

YOUR WORK

THE COMMUNICATOR

There is unity in diversity and it pays great dividends

GINA LONDON



WHAT'S your name," I asked the young man sitting across the table from me as he removed polish from my fingernails. "Duc," came his reply. "It's Vietnamese. 'D-U-C'" (Pronounced very much like 'Duke') Duc and his brother Michael Nguyen manage Tiffany Nails in Blackrock Village outside Dublin. Born in Hanoi, they moved to Ireland 21 years ago.

In addition to getting a great manicure, what I also loved about these two brothers is that the one with a name I might not have been as familiar with, did not feel compelled to offer me a substitute anglicised name. Bravo.

Duc is his proper name and I'm damn happy to learn it properly.

What is your company's culture of inclusion? Consider this past week's new Rose of Tralee. Kirsten Mate Maher is the first African-Irish winner. After being crowned, Kirsten stated simply and aptly that: "There is no typical Irish woman."

I agree. As you wonderful readers likely already know, I was born in the US. But, while I may not yet be an Irish citizen, I am working towards that and I have proudly lived here for nearly four years. Kirsten summed it up by saying: "We're all mixed and we're all from different parts of the world." So again. What is your company's culture of inclusion?

With Pope Francis due to visit Ireland this weekend, our world is clearly a different place than it was nearly 40 years ago, the last time a Pope visited this country. Our businesses must reflect these changes in a meaningful way. The way we each embrace these changes cannot be not left to chance, it's up to choice. Reflect on my short inclusivity-awareness questionnaire.

I DO YOU HAVE MINORITY EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL LIKE 'OTHERS'?

If you don't know, your organisation's statistics can paint a pretty clear picture.

2 HOW COMMITTED IS YOUR TOP MANAGEMENT?

Sure, you shoot back to me, we already have a diversity and inclusion policy in our organisation. But written words are not enough. Jessica Lee is a noted business psychologist whom I had the pleasure of having coffee with last Monday. She lived and worked for years both in Australia and the UK before recently returning to her home country of Ireland.

She states that for a true shift of a mindset to occur in the culture of an organisation: "It has to both be believed and implemented by the CEO and the entire senior leadership team."

People need to see the behaviours matching the words. Your employees are not stupid, so don't treat them that way. If you say one thing and do something differently, they see it a mile away."

3 HOW OPEN ARE YOUR COMMUNICATION CHANNELS?

Do you remember to use the more inclusive word 'partners' when inviting spouses to social activities? Do you host plenty of social activities to help employees share stories and connect to each another outside of the office in relaxed settings? Encouraging words to help modify behaviours makes a difference. I'll be flying to Stockholm on Friday to work with a group from The Absolut Company. In preparation for a big internal event, the presenters are being given the option of speaking in English or, if they're more comfortable, in their native language with simultaneous translations provided to the audience. That's communications inclusivity.

This is not about bending over to what some might describe as the rigid rules of political correctness, but it is about examining your company's communications environment and making choices to collectively move toward more purposeful inclusion.

Companies miss out when employees feel segregated. It can happen to anyone. Not