

**M+E**

**JOURNAL**

# It's Showtime!

Innovation explodes across every workflow as technology emerges from the pandemic.



Where are you in this accelerated evolution?

## **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

In the office, behind the camera, and on the screen, diversity is crucial

## **SECURITY**

Remote productions create new security concerns, with assets under siege

## **SMART CONTENT**

Artificial intelligence and machine learning are being applied in new, exciting ways

## **NEW WORKFLOWS**

The cloud is delivering on its promise, powering the future of productions

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# PURSUIT OF DIVERSITY

## Equality and inclusion requires we return to our cultural roots

By Devendra Mishra, Chief Strategist, MESA, Founder HITS

The gap between achieving the goal of diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) and the prevailing reality in society has become wider in recent years, as a blemish in the character of the nation has been exposed and even normalized in terms of white supremacy, racism, homogeneity, xenophobia and bigotry.

President Kennedy used affirmative action for the first time in 1964 by instructing federal contractors to take “affirmative action to ensure that applicants are treated equally without regard to race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.” Since the creation of his Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, progress has been made at a snail’s pace, although DEI proving to be mutually reinforcing principles within organizations.

Full potential of an organization can only be realized with fair representation of segments of society, namely driven by gender, race and cultures. Our creative and productive leveraging of human resources is maximized by achieving parity between the majority and the minorities. And during the last year of this unprecedented pandemic, we discovered the disproportionate loss of life and income among minorities. The pandemic has reaffirmed that the pursuit of DEI can transform society and benefit every facet of an organization, including the bottom line.

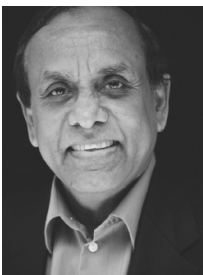
During quarantine, devoid of access to movie theaters for entertainment and working out of home, I explored an answer to “How do we achieve DEI?” I was watching significantly more content where the stories told were from distant parts of the world, such as Iran,

the Netherlands, India, Pakistan and Egypt, to name a few. The content was being streamed from Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hot Star (Disney), YouTube and others. Their diverse cultural content was disproportionately greater than that of the studios and networks.

In order for a story to be told in an authentic manner, it must include appropriate actors, be produced by professionals with understanding and empathy, marketed by relevant experts, and distributed by professionals. Pursuit of our desired goals require that we go beyond hiring practices, we must go back to the roots of the entertainment industry.

From its inception more than a century ago, Hollywood has been synonymous with storytelling and that equates into producing a unique product of a culture. Stories were told before humans learned to read and write, and have provided entertainment, preserved culture and instilled moral values. People are spontaneously drawn to stories because we see ourselves reflected in them. Hollywood must diversify the stories it tells, and the love, adventure, mystery, myths and history must mirror cultural traits.

The achievement of the desired goals of DEI is constrained by several factors, namely, the potential growth of jobs, inertia of hires made in the past, internal criteria for promotions, and availability of talent. The net job growth of an enterprise depends on the growth of the economy, the degree of productivity improvements realized, and deployment of technology in the production, marketing and distribution of movies and TV



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shows. Outsourcing of production, automation of business processes, and application of AI and machine learning, all continue to reduce the professional workforce. In addition, the preference for internal promotions reduces new hires. The combined result of these phenomena reduces job openings to achieve desired levels of DEI.

While the supply of talent from minority or inadequately represented sources continues to grow steadily, an unprecedented commitment must be made to the overall education and development of potential talent. And support for college courses in media and entertainment must be increased by Hollywood. A STEM program is a perfect example for fostering careers in science and engineering for business and technology. This is the long-term challenge to overcome, the fundamental problem in the primary areas of equality for race and gender. It's evident that while corporations assist colleges and high schools to seek business careers, unlimited opportunities exist for Hollywood professionals to volunteer in the career preparation phase of students for a job in our industry. Some examples of these pioneering organizations are Women in Technology Hollywood (WiTH), National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), Society of Women Engineers (SWE), Society for Advancing Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Indians in Science (SACNAS), and the National Black MBA Association (NBMBA).

In today's business world, diversity, equality and inclusion can't be treated as buzzwords that often amount to little more than a mandatory annual training and testing for racial bias. When you make DEI a priority, every facet of your organization benefits. Including the bottom line. 