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HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION PRINCIPAL AT CNET TRAINING

Look out from the stage at keynotes or panel sessions on inclusion and diversity in this sector and you'll see an audience filled with middle class, white, mostly middle aged men. While in no way wanting to be disparaging about this group of professionals, it's clear that the data centre demographic is a concern.

A raft of global research such as that from McKinsey and the World Economic Forum show that diverse workforces are more profitable, more innovative, more resilient and more able to adapt to new business landscapes. We also know that the data centre sector has essentially dragged all the embedded diversity problems such as a lack of women from platform sectors such as facilities management, engineering and IT. However, diversity is not just about gender – it's also about social class, race and neurodiversity, for example, and, in general, we don't have enough representation from those groups either.

The issue is gaining traction and given the lack of talent pipeline, coupled with skills and labour shortages, the smartest thing the sector can do now is get serious about effective, evidence based inclusion practices. Running some implicit bias training and putting a woman on the board for the look of it is not enough. Organisations must look deeper and more broadly into the fundamental structures that are so ingrained into the DNA of the

data centre business that they're invisible.

Structures such as recruitment and selection processes, succession planning, reward and recognition and professional development practices must be examined for implicit bias and embedded barriers to those other than traditional labour groups. Discriminatory practices are often unintentional and invisible but they're there. It takes an evidenced based, bespoke approach to scratch away at widely held beliefs about the way organisations and culture works to really see where processes, structures and behaviours can be modified to attract, retain and develop a more inclusive workforce.

There is no silver bullet or quick fix. It takes more than just surface level initiatives to change the way the sector approaches the development of a broader labour pool. The entire digital infrastructure sector must get serious about what it takes to broaden its demographic if it is to reap the rewards known to other sectors, where an inclusive approach to people management is already in place.

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