

## Diversity and Inclusion: Going Deeper Than the Tip of the Iceberg

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When we think and talk about diversity within our organizations, what traits and characteristics do we think of as creating diversity? Many of us immediately think about age, skin color, gender, and physical abilities...that is, the *visible* diversity traits. But what about the *invisible* diversity traits? Traits such as values, beliefs, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, parental status, and education? These are traits that also create a rich diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and ideas in our organization yet we often overlook this opportunity for diversity or, worse yet, fail to create an environment of true inclusion for all people.

The graphic below illustrates many of the visible diversity traits we most often think of when contemplating diversity. These are the “above the water-line” traits; the “tip of the iceberg”. What’s truly eye-opening are the traits that are “below the water-line”; traits that, while we often may not think of them, build upon our existing definition of diversity and create an even richer fabric of thought in our organizations.

### The Value of an Expanded View of Diversity

In a recent study, companies who were diverse and had highly inclusive work practices had a 39% higher customer satisfaction rate and 27% higher profitability than those who did not. What does this tell us? Could it be that organizations who are highly diverse and who tap into this diversity of thought, ideas, and perspectives are able to compete better in the marketplace? Could it be that workforces whose diversity matches the populations they serve find themselves in a better position to respond to their customers’ needs?



If we work to create a strong culture of diversity and inclusion but only among people with visible diversity traits, we may be missing out on the opportunity to truly engage and leverage the strengths of employees who we might have missed had we not taken a deeper look at the various forms of diversity in our workplaces.

### Stop and Think...

Stop and think about your own organization. What are you doing to continue to build inclusion and diversity in the traditional way (among those employees with visible diversity traits)? What can you begin doing (or do differently) to create diversity and inclusion among employees whose diversity traits are less visible?

Consider making a commitment to yourself to go deeper than the tip of the iceberg in how you leverage diversity and build inclusion in your organization. To help you, visit the SHRM website (go to [www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org), then click on the HR Disciplines tab, then Diversity) and take advantage of the diversity resources available there for members.