

WHITE PAPER 2019

021DISRUPT

Diversity & Inclusion

ARE WE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

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Abstract

Organizations are not isolated environments and as they develop and sell products and services to larger audiences, they need to have a diverse workforce that understands the lives and mindsets of their customers. This is the business case for diversity and inclusion which has been drummed up by experts time and time again but we still see a reluctance from business owners and hiring managers globally to embrace inclusion as one of their key values.

We see the same case here in Pakistan, only more intense, where organizations are usually biased in terms of gender, with the presence of women being a rarity within certain teams. Additionally, there continues to be a lack of representation from minority groups within workplaces in our society, which includes, differently-abled people, religious minorities and trans people, among others.

The idea of this roundtable was to bring various stakeholders to the table and discuss some major questions around diversity and inclusion. The roundtable was part of the largest tech conference in Pakistan, called 021Disrupt powered by the The Nest I/O. We invited four moderators, each of whom were key players in the tech industry and had been working on creating a diverse and inclusive tech ecosystem. The moderators picked three key challenges to discuss and formulated relevant questions for the roundtable participants.



ABOUT

The Nest I/O

The Nest I/O is a technology incubator and a community hub launched in partnership with global partners such as Google for Startups. We provide budding entrepreneurs with space, infrastructure, facilities, and knowledge sessions as well as access to a network of mentors and potential investors.

Since its inception in January 2015, The Nest I/O has graduated 160+ startups over 9 cohorts through our best-in-class incubation program. At the same time, we have been involved in various projects and events, ranging from promoting technology education to facilitating engagement between the startup community and our corporate partners.



ABOUT

021Disrupt

021Disrupt is Pakistan's premier entrepreneurship conference showcasing the local startup ecosystem and drawing numerous international guests, ranging from entrepreneurs and thought-leaders to corporates and venture capitalists. Once a year, we bring together under one roof an eclectic mix of speaker sessions, panel discussions, workshops, roundtables and networking activities featuring participants from diverse industries and fields from all across the globe. So whether it's a panel that offers a window into the minds of international pioneers or an investor meeting that could alter the course of your business, 021Disrupt can be your guide into the future.

Key Data Points:

MODERATORS:



Faiza Yousuf



Shamim Rajani



Sadaffe Abid



Nadia Patel Gangjee

NOTE TAKER:

01

TOTAL DURATION:

90 MINUTES

PARTICIPANTS:

26 (6 MEN AND 20 WOMEN)

CHALLENGES:

**3 (20 MINUTES OF DISCUSSION
FOR EACH CHALLENGE)**

CHALLENGE 1

Inclusive Organizational Policies

Creating inclusive organizational policies is the first step towards having a more diverse range of voices sitting on the table. This challenge was put forward by Shamim Rajani, one of the moderators of the roundtable.

Questions:

1. How to create organizational policies reflecting a focus on the inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and skill sets?
2. Organizations believe in having a cultural fit but when you set out to hire candidates whose beliefs align with your mission; how do you avoid disqualifying people from different backgrounds?
3. We have roughly one billion differently-abled people around the globe. It is absolutely vital and important to have them in our companies because not only can they test what we are building and help find the gaps but they bring their unique perspectives and experiences to the workplace. What policy-level and cultural changes (disability training, etc.) are required to achieve a truly inclusive organization?

Recommendations Proposed:

Our participants put forward the following recommendations which reflected their experiences and opinions about inclusive organizational policies.

- Creating diversity and inclusion quotas/targets to ensure having a certain number of diverse employees in the organization, and building a mechanism to monitor these efforts and measure tangible outcomes. This includes hiring people from different genders, religions, non-traditional backgrounds and exposures.
- Creating and running training programs for recruiters and hiring managers to ensure that they understand the need for an inclusive organization and are aware of any subconscious bias.
- Creating paid leave policies for all religious holidays and travels.
- Creating better policies to facilitate parents (maternal and paternal leaves), daycare services, medical coverage (physical and mental health), remote work and flexible working hours.
- Creating accessible office facilities to ensure that differently-abled people can be facilitated and don't feel left out.
- Gender sensitivity and disability confidence training sessions to all employees which will help in creating a safer environment for women and differently-abled people.
- Objective performance reviews with evaluators being giving useful and work specific feedback rather than that which is based on someone's personality or leadership style.

CHALLENGE 2

Workplace Safety for Women

Nadia Patel took the lead on this challenge and asked questions about workplace safety, its importance, and the government's proposed line of action.



Questions

1. What policies should be added to the workplace safety policy framework for women?
2. How many organizations have embraced “Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010” as a benchmark for creating anti-harassment policies? What help can be provided for a wider adaptation of this act?

Recommendations Proposed:

The discussion started with people sharing relevant incidents in their organizations and social circles and the ways in which they were resolved or dealt with. Some people also mentioned the repercussions of going public with the accusations and the backlash they would face from the organizations and society. Below is the list of recommendations proposed by the audience.

- Creating and running training programs on workplace safety for all employees which outline the basic understanding of harassment and have discussions regarding company policies and the related laws.
- Creating a policy and standard operating procedures for reporting and dealing with cases of harassment without compromising the safety of the people involved.
- Creating a policy for using communication channels and social media during and after work hours.



- Trade bodies can facilitate the process for creating and implementing policies by making it mandatory for their members to adapt “Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010” within their organizations.

CHALLENGE 3

Diverse Leadership

Research shows that having diverse leadership is imperative for any organization's long term success.

Sadaf Abid asked the following questions and moderated the discussion around it.



Questions

1. How can we create leadership programs to train and promote women to executive positions?
2. We all are familiar with bias and the ways in which it can affect our decisions. Subconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that lie outside our own conscious awareness. What do you think can be the strategies to remove subconscious bias from the hiring/selection process and create relevant policies for it?

Recommendations Proposed:

Retention rate of women in the workplace was a major point of discussion. Participants shared the problems people, especially women, face when they plan to go back to work and the lack of sponsorship for women and minorities.

- Organizations should facilitate back-to-work policies for their employees, especially women and minority groups.
- Creating an internal mentorship, sponsorship, and leadership development program for women which will help them in reaching their full potential.
- Rather than putting the whole onus on women for fixing the problem of less diverse leadership, organizations should create a safe, encouraging and inclusive environment for women where they can thrive.
- Creating home-grown groups for women and minorities where they can network and learn from their peers and other experts.



Way Forward

The discussion concluded with some policy recommendations for organizations that believe in creating an inclusive culture and want to add diversity and inclusion to their key values. We should understand that inclusion is not a one-off thing, it is an on-going process that requires a tailored approach and organizations need to re-adjust their ways once they have a better understanding of their own culture.

- Create accommodating policies for your employees, according to their needs and well-being, this includes, leave policies, remote work, flexible work hours, medical coverage (both physical and mental health), etc.
- Ensure to have a gender-sensitive and accessible environment, which includes, wheelchair ramps, separate and accessible washrooms, separate parking for expecting mothers and differently-abled people, etc.
- Create policies and procedures to ensure that the organization is an equal opportunity employer, make sure the hiring managers have a diversity goal and they are meeting their goals without compromising quality.
- Implement Workplace safety policies to minimize the incidents of harassment (both sexual and otherwise) and having open discourse on it to ensure that employees are clear on the overall law and organizational policies.
- Create leadership development programs for women and minorities and maintain a culture of trust, transparency, and competence.

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