

# Taking New Steps Toward Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



*Corporate brand and identity is being shaped more than ever before by the customer experience. Yet when it comes to keeping employees engaged and committed to their work and career growth, expectations for corporate action on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion continue to escalate. These require steady investment and demonstrable momentum toward achieving a more balanced, equal opportunity business growth agenda that will forge your organization's self-identity. It's your move now...*

If your company hasn't dedicated its resources to developing a roadmap for achieving Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) in its workforce, it's important to understand why committing to such initiatives is important to employees, customers and shareholders. It's also critical to recognize how they can raise performance and open new relationships for business growth. For today's global organizations, the question isn't whether your team is taking action to level the corporate playing field, but how and with what results.

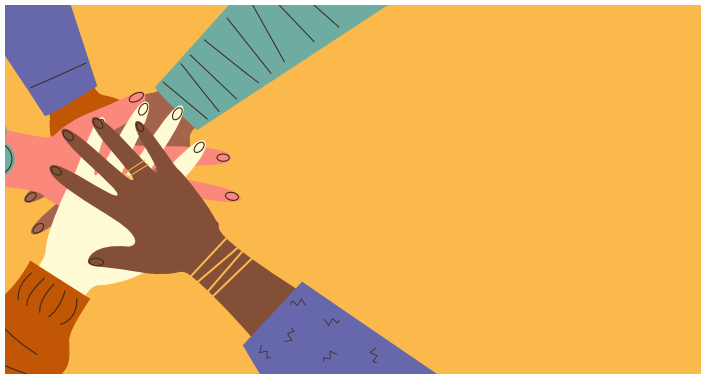
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs have become a pivotal tool in the evolving global war for talent across all industry sectors, as the following points confirm:

- Some 76% of employees and jobseekers say that "a diverse workforce is an important factor when evaluating companies and job offers," according to a Forbes<sup>1</sup> report.

1. Forbes, April 6, 2022, The Business Benefits of Greater Diversity and Inclusion, by Salvador Ordorica, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/04/06/the-business-benefits-of-greater-diversity-and-inclusion/?sh=4a0cf62115c8>

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- Further, “if employees trust their employer’s commitments, their engagement level can increase up to 20%, and the likelihood they will leave their organization decreases by 87%,” according to Deloitte<sup>2</sup> Insights.
- Leading employers “building business resilience by infusing equity and inclusion into their talent models, accessing broader and more diverse talent pools, and building out more robust supplier and partner networks,” according to a Mercer<sup>3</sup> global trends study



There is ample evidence – and a myriad of good ideas – to support your company’s first or new steps toward creating a more equitable employment proposition for prospective hires and a more fulfilling, rewarding experience for employees if only it commits to search for them.

The voices of your current employees, customers and shareholders on matters of workplace diversity and equity should alone compel your organization to action. This collective focus on performance, competitiveness and future business growth aligns on removing artificial barriers to getting the most out of people and helping them achieve their full potential.

The attitudes of prospective candidates for roles up and down your organization structure only magnify these expectations for your team and its future. There is already a considerable global consensus that the most progressive and most inclusive organizations are best positioned to capture market share, exploit new industry opportunities and win the war to recruit and retain the best talent.

*“Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives are not only an essential force for good within today’s progressive, forward-looking global organizations, but critical competitive differentiator in today’s evolving and intensifying war for talent and employee engagement.”*

*- TRANSEARCH International Partners*

The reality many organizations are already acting on is that internal investment to develop your organization will, in fact, define its brand identity and frame its competitiveness for external opportunities, partnerships and deal-making. Progressive, growth-oriented business partners have a way of finding one another in the same market spaces, and it is these linkages that open up possibilities.

Yet before your team plows headlong into its first, or latest DE&I campaign, first realize that your organization must align on these three things:

1. Its historic findings/data on its DE&I track record and what they reveal about your organization now. There are lessons here, and likely the wellspring of new goals and objectives to target
2. Its actual commitment and executive sponsorship and support. Questions that must be sorted include: Who will be principally responsible for leading these efforts? What resources will they be afforded? And what support can they expect from business partners across the enterprise?
3. How and where will these efforts – and the results they yield – be communicated to employees, shareholders, customers and prospective new hires?

Taking new steps toward DE&I will require thoughtful planning and problem solving. Beyond that, those charged with leading these tasks will also plot, over time, obstacles and internal resistance from those who mistakenly believe providing new opportunities for people across the organization means taking something away from others.

Good frames of reference for a first, meaningful foray into DE&I planning and action include a careful catalog of these statistical benchmarks:

2. Deloitte Insights, January 2022, Build Trust in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Investments, Multiple co-authors, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/building-employee-trust-dei-programs.html>

3. Mercer, Global Talent Trends Study 2022-23, <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/career/global-talent-hr-trends.html>

- The gender and overall demographic footprint of your workforce
- The percentage of women and cultural minorities in management positions, including the most senior executive leadership roles
- The makeup of your past 3-5 years' of promotions across all departments
- The statistical profiles of your past 3-5 years' of new hires at all levels
- The compensation of your Chief Executive and other C-Suite leaders as a multiple of your average-salary and lowest-salary employees
- Pay rates of men and women across the organization, with a focus on pay equity considering similarly experienced, educated and performance-rated women and men in similar roles, also considering date of hire and non-linear adjustments based on company and individual attainment of annual goals
- The inclusion of workers of different profiles in training, mentoring and up-skilling programs, with a focus on high-potential and high-performing employees and the criteria/system/decision makers for such designations and investments
- Your own employees' views of their expectations for a diverse, equitable and inclusive team and corporate identity, and how these define their own sense of satisfaction, engagement and well-being in their daily work and careers with your organization
- The actions your organization's competitors are taking, and what you can learn from them. Further, the actions taken and results yielded by best-practice employers in any industry
- The publicly stated position of your organizations' Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer and shareholders (as expressed in minutes of an Annual Shareholders' Meeting) and subsequent communication about progress aligned to those espoused commitments.

It is important to recognize that your organization's assessment or renewal of DE&I strategy and sustained programs comes at a time when the very foundations of its relationship with employees and a plethora of outside interests are being questioned, challenged and strained by unprecedented changes in the world of work.

Policy decisions about flexible and remote work sparked by corporate countermeasures to COVID-19, creating safe work environments amid increasing interest in worker unionization and prescribing resources to support the mental



health and well-being of employees beckon. Doing business in Earth-friendly, sustainable ways not only adds to this list of concerns rated top of mind for employees but also for investors, customers, business partners and government regulators.

The good news is that the debate over DE&I initiatives and their utility in the modern-day organization is long over. Today, and for some time to come, the focus will be not on "if" but how these programs should be constructed, and more importantly, how your team will develop its own historic data, how these programs will be tasked and toward what desired outcomes.

*"Ultimately, success isn't about what you have; it's about what you create. It's not about how big your garden is, it's about what you plant there."*  
 – Dr. John O. Burdett, Orxestra®

Creativity and innovation will be welcome as your team moves along its course of discovery, renewal and awareness-raising, as will the steadfast support of executive sponsors, human resources staff and concerned employees who would like their voices heard in the process.

But remember that this journey will be unique to your organization and must align with the organization's vision and mission, as well as the shared values that bind your most committed employees.



Along the road, however, it might be wise to recall some of Newton's Laws of physics and motion. For any change to happen, some level of force must be applied to achieve movement, which invariably will cause some friction, in the organizational sense, as evidenced in bureaucratic red tape, individuals unwilling to support such programs and/or others who would abandon such efforts without knowing the final destination.

Those familiar with the hurdles to enacting sustainable DE&I projects already know that it will take time to win over some people, or for the organization to realize it might be best served helping them pursue careers elsewhere. Yet the critical, essential requirement is belief in the importance of such discovery and goal setting for the organization.

This is vital because vested interests inside and outside the walls of your offices have already established their expectation that opportunity will be leveled for women, minorities and people from all walks of life, socio-economic backgrounds, gender identities, faiths and physical abilities. Again, it is a matter of how and to what common good in the organization, not "if" or "why".

The "why" has already been articulated by your employees to their managers, on social media, and perhaps in formal focus groups in the workplace. The question is whether your team has solicited

their points of view, and, in some demonstrable form, whether it can show them the organization has been listening and taking action.

Collecting data related to how their attitudes and levels of support and expectation have likely shifted over time, particularly over the tumultuous last 48 months given all that has changed in the world and work environment around us.

It is time to revisit the "how" of empowering DE&I programs within your institution. To listen, to learn again, and to adjust sails so that your organization can consistently demonstrate its commitment to a workforce grounded in talent and performance, in equal opportunity and inclusion in growth, and in reflecting the holistic social makeup of the communities and customers it serves.

All of this should compel individuals – and the leaders charged with representing the culture and potential of their organization – to look optimistically to the future with the confidence of knowing their team's true current identity and the people and skill sets they must add to build for the future. This will, in turn, bring the reassurance that the organization is putting people first and attracting individuals and groups who buy into a vision in which all have a role to play.

This evaluation of DE&I opportunities is not only a source of growth for organizations, but a wellspring from which leaders can build their own legacy and reputation far beyond their tenure, as Dr. John O. Burdett, TRANSEARCH International partners and Orxestra® model creator, has affirmed over the course of years' of research and application for global clients.

Diversity, equity and inclusion discovery, programming and milestone attainment helps leaders leave a legacy, and position their organizations in a better place than what they inherited. Indeed, it remains a tremendous opportunity for creating value from the inside out, in a sense akin to what outdoor enthusiasts might confide and liken as "leaving the woodpile higher than the one you found."

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