DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FOR SMALL AND INDEPENDENT BREWERIES
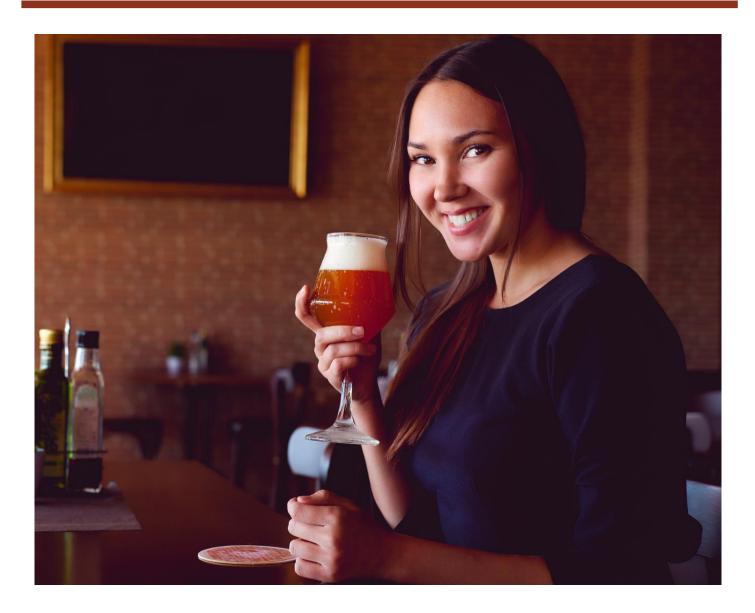

Best Practices for Implementing Diversity and Inclusion: Diversifying Your Brand

The fourth resource in a five-part series

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide a set of best practices for Brewers Association (BA) members seeking to increase the inclusiveness of their brand in order to create diversity. In this document, the term *diversity* refers to variety in the demographic makeup of the people who can potentially develop positive relationships with craft beer brands.

The statement that the business of craft beer is about relationships has become cliché, but it's true. By putting relationships at the center of branding efforts, it's possible to more accurately characterize the challenges and opportunities associated with building diversity through a brand. From this perspective, it's easier to understand that an inclusive brand is not just one that reaches many different types of people, but one that is also the foundation of many different types of positive relationships.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE BRAND

Successful brands are unique, specific, targeted, and developed with clarity and consistency. At first glance, the goal of achieving greater diversity through the use a brewery's brand may seem antithetical to branding best practices. Delving deeper, however, we see that pursuing inclusivity and equity are less about making your brand "all things to all people" and more about empowering a variety of people to authentically experience your brand.

Below, five essential components of a well-developed brand are briefly described—brand identity, brand character, brand image, brand culture, and brand personality. A short discussion of how diversity and inclusion goals relate to each brand component follows each description. Finally, a series of driving questions and practical examples that will allow you to begin the process of infusing diversity and inclusion into your brand management practices are provided.

1. Brand Identity – What is your why?

If relationships are at the center of a successful brand, your brand identity is the primary vehicle through which these relationships are forged. A brand identity is composed of a unique collection of associations that customers, suppliers, retailers, partners, etc. are invited to make upon experiencing your brand. Moreover, your brewery's brand identity should contain its *value proposition*, an innovation, feature, or service that provides functional, emotional, or self-expressive benefits to consumers. Ultimately it's about using your brand to provide a clear "why" to those with whom you hope to form relationships.

When it comes to pursuing diversity and inclusion in brand identity, the object is not to provide more "whys." Rather, it is to ensure that your "why" translates to a variety of people, in a variety of settings.

The Driving Question: Have you explored the full range of your brand's associations or are they narrowly defined by one particular cultural perspective?

A Practical Example: Environmental sustainability is one of the core associations for "green" businesses. A green brewery might discover that it has only considered its association with environmental sustainability in terms of remote or rural ecologies. This brewery can benefit from exploring how their brand might additionally be associated with concern for environmental sustainability in urban and suburban ecologies.

2. Brand Character – What is your promise?

Like human character, brand character is associated with the perception of integrity, trustworthiness, and transparency. If brand identity communicates a value proposition (*why* one would form a relationship with a particular brand), brand character communicates what the brand will deliver as a result of forming that relationship. Brand character is the promise of a tangible benefit one will experience as a result of choosing to be associated with your brand, and the ability to foster belief in the legitimacy of that promise.

Diversity and inclusion are not uncommon elements of brand character for businesses across any number of industries. Business are increasingly recognizing that diversity and inclusion are sound business practices with clear financial advantages. However, it is unfortunately all too common that these same businesses fail to follow up with these tangible benefits.

The Driving Question: Are you being transparent about how you will deliver on the promise to value and pursue diversity and inclusion?

A Practical Example: Pithy statements affirming a brewery's desire to be inclusive are frequently included in marketing materials. However, statements like "all are welcome" or "celebrate diversity" are not enough in and of themselves. Your brand needs to communicate exactly how you intend to follow through with the unspoken promise that you will work to make people from all types of backgrounds feel welcome.

A brewery that is committed to creating an inclusive taproom may consider this second driving question and, as a result, decide to create a new page on their official website. This page, called "Everyone is Welcome," includes a customer-facing version of the brewery's diversity and inclusion statement and, more importantly, a list of actions they are taking to be more inclusive. For example: "Our brewery has two unisex, family-friendly bathrooms"; "Our brewery has a zero-tolerance policy regarding hate-speech and harassment"; or "Spanish language menus are available, just ask our staff or download here!"

3. Brand Image – How will you be seen?

Of the five components discussed here, brand image is the one most readily associated with brand building and management activities. That's because brand image includes all of the visually recognizable representations of your brand identity including logos, color palettes, packaging, architecture, interior design, marketing materials, and merchandise.

Brand image is more than just the visual representation of your brand identity. It is also connected to how your brand is perceived by consumers. At the simplest level, when an individual engages with elements of your brand image, he or she should think of your brewery. At the most successful level, when an individual engages with an element of your brand image, he or she should not only think of your brewery, but also experience everything positive they have come to feel about your brewery. In other words, your brand image should reinforce your brewery's reputation in the marketplace and in the hearts and minds of your consumers.

Brewers Association members should strive to meet the standards detailed in the Marketing and Advertising Code, which stipulates that marketing materials be free of derogatory or discriminatory messages or imagery. This is not only good practice; it is consistent with the "barriers not bait" approach to defining and working toward diversity and inclusion goals. The objective, then, is to ensure that no component of your brand image serves as a barrier between

your brewery and any population of people with whom you hope to form and maintain positive relationships.

"Beer marketing should be representative of the values, ideals and integrity of a diverse culture and free of any derogatory or discriminatory messages or imagery."

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– Brewers Association Marketing and Advertising Code

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The Driving Question: Are any visual representations of your brand acting as a barrier to forming relationships with any group of individuals?

A Practical Example: The challenge of anticipating whether an element of your brand image—for example, packaging design—will act as a barrier between your brewery and any given population is that those involved in making design decisions may not perceive these barriers. A brewery invested in discovering perceived barriers in their branding may use a structured feedback system to correct problems or avoid future missteps. The leadership of this brewery acknowledges that it is easy to unwittingly find themselves in an echo chamber, surrounded by the voices, ideas, and perspectives of people who sound, think, and experience the world much as they do—particularly due to a small staff. They decide to expand the variety of perspectives involved in decision-making regarding their label art by creating a focus group composed of trusted staff, friends, family, community members, and loyal customers that reviews all packaging artwork before final decisions are made.

4. Brand Culture – What do you stand for?

At the heart of a brand culture is the system of values associated with your brewery and brand. This is commonly communicated in mission statements, visions, About Us pages, and other expressions of a brewery's brand story. However, the 21st century economy asks businesses to consider not only how to tell their own brand story in a compelling way, but also whether others will be compelled to tell your brand story, and how. Social science research has long observed that people no longer choose to associate with brands merely for their functional advantages (e.g. quality, price, convenience); they are also choosing to associate with brands for their symbolic advantages. Consumers will use your brand as a symbolic resource in constructing and managing their own identities. In short, what your brand *means* is as important as what it does.

As in the case of brand character, actions speak louder than words when it comes to successfully defining brand culture. Inclusion and equity are values-driven business practices that require consistency between words, images, and action. When it comes to creating an inclusive brand culture, it is not only important to consider whether the values associated with your brand are compatible with the values of a variety of people, but also if the *way* in which you communicate those values resonates with them.

A Driving Question: Are a variety of people able to "see themselves" as part of your brand culture and can they easily and authentically tell your brand story?

A Practical Example: A brewery that holds community engagement as one of its core values considers this fourth driving question. They conclude that although their level of engagement

with the surrounding community through events and charitable giving is admirably high, the issues, occasions, or topics that drive these activities are defined by the brewery's leadership. They realize that a significant number of people have a hard time seeing themselves as part of this community engagement, because the brewery's community engagement is centered around issues, occasions, and topics that are of little concern to them. In order to make sure they are engaging with the community in ways that are meaningful for the entire brewery staff and the surrounding community, the brewery engages in informal research. They poll brewery staff and members of a handful of neighborhood associations to discover aspects of their shared community they care most about. They use this information to make changes to their event planning and the selection criteria for charitable giving.

5. Brand Personality – What kind of relationships will you build?

Of the five components of a comprehensive brand that have been discussed in this document, brand personality relates most directly to the topic of diversity and inclusion. That's because a brand personality is commonly defined by a set of human characteristics. In fact, it is not uncommon for a business to use characteristics such as gender, age, and socioeconomic class to define their brand personality, and by extension, their target market.

When it comes to building an inclusive and equitable craft beer brand, defining or redefining your brand personality in terms of human personality traits (e.g. creative, warm, idealistic, elegant, or snarky) is preferable to using demographic segments, with the obvious exception of considering the legal drinking age. Personality traits can be universally held and valued by people with a wide range of backgrounds and life experiences.

The Driving Question: Are the personality traits that define your brand limited by being associated with narrow demographic segments?

A Practical Example: A brewery whose brand is defined as "active" and "adventurous" considers this final driving question and, as a result, discovers that the ways in which they have chosen to express being active and adventurous are narrowly defined by being young, able-bodied, and relatively affluent. For example, many of their marketing campaigns feature physically demanding sports and recreational activities that come with a hefty price tag. In order to make these personality traits more universal, they decide to craft a social media campaign around the concept of "everyday adventures." They invite consumers to post photos of themselves responsibly enjoying the brewery's beer while engaging in their own everyday adventures. The brewery curates a varied collection of these images to repost on their social media properties, providing a customer-centered way to expand how their brand personality is defined and received.