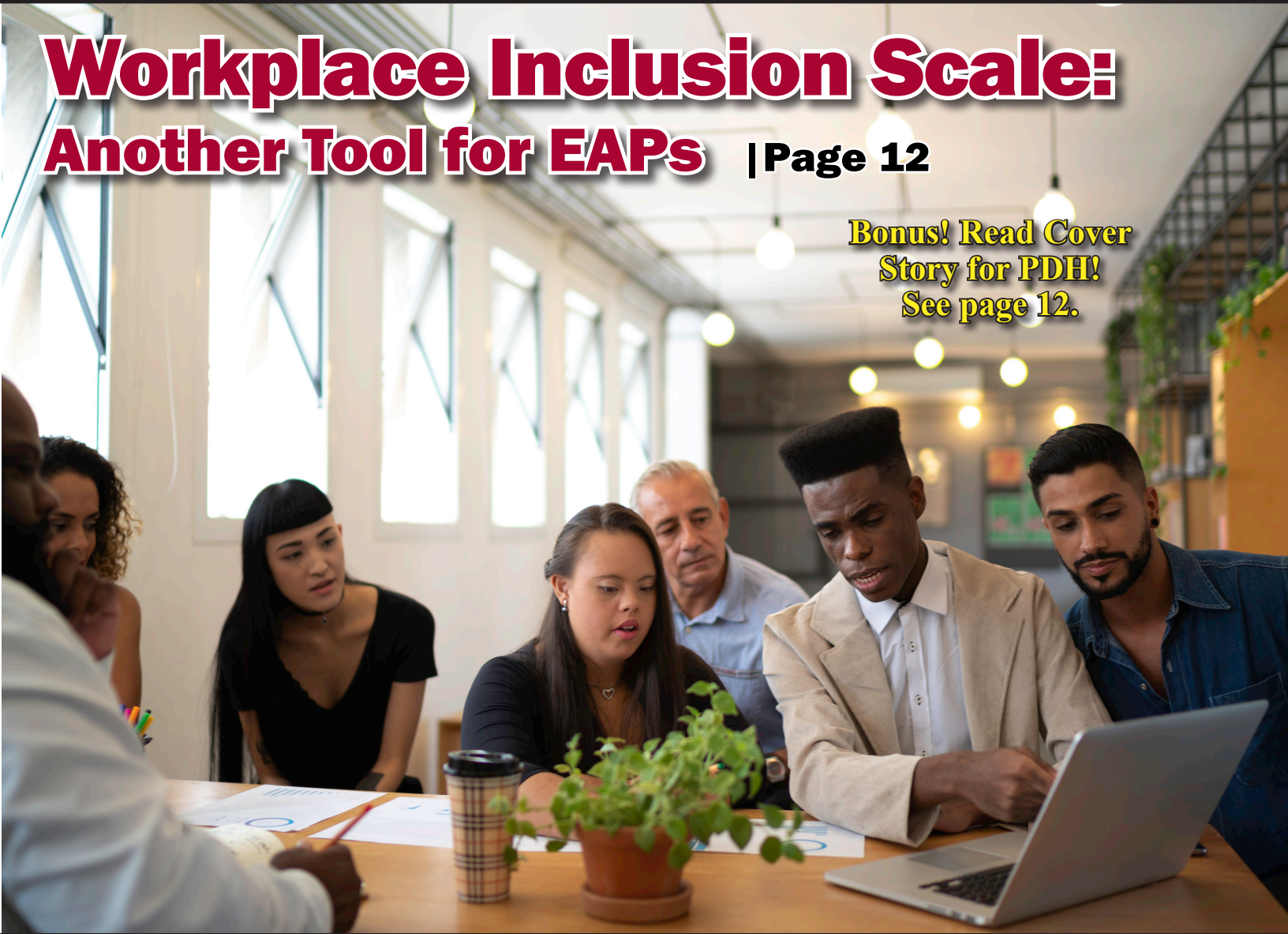


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The Workplace Inclusion Scale

Another Tool for EAPs

| By Patricia Herlihy, PhD, RN; Dave Sharar, PhD; and Molly Robey, PhD

In 2010 Chestnut Global Partners (CGP) created the Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) to provide EA professionals with a method for collecting empirical data about the impact of their interventions. This scale has been in existence for over ten years and the most recent report confirms data from over 45,726 users who have used EAP counseling services during that time span. (Attridge and Streenstra, 2021)

Chestnut Health Systems, the parent company of CGP, recently created a new psychometrically informed instrument to help the EAP field integrate inclusion into its services: the Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS).

The WIS is a tool that organizations can use to quickly assess the impact of diversity and inclusion efforts as perceived by those employees working within one or more departments and regional offices of an organization. Specifically, *it is a method for EAPs, as management consultants, to offer HR, benefit departments, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs a unique lens to assess the perceived level of employee inclusion.*

Intent of Article

This article introduces the (WIS) to the EAP community and highlights its usefulness in addressing organizational concerns about how to measure the effectiveness of DEI initiatives and programs. The WIS scale is intended to provide simplicity, clarity, and coherence to the assessment of the success of DEI programs, some of which have existed in organizations for as many as 15 years.

Considerable efforts have gone into determining which questions are most salient for capturing employee sentiments on DEI. While the researchers began with a beta-test of twenty questions, they were able, with statistical confidence, to reduce the number to eight with the knowledge that short scales are known to increase response rates. *For a list of these*

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questions, see the “Scaled Questions with Related Themes” section in this article.

Background

The year 2020 was widely acclaimed as a year of racial awakening. The deaths of unarmed black Americans, including Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor generated widespread agitation and protests across the United States. In the wake of the violence and unrest, many Americans have come to believe that the country needs to pass new civil rights laws to counter racial discrimination (Jones, 2020).

This realization has also spilled over into private sector recruitment and retention practices. According to Edelman (2020), a majority of Americans believe private sector organizations bear responsibility for helping to create a more equitable and just society.

As a result, a renewed urgency is being seen within workplaces to revise diversity policies and foster inclusion. A recent Fortune/Deloitte Survey (2021) finds that 96% of CEOs agree that DEI is a strategic priority for them in the current socioeconomic climate.

Joan Williams and David White (2020), in an article in the *Harvard Business Review* focused on

“Updating your DE&I Playbook” suggest that past efforts to deal with equity, diversity and inclusion have basically failed. They attribute this failure to a lack of structural and cultural change within organizations. Such change, they argue, must be driven by evidence and metrics.

Measuring DEI is Challenging

Measuring diversity, equity, and inclusion quickly and with a sound and reliable tool presents several challenges.

Diversity—a characteristic of a group that includes people of multiple and various identities and abilities—may be relatively straightforward to measure. However, assessing the extent to which “all people feel respected, accepted, supported, and valued” within a work environment, and all employees,

“fully participate in decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization, is even more of a challenge to measure” (Romansky et al., 2021).

It is in response to this contextual background that the authors introduce the Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS).

Discussion

The WIS is a particularly noteworthy tool in its employee-centeredness. Unlike many other diversity and inclusion assessment tools that rely on quantitative metrics, the WIS focuses *exclusively* on the reports of *employee experiences and perceptions* of the *degree* to which they feel they belong, are respected, are involved and engaged at their jobs, and have access to career building opportunities.

Since the WIS does not ask employees to weigh in on perceptions of diversity efforts, it provides a more direct measure of how efforts around diversity affect employees in terms of engagement and a sense of belonging.

The nucleus of the WIS centers on eight key themes: trust, value of individual attributes, personal work engagement, access to opportunity, fair rewards, cultural responsiveness, respect, and social acceptance. These concepts are measured by validated questions on a Likert scale ranging from 1-5 as illustrated below:

Scale Questions with Related Themes

1. I know I can trust this organization (trust)

2. People are valued as individuals by the organization (values individual attributes)
3. My opinions matter to the organization (personal work engagement)
4. I have access to new opportunities (access to opportunity)
5. The organization distributes recognitions fairly (fair rewards)
6. I think the organization recognizes diversity (cultural responsiveness)
7. I feel respected by the organization (respect)
8. I always feel like I’m part of a team at work (social acceptance)

Note: For a detailed discussion of the selection of these eight themes and how they relate to the questions, please refer to the validation article being published in *W@W’s Journal of Total Rewards* in March 2022. (Editor’s note: To access this article as it becomes available, contact any of the authors at the email addresses listed at the end of this article.)



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Using a Pre/Post methodology as a measure of change, a final comparative score can be created that can help EA practitioners, HR managers, and DEI professionals objectively evaluate how their employees specifically feel about the degree to which inclusiveness exists within their work team and company.

Although the WIS scale offers suggestions for choices in demographic selections, users of this scale are encouraged to explore how employees of different

ages, genders, races, and sexual identities experience inclusion in their own work environments.

Intended Uses for the EAP Field

Statistical analysis supports the WIS scale as an efficient and precise measure of inclusion. The WIS is shown to be a valid and reliable instrument that provides a systematic way to assess employee feelings about inclusion in a wide range of workplace environments. The validation paper for this new scale, which,

WORKPLACE INCLUSION SCALE

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our short study of inclusion at the workplace. As you can see neither your name nor any other identifying information appears on this questionnaire. Therefore, your responses to the questions will never be linked to you personally. Please answer the questions as honestly as you can.

Please check the appropriate box:

<p>Gender:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Man <input type="checkbox"/> Woman <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender or Nonbinary <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	<p>Sexual Identity:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual, Pansexual, or Queer <input type="checkbox"/> Gay/Lesbian <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	<p>Race and Ethnicity:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Black <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latinx <input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial or Multiethnic <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	<p>Age:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 15-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 <input type="checkbox"/> 61+ <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
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Instructions: The following statements reflect your impressions of your work environment. Please answer as honestly as you can and remember that your answers are completely anonymous. Please circle the appropriate number to the right of each question using the 1-5 response format.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
1. I know I can trust this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2. People are valued as individuals by this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My opinions matter to the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have access to new opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The organization distributes recognition evenly.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I think the organization recognizes diversity.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel respected by the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I always feel like I'm part of a team at work.	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU!

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as noted will be published in the *Journal of Total Rewards* in their March 2022 edition, will answer readers' curiosity about the process of designing this new scale.

The more this tool is administered and results anonymously pooled, important data for further research in this rapidly growing field will be accessible. Towards that end, the scale will be freely available to users with the signing of a short User License Agreement with similar arrangements as provided with the WOS scale. EA providers that offer workplace consultation/coaching/training and want to assist employers in building more inclusive work environments can utilize the WIS as a tool to empirically measure the success of their DEI strategies.

Summary

The Workplace Inclusion Scale (WIS) is a tool to establish a systematic and rigorous basis for conducting diversity and inclusion audits of employees at a wide range of corporate organizations of all sizes. The research conducted to create this scale provides validation for the WIS as a reliable and sound assessment tool.

The scale offers a basis for a single measure that adheres to and builds upon some of the key factors described in the earlier literature on the topic of diversity measurement. The *main differences* between the Workplace Inclusion Scale and other measures lies in its *simplicity*, *brevity*, and *theoretically solid structure* in capturing employee experiences along the key dimensions of inclusion.

The WIS tool, when deployed and used as an easy to administer before/after assessment, has the ability to bring empirical and credible assessments of employee experiences to what is now primarily a qualitative assessment and subjective approach to evaluating the efficacy of organizational DEI initiatives. ❖

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