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IN CONVERSATION WITH AVISHKAR SRIVASTAVA

In this interview, Avishkar Srivastava, Chief Innovation Officer, The PDP Group, shares how the organisation has made strides to make diversity and inclusivity one of its key values.



How would you describe the importance of diversity and inclusion within The PDP Group?

International logistics is all about coordinating with people. Employees are interacting with colleagues from different departments, office locations, regions, and backgrounds.

At a time when logistic companies are aiming to scale up and go the extra mile to achieve customer delight, it is important to get the basics right. This is where we must understand how to recognize people from diverse backgrounds and make everyone feel included.

At our company- The PDP Group® we firmly believe that diversity and inclusion must be at the core of the company culture. In order to achieve our company's vision, every employee must feel valued and believe that they are contributing to the mission statement.

Having employees from diverse backgrounds helps us become more sensitized toward various cultural norms.

A diverse pool of employees also helps create a sense of daily learning, simply by having conversations with their colleagues.

A logistics company is dealing on a global scale, whether it is communicating with foreign clients, foreign agents, or representatives from various international

associations. Unless the organization inherently has a diverse workforce, it is difficult to create meaningful relations with international stakeholders.

In a world that is now digitally connected and where each organization has its own personality online on social media, it is important to have a culture that resonates across borders, and which feels welcoming to people from all backgrounds, ethnicities, regions, and nationalities.

What initiatives or programs does PDP Group have in place to attract and retain a diverse talent pool for your roles?

At The PDP Group®, we firmly believe that a dynamic workforce gives a key competitive advantage in the Industry 4.0 era, and as a result, we put great emphasis on attracting top talents.

When hiring employees for roles, we pay special attention to the candidate's personality and workplace attitude. In the logistics sector, hiring managers often keep their sole focus on the candidate's competency for that particular job. They tend to ignore important attributes like the candidate's personality type, working style, compatibility with the department which they would join.



Our company has been hiring in-house Industrial/ Organisational Psychologists for the past 8 years. This ensures that our hiring programs have a strong focus on psychological assessments to understand the candidate's suitability for the job role.

As a result, we are able to hire employees who are not just suited for the job based on their expertise but are also contributing to creating a diverse workplace. We ensure that each department has a varied set of personalities with unique working styles.

There are regular training sessions, and activities conducted to bring out the unique attributes of each employee. This includes participation in our annual employee felicitation event where employees get an opportunity to showcase their diverse range of talents from reciting poetry, singing songs, giving 'Ted Talk' style presentations, etc.

To ensure sustained cultural development, it is equally important to retain employees. With this in mind, we conduct regular sensitization programs, workshops on workplace etiquette, and celebrations of unique events such as 'World Happiness Day', 'International Day of Gratitude', etc.

With this, we received a 'Great Place to Work' certification from 'The Great Place to Work Institute- India' for 4 years in a row.



What strategies do you use to ensure equal opportunities for career advancement and growth regardless of background or identity?

A 360° feedback mechanism is essential to understanding an employee's overall performance. We focus on all-round employee appraisals. The employees are assessed not just by their reporting managers on performance, but also by their juniors, and colleagues from the same and different departments.

The assessments help us understand the candidate's behaviour, and tone of communication when dealing with employees of various scales, as well as their overall contributions to the company culture.

By obtaining feedback from multiple employees, we successfully avoid individual biases which may usually be the case if the career progression plan is solely reliant on the employee's reporting manager.

We also get to understand any underlying trends which may be revealed while reviewing the 360° feedback, pointing us to the types of sensitization programs required in the future. Qualitative analysis is not comprehensive when dealing with career advancement.

Our company also provides KPI documents to the managers, with a strong emphasis on collaboration and team growth.

This creates a culture where employees having a strong performance and an all-round positive approach towards peers, are recognized and given a chance to stand out from the crowd.

What strategies do you have in place to foster a sense of belonging for employees from all backgrounds within the workforce?

We are responsible to create a culture where each employee feels that they are an integral contributor to the company's mission. We are focused to create a culture that celebrates diversity. We celebrate all festivals such as



Christmas, Diwali, Eid, Durga Puja, etc. with the same vigour and excitement. These celebrations are more than mere events; they are opportunities for our employees to share their traditions and heritage, deepening our understanding of one another.

There is a prevalent perception in the logistics industry that the level of knowledge decreases as we move down from the ‘manager’ scale to the ‘executive’ scale and then to the ‘worker’ scale. As a company, we are keen to challenge this perception. We believe each employee has a sound knowledge of their particular field.

With this in mind, we hold regular seminars, and some of these seminars are held by our forklift operators and trailer mechanics, who explain the intricate details of heavy equipment/ truck to executives and managers.

This has created an immense sense of pride amongst the workers and increased the level of belongingness. Managers and executives also enjoy learning the practical aspects of the job, as their time is usually spent behind a computer screen.

The workers also feel a sense of pride by realising they are being heard and their knowledge is being valued.

In addition to the statutory maternity leave, we provide paternity leaves to our working fathers.

Through cultural celebrations, knowledge-based seminars, and mentoring initiatives, we are creating an environment where every individual is empowered to contribute their unique perspectives, driving innovation and success in our ever-evolving industry.

What role does leadership play in driving diversity and inclusion efforts?

The leadership team must take primary responsibility for driving the organization’s culture. It is important for us as leaders to truly understand why we are doing what we are doing, rather than simply following a trend.

For me, creating an organization that is diverse and inclusive refers to building a workplace where employees feel comfortable expressing their views.

The road to creating such a workplace is a staircase and not an elevator.

We need to take small, consistent, and effective steps to achieve diversity and inclusion. As leaders, it is important for us to sensitize our workforce which has a mix of enthusiastic youngsters and experienced professionals.

It is important to hear everyone’s views and to help them realise the importance of building a workplace of diverse personalities where there is not just one correct way of doing things.

