



Talking points: A dialogue about diversity, equity and inclusion

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The IBJ hosted a Q & A with Chairman and President Lenny Singh of Ameren Illinois Corporation to talk about diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) in his workplace.



Singh

Here's our questions, and Singh's answers to them.

IBJ: What does "diversity, equity, and inclusion" mean to you

personally, and why is it important to know its personal meaning? How does it impact your leadership role?

Singh: I am standing on the shoulders of the many who have paved the way that has allowed me to get this far in life. As a person of color, it means a great deal to me, and it shapes every aspect of my approach to leadership. I am a firm believer that representation matters at all levels and in every aspect of life. My family immigrated from Guyana in South America to New York in the early 80s, so I know what it's like to overcome obstacles. I think of DE&I in much the same way. A leader's job is to open doors for people. Doors were opened

for me and my family through hard work and perseverance. It's my obligation to do the same for employees, prospective employees, those who do business with us and, of course, our customers.

IBJ: What does DE&I look like at Ameren Illinois Corporation (AIC)? How does the company define it?

Singh: As you can imagine I did quite a bit of research on the company when I was considering making the move to this area. One thing that was immediately evident about the company was its track record of progress in diversity, equity and inclusion. Ameren is a company that doesn't just talk about diversity or go through the motions but walks the talk. From the top down, it's embedded in our culture. I could feel it from the first day I visited and my first interactions with other senior leaders. The commitment is there, and we are driving to execute on our DE&I strategy.

IBJ: What do you think are some of the attributes for AIC to continue being a successful utility now and in the future?

Singh: These are exciting and challenging times of transition for our industry. It's hard to predict the future, but you can be sure that the energy sector will look significantly different in 20 years.

Our employees are the fabric of Ameren Illinois. For us to continue to be successful, we need to continue to develop a diverse workforce with a wide variety

of people from different backgrounds, experiences, skills, and perspectives that allows us to be creative in problem solving and be innovative. This is especially important today as we think about the many challenges we're going to face in the next 20 years as we continue to make this journey to a net zero economy.

IBJ: What is Ameren Illinois doing to ensure that its workplace is diverse, equitable, and inclusive? With its workforce? With suppliers/vendors?

Singh: In just my short time here, I'm getting to see how our leadership throughout our service territory is being deliberate about building awareness and advocacy for diversity and inclusion in hiring, supplier development, and training. They have a touch point with every one of our co-workers in that region, to instill the values and benefits of diversity across the business and in our corporate culture. This is something I will look to grow and expand.

IBJ: How is AIC delivering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for its customers?

Singh: If you're a customer-first organization, every employee must understand what the customers' needs are, what they expect, and how best to deliver a positive experience. When your employees mirror your customers, those connections are easier to make and they're

more impactful. I'm coming to learn that Downstate Illinois is a very diverse place. The sheer size of the territory and the rural and urban mix of communities lends itself to a melting-pot of ideas, world views, politics, and passions. DE&I starts with race and gender but has many more dimensions, it's about a broad spectrum of attributes that makes us all unique.

From what I have seen, Ameren Illinois is made up of 3,000+ women and men who are just like their friends and neighbors.

The other aspect is to assure that the clean energy transition and the grid of the future is equitable for all customers.

IBJ: How much attention/resources are committed by AIC to ensuring a DE&I balance as part of your operational strategies? Do you have specific programs in place to address this?

Singh: First, we need to make sure employees have an opportunity to be heard, valued and engaged. Second, they need to gain a better understanding of who their coworkers are.

Our Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are a good example. These cross-sectional groups of employees work together to develop diversity and inclusion initiatives. They share a common interest or background or work to overcome some of the challenges/barriers and opportunities a particular group might face.

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