Integrify

Productivity and well-being

through Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

Table of contents

Table of contents

Productivity and wellbeing through DEI - Handbook

Introduction

About Integrify Non-Profit

Integrify Non-Profit is the non-profit arm of Integrify, a digital academy bringing software developers and European tech companies together.

Integrify Non-Profit helps Finnish work life become more diverse and inclusive. Across multiple projects, we organize educational events and training workshops for companies and individuals in Finland.

About the project

"Inklusiivisuus tuottavuuden ja työhyvinvoinnin kasvattajana" ("Grow profitability and wellbeing with inclusivity") is a project funded by the European Social Fund and Integrify Non-Profit.

This project aims to improve the productivity and performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in Northern Ostrobothnia by developing their diversity and inclusion activities. Diversity and inclusion can bring substantial benefits for companies: from improved well-being to increased productivity.

The key actions within this project include:

- Helping companies become more diverse and inclusive through training events and workshops
- Supporting companies in developing their recruitment practices and recruiting international talent
- Organizing events related to networking, well-being, and career progression for international talent working in small and medium-sized companies in North Ostrobothnia

About the handbook

The goal of this handbook is to provide concrete actions to microenterprises and SMEs in North Ostrobothnia on how to improve the productivity and well-being of their employees while embracing the principles of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity.

This handbook is the result of years of research, over 30 workshops with experts in relevant areas, over 30 interviews with the leaders of local enterprises, and countless conversations with talent in the region.

Recruitment

Identify the needs of your organization

Starting with a clear understanding of organizational needs is a fundamental step in making effective recruitment decisions. Remember that there is no certain framework that can be applied to all situations. The specifics of onboarding depend on the size and structure of your company.

At the foundation, you must have a holistic and up-to-date view of your resources as well as bottlenecks in your operations and growth enablers. In most cases, your new hire must support your current resources while removing bottlenecks and/or seizing opportunities for growth.

When identifying the needs of your organization, make sure to involve as many stakeholders as possible especially if you lead a small-sized organization. As a leader, you need to proactively ensure that every voice is heard. For many employees, it is not often easy to share their concerns about resourcing needs. However, having this knowledge can positively contribute to helping you get the aforementioned view of your resources, threats, and opportunities.

With a clear view of your organization, you can determine whether you need someone to take ownership of a function and its future development independently or to execute a predefined set of responsibilities under the supervision of one of your existing employees. At the same time, you need to assess whether you have relevant expertise in your company already.

In summary, setting realistic expectations from your new hire is crucial to refining realistic profiles, attracting suitable applicants, and enabling the chosen candidate to make valuable contributions to your organization.

Language requirements

Language requirements vary due to a range of factors, including the nature of the job, the industry, the target audience or market, and the geographic location. Understanding these aspects is essential in determining the language requirements needed for effective communication and successful job performance.

Many companies in Finland still require Finnish and/or Swedish for all job openings. As a hiring manager, you should always ask yourself if Finnish and/or Swedish are needed for the new hire to conduct their work.

In some roles, language proficiency is necessary. For example, if a company serves the local market and you are looking for a copywriter to produce content in Finnish. Another example is working in customer-facing roles. In these cases, you should first consider the ratio of your customers in Finland and abroad and, next, plan your hiring actions accordingly.

For example, you have 20% of your customers in Finland and 80% outside of Finland. In this case, it would be possible to hire multiple employees with no knowledge of Finnish language but skills in either English or other languages that are relevant to your customer base.

However, if 80% of your customers are located in Finland and 20% are abroad, you would need to hire mainly Finnish speakers to serve the Finnish speaking audience.

Still, depending on the volume of your customers and associated workload, you can consider hiring at least one to two people who do not speak Finnish and put them in charge of your foreign operations.

In some roles, language proficiency might be a requirement due to internal processes. If all internal documentation is in one language, a requirement in that language is reasonable. However, there are multiple benefits of switching your internal and external communications to additional languages. We explore the reasons along with how to make it happen in a separate chapter.

After careful consideration of the various factors contributing to the language requirements, a decision should be made. In many cases, your new hire can excel at your company with their job knowledge rather than language skills.

Hiring international talent residing in Finland

One of the many aims of this project is to support international talent who already reside in Finland. In many cases, these individuals arrived in Finland to work, complete their studies, reunite with their families, or seek asylum.

All of the above serve as the basis for their residence in Finland. As an employer, you face little to no administrative barriers to hiring these people.

In addition, these people tend to reside in Finland for extended periods of time, which enables them to start integration into the culture as well as get accustomed to ways of working and understanding local markets. In many cases, they have equal capabilities to make valuable contributions in their roles as well as the culture of their new employers.

Writing job description

After identifying the needs of your company and creating the applicant profile, you face the next challenge, which is the process of creating and publishing a job advertisement. Your effort at this stage determines whether you attract the right applicant profile.

At the same time, you must stay faithful to your initial applicant profile. It is unfortunately common to add further requirements over multiple rounds of revisions, especially when new stakeholders get involved in the process. While attracting top talent is one of the desired goals in all recruitment processes, you must remain mindful of the balance between the level of responsibility in the role and the seniority of applicants you will attract. Hiring an overqualified applicant can do more harm than good, as these candidates may move on to a more suitable challenge after a relatively short time. It is crucial to ensure that the hired person has room to grow in their newly acquired role and they are able to deliver value to the business over a long period of time.

Short employee tenure will inevitably lead to increased recruitment costs. And while bigger companies may have the budgets to afford continuous recruitment processes, smaller businesses may be unable to afford replacement hires.

For these reasons, we recommend involving all relevant team members from the start of the hiring process. Ask your team members: What attracted them to apply to your company in the first place? Did they learn something during interviews or after starting in the role that they did not learn when reading the job description?

Most importantly, you must remember that diversity and inclusion, company culture, and values play greater roles when looking for the next career challenge. Companies that show inclusive culture attract more employees with diverse backgrounds, setting their businesses for success. Make sure to describe your values as a company along with the culture in additional sections. At the same time, remember to use inclusive language throughout the entire job description.

Publishing a job opening

Although you can publish and promote your job opening in multiple channels, we recommend using one platform or applicant tracking system (ATS) for collecting applications whenever possible. This can reduce unnecessary friction when screening and following up on applicants and their processes across different platforms.

Many talented applicants express that they might withdraw from applying in case they are asked to fill out too many fields. One of the main sources of frustration is filling out fields related to work experience and academic education, which can already be found on resumes and LinkedIn profiles. When asking applicants for information, make sure to only ask for the most essential attachments such as resumes, necessary contact information, and additional questions relevant to the role.

In addition, when asking questions from candidates in the job application process, it is crucial to also take into consideration the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

As we hinted in the previous section, asking questions from candidates at the application stage can help you make the right decision. You might receive over 100 applicants while only having the capacity to interview 5-10.

In addition to describing the desired applicant in the job description, you can ask questions from the applicants that can help you in the selection process. However, we recommend being specific rather than general. Do not ask for elevator pitches. Ask questions about job knowledge and solving problems in the role. At the same time, limit the number of questions to 3 and set appropriate character limits.

Promoting job openings

Utilize your own network as well, for example sharing the job opening with your connections on LinkedIn, Slack groups you are part of and ask your team members to share the job opening to their connections on LinkedIn.

In addition to using popular job boards and portals, consider other channels of communication that can connect you to more possible candidates. These channels can include universities and their guilds, and other professional communities. If you have sufficient marketing resources, you can run additional campaigns in order to access a wider applicant pool.

Nevertheless, the success of your promotional efforts depends on how well you are able to define your perfect applicant profile as well as clearly defining it on the job advertisement.

Screening applicants

As some job openings can get over 100 applicants, screening these applicants can be a long and hard process that requires a lot of resources. In the previous sections, we mentioned that collecting all applications on the same platform can shorten the time it takes to perform the laborious initial applicant screening process.

In addition to describing the desired applicant in the job description, you can ask questions from the applicants that can help you in the selection process. However, we recommend being specific rather than general. Do not ask for elevator pitches. Ask questions about job knowledge and solving problems in the role. At the same time, limit the number of questions to 3 and set appropriate character limits.

Promoting job openings

Utilize your own network as well, for example sharing the job opening with your connections on LinkedIn, Slack groups you are part of and ask your team members to share the job opening to their connections on LinkedIn.

In addition to using popular job boards and portals, consider other channels of communication that can connect you to more possible candidates. These channels can include universities and their guilds, and other professional communities. If you have sufficient marketing resources, you can run additional campaigns in order to access a wider applicant pool.

Nevertheless, the success of your promotional efforts depends on how well you are able to define your perfect applicant profile as well as clearly defining it on the job advertisement.

Screening applicants

As some job openings can get over 100 applicants, screening these applicants can be a long and hard process that requires a lot of resources. In the previous sections, we mentioned that collecting all applications on the same platform can shorten the time it takes to perform the laborious initial applicant screening process.

As you design your recruitment processes, avoid lengthy 60-minute interviews at the early stages. We recommend starting with shorter 30-minute interviews when you are certain about your choice. If you have doubts about an applicant, you can have shorter 15-minute calls to ask additional (the necessary) questions from the applicant.

As an alternative, some companies send recruitment assessments early on. The downside of doing this is the fact that many talented applicants may not be willing to complete an assignment before speaking to anyone in your company as well as this limits you in sending additional assignments later in the process when assessing between top 2-5 candidates.

Interviewing applicants

From your perspective, interviews are necessary to make the right hiring decision. Regardless, do not forget about the perspective of the applicants. For them, interviews are a way to gain a better understanding of your company and decide whether they are interested in becoming a part of your team.

In addition to the outline of the recruitment process established in the previous steps, make sure that every step in the process has its own defined structure that is clear to both your own team and potential future employees.

Onboarding

Overall, recruiting a new hire can be one of the most challenging activities for companies. This is especially true for small- and medium-sized companies that do not have a dedicated professional for recruitment and/or human resources processes.

Following recruitment, onboarding is just as challenging of an undertaking. Successfully onboarding a new hire determines the degree of success of the overall recruitment process as well as the long-term performance and retention of your new employee.

In this chapter, we explore multiple processes and actions you can take when onboarding a new hire. However, the success of many of these actions depends on overall internal structures of your company, which can help when onboarding a new hire as well as improving productivity of your current teams. You can find more advice on internal structures and underlying processes in the following section of this handbook.

Preparation

Before your new employee starts their work, you must reserve the necessary time to get everything ready for their first weeks.

This preparation can consist of giving access to necessary platforms, finalizing training materials, booking training sessions as well as regular check-in meetings with you or their direct supervisor.

When it comes to training sessions, it is important to differentiate between the sessions when your new employee spends the time with you or their direct supervisor or when the employee can go through the materials on their own. This model is known as flipped learning and we explore it in more detail in the following sub-sections.

Week one

During the first week, you must make yourself available for your new employee as much as possible. This can be challenging depending on your role and the size of your company. We interviewed several managing directors of small-sized companies who took the lead on the recruitment and onboarding of new employees. However, we understand that this can happen in other roles too.

In this section, we share a couple of practices that can help you make the most of employee onboarding.

Firstly, you can block off your calendar well in advance and prioritize onboarding activities over other commitments. In some cases, you and your new employee might benefit from postponing the start date by a week or more. In addition, inviting new employees for their first days on Tuesdays instead of Mondays can help you overcome some scheduling challenges as many companies tend to schedule weekly meetings on Mondays, as well as face the backlog of work accumulating over the weekends.

If you are sure that you are unable to prioritize onboarding activities over other issues such as newcoming customer meetings, make sure to share these responsibilities with other members of your team. As soon as you understand that this is necessary, align with your colleague and continue preparation together.

In addition, make sure to set up as many introduction meetings with other team members as possible. These meetings provide value to new employees even if you do not expect them to work with all people with whom they have introduction meetings. Firstly, new employees can get a bigger picture of the company, its operations, and its culture. Secondly, they can make new valuable connections from day one, which improves the effectiveness of onboarding as well as their experience and retention in the long term. Depending on the size of your company, you can start by setting up these meetings with the heads of all functions within your company.

Lastly, you can follow the approach of flipped learning to improve the efficiency of training sessions. Instead of introducing new information for the first time during real-time face-to-face sessions, you can share the materials with the employee in advance and allow them to go over them independently first. While going through instructions in real-time remains necessary, your new employee can grasp the big picture and share their questions in advance.

Remember that there is no certain framework that can be applied to all situations. While general practices apply to most, the specifics of onboarding depend on your industry and the role for which you are hiring. Please remember that you can always seek advice from other professionals. We learned that people love helping others, making new connections or reconnecting with old ones, and getting away from the routine for a productive work lunch.

30-60-90 day plan

This framework is becoming increasingly popular in various size companies in the Finnish business ecosystem. A 30-60-90 day plan is a document to set goals and strategy for the first three months on the new job. It helps maximize the performance in a new role by creating specific and manageable goals in line with the company's expectations.

Why make one?

- Focus - stating a clear focus can help your new hire be the most efficient during their first months on the job
- Goal-setting - clear goals will help your new hire to better integrate into the company
- Evaluation - after your new hire creates goals and makes progress to achieve them, you can better evaluate the success of this recruitment and determine whether you need to invest additional resources into enablement
- Areas for growth - tracking success in the role enables you as well as your employee to more accurately pinpoint areas for potential growth of the said employee as well as the areas of their ownership

The goals of the plan should be divided into three categories: personal, learning, and performance. Each 30-day period should include goals from all three categories. Each goal of the plan should follow the SMART framework (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound).

How to make a 30-60-90 day plan:

1. Draft a template to manage your plan
2. Make a general list of goals
3. Divide the goals into three groups
4. Identify targets for the first month (goals dedicated to learning about the company and the role role)
5. Identify targets for the second month (goals related to contribution based on previous findings)
6. Identify targets for the third month (goals related to leadership and improving processes)
7. Create action points for each goal (remember: the goals should follow the SMART framework with the emphasis on measurement)

A basic example of a 30-60-90 plan:

This example is written for an employee to read it and use as a blueprint for their first three months on the job.

- 30 days - time for learning the new role:
  - Get access to every account needed, study the tools (learning)
  - Meet with key stakeholders (learning)
  - Learn about internal processes, reporting structures, team and company challenges (learning)
  - Learn about the company culture (learning)
  - Learn about the company's past to better understand its values (learning)
  - Understand what is expected of you, set the metrics (performance)
  - Execute the main responsibility X times (performance)
  - Ask for feedback on the execution and apply it to future iterations (performance)
  - Get to know your coworkers (personal)

- 60 days - time to begin to contribute:
  - Execute your main responsibility more frequently with less guidance (performance)
  - Perform a task with an experienced colleague and ask for detailed feedback (learning)
  - Based on learnings, reflect on your own work and give feedback (learning)
  - Create a positive relationship with the management (personal)

- 90 days - time for executing and initiating change when applicable:
  - Perform your work independently and at full capacity (performance)
  - Develop an idea or initiative and pitch it (learning)
  - Execute the idea and get feedback (performance)
  - Create a personal strategy to better a process (learning)
  - Lead a meeting (personal)

This framework should be developed by the hiring manager and completed together with the employee depending on their personal goals and position. It is meant to be flexible to reflect the needs of any particular situation better.

Productivity

Following the onboarding process, empowering your new employees and enabling their productivity stems from setting up clear internal processes. In turn, these newfound processes can benefit your current employees and motivate them to work in more transparent and efficient ways.

Goals and objectives

Following the 30-60-90 plan, your employees should have clear goals and objectives in the long term.

For every quarter, your employees need to have clearly defined and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Every employee should be involved in setting their own KPIs with their direct managers as well as heads of departments. You must ensure that their KPIs align with the overall business objectives as well as the job description of every employee. If your operational landscape changes, you must speak with your employees without delays in case these changes affect expectations of their performance.

When setting the KPIs, you can rely on popular frameworks such as OKRs (Objective Key Results) and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound). Depending on your industry, you can benchmark success stories. In addition to supporting the business objectives, KPIs must be realistically attainable in a given timeframe while representing the day-to-day responsibilities of your employee.

Once you have the quarterly KPIs in place, you must set regular checkpoints with your employees. The frequency and formats of these checkpoints depend on the size of your company and the role of the direct manager of the employees. If you are a direct manager in a medium-sized company, you can set shorter weekly checkpoints with more extensive monthly reports. If you are a managing director in a small-sized company, you can set monthly check in meetings.

Career Development

For enabling your employees to succeed in their roles, you must ensure that every employee has opportunities for career development. These opportunities can range from one-off learning initiatives helping succeed in day-to-day work to new responsibilities leading to promotions. Besides improving productivity, this can result in better employee experience and improved well-being. In turn, this results in higher employee retention in the long term, which creates a positive loop with productivity.

Identifying these areas can be difficult in some cases. For new hires, you can take the first steps during onboarding sessions or even during the recruitment process. In addition to setting and following regular KPIs that support business objectives, you should take every opportunity to speak to your employees. For this reason, you can consider setting up additional 1-on-1 meetings. Take this opportunity to learn about your employee's well-being and their feelings towards work outside of assessing their performance. In addition to identifying development areas, you can learn more about them and their experience, which can help you improve their productivity and experience as an employee in your company. Both of which subsequently help improve their overall well-being.

Once you identify the development areas, you need to balance them against the business needs before enabling any learning initiatives. Firstly, you can allocate a budget for independent learning initiatives. This means that every employee can take the lead in learning new skills and utilizing them at work. While some employees deeply value such opportunities, you need to ensure that others understand the benefit and take full advantage of it. Secondly, you can set up regular learning sessions within departments or teams. During these sessions, you can also address and develop the necessary soft skills such as communication, collaboration, or teamwork.

Effective Communication

In the previous section, we emphasized one of the reasons for establishing effective communication with your employees.

Giving recognition to your employees is important to improving their productivity and well-being. Take every opportunity to recognize innovativeness as well as persistence. You can recognize the successes of your employees during personal conversations as well as in public meetings or internal communication channels. In order to avoid unwanted negative feelings, make sure that every employee receives an equal share of recognition. In companies with over a dozen employees, you can set up processes with heads of functions and managers on giving recognition to all employees.

Similarly, giving feedback to your employees is important to improving their productivity and well-being. However, giving constructive feedback is not an easy task. You must ensure that feedback is constructive and professional rather than personal. Firstly, you need to support your feedback with examples. Secondly, you need to enable employee growth with concrete actions they can take. Most importantly, you can recognize their strengths and successes prior to and after giving feedback.

Company Culture

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion principles have a profound and positive impact on company culture. By embracing and implementing DEI, organizations foster an environment that celebrates differences, ensures fairness, and promotes equal opportunities for all employees. In this part of the handbook, we will cover some ways DEI positively affects company culture.

Embracing diversity

IDEI principles encourage organizations to value and embrace diversity in all its forms, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and more. By actively seeking diverse perspectives and experiences, companies can tap into a wide range of ideas, creativity, and innovation. This creates a culture that values and respects different backgrounds, leading to increased collaboration, problem-solving, and overall performance.

Fostering inclusion

Inclusive company cultures go beyond mere diversity and strive to create an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and included. DEI principles promote the creation of inclusive policies, practices, and spaces that allow individuals from all backgrounds to thrive and contribute their best work. Inclusive cultures promote psychological safety, enabling employees to express their opinions, take risks, and share their unique perspectives without fear of judgment or exclusion.

Enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction

When employees feel that their identities, experiences, and voices are valued, they are more likely to be engaged and satisfied with their work. DEI principles create a sense of belonging and purpose, leading to higher employee morale, motivation, and loyalty. This positive work environment attracts and retains top talent, as individuals seek organizations that prioritize and champion their diverse needs.

Driving innovation and problem-solving

Companies that embrace DEI principles benefit from a broader range of perspectives and experiences, which enhances their ability to innovate and solve complex problems. Diverse teams bring different insights and approaches to the table, fostering creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. By encouraging diverse viewpoints, organizations can develop products, services, and strategies that better cater to diverse customer needs and preferences.

Strengthening reputation and brand image

In today's socially conscious world, consumers, investors, and prospective employees actively seek organizations that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion. By demonstrating a commitment to DEI principles, companies build a positive reputation and brand image. This, in turn, can attract customers, foster loyalty, and differentiate the organization from its competitors.

Embracing DEI

Implementing the principles of DEI in practice is a continuous process that requires commitment from everyone in the company, especially its leadership. One way to show commitment is to include the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion in the core values of the company. Decision-making processes, company policies and common practices should reflect the core values. Please remember to research the current state of the company before implementing any changes. After gaining a full understanding of the state of DEI principles in your company, set realistic goals and make progress over time.

Some ways to start implementing the DEI principles in your company can be by creating flexible work arrangements. Examples of such arrangements are allowing your employees to work flexible hours, executing remote or hybrid work mode, removing any physical obstacles that can make your office non-accessible for people with physical disabilities.

To accommodate possible international applicants, consider making English the official company language. We discussed the benefits of switching your company language to English in one of the previous sections of this handbook. Other than expanding your applicant pool for new openings, it presents many additional advantages.

Firstly, switching your external communications to English and other languages can broaden your reach to other markets and help you win more business outside of the home market. Many founders start new companies with going global in mind from day one because the local market is small.

Secondly, switching your internal communications to English and other languages can smoothen the onboarding of not only new hires but consultants, suppliers, and other collaborators. In addition, this switch can elevate your company to new opportunities for funding and investments.

Consider establishing a clear performance management review process to ensure equitable career developing opportunities. Provide equal access to professional growth opportunities, mentorship and support for all employees. Please note that the process needs to be equitable, not equal. Taking this detail into consideration will help you foster inclusive and positive company culture.
And lastly, seek feedback and listen to your employees. Encourage them to voice concerns, share ideas and suggest ways of improvements. Allow anonymous reporting.

Implementation of DEI principles is an ongoing process that needs continuous attention and improvement. You will not be able to magically turn your business into a company with stellar DEI practices. Start with small and realistic changes. Grow them overtime, and listen to the feedback you receive from your team.

Thank you for reading our handbook up to this page. We hope that you found its contents useful in addressing multiple challenges in your work.

This is the 1st version of this handbook. We aim to continue improving it based on new research, case studies, and feedback.

If you have any suggestions and additions that you would like to make, do not hesitate to contact us!

You can always reach us at: non-profit@integrify.io

Thank you for your time and support,
The team at Integrify Non-Profit