

Heritage Month - Valuing Uniqueness



As South Africa celebrates Heritage Month this month, paying homage to our diverse cultures and heritage, one cannot help but wonder what can be done to create a more inclusive society?

This is particularly true for a country that boasts 11 official languages and is arguably one of the most diverse countries in the world. At Schneider Electric one of our core values is “Embrace Different”, an all-encapsulating mantra that is applied across all our offices throughout the globe.

This core value also makes an argument for thinking bigger and extending inclusivity to not only cultures and heritage but to what makes each individual unique, ensuring all employees have a voice within the organisation.

In South Africa, our operations, like most other organisations in the country, is governed by inclusivity principles and regulations. At Schneider Electric this is not viewed merely as a tick-box exercise; we take it a few steps further to truly embrace our differences.

Due to the very nature of our business, Schneider Electric has a smorgasbord of engineers, technicians, sales executives, HR, marketing, supply chain and many other roles that support our business.

In these roles, we have an equally diverse group of personalities, from introverts to super-extroverts and everything else in between. Across the various business units, teams, committees, and programmes, we encourage these diverse individuals to work together - you’ll be pleasantly surprised at what initiatives an engineer, or a digital expert and an HR employee can come up with when working together.

Furthermore, we provide our employees with opportunities to diversify and even change career paths.

For example, many of our senior executives are today responsible for vastly different portfolios from those when they initially joined the company, reflecting again that unique capabilities and strengths are both encouraged and recognised.

Providing flexibility is also encouraged within the organisation. The pandemic has taught us that with the help of technology we can be equally productive at home, in a coffee shop or at the office.

Furthermore, this goes a long way, for example, in helping working moms juggle their careers while prioritising the wellbeing of their children.

Our South African offices serve as the headquarters of our operations throughout the entire Anglophone Africa cluster which includes 24 countries. This means that beyond accepting and celebrating our own diverse cultures and heritage we must also consider the already diverse cultures of our colleagues from East, West and Southern Africa.

To this end, we take “Embrace Different” very seriously, and through various internal employee initiatives and programmes, ensure that our employees work together as a team throughout the cluster to reach our business goals.

Examples of initiatives such as the transfer of skills and reverse mentoring, allow for us to close the generational gaps, by creating an environment where both senior and junior talent find common ground that encourages camaraderie, productivity, and learning.

At Schneider Electric diversity and inclusivity represent:

A strategic asset for Schneider Electric – it is a key element of our competitive edge. It inspires our creativity and openness while benefiting our performance. We embrace diversity to the fullest and see it as crucial to our success and motivation at work.

It is applied across the entire company and covers all facets of diversity – we mirror the diversity of the communities in which we operate, encouraging collaboration among colleagues, as we believe our differences make us grow as a company and as individuals.

Respect and dignity – we promote respect for others’ unique values by providing an appropriate environment and resources, such as support communities and diversity and inclusion awareness training. The foundation for fairness and equality – everybody is treated equally. Diversity is an integral aspect of our management style, our targets, and Human Resources processes.

Our Global CEO, Jean-Pascal Tricoire, named as a Glassdoor Top CEO in 2021 for his ongoing commitment to building an inclusive and empowering culture that drives innovation and sustainability, says it best: “All our employees can expect us to value and respect their uniqueness and welcome them as they are.”