

Improving Diversity & Inclusion in Intellectual Property Development and Management

A Guide for Organizations in Five Parts

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An Approach to Making Rapid Improvement

Introduction to Driving Rapid Change

Improving IP diversity will require changes in your organization – changes in processes, changes in people’s attitudes and behaviors. Change management is a natural extension of the program maturity approach and the continual improvement cycle. Your organization may already do change management for other important areas like research and development, quality control, or health and safety compliance. The challenge is for your organization to embrace the idea of always trying to improve processes for IP diversity as well. One of the most effective ways to do this is by becoming more sophisticated in how you drive and manage change.

This may not require implementing entirely new management systems in your company, but rather integrating IP diversity into existing change management systems. Change is a constant in any organization. There are new employees and new R&D programs. There are new products and new technologies and new manufacturing processes. New locations are opened. Maybe a new organization is acquired. All of this change puts pressure on management systems. All of this change can put pressure on your IP diversity program.

As your IP diversity program matures, you should consider root cause analysis to look more closely at the underlying causes behind the metrics. Once you carry out a more detailed root cause analysis, you will see a clear link between your analysis and change management. With root cause analysis, you can identify the underlying causes of problems. You will start to develop targeted process improvements to prevent these problems from recurring.

In an organization, process improvement involves people. It involves changing the way people do their jobs. That is where change management comes in. You need to understand how to effectively change people’s behavior. Maybe they need new skills, maybe they need additional knowledge, or maybe they need to change their attitude. Although none of this is easy, all of this is part of continual improvement.

The key to effective change management is to define a clear path to improvement so everyone knows where they are going, and to create small steps so the journey seems achievable. The best way to do this is to set quantifiable, short-term improvement goals.

The three types of IP diversity metrics are a great foundation for setting quantifiable, short-term improvement goals. These are: Program Maturity Metrics, Performance Metrics, and Employee Perception Metrics.

Setting Powerful Goals

Setting the goal right is a critical first step in your IP diversity program. The goal needs to be measurable, challenging, and timebound (but no longer than 6 months). The goal needs to create a sense of excitement and urgency in the project team – and also beyond that team – in the organization. It is important that the goal setting is done by the cross-functional team and that there is unanimous support and enthusiasm for the goal. Going after low-hanging fruit is not a successful path to effective transformation and sustainable change. When this is the approach, people tend to do the same thing they have done in the past, just a little faster for a little while. Experience shows that, too often, this results in no sustainable change.

An effective goal statement is one sentence that clearly defines what will change, how much it will change, and when the change will happen.

Look at your baseline metrics to see if there are specific areas that stand out as requiring attention. Think about how you can create a single goal, with supporting milestones that weave together improvement across several metrics. Review your maturity metrics and think about the hurdles in your company that are slowing down the achievement of IP diversity.

An inclusive brainstorm session is one technique for producing an effective goal statement around a common problem. Another approach is to have each team member list a problem they are trying to solve in their department that is related to IP creation and management. You don't need to limit the initial brainstorming to equity and diversity issues. Just look for general problems from each perspective, then identify the common problems that span departments, and see how IP diversity could be part of the solution. This can be a winning strategy for gaining buy-in and enthusiasm.

Creating Powerful Goals

Focus on results rather than process. Don't confuse milestones with goals. Reduce the scope to make sure each goal is challenging and also achievable in less than 6 months – ideally in just 3 months. Here are examples of how to turn a weak goal into a powerful goal.

Weak Goal

Develop training material intended to encourage IP diversity from a gender perspective.

Hold invention disclosure preparation meetings during normal working hours.

Send out regular communications about the IP diversity program.

Powerful Goal

100% of employees in the R&D department pass a quiz on the new IP diversity program in 3 months.

Within 6 months X% of invention disclosures are completed during normal working hours with full participation by invention teams.

Improve the employee awareness of our IP diversity program by X% in 4 months, confirmed by employee surveys.



Neena

Director
University technology transfer office – 8 employees

“I decided to focus on the inventor side to systematically increase our involvement with inventors and invention teams with women and people from other underrepresented groups. To do this we had to make sure that our IP diversity program was strong and effective. Our team came up with this goal statement: Over the next 6 months, 25% of the IP we evaluate for tech transfer possibilities will come from women and people from other underrepresented groups. We used our performance metrics to establish the baseline, which was only 15%. We realized we had a lot to do. Our next milestones were to develop a communication package targeted to attracting diverse inventors and to establish communication channels to reach our audience. Part of our strategy was to partner with affinity groups.”



Steve

Operations & Quality Manager
Research lab – 155 employees

“I wanted to focus our improvement project on making our IP diversity program more mature and sustainable. I focused on training and communications because I felt that improvement there would also elevate our leadership maturity. My goal statement was: 100% of employees pass a quiz on the new diversity focus across our IP policies and procedures in 3 months. My major milestones were to formalize the cross-functional team, draft and approve new policies and procedures with input from all departments, develop the training materials, deliver the training and analyze the quiz results.”



Roberta

IP Lawyer
Software company – 4,000 employees

“Our senior management is revenue focused, so we focused our goal on something that would have a bottom-line impact. We focused on the area of attracting and retaining research talent. Our goal statement was: Within 6 months, 80% of the employees involved in the IP creation process will say they “would” or “definitely would” recommend that their qualified female friends work here. Our first milestone was to carry out a baseline employee perception survey to see where we were. The next milestone was to establish policies that promote gender diversity. We followed that with a training program to introduce the new policies and show our commitment. The final milestone was to redo the key questions from the employee survey.”



Jennifer

HR – Senior Vice President

Global manufacturing company – 20,000 employees

“My goal was focused on building global awareness for our IP diversity program. I wanted to get the DEI leaders more engaged in building and sustaining awareness in their regions. So I set a goal that measures the effectiveness of their communication in building employee awareness of IP diversity and why it matters.

Our goal statement was: Improve the employee awareness of our IP diversity program in the EU region by 20% in 4 months. We already had baseline data from our employee perception survey. The major milestones were to develop new communications materials, distribute them in the EU region, conduct a follow-up employee perception survey, and analyze the results.”

Establishing the Right Milestones

Once you've agreed on a goal statement, break the goal down into key milestones. Try to identify milestones that will improve your IP diversity program maturity in a couple of categories. It can be useful to break the milestones into tasks and assign the tasks to project team members. Your company may have a standard project management methodology and that's fine to use. But don't over-plan. Keep it flexible and let the project team experiment as they create the path and steps to the goal. Here's an example of how a powerful goal was broken down into milestones and tasks.

Illustrative IP Diversity Program Goal, with Milestones

Goal: 100% of relevant employees pass a quiz on the new IP development policies and procedures that promote diversity in 3 months.

Milestone	Tasks
Formalize the cross-functional team	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify relevant departments2. Write a purpose and scope document for the team3. Recruit people from the relevant departments
Draft and approve new policies and procedures for IP creation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review relevant existing policies and procedures2. Collect input from all departments on the team on gaps and suggested additions3. Draft updated policies4. Get required senior management approval
Develop the training materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop outline for short training program2. Determine how training will be delivered (online, in-person, etc.)3. Survey the team to identify specific scenarios to include in the training4. Finalize training materials and quiz
Deliver the training	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Qualify people to deliver the training2. Conduct the training and collect the quizzes
Analyze the quiz results	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Determine effectiveness of the training2. Identify any gaps or hurdles in implementing the policies and procedures3. Make any needed adjustments in the policies, procedures or training

Making It Happen: Achieving Your Goal

Getting the goal and milestones right is half of the battle, but you've still got to make it happen. Hopefully, the goal setting created a spark of excitement among managers and innovators, who now understand why IP diversity matters for the organization as well as for individual innovators. Now it is time to ignite the team and start the sprint. Because the initial phase of the IP diversity program will be a sprint, you don't have time to go off track for long. However, don't just try to do the same thing just a little faster, or slightly better. You will need to experiment and innovate while keeping your eye on the goal. Think about whether to break down barriers and smash silos – or if it makes more sense to go around the hurdle.

Part of making it happen is keeping the cross-functional project team engaged, and part of keeping the team engaged is to generate ongoing interest and support from senior management. Hopefully, you intentionally designed your goal to actively involve different departments. One of the keys to success is getting input from all departments to make sure any planned changes are practical. Too often changes are made in one department that have negative, unintended consequences for other departments. Use the IP diversity program to create new workflows and processes between departments that can be sustained. This will help break down the silos and spread awareness in all departments.

Celebrating & Sustaining Success

It is important to pause and celebrate success when you achieve your goal by having a formal meeting involving senior management. This gives the project team well-deserved recognition for achieving the initial goal and lays the foundation for sustaining success. The agenda should include a review of how your team met the goal. It is important to cover what hurdles you encountered and share the details of how you overcame – or went around – the hurdles.

As part of this, provide a report on any new processes or workflows that have been established to help you sustain the improvements that were made to meet the goal. Many organizations find it useful to reassess their diversity program maturity at this point.

Finally, this is a great time to start the cycle again by defining the next IP diversity improvement goal or goals. This may be an expansion of the initial project to a new region or department, or something in a related area.

Working towards a goal in your IP diversity program creates a spark of change in your organization. Each spark brings together a cross-functional group in a new way to define and meet a challenging short-term goal. You can orchestrate a series of projects to accelerate your IP diversity program maturity and improve performance and employee perception metrics.



Onward and Upward. Together.

Improving IP diversity is a journey. Review the full [IP Diversity Guide](#) for ideas – or work through the sections one at a time. Get in touch with the sponsoring organizations for more information and support. What is important is to get moving on this important journey.

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