The Korn Ferry Diversity and Inclusion Maturity Model: A new understanding

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) maturity models are attractive because they offer a simple yet comprehensive current snapshot of how mature an organization is in diversity and inclusion. Those maturity models that are well designed and grounded in research can also serve as an effective strategy setting tool to create a roadmap of where the organization wants to go and at what pace.
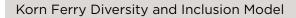
Most maturity models are presented linearly as was our orginal Korn Ferry model for the past several years. Evidence suggests that organizations may indeed move forward with increasing maturity in the ways they address and leverage D&I, and so there is some logic to this approach.

However, our deepening experience of transformational change tells us that the linear approach, which works well as a snapshot of the current and desired states, begins to break down in supporting a go-forward multi-prong strategy because the gaps are within multiple dimensions rather than neatly 100% resolved one D&I dimension at a time and in a particular order. In this context, linearity no longer makes sense: an organization needs to be maturing across various dimensions at the same time and not sequentially.

These realizations led us to create the Korn Ferry D&I Maturity Model 2.0, in which five dimensions — Compliance, Awareness, Talent Integration, Operations Integration, and Market Integration — are organized as wedges of a circumplex rather than lined up in a particular sequential order.

Within each dimension, our D&I Maturity Model differentiates between behavioral and structural inclusion:

- *Behavioral inclusion* is about the conduct of individuals as they undergo a journey of self-discovery and become more alert to the biases that hamper their decision-making.

- *Structural inclusion* is about how equitable and transparent the systems and processes in place are in order to prevent unconscious bias from occurring in the first place—and that they are corrected when it does.

Let's put these two inclusion concepts together as we elaborate on each of the D&I Maturity dimensions.

Korn Ferry Diversity and Inclusion Model

The dimensions of D&I maturity

While the three dimensions of Compliance, Awareness, and Talent Integration may intuitively be understood, there are still important nuances worth exploring. The two other dimensions, Operations Integration and Market Integration have more to them than meets the eye.

- **Compliance** — Measures risk management effectiveness. It essentially determines to what extent an organization has the infrastructure, capabilities and behaviors necessary to identify, quantify, mitigate and prevent D&I related risks. An organization that is fully mature in the behavioral inclusion aspect of Compliance displays full awareness by all stakeholders of the risks and impact associated with workplace harassment, bullying, and discrimination. Structural inclusion in Compliance is achieved when D&I is approached from a broader risk management perspective as opposed to just addressing bad behaviors when someone musters the courage to speak up. HR, leadership and the Board proactively monitor broader organizational risks (such as the need to have good reporting and whistleblower systems in place) and where there are well understood consequences and processes for those who do not adhere to company policies and values regardless of their level and status.

- **Awareness** — Measures to what extent an organization's leaders and employees are aware of and committed to the value of D&I. The spectrum of efforts in behavioral inclusion covers awareness building, advocacy, and knowledge of D&I, communicating its business value, and driving employee engagement. Leaders transition from having "D&I passion" to "D&I competency" and from "unconscious bias" to "conscious inclusion". The CEO and business leaders fiercely advocate for D&I, are authentically role-modeling inclusion and seen as "walking the talk". Structural inclusion in Awareness is demonstrated through robust and integrated D&I governance and accountability (e.g. Councils, ERGs, metrics) and by the external recognition of the organization's D&I efforts through applying for awards and being certified by an outside organization in the quality of these types of D&I efforts.

- **Talent Integration** — Measures to what extent an organization has integrated diversity and inclusion into their talent systems, and leaders and employees display inclusive behaviors. When behavioral inclusion is fully actualized in Talent Integration, inclusive behaviors become part of the entire talent management lifecycle and show up in key talent decisions. Leaders and employees display inclusion skills and leverage talent diversity for better decision making and team performance. When structural inclusion is fully actualized, the organization's D&I strategy is integrated into its talent strategy, talent processes are reviewed for, and scrubbed from, unconscious biases, leaders and employees are held accountable for D&I Integration into talent

management and robust talent analytics are applied to inform talent decisions.

- **Operations Integration** — Measures the bottom-line impact of leveraging the organization's diversity in an inclusive way that leads to greater efficiencies, increased safety, increased quality assurance, etc. The spectrum of efforts in behavioral inclusion covers functional leaders and middle managers rolemodeling inclusion and displaying inclusive leadership skills by deliberately putting together high performing diverse-by-design teams for operational tasks and projects. For structural inclusion, the spectrum of efforts includes D&I being fully leveraged within the operational ecosystem such as in Six Sigma and LEAN processes which require input from every team member, managing M&A workstreams, innovating new processes for greater safety, etc.

- **Market Integration** — Measures the top line impact of D&I through expanding to markets of new consumers, enhanced customer service, and effective partnership with communities. From a behavioral inclusion perspective, organizations who have mature Market Integration of D&I are those where inclusion and cross-cultural competencies are applied in key decisions and market initiatives and where leaders and employees recognize their own need for cross-cultural competency and seek out further education. From a structural inclusion perspective, well understood processes such as innovation, product testing, marketing focus groups and campaigns are enhanced by greater D&I. D&I metrics are also embedded in all lines of management in all markets, and expected business outcomes, due to leveraging the organization's D&I, are regularly evaluated to ensure sustainability. An organization will also maintain active communications with diverse community and professional organizations, and their employee resource groups may help generate innovative solutions for diverse markets and customers. This requires behavioral inclusion of leaders and others choosing to participate in these events and the structural inclusion of establishing well-structured strategic partnerships.
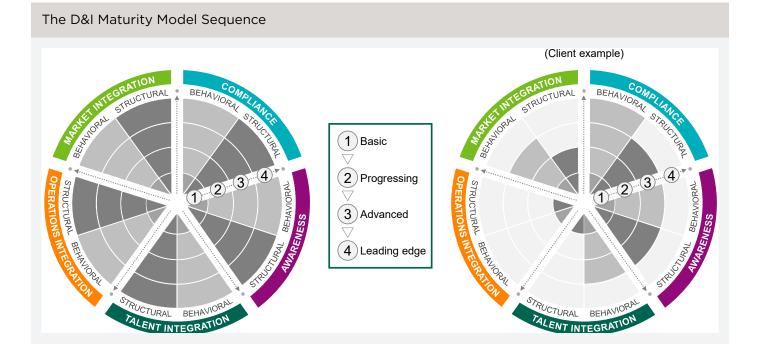
A benefit to structuring the D&I Maturity Model in a circumplex, is that it allows the declaration that each of these dimensions has a distinct owner and a distinct business case. This underscores that organizations are indeed at various stages of D&I maturity in each of these dimensions as each is led by a different stakeholder with a different objective.

Dimension	Who is responsible?	Business case
Compliance	Risk Management/ Legal function	Risk mitigation
Awareness	D&I Function	Employer of choice
Talent Integration	HR Function	Enhanced talent pipeline
Operations Integration	Business functions focused on internal efficiencies such as Finance, Procurement, Quality Assurance, etc.	Enhanced bottom line
Market Integration	Business functions focused on customer and community such as Marketing, Sales, R&D, CSR, etc.	Enhanced top line

The role of sequence

Despite moving away from a sequential maturity model from dimension to dimension, sequence does still live on within each of the dimensions, as our D&I diagnostic scores will plot whether an organization is performing at a Basic, Progressing, Advanced, or Leading Edge level within each dimension.

- **Basic** — Generally speaking, across dimensions, when organizations are at the more basic level of maturity, their approach to D&I tends to be more reactive; they may define diversity along one or two visible aspects of diversity, and leaders usually have very limited involvement in driving D&I forward.

- **Progressing** — The focus tends to be purpose-driven with leaders assuming some responsibility for D&I. The definition of diversity expands to include both visible and invisible dimensions of diversity. At this stage, an organization may start having a dedicated staff and budget for D&I.

- **Advanced** — Organizations at this stage pay attention to multi-dimensionality and intersectionality when thinking about diversity. Their leaders are enabled on inclusive leadership skills and are held accountable for creating a diverse and inclusive environment. They often have D&I resources and budgets distributed throughout other functional areas and regions.

- **Leading edge** — These organizations take a sustainable approach to D&I where leaders are expected to lead holistically and inclusively, be key D&I change agents and hold the organization accountable. In addition to their internal resources, they often have external D&I advisory boards that guide them on leading edge practices.

The D&I Maturity Model Sequence

(Client example)

Key indicators for each sequence stage

Each of the sequence stages of maturity has clearly defined anchors that are the same regardless of D&I maturity dimension. This makes it possible for the diagnosis to be highly granular in its measures and outcomes allowing for pinpointed recommendations.

	Stage 1 Basic	Stage 2 Progressing	Stage 3 Advanced	Stage 4 Leading edge
Definition of diversity/ diversity focus	Based on one or two visible diversity dimensions	Based on a variety of visible and invisible diversity dimensions	Based on multi-dimensionality and intersectionality	Based on self-identification, "diversity of one" spectrum, fluidity
Leadership involvement	Limited leadership involvement or commitment	Leaders have goals and responsibility for D&I	Leaders are held accountable for creating a diverse and inclusive environment and are enabled on inclusive leadership skills	Leaders are expected to lead holistically and inclusively, be key D&I change agents and hold the organization accountable
Measurement	Activity	Lagging indicators	Leading indicators	Predictive indicators
Resource/staffing	No or few dedicated resources	Dedicated staff and budget	Additional resources and budgets distributed throughout functional areas/regions	External D&I advisory board
Approach	Reactive approach	Purpose-driven approach	Transformational approach	Sustainable approach

Bringing it all together

We believe this approach aligns much more closely to reality, because just like human beings, who at any given age will be at different levels of maturity physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, so organizations will be at different levels of being behaviorally and structurally inclusive within different dimensions of their organizational health and ability to optimize their own diversity and inclusion.

Within each dimension we use our comprehensive quantitative and qualitative D&I diagnostic to measure how mature an organization is on both behavioral inclusion and structural inclusion. This allows organizations to focus on interventions that are targeted and specific.

In organizational environments facing a multiplicity of D&I issues at once, the ability to pinpoint current state, plot out the desired state, and craft the roadmap to get there is critical.

Contributors

Andrés Tapia: Senior Partner
andres.tapia@kornferry.com

Alina Polonskia: Senior Partner
alina.polonskaia@kornferry.com

Fayruz Kirtzman: Senior Principal
fayruz.kirtzman@kornferry.com

Gustavo Gisbert: Senior Principal
gustavo.gisbert@kornferry.com

About Korn Ferry

Korn Ferry is a global organizational consulting firm. We work with organizations to design their organizational structures, roles, and responsibilities. We help them hire the right people and advise them on how to reward, develop, and motivate their workforce. And, we help professionals navigate and advance their careers.