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Tracy Chou, a founding advisor to Project Include, discusses how the organization launched with an open-source approach to building a community of advocates for more diversity and inclusion in tech. She lists specific ways companies can set and work toward goals, as well as track progress. An early employee of both Quora and Pinterest as a software engineer, Chou mentions the work Project Include does with startups.

Transcript

Was we had seen before, not having any sort of metrics, it was very easy to say we are working on the problem, and never see any gains.. We though it was important that around diversity and inclusion, we're actually setting goals, and measuring ourselves against those goals.. And sometimes we're going to miss those goals, which is fine.. Sometimes you miss your growth targets, or your sales targets, but that doesn't mean you don't set them.. So that's been very core to all the work that we do.. What we ended up doing as this group of eight people, is we just wrote down everything that we knew to be best practice.. Knowing that best practices are gonna change, and we're gonna learn more about what works and what doesn't work.. We wanted to put a steak in the ground.. Write down those things, and also start to build a community around those, were we can update them.. So, a little bit like open source software..

Where, people who are solving some problem will write a bunch of software.. Put it out there, Other people who want to find some benefit can use it.. If they make extensions, or they want to add to it, or they want to help maintain, they can also be part of that community.. So thinking of the diversity and inclusion work and recommendations as almost like open source, and try to pull in these learnings from the community as well.. And so, we have this resource out on the website.. We also have started doing more programmatic work through Startup Include.. But, we actually have cohorts and companies that come in, and we help them to instrument a lot of the diversity and inclusion numbers.. So it's not just demographics.. It's not just how many Black women do you have in engineering? And, how many Hispanic women do you have in leadership? And that's just those demographic numbers.. But also things like, how included are people feeling? The sorts of things that people study in engagement surveys, like, does everyone feel like they have the same chances to succeed? Do they agree with the direction of the company? Do they feel confident in where the product is going? And so, we help these companies to measure this data..

We're still building out those base lines and those benchmarks.. We think it's really important that we start to build community around this.. We also recognize that we're a small part of the ecosystem and there are actually a lot of great people doing work in this space.. Some are doing it professionally, so there's a good number of nonprofits and for profits doing work in diversity and inclusion.. I think sometimes it will just be hard to see change because these are just such hard problems.. And it will take a long time before we see success.. There are also a lot of people who are working on this as a second shift emotional labor, on top of their normal jobs.. People who are software engineers or leaders, and they just do this on top of what they already do.. So, I do think it's important to give a shout out to those people.. We just need more in that..

I think ultimately tech leaders need to take responsibility here because they set the proprieties.. Diversity and inclusion, even though everybody says it's a priority, is not actually a priority if everything else gets prioritized above it.. If companies are consistently prioritizing the speed..