labor market, the company’s customers, and both its current and future markets. Carrying out the external analysis is the task of the human resources (HR) manager, who is supported by the diversity and inclusion manager (if this role exists within the organization) and the marketing manager. At the same time, the HR manager and the diversity and inclusion manager should conduct an internal analysis to make sure they are aware of the diversities within the company and how these are distributed across roles and functions. Citigroup, Coca-Cola, and Sodexo all perform this type of analysis and publish the results in an Annual Report on Diversity—a yearly statement that discloses, internally and externally, how a company manages diversity issues, both strategically and tactically.

At this point, the company can take action to enable everyone to participate in identifying the diversity dimension on which they think the company should focus; this can be achieved by conducting an internal survey examining the beliefs, fears, difficulties, desires, and needs of employees as related to diversity and its management. [L’Oréal \(2012\)](#) conducted a survey of this kind, called “Pulse—Have your Say” (36,900 participants in 68 countries), to gather data on the satisfaction of its personnel regarding how diversity was managed within the company, and to identify any newly emerging diversity-related issues that employees believed should be managed in a different way. Such

a survey can also help to reveal the current climate surrounding people’s differences and how they should be managed, allowing the company to intervene—where necessary—to support internal cultural change by offering all employees training/educational seminars on diversity, personal mental patterns and prejudices, and the company’s values and initiatives relating to diversity. For example, [Sodexo \(2012\)](#) trained 15,573 frontline employees in equal employment opportunities and 12,802 frontline employees in diversity awareness.

Based on the results of the internal and external analyses, the HR manager and the diversity and inclusion manager can rank the identified diversities by relevance and priority, establishing which are the most significant or critical for the company. This process must also take into account national anti-discrimination laws and the specific context in which the company operates. For example, IBM decided to focus on six areas: culture, gender, disability, cross-generation, GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender), and work-life integration.

The history of this company well illustrates the “ever-changing and evolving nature” of diversity management ([Friday & Friday, 2003](#), p. 875). In the mid-twentieth century, IBM started by focusing on cultural, gender, and disability diversities, widening its scope in the 1990s to include generational and sexual-orientation diversities and work-life integration. Today, the company has further extended its focus to encompass diversities relating to knowledge and competencies ([IBM, 2013](#)).

The IBM experience is also very useful in understanding the contextual nature of diversity management ([Gonzalez, 2010](#); [Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007](#)). Indeed, looking at IBM’s intendance of GLBT diversity, we can see that the matter is both advanced and well-developed in the U.S., while still in its infancy in other countries such as Italy.

2.2.2. Selecting diversity management lines of action

In the third stage, the HR manager and the diversity and inclusion manager must set out the lines of action they consider most appropriate in addressing each of the selected diversities. A line of action is the framework adopted when reasoning about how to operate on a specific diversity, which is then built taking into account the vision of the company together with its present context and resources. The simplest distinction that can be made between the different lines of action is:

- Managing a given diversity merely to comply with the law or to avoid damaging the company’s reputation (compliance line of action); or

- Managing diversity to create added value, which involves leveraging employees' motivation and commitment to boost the productivity of individuals, groups, or the organization (value-creation line of action).

The line of action strongly influences the policy and practices chosen to manage a specific diversity. Take for example the management of employees with disabilities. A company that adopts a compliance line of action on disability will have policies and practices in place to ensure legal requirements are respected and there is no discrimination within the company. Alternatively, a company that employs a value-creation line of action will analyze its employees' capabilities to find suitable jobs for disabled employees that allow them to contribute to the company's success. IBM does this; by involving these workers directly in the improvement process, the company developed new technologies that not only assisted disabled employees, but also translated into new products for the market.

2.2.3. Designing policy and practices

This stage combines all the preceding elements to draft a diversity management policy that formally sets out the company's general goals and approaches to people's differences and how these are to be managed. After this, the company can plan a coordinated set of actions to help ensure successful implementation of diversity management.

While the approach to managing diversity is determined by the company's vision and line of action, its goals are established and planned by analyzing all the problems and opportunities inherent in managing each dimension identified. The company must then focus on the most crucial and likely problems. It should also focus on opportunities that will influence company success and are easy to accomplish, as well as on those that are difficult to accomplish, as long as their level of influence on company success is very high. To encourage a more participative implementation of diversity management, the company may choose whether to involve trade union leaders and/or employee representatives at this stage.

The HR manager and the diversity and inclusion manager should inform the board of directors and senior management about identified problems and opportunities, and present emergent goals. Based on this information, the board members and senior management will select some of these strategic goals and combine them with the company's mission, vision, and general strategy to formulate the company's diversity management policy. According

to research conducted by the [European Commission \(2008\)](#), of 335 European Business Test Panel companies, 56% have in place some kind of diversity policy. Once again, we will look at IBM's experience to illustrate a diversity management policy that sheds light on the evolving nature of the issue, depending on the changing context and company strategic goals. IBM's policy started with a focus on nationality, gender, and disability and a compliance line of action aimed at avoiding problems with equal opportunity laws by meeting numeric quotas (*Diversity 1.0*). It later evolved to fold in other diversity concerns (age, sexual orientation, and work-life balance), with a shift toward a general value-creation line of action that involved eliminating barriers and promoting inclusiveness (*Diversity 2.0*). Today, the company continues to deploy a general value-creation line of action and has further expanded the diversity dimensions it manages to include knowledge and competencies, leveraging these diversities to improve innovation, collaboration, and client success (*Diversity 3.0*).

Once a company has formulated its diversity management policy, the HR and the diversity and inclusion managers should involve mid-level executives to establish short-term operational goals and a corresponding set of actions (practices). To promote a more participative implementation of diversity management, the company can also involve trade union leaders and/or employee representatives in formulating its operational plans, and use feedback and suggestions gathered through employee voice tools (e.g., internal climate surveys, network groups, blogs). For each operational goal identified, the company actors mentioned previously should set out at least one operational solution, clarifying:

- The organizational area that will be affected;
- The expected results;
- The resources needed in terms of time, money, technology, people, and their competencies;
- The key performance indicators (KPIs) chosen to measure the success of the intervention;
- The person in charge of implementing the specific solution; and
- The person accountable for measuring the results achieved.

This process of translating strategic and tactical goals into operational goals and actions should

also take into account any pre-existing diversity management solutions in use by the organization, with an eye to improve their effect or broaden the scope of the company’s actions.

2.3. Diversity management implementation at the operational level: Performing diversity management

At the operational level, the company implements, communicates, monitors, and evaluates the diversity management vision, policy, and practices that were defined at the strategic and tactical levels. To ensure the shift from tactical to operational level and the commitment of company personnel toward managing diversity, the HR and the diversity and inclusion managers must enroll the support of other staff members: the line managers (who are responsible for ensuring that people apply, in practical terms, the company’s values and solutions) and the employees (who, through their words, behavior, and actions put diversity management into practice). This can be achieved through both extrinsic and intrinsic sources of motivation.

An example of an extrinsic motivational tool is incentive compensation linked to specific diversity-related objectives or performance processes that hold managers accountable for tasks or outcomes relating to diversity. [Sodexo \(2011\)](#) employs similar extrinsic motivational solutions and states that 25% of executive team bonuses and 10% to 15% of management bonuses are tied to diversity management results as measured on a scorecard. Another way to commit the whole organization to diversity management is to use learning processes to align the values of individuals with those of the organization (intrinsic motivation). Training/educational initiatives and employee network groups are useful tools for achieving this aim. In terms of employee networks, [SHRM \(2010\)](#) discovered that of the 177 firms in its aforementioned sample, 30% have affinity groups. For example, [Citigroup \(2011, p. 5\)](#) has 10: “African Heritage, Asian Pacific Heritage, Hispanic Heritage, Identity—assembles people from different nationalities, Roots—assembles multicultural experiences, disABILITY, Military Veterans, Pride—focused on Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender communities, Women, and Working Parents.” Such networks promote inclusion, open dialogue, learning, and constructive contributions by giving people opportunities for networking, mentoring, and coaching, as well as the chance to be involved in a community. They can also become fruitful centers from which specific needs and opportunities related to diversity are identified and presented to the company.

2.3.1. Implementing diversity management-designed practices

Once the tactical level has been put in place and the whole of the organization is committed to diversity management, the company must actually implement both the policy and the associated plans and practices into its day-to-day operations.

Although the solutions implemented at this stage are always context-dependent and firm-specific, we can cite a few illustrative cases. For example, [Autogrill \(2011\)](#) states that in order to implement its diversity policy to support working mothers, it introduced in Italy a maternity kit (a sort of welcome gift for new mothers with useful reading material), maternity coaching, and the choice of working part-time until the child is 3 years old. In addition, it helps mothers with the cost of childcare through special agreements with private nurseries near the workplace and along the main routes to it, covering around 50% of their monthly fees. In the UK, the company introduced childcare vouchers “which provide for the conversion of a portion of the salary into activities dedicated to children (nursery, recreational activities until the age of 16) and benefiting from tax relief” ([Autogrill, 2011](#), p. 34). To address issues of multiculturalism, Autogrill in Italy used a questionnaire to understand the needs and motivations of immigrant workers, and developed a tool kit to promote multicultural management throughout the company. In Spain, the solutions it implemented to foster multiculturalism focus on supporting a work-life balance for foreign employees in the respect of religion, including the “exemption of Muslim employees from the performance of their duties during the Ramadan period,” and more generally with provision for a 1-month leave to allow foreign workers “to visit their country of origin” (p. 35).

2.3.2. Communicating the company commitment to diversity management

To support the company’s endeavors to respect, enhance, and integrate people’s differences, the organization should promote—through internal and external communication initiatives—the policy, plans, and practices it has adopted. Internal communication helps to promote personnel awareness regarding the opportunities open to them, and can elicit useful suggestions for improving diversity management through employee voice channels. These participative tools can boost the employees’ motivation, commitment, and willingness to work harder to achieve better personal and organizational results, and also help the company to avoid spending time, energy, and money on unnecessary or unappreciated initiatives. Conversely, external communication helps to build up a positive image of

the company among customers, public institutions, suppliers, and competitors by showcasing its efforts in the sphere of corporate social responsibility. External communication may also result in the company being recognized as a 'best case' for workplace diversity management and winning special awards (e.g., DiversityInc Top 10 Companies for Diversity and Best Company for Diversity).

2.3.3. Making diversity management accountable

Measuring and evaluating diversity management is a problematic stage of the process because its output and outcomes tend to take a long time to become visible; diversity management is a medium- to long-term approach. This difficulty is reflected in the aforementioned research of [SHRM \(2010\)](#) and the [European Commission \(2008\)](#): only 36% of companies in the U.S. sample have methods for measuring the impact of their diversity practices, while this number is just 25% among the European sample. Despite these less-than-comforting results, it is important to monitor and evaluate the progress of the implemented diversity policy and associated practices on an annual basis to be able to justify continuing, modifying, or abandoning them, and to identify any changes needed to ensure that the process maintains its efficacy over time.

Chosen measures may be quantitative or qualitative. Reduction in absenteeism, complaints relating to mobbing or harassment, and customer response time are quantitative measures. So are increase in return on investment (ROI) of diversity, the number of employees in formal mentoring programs who are promoted, and representative mix on the board of directors.

On the other hand, employee climate surveys, customer surveys, and training assessments are qualitative measures. For example, in 2003 Sprint Nextel estimated that the diversity management course it offered to its 13,000 employees had a ROI of 163%. Accordingly, for every dollar spent on diversity training, Sprint gained \$1.63 net benefit from a reduction in staff turnover rate and its attendant costs (recruitment, selection, and training actions), which the participants linked directly to the diversity management training program ([Kirkpatrick, Phillips, & Phillips, 2003](#)).

In order to reach a commonly agreed upon method for evaluating the company's diversity management policies and operational solutions, the HR manager and the diversity and inclusion manager should present the relevant data to the board of directors, senior management, and trade union leaders and/or employee representatives. This evaluation will take into account the goals reached,

adherence to planned timescales, and allocated resources. It will also look at whether the policy and practices can solve the problems and seize the opportunities that prompted the company's diversity management efforts in the first place.

After this, successful outcomes should be communicated both internally (in a detailed manner) and externally (in more general terms). This phase is crucial because measuring and communicating the achieved outcomes can help to boost the importance that the company gives to diversity management, as well as demonstrate the return on investment to senior management and shareholders—a key element to ensure that resources continue to be allocated to the practice over time.

2.3.4. Re-thinking the whole process

Diversity management is the result of a continuous learning process. The HR manager, supported by the diversity and inclusion manager, must therefore discuss with the board of directors and senior management—and possibly with trade union leaders and/or employee representatives—whether to revise diversity management and its implementation. In this process, they must also identify any changes needed at the strategic, tactical, or operational level to take into account possible changes to the company's context, strategies, and people. The company will then inform its employees about any proposed changes to the company's diversity management system, thereby restarting the entire process.

3. The merits of the proposed model for bridging the implementation gap

Increasingly, managers recognize the importance of seizing the opportunities inherent in managing diversity, but struggle with an implementation gap. Far too often, HR managers only give lip service to diversity management, without truly considering it as a core part of their corporate strategy. In this scenario, diversity management is confined to slogans, ethical code sections of rule books, training sessions, and limited initiatives or solutions that are simply copied and pasted from other companies—and which tend to be poorly planned and disjointed from the general strategy. This demonstrates that translation of the diversity management concept into practice is a real challenge for companies. The lack of skilled expertise in managing diversity is an issue acknowledged by 50% of the companies sampled by the [European Commission \(2008\)](#).

To bridge this implementation gap, we propose that companies should adopt an integrated process

Table 1. Key elements of the proposed integrated process of change to implement diversity management (DM)

Level	Stages	Core Actions	Expected Outcomes
S T R A T E G I C	I. Framing a new company vision	Explanation of the values that underpin the company’s interest in DM	Learning opportunities addressed to the board of directors and senior managers (e.g., training/educational workshops on the relevance of diversity and inclusion)
		Identification of the reasons ‘why’ the company has chosen to introduce DM	
		Definition of the new vision	Redefinition of the company values and vision to incorporate diversity
T A C T I C A L	II. Selecting relevant and urgent diversity dimensions	Choice whether to introduce a dedicated DM role or function	Assignment of the responsibility of the DM to one or more person/s
		Identification of people’s diversities (both internal and external)	Internal and external analysis of people’s differences
		Selection of the relevant and urgent diversities that the company wants to manage in a differentiated way	Internal diversity and inclusion climate survey (Optional; it is normally used in a participative approach) Prioritization and selection of the diversities that the company wants to manage in a differentiated way
	III. Selecting DM lines of action	Definition of the line of action that the company wants to adopt for each selected diversity	Identification of the line of action for each selected diversity (Compliance vs. Value-Creation)
IV. Designing DM policy and practices	Formulation of the diversity management policy	Identification of medium-term strategic goals Formulation of the company DM policy	
	Selection of the diversity management practices to be implemented	Taking pre-existing diversity solutions into account, translation of the policy into practices by defining long-term and mid-term operational goals, area of impact, responsibilities, needed resources, expected results, KPIs (measuring their baseline value before implementing the solutions)	
O P E R A T I O N A L	V. Implementing the DM designed practices	Attribution of the responsibilities of this phase to line-managers	Learning processes bound to all the people in the organization (e.g., training/educational seminars; network groups)
		Implementation of the planned practices	Implementation of DM solutions
	VI. Communicating the company commitment to DM	Communication	Internal communication (e.g., letter from the CEO presenting the company’s diversity values, policy, and practices; intranet section devoted to DM; code of conduct, annual report on diversity, DM meetings or events) External communication (e.g., newsletters, press releases, brochures, DM annual report, conferences, diversity website page)

Table 1. (Continued)

Level	Stages	Core Actions	Expected Outcomes
O P E R A T I O N A L	VII. Making DM accountable	Measurement of the achieved results	Measurement of the defined KPIs (both quantitatively and qualitatively)
		Evaluation of the achieved results	Evaluation of the achieved results Communication of the achieved results (both internally and externally)
	VIII. Re-thinking the whole process	Process review on the basis of the achieved results and the changed situation	Meeting to re-think the whole process on the basis of changes in the context Internal communication of the planned changes

of change. This implies treating diversity management as a central part of a company's strategy and introducing it across the organization at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels. It must involve senior management and mid-level executives, but also line managers and employees, in a process of cultural and organizational change that affects the company's vision, leadership, strategy, policies, practices, measurements, and communications.

Different diversity management implementation processes are presented in literature, some being more planned (e.g., Friday & Friday, 2003), while others are more emergent (e.g., Gonzalez, 2010), with the process proposed in this work (summarized in Table 1) being a halfway solution. It would be interesting, in future studies, to analyze and compare the strengths and weaknesses of these different processes.

The integrated process described in this work is intended to guide companies in effectively bridging the diversity management implementation gap. In our opinion, it has three main and very individual strengths:

1. It sets out clear steps that companies should follow, pinpointing the related core actions, actors, and expected outcomes, but at the same time leaving companies the margin to adapt them to their specific situations;
2. It is flexible in terms of degree of participation; and
3. It integrates the strategic, tactical, and operational levels in a coordinated way.

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