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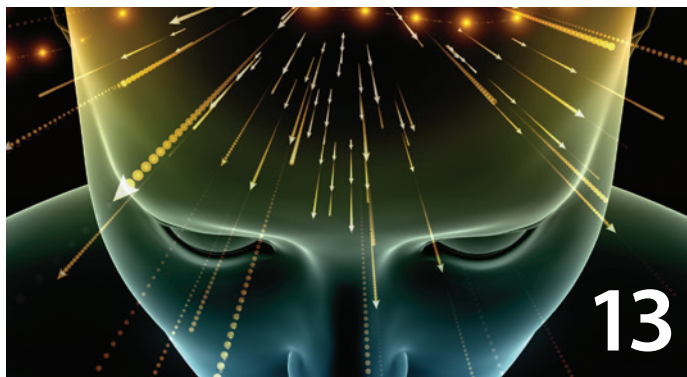
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THE DEEP DIVE

5 DEI Trends to Watch for in 2024

When it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion, success is a moving target

BY TAMARA E. HOLMES

As longtime goals are surpassed and new challenges arise, DEI teams must refine their strategies and, at times, shift focus. While no one has a crystal ball, signs shed light on the most pressing issues that DEI professionals may now face. Here are five trends to pay close attention to in 2024.

1 DEI programs will continue to be politicized. The Supreme Court's ruling to end race-conscious affirmative action practices in college admissions, as well as states' anti-DEI legislation, has some workplaces on edge as DEI initiatives have been subject to accusations of divisiveness or even discrimination. With the 2024 presidential election coming up, criticism of DEI programs is likely to continue: a recent Pew Research poll found that

78 percent of Democratic and Democratic-leaning workers say DEI is a good thing, compared with only 30 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning workers. As a result, DEI professionals may spend much of 2024 defending and advocating for their work.

2 Inclusion will become a bigger priority in hybrid workplaces. Offering remote work can attract top talent, but it creates new challenges. Working from home, for example, can cause employees to feel less connected to the organization's culture, a 2022 Gallup survey found. Other negative impacts include fewer opportunities for giving and receiving feedback, impaired working relationships, and less recognition. Companies must learn to create a culture of belonging when some or all team members are working remotely. Ensuring that communication, collaboration, and recognition take place in a virtual environment will be paramount.

3 AI risks and benefits will take center stage.

The growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to disrupt many industries. DEI is no different. Seventy-three percent of HR leaders use AI to some extent in hiring and recruiting, according to Eightfold AI's 2022 Talent Survey. While AI may improve efficiencies, care must be taken to make sure it doesn't compromise DEI goals. Optimally, artificial intelligence can help decrease unconscious bias, but experts point out that the technology is only as unbiased as the data used to develop it.

4 Perks will center around well-being.

High-performing employees can be as much as 400 percent more productive than the average worker, according to researchers Ernest O'Boyle and Herman Aguinis. To incentivize them and boost employee retention in general, organizations will be offering unique wellness perks like mental health vacation days and paid sabbaticals, according

to employee-engagement company Inspirus's latest Employee Engagement Trends and Forecasts report. The efforts will likely be well worth it, as companies with workplace wellness programs report a 67 percent increase in employee satisfaction, consulting firm Gitnux reports.

5 More focus will be placed on gender identity and inclusion.

Less than half of respondents to Deloitte's 2023 LGBT+ Inclusion @ Work study said they felt comfortable expressing their gender identity at work. DEI teams will increasingly focus on ways to make the workplace more inclusive for all genders, whether that means providing gender-neutral restrooms, encouraging the use of someone's preferred gender pronouns, or creating supportive resource groups. Three-quarters of LGBT+ employees surveyed said it is important to be able to freely express their gender identity at work. **IN**



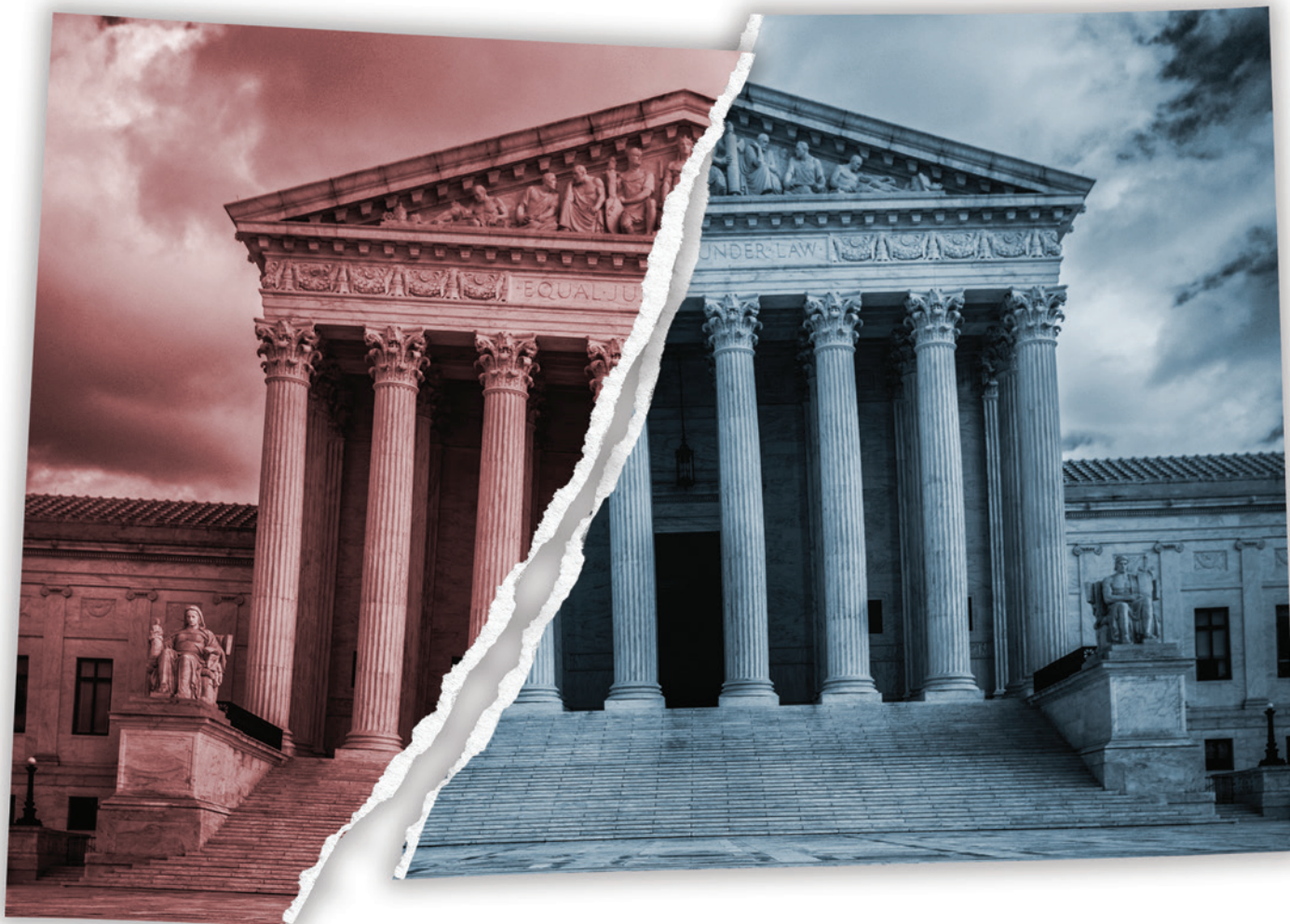
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DEI UNDER ASSAULT

The Supreme Court's strike down of affirmative action in colleges has DEI professionals feeling vulnerable. Here's what you can do about it.

BY TAMARA E. HOLMES

When the Supreme Court ruled in June 2023 that race could no longer be a factor in college admissions, the world of academia was understandably rocked. The move, which effectively ended affirmative action in higher education, marked a clear blow to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in institutions of higher learning across the United States.

But many DEI professionals worry that diversity efforts in education aren't the only programs in the crosshairs. In July 2023, 13 state attorneys general sent an open letter to Fortune 100 CEOs, warning them that the Supreme Court decision could apply to private companies and suggesting that some workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion programs might be discriminatory.

While workplace DEI programs are legally safe for now, there is no guarantee that the court's action

won't be used to lay the groundwork to target programs in the future. However, DEI professionals urge companies not to panic. "While it's possible that there will be a ripple effect and we might see challenges to workplace programs, it's important to remember what is still possible and true for workplace DEI," says Erin Souza-Rezendes, vice president of Global Communications at Catalyst.

As the fallout from the Supreme Court ruling continues to be felt, DEI professionals may have to pivot and

adjust their strategies. Here's what DEI professionals need to know.

Gauging the impact

There's no doubt the ruling has far-reaching implications, including within the halls of Corporate America. For one thing, it will likely affect the talent pool. "If the individuals that are being accepted in universities are not a representation of diverse America, then what do we expect when it comes to the recruitment and talent acquisition efforts for corporations?" asks Nika White, a DEI consultant based in Greenville, South Carolina. "It really sets us back in a tremendous way."

Another way the ruling can hurt workplace DEI efforts is that it may prompt some companies to pull back on their diversity initiatives out of fear of potential backlash or legal consequences in the future.

In the aftermath of the ruling, Catalyst talked to legal experts Kenji Yoshino, faculty director of New York University School of Law's Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, and David Glasgow, executive director of the Meltzer Center. Catalyst asked them to chime in on whether the fears are warranted.

Yoshino and Glasgow argued that DEI in workplaces is safe in the near term for three reasons:

- The high court's decision pertained to institutions of higher learning and not workplaces.
- Most workplace DEI initiatives seek to create a diverse and inclusive environment rather than use race to make hiring and promotion decisions.

An attack through legislation

Sara Margulis, owner of honeymoon registry company Honeyfund, based in Clearwater, Florida, faced a dilemma. "Florida came out with a law saying that I can't talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion at work in a mandatory training for my employees, and that just did not seem right to me," she said in an episode of *Leading Diversity at Work*, a podcast from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

After consulting with her attorneys, Margulis and Honeyfund became part of a lawsuit that is challenging the constitutionality of Florida's Individual Freedom Act, also known as the Stop Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees (WOKE) Act, which was passed in March 2022. The law places restrictions on what can be discussed in DEI trainings.

The law is problematic for DEI professionals, says Erika Royal, who worked as an employment lawyer in Florida for 22 years before launching the Life Coach School, a life-coach certification company. A regular part of her job was anti-harassment and anti-discrimination training. "While most of what the Stop WOKE Act addresses would likely never be addressed in employee training sessions, employers now face exposure just from holding such trainings," she says.

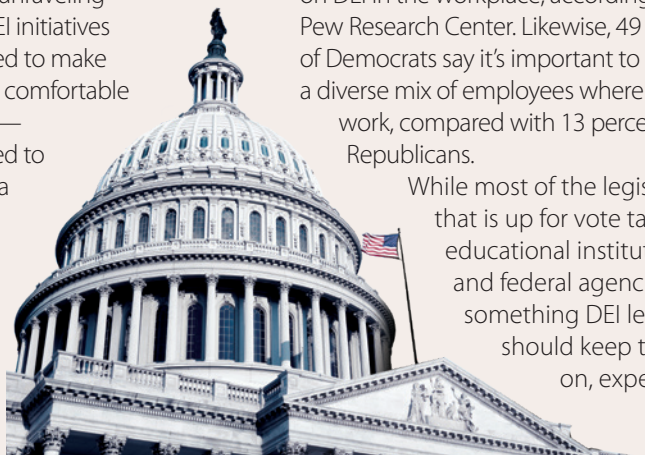
Royal expects that some employers will choose to avoid the prospect of litigation by ceasing the trainings altogether. "This may result in the unraveling of many of the DEI initiatives that were intended to make workplaces more comfortable for all employees—initiatives designed to ultimately create a more productive workforce by allowing all employees to show up fully," she says.

While the Stop WOKE Act has garnered a lot of attention, it's not the only piece of state or federal legislation in the past or present that could potentially derail workplace DEI efforts.

- In 2020, former President Donald Trump banned federal agencies from conducting racial sensitivity training. President Joe Biden reversed the ban with an executive order in 2021.
- In May 2023, a bill was introduced in Congress that would make it illegal for federal funding to be used for DEI activities in the military, service academies, or at the Department of Defense.
- In June 2023, Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed legislation that bans DEI offices at the state's public universities.
- In April 2023, a bill was introduced in South Carolina that would require colleges in that state to submit yearly reports on DEI spending, as well as ban mandatory diversity training and the use of diversity statements.
- In May 2023, a bill was signed into law in Tennessee that bans mandatory implicit-bias training in public education institutions and the state's Department of Education.

As it happens, DEI is often viewed through a partisan lens. Republicans are more likely to say employers place too much emphasis on DEI in the workplace, according to the Pew Research Center. Likewise, 49 percent of Democrats say it's important to have a diverse mix of employees where they work, compared with 13 percent of Republicans.

While most of the legislation that is up for vote targets educational institutions and federal agencies, it's something DEI leaders should keep their eye on, experts say.



“Companies that are considering pulling back on DEI might feel like they’re playing it safe, but it’s important that they understand the consequences.”

- The Supreme Court decision focused only on race, while workplace DEI programs focus on a broader span of categories, including gender, disability, and sexual orientation.

The costs of being too cautious

Companies that are considering pulling back on DEI might feel like they’re playing it safe, but it’s important that they understand the consequences.

Decreasing DEI efforts could hurt company profits. Research shows that diverse workforces are more productive and profitable. In fact, companies with the most ethnic and cultural diversity are 36 percent more profitable than those with little diversity, according to McKinsey & Company.

Pulling back on DEI could also impact your ability to hire and retain top talent. A 2023 survey by career platform The Muse found that 70 percent of respondents said their interest in working at their company would be negatively affected if they believed the company was pulling back on its diversity commitments.

“Today’s workforce wants to know that their employer takes meaningful action on racial equity—and they will hold employers accountable if they don’t,” Souza-Rezendes says.

Taking preemptive action

Yoshino and Glasgow suggest that DEI teams make some adjustments to minimize the risk of future backlash.

Employers should set clear guidelines for making hiring and promotion decisions that are based on merit, for example, without factoring in characteristics protected by Title VII of

the Civil Rights Act, such as race, color, sex, ill and national origin. At the same time, employers can increase efforts to ensure that they have a diverse applicant pool to pull from. With some colleges and universities potentially becoming less diverse, that could mean investing in pipeline programs that are designed to provide diverse workers with the experiences they need to succeed.

Sacha Thompson, CEO of The Equity Equation, a boutique DEI consulting firm in the Washington, DC, area, advises DEI professionals to reframe their work. “No one is pushing back on the fact that everyone wants to feel valued,” she says. “Many of the organizations that I’m working with are doubling down on the inclusion work. I’ve heard less about, ‘We’re doing this DEI initiative’ and more about creating environments where everyone feels valued, seen, heard, and connected.”

Setting metrics goals without providing a rationale could also put companies at risk in the current environment, Thompson says. For example, if you simply state that your goal is to have a 10 percent increase in women leaders in the C-suite, “then people are going to say, ‘You’re filling a quota,’” she says. A better option would be for organizations to state that their goal is to increase the diversity of their employee base because diversity helps them to better connect with their customers. “That’s more effective than saying ‘We need to hit this number,’” Thompson says. “It explains the why.”

DEI professionals can also take the following steps to shore up the profession during a vulnerable time

and put themselves in a better position no matter what legal challenges may come up in the future.

Keep making the case. Look for opportunities to educate people on the value of workplace DEI programs for everyone, not just people of a particular race or protected class.

“What I have noticed is that the volume has been turned up by the naysayers and those who are against the value and the strength of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we have to drown out those voices,” White says.

Sharpen your skills. Find new ways to make DEI programs more effective. “The way other professionals in different spaces and disciplines will upskill themselves around creativity, innovation, and strategic critical thinking, this is a time for us to roll up our sleeves and do the same,” White says.

Stay positive. DEI programs have a proven track record of contributing to employers’ success. “There are a number of people right now who are on the fence wondering, Do we keep doing this work or do we not? And I think that our outlook as practitioners and professionals and champions and advocates in this space is going to make a big difference,” White says.

Have open conversations. Keep the lines of communication open to make sure company leaders are all on the same page when it comes to DEI. “As we hear news that can negate the value of DEI, we can’t assume that our leaders aren’t being influenced by it,” White says.

Indeed, DEI programs are good for business and good for every employee who makes up the workforce, says Souza-Rezendes. “For companies truly committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, this decision doesn’t change those values. In fact, it makes them more urgent and relevant than ever.” **IN**

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DATA ENTRY

Are Your DEI Efforts Making an Impact?

BY TAMARA E. HOLMES

How effective are your company's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts? As it turns out, it depends on whom you ask—at least according to data from the Human Workplace Index, a monthly survey of 1,000 full-time workers by employee management company Workhuman.

While 70 percent of organizations have a formal DEI team in place, company leaders and general employees aren't always on the same page about how effective it is.

MANAGERS	ASSUMPTIONS	EMPLOYEES
76%	Believe DEI teams and initiatives are prioritized in their organization	46%
83%	Believe their organization is doing a great job of integrating DEI principles into hiring and recruiting strategies	64%
88%	Believe diversity is a stated value or priority for their organization	71%

One possible reason for the disconnect: companies may not be communicating their DEI goals and accomplishments enough. While 82 percent of managers believe leaders in their organization communicate frequently about DEI, only 57 percent of employees agree.

To make sure your organization's DEI efforts are having the impact you want, Workhuman recommends sharing your priorities and progress with employees at all levels of the organization.

However, employee input is just as important because building a DEI strategy without getting feedback from employees could be setting you up for failure. Says Meisha-ann Martin, director of people analytics at Workhuman, "It's like putting together a career plan for an employee without taking the employee's input into account." **IN**

INCLUSIVE CORNER

An Age Old (and Young) Problem

Ageism impacts women, no matter their age

NANCY D. O'REILLY, PSYD

Today's workplace is grappling with so much that it doesn't need another "ism"—but make way, because ageism is real, and it is impacting women at every level. And it isn't directed only at the 40-and-above cohort: ageism is also directed at women in gen Z.



"In most DEI initiatives, sexism and racism are routinely addressed, but ageism has largely been ignored."

excuse not to take women seriously, to discount their opinions, or to refuse to hire or promote them.

Younger women contend with higher-ups surprised by their seniority and are often excluded from opportunities to contribute to decision-making or are considered

Ageism, like gender bias, is an unconscious bias. Left unchecked, it creates a no-win situation, especially for women in leadership. A recent study published in *Harvard Business Review* found that there is no right age to be a woman leader, and researchers reported that there is always an age-based

a potential liability because they may have children. There are also reports of women being subjected to condescending nicknames like "kiddo." Then there's the credibility deficit, a term coined by Amy Diehl and Leanne M. Dzubinski in their book *Glass Walls*, referring to situations in which women's statements and expertise are simply not believed.

And for women over 50? Well, they're seldom heard at all. According to gerontologist Jeanette Leardi, that is because people tend to see women of a certain age as entering in a period of deterioration and decline. No wonder nearly two out of three women age 50 and above say they are regularly discriminated against.

But guess what? We're all getting older. And with age comes confidence, experience, and insights that benefit entire organizations. In most DEI initiatives, sexism and racism are routinely addressed, but ageism has been largely ignored—despite the fact that gendered ageism, sitting at the intersection of age and gender bias, creates a double whammy, which for women of color becomes a triple. Those biases have a direct impact on a woman's job security and financial future—especially as we age—with long-term implications for retirement.

So, what can we do? First of all, we need to recognize age bias for every age and call it out. We also need to focus on skills regardless of "isms." That means hiring and promoting leaders for their knowledge and experience, period. While we're at

it, we must address what Catalyst has dubbed "lookism." With so much value placed on appearance, women are under a lot of pressure to look young, beautiful, and thin. Women who can pull it off, even if less skilled on the job, are advancing, while their counterparts are not. Including lookism in DEI initiatives and creating awareness around the issue will begin to level the playing field.

Ultimately, we need to realize the magnitude of benefits that companies receive from a diverse workforce. In my book *In This Together*, I stress the importance of diverse women working together to maximize the power of our full numbers. We all benefit and draw strength from our diversity.

The business case is clear. Study after study has found increased profitability for those companies with more women in leadership and more diverse teams.

Let's come together to make change and eliminate all "isms" from the corporate consciousness. That's when we'll be valued for what truly matters: our uniquely diverse perspectives, experiences, and talents. **IN**

Dr. Nancy D. O'Reilly is an author, educator, and the founder of Women Connect4Good Inc., a foundation supporting organizations that advance women and girls.



THE AI CHALLENGE

Yes, artificial intelligence is biased. But you can make it work for you, instead of against you, in the workplace.

BY KIMBERLY OLSON

The days of HR personnel thumbing through stacks of résumés are quickly receding into history. Today, most companies—79 percent—use automation, artificial intelligence (AI), or both for recruitment and hiring, according to a 2022 survey from

the Society for Human Resource Management.

Companies use such technologies to screen incoming résumés (64 percent), communicate with job seekers (69 percent), and preselect applicants for interviews (25 percent). Then post-hire, 38 percent use it for performance management.

Organizations are embracing automation for good reasons. Recruitment tools that use AI, for example, can help create more accurate job postings and weed through résumés at lightning speed, saving busy recruiters valuable time. And on the career development front, AI tools can direct employees toward relevant learning opportunities.

Unfortunately, AI isn't as fair as we might hope. Being clear-eyed about potential bias is key to helping mitigate it.

Impartial algorithms

Users have noticed various types of AI bias emerging, according to DataRobot's 2022 *State of AI Bias* report.

DataRobot surveyed more than 350 tech leaders in the United States and the United Kingdom, including CIOs, IT directors, and data scientists. Of those surveyed, 32 percent reported gender discrimination and 29 percent reported racial discrimination by their own AI tools. Bias based on age was found by 32 percent, on sexual orientation by 19 percent, and on religion by 18 percent. It's not surprising, then, that 19 percent noticed AI excluding qualified job applicants.

"The repercussions of AI bias are significant," the report states. "Companies have a lot to lose—revenue, customers, employees, trust—by neglecting to address it."

They might even end up in court. In August 2023, iTutorGroup Inc. was sued by the US Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for using software that screened out older job applicants, in the country's first AI hiring-discrimination lawsuit. The bias was discovered when an older job applicant was rejected—and then resubmitted their résumé with a younger birthdate and got an interview. The company, which admitted no wrongdoing, paid a \$365,000 settlement to a group of more than 200 rejected job applicants.

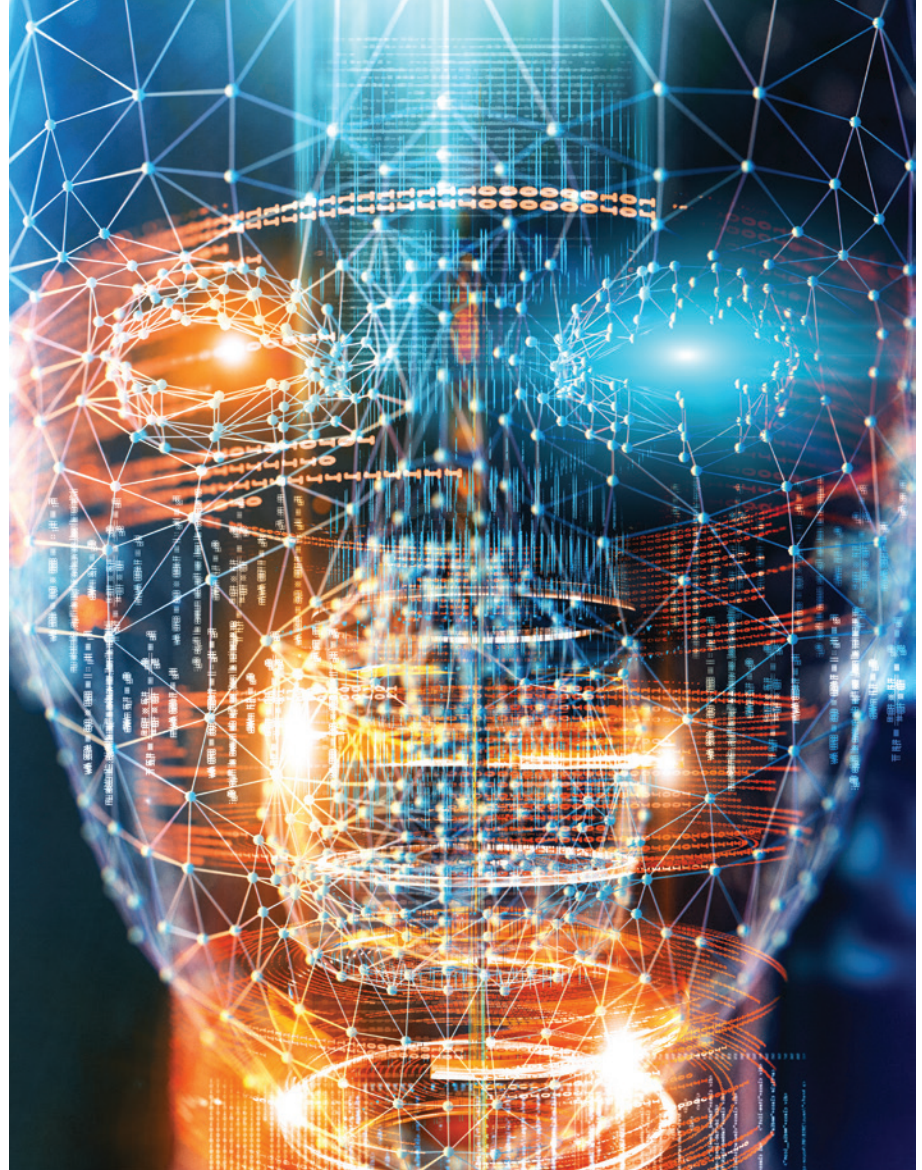
The roots of AI bias

One cause of AI bias is the data that it's fed, which trains AI's algorithms so it can reach conclusions.

If a company is hiring a systems engineer, the AI might prefer job seekers whose résumés have patterns like those of previous systems engineers. If the organization has historically hired mostly men for that position, the AI might downgrade résumés from candidates who, for example, attended a women's college or belong to a women's organization. In essence, the types of job candidates who've been overlooked in the past will continue to be overlooked.

So data can be accurate but also skewed. "It's not about data lying," says Ifeoma Ajunwa, JD, PhD, a law professor and founding director of the Artificial Intelligence and Decision Making Research Program at the University of North Carolina School of Law. "It's more about data having incongruities. Data can be incomplete, data can be inaccurate, and data can also be biased if the collection procedures were biased."

Bias also gets introduced because humans make judgments, which then show up in the data. "Someone saying, 'Oh, we like to hire people from certain schools' can actually be code," says Ajunwa, who authored *The Quantified Worker: Law and Technology in the Modern Workplace*. "It can be a way to say we are hiring people from a certain economic class or we are choosing white males because those are predominantly the types of people



"It's not about data lying. It's more about data having incongruities. Data can be incomplete, data can be inaccurate, and data can also be biased."

who went to those schools. But if you couch it as, 'We like people who went to X school,' then it's hidden."

That bias might be shared by just a few managers, but AI helps it spread. "What if those managers are now in charge of training the AI?" Ajunwa posits. "Then that bias can infect the entire system. So AI can actually amplify bias and continue to replicate it."

Reducing bias

It's not possible to remove AI bias completely, and some bias is actually

beneficial. If you're trying to address hepatitis in women, for example, you'd want data from women. But detecting and mitigating unfair bias has become a focus of organizations that want to ensure equity and protect their brand.

"The first step [for organizations] is to ask themselves, Are we adopting this AI system because it is truly relevant for our work, or are we doing it because it's fashionable?" says Ajunwa.

It's prudent to question the belief that technology always offers the best solution, a tendency called "techno-chauvinism," a term coined by Joy Buolamwini, PhD, an AI researcher whose TED Talk on algorithmic bias has garnered more than 1.6 million views.

For companies that choose to use AI, DataRobot suggests training employees on AI bias prevention and perhaps even hiring an AI bias or ethics expert.

Then, when purchasing an AI tool, Ajunwa advises companies to carefully examine the claims made by the vendor. In DataRobot's survey, only two in five companies said that their vendors are very transparent about steps taken to protect against bias.

Organizations like the Data & Trust Alliance are stepping in to help. The Alliance is a consortium of 26 businesses and organizations—kept purposefully small—that joined forces to create and adopt responsible practices around intelligent systems. Its first project was a procurement questionnaire that any company can use to screen AI vendors, so they know exactly what they're buying.

"Any time you want to bring AI into your environment, you have to have a good understanding of the value it's going to give you and the risks, bias being one of them," says Saira Jesani, deputy executive director of the Alliance. She notes that in 2021, bias became the issue that most concerned Alliance members, overtaking concerns around privacy.

More than 80 experts—from member companies and external sources—representing a cross-section of gender and racial diversity, helped develop the AI vendor questionnaire. "We have a distinguished engineer at IBM, the head of DEI at the NFL, the assistant general counsel at Nike," Jesani says. "We then validated their work by 200 experts across HR, AI, and also academia and vendors."

The questionnaire—which comes in a robust version with 55 questions or a briefer version for newbies—is free to any organization that wants to evaluate AI vendors. "We created education to go with it that gives basics on AI and bias," Jesani says. "It also explains what each question means, why it's important, and what a good answer looks like—red, yellow, green."

Ajunwa says it's also important to implement guardrails in the future. "That might be instituting auditing mechanisms and protocols to check

Automation and AI: What's the Difference?

The terms *automation* and *artificial intelligence* are sometimes employed interchangeably, but they're not the same.

Automation involves using machines or software to perform repetitive or time-consuming tasks, like assembling a car or doing a complex math problem. Humans create a set of rules and automation follows them.

Some automation uses **artificial intelligence** (AI) to mimic the way humans think. Artificial intelligence learns on its own and can reason, provide insights, and create. The popular AI chatbot ChatGPT, for example, can write a poem in a particular style.

that the AI is doing what it's supposed to do," she says.

To stay informed about the latest issues related to AI bias, companies can keep tabs on watchdog organizations like the Algorithmic Justice League, the ACLU, and the Electronic Privacy Information Center.

Evolving laws

Some companies are taking the initiative to mitigate AI bias, but it's something that all organizations that use AI will need to address.

The EEOC is ramping up its enforcement efforts against automated discrimination, with a focus on AI bias. Meanwhile, New York City became the first local jurisdiction requiring employers using AI for hiring and promotion to conduct AI bias audits, with other cities expected to follow suit.

In October 2022, the Biden Administration issued a Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights. In February 2023, President

Biden signed an executive order requiring federal agencies to mitigate bias in their AI tools. That same month, he signed another executive order establishing eight guidelines for AI safety, including around equity and civil rights. There's also been talk about federal regulation.

According to DataRobot's report, 81 percent of tech leaders want the government to regulate AI bias. Their concerns around AI bias include loss of customer trust (56 percent), reputational damage (50 percent), loss of employee trust (42 percent), lawsuits (25 percent), and eroding shareholder value (22 percent).

"A lot of employers using automated hiring are not necessarily nefarious or ill-intentioned," Ajunwa says. "On the other hand, because of the lack of regulation, vendors can make all sorts of claims that could be deceptive to the employer. [Regulations can] put the vendor on notice as to what's allowed and what's not allowed in developing the AI. They also would help the employer know what sort of uses [of AI] would be seen as potentially discriminatory."

Building better AI

A more diverse tech community could also help create more fair-minded AI. "Think about the work of Timnit Gebru and Joy Buolamwini showing that, for example, some facial recognition systems had trouble recognizing darker-skinned folks," Ajunwa says. "This clearly shows that those systems were not tested on darker-skinned folks. So [having] darker-skinned folks, people of different genders, of different sexual orientations in Silicon Valley would help obviate those kinds of problems because those types of people would raise that issue at the design stage."

Jesani says those outside the tech world also have a role. "They should [share their] opinion of how to get the most out of AI and to regulate it," she says. "There's a call for all voices to be heard." **IN**

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As more people transition, companies are learning how to be a safe and inclusive space for their trans employees

BY KATELYN BURNS

Transgender people have long been last in line when it comes to employment. It was legal to discriminate against trans people in most states up until relatively recently, when the Supreme Court ruled in favor of trans rights in its 2020 decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*. The decision meant that companies even in the most conservative states must now, by law, accommodate trans employees.

Thankfully, many large companies were working to better support their trans employees years before the Supreme Court decision.

When *Time* magazine featured actress Laverne Cox on its cover in 2014, it was the first time a large, mainstream publication spotlighted the challenges—and success and happiness—of transgender people. Many consider the moment a trans turning point.

Ever since, the corporate sector has been evolving to support its trans employees amid a constantly shifting legal and political landscape. Faced with more public awareness of trans people and the process of transitioning, many companies were forced to write new policies outlining the arrangements for an employee to transition genders on the job.

While there are precious few hard statistics accounting for the trans community—the addition of questions to gather census data related to the trans community has been blocked for several years now—anecdotal evidence points to several waves of more trans people coming out publicly since the turning point.

But now that policies have been written and stress-tested with multiple employee transitions and trans people are facing a worsening political environment, it's worth revisiting how large companies can continue to support their trans employees in 2024.

A new wave of employees transitioning started in 2020 during the COVID lockdown. Suddenly, millions of white-collar workers were doing their jobs from home. They no longer had to dress up to go to the office or interact with colleagues face to face. It opened opportunities for self-exploration of their



gender, along with time away from colleagues to get through the early transition, an inevitable awkward phase for a lot of trans people.

Such was the case for Serena Jamison, a 43-year-old senior regulatory compliance analyst in the United States for Siemens, a German multinational technology conglomerate. She began her early medical transition over the first part of the pandemic, taking the opportunity to go through the shifting appearance phase away from the inquisitive eyes at the office. But when she finally returned to the office, the reception from her colleagues blew her away.

“When I did have the chance to go into the office a few times in fall and early winter, I found out that the admins in my office had taken it upon themselves to change my nameplate [to my new name],” she says. “That was honestly one of the most beautiful things that I could ever see happen. I didn’t even have to ask them. They just took my old nameplate out, put my new nameplate in.”

Jamison credits the supportive environment fostered at Siemens for the warm reception she received. Alongside that, she credits the company’s health insurance coverage of transition-related procedures and its human resources process for supporting her transition for making it possible to begin the transition in the first place.

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“We had conversations once a week or so to work through [my transition],” she says. “Siemens does have corporate policies about what steps one should take when it comes to transitioning in the workplace.”

According to Jamison, the Siemens HR department was critical to her successful workplace transition. Early in the process, she was able to bring in an HR representative to work with her, her managers, and team members as the set of events—from coming out to social transition to paperwork changes—worked their way through to completion.

The process for supporting a person’s transition cuts across corporate departments, according to Marcos Garcia, the deputy director of the workplace equality program for the Human Rights

Campaign. According to Garcia, the foundation for any good corporate trans-inclusion policy is being a welcoming and affirming place for trans people. “When I think about nondiscrimination, harassment, anti-bullying, it’s about making sure that gender identity is included in those policies,” he says. “Alongside that, it’s making sure your HR department is capturing sexual orientation and gender identity information in its HR systems or in surveys that it may provide to employees on employee satisfaction.”

Garcia leads the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index, the preeminent index for corporate LGBTQ equality. The index measures how inclusive companies are by examining their policies on dress code, bathroom access, and health insurance policies as well as specific trans-inclusion policies in HR. The Index reveals that 66 percent of Fortune 500 companies provide trans-inclusive benefits.

Garcia says that developing an employee-led process for trans people to go through their gender transition at work is critical to supporting trans employees. But policies alone are often not enough to ensure that trans employees are happy and productive, especially in the current political moment when misgendering trans



people is often a political statement for conservatives.

“People stay at a company not just because of their policies but because they’re welcoming and affirming,” he says. “It’s about the culture and whether or not their team is affirming of them. And I think that in this moment where trans folks are getting anti-trans legislation across the country, companies can step up and be out loud and proud about affirming their trans employees.”

The American Civil Liberties Union has (as of late 2023) identified 505 state-level anti-LGBTQ bills, the majority of which directly attack the everyday lives of trans people. These bills have come with an increasingly hostile political environment for trans people, in which everything from trans people’s bodies and genders to bathroom usage has become fodder for a public debate.

Company leaders should be aware that some employees could attempt to harass a trans coworker with intentional misgendering or deadnaming, the act of using a trans person’s birth name. There have been recent court cases in which employees have claimed they can use such language because it’s protected as free speech or religious freedom. But for most trans employees, working under

such harassment is difficult or impossible to endure.

One way many companies have found to support their trans employees is through creating specialized employee resource groups (ERGs). They can provide a space for trans and queer employees to work through the challenges they face in the workplace. Managers whose companies are large enough, with enough trans employees, should consider establishing a trans-specific ERG, or at least create an opportunity for trans employees to form a subgroup as part of the larger company LGBTQ+ ERG. Trans employees have slightly different needs and challenges from their cis queer colleagues, and providing their own space can add value to a trans employee’s experience.

A way to offer the chance for closeted employees to join the LGBTQ+ ERG is through keeping an unpublicized list for those who want to be a part of the group but not publicly as well as the official list of those publicly identifying as being in the ERG. Another way to ease this tension is by encouraging allies to join the group without taking over the decision-making process.

While Jamison provides a good look into how companies can support rank-and-file employee gender transitions, Michele Bettencourt’s transition tells

Definitions

Transgender: An umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth.

Misgendering: The purposeful or accidental use of incorrect pronouns for an individual. It’s most often done to trans people, but anyone can be misgendered.

Deadnaming: The purposeful or accidental use of a trans person’s birth name instead of their chosen name.

Transition: Transitions can come in many forms. They may be either medical or social (or both). A medical transition involves changing a trans person’s body through medication, devices, or surgery to better fit their gender identity. A social transition is the process for coming out and publicly identifying with their new identity. This is the process that usually most closely involves employers and human resources.



a very different story, that of someone transitioning at the highest levels of corporate leadership. Bettencourt is currently the executive chairman of Corelight, a security company, and the chairperson at WalkMe, a tech coaching company.

She was 57 years old when she came out to her family and began her transition in 2017. At the time, she was CEO of Imperva, a cybersecurity company. She was, she says, outed by an activist investor who was upset over her sale of some company stock. Eventually she hired her replacement, stepped down as CEO, and left the board in 2018.

She looks back on the experience with a mixture of emotions. “I learned that when you run a company, it’s not the place for your coming-out party,” Bettencourt says. “I should have had my own coming-out party, not on the company nickel, not with all the distractions of a public company. So when I stepped down, it gave me a chance to go be me, gave me a chance to find a good psychiatrist, get on the meds, hormones, and blockers, and figure myself out.”

Bettencourt says she faced some “silly” questions from her board at the time of her coming out. Questions like “Why didn’t you tell us?” She says she didn’t begrudge the questions. “When

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the public money’s involved, when you’ve got shareholders, you have a level of responsibility,” she says. “It may not be right that the CEO’s gender orientation can impact stock prices. It’s not an excuse for anyone, but when you’ve got investors who may want to know, and you’ve got analysts and folks who are going to reference this when they write about the stock, you need to take that big picture into account.”

Bettencourt believes she wouldn’t have had the opportunities to advance so high in the corporate world if she had transitioned younger. “Had I transitioned at 30, I would not be on this call with you,” she says. “That opportunity

would’ve never happened. You’re [institutionally] blocked. And number two, you’ve got to work through the mental anxiety of transitioning, which is pretty significant. It’s worse for some than others. I was shocked at how it leveled me. I thought I was super strong, but this was unlike anything I’ve been through before.”

Despite protective policies in place at the majority of Fortune 500 companies, both Bettencourt and Jamison question whether the average corporation today truly offers an equal opportunity to its trans employees. It’s one thing to be supportive and affirming; it’s another thing to ensure that your trans employees have room to grow in the company.

That can be the next step in corporate support for trans employees: creating opportunity. Companies need to ensure their employment opportunities are reaching trans candidates, and that current trans employees see a future with the company, devoid of everyday workplace discrimination. Create a welcoming environment for trans people and give them a vision of a growing future, and you will have loyal trans employees for life. **IN**

Katelyn Burns is a freelance journalist and trans woman. She was previously the first ever openly trans Capitol Hill reporter.

FRESH TAKE

Integrating Menopause into DEI Policies and Practices

BY NADINE O. VOGEL

More and more companies are prioritizing policies and practices that ensure an inclusive work environment. This includes issues related to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, and ability. And while everyone agrees that gender equality is an important aspect of DEI, menopause, as well as its impact on employees, remains a taboo topic—one that is considered a personal, private matter.

Integrating menopause into a company's DEI initiatives illustrates the organization's commitment to valuing, supporting, and acknowledging employees who may be experiencing the myriad physical, emotional, and mental symptoms that occur during this phase of life. And while these symptoms range in type and severity, they can impact the employee's capacity to bring their whole self to work, a key DEI concept.

Another key DEI concept is that of intersectionality, which refers to the ways in which the different aspects of a person's identity can intersect to affect how they are viewed by others. DEI practitioners must acknowledge everything that can marginalize people, and they must recognize that marginalization is related not only to gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and ability, but also how those identities overlap. For instance, women of color tend to begin menopause at earlier ages than their white peers,



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disrupt employees' ability to focus due to lack of sleep or cause embarrassment from visible perspiration.

Mood swings, anxiety, and depression are just some of the more common emotional challenges that can have an impact on employees' engagement with colleagues and overall job satisfaction. Challenges with memory and concentration, often referred to as brain fog, can have an effect on employees' productivity.

These symptoms can negatively impact both the employee and the employer in terms of productivity, profitability, and retention.

This presents DEI leaders with an opportunity to ensure that the

have longer menopause transitions, and experience more intense menopausal symptoms.

Menopause is a natural and inevitable phase of life, but it also comes with challenges for many. Some of the most common challenges are physical. These include hot flashes, night sweats, even joint pain, all of which can

organization is both supportive and inclusive to those experiencing menopause. First and foremost is the opportunity to provide education. From training sessions and interactive dialogues to providing online resources, these actions will begin to create a culture of awareness and understanding for everyone. Education is the foundation for what should follow, which includes but is not limited to the creation of policies and practices that serve to accommodate the unique needs of these individuals. Practices may include flexible work arrangements, a no-judgment policy if taking sick leave for symptoms related to menopause, individual temperature control options, menopause-specific health-care and emotional-support resources, menopause-related leave programs, and uniform/dress flexibility. It is imperative that the policies and practices that are created are effective and compliant while ensuring that each person's needs are addressed and respected.

Having such policies and practices in place sends a clear message to all employees that menopause, well-being, and the full spectrum of human experiences are an important part of DEI and the organization as a whole. **IN**

Nadine O. Vogel, CEO of Springboard Consulting, works with corporations around the globe on disability inclusion of candidates, employees, and customers.



Dr. Denise L. Caleb

First Vice President, Director of Human Capital Consulting, **Alliant**

Denise L. Caleb is one of the country's leading experts on diversity, equity, and inclusion. A chief HR officer

twice, she has more than 25 years of experience in human resources, business development, and executive leadership roles. Dr. Caleb is focused on innovating and leading human capital strategies to enhance DEI capabilities at consulting firm Alliant.

Prior to her role with Alliant, Dr. Caleb was the inaugural president of Human Resource Standards Institute (HRSI) and senior vice president of global diversity and inclusion external strategy at Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI), providing and advancing the organization's strategic expansion and multi-sector growth.

Dr. Caleb has supported numerous Fortune 500 organizations, including Walgreens; Ford Motor Credit Company, the financial arm of the Ford Motor Company; Education Management Corporation, under the Goldman Sachs umbrella; San Juan Regional Medical Center; and the University of Kansas Health System, serving on a total of eight executive teams. In addition to the health system's HR, she was responsible for employee health, occupational health, and urgent care, which had more than 30,000 visits per year. While in higher education, she provided HR leadership for 13 campus locations and Western State College of Law in California. Dr. Caleb, who currently serves on the Rockies Venture Club board, is also a military spouse of 27 years.

Photo Courtesy: The Female Shooter, Chermetra Keys, BSBA, CCMA, Portrait Photographer (Info@thefemaleshoota.com)

Inclusion: What should companies be prioritizing in 2024 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

Denise Caleb: The prioritization of the employee value proposition (EVP) is at the top of my list, because it merges purpose, inclusion, belonging, and engagement into one critical set of work that I believe to be at the cusp of organizational success or failure. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we started to see a shift in employees wanting more from their work-life relationship with their employer. Many would refer to this as an individual purpose. When people had an opportunity to sit back, slow down, and process their lives, many of us decided we wanted and deserved more. This was when aligning purpose and values to the organization became much more critical.

Fast-forward to the current VUCA [volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous] times that we are navigating, with different types and levels of uncertainty. Employees are still longing for alignment, balance, or what I refer to as a positive blend of work-life integration. Developing a well-crafted EVP can make the organization's success sustainable and progressive growth possible. When it's done right, I refer to the EVP as an integral component of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. It can create this hire-to-retire mentality, where the employee who is treated well and allowed to share their authenticity sees themselves as contributing to the organization and sees their value come to fruition.

Since I was a little girl, I have wanted to work with and be tied to an organization that values my talents and unique personality. When an organization designs an attractive EVP, the employer brand is elevated and recognized by the employee population, managers, leaders, and the community. Each day, I feel fortunate that, through our work at Alliant, I can partner with and bring this type of service to the market to expedite organizational solutions, resulting in desired outcomes for our clients.

“DEI practitioners can push their shoulders back, stick their chests out, and hold their heads high knowing that this work matters. Each day, we have the opportunity to positively influence the workforce and workplace through the work of DEI.”

IN: In 2022, increasingly, many companies began pulling back from their commitment to DEI. How can DEI practitioners combat that retreat and convince their companies of the value of continuing, even expanding, that investment?

DC: The retreat and departure from DEI are not uncommon. Since the beginning of DEI work, the peaks and valleys, the highs and lows have been prevalent. This is what drives the necessity for resiliency. As DEI practitioners, strategists, and leaders, we must stay the course. There will continue to be influences in this field of work that impact the level of engagement and commitment we can drive among certain leaders and workplaces. My philosophy has been to remain attentive to the individuals who want to do the work to drive business outcomes and employee experiences.

DEI practitioners can push their shoulders back, stick their chests out, and hold their heads high knowing that this work matters. Each day, we have the opportunity to positively influence the workforce and workplace through the work of DEI. We can continue and should continue to cast a wide net to bring people along the DEI journey. Those who do not come along should not be forced or given an overabundance of our time. When doing DEI work, we must be protective of our time, mindful of how we leverage our talents, and prideful of exercising our treasures. Working overtime to convince those who are not aligned with the philosophy of the work can be inefficient.

Here are three ways that I recommended utilizing DEI practitioners to provide an introductory foundation to the investment of DEI:

Introspection | Know yourself, your purpose, intersections, and the story you want to contribute to the work. People want to learn from vulnerable, candid, and real people. Knowing yourself and how you can positively impact others is the only way.

Influence | Build a compelling business case that leans into the value, research, and outcomes to influence deeper understanding and engagement with DEI.

Resiliency | Having the right allies around you is critical. This is hard work, and when your DEI practitioners do not have the right mentor, coach, or sponsors around them, they will be at risk of burnout and turnover.

IN: What brought you to do this work? Is there a story from your childhood that inspired you in this direction?

DC: During second grade, when my class was preparing to go out for recess, my teacher attempted to have everyone line up in some orderly



fashion. She asked us to form two lines. As kids shuffled around and would not stay still, she said both lines were not doing well enough to be dismissed. She took her finger and pointed to the leader of each line. She looked at me and said, “Eenie, meenie, miny, moe, catch an ‘N’ by its toe.”

For a moment, I felt like I froze and could not move.

It was one of those times, of many, that you don’t forget, and you can remember when the event took place and what you were doing, such as the beating of Rodney King, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the killing of George Floyd. In our lifetimes, we’ve all had a moment when we’ve paused and said, What happened?

At seven years old, I did not understand the impact and magnitude of the incident, aside from the fact that it felt inherently wrong. I knew it was a feeling I did not want to experience again.

This childhood memory is one of many that have lasted and made me want to ensure equity and justice through my HR career and DEI work, where there is inclusion and belonging for all within the workplace. Throughout my career, it has been my goal to create spaces where no one feels that ache in the pit of their stomach or a moment in time that never dissipates.

That is why I do the work, to invent outcomes that allow employees to feel a sense of safety, celebration, and inclusion, allowing their purpose to be utilized. From early in my career, I have known, no matter

what my role has been in the organization: I am responsible for the work of DEI.

IN: How do you use data and metrics to measure DEI success?

DC: Data is critical and valuable if you measure what matters to the workforce and the community. The mirror effect continues to be a starting point for evaluating underrepresentation, which is vital for reaching representation. When employees live and work in an environment where their employment and that of others do not mirror the community in which they live, the goal of representation remains unanswered.

IN: In the last few years, with so much happening in the world and country that impacted all of us, how can organizations and teams deal with the fatigue and sense of being overwhelmed by the scope and speed of the work required to increase equity in the organization?

DC: Brilliant question without an easy solution, and no one approach will work for all. In the simplest of terms, so many of us are striving for balance. My resolve years ago was to embrace what I refer to as “work-life integration.”

I have operated in a state of work-life integration for nearly 25 years, meaning my personal and professional lives have been tightly woven. My family, friends, and colleagues all know a little about critical aspects of my life. I also have interpreted my roles with a blended mindset of what looks right for my lifestyle. It works for me! At least, I think it has.

I hope my career philosophy has the outcomes I had expected as a working professional and parent. It was a tough decision, and I am attempting to navigate work-life integration without regrets.

With so much work and the rapid rate at which work must be completed, we must rely on efficiency tools and find peace with what does and does not work. How you approach the abundance of the work, and the rate of speed at which you need to complete the work, must become a personal choice that works for you and your family. **IN**



Johnnetta Betsch Cole, PhD

Staunch Supporter of **IDEAS**

**Inclusion, Diversity,
Equity, Accessibility,
and Social Justice**

Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole rose to national prominence as the first African American woman to be named president of Spelman College. She later became president of Bennett College, making her the only person to serve as president of both historically Black

colleges for women in the United States. She has held teaching and administrative positions in anthropology, women's studies, and African American studies at major academic institutions.

After retiring from academia, Dr. Cole served as director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. During her tenure, the museum expanded its outreach to

African immigrant communities, opened its first exhibition on the African continent, and aimed to substantially boost the number of African women artists' works in its exhibitions and permanent collection.

Dr. Cole was also a principal consultant with Cook Ross (now Be Equitable) and a senior consulting fellow at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, bringing her DEAI expertise to both positions. She has additionally served on the corporate boards of Coca-Cola Enterprises (the first woman to do so), Home Depot, Merck (the first Black woman to do so), and Nation's Bank South.

Dr. Cole was the first African American to serve as chair of the board of United Way of America and was president and chair of the board of the National Council of Negro Women. She currently serves on the board of the A.L. Lewis Museum and is a senior fellow at the Kettering Foundation.

Her published works include *Racism in American Public Life: A Call to Action*, *African Proverbs for All Ages*, and *Speechifying: The Words and Legacy of Johnnetta Betsch Cole*. Dr. Cole has received numerous awards and 70 honorary degrees. On March 21, 2023, she was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Joseph R. Biden.

Inclusion: What brought you to do this work?

Johnnetta Betsch Cole: I have been engaged in the work that I now refer to with the acronym IDEAS—inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and social justice—since I was a youngster, growing up in Jacksonville, Florida. Those were the days of legal racial discrimination that was based on the ideology of white supremacy and expressed through acts of systemic racism in every sector of the life of African American people.

While I grew up as a Black girl, I did not grow up poor; however, class did not trump race and gender then, and it does not do so now. In my hometown, I and all in my extended family were well-known because of my maternal great-grandfather, Abraham Lincoln Lewis. A.L. Lewis, as he preferred to be called, was born in 1865, the last of the children of Judy and Robert Lewis, who had been enslaved in Madison County, Florida. A.L. Lewis only had an elementary education, but he went on to become a businessman, a philanthropist, and a civil rights advocate. He was also Florida's first Black millionaire.

During my childhood, Black people could not try on clothes in stores that were owned by white people. However, because of who my family was, someone in the main department store in downtown Jacksonville would periodically call up my mother and say that she could bring my sister and me to try on clothes after the department store was closed. When

"I not only understand and do IDEAS work that is informed and motivated by my own multiple identities, but my work respects, honors, and supports the multiple identities of people in other marginalized communities."

I was 10 years old, and we were driving home after my mother had bought some dresses that my sister and I had just tried on that night, I said to my mother, "Mama, if I cannot try on clothes in the light of day, please don't ever take me again to try on clothes in the darkness of night." And I never did!

IN: Tell us about one of the greatest challenges you confronted.

JBC: In 1982, at the invitation of Dr. Donna Shalala, who was then the president of Hunter College, I assumed the position of Russell Sage Visiting Professor of Anthropology at that college and the director of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program at the City University of New York. I also taught women's studies at Hunter before I became the first African American woman to serve as the president of Spelman College. It was while I was at Hunter College that I met Audre Lorde, who was also a professor at Hunter.

Audre Lorde would often introduce herself by saying, "I am Audre Lorde, a Black woman, feminist, lesbian, mother, professor, poet, and warrior!" Speaking from her own multiple identities, Sister Audre forever changed how I do IDEAS work and laid the foundation for what I think is my greatest success. Namely, I not only understand and do IDEAS work that is informed and motivated by my own multiple identities, but my work respects, honors, and supports the multiple identities of people in other marginalized communities.

When Audre Lorde first confronted me about my homophobia and heterosexism, I was shocked. But I came to accept that she was right in pointing out that because I was a social justice activist on issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and religion did not mean that I was informed by scholarship about heterosexism and had done the inner work to confront and address my own views and practices that were centered in heterosexism.

IN: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2024 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

JBC: In recent years, much of my work as an

“We need to give far more attention to presenting our work in a way that ensures organizations don’t reject it.”

advocate for inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and social justice “IDEAS” in companies is carried out with my colleague and brother-friend Howard Ross, who is well-known and highly respected for how he continues to teach and learn about IDEAS, implicit bias, and belonging.

In the work that we do together, Howard and I see that, across our nation, there is more and more “them vs. us” thought and action and less and less attention to ways to bring people together across their differences. Companies should prioritize ways for their employees to experience a sense of community in the face of these highly polarized times that we are in.

IN: What sort of impact do you expect the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action to have?

JBC: While it remains to be seen what effects the Supreme Court’s ruling on affirmative action in higher education will have on businesses, it has already had a chilling effect on corporate efforts for greater inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in their workplaces. We are going to have to be creative about how we continue to address the kind of disparities that are so real in workplaces, and we are going to have to do so even in the face of opposition to “diversity programs” in businesses—an opposition that is now firmly in place as a law in the state-supported colleges and universities of Florida, Texas, and Alabama, and as of September 2023 was being considered in nine other states.

Corporations also must face the challenge of keeping their employees physically and psychologically safe as they are confronted with racist, misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic public policies. And it is vitally important that companies make sure their employees know that they stand beside them.



As IDEAS practitioners, we must be willing to do some soul-searching about our own work and seriously inquire as to whether the approaches and strategies we take are focused more on “being right” and less about which policies and practices can lead to the kind of change that is spoken about but is far from being practiced. Sometimes in our ardor for doing our IDEAS work, we have not been as conscious as we need to be about what can effectuate fundamental change, rather than what makes us feel good. Simply put, we need to give far more attention to presenting our work in a way that ensures organizations don’t reject it. There is wisdom in this saying: When you go fishing, you should bait the hook with what the fish likes to eat, not what you like to eat!

IN: You are often referred to as an exemplary mentor for people who are IDEAS professionals and those who aspire to do that work. What is your basic approach to mentoring?

JBC: I strongly believe that every relationship is more authentic, rich, effective, rewarding, and joyful when it is centered in reciprocity. Thus, while I understand and will carry out my responsibility to guide, teach, encourage, and support my mentees, I also expect to receive benefits from each of my mentees.

There is a widespread assumption that mentees, because they are usually younger than their mentors, have little to teach their mentors. That is not true. Indeed, I learn enormously from my mentees, who have experiences, ideas, and practices that are quite different from my own. When we work together across generations, each of us can serve as a teacher as well as a learner. There is an African proverb that captures the value of this kind of reciprocity: She who learns must teach, and she who teaches must learn. Dr. Sheila Robinson, with whom I regularly interact as one of her mentors, is an IDEAS professional who I continue to learn from and am inspired by. **DW**



The Executive Leadership Council (ELC)

The Executive Leadership Council (ELC)

is the preeminent global membership organization for Black CEOs, C-suite and senior executives, board members, top-tier entrepreneurs, and global thought leaders. The ELC and its members work to build an inclusive business leadership pipeline that empowers global Black leaders to make impactful contributions to the marketplace and the global communities they serve.

Here, we feature the thought leadership of board chair Gale V. King, president and CEO Michael C. Hyter, and cofounder James G. Kaiser.



Gale V. King

Corporate director, chair of The Executive Leadership Council, retired executive vice president and chief administrative officer at Nationwide Insurance, and community leader

Gale V. King is the elected chair of The Executive Leadership Council. During her time as executive vice president and chief administrative officer for Nationwide, she led the enterprise's human resources, corporate real estate, corporate security, and aviation departments. King has made meaningful impact throughout her career by evolving human resources strategies, policies, and benefits that created a more engaged and inclusive culture. She brings this wealth of expertise and a compassionate leadership approach to The ELC.

King also serves on the boards of several major corporations, including AutoZone and Unum Group. She currently serves on the board of directors for the University of Florida Foundation. She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Florida.



Michael C. Hyter

President and CEO of The Executive Leadership Council

Michael C. Hyter is an accomplished senior executive, leadership consultant, author, and thought leader. He is widely known for his success in developing enterprise leaders and their next-generation successors. For more than 25 years, Hyter has served as a trusted advisor to senior leaders in a variety of industries. He brings a wealth of leadership experience to The ELC in the areas of CEO succession, chief executive and executive leadership development, and strategic diversity and inclusion consulting.

Prior to leading The ELC, Hyter was chief diversity officer of global organizational consulting firm Korn Ferry. He also led the firm's Washington, DC, office. Hyter's work is guided by the belief that one of the most effective ways to positively impact an organization's bottom line is by growing and developing the organization's talent.

Hyter serves on the board of directors of Dine Brands Global Inc., sitting on the Nominating and Governance Committee, and is a member of the Economic Club of Washington, DC. In 2018, *Savoy* magazine named him as one of the most influential Black people in Corporate America.



James G. Kaiser

Cofounder

James G. Kaiser is a retired executive with 55 years of business experience with Fortune 300 companies, including serving on boards, in operational management, and in entrepreneurial roles. This includes 30 years of experience with Corning Inc., spanning a portfolio of nine businesses with 70 product lines in specialty glass manufacturing (consumer and industrial) and environmental services internationally (Europe, Latin America, Asia). He also served as CEO of Quanterra Inc., the largest environmental testing company in the United States. He transitioned to work as an investor and entrepreneur, including 15 years as chairman and CEO of Avenir Partners Inc. dba Lexus of Memphis.

Kaiser also served as a member of the board of directors for four Fortune 300 companies (Dow Corning Ltd., Stanley Works, Sunoco Inc., and MeadWestvaco Corporation), three joint ventures, in numerous industries, and in community, academic, professional, and entrepreneurial organizations.

He is a founding member of The Executive Leadership Council and is a co-architect of the original strategy that launched The ELC (with Mannie Jackson of Honeywell Inc., who was the third president and a founding member of The ELC).

“We believe that leaders, like those in our partner companies and many others, understand the value of talent being color and gender inclusive.”

— Gale V. King

“If we want to bring about equal representation in Corporate America, our work must begin in communities.”

— James G. Kaiser

Q&A

Inclusion: Equity is now taking center stage over diversity and even inclusion. How can an organization best ensure equity?

James G. Kaiser: Equity is what our country is all about! Our Declaration of Independence states that all men (and women) are created equal. Practically, we must reject the biases that try to take away this founding principle. When we formed The ELC, our first goal was to guarantee a pipeline of executives that would someday replace us, and our second goal was to provide access to the wealth that corporations create to make our communities more successful, stronger, and more equitable.

We have been very successful in growing The ELC from 20 to nearly 900 Black executives today. There is a tremendous sense of pride in the progress we have generated, but we are also dismayed by the lack of progress in helping our communities become more equitable in reaching the American dream. We clearly have much work to do, and that includes exploring new strategies to improve the future of our communities and to eliminate racism.

From a business standpoint, the cost of racism is overwhelming when you consider its impact on our fundamental systems—health care, education, judicial and welfare systems, etcetera. These are the systems Americans fund through our taxes each year. If we could reduce the cost of these systems by just 50 percent and invest in our communities, we could dramatically impact our communities and go beyond equity to something closer to parity.

Michael C. Hyter: Companies can best ensure equity by adopting a skills-first approach to talent acquisition [versus evaluating candidates solely on college credentials], diversify talent pipelines through work-based experiences, invest resources in cross-training and upskilling, and have impactful mentor and sponsorship programs.

IN: What are some examples of what The ELC is doing to advance gender equity for Black women?

Gale V. King: The ELC continues to consult with members and partner companies to understand the issues facing their organizations, including evaluating existing policies and programs. One of our most-used best practices tools is around pay equity—helping member-affiliated corporations understand the necessity of pay equity and working with them to have greater transparency in compensation targets. The ELC’s Women’s Leadership Forum (WLF), Power of Women at Work (POWW), and others are excellent programs that showcase the brilliance of our Black women members and the support the organization provides to them, and how they uplift and amplify each other.

IN: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2024 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

MCH: Companies should be prioritizing the effective development of Black talent, and positioning talent early to develop skills that provide the foundation for managing businesses [P&L]. There is often too much focus on recruitment and not enough of an effort on developing talent to a standard happening right now. Companies should also leverage employee engagement data to better understand where opportunities exist for company culture and talent management, including in the areas of equity, company culture, and upskilling.

IN: In the last few years, with so much happening in the world and country that impacted all of us, how have you helped your organization and team deal with the fatigue and sense of being overwhelmed by the scope and speed of the work required to increase equity in organizations?

GVK: The staff and the membership of The ELC are purpose driven around the mission of the organization and recognize the moment that we are in as a country. While we are collectively disappointed by some actors’ efforts to take the country backward around the necessity of diversity, equity, and inclusion, our staff and

“Companies should be prioritizing the effective development of Black talent, and positioning talent early to develop skills that provide the foundation for managing P&L.”

— Michael C. Hyter

membership remain fueled by and steadfast to The ELC’s efforts to engage Corporate America and beyond toward greater parity in the C-suite. We have been fortunate to see the impact of corporations that are making positive change. And we believe that leaders, like those in our partner companies and many others, understand the value of talent being color and gender inclusive. These inclusive practices yield dividends for shareholders and stakeholders alike. The ELC is proud to continue this work in partnership with our corporate partners through this time of challenge.

IN: What is the key for bringing about equity in organizations—and meeting business goals?

JGK: Over the last 20 years, we have seen white Americans become the “majority minority” in America and across the workforce. Given the composition of American demographics, our workforce is more diverse, which is a distinct American benefit that good leaders can leverage for a competitive advantage for our companies. Some of these advantages include diversity of thought, lived experience and skills, language, appreciation of cultural nuances, etcetera. After all, how you think about an opportunity/problem is informed by your perspective or approach. Diversity allows you to have multiple entry points to problem solving that will produce better bottom-line business results. When used properly in Corporate America, this gives the United States a strong, distinct advantage over more monolithic countries. Everyone wins when we make diversity a competitive advantage. The cost of racism to America is too high, [and] the country would be financially better off and could be better leveraged for the benefit of all. Everyone wins!

IN: Tell us about The ELC’s greatest success story.

MCH: The ELC’s greatest success story is having built a membership organization of 840 high-ranking Black executives/board members who have the collective ability to influence the development of the pipeline of Black talent through our Leadership Institute programs and the advocacy and reinforcement of increasing Black C-suite, CEO, and board members in public companies. **IN**



Adrienne Trimble

Vice President and Chief Diversity and Culture Officer, **Sysco**

Adrienne Trimble is an established thought leader for advancing corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. She has led DEI and social impact initiatives for large, complex organizations nationally and globally. Trimble began her diversity and inclusion work at Toyota Motor North America, where she worked closely with the company's senior leadership team in developing advocacy and accountability measures to integrate DEI processes across the organization's business operations. She oversaw Toyota's Supplier Diversity initiative from 2005 to 2012. In this role, she grew the company's diverse supplier base to reflect an increase in spending that exceeded 300 percent. Trimble served, as an executive on loan, as the president and CEO for the National Minority Supplier Development Council from August 2018 to February 2021. Under her leadership, the organization grew both the number of corporate members and certified minority businesses and implemented a strategic plan for long-term organizational sustainability.

Inclusion: What impact do you expect the recent Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action to have on corporate DEI efforts, and what can DEI professionals do to prepare?

Adrienne Trimble: Although the Supreme Court ruling was focused on higher education, it has sparked robust discussion regarding the viability of corporate DEI initiatives. As those discussions unfold, it is essential for DEI professionals to remain proactive and adaptive in

their approach, staying attuned to changes in the legal landscape and evolving best practices in the field. DEI professionals can continue to focus on collecting and analyzing data to demonstrate the effectiveness of their strategies. This data can help organizations focus efforts on the most pressing DEI challenges and provide context on the impact the strategies can have on overall business outcomes.

Over the last few months, I've been fortunate to attend several chief diversity officer forums to discuss the current state of DEI initiatives and the path forward. Our discussions suggest that most companies are forging ahead with their planned strategies, albeit more cautiously. This is where communication strategies can be profoundly beneficial. We need to remind internal and external stakeholders of the basic inclusive principles of DEI strategies and the business case advantages. By going back to the fundamentals and aligning DEI efforts with broader business goals, practitioners can show the true economic and business benefit of DEI—regardless of the external challenges we might face.

IN: As offices are returning to a hybrid work model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of their employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

AT: As remote and in-office work continue to coexist, organizations can proactively nurture connections and ensure that all employees feel valued and included. Companies should develop clear policies and guidelines outlining how the hybrid work model will function, including expectations for attendance, communication, and performance. Effective communication is the linchpin of engagement. Organizations should prioritize establishing clear communication channels that accommodate both remote and in-office employees. Regular team meetings, video conferencing, and collaborative messaging platforms help bridge the physical gap.

Camaraderie fosters trust and positive working relationships among team members,

“Practitioners can stress that DEI is not a fleeting trend, but a critical long-term strategy for the organization’s sustainability and growth.”

whether they are working in the office or remotely. When employees feel connected and comfortable with their colleagues, they are more likely to collaborate effectively, share ideas, and work together seamlessly.

Within hybrid work environments, recognition programs become a unifying force that fosters positive morale, promotes a sense of belonging, and motivates employees to excel. They help create a workplace culture that values and appreciates the diverse contributions of all employees, contributing to a more engaged and satisfied workforce.

IN: In 2022, many companies began pulling back from their commitment to DEI. How can DEI practitioners combat that retreat and convince their companies of the value of continuing, even expanding, that investment?

AT: In a world where diversity, equity, and inclusion are not only moral imperatives but also business necessities, DEI practitioners are the vanguards of change. Practitioners can stress

that DEI is not a fleeting trend, but a critical long-term strategy for the organization’s sustainability and growth. We must continually share the business case for DEI, positioning commitment to these principles as a driver of business success and a source of competitive advantage in the marketplace. By making a strong commitment to DEI, companies can greatly impact their customers and their employees as well as the communities they serve.

The demographics of the world are changing rapidly. Populations are becoming more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and more. DEI initiatives are essential to ensure that organizations accurately reflect the makeup of society and their customer base. At Sysco, we will continue to live our values and demonstrate that a diverse workforce is a stronger workforce. Our ultimate goal is to cultivate a workforce and customer base that match the demographics of the communities we serve.

IN: What brought you to do this work? Is there a personal motivation, a story from your childhood or past that inspired you in this direction?

AT: In the early days of my career journey, my ambitions were clear: I aspired to be a civil rights attorney, passionately advocating for justice and equality in a courtroom. The notion of using the law as a powerful tool to champion the rights of the marginalized and disenfranchised had always been a driving force within me. Little did I know that my path would take a turn, leading me toward an entirely different arena where I would continue the fight for fairness and equity on a broader scale.

My initial foray into the world of human resources may have seemed like an unexpected detour from my original dream, but it turned out to

be a pivotal moment of self-discovery. As I immersed myself in the HR field, I quickly realized that it held immense potential for making a profound impact on people's lives, just as my initial career choice had promised.

The realization struck when I observed the director of HR in my organization, a remarkable individual whose actions and decisions resonated deeply with me.

I observed how my former director of HR was the catalyst for policies that shaped the work environment for every employee. Every personnel matter, every policy implementation, and every decision influenced the daily experiences of the workforce.

In my commitment to ensuring that company policies were not only equitable but also applied fairly across the board, I recognized that true equity meant recognizing and addressing the unique circumstances and challenges faced by each individual in the organization. I have always championed the cause of fairness, even when it meant challenging established norms or confronting difficult situations head-on.

This unwavering dedication to creating an equitable and inclusive workplace deeply resonated with me. I saw how DEI principles were not just about compliance, but about fostering an environment where every employee could thrive, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.

I realized that while my dream of becoming a civil rights attorney was noble, the world of HR offered me an opportunity to effect change on a broader canvas, impacting the lives of countless individuals within an organization.

As I look back on my journey, I am grateful for the unexpected twists and turns that have brought me to where I am today. My experiences have taught me that the pursuit of justice and equity can take many forms, and my role in HR has allowed me to make a meaningful difference in the lives of employees and the organizations I serve.

IN: Tell us about your greatest success story—and the greatest challenge you are currently facing.

AT: My greatest success story unfolded when I assumed leadership of the NMSDC [National Minority Supplier Development Council] and advocated for thousands of minority-owned businesses during a global pandemic. It was a time of unprecedented challenges, but it also offered a unique opportunity to make a profound impact. Collaborating with members of Congress and influential business leaders, we tirelessly

“Within hybrid work environments, recognition programs become a unifying force that fosters positive morale, promotes a sense of belonging, and motivates employees to excel.”

advocated for awareness of the critical issues faced by minority-owned businesses. Our goal was to secure the resources necessary to sustain these companies through the economic upheaval caused by the pandemic. It was a rewarding experience to witness the tangible results of our efforts, including special loans, funding, and vital resources that helped these businesses weather the storm.

It's clear that, despite significant efforts, the issues we set out to address years ago persist today. My ongoing challenge is to keep companies focused on these crucial strategies, helping them understand that DEI remains an urgent business imperative. We must continue to champion change, making sure DEI remains at the forefront of our corporate landscape, driving lasting transformation and inclusivity. In the face of efforts to undo progress in DEI, our determination to stay the course is a powerful statement of our values and commitment to a fair and equitable society. It demonstrates that we will not be swayed by temporary setbacks, but will continue working toward a future where diversity, equity, and inclusion are embraced as essential principles that drive positive change in our workplaces and communities.

IN: How do you use data and metrics to measure DEI success?

AT: Always lead with the data. In the DEI space, leading with data isn't just best practice; it's an ethical imperative. It ensures that organizations aren't operating in the dark but are making informed decisions that drive tangible progress toward a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive future. By embracing data as a guiding force, organizations pave the way for meaningful change and lasting impact in the DEI landscape. By making our DEI data accessible and public through an annual report, we're demonstrating our commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

The data in the annual report isn't just a reflection of our successes; it highlights areas where we need to improve. This data-driven approach ensures that resources are allocated where they can make the most significant impact. **IN**



Candi Castleberry

Vice President, Inclusive eXperiences and Technology (IXT) **Amazon**

As Amazon's vice president of Inclusive eXperiences and Technology (formerly Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), and a member of the senior leadership team, Candi Castleberry is focused on leveraging science and technology to drive systemic change in DEI. A visionary change agent with two decades of experience in helping organizations move "from bolted-on to built-in" diversity, Castleberry is leading the integration of DEI throughout the employee, customer, and community experience at Amazon.

Prior to joining the company, Castleberry was vice president of Intersectionality, Culture, and Diversity at X (formerly Twitter). She is also the founder of the award-winning Dignity & Respect Campaign, which helps organizations create environments that nurture cultural awareness and community unity. As an experienced diversity and inclusion leader, she developed successful strategies and initiatives in technology, telecommunications, and health-care companies, including Xerox Corporation, Sun Microsystems, Motorola, and health-care provider and insurer University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC).

“AI can have tremendous upside for DEI. It can accelerate relationship building, upskill, and scale in a way otherwise impossible. At the same time, we can influence this technology so that it helps, not harms.”

Castleberry’s business acumen enhances her approach of partnering with senior executives, business process owners, and community leaders to build sustainable practices for the workplace and marketplace. She

has delivered inspiring keynotes and lectures all over the world, from Beijing to Budapest, and served as an adjunct professor at Carnegie Mellon University. She received an MBA from Pepperdine University and a bachelor’s degree in legal studies from University of California, Berkeley, and completed the Stanford University Executive Human Resources program.

IN: You pioneered the concept of diversity as “bolted on” or “built in” nearly 20 years ago. Does this blueprint still apply today?

CC: At Amazon, we have moved well beyond these two concepts to “born inclusive.” AI and machine learning are making this possible.

I began evolving DEI from “bolted on” to “built in” to “born inclusive.” Born inclusive integrates DEI into internal processes to empower employees and better ensure an inclusive work culture. Historically, and frequently to this day, most DEI initiatives tend to be bolted on—the product has already been built, and we sit a program on top of this existing system so that the results yield a desired outcome. The DEI initiative is bolted on, meaning it’s aftermarket—the product itself doesn’t yield the result without the complementary program.

In other cases, DEI initiatives are built in. For example, say the talent acquisition process is not yielding enough veterans. Instead of changing the hiring system, we tend to build a new process that offers a Band-Aid when what is necessary is addressing how the hiring system was built.

Given that it’s harder to fix something once it’s out there than it is to do it right the first time, these two approaches have limitations and are not scalable.

Today at Amazon, foundational to everything we do—every decision we make, every product—we strive for “born-inclusive” standards. This means that equity and inclusion are integrated from the beginning into the conception and execution of the architecture and design of the products we build. Throughout the company, the work of every person, every task, is done in collaboration with our science and technology teams to leverage AI and machine learning to enhance the employee and customer experience—not to fix a broken experience.

Because of our size, we are able to build customized products for both our employees and our customers. So, for example, when we build our own HR products, DEI is “born inclusive” into that product. The same goes for customer-facing products we create.

This technology is moving so fast that unless we act now, we’re not going to be a part of it. DEI leaders need to be involved every step of



the way—we must give input at every milestone, every checkpoint, as a product is being built. So we need to shift our resources to think about how we integrate DEI into the design to yield the outcomes we want.

Not only does this born-inclusive approach have significant implications today, it will have even greater implications tomorrow. As technology inevitably develops to a place where it will replace more and more human functions, it is imperative that we build products and systems that are inclusive and human centered.

This urgency is why we recently changed the name of our DEI team to Inclusive eXperiences and Technology (IXT). IXT will put into action and accelerate Amazon's creation of inclusive, accessible, and equitable experiences enabled through technology. This new name places our vision—and our approach for achieving it—in front of us at all times.

The lasting imprint this work will have on DEI and people's well-being for generations is the reason I am here at Amazon. This is the future of DEI, and I want to be in at the ground floor.

IN: In the last few years, there's so much happening in the world and country that has had a profound impact on employees' well-being and effectiveness. How can organizations best support their employees, and in particular those with DEI roles?

CC: Many of us have chosen to work in DEI not because it's a job but because it's a mission. Therefore, we have accepted that our work will often be hard, emotionally draining—and hopefully, fulfilling as well.

But in recent years, the scope of our job has changed drastically and made our work more challenging. As champions of employees across multiple demographic groups and intersectionalities, we are often asked to solve for rapid-fire, complicated, and overlapping global challenges that have deep and tangled roots, that even the experts for whom these conflicts are their lifework have been unable to resolve.

Today, DEI professionals need to be attuned to everything, 24/7. Most people, as they go about their day, tune in to the news maybe in the morning and at the end of the day. But we have

to continually be tuned in to all the struggles on every front—including societal conflicts around race, gender, and religion—all day, every day.

On top of that, for those of us who've been in this field for a long time, many of our friends also do this work, which means even on the weekends, we're still not able to turn off. For decades we have pushed through it, but now the order of magnitude is much greater, and the accumulation of the psychological impact of this work is piling up.

So, what is the solution? How do we take care of ourselves so we can continue to use our training and empathy to help others and have a material impact? If we are going to be healthy and effective DEI leaders, we need better work-life integration and access to mental health and wellness resources—and we need to use those resources and not just refer others to them. We need to first make sure our companies provide an adequate mental health support system, and then we must prioritize ourselves in this journey. The success of our work depends on it.

IN: What will be some of the most pressing issues and challenges in the coming years for corporate DEI leaders like yourself?

CC: This is a critical time for DEI, not just because of legislative headwinds or the complexities of competing narratives we are asked to solve, but because AI and machine learning are changing the way we work, learn, absorb content, research, write—you name it. We are at a unique inflection point, where technology is rapidly progressing in the midst of a changing political and economic landscape.

So many people are worried, for good reason, about the potential negative impact of AI. But I think we need to reframe the question from how can we defend our work and employees from this technology to how can we use AI to further our work?

This technology can have tremendous upside for DEI. We can use generative AI to accelerate relationship building, upskill, and scale in a way otherwise impossible. At the same time, we can influence this technology, so we benefit from the good it can create and avoid the pitfalls it may introduce. If done right, AI can reduce bias in humans, not accentuate it. It can inspire communities of color and increase accessibility.

The key is, we must be in on the ground floor as the technology is being developed and deployed into our companies' products and business models. At Amazon, given our unique position as a global tech leader, we have a huge responsibility—and a huge opportunity. We can lead the way in creating devices and services for our customers that are "born inclusive." That means that in the conception process, we're prioritizing how to optimize inclusion so that the product and service meet the needs of people across all stages of life, from people with disabilities who rely on technology to communities who benefit from easily customizable devices that provide multi-language options.

DEI teams are at a pivotal moment. We have the responsibility that comes with not just doing DEI work as we know it, but doing DEI work that influences the way the world will absorb content and build future technologies and products with AI. Let's embrace this moment. **IN**

Krista Phillips

Executive Vice
President, Head of
Consumer Cards and
Marketing,
Wells Fargo

Krista Phillips is the executive vice president and head of consumer cards and marketing at Wells Fargo, where she manages a multimillion dollar P&L and a team of 750 and led the recent reinvention of the company's consumer credit card portfolio.

Phillips oversees product development, management and capabilities, loyalty solutions, and the marketing center of excellence and digital strategies. She has a demonstrated passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and is dedicated to gender parity—not only to create emotional connections with consumers but also for optimal team development.

Prior to joining Wells Fargo, she worked in product management and marketing at several companies, including 10 years at Citi, where she served as managing director of global consumer brand strategy and advertising. She also worked at JPMorgan Chase for 11 years in a variety of product, communications, and marketing leadership roles.

Phillips sits on the Google Marketing Advisory Board for Finance as well as the Women in Payments USA Advisory Board, and is a member of the private women's membership group Chief. She holds a bachelor's degree from Loyola College and a master's degree from La Salle University. She lives in Pennsylvania with her husband and three young-adult children.

Inclusion: Tell us about your role at Wells Fargo. How have you been challenged, and where have you seen success?

Krista Phillips: I am a lifelong learner, and I think that is what led me to Wells Fargo. I was motivated by the opportunity.

I wanted to join a team where I could truly make a difference. Every role I have decided to take in my life has had some transformative element to it. Wells Fargo is a household name, but we weren't a household name for credit cards. I loved the idea that I could come in and make a mark. I love a challenge, so I said to myself, "Challenge accepted."

"I believe if you have representation of women, you can eliminate gender bias and disparity in pay."

I have always liked the idea of the psychology behind advertising, getting into the consumer's mind, and figuring out how to drive specific behavior. I have also always leaned in on gender equity and inclusion, both from the consumer perspective but also on my own teams. Of my leadership team, more than half are women. And as a whole, nearly 30 percent of my 750 employees identify as ethnically diverse.

I think that is why we are able to put a great deal of focus, care, and love into our offerings—from whom we are going to target, to how we ask customers to do business with us, to the mobile app, the digital framework, the value proposition, and the overall impact to the organization.

As a result, our consumer credit card portfolio is the growth engine of the company. We are experiencing double-digit growth year over year in terms of customer satisfaction, acquisition, engagement, and purchase volume. I am really proud that we are showing up and seeing success.

That is what I want to continue to do for Wells Fargo every day: show up for our customers, employees, and shareholders—and succeed. It's an exciting role.

IN: What brought you to this work? Is there a personal motivation, a story from your childhood or past that inspired you in this direction?

KP: Navigating the banking world as a woman hasn't always been easy. I had a manager early in my career who [tried to] put me in a box of what an executive at a bank was at that time, and I did not fit that mold. I have been told that I'm too emotional or too passionate. While I could have taken these things to heart, instead I interpreted them as superpowers. I am passionate. I am emotional. And that's not a bad thing. I used that feedback as motivation to be a change agent and learned how to have my voice heard.

So, I pay attention to that voice in my work at Wells Fargo. I want to ensure there isn't any gender bias in the way we launch products, in how we think about value propositions, in how we show up in the marketplace. I want to make sure everyone is represented in a really authentic way.

The way I lead my teams and bring products to market is based on 30 years of experience in an industry that is not easy for many, but especially women. I've learned that it is important that women support women. As employers, we need to embrace that we are better together and there is room at the table for all. I truly rely on the representation on my team and the unique perspectives each of my team members provides. It is important to our customers and, ultimately, to our bottom line.

IN: How is Wells Fargo supporting gender identity and expression in the workplace?

KP: I believe if you have representation of women, you can eliminate gender bias and disparity in pay. With any inclusion platform, you want



to stay away from the emotional part, because it is ultimately really just about good business.

I love to educate my staff on the meaningful ways we show up in the marketplace—the authentic ways to show up. We put a lot of thought into our selection of influencers, of talent, of casting, where we purchase media. We are data driven to a fault.

We are going out and doing the primary research, really trying to learn what today's customers are thinking about money, their finances, and the impact it has on their lives. We are teaming up with The Female Quotient [an organization dedicated to workplace gender equality] to lead that work.

I'm proud of our efforts, and I am really proud of the team we've built over the past few years.

My leadership team offers a truly diverse slate of ideas. I love how we collaborate. We are firing on all cylinders. When you have a lot of ideas, innovation, and diversity of thought, it shows up in your numbers. The numbers don't lie.

IN: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2024 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

KP: DE&I cannot just be a checklist. Employers need to embrace that everyone has a voice. This goes beyond a division or a team. We need to turn the page on having DE&I as part of an HR program, in order to really embody what we are doing. It needs to be part of the fabric of what we bring to the market, how we think about teams, how we think about our employees—all of it. It is truly about inclusion.

IN: As offices are returning to a hybrid work model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of their employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

KP: We need to understand the work has to “work” for our employees. We often talk about work-life balance. I don't think about it that way.

“If a team is communicating, supporting one another, cheering each other up, and working in partnership with each other, 9 out of 10 times, that team will win.”

I think it's important to have flexibility because it is not always just about work. Our employees have lives that they need to care for as well. I want to make sure everyone is cared for and no one is feeling anxious because they have to go to the doctor or take care of a sick child.

I am also a big believer in the power of recognition. As part of my Culture initiative, I champion programs and platforms to recognize, celebrate, educate, and inspire our team members.

I've seen this time and time again. If a team is communicating, supporting one another, cheering each other up, and working in partnership with each other, 9 out of 10 times, that team will win. And if there is a misstep—maybe they didn't get something exactly right—if they keep swinging, keep trying, keep supporting one another, they will eventually win.

I am so proud of how our employees support one another—our team receives about 2,500 recognitions a year for everyday actions. One of my favorite stats is recognition is not just for managers; more than 60 percent of our e-cards recognizing good work are sent by individual contributors to acknowledge their peers.

If you create a strong and diverse team, give them a voice, and truly listen to them, you will deliver results. Again, the numbers don't lie. **DW**

Michelle Gethers

Chief Diversity Officer,
Head of Corporate
Responsibility and
Vice Chair, Visa
Foundation

Visa



Michelle Gethers leads Visa's global strategy for growth in inclusive and diverse talent, social impact and environmental sustainability, and philanthropy. Prior to joining Visa, Gethers served as the president and CEO at United Way of Greater Greensboro, North Carolina, where she and her team focused on partnerships to end poverty. She led business transformation and fundraising by galvanizing community leaders, businesses, and nonprofits. Gethers held a variety of roles over 21 years at American Express, including Senior Vice President and General Manager of Card Operations. In addition, she has experience as an entrepreneur with a consulting firm, as a certified public accountant, and as an author.

Gethers has served in positions with global leadership responsibility in the United States, Canada, the Philippines, and India. She leverages her corporate and social impact experiences to

"We designed our return-to-office plan to prioritize our employees and to create deeper client, partner, and colleague relationships while providing the space and flexibility our workforce needs."

form strategies, operationalize solutions, convene stakeholders, innovate, and address root causes of business and societal problems.

Inclusion: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2024 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

Michelle Gethers: Every company has a unique culture and cadence for how priorities are set. I trust that, based on business objectives and employee engagement, FY24 will allow companies to achieve their goals and objectives. Addressing inclusion and diversity is a dynamic process. There are no "should" and "should not" priorities that I would call out. Instead, I would say that inclusion and diversity efforts require continuous prioritization and calibration to internal and external conditions. At Visa, our purpose is to uplift everyone everywhere by being the best way to pay and be paid. Accordingly, inclusion and diversity consider the collective needs of internal talent, external communities, and other



(left to right) Michelle Gethers at Visa's inaugural Black Scholars Summit in June 2022; speaking at Visa's Atlanta office opening ceremony; speaking to incoming interns at Visa's Black Scholars Summit in June 2023.

stakeholders aligned with our business priorities. Said another way, business goals and I&D goals are linked. At Visa, business and I&D goals support communities and local businesses through greater access to financial education, inclusion, digital enablement resources, and business development tools to help them succeed.

As Visa continues to grow, a strong local presence in the communities where we do meaningful business is critical, to deepen our I&D commitments by putting down roots where there's a pool of untapped diverse talent. For example, we recently opened our Atlanta office with the mission of expanding our commitment to I&D and providing new opportunities to a diverse pool of talent. Our newfound I&D commitments within Atlanta are helping to set this precedent of expanding outreach to communities through our continual private-public community-academic partnerships that foster equitable opportunities for Black entrepreneurs, support for local businesses, and programs that expand financial inclusion and access. Setting forth and upholding these commitments allows us as corporate leaders to ultimately create a more equitable society by continuing to implement initiatives that drive economic mobility, uplift communities of color, and reduce economic disparity at the local level. Through the ongoing prioritization at a localized scale, we are not only able to further the reach of our partnerships and investments but also pursue new opportunities that reinforce Visa's imperative to be a good corporate citizen for the communities where we live and work.

"This next generation of employees entering the workforce are global thinkers, travelers, inventors, and innovators powered by technology. We must make room for this technically sophisticated generation."

At the same time, we acknowledge that flexibility differs from person to person and team to team. Our workspace is conducive to interacting with colleagues and playing a game together. Simple things like beverages and snacks also add to an engaging experience. All these elements enrich how we work together to deliver business outcomes that benefit. We become more efficient and effective when we have strong working relationships with colleagues. The basis for most human relationships is being together and shared experiences. The future is bright as we consider the ongoing benefits of hybrid work.

IN: As offices are returning to a hybrid work model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of their employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

MG: Culture, culture, and culture. Company culture will be a driving force for remote, hybrid, and in-office work. We know that now more than ever, an employer must provide its employees with the support, flexibility, and resources they need to thrive. At Visa, we specifically designed our return-to-office plan to prioritize our employees and to create deeper client, partner, and colleague relationships while providing the space and flexibility our workforce needs. We've created dedicated employee assistance programs that routinely examine the ways in which we can ensure employees feel supported. We ask our employees to collaborate and have meaningful interactions with each other. We invite customers and clients into our offices.

IN: In 2022, increasingly, many companies began pulling back from their commitment to DEI. How can DEI practitioners combat that retreat and convince their companies of the value of continuing, even expanding, that investment?



MG: I have no specific comment or insight into companies pulling back or retreating. I can say that strong strategies and action plans linked to business results allow for I&D to be a sought-after component of business investments. Leaders can establish an annual revisit of why they implemented their I&D practices and programs. This way, they are better able to reinforce the impact on the communities they set out to support and determine areas for growth and improvement. As a global company that does business in more than 200 countries and territories, much of our I&D efforts are rooted in the fact that our workforce is representative of the customers and clients we serve. We value the unique identities and contributions of our employees, and we are committed to cultivating an inclusive and diverse environment that supports the development and advancement of all. Because of this, we make data-driven decisions, have culture-based conversations, and support all aspects of individual identity. The value proposition of I&D on any business can be determined. Many studies exist, and internal data points can support the global and local market relevance. Our investment in creating a diverse and inclusive culture ensures all employees are given an opportunity to contribute to the fullest, because we know our best thinking, problem-solving, and creativity come from giving everyone a voice, and that people can only speak authentically when they bring their whole selves to work. Combining the narrative of employee and customer experiences with data-driven business outcomes can be an effective way for a company to determine if it should start, stop, do more, or do less.

“The work of equity, inclusion, and diversity is ongoing and subject to change. The importance of strong metrics and communication plans cannot be underestimated in the journey.”

IN: What do you see as the challenges and opportunities posed by gen Z?

MG: This next generation of employees entering the workforce are global thinkers, travelers, inventors, and innovators powered by technology. Several generations will be in the workplace learning and working together. As such, we must make room for this technically sophisticated generation. We know first-hand that this generation of doers is vibrant and ready to contribute through our various internship, scholarship, and new college graduate programs. Each summer, we get to work closely with students from around the world who want to contribute at a high level. We welcome them and learn from them. As an organization, we recognize that the speed that they work and expect action may be different than traditional business models, so it means we must be bold and fast. We are ready to make the necessary changes in our system, practices, and mindsets to be bold and fast. We also know that Gen Z wants maximum flexibility, and we must collaborate regularly to stay abreast of emerging trends. Gen Z introduces only upside to any business. We look forward to multiple generations working together at Visa for collective impact.

IN: In the last few years, with so much happening in the world and country that impacted all of us, how do you help your organization and team deal with the fatigue and sense of being overwhelmed by the scope and speed of the work required to increase equity in your organization?

MG: Well-being and psychological safety are starting points for a world that has experienced once-in-a-lifetime events. The need for change and speed is unprecedented. At Visa, we anchor on our purpose and leadership principles to ensure we are aligned during every step of the business cycle. It means human-centered designs are considered for our customers, clients, and our talent. We are a network of networks powered by great people. Our culture and workplace designs offer space for individual reflection and flexibility. We do not rush our I&D process. Instead, we have thoughtful discussions to determine the next right action. We make decisions and we move forward in an inclusive manner. We align our people and investments in a way that makes the most measurable impact. We examine our progress at regular intervals so we can lift and shift if needed. The work of equity, inclusion, and diversity is ongoing and subject to change. The importance of strong metrics and communication plans cannot be underestimated in the journey. **IN**



Valeisha Butterfield

Vice President of Partnerships and Engagement Google LLC

Valeisha Butterfield is an influential, award-winning global business leader driving impact at the junctions of technology, entertainment, and politics.

In her role at Google, she builds strategies for some of the world's most recognizable brands. Passionate about bringing more diversity into the tech world, she has also accelerated DEI innovation for the global organization.

Prior to joining Google, Butterfield served on the Obama for America campaign as the national youth vote director, helping to deliver one of the highest youth voter turnouts in US history.

She also served as the first-ever copresident and chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer for the Recording Academy, home of the Grammys. With Butterfield at the helm, the Grammys became the first major awards show to use an inclusion rider, resulting in three consecutive Grammy Awards shows, telecast on CBS, that were the most inclusive in the organization's 64-year history, while boosting its digital ratings growth. She also helped the organization implement its racial equity commitments, with a 100 percent completion rate, and establish the Black Music Collective.

Butterfield previously worked at Google as its global head of Inclusion and also worked in the Obama Administration as deputy director of public affairs for international trade.

She has been recognized by *Forbes*, *Billboard*, and *Essence*, and in the *Ebony* Power 100 and *Elle* magazine's Top 25 Leading Women, among other honors. Butterfield attended Clark Atlanta University and cofounded the Women in Entertainment Empowerment Network. She is also a mom.

Inclusion: What brought you to do this work?

Valeisha Butterfield: Though I didn't know it at the time, my upbringing played a critical role in guiding me to the career path that I am on today. I grew up in Wilson, North Carolina, a small town literally and figuratively split by a train track. I learned from an early age that for many, the difference that shaped one's future was not a lack of talent but instead a lack of resources and access to opportunities.

In many ways, it was this fundamental lesson that shaped how I have approached every aspect of my career. Along my career journey—whether it be working for the Obama administration, the Recording Academy, or Google—I have found that in order to drive real change, we must work toward access and equity that can elevate communities and ensure that those communities have equitable opportunities to showcase their talent.

IN: Tell us about your greatest success story and your greatest challenge.

VB: While I have been blessed to work with inspiring colleagues and some of the most influential brands in the world, I can say that the achievement I am most proud of is being a mother to my two incredible sons. Every opportunity I have to take a stage, launch an initiative, or give voice to an issue, I think about how I am creating a new pathway not only for my children but for the next generation. As I get older, the responsibility of building a world where my Black sons have more opportunity and examples than I had growing up becomes more and more central to my purpose and career.

The greatest challenge I'm currently facing is actually taking the time to acknowledge my own achievements. So often we're concerned about the next deliverable, the next milestone, the next win. The more senior you become in your career, the more you focus on the future. I have been pushing myself to pause, be present in the moment, and acknowledge all the small wins along the way too.

IN: What are some recent thought-leader topics and trends in the world of DEI that organizations are learning about and implementing?

VB: We are truly at an inflection point within the DEI space. While there is no shortage of external voices questioning the value of the work, practitioners are laser focused on how the work continues to evolve to meet the demands of an ever-changing social, business, and political landscape. As the work continues to evolve, I have been encouraged by the industry's move to an environment where principles of inclusion



“We are truly at an inflection point within the DEI space. Practitioners are laser focused on how the work continues to evolve to meet the demands of an ever-changing social, business, and political landscape.”

and belonging are no longer relegated to one-off initiatives. We're seeing those principles being integrated into the fabric of organizational policies, training, and best practices.

For example, at Google, when we talk about product inclusion, we are not simply looking at the final product to determine if it is inclusive. Instead, from inception, a user-first approach is applied throughout every stage of design and development to ensure an inclusive design paradigm is adopted to address user needs across many dimensions of identity. It is through the integration of inclusion principles across an organization's systems that we can take a more critical look at the effectiveness of our DEI efforts as well as the overall commitment of the organization's mission of building an environment where all employees can thrive.

IN: What do you see as the challenges and opportunities posed by gen Z?

VB: Each generation is faced with the same challenge: how to leverage the lessons of the past while charting its own path toward the future. Gen Z is no different. I have been inspired by gen Z's willingness to lean into change. At a time when we are seeing industries rapidly changing in reaction to technological shifts, changes in climate, and evolving business realities, I believe that gen Z's affinity for disruption will put them at the forefront of leading organizations into the future.

In terms of challenges facing gen Z, I believe that the ultimate responsibility resides with the generations before them who currently sit in positions of power to have the courage to look holistically at what gen Z uniquely brings to the table and enable our organizations to leverage those strengths. If we truly care about building workplaces where everyone belongs, we must understand that progress is inextricably linked to change, and that change must be reflective of the experiences across the generational spectrum.

IN: How do you use data and metrics to measure DEI success?

VB: I believe in the power of storytelling. Data plays a fundamental role in effectively telling any story. When looking at any inclusion issue, I use data to help contextualize the experiences that individuals and communities have within a system or organization.

Oftentimes, we can feel when something is broken within a space, but it is through the collection of data that we are able to evaluate the depth



Butterfield in conversation with DJ, producer, and cultural catalyst Derrick “D-Nice” Jones at the 2023 Cannes Lion Festival.

and breadth of the issue. With this in mind, I guide my teams to first listen to and center the feedback of communities they are tasked with serving, and then evaluate which metrics most directly correspond to the issues the communities are facing. It is only when we have a clear understanding of the issues and relevant data points that we can consider going into the ideation and design phase of support.

Maintaining a data-driven approach is critical not only in the design of DEI interventions but also in reaffirming the business imperative for DEI. While there have been countless studies highlighting the financial benefits of having diverse and inclusive organizations, it is the duty of every DEI practitioner to ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of how internal DEI strategy directly connects to their organization’s near- and long-term goals. Going beyond representation, attrition, and retention, it is critical to understand what metrics are key to the organization and its leaders and where your inclusion efforts intersect.

IN: Describe Google’s commitment to sharing DEI data and what has been the impact of that.

VB: Google’s mission is to organize the world’s information and make it universally useful and accessible. This mission is reflected throughout the company and is particularly pertinent in our approach to DEI data. Before collecting data from our Googler community, we share clear guidelines for the collection of data as well as how the data will be expressly used.

In 2019, we launched the Self-ID global census, a voluntary employee demographic data collection effort. Our goal is to build a multifunctional dataset to better understand who we are as a company and to inform the priorities, programs, and products that create a more inclusive Google. Self-ID is already making an impact internally and across the industry. For example, the Self-ID dataset has supported the creation of tailored

“I believe in the power of storytelling. Data plays a fundamental role in effectively telling any story.”

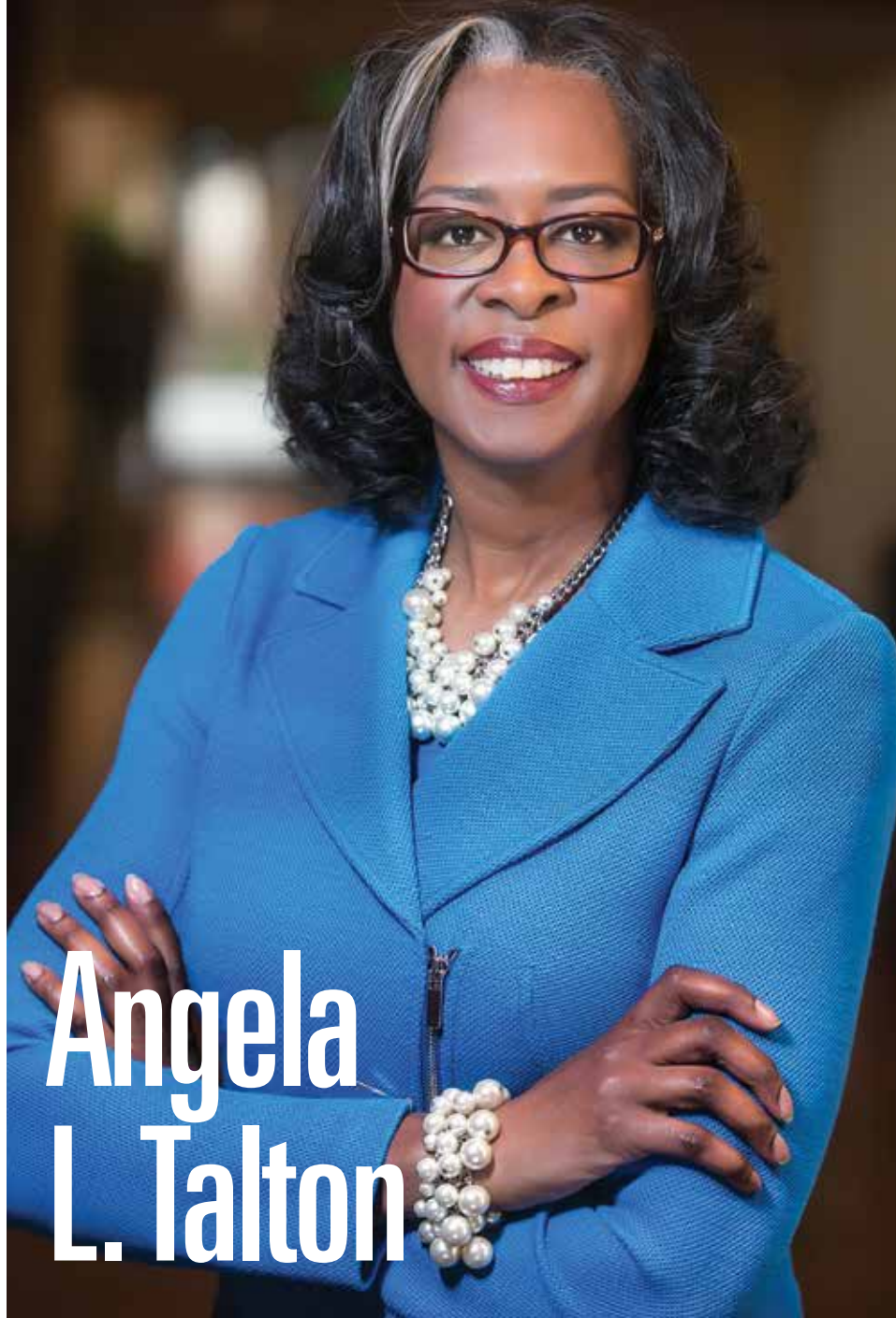
learning resources as well as expansion of programming to more locations and communities.

IN: How is Google supporting gender identity and expression in the workplace?

VB: Creating an inclusive culture where everyone feels welcomed, respected, valued, and supported is central to Google’s DEI goals. This is particularly important as we look to build an inclusive environment for Googlers across the spectrum of gender identity and expression. Going back to the importance of centering the voices and experiences of the communities you look to serve, we have worked to

take a “One Google” approach in all of the spaces where our Googlers engage. From the cultivation of community via our employee resource groups and physical investment in offices with increased access to lactation rooms and gender-neutral bathrooms to integration of optional pronoun functionality into our internal systems of tools, we have tried to ensure that every Googler feels that they belong and that they experience the workplace at parity.

We’ve made remarkable progress in this space, but it is important to note that there is more work to be done. As a global company, we realize that the experiences of employees can vary greatly across regions and intersections of identity. In recognition of this, we consistently work to develop resources that are not only regionally relevant but are also reflective of the intersectional spectrum that makes our community so unique. We know that a one-size-fits-all approach often fails to meet the needs of those most marginalized. We’ll continue to build innovative solutions that create richer experiences of belonging for everyone. **IN**



Angela L. Talton

**Senior Vice
President and
Chief Diversity,
Equity, and
Inclusion
Officer,
City of Hope**

At City of Hope, Angela L. Talton, MBA, leads the development of the national cancer research and treatment organization's vision and strategy for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion; for improving health equity and community benefit; and for ensuring measurable DEI progress across administrative, clinical, and research functions. Talton's broad expertise in diversity and inclusion encompasses leadership development, recruitment and retention of talent, communication strategy, community alliances, philanthropic giving, supplier diversity, and analytics.

At City of Hope, Talton has created a holistic and integrated DEI vision, strategy, and implementation

road map, leveraging scenario-based training and diversity scorecards to mitigate bias and change behaviors to focus on conscious inclusion throughout the system. Under her leadership, City of Hope's ranking on DiversityInc's list of Top Hospitals and Health Systems has jumped from No. 8 to No. 2. City of Hope has regularly been recognized as a Healthcare Equality Leader by the Human Rights Campaign.

Prior to joining City of Hope, Talton successfully advised national clients through her firm, ALTalton Consulting. From 2012 to 2019, Talton held diversity and inclusion leadership roles at industry leader Nielsen as chief diversity officer and as SVP, Global Diversity and Inclusion. Her work solidified Nielsen's reputation as a recognized leader in corporate diversity and inclusion, with six consecutive years of improved rankings on DiversityInc's list of Top 50 Companies.

Inclusion: Given the broad constituency City of Hope serves, is DEI and transparency around it even more critical? What are some of the challenges in the health-care industry, and how has City of Hope stood out?

Angela L. Talton: As one of only 56 National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer centers and one of the largest cancer research and treatment organizations in the US, City of Hope has a vision of advancing equity to optimal cancer care for all by breaking down barriers to this care for underserved populations. One of the ways we have done this is by transforming into a national system with the acquisition of Cancer Treatment Centers of America, thus expanding our footprint in California,

Atlanta, Chicago, and Phoenix, and now serving more than 134,000 patients annually.

We believe diversity, equity, and inclusion are a central component to ensure equal access to superior cancer care; therefore, City of Hope has set its vision to expand access to optimal cancer care as its North Star, thus supporting efforts to make innovative discoveries and leading-edge treatment a right for all. Recognizing that cancer is not one disease but hundreds, that every tumor can be different, affecting different populations in unique ways, our research focuses on the diversity of each patient. With this focus on genomic research to provide precision medicine and individualized patient treatment, we are intentional about seeking a cure for everyone, not just a subset of the population.

IN: In recent years, with so much happening in the world and country that impacted all of us, how do you help your organization and team deal with being overwhelmed by the scope and speed of the work required to increase equity in your organization?

ALT: Our DEI strategy is holistic and focuses on our staff, patients, their families and caregivers, and the community. During the interview for my role, City of Hope CEO Robert Stone shared his goal that “City of Hope be a beacon of light for diversity, equity, and inclusion.” With this comprehensive approach and support from our CEO, DEI is viewed as a strategic initiative worthy of focus and resources.

Additionally, our senior leaders are active participants, communicating their support; doctors and researchers share their findings related to the impact of cancer and diabetes within diverse communities; and all employees are encouraged to participate in ERGs and community outreach projects. To maintain that focus on DEI, we host an annual Diversity Week celebration to educate the entire organization in the value of DEI. We also sponsor self-help programs, wellness classes, employee assistance programs, and a quarterly program called Expressions of Hope, where staff share their artistic talents, such as poetry, art, photography, and music.



DEI Team on City of Hope's Duarte Campus by Golter Gate.

IN: How do you use data and metrics to measure DEI success?

ALT: With training playing a pivotal role in embedding DEI into our culture, measuring completion rates is a scorecard metric.

Utilizing an interactive, scenario-based training program focused on conscious inclusion, we have seen a steady increase in completion rates—from 91 percent at program launch in May 2021 to 99.6 percent in February 2023. DEI training, which is mandatory for all people managers and a key part of our annual incentive plan, has been instrumental in fostering a culture of conscious inclusion.

Our leaders are the driving force behind this transformation, leading by example and emphasizing the importance of the trainings. Their commitment is reflected in our employee engagement survey scores, where the DEI composite score has improved annually—another measurement of inclusion.

Our commitment to DEI is also reflected in our workforce. Our quarterly diversity scorecards show significant growth in diverse representation, particularly among senior leadership. We have seen a 25 percent increase in women and Black/African American representation, and a remarkable 150 percent increase in Hispanic/Latinx representation.

Externally, our commitment to diversity and health equity has not gone unnoticed. In the past two years, we proudly climbed four spots to rank second on DiversityInc's 2023 Top Hospitals and Health Systems List. We also received the Healthcare Equality Leader designation from the Human Rights Campaign for four years, which is a testament to our unwavering commitment to equity and inclusion for all our patients, visitors, and employees.

IN: What brought you to do this work? Is there a personal motivation, a story from your childhood or past that inspired you in this direction?

ALT: When I joined Nielsen in 2007 as the SVP of Global Call Center Operations, I was asked to be an executive sponsor of one of the employee resource groups. Although I'd been working with diverse teams in call centers, this was my first official DEI role. I was amazed by the level of talent flying below the radar, and wanted to help provide exposure to senior leadership, strategy, and other opportunities for these innovative

and dedicated employees. When Nielsen named their first chief diversity officer, I joined the team as SVP, [Global] Diversity and Inclusion and assisted with crafting a strategy to further the focus on DEI at the company.

When accepting the role at City of Hope, it became even more personal for me. My interest in health care started about 28 years ago, after hearing my mom replay a routine doctor's visit that turned into an outpatient procedure. The urgency of the procedure, as well as the lack of clarity and compassion from her doctor, left her feeling bewildered and terrified. My passion for health equity grew even more in 2020, following the devastating impact of COVID-19 in underrepresented communities.

IN: What sort of impact do you expect the June 2023 Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action to have on corporate DEI efforts, and what can DEI professionals do to prepare?

ALT: The recent Supreme Court ruling against affirmative action, disappointing and short-sighted as it was, is yet another barrier to equality. It will be imperative that this ruling be viewed as a stepping stone rather than a roadblock. In the court's majority decision, Chief Justice Roberts wrote that students must be evaluated based on their experiences "as an individual—not on the basis of race"; however, universities should focus on Roberts's full statement that universities can still consider "an

"City of Hope has a vision of advancing equity to optimal cancer care for all by breaking down barriers to this care for underserved populations."

the voices of philanthropists, Congress, CEOs, and leaders are needed to ensure the legislation does not move beyond this university ruling, and that diverse representation is achieved using methods such as new legislation, innovative recruitment practices, ending legacy admissions, and maintaining existing diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

[Given] the ever-changing landscape of the judicial system, it is critical for DEI professionals to integrate the principles of equity and inclusion throughout their organizations' operations, policies, and practices. One way to do so is to embed a focus on DEI into the overarching business strategy. With the needs of the individual patient in mind, City of Hope focuses on the science and research to find the right treatment for our patients. Without access to clinical trials needed to perform genomic

applicant's discussion of how race affected his or her life, be it through discrimination, inspiration, or otherwise."

Although universities have tried other means to maintain and increase diverse representation—using factors such as whether students were the first in their family to go to college or their family's income—Dominique Baker, a professor of education policy at Southern Methodist University, states, "Nothing is as good at helping to enroll a more racially equitable class than using race. Nothing comes close to it."

This is why corporations, health-care systems, not-for-profit entities, etcetera, will need to take a leadership position and ensure we do not lose ground in the event this ruling spills over into issues related to employment. Many organizations have pledged support for Black Lives Matter, have supported HBCUs, sponsored scholarships, etcetera. This is another historic moment when

the voices of philanthropists, Congress, CEOs, and leaders are needed to ensure the legislation does not move beyond this university ruling, and that diverse representation is achieved using methods such as new legislation, innovative recruitment practices, ending legacy admissions, and maintaining existing diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

It is of utmost importance to reflect the diverse communities we all serve, as the United States continues to become more diverse. [The United States is projected to become "minority majority" in the year 2045.]

Here at City of Hope, the focal point of our transformative work begins with expanding access to the best treatment for our patients and their families and caregivers. This standard of excellence is how we have prepared for potential judicial decisions, such as the recent Supreme Court ruling. **IN**



City of Hope CEO Leadership Group support Diversity Week locally at City of Hope Chicago.

WE BELONG



CDOs find new paths forward during the second Martha's Vineyard Chief Diversity Officers Summit

In August 2023, the second Chief Diversity Officers Summit convened with 175 CDOs and 154 companies—all seeking new paths to “belonging” in a post-affirmative action world. The summit attracted record attendance in the face of recent Supreme Court decisions rolling back strides in inclusion, with attorney Ben Crump, who represented George Floyd’s family, and Marc Morial, president of the National Urban League, among the attendees.

Speakers at the event included **W. Kamau Bell** of CNN’s *United Shades of America*; **Roddy Chong**,

keynote speaker and virtuoso violinist for Trans-Siberian Orchestra and entertainers Celine Dion and Shania Twain; **Ellen McGirt**, a senior correspondent for *Fortune*; **John A. Powell**, director at the Othering and Belonging Institute and a professor of law and African American & ethnic studies at the University of California at Berkeley; **Laura Morgan Roberts, PhD**, an organizational psychologist and CEO of The Alignment Quest Enterprise, LLC; and **Kenji Yoshino, JD**, Chief Justice Earl Warren Professor of Constitutional Law and director of the Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging at NYU School of Law.

W. Kamau Bell noted that DEI has become a hot-button issue under attack, post George Floyd, post COVID, and post affirmative action. He encouraged CDOs to push for change and stay the course so that we can evolve, not return to the past.

Looking ahead, CDO Summit founder Dani Monroe announced that Center Focus is conducting one of the first studies ever on the role and impact of CDOs and DEI initiatives from the perspective of those in the trenches doing the work. “It’s time for CDOs to create their narrative about their work and to add to the expertise and knowledge in the field,” said Monroe.

As CDOs reset, recharged, and realigned what will become the next steps in a post-affirmative action world, they acknowledged that ‘belonging’ in the workplace has never been fully realized. Since the earliest days of the workplace as we know it, the question of ‘belonging’ has lingered. Do we belong? Will we belong? In a post-affirmative action world, what will belonging look like in the face of economic uncertainty, stress, and high expectations from communities and corporations?



The two-day summit offered keynotes and deep conversations that challenged CDOs to reexamine and, in some cases, recast their priorities and purpose in a world that now wrestles with their effectiveness. In discussions of social justice and equity, it was noted that the term *belonging* began to permeate the workplace when it was evident that many people, especially those of color, began to call out their experiences. They raised self-care issues while highlighting “belonging” as a critical concern.

Monroe observed, “We have witnessed the steady progression of DEI over the decades. We know this work is important, and we have seen its impact. History is on our side. We have learned that many companies with the most gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity outperform less diverse peers in terms of profitability. So as we move

*Clockwise from top right: W. Kamau Bell, host, CNN’s *United Shades of America*, in conversation with Lisa McGirt, senior correspondent, *Fortune*; civil rights attorney Ben Crump and global artist KEM; (from left) Lisa Coleman, PhD, senior vice president, global inclusion and development at NYU, DEI consultant and CDO Summit founder Dani Monroe, and Wendy John, CDO of Fidelity Investments; Kenji Yoshino, JD, director of the Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging at New York University.*

into a new era, our voices are needed at the table. We can prove that everybody wins when DEI filters through every organizational function and becomes part of an organization’s DNA.

“Today, we stand on the threshold of the next era of our work, which includes an increased awareness of what it means to belong.”



THE LAST WORD

Let's Keep the Focus on Our Shared Humanity

BY DR. SHEILA A. ROBINSON

The year 2023 was a momentous one for DEI professionals. The Supreme Court struck down affirmative action in higher education and curtailed a Colorado LGBTQ civil rights law with national implications. We continued to manage the challenges wrought by the previous year's ruling that ended *Roe v. Wade*. The breakneck acceleration of AI in everything our companies do has changed how we work. And controversial and complicated world events have crashed onto our shores, impacting the lives of many of our employees and destabilizing some workplace environments.

In this issue of *Inclusion* magazine, we address some of these fast-moving events and issues. In particular, we focus on how artificial intelligence is altering how we work and the impact of the June SCOTUS ruling on affirmative action. In addition, we feature a timely article on how we can best support our transgender employees.

Lastly, nine outstanding DEI leaders share their expertise on a wide range of subjects that touch us all, from the machine-learning revolution to the way in which outside events are impacting the mental health of not only our employees but ourselves.

On page 13, Kimberly Olson's thought-provoking piece on the opportunities and challenges presented by artificial intelligence reveals that 79 percent of companies use AI for

"We can do what we do best—create safe spaces and encourage our employees to take a deep breath and vow to respect others' positions."



recruitment and hiring. The upside is tremendous—machine learning can help companies scale in a multitude of ways. For example, hiring professionals can evaluate résumés more efficiently. On the other hand, AI poses challenges, especially for DEI leaders, as to date, many of these algorithms have demonstrated built-in biases, such as screening out older employees, women, and people of color. Read the full story and learn how this ubiquitous technology can work for you.

The June Supreme Court decision on affirmative action has been a significant focus for all of us this year. The striking down of race-conscious affirmative action in universities has left DEI professionals feeling vulnerable. How might this ruling be applied in the private sector? Might our work be subject to a lawsuit? We know this ruling will weaken the diversity of the talent pool in the coming years.

How can we adjust to ensure we are attracting the full spectrum of talented college graduates? Learn more on page 7.

In talking to DEI professionals, the consensus seems to be that our job is getting harder every year, as national and world events—from Supreme Court rulings banning *Roe v. Wade* and affirmative action to war in the

Middle East—have impacted the lives of our employees, and therefore our work, significantly.

At the same time, we must recognize that it is not in our jurisdiction (or training) to solve these big problems that the experts themselves struggle with. All we can do is what we do best—create safe spaces and encourage our employees to take a deep breath and vow to respect others' positions. In this challenging, sometimes even contentious environment, we can help keep the focus on what matters most—our shared humanity. **IN**

Dr. Sheila A. Robinson is the founder of Diversity Woman Media.



ARE YOU NEXT?

Showcase the difference you and your company are making.
Contact Dr. Sheila Robinson • drsheila@diversitywoman.com



We're in this together—reaching across cultures—creating inclusive, accessible, and equitable global tech innovations that unite and empower each of us like never before.

Inspired to cultivate inclusive experiences everywhere, Amazon is proud to partner with Diversity Woman Media.

