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# Preface

Entertainment industry in India has registered an explosive growth in last two decades making it one of the fastest growing industries in India. From a single state owned channel, Doordarshan in the 1990s there are more than 400 active channels in the country. Worldwide, 2010 saw the global economy begin to recover from a steep decline in 2009. Improved economic conditions in 2010 played a major role in a rebound in customer spend. Since the world economy begin to recover from the global financial crisis of 2008, improved economic conditions played a major role in rebound in consumer spend. While India was not critically impacted by the downturn in 2008 and 2009, it demonstrated one of the highest growth rates this year and continued to at a healthy pace. The rising rate of investments by the private sector and foreign media and entertainment (M&E) majors have improved India's entertainment infrastructure to a great extent.

Viacom 18 Pvt. Ltd was founded in November 2007 as a 50 joint venture operation in India between Viacom Inc. and the Network18 Group. They manage a variety of TV channels comprising brands like CNBC TV18, CNBC Awaaz, Newswire18, moneycontrol.com, CNN-IBN, IBN 7, Homeshop18 and E18 amongst others. Then they entered general entertainment channels space by launching Colors which became a huge success in India. The brand has always been very well received by the Indian audience and hence it has been growing ever since. The firm is headquartered at Mumbai with employee strength of around 300.

The media houses in India face a big problem of diversity and inclusion. The organization believes that diversity is a critical component of being successful on a global scale. The senior executives in the company do recognize that a diverse set of experiences, perspectives and backgrounds is extremely crucial to development of new ideas. Hence, in order to reduce stereotypes, and increase individual, managerial and organizational participation, Appreciative Inquiry was conducted to identify what practices of the company are benefitting the organization in this context and how can these practices be leveraged to make sure that they’re uniformly followed across all locations. We interviewed people across ranks in Mumbai Office. We also interviewed the CHRO to identify the problem area at the beginning of this project.

# Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Mr. Abhinav Chopra, CHRO, Viacom 18, for allowing us to conduct a live Appreciative Inquiry intervention at Viacom 18 Mumbai. His trust and belief in us made us give our best to the project. His readiness to help was definitely a reason behind us smoothly achieving the completion of the project.

We would also like to thank **Dr. Veena Vohra** for her incessant support and guidance throughout the trimester. Her teachings in the class helped us understand the subject better. Her timely inputs to the project helped us gain confidence in our work.

Special thanks to all the employees of Viacom 18 who worked alongside us, directly and indirectly, and became subjects of our interviews and observations. Without their support, this intervention wouldn’t have been possible.

We would also extend our heartfelt thanks to our families and friends.

# Introduction

## Objective of the intervention

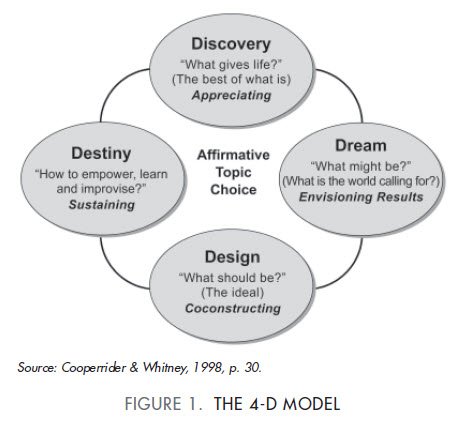
The objective of this intervention is to find out the best practices at Viacom 18 Mumbai office which lead to a productive and conducive work environment for diverse set of employees. The employees at the Viacom 18 Vile Parle office were interviewed to help them focus on the positives and strengths of their workplace. The notes are attached to the report as annexures.

## Description of the model

The model that we’ve used in the report is the 4-D model of Appreciative inquiry. Like AI itself, it is based on a shift in paradigms on human interaction. The core can be captured in the idea that we create the world as we describe it. If many people in an organization think that this is a torture chamber, they will feel physical pain when they enter the door of this organization. If the same people think this is a great place to work, it will be.

**Creators of the Model:**   
Suresh Srivastava, Ron Fry, and David Cooperrider, 1990  
  
**Phases of the Change Process:** (taken from new-paradigm.co.uk)

**Discover**—people talk to one another, often via structured interviews, to discover the times when the organisation is at its best. These stories are told as richly as possible.  
  
**Dream**—the dream phase is often run as a large group conference where people are encouraged to envision the organisation as if the peak moments discovered in the ‘discover’ phase were the norm rather than exceptional.  
  
**Design**—a small team is empowered to go away and design ways of creating the organisation dreamed in the conference(s).  
  
**Destiny**—the final phase is to implement the changes.



**Applicability:**   
  
The model has been applied to many different kind of organizations, from the profit (e.g., British Airways) and non-profit (United Nations) sectors. It is suitable for a wide range of transformation processes, including quality management, vision/mission/value creation, improvement of collaboration, etc.  
  
**Strengths:**

* The 4D-model works with what exists already in organizations. People can easily relate to their past success stories and link them to what they want for the future.
* It is highly participatory and inclusive and respects different views and values.
* The results of a 4D process are directly action oriented.
* It creates energy and enhances motivation of people involved.

**Weaknesses:**

* The model is more related to the past and present than to the future.
* It does not include a wake-up call. Problems and challenges, although not denied, do not receive the same attention than visions.
* The quality of results varies and depends on many factors. AI requires a highly skilled facilitator to make sure that the output of the process satisfies the expectations of the process owner.

## Description of the organization

**About Viacom 18 Media Pvt. Ltd:**

Viacom 18 Media Pvt. Ltd., founded in November 2007, is a 50/50 joint venture operation in India between Viacom Inc. and the Network18 Group, (with interests in television, internet, filmed entertainment, mobile content & allied businesses, comprising brands like CNBC TV18, CNBC Awaaz, Newswire18, moneycontrol.com, CNN-IBN, IBN 7, Homeshop18 and E18 amongst others). In 2008, Viacom18 Media launched the game-changer [Colors](http://www.business-standard.com/search?type=news&q=Colors" \t "_blank) and entered the general entertainment channel (GEC) space. Then, the network operated three other channels - Nickelodeon, VH1 and MTV. The success of Colors, coupled with deeper expansion into existing genres and movie production, has helped Viacom18 scale from a Rs 100-crore broadcast network to a Rs 2,000-crore one.

Today, Viacom 18 Media Pvt. Ltd. operates six general entertainment channels - MTV, Nickelodeon, Vh1, COLORS, SONIC, Comedy Central and film business through Viacom18 Motion Pictures, that produces, acquires and distributes Hindi films, this apart, Viacom18 also runs Viacom's consumer products division in India. The firm is headquartered at Mumbai with employee strength of around 300.

A detailed discussion with the CHRO of Viacom 18, Mr. Abhinav Chopra, brought forth the fact that media houses in India face the unspoken problem of managing diversity and inclusion. The rights, opportunities, and freedoms of certain people are restricted because they are reduced to stereotypes. Viacom 18, wishing to attain and maintain workforce diversity, is currently facing three social dilemmas: the dilemmas of organizational participation, managerial participation, and individual participation. Viacom believes that functional and social category diversity will imperatively offer benefits for organizations in terms of creativity, adaptation and innovation. Viacom 18 aspires to position itself as an organization that is committed to walk the talk in the field of providing its employees a workplace that promotes and nourishes diversity. We have explored this issue and conducted an Appreciative inquiry to help out employees to determine what workplace practices of Viacom 18 make employees of diverse backgrounds feel comfortable, valued and supported. In recognizing the importance of diversity in the workplace, Viacom 18 is committed to providing equality of opportunity to all employees, freelance staff, contractors and job applicants. The organization tries to treat everyone fairly in selection for employment, promotion and training - with assessment based on an individual’s aptitude and ability irrespective of gender, marital/family status, religious belief, political opinion, disability, age, nationality, race, ethnic origin or sexual orientation.

Viacom 18 welcomes openness in all matters of equality and consults with staff representatives on the effective implementation of equality policies. Viacom 18’s ‘Code of Business Conduct’ is given to all new staff and they are kept informed of diversity policies through the induction process and via the intranet. Procedures are in place to address conduct, behavior and performance issues, including the Viacom 18’s Whistleblowing policy.

## Description of the Topic

Diversity

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing individual differences. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Analysis of Diversity and Inclusion will primarily focus on:

• Gender Diversity

• Age Diversity

• Professional/Academic Diversity

Critical parameters for ensuring Diversity and Inclusion are:

* Career Development/ Capability Building and Recognition

Goals: To determine what all career development opportunities available to employees of diverse backgrounds have been beneficial to employees and in what ways. Also, to gauge the degree of motivation generated by rewards and recognitions being given to the achievements of diverse section of employees.

* Recruitment

Goals: To support the recruitment of a diverse workforce through positive actions to meet the set diversity objectives.

* Communication

Goals: To determine the benefits of having communications pertaining to promotion of diversity structured, consistent, appropriate and accessible. Also, to discover ways to improve communication channels.

* Work Environment

Goals: To determine what workplace practices of Viacom 18 make employees of diverse background feel comfortable, valued and supported.

* Policies

Goals: To determine which all policies of Viacom 18 on equality, safety and empowerment have been effective. To analyze the gap between what the policies and practices aim to achieve and what the real scenario is.

For this project, we have selected to analyze Viacom 18 on the basis of how work environment helps in promoting and sustaining diversity at workplace.

# Methodology

## Data collection devices/instruments

### Interviews

We conducted one on one and group interviews with the Associate Executives, Senior Executives, Assistant Managers and Senior Managers under Creative and Content team, Graphics team and the Digital Team. The interviews were structured and were based on a questionnaire that our team prepared on the basis of the 4-D model of appreciative inquiry, which is attached in the appendix. After conducting a preliminary meeting with Mr. Abhinav Chopra at Viacom 18 office, we sent our proposal to Ms Karuna Raghuvanshi, HR manager at Viacom 18 Vile Parle office, to seek permission to conduct the Appreciative Inquiry intervention.

### Observations

We conducted a few visits to the Viacom 18 Vile Parle office to collect data based on Observation as well. We observed the employees of Viacom 18 in their normal setting and work environment and jotted down points regarding the way of working and communicating etc. The details of our observations are attached as annexures.

## Size of Sample and Sampling

Because of our limited reach, we decided to use Convenient Sampling to conduct the interventions at the offices located in Mumbai. Once the office was finalised, the next step was to choose whom to interview. We used Convenient sampling to interview those who were present in the office when we paid the visit. In order to get the best picture along with the constraints of having limited time and reach, we decided to survey only in the Mumbai region. We took appointments every time before visiting the office so that we do not disrupt their functioning and also to make sure that we are able to interact with as many people as possible.

We interviewed the following people during the intervention process:

1. Archana Sharma (Assistant Manager)
2. Neha Rathi (Senior Executive)
3. Snigdha Ojha (Associate Executive)
4. Pradeep Kumar (Assistant Manager)
5. Stacey Dsilva (Associate Executive)
6. Bharti Singh (Senior Executive)
7. Himani Choudhry (Senior Executive)
8. Ruth Mohinani (Senior Executive)
9. Neham Rawat (Assistant Manager)
10. Vipin Mendon (Senior Executive)
11. Vicky Chhaproo (Senior Manager)
12. Purshottam Lala (Senior Manager)
13. Surabhi Kapoor (Associate Executive)
14. Archita Trisal (Assistant Manager)
15. Vikas Gurnani (Senior Executive)
16. Archita Trisal (Assistant Manager)
17. Eklavya Bhattacharya (Senior Manager)
18. Ajinkya Chikte (Senior Manager)
19. Varun Joshua (Senior Manager)
20. Neha Gupta (Assistant Manager)

*Figure: Broad organizational hierarchy in the sample chosen for AI intervention from the HR department*

## Data collection

All three team members collected the data. For approaching this project in systematic manner, we divided the whole project into three phases. The first phase was concerned with studying the best practices on diversity in some companies renowned for their diversity practices. In the second phase, we analysed the policies and practices of Viacom 18 on Diversity and Inclusion. In the third phase, we carried out AI intervention to interact with employees and understand what the real scenario of diversity prevails at Viacom 18. In all we visited the Viacom 18 office three times and interviewed employees at various levels belonging to different departments. To get a hang of it, during our first visit, the three of us interviewed the same person to ensure more probing. Once we understood it better, the interviews mostly were taken one on one. Data was collected by making notes, the transcripts of which have been attached as appendix to this report. For the purpose of confidentiality, we were not allowed to voice record the interviews.

We first explained to each employee, why we were doing the project. They were explained what was in it for them. We gave each employee ample time to think what their best instances were during their stint at Viacom 18. The feel good factor was always insured during the process.

**Highpoints**

During the project, the high points were seen when we could actually get them involved and have the employees share their take on the diversity around them. A few of the employees went on and on describing what they liked about the prevalent work environment and how it supported the cause of diversity. Interviews lasted for as long as 1 hour in few cases. A lot of positives about the company were also seen.

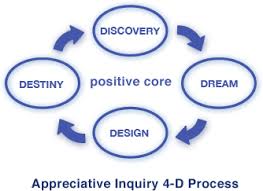
**Surprises**

A surprise in store for us that the process went on very smoothly and a lot of common themes came out. People were really happy with the entire process. They connected well with the topic and were excited that interviews on such major issue was being conducted by students external to the organisation. This probably made them feel comfortable in sharing their opinions and concerns in a more reflective manner.

**Disappointments**

A disappointment that we faced was not many employees could express themselves clearly and were loss of thoughts when asked to explain situations. They were saying that they were overall happy but had difficulty in explaining instances. Another disappointment was that a lot of the employees were scared with the thought of interview and had to be explained and eased down. Some employees talked about instances from a very myopic view. Some were not comfortable explicitly taking about their current teams and preferred giving general answers. People found it very tempting to switch easily into complaining mode. We had to then try to manoeuvre their focus on concentrating on positives of how diversity in work environment has helped during their stay at Viacom 18.

# The Model



## Discovery Phase

A meeting with Mr Abhinav Chopra, Head HR, Viacom 18 marked the start of this stage. He directed us to take up the study of the linkage between diversity and the prevalent work environment in the organization. We zeroed onto the “work Environment” component to analyze diversity implementation as this parameter could be judged well by all sections of the organization and not just by the HR team. Ms Karuna, HR Manager, helped arrange our meetings with employees of the HR team as well as employees of other departments. This further facilitated in unearthing the views and opinions of a varied sample of workforce on diversity and inclusion.

Going further, we were connected to different employees with whom we carried out individual/ group interviews.

The interviews primarily started with us giving a brief description of what was the purpose of this intervention followed by an overview of how we will be using the AI mode to probe into the issue. We also made sure to specify the approx. number of questions we would be asking and the planned time for interviews.

After the interviewee/(s) had got all their queries regarding the intervention sorted, we probed into their past good experiences. Irrespective of the position/ department the person was in, the following questions were asked:

1. Describe a situation when the diversity of your team helped the team perform exceptionally well
2. Describe a situation when a team member from a complete diverse background went of his/her way to help you out
3. What according to you is the best practice of this organization when it comes to embracing diversity?
4. What aspects of the organization culture do you think encourage and support diversity in the organization?
5. Who are the main advocates of Diversity and inclusion in your team?
6. In your view, which categories of Diversity are most important to have in your organization’s talent pool (age, gender, background)?

From these questions, the common themes that could be found were

* More diversity led to better idea generation and positively affected employees’ productivity
* Diversity in terms of professional background, educational background, age and gender were desired at every level of the organisation

For reasons of confidentiality, we will refrain from using names of interviewees in this report.

We would like to quote a case shared by an HR manager (Mr ABC) wherein he was troubled by the escalating absenteeism of an employee in the Creative and Content team. The said employee refused to furnish any substantial reason for his absenteeism and refused to have any interaction with Mr ABC or his team manager on this issue. Mr ABC was baffled by this behaviour of the employee but he couldn’t find ways to sort this issue. Mr ABC was left with no option but to seek assistance of his colleague Mr XYZ. While studying the behavioural pattern of the said employee, Mr XYZ realised that the issue faced with the employee was a sense of being incompetent in matching the creative best of one of his colleagues whom this employee admired. Mr XYZ was able to zero onto the exact cause of absenteeism as he shared similar educational background with the said employee. Mr XYZ was able to understand the unstated need of the employee, which Mr ABC found hard to decipher being from an engineering background.

Another thing that we discovered was Viacom 18 is trying extensively to rope in professionals who varied industries to bring to the table more diversity of thoughts and ideas. Initially, employees felt threatened by such initiative, but they have gradually realised that having diversity works in their best of interests. They get more avenues to have informal learning and it also helps the organisation in attracting a wide range of clients.

Many interviewees felt that the diversity of professional background has been helping Viacom 18 strike better deals with clients across industries. In one such instance, a manager said that once they had gone for a meeting with a client who was into the business of Real Estates. He was not convinced that the team from Viacom18 will be able to well understand what he desired and he was having difficulty putting forth his ideas. For the next meeting, the team from Viacom 18 took with them an employee who had previously worked in Real Estate business. The whole negotiation with the client suddenly started taking a affirmative angle as he started gaining confidence after interacting with someone whom he could well visualise understanding his opinions and concerns. Such instances have been possible only because every stakeholder in the organisation is willing to imbibe and celebrate diversity as an indispensible cultural element.

## Dream Phase

Moving ahead with our intervention, these questions were asked in the Dream phase:

1. How do you envision your team, considering the context of workforce diversity?
2. How do you see your employees exhibiting respect and understanding towards diversity inclusion?
3. What is the organisation's target representation of diverse workforce in the next 3-5 years?
4. How can you influence your colleagues to nurture and promote work environment that promotes diversity?

In this phase the articulation of the future that the employees wanted took place. During this phase employees were probed for the best of what is working in the organization and how they dreamt of a better future.

The common points that came out from this were:

1. Need to learn to update their understanding and knowledge of Diversity initiatives in the organisation
2. Being able to be a good role model to others and heading by example

## Design Phase

It is here that the provocative propositions were developed. Through this phase we wanted to bridge the gap between the current realities and what the company wants to be in future. The following question was asked in the design phase:

1. How will you ensure that the new joiners to your team are treated fairly?
2. How will you ensure that your team leverages upon the diverse experience of every new joiner?
3. How will you ensure the work life of the minority group employees is further improved?
4. How would you ensure that an integrated decision making (taking into consideration the opinions of all groups) process is installed in the organisation?

In order to bridge the gap, we asked the employees “what should be done”. We were designing it from what they had dreamt of in the previous stage. A common ground that we saw was employees “wanted to be role models to the others in the company”. Efficient communication and learning modules were generally demanded in this phase so as to make sure that everyone is aware of the policies and procedures present in Viacom 18 on diversity.

## Destiny Phase

This acted like a feedback loop for us. The questions asked in this phase was:

1. What will happen if diversity is embraced at every level of the organization?

There were a few employees who also thought that Viacom 18 is going to benefit rather than simply saying that the Mumbai office would benefit. As one employee puts it, the “individual goal and company goal are then aligned” and the entire company would be sailing in the same boat. Another common theme that came out of it was that the “brand image of Viacom 18 would improve drastically”.

# Results

Mapping the evolution of diversity inclusion in the work environmnet of Viacom 18 with the growth phases of the organisation, we can assume that it is Cordination stage. There are formal systems in place for achieving greater coordination with top management as the "watch dog." A lot more still needs to be done to achieve a work environment where diversity is embraced and celebrated with equal aplomb by all.

## Discovery Phase

During the discovery phase, employees had shared their success stories. The ensuing discussion brought forth many parameters that underlined how work environment facilitated the promotion of diversity in the organisation.

*Figure: Percentage of respondents based on their responses that among Gender, Age and Academics/ Work-ex, diversity in which area has proved to be most benefitting for the organization*

*Figure: Percentage of respondents based on their responses that a work environment that supports and promotes diversity helps increase employee productivity*

## Dream Phase

*Figure: Percentage of respondents based on how they see other employees exhibiting respect and understanding towards diversity inclusion*

## Design Phase

It is here that the dreams which were built in the second stage have to be made a reality in future. Thus we need to bridge the gap between the current reality and what it wants to be in future. The respondents basically spoke of 3 things

*Figure: Percentage of respondents based on the ways in which the work environment can be equipped to support Diversity and inclusion*

## Destiny Phase

Again taking all the 20 respondents together, the following results were seen.

*Figure: Percentage of respondents based what they felt will be the good effects to Viacom 18 of having work environment that promotes diversity*

# Interpretation and Discussion

## Discovery Phase

* The typical boss-subordinate relationship is non-existent. Everyone is allowed to speak his or her mind without a fear of seniority or hierarchy. People believe in the Viacom 18 culture to collaborate and succeed. Promotion of diversity has become an integral part of their work culture
* Viacom 18 is doing a lot to drive across the point that it is pretty serious to the cause of diversity and inclusion
* Employees are willing to go extra mile to include an employee of having a background/gender/age diverse from theirs
* Effective management & planning skills have been displayed by management to promote workplace diversity
* Employees are appreciated for demonstrating excellent team skills and willingly sharing responsibilities hence ensuring that the all employees are given equal opportunity

## Dream Phase

Viacom 18 is expanding greatly into diverse markets. Improving on work environment that promotes diversity will increasing the brand value of the organisation in not Indian markets but also international markets.

* Individuals dedicated to having a climate of the organisation that incorporates diversity. No mandatory requirement of setting goals or explicitly mentioning diversity inclusion actions as part of individual KRAs
* Training and coaching on Diversity initiatives to further educate employees on the policies and practices of the organisation.
* By building an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust in each other’s abilities would encourage a free flow of ideas would help organization ways to collaborate a diverse workforce into its operations
* By walking the talk – when an individual observes other employees making a positive difference and displaying high levels of commitment towards the organization’s objective of encouraging diversity, he/she gets inspired and displays similar behaviour
* Managers should lead by example so that the employees ‘buy-in’
* Openly appreciating employees who contribute towards maintaining a work environment that encourages diversity. This would form a positive reinforcement and help them stay committed to the cause as well as repeat the set of behaviours
* Inclusion of all employees and their ideas and jointly setting goals and targets would help in obtaining the buy in as well and they would be easier to influence for taking ownership along with a stronger commitment

## Design Phase

Viacom 18 is committed to the providing a work environment that supports Diversity. They are working towards it by:

* Preventing any form of direct or indirect discrimination or victimisation based on gender, age or background of individuals
* Promoting equal opportunities for men and women
* Promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities
* Promoting equal opportunities for people regardless of age
* Promoting equal opportunities for people regardless of race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin
* Promoting a good and harmonious working environment where all staff are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation, discrimination, bullying or harassment is tolerated
* Ensuring that managers and supervisors are aware of their responsibilities and are appropriately equipped through training and development initiatives for promotion of workplace diversity

## Destiny Phase

* Maintaining work environment to promote diversity will require more focus and it should be woven in to all Viacom 18’s projects and funding
* The best way to bridge the gap between Gen X and Gen Y is to have no gap. At Viacom 18, a culture of diversity has been built. They value the differences in opinions and ideas from all levels. The goal is to create a culture where both senior and junior employees compliment each other thereby ensuring better teamwork. In a true sense there is no hierarchy, no boundaries they treat each other as equals
* The dreamt organisation will have ample opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration learning to help facilitate a learning culture which would give a much better understanding of the benefits of a diverse workforce and hence more commitment to this cause

# Recommendations

* Widening the Recruiting Base: Currently Viacom 18 is conducting its recruitment mostly in the immediate geographic area, which in a way restricts the diversity of the applicants. It can focus on advertising their openings in publications that can appeal to minorities
* Make use of current staff in recruitment of new employees: Viacom 18 can use its existing employees for recruitment. Involving the current high performing employees who are minorities to spread the job openings can bring in more applications from diverse set of employees, reducing the recruitment expenses.
* Provide Diversity training at the workplace: Viacom 18 doesn’t has few operational trainings pertaining to Diversity. Making available more such kinds of trainings to the managers will make them more culturally sensitive. Also, managers are the ones who would be involved in implementation of personnel policies; hence it is very crucial that they are committed to supporting the practice.
* Form affinity groups: Affinity groups can be formed at Viacom 18 that empower small groups of employees to brainstorm about the products and share their ideas about expanding into new markets. This way the company will get new ideas and the employees will be reassured their differences are assets.
* Probe if the attrition is due to diversity issues: The human resources department at Viacom 18 needs to create an exit interview assessment to determine why minority group employees are leaving the company and what can be done to curb future loses. The results from the exit interviews can be used to make changes in the process.
* Increase diversity at senior level: The issue is not all about new talent, but progression. Senior levels of management are less diverse than entry level staff, but by supporting fair access to training and development Viacom 18 can help all groups of people gain the skills and confidence they need to move up in their career.
* Promoting equal opportunities fro people of different sexual orientation: Viacom 18 lacks ample policies serving the interest of the LGBT group. The absence of formal policies and procedures makes it a bit difficult for the employees belonging to LGBT group to contribute to the diversity quotient of work environment. It is becoming more and more imperative for Viacom 18 to openly voice its support to the inclusion of LGBT group in its talent pool.

# Implications

Diversity is important in for Viacom 18, not just because it is the right thing to do but because it makes good business sense; staff that are comfortable and valued at work are more productive. Employees at Viacom 18 strongly feel that a diverse workforce also brings a diverse set of ideas, knowledge and experiences leading to increased creativity and problem solving skills. Being a great workplace also means creating passion and excitement in the work to the extent that each individual looks at his job as more than just a job and can see his contribution adding up to the larger picture. It means having pride in saying “I belong to Viacom18.” Finally, it’s about creating an environment that supports diversity by being flexible and by treating individuals as individuals and not as ‘assets’. Viacom 18 is committed to providing a work environment free of unlawful harassment. This is possible only if there is a work environment sans biases based on gender, age, ethnicity and background (professional/ educational); where employees are freely able to voice their opinion and be assured that their peers and the top management will support them. As Viacom 18 is spreading its wings in different arena in the media industry, it become more and more necessary for it to promote its work environment that supports and nurtures diversity at all stages and levels.

# Conclusion

Using appreciative inquiry, we as a team have been able to successfully study how work environment affects diversity at Viacom 18. We have analysed and structured our findings in accordance to the 4-D model where in we came to a common ground for the inquiry by using the responses of the major stakeholders at Viacom 18. Data collection was done through one-on-one and group interviews with the employees to gauge the strengths and challenges faced while nurturing and sustaining a work environment that promotes diversity. An action plan was developed to address these strengths and challenges at the organization. Based on our findings, we suggested a few feasible recommendations on what can be improved.

The company has to estimate the feasibility of implementing the recommendations covered in the report. Though, enough care has been taken to address issues as pragmatically as possible, still there could be room for improvement/changes when implemented at the ground level. During our short stint at conducting short AI interviews, we felt that the company was moving in the right direction. More participation of employees in implementing the diversity initiatives is required and it should be aligned to the AI process to make it an even more successful at the organization level.

The main aim of the organization should now be to make sure that the diversity is reflected even at senior management and Board level. They should try and address the issue of including people with different sexual orientation and differently abled employees. Viacom 18 should believe in reactive intervention by undertaking more preparatory and reflective work.

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# Appendix

**Interview Transcripts**

Q1) Describe a situation when the diversity of your team helped the team perform exceptionally well

Person X: Our team was facing low productivity issues for some time when our Team Lead moved to another role. We weren’t able to come to a solution for the same even though another lead came. It was only when the HR appointed a cross-unit female lead to our team; we saw the productivity levels rising up. Our team primarily comprises of women and I think it was difficult for a male manager to understand our issues and concerns.

Person Y: When we were working for one of our clients, we initially thought it would be difficult to understand their work environment and background but due to the presence of people from different prior work-experiences, it was relatively easier. I think our team’s diversity has always been our strength.

Q2) Describe a situation when a team member from a complete diverse background went of his/her way to help you or another team member.

Person X: One of our account heads came from a multinational consumer durable company. Owing to such a large organization size and context, she was used to following the instructions coming from her superiors. Also, she was used to a structured environment. When she joined us, she faced a lot of problem adjusting to our culture and environment, which is quite dynamic. Luckily the Team Head whom she was reporting to also had prior experience in working in a large sized multinational organization. He could understand her concerns and went out of the way to get her adjusted to our dynamic work-environment.

Q3) What according to you is the best practice of your organization when it comes to embracing diversity?

I think the best thing about our diversity initiatives is that the organization doesn’t just limit looking towards diversity from representation and number perspective. A lot of effort is taken to ensure that the diversity of individuals is considered as an advantage in the organizational context. Mapping the skills, competencies and diverse backgrounds of individuals to different roles and teams is really done well here. Depending on the requirements, team shuffling takes place at regular intervals that ensures the best of the resources are available to all projects.

Q4) How do you envision your organization to be?

Person X: As of now, we feel that a lot of our senior management employees still see diversity from number perspective. They are focussed on hiring more women employees and people from diverse backgrounds. They need to realize the real impact and importance of having a diverse workforce. Rather than looking at improving representation from various minority groups, the focus should be on having a team with diverse set of skills, experiences and backgrounds which will help our organization grow as per the long term goals of the organization and create an environment that respects diversity.

Person Y: While having informal discussion with my peers here at Viacom, I feel that most of them have narrow-minded outlook to people from LGBT community. I want all of us to build an environment that encourages openness to people from all walks of life including the LGBT community. I want Viacom to foster a high-performance culture, one that’s defined by having the best people, with the skills and determination to deliver above and beyond.

Person Z: I’ve been here for over 5 years now. Things have changed over time. People have started realizing the importance of having a diverse workforce. Male employees are realizing that women peers bring creativity to the team that leads to improved performance and productivity. But there’s a lot to be done. We all need to be more open and accepting of the people around. I envision Viacom to be an inclusive place for all.