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Corporate India's DEI Challenge: Are We Doing Enough?

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In today's rapidly evolving business environment, the significance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the workplace is undeniable. Yet, despite the growing recognition of DEI as essential for long-term success, many companies in India are still falling short in translating these ideals into actionable strategies. The 5th edition of the Diversity & Inclusion Excellence Awards and Conclave, hosted by ASSOCHAM on September 25th, 2024, in New Delhi, is a testament to the increasing focus on DEI in Corporate India—but it also highlights the urgent need for more concrete actions.

While conversations and dialogues around DEI has become more prominent, the reality on the ground tells a different story. Many organizations continue to struggle with the practical implementation of DEI initiatives, often treating them as mere compliance requirements rather than as integral components of their corporate culture. This disconnect raises a critical question: Are we doing enough to create truly inclusive workplaces in India?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are not just checkboxes on a compliance form; they are the foundation of a thriving, innovative workplace. DEI involves creating an environment where every employee, regardless of their background, feels respected, valued, and

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empowered. This goes beyond gender and ethnicity—it includes age, sexual orientation, disability, and more. However, the slow pace of change suggests that many organizations are not fully embracing these principles.

Complykaro is doing its bit towards making Corporate India compliant with various DE&I regulations through its training solutions on various DEI laws. As part of the larger DE&I umbrella, companies are mandated to comply with several key laws listed below that support DEI initiatives.

1. **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (PoSH Act):** This act mandates the creation of a safe and respectful workplace for women, requiring organizations to establish mechanisms to prevent and address sexual harassment





2. **The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:** This act ensures equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities, mandating accessibility and reasonable accommodations in the workplace.
3. **The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019:** This act prohibits discrimination against transgender individuals in employment and other areas, requiring employers to create a supportive and inclusive environment.
4. **The HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017:** This legislation prohibits discrimination against individuals based on their HIV status, ensuring equal treatment in employment and healthcare.
5. **The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961:** Amended in 2017, this act mandates that women are entitled to maternity leave and benefits, ensuring that they can take time off for childbirth without losing their jobs. The act also requires employers to provide crèche facilities for working mothers, further supporting gender equity in the workplace.

The said acts are pivotal in ensuring a diverse and inclusive workplace, but their impact is often diluted by ignorance or a lack of enforcement by the companies to implement the same possibly due to low or manageable (“We’ll deal with the problem when it arises” mindset) repercussions for non-compliance.

Moving forward from rhetoric to reality, The ASSOCHAM conclave offers a crucial platform for industry leaders, policymakers, and diversity advocates to share insights and strategies for advancing DEI in the workplace. But as the spotlight on DEI grows, so does the responsibility of organizations to move beyond rhetoric and into meaningful action. To truly embed DEI into the fabric of corporate India, organizations must adopt a proactive approach—going beyond mere compliance to actively challenging biases, educating employees, and fostering a culture of inclusion. This is not just about legal requirements; it’s about creating workplaces where everyone can thrive.

As we celebrate the progress made in promoting DEI, we must also confront the challenges that remain. Corporate India is at a crossroads—either we take the necessary steps to fully realize the promise of DEI, or we risk falling behind in an increasingly competitive global market. The choice is clear, but the question remains: Are we doing enough?

