

Why Sandra Phillips Rogers Sees Diversity and Inclusion As the Key to Innovation

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Embracing and committing to engaged, diverse and inclusive environments for all is woven into Toyota's DNA. Striving to be leaders in Diversity and Inclusion (D+I) and fostering a world-class D+I culture challenges what's possible by recognizing D+I as an essential component of every team member experience. Diversity makes the workplace, marketplace, society and the world a better place through equality, respect and inclusive treatment of all people.

Leading the charge is Sandra Phillips Rogers, Toyota Motor North America's chief diversity officer. Phillips Rogers joined the company in 2012 as assistant general counsel and vice president, before being promoted to general counsel and group vice president in 2015.

In her role as chief diversity officer, Phillips Rogers leads Toyota's long-standing efforts to advance diversity and inclusion through an integrated holistic strategy that addresses the workplace, the marketplace and society. She also focuses on inclusive mobility, community sustainability and workforce readiness.

Here, Phillips Rogers offers her take on the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and its role in fostering a culture of innovation at TMNA.

Engage and Empower

I believe diversity and inclusion is a core asset of our company, a business imperative. It's the glue that holds team member engagement and community involvement together. We're also finding that as millennials and Generation Z enter the workforce, they're looking for a place that's going to enable them to be innovative. When you have diverse people around the table who feel included and empowered, they're going to give you their best. That's how you unlock innovation.

This is also represented by what we're doing to motivate, encourage, develop and promote women. Our Women in Leadership Program is second to none. I've seen women come through that program who are forever changed. They've got a new perspective on who they are, what they can be and how they can contribute. We host a yearly North America Women's Conference, which has paved the way for additional programs, executive development opportunities, and Reach, a group that focuses on professional development for African American women.

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There's Diversity in Numbers

One of our real success stories is our business partnering groups (BPGs), employee-driven networks based on shared characteristics and/or life experiences. They help with key initiatives for Toyota around workforce inclusion, workplace engagement, & marketplace connections. We have 13 BPG affinities, and over 95 chapters in Canada, Mexico and the US., which include the African American Collaborative, ToyotAbility (promoting mobility awareness and understanding) and Toyota Veterans Association. I think that gives us the grassroots involvement we need to engage our team members in diversity and inclusion.

These efforts have played a substantial role in helping us reach number 18 on DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies for Diversity ranking. The ranking's not the only way we measure ourselves, but it does give an indication of what we stand for. Most people know the Toyota Way: respect for people and continuous improvement. But, make no mistake; for me, what's most important is that we continue to live our values for our customers, our team members, our business partners and our communities each and every day.