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By Marcus Hayle, MBA.

It's hard to believe that 2022 is nearly over and a new year is almost here. It's even harder to believe that in spring 2020, and [the killing of George Floyd](#) which brought diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the national spotlight, was nearly three years ago.

So much has changed in this time, both good and bad. There's been an inspiring wave of awareness spreading as we've learned more about our neighbors' cultures, experiences, and struggles with openness and honesty. However, there continues to be systemic issues that we need to address, not just for any one group but for all people.

As I often speak about, one of the most impactful places to practice DEI is in the

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It's important to remember that DEI is a fundamental piece of the tax profession because it not only positively impacts the workplace, but also directly benefits business.

There is intrinsic value when you ensure that you have a diverse workforce and clientele. You gain unique perspectives, opportunities, and insights that you otherwise would never have access to.

I recently experienced this firsthand, when we welcomed a new client to the firm whose first language was Spanish. I speak some conversational Spanish, but communicating complex accounting terms was a larger hurdle for me to overcome. So, we leveraged a translator, which worked great, and I was able to program our software to produce their tax forms in Spanish so they could better understand the strategies we were proposing.

With these tools, my firm now has more confidence in engaging and serving Spanish speaking clients. It has been a real pleasure embracing these clients into our family and having them embrace us into theirs, as it's helped us grow our perspective and experience.

I recently wrote about this, and the ways [tax professionals can take ownership of DEI in the workplace](#). When taking a critical look at DEI in your workplace, it's crucial to remember that these practices cannot happen in a vacuum. They require full participation of the team and start with a transformative shift in thinking by being intellectually curious.

With this in mind, you can begin to take stock of the role DEI has played at your firm with some of these self-reflective questions:

- *Did I learn about any new DEI perspectives this year? Do I have a plan to learn to do so for 2023?*

- *Did I work with any new clients or employees who have a uniquely different background*

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I encourage you to be as honest as possible when examining your answers. It's quite possible that DEI has not actually been a priority, even if the intention is there. If that's the case, acknowledging this is the first step to making positive change in 2023.

From there, take a close look at what your company looks like today and how it reflects the people you serve. Being self-aware and transparent on the journey is key to show you are improving. You can then take the following leadership steps:

Have honest conversations with your team members and get to know them better as individuals. Take interest in their particular needs, even if they look different than yours. After all, you won't necessarily understand a person's perspective unless you meet them where they are. Having these talks consistently is key. Creating a safe environment where people feel safe to have the discussion is even more important.

Practice what you preach and ensure leadership is implementing their messaging around inclusivity at the highest level. Have you held panels to hear from a diverse group of workers? Have you added inclusive language on new job listings? Are you open to feedback on day-to-day work? Are you looking at your own personal and professional circles and seeing diversity? To keep myself accountable, I actually have added DEI activities to my annual performance goals. That ensures that my actions reflect what's on my heart.

Know what is going on around you and take a hard look at how injustice impacts your employees' lives. Be sensitive to the environment. This includes not just racial injustice, but challenges for all groups, from people with disabilities, immigrants, veterans, members of the LGBTQ community, and more.

How our work on DEI impacts current and future generations.

I cannot overstate the importance of getting involved in DEI work, being open to

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