

22 Truths about Diversity and Inclusion

Insights from the 2018 Diversity and Inclusion Conference

Diversity and Inclusion: Respecting the Differences and Standing on Common Ground

New York City, June 7-8, 2018

INSIGHTS

SNAPSHOTS

ACTIONS

RESOURCES

"I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university."

"The only source of knowledge is experience."

—Albert Einstein, Scientist

When 217 practitioners and experts met to talk about diversity and inclusion, we took notes. Here are the highlights:

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) is not a soft issue—it is essential to an organization's success. Companies, groups, and teams that have greater diversity and inclusion are more creative, innovative, better at solving problems, more engaged, and more likely to recommend their organizations as a great place to work. Therefore, companies need to build D&I into all aspects of how they work and create a culture where everyone can feel comfortable being themselves.

Embed diversity and inclusion strategy into your business strategy.

A robust D&I strategy is comprehensive and applies to all aspects of the business, including people, community, customers, and suppliers.

1. Create a vision, mission, values, and strategy for your D&I program, or at the very least, make one of your overall corporate values D&I-related. Make sure your D&I strategy and vision align with your overall business strategy.

2. Everyone has different definitions of diversity and inclusion. You need to decide what your organization's definition of these are. For example, one technology company defines inclusion as: "A sense of belonging, connection, and community at work. Inclusive organizations help people be welcomed, known, valued, and encouraged to bring their whole unique selves to work."
3. When creating a D&I strategy, also ask:
 - What kind of workplace do we want to be now and in the future? Who do we want to be culturally? Strategically?
 - How do we increase the number of women and minorities in the succession pipeline?
 - What role does data play in our D&I strategy? How are we going to create models from the data and analyze it?
4. Build D&I practices into all aspects of the employee lifecycle. For example, if you're looking to fill a position:
 - Before you think about whether job applicants have the right personality traits for the roll, make sure they all have skills and competencies that align with the needs of the job.
 - Open the job search to everyone inside and outside the company, not just to select applicant pools.
 - Review the performance histories of all candidates who have relevant skills and competencies, regardless of age, gender, or other demographic or background information.
 - Keep the job open until you have a diverse candidate slate.
5. Beware of "tokenism"—the practice of including just one person of color or just one woman to tick a diversity box—when putting together teams and departments.
6. Aim to have minorities and women make up at least 30 percent of each rung of the organization. Don't be proud if 50 percent of your workforce is female and minorities, but 85 percent of them are on the bottom two rungs.

7. Pay attention to bias: Recognize that the human brain is biased by design, and therefore everyone will have bias of some kind. Also know that while it's unlikely that you'll get an individual to completely mitigate his/her bias, you can lessen bias at the team level by creating a culture where bias is labeled in a conversation as it happens and implementing processes to help combat it (e.g., if you're interviewing two job candidates and one is local and one is remote, interview both over the phone so both have the same interview experience).
8. Also recognize that everyone has inclusion and exclusion issues and that if you aren't actively including people, then you're probably accidentally excluding them. This is important, because under-inclusion and exclusion light up the same parts of the brain as physical pain, which creates a threat state. People who feel less included may be less creative as a result.
9. Beware of overinclusion as well, because it can feel overwhelming (e.g., do I need to include everyone in every meeting?) and negatively affect cognitive ability. Think about how included each person on the team needs to be for what you're trying to execute. Have clear expectations for who needs to do what, and then invite people to meetings based on what will be discussed.
10. The best way to embed D&I into how you do business, tackle bias, and become more inclusive is to change the culture. And changing habits ultimately changes the culture. To change habits:
 - Build new habits instead of trying to undo old ones.
 - Identify up to three habits you want to add, and build them individually, not simultaneously, because you can only change one habit at a time. Also know that habits form at a fixed speed, just like light travels at a fixed speed.
 - Make each habit you want to add a priority. When you make something a priority, your brain will focus on that item more prominently.
 - Continuously reinforce the "what's in it for me" aspect of changing the habit.
 - Put systems in place to add the habits and then practice the new habits often for them to become ingrained. Keep the habits you want to add simple.

USE THE FLEX MODEL TO HELP INCREASE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION^a

Companies can use this tool to help them be more diverse and more inclusive by exploring their own biases, the viewpoints of others, and how existing systems can be improved to foster greater diversity and inclusion.

Focus within Notice your own:

- Feelings: What do you respond to positively? Negatively?
- Favorites: Do you turn to the same people for advice? Do you tend to prefer people who have things in common with you?
- Familiarity: Do you tend to choose what's familiar?

Learn from others Observe how others engage with the world

- Watch other people's processes and the different ways they approach tasks and interactions
- Hear about other ways of doing things
- Hear about other's perceptions and points of view
- Ask: What are other's priorities?
- Let go of assumptions you may have about knowing the "right way" to accomplish a task

Engage in dialogue Talk with people who differ from you

- Enter the conversation with respect and intention to learn; be genuinely curious
- Use open-ended questions
- Establish a clear intention of wanting to deepen understanding
- Listen to understand, not to debate or judge

Expand the options Think about systems, processes, and individual behaviors that you want to be different

- Think about how things are currently being done that might be interfering with diversity
- Explore alternatives that could be different than what you're currently doing
- Experiment with some alternatives and their effectiveness

^a Source: IBIS Consulting, <http://www.ibisconsultinggroup.com/insight/hr-as-strategic-diversity-partners/>

Implementing diversity- and inclusion-related activities and programs—not just training—will help ingrain D&I into the culture.

Storytelling, difficult conversations, and adding allies to employee resource groups all bring about greater understanding. Make sure people feel psychologically safe in any approach you use.

11. Some people say that diversity training doesn't work. Most of the time, this is because the training starts the conversation, but is never applied any further. For it to be effective, it needs to be aligned with the business strategy and be customized for your employees and business needs—off-the-shelf programs don't work.
12. Give people the tools to have ongoing, open, in-depth conversations about racism, sexism, and other inclusion topics. Provide leaders with discussion guides to help facilitate discussions with teams. If the conversation is really serious, build in humor, which helps people feel safe.
13. Have leaders teach and show vulnerability. When they are vulnerable in front of others, everyone tends to feel safer.
14. Language matters. When giving performance reviews, replace "strengths" and "weaknesses" with habits to "consider" and "continue." The latter two terms sound less threatening and put the receiver of the feedback in charge of making the changes.
15. Storytelling is where culture change begins and is one of D&I's greatest tools because stories help to bring about greater inclusion. Here are some ways you can embed storytelling:
 - Make video stories about employees' unique experiences of pain and challenge. One company has a "Profiles in Leadership" series in which leaders tell human stories in two-minute video segments. One woman talked about what it was like to be a journalist in Cairo and get arrested for prostitution because she was not escorted by a male family member and then she spoke about her adopted daughter and the death of her son.
 - Have a speaker series. One government agency brought in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s lawyer to tell stories about the racism he saw and still sees.
 - Invite allies to your employee resource groups (ERG). One company asks employees to join an allies group/ERG they don't identify with so they can learn about the challenges of that group's participants. This allows everyone to have a voice, which leads to culture change.

- Think of a time where you felt excluded. Think of a time where you felt included. And think of a time when you excluded someone either intentionally or by accident. How did you feel? Have employees share these thoughts and stories with each other.
 - Create inclusion in new teams by asking members to share something that is affecting them personally. It's a great way for people to get to know each other and it reveals vulnerabilities.
16. Inclusive actions include openness and collaboration. They can be practiced daily, weekly, and monthly.
- Do these to bring about more openness:
 - Daily** Smile and say, "Hello" to people within 10 feet
 - Weekly** Volunteer information about yourself, especially if you're a people leader
 - Monthly** Ask employees for feedback
 - Do these to bring about greater collaboration:
 - Daily** Pause to ask another person what they think
 - Weekly** Give credit where credit is due
 - Monthly** Reach out to remote employees or those who work in satellite offices to say hello and maybe have a virtual happy hour

Don't forget to include ageing in your diversity and inclusion strategy.

While most companies have a D&I strategy, age is frequently not part of it. But it needs to be since there are currently five generations in the workforce.

17. To address age diversity in the workforce, raise awareness about intergenerational differences and think about how the different generations can learn from each other. Do this through an intergenerational ERG or reverse mentorship program.
18. Since people are healthier and living longer, they will be working longer. Therefore, companies need to change their negative mindsets about older employees: "Aging isn't a disease, it's living," said a presenter.
19. Explain that your workforce needs to match your customer base, which frequently has all ages and generations.
20. To help remove age (and other types of) discrimination in the hiring process:
 - Refrain from asking for salary history
 - Look at job applications without pictures

- Don't require an expanded history of job experience
 - Remove requirements for job experience minimums and maximums
 - Don't ask for a graduation date
21. Make your workplace friendly to all ages by offering phased retirement, paid time off for millennials to care for older parents or children, wellness/exercise activities suitable for all ages and fitness levels, and a paid sabbatical.
 22. Provide apprenticeships or internships for everyone, not just for those receiving college credit. This is especially helpful for people re-entering the workforce after a long absence, such as for caregiving.

DID YOU KNOW YOUR DATA CAN BE BIASED? IT CAN ENCODE HISTORICAL, SYSTEMIC, AND PERSONAL BIASES.

People think artificial intelligence (AI), data mining, and data science are technical endeavors, but they're the craftwork of humans—and anything that's created by humans is prone to bias.

- Know that data can reflect the bias of whomever is coding the data. For example, coding options may be "good" and "terrible." What happens if someone answered "okay"? The person doing the coding will have to choose whether "okay" is "good" or "terrible" and that coding choice will make the data less accurate. The coder's choice implies a bias, which will be baked in.
- Bias in everyday life can get encoded into data. For example, if you're trying to find a link between high performers and the universities they attended, your data may be biased if all the schools that high performers attended had low levels of diversity. That racial and ethnic bias will be encoded into the data.
- Companies need pay close attention to how AI tools and data models are built as well as to how algorithms are written, especially when teaching machines how to work with data sets and subsets. Be particularly aware of the accuracy of data samples, and potential historical and systemic biases. For example, if you're teaching a machine how to read English, it may learn to associate jobs with genders (e.g., male and astronaut and female and nursing) because it picks up on recorded history, which is biased.

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- Data scientists will try to determine what you're looking for based on the data, so be clear about what you're asking and what you're looking for. What you want and what they think you want may not be the same.
- To mitigate bias in data, ask:
 - What questions are asked? By whom?
 - How were the original data sets created? Why were they created?
 - How were the data sets collected? What data is missing?
 - What data was discarded? Data scientists will often stop mining when they think they have what they want. So, what data is leftover? What is done with it?
 - What data is selected? Will it be useful? Are there other data sets that could help? Or that could be less biased?
 - Do data sets accurately represent the population? Or does it reflect discriminative practices? (For example, if you only hired white engineers, then it will show that only white engineers are successful).
 - What variables are missing? What did the employer not keep records of vs. what data may have been thrown out? Sometimes, data is thrown out because it wasn't coded properly, or it was too difficult to encode.
 - Were proper proxies used for the data and/or variables that were discarded or missing?
 - Was the model properly trained to handle bad or wrong data?
 - Which analytic techniques were used and why?
 - Is the data quality high enough? Correct? Accurate? Well structured? What structural ambiguities are there?

SNAPSHOT

A space and robotics research facility wants to improve the diversity of its employee base.

This company has taken measures and implemented programs to advance its D&I and program and improve the diversity of its workforce at all levels of the organization.

It wanted to find out why there were so few women in higher-level roles. It did an overall internal audit where it reviewed turnover, promotion rates, percentage of diverse leaders, job applicant pools, and merit increases from a D&I perspective and found that very few women were applying for higher-level jobs, which are open to mostly internal applicants. Now it is asking managers to encourage qualified women to apply for the jobs and is paying closer attention to succession planning.

It is also making efforts to improve diversity in its recruiting process. It's reviewing universities where it recruits to see which provide the most diverse interns and job applicants, while also looking for new schools—the data model has recommended five additional ones to consider. It also sends diversity liaisons to target schools to engage potential recruits throughout the school year. The company likes to bring back the same interns for several summers in a row with a goal of hiring them full time after they graduate. All interns are encouraged to join an employee resource group for a greater sense of community.

The company is also stepping up its D&I education program by:

- Inviting speakers on tokenism, gender intelligence, unconscious bias, and other topics
- Offering a five-month technical women's leadership training for high potentials to help them build their networks and brand
- Being very clear on leadership expectations

These insights represent highlights from discussions held by 217 senior executives who attended the Diversity and Inclusion Conference on June 7-8, 2018. The views expressed are those of the presenters and participants of the conference. Presenters include executives from a cross section of companies and industries:

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United States Tennis Association
Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer

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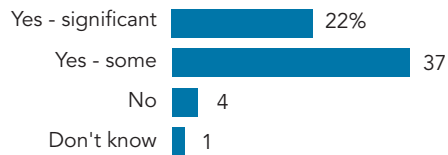
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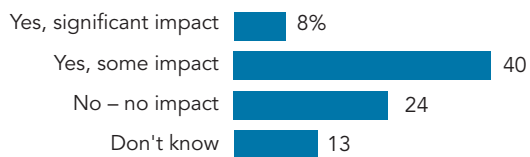
BENCHMARKS

Conference attendees were polled on the following questions:

Have movements such as #MeToo or Black Lives Matter had an impact on you personally?



Have movements such as #MeToo or Black Lives Matter had an impact within your organization?



ACTIONS TO TAKE

What actions will participants take after the conference? A post-conference “action survey” highlights a range of objectives.

Addressing bias

- Focus on conscious bias and behavior change in teams—shift from focus on self
- Bring back a different approach to unconscious bias
- Attack bias at a team level
- Hold others accountable for their unconscious bias
- Need to break bias at the team level, not at the individual level
- Do some professional/personal development—after all, it starts with me by calling out courageously/“politely” when I see bias
- Review our applicant process to scrub out bias areas
- Look at different ways we recruit our workers
- Challenge the way we recruit (i.e., what sources)
- Suggest removal of name and age (along with photos and dates) from our personnel records used in promotions/selections
- Think about how we move/promote leaders
- Introduce the FLEX model to my team
- Analyze our data for bias
- Ask questions about data, tracking

D&I programs

- Conduct a D&I assessment
- Reflect with our D&I team on where we are and where we need to go
- Develop a diversity program for my specific division
- Refresh our D&I messaging
- Create an actionable and operational definition of diversity, which can serve to bridge and back up our global organization
- Define inclusion
- Figure out how to move training initiatives forward

- Improve the design of training for trainers
- Improve the design of our mentoring program
- Review how we are looking at mentoring—bring in “reverse mentoring” concept
- Improve the design of our EEO Liaison Program
- Consider the power of personal narrative as a driver of psychological safety
- Use storytelling to impact change
- Capture our leaders’ stories. Maybe on video? And share with our people
- Use the dimension wheel with our leadership team
- Have leaders and ERGs do exercises from the first session
- Recommend interactive theater training
- Start a new ERG
- Enlist better program measurement

Related Resources from The Conference Board

Publications

[Dysfunctional, Abusive Behavior in the Workplace: What Organizations, Boards, and Senior Leaders Can Do](#)

May 2018

Dysfunctional, abusive behavior, such as violence, bullying, or condescension—directed toward men or women—can be found in every industry and region, and has been, unfortunately, a part of the working lives of men and predominantly women for decades. In partnership with experts in this area, The Conference Board offered three webcasts in March of 2018 to advance the conversation and provide specific steps organizations, the board, and senior leaders can take to prevent or address these issues in the workplace. This report distills the insights from those webcasts and provides references to the underlying research that supported the discussion.

[Global Leadership Forecast 2018: 25 Research Insights to Fuel Your People Strategy](#)

January 2018

The Global Leadership Forecast is the largest research study of its kind, examining the state and business impact of leadership development practices and leader experiences within and across organizations in major industries and economies around the globe. More than 25,000 global leaders and 2,000 organizations contributed to this new research study. The forecast focuses on current and emerging topics such as leadership strategy, raising leader engagement, making the most of high-potential leaders, building a coaching culture, retention and role of purpose.

[Turning Silver into Gold: Tapping into the Mature Workforce to Close Europe's Widening Talent Gaps](#)

July 2017

Europe's aging workforce will continue to have significant, long-lasting impact on economies, cultures, and businesses. One important approach to solving the challenge would be to better leverage the skills, knowledge, and work ethic of mature workers through rethinking retirement and pension schemes, retraining, redeployment, technology, and organizational design.

[Every Other One: A Status Update on Women on Boards from the Committee for Economic Development](#)

November 2016

In an effort to accelerate progress for women in corporate boardrooms, CED launched the *Every Other One* initiative in 2014. *Every Other One* advocates that if every other corporate board seat vacated by a retiring board member

were filled by a woman, while retaining existing female seats, women would occupy nearly a third of board seats in the next five years and ultimately reach parity. As part of the *Every Other One* initiative, CED outlines multiyear guidelines implemented through direct outreach from our “ambassadors” to CEOs and chairs of nominating and governance committees of Fortune 1000 companies. As of November 2016, 37 ambassadors have held peer-to-peer discussions with board nominating committee chairs and CEOs to uncover the challenges involved in increasing the number of women on boards. This report shares the findings from the first round of meetings and outlines a range of company-led, voluntary solutions for making progress.

[Inclusion + Innovation: Leveraging Diversity of Thought to Generate Business Growth](#)

January 2016

Building a diverse workforce is one thing; cultivating an inclusive culture that actively encourages people to express their unique perspectives—that is, an organization where “diversity of thought” consistently sparks innovation—is far more challenging. To understand the enablers and barriers to leveraging inclusion to capture new ideas, The Conference Board conducted a global survey of leaders responsible for either innovation or diversity and inclusion (D&I).

Webcasts on demand

[Who Is Accountable for Gender Balance within Organizations?](#)

May 2018

In the year where we celebrate 100 years of (some) women in the UK and in the US getting the right to vote, it seems timely to ask about how far we’ve come and where things stand in the workplace today.

Avivah Wittenberg-Cox and Tracey Allison join Anne Stevens to explore some of the key considerations while encouraging interactive participation from a global audience.

Key takeaways:

- Who is truly accountable for getting the balance right?
- What should companies be doing?
- What is the role of male business leaders?
- What do women leaders need to do?

[Book Discussion: Earning It](#)

April 2018

How have women such as Mary Barra, chairman and CEO of General Motors, been able to make their way to the top? And when they get there, what impact do they have on corporate governance?

In her book, *Earning It: Hard-Won Lessons from Trailblazing Women at the Top of the Business World*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist **Joann S. Lublin** from the Wall Street Journal interviewed over 50 top female executives to hear the successes and setbacks they've faced as women climbing the corporate ladder.

Join us for an interactive conversation hosted by Doug Chia, executive director of The Conference Board Governance Center, as Lublin discusses:

- Key themes from the book, including how to handle issues surrounding sexual harassment; maintaining a necessary work-life balance; and getting ahead at both junior and senior levels of your career
- What women experience when they join the company board
- How the board dynamic may change when a female director joins
- How having a female executive can affect a company's governance/corporate culture

[Why Leaders Are So Critical in Stopping Abusive Behavior](#)

March 2018

The Conference Board Executive Vice President Rebecca Ray and **ELI President and CEO Stephen Paskoff** will be joined by **Executive Director, Diversity and Inclusion for the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority Dr. Shelton Goode** and **Retired Chairman, President and CEO of Southern Company David Ratcliffe** to discuss actions industry leaders are taking to build professional, inclusive, "speak-up" cultures and prevent cultural failures from leading to abuses of power, harassment, other misconduct, and organizational crisis.

Corporate value statements, "hot lines" and annual training programs alone are not enough; leaders must lead.

Join our panel of experts to learn:

- The practical, effective steps senior leaders and their organizations are taking to build professional and inclusive cultures;
- How to create a culture that helps ensure improper behavior does not occur; and
- How to properly take action to address and resolve issues if they arise, while encouraging a “speak-up culture.”

[Advancing Women’s Leadership](#)

November 2017

Women currently earn more advanced degrees than men and make up half the workforce. Yet, despite their economic and educational punch, women still hold far fewer leadership positions than men.

Join our panel of top talent executives and other business leaders to discover:

- Practical steps that company managers and executives can take to increase the number of women in leadership positions;
- The roadblocks companies often face in advancing women’s leadership; and
- The short- and long-term company benefits of having more women in leadership roles

[Women’s Leadership: Advancing Your Organization Through Advancement of Women](#)

August 2017

At our 13th Annual Women’s Leadership Conference, top business leaders came together to share specific, actionable insights on how to advance women’s leadership throughout the organization and examined the total business impact of strengthening women’s leadership roles.

This webcast will highlight some of the best insights from this special event, featuring business leaders and diversity experts who will discuss:

- How to increase the number of women in global management positions;
- How to battle unconscious bias in your organization that can hold women back from obtaining prominent leadership roles; and
- How to evaluate and implement options to improve the pay gap and negotiating environment for women.

Join us and learn key methods for retaining and advancing women of any age in your organization.

Councils

Advancing Women in Leadership Council
Career Development Practitioner Council
Diversity & Inclusion Executives Council
Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Councils I & II
Diversity and Inclusion in Business Council
Global Business Women Leaders Councils I & II
Global Diversity & Inclusion Executives Council
Human Capital Analytics Council
Leadership Council on Advancing Women Councils I & II
Leadership Development Council
Learning and Development Executives Council
Learning, Development, and Organizational Performance Council
Talent Acquisition Executives Councils I & II
Talent Management Executives Councils I, II, & III
Talent Management Leaders Council

Centers

Talent Management
Human Capital Analytics
Strategic HR
CED/Public Policy
Diversity & Inclusion

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- Hear real-life case studies from leading companies; and
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