

APM emphasises importance of inclusion in Project Management

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The Association for Project Management (APM) hosted a discussion at its Volunteers' Development Forum highlighting the critical role of inclusion in fostering successful project teams.

The event, led by Mac Alonge, CEO of The Equal Group, brought together nearly 100 volunteers to explore the challenges and opportunities of creating inclusive project environments. Attendees shared their experiences and insights into fostering a culture where all team members feel valued and empowered to contribute.

Mac Alonge said: "Creating an inclusive environment has immense value within a project management context. We've all been involved in projects where the environment has been either stressful, short of time, or tight on budget. Having an inclusive environment can actually help to reduce these issues and create a more positive and efficient working environment."

Several key challenges to creating inclusive project teams were identified, including hybrid working, time zone differences, industry jargon, and the fast-paced nature of project work. However, experts emphasized the significant benefits of an inclusive approach, such as improved decision-making, enhanced problem-solving, and increased creativity.

To overcome these challenges, attendees shared practical recommendations:

Expert's recommendations:

- “Never assume. Personal engagement is key, always have a conversation to find out the best way the worker can contribute to a project. It’s important that the wider team are aware of any adjustments being made as well.”
- “Recognise introverts and extroverts in your team. Some workers may feel less comfortable in group discussions, some may feel intimidated by language challenges etc, so it’s important to give workers a chance to contribute through understanding everyone’s needs and abilities. It could be doing something as simple as sharing an agenda in advance or giving team members the space to talk in their own language.”
- “There is no one size fits all approach. Be flexible with workers but this also needs to go both ways. If you are adjusting too much, you need to ask is this the right project for them or can they perform at this level?”
- “Create a safe space for failure and vulnerability. Team members will be more likely to contribute and take risks in their ideas and approach to work when they don’t feel in jeopardy.”

Mac concluded: “It’s important to ask questions of yourself that will allow you to step into somebody else’s shoes and see things from their perspective. This will help you to reflect on the way on the way you communicate with you team and understand the environment that you create as a project manager.”