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**MANAGE HR**



## Fostering Culturally Intelligent and Inclusive Leaders



Jennifer Izekor,  
Founder and CEO

**T**he business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is stronger than ever. The onus is on leaders to build a robust organizational culture, which does not happen in many organizations due to the lack of available tools to help leaders address the concerns around DEI in the workplace. “It all rises and falls with leadership, Leaders create the culture of organizations and those cultures determine how included people feel,” says Jennifer Izekor, Founder and CEO of Above Difference. As a staunch believer in this, Izekor intends to equip leaders and organizations with the “how” of achieving a visible impact on the lives of the people they work with. Most organizations, she reasons, focus on discussing the DEI problems or challenges. Still, there is little information on the changes needed to influence the behaviors and attitudes that leads to workplaces where all employees feel valued, seen and included.

To that end, Izekor believes that Intentionally Inclusive Leadership

underpinned by Cultural Intelligence is growing to be a distinct and vital capacity for organizations seeking to move past a diverse workplace to creating an inclusive workplace. By combining CQ and inclusive leadership, and offering an innovative approach to the inclusion agenda, Above Difference found a way to disrupt the status quo.

“Our primary value proposition is that inclusion has to be about everyone, or it will be about no one,” says Izekor.

Based on this principle, the company’s goal is to empower leaders to build inclusive spaces for people who are more likely to be discriminated against in the workplace because of their race, faith, gender, or disability while also engaging the whole workforce in the change and transformation journey.

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Above Difference offers its highly acclaimed Masterclasses to enable leaders to equip Leaders. The team conducts workshops that combine design, innovation, and change management principles to help leaders achieve and sustain an intentionally inclusive leadership style, underpinned by CQ. Above Difference encourages firms to consider DEI as an important element of strategic leadership and works its way down through the leadership chain—first

the board, then the senior leadership team, and finally the operational leaders. During the six-month training program, the Above Difference team trains internal Facilitators and helps build capacity throughout the organization.

Above Difference’s Inclusive leadership journey is a step-by-step process that charts a clear pathway to DEI. The concept of CQ coupled with inclusive leadership, as proposed by Above Difference, advances the journey to intentional inclusive leadership. As a result, CQ plays an important role, and when well-developed and combined with Inclusive leadership can assist leaders in leading and working successfully with a wide range of individuals and situations.

This is backed by the company’s long list of satisfied clients that attests to its exceptional offerings and ultimate worth. In one such case, Above Difference worked with a police constabulary as they dealt with policing in a culturally diverse society. The CQ Masterclasses aided the team’s development and growth, as well as their community policing efforts. This was evident when they had to deal with a major demonstration in the city about a year later. They applied cultural intelligence and inclusive leadership to deal with it successfully. Masterclasses also strengthened their capacity to recruit the best talent from a wide range of backgrounds, helping them develop a diverse senior leadership team.

With its research-based tools, training, and assessments, Above Difference is taking client DEI goals to new heights by offering the public and community sector leaders the ‘how’ of inclusive leadership. **HR**