

WORKPLACES AND  
MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

INTERSECTIONALITY:  
WHY IT MATTERS

CORPORATIONS ARE TAKING  
A STAND ON THE ISSUES

# INCLUSION

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+ ISSUE 4

*Creating  
Globally  
Inclusive &  
Culturally  
Competent  
Workplaces*

SODEXO'S

**DR. ROHINI  
ANAND**

**Leading the  
Charge on  
Implementing  
Inclusive  
Practices**



## Dr. Rohini Anand

### Senior Vice President Corporate Responsibility and Global Chief Diversity Officer, Sodexo

**D**r. Rohini Anand is responsible for the strategic direction, implementation, and alignment of Sodexo's integrated global diversity and inclusion initiatives, as well as Sodexo's corporate social responsibility and wellness strategies. Dr. Anand is a member of the North America Regional Leadership Committee for Sodexo, the global leader in quality of life services.

Under Dr. Anand's leadership, Sodexo received the prestigious 2012 Catalyst Award and ranked in the top 10 of DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies for Diversity for nine consecutive years. In 2018, Sodexo was one of the companies, along with four others, named to DiversityInc's inaugural

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Top 50 Hall of Fame. In addition, the Human Rights Campaign has given Sodexo a 100 percent rating on its Corporate Equality Index for 10 years, and the Dow Jones Sustainability Index has named Sodexo a Global Sustainability Industry Leader in its sector for the 14th year in a row.

Widely considered a leading expert on organizational change and diversity and inclusion, Dr. Anand has been featured in many articles in trade magazines as well as those published in the *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*. She has appeared on Bloomberg, CNN Money, and National Public Radio. Among her many prestigious awards are the Mosaic Woman Leadership Award, Women's Foodservice Forum Trailblazer Award, American Institute for Managing Diversity's Individual Leader Award, Webster University's Women of Influence Award, and Who's Who in Asian American Communities Award.

Dr. Anand received her PhD from the University of Michigan. She chairs the Catalyst board of advisors and serves on the boards of several organizations, among them the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, Community Wealth Partners, National Organization on Disabilities, and Sodexo's Stop Hunger Foundation, as well as Charter Communications external Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board.

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

Dr. Rohini Anand: I grew up in Mumbai, India, where I was sur-



(left to right) Anand at the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society; Erika Irish Brown Bloomberg global head of diversity & inclusion and Anand at the inaugural Bloomberg Business of Equality summit in New York City; Anand at Global Summit of Women.

rounded by people who looked a lot like me, but were diverse in terms of income, religion, socioeconomic class, and education. I was part of the majority, and with that came the privilege of not having to think about my identity. I moved to the United States as a single woman to go to graduate school before my 20th birthday.

When I came here to begin a PhD in sociology at the University of Michigan, it was the first time I was perceived as Asian American and a minority. I learned how to identify myself as such. It was a truly transformational experience. And being identified as a minority made me realize the privileges that come with being part of a majority.

My personal journey as an immigrant in the United States and the experience of shaping my identity based on how others perceived me led me to my graduate research on the movement of people and identity formation. I eventually consulted for many large organizations, and when I had an opportunity to meet the CEO of Sodexo, who at the time was Michel Landel, and experience firsthand his commitment and vision, I knew that I wanted to work for Sodexo. The diversity function was new to Sodexo at that time.

Over the years, Sodexo has afforded me an amazing opportunity to have an impact and to grow from establishing and leading the function in North America, to establishing and

leading the function globally in more than 80 countries with more than 430,000 employees, to leading corporate responsibility and wellness.

Today my vocation and avocation are perfectly aligned, and this is more than a job to me. It is my passion.

**IN: What will be some of the biggest issues and challenges in 2019 for a corporate diversity and inclusion leader like yourself?**

**RA:** Aligning D&I with business outcomes is critical. Among the challenges is continuing to do the important work of D&I with diminishing resources and in the context of a constantly changing and often hostile external environment, both socially and politically. However, we must sustain the momentum around D&I work and keep it top of mind, despite competing business priorities and distractions.

**IN: Gender inequality in the workplace—including sexual harassment—has become large in the public eye. We all know that these challenges are not new. How does this new public awareness help close the gender gap?**

**RA:** The awareness creates an environment where gender parity is being discussed more openly and candidly than ever before. Women who were reluctant to share their stories are coming out and talking about their experiences, which is informing the public discourse. As a result of the external context, organizations are accelerating their work internally to ensure a harassment-free workplace and beyond that to ensure pay equity, gender-balanced teams, and the advancement of women.

**IN: There has been a much greater emphasis in recent years on unconscious and implicit bias training in companies. Does it work? How can it be done better?**

**RA:** Even with the best training in place, it's often individuals' implicit biases that have the biggest impact, especially on HR processes like hiring and promotion decisions. That said, we must also address systems, poli-

cies, and practices, along with individual mind-sets, which can often circumvent the best of processes. Unconscious bias, in and of itself, cannot be successful. However, if you take a systems approach and focus more on culture change—which includes looking at policies, integrating D&I in all systems and practices, education and awareness, and holding managers accountable and identifying the right metrics—in conjunction with implicit bias training, you’re likely to achieve success.

**IN:** The concept of intersectionality has moved from college campuses into the workplace. How is this concept being applied by D&I offices in companies?

**RA:** Intersectionality is not a new concept; it is core to our identities, as we all have multiple identities that are dynamic and contextual. We now have a language and literature that frame this complexity. Frequently, how people perceive you is one-dimensional, and how you experience yourself is more nuanced and multidimensional. This is the difference between self-perception—identity—and how others perceive you—identification, which tends to focus on one dimension of your identity.

One of the ways we’re seeing this is play out in the workplace is through the increasing number of people opting to be a part of multiple employee resources groups because of the intersectionality of their identity. ERGs are working collaboratively to address the concept of intersectionality more and more.

**IN:** A concept that is increasingly being addressed is cultural transformation. How is Sodexo working to transform its culture?

**RA:** At Sodexo, we approach D&I work through the lens of cultural transformation. For us, diversity is a fact and inclusion is a choice—a choice we make to ensure we foster a culture that encourages all of our employees to bring their full self to work.

In addition, cultural transformation requires a specific level of commitment and intentionality. At Sodexo, we learned that the following must happen in order for cultural transformation to occur: confirming leadership commitment, en-

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agement, and visible role modeling; building a strong business case that is clearly understood, and aligning D&I to the core business strategy; building and executing a systemic strategy with a simultaneous top-down, bottom-up, and middle-out approach, including integration in processes; and establishing clear metrics and accountability measures.

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

**RA:** One topic is doing the work globally given the context of varying cultures and laws, and learning how to navigate the nuances of different countries. Another is intersectionality and identity formation—the idea of gender identity

fluidity within the context of identity. A third topic is preparing workplaces for future generations—addressing the need for organizations to be attractive to future generations.

**IN:** Given the change of emphasis in our current federal administration, in coming years, will it be more incumbent on corporations be at the vanguard leading the push for inclusion?

**RA:** Companies will need to step up and be at the vanguard to drive societal change in the vacuum that’s being created. I believe that companies need to and are positioned to take more of a stand on issues, which is something they are not used to doing. As such, they need to address issues that are happening around them. It’s a new muscle that companies need to develop; if not us, then who?

**IN:** For a number of years, practitioners of diversity and inclusion have been making the business case for D&I. Do you think this message is sinking in? If your CEO or senior management team does not fully buy in that culture of diversity and inclusion is a competitive advantage, how do you convince them?

**RA:** Influencing leaders to see the business benefits continues to pose a challenge. While we often hear the argument that we have overexhausted the need for a business case, we have found that if done well with reliable data and outcomes, it continues to be a game changer.

One way we did this at Sodexo was with our Gender Balance Case Study. In 2014, Sodexo launched this internal study to explore and understand the correlation between gender-balanced management and performance. Part two was released this year. We now have over five years of data, covering 50,000 managers in 70 entities worldwide, that suggests that gender-balanced teams outperform those that are not gender balanced. And that the optimal mix of gender is 40 percent men to 60 percent women. **IN**