

HOW TO CREATE A  
WINNING COMPANY CULTURE

HEROES FOR HIRE:  
VETERANS IN THE WORKPLACE

GET READY—  
GEN Z IS COMING!

# INCLUSION

*Creating Globally  
Inclusive & Culturally  
Competent  
Workplaces*

WINTER 2020  
+ ISSUE 5

**Carlos W. Cubia**

## Walgreens Boots Alliance

Leading the  
Charge on  
Implementing  
Inclusive  
Practices







# Carlos Wesley Cubia

## Vice President & Global Chief Diversity Officer, Walgreens Boots Alliance

**C**arlos Cubia is vice president of human resources and global chief diversity officer for Walgreens Boots Alliance (WBA) and leads the development and implementation of enterprise-wide diversity and inclusion strategies. As a member of the global human resources leadership team, Cubia operates worldwide with responsibilities for effecting positive change across a workforce of more than 415,000

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employees. He heads Walgreens Boots Alliance’s global diversity and inclusion center of excellence, which promotes inclusive leadership behaviors and workplace practices, and drives diversity recruitment, talent development, performance management, and succession planning. His team also has responsibility for vendor and supplier diversity, affirmative action, and EEO compliance, as well as Walgreens Boots Alliance’s employee-driven business resource groups.

Prior to joining Walgreens Boots Alliance, Cubia served as the chief diversity officer for a global enterprise with more than 38,000 employees. He has more than 20 years of experience in the insurance and health-care industries, where he has been directly responsible for sales, marketing, and distribution management, and developed and implemented corporate diversity and inclusion initiatives. Throughout his career, Cubia has been instrumental in identifying strategies and implementing changes necessary to advance the business.

*Black Enterprise* recognized Cubia as one of the Top Corporate Diversity Executives in 2018, and *Career Mastered* magazine honored him with a Men as Allies Diversity in Leadership Award.

**Inclusion:** What will be some of the biggest issues and challenges in 2020 for corporate diversity and inclusion leaders?

**Carlos Cubia:** As businesses more deeply understand the value of and invest more in diversity and inclusion, it’s critical for D&I teams to demonstrate the return on investment. The good news is that organizations today are increasingly looking to D&I teams to provide counsel on many aspects of the business, like marketing, product development, and advertising, to name just a few key areas. Leaders understand the value of embedding D&I in the business strategy and operations, but we must demonstrate our value to stay there.

Another challenge is creating an effective, sustainable global vision that addresses unique, local market and geographical issues. It’s virtually impossible to take a one-size-fits-all approach to D&I around the world; each of

the regions in which Walgreens Boots Alliance operates faces different challenges, from ethnicity to classicism to gender equality. While our global vision drives everything we do, we execute our programs with a local mind-set focusing on relevant challenges and opportunities in that market.

Additionally, most industries have a long history of having a leadership team that is predominantly white men. Despite greater awareness and advancements in racial and gender balance, equity in hiring and promotions of women and people of color into top management continues to be a challenge. We know that meaningful change in any organization starts at the top, so unless a business makes a commitment to diversify leadership—starting with its board of directors—it will likely continue on the same trajectory.

**IN:** Over the last few years, there has been a great deal of excitement about artificial intelligence and machine learning in creating more inclusive workplaces. What do you see as the opportunities? How is your company and its clients using these technologies? What are some of the cautionary tales we need to be aware of?

**CC:** The opportunities to leverage AI technology to hire, develop, and engage people—and help them to succeed—are endless. Further, technology can help organizations assess and manage pay equity and advancement. And in a competitive, global marketplace, AI gives us greater opportunities to recruit and retain strong talent with flexible work arrangements, including a work-from-anywhere arrangement.

However, as with any new technology, we must understand and thoughtfully develop the algorithms that inform AI while maintaining strict standards to protect confidential information and general data privacy. If used correctly, AI can help reduce underlying biases in many people processes by using standardized and objective methodologies. To be effective, we must develop AI with the same mind-set that we are using to build more diverse and inclusive workplaces today.

**IN:** A concept that is increasingly being addressed now is cultural transformation of the workplace. What does this mean to you and how is your company working to transform its culture?

**CC:** Cultural transformation is a top priority at Walgreens Boots Alliance as we integrate two large, historic, and iconic brands to form the first global pharmacy-led health and well-being enterprise. We view our transformation as an evolutionary process that will deliver a “One Team” mind-set. We want our employees to have a shared vision and



*Left to Right:* Carlos Cubia, vice president and global chief diversity officer; Vivian Ayuso-Sanchez, senior manager, networks and programs; Gina Stuart, director, diversity strategy and programs; and Shaun Jones, director, supplier diversity.

purpose. We also want them to feel a strong sense of belonging and feel comfortable to bring their authentic selves to work; we want to create a workplace that encourages different work styles, new ideas, and fresh approaches to meeting our customers’ needs. Kathleen Wilson-Thompson, executive vice president and global chief human resources officer, sees cultural transformation through the lens of every voice, and with over 400,000 employees of WBA, it becomes critically important to treat everyone with dignity and respect so that we all bring our best each and every day.

**IN:** As more and more millennials join the job force, and as baby boomers are slowly aging, has this phenomenon proved challenging for Walgreens Boots Alliance? What are your suggestions for addressing this challenge?

**CC:** There are five generations in the workforce today, including traditionalists, baby boomers, generation X, millennials, and gen Z. Each generation has different ways of communicating, different ways of working, and different expectations from their employer for compensation, benefits, and advancement. To succeed, we need to help managers learn to motivate and engage each generation—and help them to collaborate and build effective working relationships with one another.

No matter the age, our managers are encouraged to focus on the results employees produce



Carlos Cubia presenting at the WBA Global Women's Executive Conference, November 2018.

rather than on how they get it done. This gives employees some flexibility in how they want to work and measures everyone on the same scale. For instance, flexible work arrangements can help boomers nearing retirement to remain working longer, and it gives millennials the flexibility they desire.

We also offer different approaches to learning. For instance, some may favor more traditional training methods, like PowerPoint presentations and handbooks, and other workers may prefer technology-based learning.

Regardless of the approach, the key is to maintain parity so other employees don't feel alienated. Employees who are close to retirement may want to reduce their work hours. Parents may want flexibility to attend their children's events. Businesses must support and extend these opportunities to all employees.

Finally, we strive to give all employees a voice. Regardless of age and tenure, we give all employees a forum in which they can share ideas, feedback, and concerns. This approach makes our workplaces more inclusive, which then yields solutions and outcomes that benefit all.

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

**CC:** We face a huge lost opportunity in the business world, and I'd argue in our personal lives too, when we don't seek out and build relationships with people who are different from

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us—getting to know them, taking a chance on them, or giving them the opportunity to learn and grow. If we don't do this, we all lose, because we miss out on the potential and range of contributions that others can offer.

When I was young, my parents separated, and my mom had to figure out how to support four children following 15 years as a homemaker. When she was starting over, most people discounted her; however, she went on to put four children through college, grad school, and law school. She could have thrown in the towel, but she overcame a multitude of hurdles because she believed there was too much at stake.

As a person of color in Corporate America, I'm often the only one in the room who looks like me, and sometimes that can feel like I'm on an island all to myself. But learning from my mother, who fought for others with far fewer resources and opportunities than I

have now, I know I need to continue to be the change I want to see in the world, inviting others onto my island and encouraging them to do the same.

**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 someone else on your leadership team does not fully buy in to the idea that a culture of diversity and inclusion is a competitive advantage, how do you convince them?**

**CC:** For a large, consumer-based business, diversity and inclusion is not an option but rather a business strategy. We MUST understand, reflect, and respond to the consumers who purchase our products around the world and the employees who serve them.

Data is the key to success. Through data, we can illustrate the demographics of who we sell to, what they purchase, when, and why. When we can demonstrate to a leader the return on investment or we can illustrate how D&I can be operationalized on a daily basis, the message sinks in and we gain full buy-in.

At WBA, we also have a fierce champion of diversity and inclusion in our executive vice president and global chief human resources officer, Kathleen Wilson-Thompson. She positions D&I as a business imperative—a means by which to accelerate change and maintain our competitive advantage in the marketplace. Kathleen knows that D&I is an essential driver of business performance; a talented, diverse, and highly engaged workforce is what every purpose-driven organization seeks to acquire and retain. Through her ongoing engagement with the executive leadership team, she positions D&I as a regular business topic at executive and board of directors' meetings. **IN**