

I consider equity, diversity, and inclusion to be an incredibly powerful concepts when one considers the meaning of each word. To illustrate this, equity is a word that conveys empathy and compels us to provide resources according to the individual's needs. Diversity refers to the awareness that there is someone missing due to a policy, procedure, or practice that, on its surface, appears neutral, but actually serves as a mental or physical barrier.

Then there is inclusion, which implies that after we have welcomed a range of highly qualified individuals, we must intentionally include them in decision-making processes or risk unintentionally excluding them. It has long been my conviction that equity, diversity and inclusion cannot simply be a slogan. Instead, these words must communicate to the workforce and to the general public the commitment of the organization's leadership team to disrupt its status quo.

All too often, leaders buy into the idea of equity, diversity, and inclusion, but fail to take the necessary steps to empower supervisors, employees, and the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) officer. I am not sure whether this is a deliberate decision or if it is the result of an oversight. In my experience, if leadership is not fully committed, then it will be difficult to change behaviors and beliefs that contributed to the culture of exclusion.

While serving in the United States Army, the world's greatest organization, I gained a deep understanding of the 11 Universal Principles of Leadership. The principles teach leaders the importance of self-awareness, empathy, and effective communication skills. When I lead EDI workshops, I refer to the 11 Universal Principles, and I'm amazed at how little executive leaders know about the existence of these universal principles. This is not a judgement statement; I am simply pointing out that this valuable information is not universally known.

As far as I know, no successful EDI program has ever been implemented without senior leadership support. Conversely, I do not possess enough digits to count the number of failed EDI programs that were underfunded and ignored by the very people who insisted that an EDI office be created in the first place. My starting point for this article was to highlight the power of EDI when it is properly supported. To conclude, I would like to note that if you are reading this article, you fall into one of two categories. You are

either consciously and intentionally supporting the EDI program in your organization, or you are unconsciously and unintentionally subverting it.

I strongly encourage all of you to research the [11 Universal Principles of Leadership](#), as I am confident that there are solutions there for every problem a leader, teammate, or employee might face. Since 1948, the 11 Principles have been used by the Department of Defense, and if the government can rely on them for national security, I am confident that they will also benefit your organization.