

Important Conversations

By Gary Means, CAPP



THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT OF CONVERSATIONS lately about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. If you didn't get a chance to catch the Fireside Chat On Industry Inclusion back on August 20, 2020, I would encourage you to do so ([click here](#)).

I was joined by a fantastic panel:

- Richard Easley, CAPP, president of E-Squared Engineering.
- Keith Hutchings, director, municipal parking, City of Detroit.
- Kim Jackson, CAPP, director, transportation and parking services, Princeton University.
- Tiffany Smith, director, Parking Authority of River City, Ky.

I opened up the conversation with this statement: "As a result of the protests and news coverage in response to the very recent and preventable deaths of several Black Americans, I did a little soul searching, listened to podcasts, read posts and articles, watched videos on YouTube and Facebook, and most importantly, had one-on-one conversations with several of my Black friends and associates. My eyes have been opened to a problem. I've learned a lot and while I'd love to change the world, I thought maybe focusing on my circles would be best."

In this column, I want to expand a little more on my reasoning for asking IPMI if we could have an open conversation about inclusion. You see, until recently I understood very little about the challenges of the Black community in America and of our friends and colleagues in the parking and mobility industry. It took a horrible news story to really get my attention and for me to start digging deeper as I mentioned above. I now, more than ever, realize that things aren't the way we think they are when we only look within our own circles, or when we look through our own lenses.

That is why I wanted to start this conversation. I'm sure I'm not the only white guy who hadn't heard the term "driving while Black." Or if I had heard it, I must have ignored it. This phrase is just one of many things I've learned in my recent journey. The most important thing I've done is reach out to friends like the people on the panel listed above

and asked difficult questions. I've specifically looked up Black acquaintances such as previous employees and leaders in my community. All have stories and all reinforce the fact that there is a deep-rooted issue in our society that needs to change.

A New Focus

So with the support of the leadership at IPMI, we will continue focusing on the topic of inclusion in the following ways:

- Implementing this new column on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Encouraging and establishing training sessions and courses.
- Encouraging more open conversations that help us learn more about the needs of all of our members.

After our fireside chat, we were asked why did we not use the word “diversity” in the title or during our chat. Our answer centered around the idea that “diversity” has been used a lot and folks might already have a preconceived idea about what it means—and that focusing on diversity alone might even water down the current issues of our day. We felt focusing on “inclusion” would be more powerful. Simply put, diversity refers to the traits and characteristics that make people unique while inclusion refers to the behaviors and social norms that ensure people feel welcome. The most powerful part of our fireside chat was hearing the experiences and stories of our esteemed panel. I hope it has encouraged or this column will encourage more courageous conversations within your organization.

Breaking it Down

To start off the first of many columns on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), I thought I might make an attempt to help break down some of the ideas and definitions of DEI.

Diversity vs. Inclusion: In simple terms, diversity is the mix and inclusion is getting the mix to work well together.¹ Verna Myers says “Diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.” In a recent blog post, Meg Bolger writes: If we aren’t clear on the words and ideas, (of DEI) how will we be clear on the solutions? Meg also included these definitions:

- **Diversity** is the presence of difference within a given setting. Diversity is about a collective or a group and can only exist in relationship to others. A candidate is not diverse—they’re a unique, individual unit. They may bring diversity to your team or your hiring pool, but they themselves are not diverse.
- **Inclusion** is about folks with different identities feeling and/or being valued, leveraged, and welcomed within a given setting (e.g., your team, workplace, or industry). You can have a diverse team of talent, but that doesn’t mean everyone feels welcome or are valued, is given opportunities to

grow, or gets career support from a mentor.

- **Equity** is an approach that ensures everyone access to the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers exist, and that, as a result, we all don’t all start from the same place. Equity is a process that begins by acknowledging that unequal starting place and makes a commitment to correct and address the imbalance.²

I hope this first edition of our new diversity, equity, and inclusion column gives you some insight on what future columns may hold. If you have any ideas or questions please feel free to reach out to me at gmeans@lexpark.org. Thank you for taking the time to read this. ♦



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References

¹ <https://globaldiversitypractice.com/what-is-diversity-inclusion/>

² What’s The Difference Between Diversity, Inclusion, And Equity? May 24, 2020 on General Assembly’s website by Meg Bolger, Founder of Same Team.

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