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ROLE OF MIDDLE MANAGEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION AS A BUSINESS CATALYST FOR THE FUTURE AEROSPACE INDUSTRIAL
WORKFORCE

Abstract

The aerospace industry is in the midst of a major expansion, but talent is a limiting factor. Studies in both private and public sectors show that diversity of skills and perspectives is one of the main drivers for greater innovation and success in these fields. Organizations representing a diverse workforce enable multiple demographics to relate to the company and brand, opening doors to new market segments, customers, and business partners. Consumers are becoming more diverse and firms may need to reflect this or risk losing out in important sectors. This is particularly significant for start-ups and industries where innovation is the key to growth, such as in aerospace. Moreover, no matter the business sector or the entity's size, equality is also recognised as one of the core principles of a healthy workplace – and healthy workplaces drive productivity. The mutually reinforcing principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are therefore key to business strategy and culture, as together they establish a sense of belonging among employees. Nevertheless, to create an equal, diverse, and inclusive workforce in the aerospace industry, a field that - like many STEM industries - has struggled to make progress with respect to EDI, a large cultural shift is required. Achieving EDI within an organization is a mindset change that has to be progressively installed. Driving an inherent adherence to EDI principles is a shared responsibility, “being everyone’s business”. However, there is no quick fix. All levels of organizations need to commit to EDI principles for company-wide initiatives to work, starting by top management commitment, immediately followed by middle management. Research clearly demonstrates that middle managers – responsible for taking executive strategies and objectives and translating them into sets of goals for their departments – often perceive EDI as an abstract concept or not as a priority. Unless the managers who directly supervise the majority of the workforce accept, encourage, and implement the recommended EDI initiatives, no progress will be made. This work was born out of the IAC IPMC Young Professionals Workshop 2021 and is thus written primarily from the perspective of diverse young professionals working in the aerospace

sector. This paper aims to provide an extensive overview of EDI principles and to outline how they can be effectively implemented and managed, and middle-management's role within this process, in order to bring a strong positive human and business value for the future aerospace industrial workforce.