

GUEST ARTICLE

Author: Colette O'Reilly, General Manager People & Culture

04 October 2024

A LOOK AT WORKPLACE DIVERSITY: CREATING A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN BE THEIR WHOLE SELVES

Diversity is a key contributor to any successful business, and diversity equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices can be applied to any workplace no matter its size or industry.

As a Diversity Council Australia accredited 'inclusive employer' and Urban Development Institute of Australia New South Wales' 2024 'Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Company of the Year', AVID Property Group (AVID) acutely understands the importance of DEI in the workplace and is working to create an environment where difference is both valued and leveraged.

AVID has taken a top-down approach to DEI to ensure its people practices support AVID's objectives and accommodates its ever-evolving, diverse customer base. The business has recognised the importance of DEI groupwide - not just as a human resources initiative.

In her role as AVID General Manager People and Culture, Colette O'Reilly encourages on-going dialogue with the leadership team to ensure DEI remains as an integral pillar for the business.

You do not have to be a large organisation to be truly inclusive.

Having been in business for more than 35 years, AVID has a rich history and culture. As an SME, having a compact workforce has meant the integration of our DEI policies has been a more intimate and tailored process.

Diversity for us has meant that when we are at the start line of a development project, we invite people from a range of functional areas to the table to bring the benefits of different ideas, backgrounds, perspectives, and insights into how we should approach the delivery of that community. A diverse workforce also ensures we are more reflective of the communities in which we operate, allowing for the context and sensitivities specific to certain groups to be considered during our project planning and decision-making processes. By drawing from a shared pool of knowledge we can widen our reach and relatability to varying ages, nationalities, genders, and cultures.

Our diverse talent base benefits all stakeholders including our customers, our shareholders, and our people. Diverse organisations have been found to make smarter decisions, see increased profits and productivity, and have lower turnover. With these merits in mind, the choice to commit time and resources into fostering a diverse workplace was not a difficult one for AVID to make.

As members of the property industry, we have the benefit of tangible measures of success - whether that be houses built, communities completed, or people we have helped find a home.

Our strides towards DEI are just as quantifiable, and we are proud to have achieved visible results in this area. Looking beyond quotas, however, is where genuine and sustainable DEI can flourish.

While the benefits of quota-based diversity should not be discounted – quotas give a transparent and unambiguous roadmap towards implementing inclusive practices within an organisation - that should not be the end goal. If a quota is where an organisation's pro-diversity practices finish, then there is more work to do to reap the rewards of an equitable and inclusive workplace.

For example, at AVID we know more than a third of our Executive Committee and our managers are women, and that a third of our staff are multilingual from 38 diverse cultural backgrounds – but our steps towards a truly diverse workplace go far beyond just these numbers.

We are not perfect, but we are committed to fostering diversity and inclusivity in every corner of our culture, and our efforts towards this goal are reflective of our commitment to genuine DEI. While there has been much work done around gender diversity, work is still required.

There are other areas of focus that as an industry may offer opportunity. For example, access to quality schooling can be down to the postcode you live in and/or your socio-economic status. As an industry facing skills and labour shortages, we should consider any opportunity to partner more with government to provide skills learning pathways to ensure we have the talent we need in the future.

We are currently rolling out DiSC (dominance, influence, conscientiousness, steadiness) profiling for all staff, to assist our people to build a greater understanding of both themselves and others. With this knowledge, we aim to help our people to improve internal communication and leverage our collective strengths when problem solving.

Beyond this, we host in-house cultural social events celebrating the many backgrounds of our team, we promote an equitable and ethical work environment through our code of conduct and equal opportunity employment policies, as well as a separate and highly focussed DEI Policy.

These initiatives work towards building a long-lasting culture of belonging in the workplace, creating satisfied staff well beyond just a quota or a percentage of diverse groups employed.

New business, same values

Our business is rooted in creating a sense of belonging for the people who call our community's home. We strive to ensure this feeling of belonging permeates into our staff culture, so that every member feels they are working in a space they truly belong.

As our business takes on new ventures, we are tasked with ensuring that values core to our operations are instilled in to new members of our team. For an organisation to hope for a prosperous future, self-sustaining and regenerative diversity and inclusivity must be cultivated within the company culture.

We have worked to educate ourselves on how we can best create an inclusive culture for our team and apply these practices in AVID offices across Australia as we continue to grow.

We encourage our people to bring their whole selves to work. Irrespective of differences, we want to ensure that our people feel connected to our purpose and their team, that they can contribute, and that their contribution is valued by those around them.

Made possible by our 35 policies to promote diversity and inclusion, our priority is giving a seat at the table – and a voice – to every member of our team.

– ENDS –

Colette O'Reilly, AVID Property Group General Manager People & Culture

Colette's focus is on creating people practices that support and drive high performance and engagement for the business. She has over 25 years' experience in Human Resources, holds a Professional Diploma in Human Resource Management from Deakin University and is a Certified MBTI Practitioner.

About AVID Property Group

AVID Property Group (AVID) is an award-winning Australian developer, responsible for a diversified selection of residential masterplanned communities, land lease communities, completed houses and apartments, with 45 developments, located in key growth areas across Australia's eastern seaboard.

AVID has a proven track record with the delivery of \$4.2 billion worth of projects over the past 17 years. AVID's current portfolio has a gross revenue pipeline of \$5 billion.

With a strong record of delivering connected and vibrant communities, AVID and its subsidiaries have created great homes and places for more than 75,000 Australians to live out their dream lifestyle.

Led by highly experienced senior management, AVID brings people together to deliver exceptional communities, valuable shareholder returns and thriving environments for its customers. For more information, visit www.avid.com.au.

For further information, please contact BBS Communications Group:

Victoria Cox

Account Manager

vcx@bbscommunications.com.au

0405 873 368 | 07 3221 6711