

What's Next on the Diversity And Inclusion Agenda?

By [Elizabeth Black](#)

Diversity and inclusion initiatives have become part of the fabric of many organizations. Indeed, the core values, management practices and often strategic business metrics of companies have embraced the spirit and intent of building a workplace where everyone is welcome, valued and can contribute in a myriad of ways to organizational success.

What's next for companies who have mature diversity programs and inclusive cultures?

We believe that organizations will complete the circle that began with understanding differences and valuing these differences, by identifying and building upon similarities—valuing the concepts of community to build collaborative networks—each comprised of people with like-minded workplace goals, strong commitment to the organization's core values and commitment to the success of the organization and themselves.

Rather than focusing upon increasing representation, helping people find affinities by race, gender or physical capabilities or emphasizing getting diverse talent “not only in the door but into the boardrooms,” we posit that by using social network analysis, organizations can increase communication, collaboration and true building of communities (both in the workplace and throughout the supply chain—with suppliers, and customers) that will yield positive results--results that will engage and supercharge individual employees (because they are connected to people who matter to them) and that will take the organization to the next level of innovation and success.

Recent research has reported on how the hidden organization works. What are the social relationship maps and communication flows that occur beneath the organizational chart? Who regularly interacts with whom? Who is connected to whom? How does information flow within the organization?

Why is this important to diversity leaders? It is important because no program or initiative can produce sustainable behavior change unless it engages the organization's social network. Social networks play a critical role in determining the way problems are solved, organizations are run and the degree to which individuals succeed in achieving their goals, despite formal org charts and mission statements.

If building connected communities are the natural next step for your organization, we recommend that you investigate social network analysis (SNA), and we can show you how.

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