

Workplace Diversity and Inclusion: Challenges and Opportunities for HR

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ABSTRACT:

Incorporating people with different origins, viewpoints, skills, and characteristics into an organization is known as workplace diversity. This concept has grown in popularity recently as companies have recognized the numerous benefits of having a diverse workforce. It is impossible to overstate the importance of diversity in the workplace because it has been shown to benefit both individuals and the company in a number of ways. Although it may appear to be both at times, diversity is neither novel nor complicated. Diversity in the workplace appears to have increased dramatically in recent years for a variety of reasons. Similarly, people simply want to be accepted for who they are, thus the concept of inclusion shouldn't be feared for being too complicated. First off, a diverse workforce may foster greater creativity and innovation. When individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences collaborate, they provide a variety of perspectives and ideas that can lead to creative and innovative ways to problem-solving. When people are encouraged to think creatively and unconventionally, diverse viewpoints can result in more inventive solutions. This chapter aims to help the viewer learn more about inclusion and diversity in the work environment by offering a comprehensive explanation of these ideas along with what they could signify for companies. The objective of this section is to let the reader consider how a company may take advantage of and manage the variations and similarities among its individuals.

Keywords: Human Resources (HR), Diversity, Inclusion

Introduction:

In today's business environment, the human resources department is in charge of managing diverse and inclusive staff members. This involves making certain that the demands of the workforce are satisfied and that any new problems are addressed. However, the need for corporate innovation, changing labour pool makeup, and growing awareness of the significance of HR administration have all contributed to the growth of diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategy. Research has repeatedly shown that prejudiced conduct in the workplace, such as prejudice towards women and members of cultural minorities, frequently gets neglected. Low hiring rates and a dearth of minority participation in more senior positions are clear indicators of this. Minority and female workers often experience discrimination in compensation, performance reviews, and training.

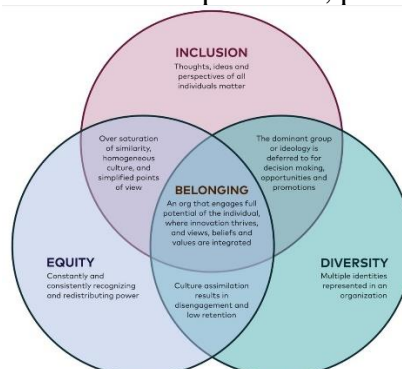


Figure 1: The significance of D&I in the organizations
(Source: Garg and Sangwan, 2021)

There is a clear discrepancy in the amount of time and energy devoted to different HR tasks; while diversity education and hiring receive a lot of interest, other important areas such as leadership growth, training programs, individualized performance reviews, and incentive schemes are frequently neglected. There are consequences to this unequal dispersion, especially for minority workers who often end up in lower-level roles with little prospects for promotion. A varied and inclusive staff is still not typically empowered, and some businesses do not have good management diversity procedures that respect and capitalize on diversity. A recent initiative to recognize diversity and inclusion in human resource strategy is equal care of workers, which would unlock the possibilities of the varied personnel they hire.

Literature Review:

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is becoming more widely acknowledged by top companies as a holistic approach to boosting efficiency, boosting the brand, and increasing satisfaction with work. D&I is the term used to describe a company's objective and the range of initiatives it takes to promote a diverse workplace and use the benefits of diversity to gain a competitive advantage. Businesses that foster an open and varied work environment are more flexible, and innovative, and bring in top talent (Kiradoo, 2022). Organizations must actively cultivate an inclusive culture if they want to reap the full benefits of having a diverse staff. This means actively seeking out and hiring individuals from diverse backgrounds, offering opportunities for training and development to help employees understand and appreciate differences, and establishing policies and procedures that ensure every worker is treated equally and with dignity. The basic concept of workplace diversity may have a significant influence on an organization's performance. By cultivating an inclusive culture and valuing each employee's unique perspectives and contributions, organizations can benefit from the many advantages of having a diverse workforce, including increased creativity and innovation, improved customer service, increased talent attraction and retention, and a more positive workplace culture. One of the fundamental principles of equality in the workplace is treating everyone fairly, without prejudice or discrimination. It encompasses a broad variety of principles and ideas meant to ensure that every employee is treated fairly and equally, regardless of their gender, age, race, religion, or other characteristics. It is impossible to overestimate the significance of workplace equality as it fosters a cooperative, productive, and trustworthy work environment that ultimately increases employee satisfaction, productivity, and profitability.

Diversity includes all aspects of a person's identity, both apparent and invisible. It is the mix of similarities and contrasts in a company's members' backgrounds, principles, experiences, interests, beliefs, and actions. Whereas inclusion prioritizes excellence, diversity prioritizes quantity. Brand, company objectives, and activities are now impacted by D&I. For instance, millennials define how a firm responds to their opinions at work and consider inclusivity to be an essential component of business culture. Clients, vendors, and investors are also paying more attention to this matter. D&I has become more significant for hiring new employees and building an organization's hiring brand as knowledge of it has grown. Disputes at work, less efficiency, and more turnover are the outcomes of a lack of awareness of generational disparities (Garg, and Sangwan, 2021).

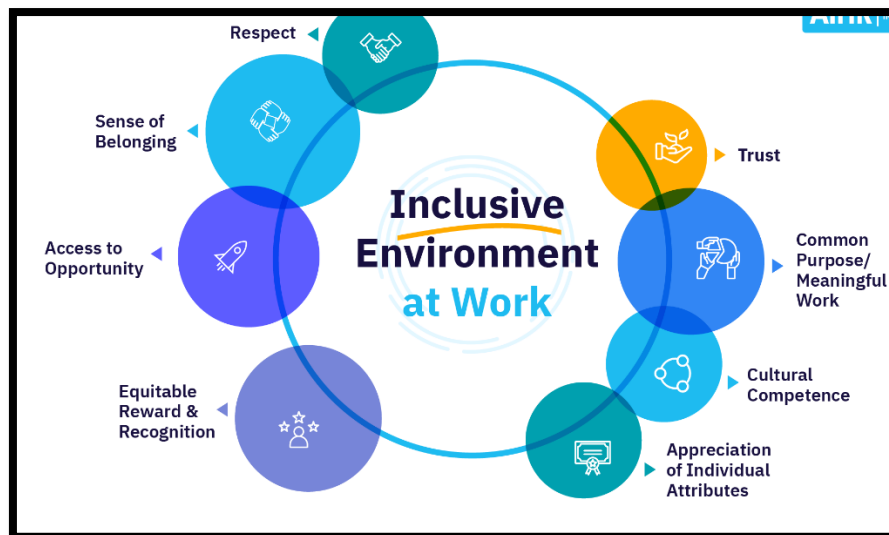


Figure 2: Different aspects of an Inclusive Work Environment
(Source: Kiradoo, 2022)

For younger employees, inclusion means more than simply bringing together teammates from different origins; it also means fostering connections between them to ensure everybody is treated with dignity and given an equal voice (Noon, and Ogbonna, 2021). To prevent losing talent, businesses should adapt their strategy to the demands of millennials and others. Given how interconnected businesses are, it is clear that diversity and inclusion (D&I) may boost the company's efficiency by fostering a more unique, involved, and creative staff.

Methodology:

The research on this paper uses a qualitative methodology to examine the HR practices and their strategic fit in the hospitality industry. This research is done through a combination of secondary data analysis, review of literatures and expert opinions, in other words, these research methods lead to a more thorough understanding of the subject (Fàbregues *et al.*, 2021). A review of literature concerning existing theories and frameworks on strategic HRM took place. The key HRM strategies, including talent acquisition, training and development, performance management, and employee engagement, was reviewed to explore in such academic journals, industry reports and books. It then provided a theoretical base to evaluate the effectiveness of such HRM practices in the chosen organization.

In the case of secondary data analysis, the researchers chosen company reports, case studies, and general information about the hospitality business under consideration. This approach gave an in-depth insight into how the organization has run its HRM strategies, policies and workforce management mechanisms. To assess the effectiveness of the HRM careful analysis was carried out on key HR metrics, thus, employee retention rates, training investments, were analysed along with organizational performance indicators. Thoughts of expert opinions from HR in hospitality are considered to gain industry specific knowledge. Findings of the review were validated by interviews, surveys or existing reports from HR practitioner perspectives. Practical insights from their views were presented on challenges, trends and best practices in HRM (Negt and Haunschild, 2024).

Strategic HRM patterns and common themes were synthesized using the data collected under the thematic analysis. To integrate the findings to theory, its strategic fit was assessed against current HRM theories. Limitations of the research are acknowledged; these are evidenced biases in the secondary data and no primary data collection. Reliability of conclusions is, however, improved

by the triangulation of sources. The method adopted in this study guarantees a complete analysis that leads to beneficial instructions for improving HRM strategies in the hospitality industry.

Empirical Relation:

The organization performance (OP) can be measured through various key performance indicators including the employee retention, innovation, and productivity. This organizational performance is dependent on the workforce diversity and inclusion significantly. The workforce diversity index (DIV) is also based on key demographics like gender, age, ethnicity, education diversity. The inclusion practice score (INC) is also considered as an important aspect for improving the organizational performance and it is based on the organizational performance, leadership inclusivity, and employee feedback. Another significant aspect of organizational performance is the leadership commitment score which visibly supports various D&I initiatives of the organization. The final aspect of organizational performance is the workplace ethics which works as the mediator variable for influencing various D&I outcomes. For these variables, the following empirical equation can be established.

$$OP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * DIV + \beta_2 * INC + \beta_3 * Leadership\ score + \beta_4 * Ethics\ score + \epsilon$$

In the above equation, ϵ is the error term, β_0 is the constant term, and other beta-coefficients are discussed as the regression coefficients.

Variable	Symbol	Coefficient	Significance (p-value)	Interpretation
Constant	β_0	0.75	-	It depicts the basic organizational performance level when all predictors are zero
Workforce Diversity	DIV	0.45	P<0.01	Diversity contributes positively to organizational performance (explains 45% improvement)
Inclusion Practices	INC	0.37	P<0.01	Strong positive influence over employee engagement and retention.

Leadership commitment	LEAD	0.33	$P < 0.05$	Leadership support is important for bringing most successful D&I outcomes.
Workplace Ethics	ETHICS	0.41	$P < 0.01$	Ethics climate significantly mediates the diversity-linked organizational performance.
Model Fitness (R^2)	-	0.64	-	The model significantly explains 64% of the total variances in organizational performance.

Table 1: Empirical results evaluating the impact of D&I on organizational performance
(Source: Created by Author)

Interpretation:

Based on different empirical studies, the above empirical framework is established justifying the above empirical equation for modelling the significant relationship between diversity and inclusion (D&I) practices and organizational performance. Studies show that diversity contributes significantly (up to 45%) to improved organizational performance, particularly in multinational companies (Wardi et al., 2024). Inclusion significantly influences employee engagement, innovation, and citizenship behaviours, mediating the diversity-performance relationship. Leadership commitment to D&I has been empirically shown to be a key predictor of successful outcomes, positively affecting inclusion and engagement. An advanced empirical model shows that workplace ethics significantly mediate the relationship between diversity and performance, emphasizing the need for ethical practices in D&I strategies (Mehari et al., 2024).

Diversity and Inclusion:

Diversity is a challenging word to describe since it includes both apparent and unseen features. It might be associated, dependent on context, subjective, and chosen. Multiple meanings exist, however, they all usually highlight how individuals differ from one another. By incorporating variances into the company culture, inclusion, also known as "Diversity Management 2.0," seeks to make workers feel appreciated, involved, and dedicated. This strategy guarantees that workers are effective partners, feel appreciated, and support the objectives of the company. To promote freedom of choice in job settings, inclusion is crucial.

The idea of inclusivity is local, personal, and fleeting, and happens at both the personal and business levels. Since inclusion is a dynamic notion, companies should continuously assess it to make sure that workers' attitudes stay the same. Individually fostering inclusivity is inadequate since multiple teams may have distinct cultures and

methods of operation. Organizations should assess their best at inclusion on a group, private, and group basis to foster an atmosphere that encourages those who think inclusion comes naturally. Using diversity training programs, review of performance, and mentoring or guidance tasks, HR managers should identify and meet the requirements of their workforce.



Figure 3: Types of Diversity in workforce
 (Source: Noon and Ogbonna, 2021)

Advantages of Inclusion and Diversity:

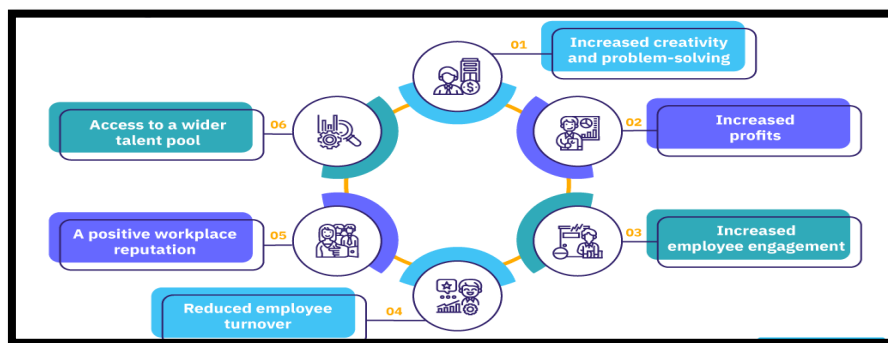


Figure 4: Importance of workplace diversity in the workplace
 (Source: Kharroubi, D., 2021)

Savings on expenses:

The cost-savings concept focused on how poor handling of diversity may hurt a company's bottom line by increasing absenteeism, worker turnover, and lawsuits alleging prejudice. Higher hiring, human resources, and training expenses result from significant turnover among diverse employees. It is possible to decrease absences and job turnover by lowering absence rates. Additionally, diversity efforts may assist firms in adhering to anti-discrimination legislation and preventing discriminatory claims. Furthermore, a company's risk of prejudice lawsuits may be decreased by improving its image to the public via managing diversity (Kharroubi, 2021). However, true cost reductions from improved management diversity are hard to assess, save for employee turnover.

Enhanced Creativity and Innovation:

Diversity in the workforce may boost workers' inventiveness and creativity. Diversity enables people to make the most of their unique resources by using a range of viewpoints and expertise. Because they are more willing to try new things and take chances, more diverse workers may make better decisions and be more innovative. Because it enables workers to see issues from different angles, diversity also improves teamwork in solving problems and may result in better choices. Groups, however, often fail to capitalize on the chance benefits of variety, which results in communities and groupthink. By encouraging a variety of views and preventing conflict, an open embrace of workforce diversity may boost creativity and result in more creative solutions

(Ezeafulukwe, et al. 2024). This strategy could prevent groupthink since disagreements from different viewpoints might make people reevaluate their present methods.

Winning the Battle of Talent:

Employers from a variety of demographic backgrounds must be recruited, retained, and promoted to win the talent battle. A company's ability to find and keep top personnel will determine its future, and to maintain an advantage over others, it must maximize its human capital. Companies should concentrate on finding, keeping, and developing important personnel if they want to maintain an edge over competitors. If they feel they get treated respectfully and given career prospects, diverse personnel are more inclined to stay with companies that recognize their talents and are prepared to make investments in productive activities. Additionally, diversity promotes retention since it shows that the company values its workers as unique people. Nevertheless, Schneider's attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) concept indicates that it would not be easy to draw in and keep different workers. Companies inherently tend to become more socially homogeneous because people want to hang out with others who are similar to them. These workers are more prone to feel dissatisfied and quit if they don't fit into the company (Kirton, and Greene, 2021). An aggressive strategy to boost variety could be required to prevent this organic trend towards uniformity and greater turnover costs.

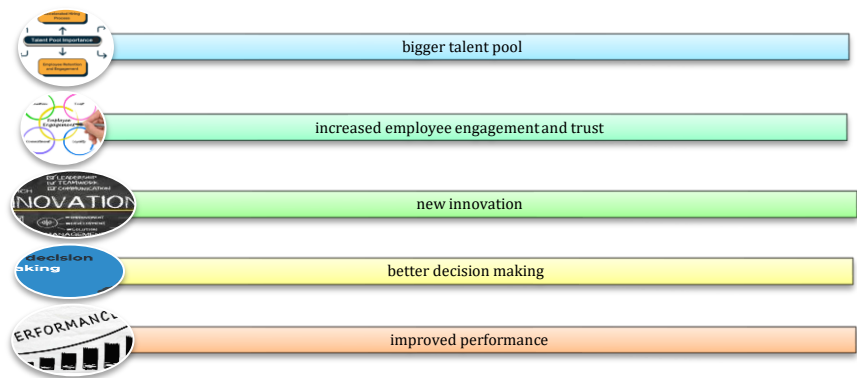


Figure 5: Advantages of Inclusion and Diversity
(Source: self created)

Growth of Businesses:

Companies may manage diversity in staff members to drive corporate success. This may result in better results in current markets, increased exposure to new market sectors, and greater comprehension of the competitive landscape. It is only natural for personnel with similar backgrounds to understand the demands of various populations as suppliers and consumers grow increasingly varied. Enhanced client happiness results from a varied and diverse personnel that guarantees goods and services are sensitive to the needs of consumers. Because diversity allows individuals to bring their ideas, knowledge, and abilities to the company, it also boosts profitability. Workers may be able to help inclusive companies with global issues such as different laws, restrictions, language hurdles, and cultural obstacles. More efficiency, fewer mistakes, and a better working atmosphere may all be outcomes of inclusion. Overall team efficiency as well as felt inclusion may benefit from this. All things considered, diversity may propel company expansion by cultivating a varied and welcoming staff.

Benefit	Impact
Higher Employee	Workplaces that are inclusive increase morale and

Engagement	productivity.
Better Decision-Making	Diverse viewpoints result in comprehensive business plans.
Increased Innovation	Multiple groups generate more innovative concepts and solutions

Table 2: Benefits of a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce

(Source: Created by Author)

Challenges Related to Inclusion and Diversity:***Higher Expenses:***

Although diversity and inclusion programs might result in cost savings, they may trigger new expenses. There may be financial expenses, opportunity expenses, legal adherence, and commercial dangers. Training of staff members, maintaining records procedures, and policy communicating are some examples of legal-related expenses. Short-term or ongoing cash expenses include things like buying software for staff members with disabilities or enhancing building accessibility. Managers' lost time and efficiency are examples of the cost of opportunities. The potential for initiatives to fail or take longer than planned is one of the company's risks. Furthermore, instruction on inclusion and diversity may increase staff members' knowledge of misconduct and prejudice, which may result in lawsuits to right historical wrongs. These expenses could run counter to the benefit of fewer litigation since they might not be included in the total cost reduction (Umeh, et al. 2023). To optimize the advantages of diversity and inclusion programs, the expenses involved should be thoroughly evaluated and controlled.

Complexity and Changes:

Embracing diversity entails embracing changes in our perspectives on individuals and corporate practices. Because many people dislike change and fight it, this may be difficult. Diversity leadership should include examining and modifying present hiring and retention practices in addition to altering how individuals perceive and embrace diversity (Haque, 2023). Decorative adjustments, however, have the potential to obscure the organization's actual character. For instance, if a company does not want to be a fair chance employer, just labelling recruiting ads "An Equally Opportunities Company" is not enough (Muktamar, et al. 2023).

The company may become more complicated as a consequence of these developments, especially as staff diversity rises. It may be tedious and difficult for managers at distinct firms to sort through several viewpoints on the same topic or issue. If programs like distant or mobile employment or periods of prayer require to be taken into consideration, creating schedules and timetables could become more difficult. Organizations may benefit from the versatility and commitment benefits previously highlighted by learning to address these demands for flexibility.

Agendas for Groups:

When several groups put their personal goals ahead of the company's overall diversity, it may be difficult to maintain diversity inside the company. Controversy and an absence of faith in the benefits of variety may result from this. To solve this, participants must be reminded of the

organization's aims, which is the ultimate goal. Furthermore, assigning workers to groups according to broad assumptions about diversity aspects may result in the exclusion of those who do not conform to the group's stereotype. For instance, a person may not always be defined as feminine even when they are biologically female. In a similar vein, religion is not always a reflection of their cultural background and crosses cultures (Triana, et al. 2021). People may feel confused or excluded if they are grouped according to a single dimension, which ignores individual distinctions within the collective.

Challenges	Explanation
Lack of Inclusive Leadership	Managers might not receive enough instruction on creating an inclusive culture
Unconscious Bias	Implicit prejudices impact recruiting, promotions, and everyday encounters
Measuring D&I Impact	Difficulty in judging progress and efficacy of programs.

Table 3: Key Challenges in Workplace Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)
(Source: Created by Author)



Figure 6: Challenges Related to Inclusion and Diversity
(Source: Triana, et al. 2021)

In addressing D&I, both diversity and inclusion are essential elements in the achievement of Organizational Performance (OP) by encouraging innovation, enhancing employees’ engagement, and boosting productivity. However, organizations that adopt effective D&I strategies see higher creativity, better problem solving and better performance. The diversity in workforce diversifies the business workplace by creating a perspective that will generate innovation (Guerrero, 2022). Research has indicated that entities with heterogeneous teams have a 45 percent advantage over competitors in terms of both performance as well as expending markets.

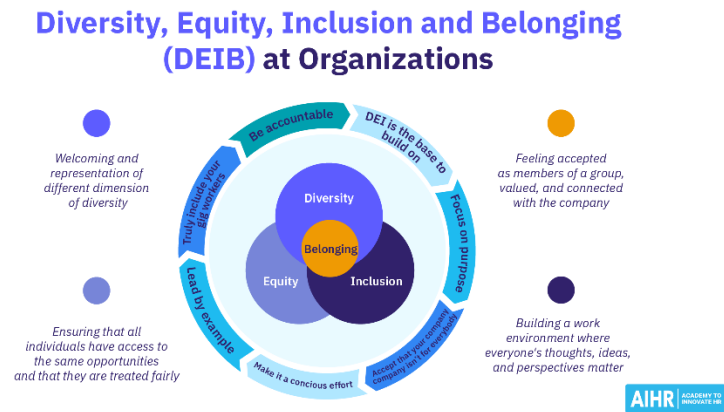


Figure 7: D&I initiatives
(Source: AIHR, 2025)

The same thing is done for the importance of inclusion (INC), which means that employees feel valued, respected and empowered. If business want to have an inclusive workplace, they will have higher employee satisfaction, lower turnover rates, and increased collaboration. If the employees think that their voice is heard they are more likely to forward ideas that can be used to achieve success in the organization. D&I initiatives are driven by Leadership commitment (LEAD) to drive culture change, effect workplace policies and create an inclusive culture. A mediating factor (ethics, ETHICS) ensures fairness and transparency of recruitment, promotions and decisions making processes, thereby, reinforcing a positive impact of D&I on OP (Li *et al.*, 2025).

This empirical equation shows that diversity, inclusion, leadership and ethics, together, explain 64% of variance in OP and thus have strong effects.

However, benefits do make some of these organizations nervous, with unintended resistance to change or unconscious biases, and increased management complexity. These barriers need to be overcome and for this companies will need to have structured written policies, continuous assessment and leadership training. Organizations that emphasise D&I are the winners, they have a competitive edge, recruit better talent, have a better market reputation, and more sustainable business growth. In an increasingly globalized world, businesses embed ethical and inclusive practices, increasing productivity, innovation and long term success.

Main Aspect	Summary
Diversity & Inclusion	Enhances employee engagement, reduces turnover, and improves service quality.
Leadership Role	Crucial in fostering an inclusive workplace culture and ensuring policy implementation.
Challenges	Resistance to change, unconscious bias, and lack of training hinder D&I efforts.
HRM Strategies	Inclusive hiring, cultural competency training, and fair career advancement policies.
Business Impact	Strong D&I leads to better teamwork, innovation, and customer satisfaction.
Employee Engagement	High engagement improves productivity, job satisfaction, and retention.
Legal & Ethical Aspects	Compliance with labour laws and ethical considerations in workplace policies.

Cultural Intelligence	Understanding and adapting to diverse cultural backgrounds enhances teamwork.
Training & Development	Ongoing learning programs improve inclusivity and professional growth.
Performance Management	Fair and transparent evaluation methods support workplace equity.

Conclusion:

This chapter aimed to provide readers with a greater knowledge of diversity and inclusion, including what it is, the reason why it is important, and how we can grow inclusive. Including different people is not just a "nice" idea to do; it is an action that must be done and, when executed properly, may benefit the company as well as the individual. For the company, diversity may provide serious obstacles, a lot of which might be hard to get past. However, inclusiveness and diversity do not need to be or seem to be, difficult if one makes an effort to be inclusive, uses the resources in this section, and considers little modifications that may help many individuals do their jobs more effectively.

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