

IT'S GOOD FOR BUSINESS: THE CASE FOR DEIA IN THE MEETINGS & EVENTS INDUSTRY

Let's be real about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). Putting aside the noise of the current political climate, let's focus on how DEIA directly impacts our industry and the businesses and organizations that rely on us to bring people together. While championing DEIA is undeniably the right thing to do, for those seeking a more tangible, ROI-driven perspective, let's look at it through a financial lens.

As meeting professionals, we sit at a unique intersection: the decisions we make about venues, speakers, programming, and event design ripple outward to affect thousands of attendees, clients, and communities. DEIA isn't a checkbox on our planning list, it's a strategic advantage that shapes the experiences we create and the businesses we build.

Five Ways DEIA Makes Good Business Sense

Enhanced Innovation: Diverse teams bring a wealth of perspectives, sparking creativity and innovative problem-solving. For meeting professionals, this translates to more dynamic programs, unexpected partnerships, and event experiences that stand out in a crowded marketplace.

Access to a Broader Talent Pool: Embracing DEIA opens the door to a wider range of qualified candidates from all backgrounds - whether you're hiring for your own team or curating speakers and vendors for an event. The best ideas and the best talent don't come from a single demographic.

Improved Employee Engagement: When employees feel valued and included, they thrive. A culture of equity and accessibility improves job satisfaction, boosts productivity, and reduces costly turnover - all of which matters in an industry where relationships and institutional knowledge are everything.

Stronger Client and Attendee Connections: A diverse workforce reflects and understands a diverse global audience. This strengthens relationships, drives loyalty, and opens doors to new markets. Consider this: the disabled community alone accounts for an estimated \$8 trillion in disposable income annually - \$13 trillion when including their friends and family. Clients and organizations that prioritize accessibility are tapping into a massive, underserved market. Are your events helping them do that?

Better Decision-Making: Inclusive teams make well-rounded, informed decisions. By considering diverse viewpoints, they develop smarter strategies, reduce risk, and achieve better outcomes - for their organizations and for the events they produce.

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DEIA in Event Design: Where the ROI Really Shows

As the MPINCC DEIA Committee's mission reminds us, "accessibility ensures no one is left behind." That's not just a value statement. It's a design principle that, when applied intentionally, transforms the attendee experience and delivers measurable returns:

Increased Attendee Satisfaction and Loyalty: When attendees feel truly welcomed and accommodated, satisfaction scores soar. Accessible venues, diverse programming, and inclusive design signal to attendees that they matter. This translates directly to higher Net Promoter Scores, stronger post-event feedback, and increased likelihood of returning year after year. Satisfied attendees become brand ambassadors - the most powerful marketing tool in our industry.

Higher Engagement Rates: Inclusive event design meets people where they are. Offering multiple session formats, quiet rooms for sensory breaks, live captioning, diverse presentation styles, and varied networking opportunities means more attendees can fully participate. When everyone can engage meaningfully, you see higher session attendance, more active participation, stronger networking outcomes, and greater interaction with sponsors and exhibitors.

Attendees Feel Seen and Valued: There's an intangible but powerful ROI when attendees see themselves represented in speakers, in content, in imagery, and in thoughtful accommodations. As meeting professionals, we know that emotional connection is what transforms a good event into an unforgettable one. When people feel seen, they connect more deeply with your brand and message, leading to stronger community building, increased word-of-mouth, higher future registration rates, and greater willingness to invest in premium tiers or upgrades.

Supporting Neurodivergence Boosts Participation: Providing quiet rooms, sensory-friendly spaces, clear signage, detailed schedules shared in advance, and options for virtual or hybrid participation doesn't just help neurodivergent attendees - it creates a better experience for everyone. These considerations reduce anxiety, increase comfort, and allow more attendees to show up as their best selves. The result? More people can fully absorb your content, engage with your community, and walk away with real value.

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Expanded Audience Reach: When you design with DEIA at the forefront, you remove barriers that have historically excluded entire segments of potential attendees. Accessible venues welcome those with mobility challenges. Diverse programming attracts varied demographics. Flexible formats accommodate different learning styles and schedules. This isn't just good ethics, it's good math. More people who can participate means more registrations, more revenue, and a richer, more dynamic event environment for everyone.

Enhanced Sponsor and Partner Value: Corporate sponsors increasingly prioritize DEIA in their partnerships. Events that demonstrate genuine commitment to inclusive practices are more attractive to forward-thinking sponsors, can command stronger sponsorship packages, and build longer-term relationships. Your DEIA commitment becomes a differentiator - a selling point that sets your event apart in a competitive market.

The Bottom Line

MPI's vision that "when we meet, we change the world" only holds true if everyone has a seat at the table. DEIA isn't just about doing what's right, it's about doing what's smart. It's a strategic investment in innovation, talent, and growth that ensures our events, our chapter, and our industry not only survive but thrive in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

As one of the most diverse chapters in one of the most diverse regions in the country, MPINCC is uniquely positioned to lead on this. Let's make sure our events reflect that. What steps is your organization taking to embed DEIA into your event design? We'd love to hear from you!

