Diversity and inclusion fuels innovation, and building diverse teams is crucial to our growth. Change must start at the top, where leaders commit to measurable results and hold our teams accountable. Our goal is to make our company a place that employees can and want to do their best work.

Our journey to a more diverse and inclusive company picked up speed when we found the programs that made this imperative more personal. We have long believed that diverse teams make better decisions, but the real progress didn’t happen until we made a compelling case for change that resonated with individual people.

During my 33 years in the automation industry, it has been traditionally male-dominated at all levels, with women frequently experiencing unwelcoming work environments and challenges advancing their careers. In 2007, Rockwell Automation acknowledged those challenges, noting a decline of women in North America Sales and lower retention rates for women and people of color compared to white men across the U.S. organization. Our corporate leadership knew that we had to do something different to reverse this trend. It wasn’t just about hiring more women and people of color. To retain employees, the company culture had to change.

To learn more about the current culture, each business and function in the company held focus groups with employees to understand what was getting in the way of an inclusive work environment. But before any work was done to address these barriers, our leaders attended a 3.5-day experiential learning lab offered by Portland, Oregon-based consulting firm, White Men as Full Diversity Partners (WMFDP), to become aware of the impact of dominant membership privilege and learn to partner with women and underrepresented groups in a meaningful way.

I am proud to share that to date, more than 1,000 leaders have attended the learning lab, including me and my executive team, and another 4,000 employees have attended a 1-2 day summit based on the learning lab. Inclusion change teams, sponsored by each business and function and led predominantly by white men, are chartered with removing barriers to inclusion. These teams encourage ongoing skill building and courageous conversations to apply inclusion learning to everyday practices.

We are also helping to affect culture change outside of the company. By
involving distributor partners in our inclusion journey through sponsorship of learning labs, inclusion awareness activities and best practice sharing. Rockwell Automation is influencing the entire electrical distribution industry.

Customers also regularly make benchmarking requests and/or attend Rockwell Automation forums on our Culture of Inclusion (COI), which builds stronger relationships across all parties.

Last year, the impact of our culture change was acknowledged when we received the well-known Catalyst Award. This award honors innovative organizational approaches with proven, measurable results that address the recruitment, development and advancement of all women, including diverse women.

Over the past decade, Rockwell Automation has diversified what was a predominantly white male workforce. Women’s representation in the United States has increased by 113 percent among executives, 65 percent among directors, 29 percent among mid-level managers and 38 percent among engineers. Additionally, people of color representation has increased by 82 percent among executives, 70 percent among directors, 52 percent among mid-level managers and 43 percent among engineers.

Rockwell Automation remains committed to evolving our COI practices. As leaders, we have personalized this work and hold ourselves accountable. I believe that Rockwell Automation is well on its way to creating an environment in which all employees can and want to do their best work.

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