

d&i
Leaders

**GLOBAL
FORUM 2021**

SUMMARY REPORT

“It’s no longer good enough just to have passion,” declared Charlotte Sweeney OBE, chair of the d&i Leaders Global Forum 2021. The ramifications of the pandemic, coupled with the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, have thrust diversity and inclusion professionals into the spotlight, leading to a surge in career opportunities but also scrutiny on the effectiveness of the role.



CHARLOTTE SWEENEY OBE

Over the course of the two-day forum, global speakers from across the profession shared insights, not just on how to build organisational effectiveness in D&I, but also on the urgent need for professionals in this space to reflect on their own resilience.

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WHY PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IS THE BEDROCK OF INCLUSION

Harvard Business School professor Amy C. Edmondson defines psychological safety as “the belief that no one will be punished or humiliated for speaking up with their ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes”. But while an increasing number of organisations are proclaiming their commitment to ensuring belonging (and we’re seeing job titles reflect this), do they understand the role of psychological safety in helping employees feel free to be their authentic selves at work?



ADAM TRAVIS

Adam Travis, head of global inclusion and diversity at Elsevier, has recently been involved in building team psychological safety. This is through a process of training

employees to facilitate sessions and measuring how this has impacted participants’ feelings of psychological safety at work. This begins with an anonymous Mentimeter survey that asks a series of questions around psychological safety at team level. Looking at the results, pre-chosen facilitators decide what to work on with the team and where the organisation could support them or improve. Three-to-six months later they run the survey again to gauge impact. He said: “One of our first steps was to work with the leadership team. Their initial scores were not high but they took it on board as something they wanted to improve. After a year, they now have the second highest score I’ve ever seen for psychological safety.”

Nadia Younes, global head of employee experience, wellbeing and diversity at Zürich

Insurance, has undertaken a similar project. She argued that knowing more about employees’ levels of psychological safety can help focus D&I strategies in the most effective way. “If we look at where D&I is headed, many managers struggle with measuring inclusion. They’re often working in silos or asking for external support. This is a great way to break down those silos,” she said. It’s crucial, however, to ensure that the data remains anonymous, or “sacred”. “It’s tempting to cut the data but you should not,” added Travis. “To create safety you cannot cut this data in any other way than at a team level, and should only break it down further with people’s permission.” Likewise, it’s important to check that the facilitators themselves feel safe to run sessions, and this can mean deselecting people from being trained up to do so.



NADIA YOUNES

THE TECTONIC PLATES ARE SHIFTING IN EVERYTHING, FROM HOW WE LEAD OUR LIVES TO WHETHER WE RETURN TO THE OFFICE. NOBODY WANTS TO BE THE FIRST TO MOVE, BUT EVERYONE WANTS TO BE SECOND.

Nadia Younes, global head of employee experience, wellbeing and diversity, Zürich Insurance

D&I leaders have a right to protect their own psychological safety, too, according to Astrid Balsink, global director for inclusion and diversity at Philips. “Unlike many other roles or functions, our identities come to play in D&I. One specific action we can take is to reach out and be authentic, for example, saying ‘this doesn’t land for me as a Black woman’. It’s about caring for yourself and caring for each other - people want human managers that don’t tell them what to do, but tell them to be open and ask questions.”



ASTRID BALSINK

EMPOWERING ACTION FROM THE GROUND UP

Historically, diversity and inclusion has from time to time been a series of initiatives that are “done” to the workforce from the top-down. But the energy and passion of employees on the ground can be the catalyst for something far more impactful, whether through the power of employee resource groups or individuals sharing honestly how they would like things to improve.



CHUCK STEPHENS

At Booking.com, the organisation has harnessed this power through a channel of initiatives and events called ‘B.Inclusionist’. Chuck Stephens, global head of inclusion and

belonging, said the company tended to see three groups of employees when it came to D&I: advocates, people who wanted to do something but were afraid of getting it wrong, and the ‘naysayers’ who felt D&I wasn’t necessary. “We all spend a lot of time focusing on the third group, but we decided that it might be better to lean into the first and second groups and empower them instead,” he said. The first step was to set the context around inclusion by asking employees about their own experiences. There are events such as a Global Inclusion Day, curated learning materials available to all employees on various inclusion topics and awards (nominated by peers) for people making a difference at a local level. One of the most effective activities has been asking employees to

make a commitment to something meaningful to them through an ‘I commit’ campaign. “This is about people taking one small step, it’s all about the little efforts at a colleague level that bring people along,” added Stephens.

At Philips, these small steps are linked back to the company’s values as a brand, explained Astrid Balsink. The organisation has built up an ecosystem for D&I that provides a framework and a clear link to what holds everyone together, she explained. “How do we connect what we are doing? We saw lots of separate and brilliant initiatives, but they were not linked in a way where people could grasp how it all adds up,” she said. “So we looked at our heritage and what is in our DNA that makes us special - and that was family.” One of the core values at Philips is caring, so activities around D&I are set up through this lens. There are key pillars of health/wellbeing, policies and practices, learning and belonging, but these are underpinned by action at ground level, including employee networks and innovation labs. “We need a lot of ambassadors - this will only sustainably fly if we all play our part,” she added. “We all have to play our part, be aware of our privileges, how we can move our privilege to benefit someone else.”

INSPIRE CHANGE RATHER THAN JUST DOING THE WORK. CONNECT THE DOTS AND THE WORK WILL BE DONE FOR YOU, THE WHEELS WILL START TO MOVE.

Astrid Balsink, global director inclusion & diversity, Philips

SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES THROUGH THE MENOPAUSE



CHERYL STACEY

When Cheryl Stacey, talent lead for supply chain and procurement at drinks company Diageo, began to enter the menopause at 40, she found it a challenge to hold

down her job. "Every woman will experience symptoms differently and it can have an impact on your friends, partners and colleagues," she explained, citing recent figures suggesting one in four employees who enter menopause consider leaving work due to the symptoms, despite this being the fastest growing workforce demographic.



CAROLINE RHODES

Diageo had already introduced a progressive equal parental leave policy in 2018/19 and had asked employee resource groups what they would like to see

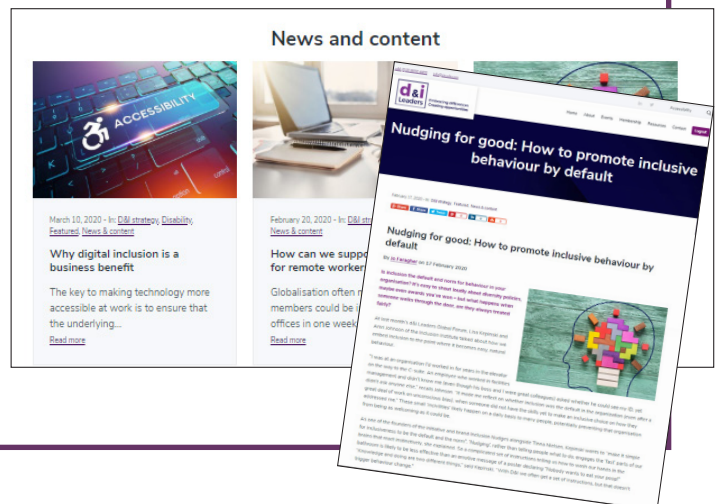
more of. Since then it has introduced guidelines around gender expression and decided to build on this with guidelines for managers to support menopausal employees in March. "We launched it on International Women's Day and worked with managers in our different markets to decide how to do so and what would

be most appropriate for that country," said Caroline Rhodes, global I&D director and HR director for corporate functions. The three main aims of the guidelines were to help managers understand the symptoms (there are at least 34), signpost employees to support and to ensure that managers were supported in having conversations about the menopause.

"Anyone who comes to you to say they're menopausal and that it's having an effect on their work is taking a brave step," added Rhodes. "We need to create an environment of trust, empathy and respect. We encourage managers to listen carefully, educate themselves on the facts, not to ask invasive questions and to observe strict confidentiality." Stacey was grateful for this support when she discussed it with her own manager. She added: "It can be hard to be open and honest, but I had an early conversation with my manager as soon as I was diagnosed. We discussed flexible working and - together with my hormone replacement therapy - this has meant I'm able to do my job and thrive during menopause."

“
ANYONE WHO COMES TO YOU TO SAY THEY'RE MENOPAUSAL AND THAT IT'S HAVING AN EFFECT ON THEIR WORK IS TAKING A BRAVE STEP.
Caroline Rhodes, global I&D director, Diageo

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HOW CAN WE WORK ACROSS CROSS-CULTURAL BARRIERS?



JENNIFER O'LEARY

One of the challenges of developing a global D&I strategy is understanding the nuances of different cultures at a local level. Jennifer O'Leary, chief diversity officer and

head of engagement and inclusion at Merck Group, described her approach to leading a strategy across a global science company where more than 65% of leaders are of other nationalities than the 'home' HQ in Germany. "We have quite a diverse leadership population and a shift in our business towards the US and Asia in the past 10 years. This means around 10% of employees report to a manager in another country," she said. "We use English as our business language but also need to integrate talent from China and the US into our global leadership."

Focus groups and listening sessions in different territories have enabled the company to get an idea of expectations in a local context - their growing pains and challenges. "In Germany for example employees expect a strong company stance on social justice, while in China speaking out about something can be a barrier," she said. One key issue has been around language, with Chinese employees feeling judged on their English language ability, so her team has targeted support on this around relevant business topics, as well as offering insight into Western business culture.

Dr Sandra Upton, vice president for global diversity practice at the Cultural Intelligence Center, described cultural intelligence, or "CQ" as a cousin of emotional intelligence. "CQ picks up where EQ leaves off," she explained. "For example, how we get upset about something may differ depending on our culture."

Her organisation has developed a way of measuring and developing cultural intelligence both at an individual and organisational level.



DR SANDRA UPTON

There are four key elements: understanding motivation and drive; building knowledge; developing a plan (your D&I roadmap); and finally action. Individuals and organisations can use the tools to assess where they are on the cultural intelligence spectrum and form a roadmap to increase their knowledge and awareness. And while many leaders are keen to develop their cultural awareness around race in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter movement, CQ tools can be applied to develop understanding of anyone with difference. "Once we have that skill we can be effective in any cross-cultural context," she said.

O'Leary offered four questions for organisations to ask when addressing cross-cultural challenges:

- What business opportunities drive specific market opportunities?
- How is your approach influenced by the location of your HQ?
- Do your markets require individualised approaches?
- How are you adjusting your messages and programmes to enhance their relevance at local level?

THERE IS SO MUCH WORK THAT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE, AND OFTEN IT'S A SYSTEMS ISSUE. IF WE WANT SUSTAINABLE CHANGE, WE HAVE TO DIG DEEP INTO THOSE SYSTEMS IN A WAY THAT ALLOWS US TO SEE REAL IMPACT.

Dr Sandra Upton, vice president for global diversity practice, Cultural Intelligence Center

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

STRATEGIES FOR COLLECTING AND USING DATA



ASIF SADIQ MBE

One of the common themes throughout d&i Leaders' events is how we collect reliable data both on the demographics of organisations and the impact of diversity and inclusion programmes. In an increasingly globalised employment market, one of the challenges can be nuances in terminology and requirements across different markets, particularly when it comes to race, said Asif Sadiq MBE, international head of equity and inclusion at WarnerMedia.

"When we're looking at data from a global perspective, we need to ensure people understand that the request is about them, so in the US the acronym BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour] is used but this might not resonate in the UK," he explained. "People often focus on the legal definition because we don't want to get it wrong. But we need to get comfortable being uncomfortable, speaking about race in a positive way and capturing unique identities within different ethnic minority groups."

Being more transparent about the data can also

support organisations to increase disclosure rates, by explaining why they are collecting the data, what they will do with it, how it will benefit the organisation and those individuals. "Rather than saying it's for 'monitoring purposes', humanise the statement so someone can see the benefits sharing their data might bring," he added. A communications exercise showing how data has been used positively in the past can help.

Adam Travis from Elsevier added that employees were often more trusting if an organisation had collected a lot of data before, and this was something that



ADAM TRAVIS

reassured workers undertaking psychological safety surveys. Taking an intersectional look at data is helpful to understand where gaps in support are on a very detailed level, said Sadiq. "Globally we need to understand individuals' unique challenges and that's why intersectionality is important. In Brazil for example we see race and low socio-economic backgrounds intersect frequently, so any solution needs to consider both elements," he added.

USUALLY WE'RE KNOCKING ON DOORS AND THEY ARE SHUT, BUT NOW EVERYONE WANTS TO SPEAK TO US. I HOPE THAT DOESN'T CHANGE.

Asif Sadiq MBE, senior vice president, head of equity and inclusion, international, WarnerMedia

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

It has been described by the UN as the “shadow pandemic”, with charities and support organisations reporting a surge in calls from individuals experiencing domestic violence over the past 12 to 15 months of lockdowns and restrictions. For employers, this can be an area where they are keen to support employees but are not sure how to intervene.

Mobile network Vodafone has taken decisive action on supporting employees through domestic violence. In 2019, it commissioned research which found that around 15% of the female workforce (across a poll of 80 million women) had experienced domestic violence in the past 12 months. This was naturally having an impact on their ability to work, leading to an estimated loss of £1.6bn in economic output each year. In response, the company launched a policy to support survivors of domestic violence and abuse, which offers support and specialist counselling, as well as up to 10 days’ additional paid leave (for all employees, not just women). There is training for HR and line managers in how they can “recognise, respond and refer” to an

employee disclosing an incident to them or if they suspect something might have occurred.

Managers are empowered to offer changes to someone’s schedule and to be explicit about ensuring employees are safe - remote working may be risky in some situations, for example, so access to the office would be advised.



CLAUDINE MCMAHON

“The policy is being used,” said Claudine McMahon, global head of culture and inclusion at Vodafone. “The most frequently used aspects are referral to counselling and the paid, safe leave. In some markets there is little support for survivors of abuse but rates are high, so this is really important.” Some managers are using the toolkit - which is available to all employers from Vodafone’s website - to play an advocacy role in their community or to support friends and family members. McMahon added: “Training and awareness has given visibility to the issue and opened up new spaces to openly talk about domestic violence and abuse.”

CONNECTING IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN IT WAS BEFORE BECAUSE CHANGE WILL KEEP COMING. THE BETTER INFORMED WE ARE, THE MORE ABLE WE ARE TO TAKE A STEP FORWARD.

Claudine McMahon, global head of culture and inclusion, Vodafone

SMASHING STEREOTYPES: AN UPHILL STRUGGLE?



PROFESSOR BINNA KANDOLA

For anyone who has ever felt 'othered' in a work or social situation, challenging people's inbuilt biases and stereotypes can feel like a battle that never ends. This is because it is inevitable that we see things through our own lenses, according to Professor Binna Kandola from workplace psychology consultancy Pearn Kandola. "It's worth bearing in mind the L.P. Hartley quotation that 'the past is a different country, they do things differently there,'" he said.

We see this in the history of stigma suffered by the LGBT+ community, where in Greek myth it was recognised that human sexuality was varied, yet by the 19th century homosexuality became medicalised and revulsed, only removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1987. "To be seen as heterosexual is a form of privilege we need to acknowledge. Even in 2018, candidates listing having worked at an LGBT+ affiliated organisation on their CV would be less likely to be shortlisted," explained Professor Kandola. "This process of stigmatisation affects people's self-perception and self-confidence. As a consequence of having this experience they might not want to reveal their identity, they become hypervigilant to discriminatory events, and are subject to excess rumination."

With such stigma alive and well not just against the LGBT+ community but other

under-represented groups, it's crucial that organisations address this across every part of their business. Michele Oliver, a Stonewall trustee and global corporate brand and purpose director for Mars Incorporated, said brands have a role to play in challenging stereotypes. "Advertising is one of the levers we can use to effect change, and we are one of the top 10 advertisers in the world. We inform people about our products and services, but who is in the ads matters, and who we don't see," she said.



MICHELE OLIVER

Mars sought out hard data which showed that just three years ago, men had four times as much screen time and treble the screen time of women in the company's ads, and men were three times more likely to be shown in a place of work. Now there is a drive to ensure more equal representation in ads not just in gender but across all characteristics. This has helped to improve inclusion within the company too - a Maltesers advert featuring disabled actors helped one Mars employee come out as a trans woman, while another employee disclosed their dyslexia. "People started feeling more comfortable and more able to feel their authentic selves," said Oliver.

For businesses to have a driving role in challenging stereotypes, they need to move away from the idea that they need to be perfect. "Progress rather than perfection is what we need, we're all learning and we all make mistakes, but as long as we're trying it beats inertia."

PROGRESS RATHER THAN PERFECTION IS WHAT WE NEED, WE'RE ALL LEARNING AND WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES, BUT AS LONG AS WE'RE TRYING IT BEATS INERTIA.

Michele Oliver, global corporate brand & purpose director, Mars Inc.

TAKING AN 'ABILITY FIRST' APPROACH TO DISABILITY



YVES VEULLIET

While most leaders claim that fostering inclusion is a key business priority, they will often still have one question at the back of their minds, according to Yves Veulliet, global diverse abilities and inclusion leader at IBM.

"They will think 'why should I hire someone with a disability or diverse ability to do a job that someone without could do'? It's a fair question that should be answered. You can have the best accessibility provision in the world but if you don't answer this question you won't be successful," he said.

"The fact is, you don't need to hire someone with a disability. You need to hire someone with the potential to acquire the skills you need, and if they happen to have disability then so be it. Your responsibility is that your workplace/tools are accessible. Your job to remove the barriers. Focus on the person, not the disability," he added. IBM has taken a triple-pronged approach to doing

this within its business, focusing on accessibility, accommodation and attitude. Accessibility is both physical and digital, and requires an end-to-end assessment of both IT infrastructure and physical offices. Accommodation refers to adjustments such as specialist software or equipment. But attitude is the most important of the three, he urged.

"This is far more difficult to achieve because it's connected to someone's identity, and it can require education and conversation to make the workforce comfortable interacting with employees of diverse ability," said Veulliet. During the pandemic, it has been crucial to ensure that all employees enjoy the same level of accommodation as they have at the office. Ultimately, focusing on the skills someone has and their potential, rather than the barriers presented by disability, will ensure success. He concluded: "Disability is an environmental issue, not something to do with the individual. If you look at it as a problem with the individual, you will not be inclusive. As a manager, your question should be 'how can I remove obstacles?' This is a far more positive approach."

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF AS A D&I LEADER



DR DOYIN ATEWOLOGUN

The d&i Leaders Global Benchmarking Survey 2020/21 showed that, while almost two-thirds of professionals report good or very good psychological wellbeing, 12% reported poor psychological wellbeing,

and 98% of those said it had worsened over the course of the last year. As Dr Doyin Atewologun, organisational psychologist and director of consultancy Delta Alpha Psi pointed out: "We celebrate the positive psychological wellbeing because a lot of this is due to people's passion and their interest in social justice. But we also have a small minority feeling that they don't have the support they need or the resilience to do this work."

The events of the last 12-15 months have arguably weighed harder on D&I professionals than other parts of the business: leaders looked to the function for answers after the murder of George Floyd, for example, or to sense-check that pandemic policies were landing in the most inclusive way possible. Dr Atewologun called upon organisations to invest in greater support for their D&I leaders, particularly in skills and coaching that could build resilience. When

Rachel Osikoya, global head of diversity and inclusion at shipping company Maersk, realised that events had impacted her personally, she drew on her network of colleagues. "I realised how vulnerable I was and how little resilience I had left. All that I needed was a psychologically safe space to say it was challenging," she told the forum.



RACHEL OSIKOYA

Dan Robertson of Vercida Consulting argued that the pandemic had created "immense challenges" and lessons around health and wellbeing, particularly in terms of presenteeism and an 'always-on' culture. "We can now reflect and ask questions, ask people how they are feeling, whether we can work in a more radical way than the traditional 9 to 5," he said.

D&I HAS TO FEED INTO EVERY SINGLE ELEMENT OF THE BUSINESS STRATEGY. WE'RE ACCOUNTABLE NOT JUST TO OUR ORGANISATIONS BUT SOCIETY TOO.

Rachel Osikoya, global head of diversity and inclusion, Maersk

WHY COVID-19 HAS LED TO THE RISE OF THE INTROVERT



RICHARD ETIENNE

internal communications at the UK Department for International Trade. But joking aside, the reduction in social interaction and face-to-face meetings led to a profound shift in organisations that reward those who are outspoken and dynamic. Finally, explained Etienne, “the voices of quiet leaders” could rise up.

This happened in a number of ways: managers were often being more intentional about asking for people’s opinions in virtual meetings; tools within video meeting platforms often meant introverted people could ‘raise a hand’ without fear of being spoken over; we all had more space for quiet reflection outside of the office; and colleagues showed more allyship to their introvert team members. “Introverts don’t tend to like meetings because we like to dwell and overthink details before speaking.

But there’s now a level playing field, no ‘head’ of the meeting table’ and it’s commonplace to be given an added voice,” he added.

Simple tweaks

“When the pandemic began last year, we made jokes about social distancing being ‘business as usual’ for introverts,” said Richard Etienne, deputy head of

such as providing an agenda in good time means introverts can reflect, or diversifying who chairs the meeting, will help sustain this confidence in a hybrid working world.

Allies have been able to support introverted colleagues by helping them to become more visible, explained Etienne. “We have all experienced feelings of isolation and anxiety during this time, so people are more intentional about regular check ins, and extroverted mentors can help others thrive,” he said. Because introverts tend to lose energy from high interaction, lockdown has provided them with a level of freedom and energy that has led to creative ideas and innovation - or “permission to thrive”. So much so that Etienne predicts we will all lean into our more introverted side as we emerge from the pandemic. “When people need solitude to recharge they will do so, and during the pandemic we’ve seen greater empathy and leaders have become more person-centred. We sway towards the side we need,” he said.

Stuart Sherman, CEO and founder of BiasProof, felt that the pandemic had amplified empathy around where people draw their energy because we’ve all had more time to reflect. “Thinking has changed,” he said. “We’ve recognised that whether you’re an introvert or extrovert, the situation of being forced to be at home and lockdown has changed the way we all think.”



STUART SHERMAN

DURING THE PANDEMIC WE’VE SEEN GREATER EMPATHY AND LEADERS HAVE BECOME MORE PERSON CENTRED.

Richard Etienne, deputy head of internal comms, Department for International Trade

HOW CAN WE ENSURE PROCESSES AND POLICIES

ARE INCLUSIVE?

While there's no denying that inclusion and belonging can be summed up as attitudes or even how it feels to work somewhere, it's often the smallest features of policy or process that can derail success. Anything from a rigid HR system that won't accept changes in pronouns to how we address someone in an email or letter can give off a non-inclusive message.



HELEN ROWELL

In 2020, banking giant HSBC made a public commitment to at least double the number of Black employees in senior roles by 2025. Before embarking on this journey, it asked

recruitment partner Resource Solutions to audit its recruitment process, and the team was surprised at what this uncovered. The company undertook 136 hours of auditing to look at any ethnicity bias, and considered 157 data points across the hiring process, with 63 ways HSBC could minimise bias. Helen Rowell, head of resourcing for UK and Europe for HSBC, said: "Once we could see what we were doing well, we could continue with that, and then it was about prioritising based on impact and reengineering some processes."



TOM LAKIN

Tom Lakin, Senior Innovation & Diverse Hiring Manager at Resource Solutions, said it is often "innocent ignorance" that leads to inadvertent bias in company processes.

"Something like

basing an offer on a candidate's current salary, recommending someone finds a quiet space for an interview or having an excessive number of interview stages can be based on privilege," he explained. Only 2% of white people live in overcrowded accommodation in the UK compared to 24% of Bangladeshi and 16% of Black people, meaning finding a calm room for an interview might not be possible. Basing communications or assessments on Apple's iOS could exclude those with Android-based phones, while multiple unnecessary interview stages could be adding disadvantages for women, he added. HSBC has begun to address incidences of bias and has also adapted its equal opportunities policy so it is

more up to date and relatable. Anyone with hiring responsibility must undertake training and there are diversity questions in the hiring process for any role with line management responsibility.

Law firm Clifford Chance has reviewed how it uses languages in its communications as part of its inclusion efforts. In 2016, the company created a policy around gender neutral language such as the use of 'Dear Sir' in formal communications. It has since expanded this to include more inclusive language in HR policies and social media. The key principle is to avoid using gender-specific pronouns in any communication, according to global inclusion specialist Georgie Court. "It's a larger conversation beyond letterheads, challenging our assumptions around gender and pronouns, because not everyone defines themselves in that way. For example, assuming someone of a particular gender has a certain role (chairman), and avoiding using gender stereotypes such as 'throwing like a girl!'"

The firm is now undergoing the task of removing gender specific pronouns in many of its legal templates and contracts, supported by the IT team and a working group from across the organisation. Tiernan Brady, global inclusion lead at the firm, said that even these small changes showed the importance of words and the impact they have. "We see lots of headlines about language being changed by 'woke warriors' but I don't think that's true. There's nothing wrong with being respectful. Across societies we see language that marginalises people - the first sentence you say can tell someone if you see them at all."



GEORGIE COURT



TIERNAN BRADY

Changes won't happen overnight, Brady admitted. "We won't flick a switch and change the terminology we've used for generations, and we don't want to create an environment where fear of language creates silence, as this is also exclusionary," he said. "If this is a journey we have to bring people along. We can't expect them to start as experts, but we do want them to be advocates."

SEVEN WAYS TO BUILD ALLYSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE



LAUREN VON STACKELBERG



DR FUNKE ABIMBOLA MBE

For many organisations, allyship can be the thing that shifts the dial from diversity initiatives to a culture of true belonging. But how can they achieve this? Lauren von Stackelberg, chief equity, diversity & inclusion officer for Tate & Lyle, and Dr Funke Abimbola MBE, CEO of the Austen Bronte Consultancy, identified seven strategies:

1) Take on the struggle as your own

Dr Abimbola acknowledged her own privilege as coming from a Nigerian, upper middle-class family and having attended public school, and why this made it important for her to use that privilege positively. "I reach out to less privileged people through work with state schools in raising aspirations," she said.

2) Amplify the voices of others

Von Stackelberg highlighted research done by LinkedIn on the importance of amplifying our networks so we don't keep hearing the same voices. Dr Abimbola said one of the ways she personally had amplified others' voices was through campaigns to increase access to technology during the pandemic for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

3) Have courage

"The more of us that learn to act as allies, the fewer of us have to pick up the baton when others don't feel safe," said Von Stackelberg. "You have to decentre yourself and your fear of getting it wrong. Someone's fear of experiencing something such as ablism or discrimination is much greater than your discomfort."

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THE BATON WHEN OTHERS
DON'T FEEL SAFE.**

Lauren von Stackelberg,
chief edi officer,
Tate & Lyle

4) Own your mistakes

Dr Abimbola reflected on a recent experience with a friend when they were discussing her Indian heritage. She added: "I realised that I had no idea of the history behind partition [which led to British India being separated into two states of India and Pakistan, with millions of deaths and displacements]." She committed to learning more about this period in history rather than expecting her friend to educate her.

5) Ally is a verb not a noun

Becoming an ally is not about doing a course and declaring you're an ally, said Von Stackelberg. There's a clear difference between self-identifying as an ally and doing the work. "This is something you make a choice to do every day, an action you proactively take. What this does is allow people to step into the ally role and close the gap between intention and action."

6) Teaching allyship in a corporate context

Making allyship training a mandatory initiative imposed by HR won't work. Instead, organisations need to "empower employees on their own inclusion journey," Von Stackelberg explained. When she worked in D&I at Expedia, the organisation introduced 'train the trainer' workshops on the ground that were locally relevant and culturally sensitive. These reached more than 6,000 employees in a year.

7) Measure change

Tracking who takes part in allyship training or who participates - when married up with other organisational metrics such as retention and engagement, can show whether it is having an impact, added Von Stackelberg. Likewise, it can show where there are gaps. "Have the managers in these areas spent time on ally skills, are there ways we can engage them?" she suggested.

RECOGNISING PRIVILEGE AND USING IT POSITIVELY



ASTRID BALSINK

The word 'privilege' can often be tainted with negativity when discussing difference in organisations. But recognising one's privilege and using that position to benefit someone else can be a powerful tool for change. Astrid Balsink, global director for inclusion and diversity at Philips, described herself as the "chief connection officer" for the company, and making people aware of their own privilege is one way in which she mobilises action on inclusion. "We all have to play our part, be aware of our privileges, how we share that rather than doing our own thing," she said.



AMRI JOHNSON

Inclusion consultant Amri Johnson said that "privilege is a superpower if you use it appropriately - if you use it to dehumanise people it's abhorrent". He added: "We all need to understand where we have power and privilege and how we use it. Privilege has become a bad word but this is not about being bad; it's about what you're going to do with it." It can be present in processes: Resource Solutions' work with HSBC (mentioned earlier) showed how easy it is for hiring managers to see candidates' circumstances through the lens of their own privilege.

At processor company Intel, one of the challenges has been engaging white men (who make up the bulk of the workforce) in D&I

issues. "Despite saying and wanting to do the right thing we had not made any progress on hiring progression for women," explained Joanne Watson, global inclusion and belonging director. Men-only listening sessions where discussions which were confidential, offering male employees a safe space to share. "Many thought it was the right thing to do to increase female representation but were unsure how to help," she added. Moving a 'persuadable' group to become believers in action on diversity has had a positive impact, with more men happy to mentor female colleagues or speak out on microaggressions.



JOANNE WATSON



LAUREN VON STACKELBERG

Lauren von Stackelberg, chief equity, diversity and inclusion officer at Tate & Lyle, said it was "good to start the conversation about privilege early" as often it's about people unlearning practices they may have been used to for years. This is particularly important among leaders. "The tone is set at the top. For senior leaders what is important is how vocal they can be about their actions. Senior leaders have the privilege of a microphone and platform, and they need to use that to story tell, even if the story is about getting it wrong sometimes."

WE NEED TO CHOOSE HUMANITY EVERY DAY. IT'S A SUPERSET OF ALL IDENTITIES AND HELPS US TO SEE HOW CONNECTED WE ARE.

Amri B. Johnson, ceo,
Inclusion Wins

HOW TO TAKE A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO D&I



BENDITA CYNTHIA MALAKIA

Interest in intersectionality has grown massively in the past few years as organisations realise that standalone initiatives around diversity and inclusion simply aren't moving the dial. But few have a truly multi-dimensional approach, according to Bendita Cynthia Malakia, global head of diversity and inclusion and law firm Hogan Lovells. "As a Black bisexual woman, this shapes how I perceive situations and how others treat me. Women aren't just women, religious minorities do not leave their race at home, queer people don't exist outside of race, gender and class," she said. "Kimberlé Crenshaw may have coined the [intersectional] term more than 30 years ago, but we've not cultivated workspaces that embrace that."

Malakia acknowledged the barriers many organisations faced in taking a more intersectional approach, such as restrictions around data collection and the challenge of creating affinity groups based on multiple identities. But these should not mean they fail to act, she added. Taking a new approach to employee resource groups was one example. "Rather than taking the lowest common denominator, take a hybrid approach," she advised. "Consider task forces that tackle issues

faced by multiple groups, for example. This leads to a multi-dimensional approach."

Candi Castleberry Singleton, vice president of diversity partnership strategy and engagement at Twitter, explained how the company's work with partners



CANDI CASTLEBERRY SINGLETON

and communities had helped it to take a more intersectional approach. "Our job has got larger than ever before, and anything that touches a group that's different, we're expected to have answers," she said. #TwitterIgnite is a way the platform collects stories and highlights the actions it takes as a company but also bridges its connection with society and encourages individuals to educate themselves around multiple identities. "If you were closer to people living intersectional lives you'd know more about what was happening," she added. "But their job is not to help you. I wake up every day committed to learn."

Crucially, it's important not to boil data down to labels, concluded Malakia. "Every time you're talking about identities, data and demographics remember you're talking about people. This might be complex but is nothing compared to the gymnastics we expect people with multiple identities to perform every day."

**IF YOU ARE A LEADER
AND ARE LEARNING ABOUT
THINGS HAPPENING AS THEY ARE
HAPPENING, YOU NEED TO MAKE
NEW FRIENDS.**

**Candi Castleberry Singleton,
vp of diversity partnership
strategy and
engagement,
Twitter**

HAS COVID-19 BEEN A WAKE-UP CALL FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY?



MARGOT SLATTERY

According to the World Economic Forum, even before the pandemic the outlook for achieving gender parity was almost a century away, at 99.5 years. Its report

for 2021 is even more sobering, suggesting this timeline has grown to 135.6 years. The combined factors of more women being in lower-paid or part-time roles during the pandemic, being more likely to have been furloughed or made redundant, on top of increased caring responsibilities and home-schooling, does not paint a positive picture.

In the hospitality sector, this has been particularly prevalent, said Margot Slattery, global head of diversity and inclusion at facilities firm ISS. The company took a number of actions to mitigate the impact on its female workforce, including discussions on flexible and hybrid ways of working where possible and resetting goals to accommodate individual situations. "We have set a target of having 50/50 gender representation at all business levels, with at least 40% women in leadership roles by 2025,"

she explained. "We want clarity around what we do and believe the pandemic has been a call to action."

At Johnson & Johnson, building diverse representation has been built into its credo - a commitment to company values that has been around for 78 years. "An executive



WANDA BRYANT HOPE

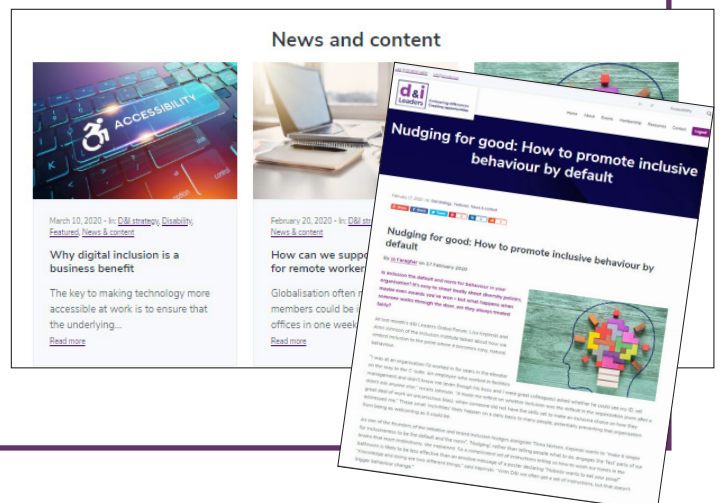
team in the top quartile of gender diversity is more likely to outperform its peers. We treat this just as we would any other opportunity or challenge by embedding it into our strategic plan. An evidence-based strategy helps us invest in initiatives that will drive outcomes," explained Wanda Bryant Hope, chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer.

She agreed that the pandemic had been a catalyst to move the dial on D&I for many organisations. "Disparities have been laid bare; society is demanding more from us as businesses. Those that do this well with tangible actions and create an environment where everyone can thrive will be the companies that are successful in the long term," she added.

DISPARITIES HAVE BEEN LAID BARE; SOCIETY IS DEMANDING MORE FROM US AS BUSINESSES.
Wanda Bryant Hope,
chief dei officer,
Johnson & Johnson



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ACTIVISM AND THE ROLE OF THE LEADER



DAN ROBERTSON

“After the death of George Floyd, we saw an outpouring of shock and surprise from majority groups. This is interesting because it poses challenges for leaders, who can no longer see inclusion as a ‘minority’ issue,” reflected Dan Robertson, director of Vercida Consulting. Indeed, the events of the past year have underlined the role of leaders in “radical empathy” and fostering more activist organisations.

“There can be a misalignment between what leaders say and what they do, and it’s time to start joining words with actions,” he added. It is no longer enough for leaders to dismiss issues as political or social and remain silent, yet many need to develop the competence and confidence to share their voice. One of the barriers has been the rise in identity politics, particularly on social media, added Robertson. “Leaders are asked questions such as ‘what about me as a white guy?’ There is a real clash of cultures. But at the same time, Covid has broken down some of those psychological barriers and they’re more able to reflect and ask questions about how others are feeling.”



BEATRIX PRAECEPTOR

Beatrix Praeceptor, chief procurement officer at Mondi Group, said that after the Black Lives Matter protests, her organisation had to consider how a statement on the issue would land with its European customers. “If a CEO puts out a statement on a particular issue, that needs to fit the values of the company but also be relevant to what that company wants to achieve,” she said. Most important is being open to different

viewpoints and answers, particularly when many are quick to ‘cancel’ high-profile voices for saying the wrong thing. “This could be key stakeholders using their voice in a way that’s important to them. This is not about having the right or wrong answer, but about being open to different views.”



VERONICA SCHILLING

Veronica Schilling, head of culture, D&I and new work at Zalando, agreed: “We’re a young company so lots of employees are vocal online, giving us hard and clear feedback. This has forced us to look at our values. How can we help people understand the support they can offer while challenging for better behaviours?”

THERE'S A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT. BEFORE ORGANISATIONS WERE ANSWERABLE TO INVESTORS, BUT NOW IT'S NOW IT'S EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS, AND SOCIETY AS A WHOLE. THE WORLD IS WATCHING.

Jim Rottman, former global head of D&I, Roche Pharma

Sari Einy Brody, an EDI Consultant and former Global Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at IKEA, has been at the forefront of activism at a senior level. When the Polish arm of the furniture retailer fired an employee for anti-LGBT+ views, Brody received threats on social media trying to discredit her. But the organisation stood firm. “We did the right thing. If we want to stand for equality we have to do that in tough times too, and we lost some clients but gained many. Social activism is a necessity for driving social change,” she said.



SARI EINY BRODY

“We did the right thing. If we want to stand for equality we have to do that in tough times too, and we lost some clients but gained many. Social activism is a necessity for driving social change,” she said.

Jim Rottman, former Global Head of D&I at Roche Pharma and now Practice Leader at AccelPeople, said CEOs “must step in and work with employees on the culture they want”. He pointed to the fact that employees at Google have recently unionised to change culture rather than bargain on pay and contractual terms. “This is the time to build inclusion because you have employee support,” he said.



JIM ROTTMAN

“This is the time to build inclusion because you have employee support,” he said.

GLOBAL BUSINESS COLLABORATION: KEEPING UP

MOMENTUM IN EMPLOYEE MENTAL HEALTH

The Global Business Collaboration for Better Workplace Mental Health launched at Davos in early 2021. The initiative aims to advance progress across the globe by asking senior leaders to sign up to a pledge to create mentally healthy workplaces. The six key elements of the pledge include developing and delivering an action plan on mental health; promoting an open culture to eliminate stigma; developing more positive ways of working that reduce mental ill-health; and signposting employees to the tools and support they need. Finally, it encourages employers to measure the impact of their efforts and to be open about their progress.



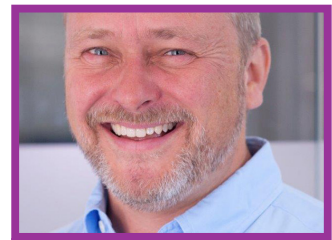
EMMA CODD

Consulting firm Deloitte is one of the founder signatories. Global inclusion leader Emma Codd said the pandemic had increased the spotlight on

the mental health agenda, but that it was “a critical issue before that”. “Leaders must realise this must continue to be a priority as we move into the ‘new normal’,” she added. During the first lockdown in 2020, Deloitte asked employees about their mental health in a pulse survey. Forty-eight percent of millennials and 44% of generation Z employees said they felt anxious all or most of the time, and the levels were higher among women. Despite this, around half of those taking time off for stress gave a different

reason to their manager. “Dealing with stigma is a massive part of the battle. The more we talk about and normalise talking about mental health, the more success we have,” said Codd. “People that were open about reasons for taking mental health absence said their organisation provided clear support. So if you take a firm stance and talk openly, it can make a real difference.”

Tim Munden, chief learning officer at Unilever, another signatory, said one of the most effective ways to reduce stigma was through leaders sharing their own



TIM MUNDEN

experiences. On a practical level the company supports line managers with team energy assessments and toolkits. “Stigma stops people getting the help they need, so breaking that through communications and engagement is key. We have mindfulness leaders and champions, have deployed mental health awareness training at scale, and promote our employee assistance programme,” he said. A new element of support since the pandemic began is in grief and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Over 60 leaders have already signed up to the GBC. For more information on The Global Business Collaboration for Better Workplace Mental Health and how you can sign up to the pledge, visit <https://betterworkplacemh.com/pledge/>.

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**THE MORE WE TALK ABOUT AND
NORMALISE TALKING ABOUT
MENTAL HEALTH, THE MORE
SUCCESS WE HAVE.**

Emma Codd, global
inclusion leader,
Deloitte