

# The lighthouse that is diversity, equity and inclusion

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When interacting with women at all levels of an organisation, in society, and within our family and social circles, it's evident that diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) have never been more important than now.



As a community of people from around the world, we have merely started to scratch the surface of the conversations around what DE&I look like – how do we unpack it, how do we talk about it, how do we implement it?

Undoubtedly, great strides have been made in recognising the value of diverse perspectives and inclusive practices. Studies have shown that diversity leads to better organisational performance, and research consistently demonstrates that diverse teams outperform homogenous ones in problem-solving, creativity, and decision-making.

Individuals with varied backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints are critical in fuelling innovation, driving product development, and anticipating market trends with greater accuracy.

## #InspireInclusion

Why then, do we still need to have this discussion with our networks, at the boardroom, at the water cooler? It's because the journey towards true equality and representation is far from over. Organisations and women alike continue to grapple with systemic barriers, biases, and disparities that act as a stumbling block for inclusion in all aspects of business and society.

That's why, this International Women's Day (IWD), efforts to #InspireInclusion are needed. It's a reminder every year that while we have set the boat off, there are miles of sea ahead to get where we need to be as a society. At every opportunity we have, we need to inspire inclusion.

This IWD, I've committed to openly talking about inclusion in the spaces I am in, inspiring a conversation that enables change.

### More than representation

Inclusion is not just about representation; it's about creating a culture where every voice is heard, respected, and valued. Inclusive workplaces empower individuals to bring their authentic selves to the table, fostering a sense of belonging.

Importantly, people feel a sense of psychological safety when they feel included, and this in turn fuels engagement, productivity, and retention in the workplace. When employees feel seen, heard, and appreciated for who they are, they are more likely to contribute their best work and remain committed to the organisation's mission and values.

### The lighthouse

Achieving true diversity, equity and inclusion requires ongoing commitment and action at all levels of an organisation, and in our personal lives.

This IWD, we are not paying lip service. We are opening the conversation, and we are listening to each other. In my

capacity, I am opening the conversation on inclusion in the groups I am present in.

As we've set off on our journey, let inclusion be the lighthouse that guides our actions and keeps us on a path of growth and unity.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Denise Mmodley is finance director at Bata South Africa.

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