

CAHRS Working Group
Group:

Systemic Shifts
in Belonging &
Inclusion
Approaches
July 19, 2023

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Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEI&B) has evolved from "nice-to-have" to a mission-critical component for global organizations. While many organizations have made progress towards achieving their DEI&B goals, successfully orchestrating a global diversity and inclusion strategy is complicated. Each organization faces a unique set of challenges depending on their DEI&B stage of maturity. Many organizations struggle to move beyond the compliance and tactical stages to fully integrate DEI&B as part of their everyday business decision making and culture.

Differences in culture, politics, economics, and legislation across regions in which businesses operate adds another layer of complexity. For example, in the United States, recent state and federal legislative changes are prompting some organizations to revisit their Human Resource policies and benefit offerings. Legislative changes may require organizations to modify their policies and benefits to remain compliant. It can also potentially affect strategies intended to drive diversity, attraction and retention. As some employees are looking to their employer to take a stand on social justice issues, this can add to the complexities of fully integrating DEI&B and cultivating a sense of belonging in the workplace. During this working group, hosted by The Cigna Group, participants discussed the challenges and shared approaches their organizations are taking to make systemic shifts to help drive collective D&I responsibility and more fully embed DEI&B into all aspect across their business. The following three questions helped guide the group discussion:

1. What does driving business integration mean and how would you define and measure it?
2. Are there critical enablers to drive systemic and sustainable change?
3. How would you go about transitioning from tactical to integration at scale?

Participants agreed that leadership buy-in and commitment to supporting DEI&B efforts was a key enabler for success. However, many participants highlighted that the challenge lies in creating stronger alignment between DEI&B strategies and the business. Enabling a stronger connection would help to support vertical integration of DEI&B strategies from the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), Business Unit (BU) level and down to smooth out pockets of unevenness. Several participants mentioned that establishing diversity goals and targets is important but felt that it is not enough. Some organizations aspire to move beyond gender and race representation to encompass a broader definition of workplace inclusion, such as diversity of experiences, disabilities, age, mental health and wellness, etc. - moving away from use of equity to embracing a sense of equality for all.

15 attendees from
8 companies:

Accenture
American Express
Bloomberg
CNH Industrial
The Cigna Group
Corning
General Electric
Medtronic

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CAHRS members agreed that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. The key is to understand what will work given your organizational culture and understanding what motivates your leaders to buy in and change their behaviors. Several approaches that participants shared during the discussion include:

1. **Building awareness through use of DEI&B data & insights:** Several organizations are focusing their efforts on tracking metrics (e.g., diversity talent promotion, turnover data, sense of belonging, etc.), assessing trends, and communicating this information to leaders at all levels of the organization. Several executives cited that regular communication on a quarterly basis was helpful in building awareness of DEI&B progress towards goals. Many participants mentioned that the use of this data can be powerful to initiate authentic discussions and transparency about how much or how little progress is being made. Another benefit is that it can help to drive healthy competition and motivate leaders to take action to improve their results.
2. **Imbedding DEI&B within the BU:** One organization described how it has created a global inclusion and equity business partner as a resource within each business unit. This role works closely with the HRBP, talent acquisition, talent management, and employee relations. The team is aligned by an overarching operating and governance structure that measures progress, identifies successes, learnings, and challenges, and aligns targeted actions and resources based on where the greatest D&I needs exist within the business.
3. **Linking DEI&B progress to leader performance and rewards:** Several organizations mentioned that a key to holding leaders accountable and ensuring alignment is to embed DEI&B goals into the performance management process and linking results to recognition and rewards. This tactic can help to drive motivation of leaders to commit to upholding the organization's inclusion values and "walk the talk" by fostering inclusion in their business and supporting initiatives for diverse talent hiring, development, and succession planning.
4. **Review of global HR practices and policies:** Given rapid changes in the market and workplace post pandemic, some organizations are undertaking a review of HR policies and practices to ensure they are not unintentionally serving as a barrier to enabling their DEI&B strategies. Some participants mentioned that they are considering reexamining their global benefits to support a broader range of diversity and inclusion benefits (e.g., accommodation for employees with disabilities, flexible working arrangements, family care, mental health, etc.), recognition, and access to development opportunities. One organization mentioned removing barriers to building internal pipelines of talent given recent limitations in hiring. Another organization revisited its Employee Relations Group (ERG) policy to ensure hourly employees were motivated to participate.

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5. Revisiting ERGs and BU Council Value Proposition: One organization mentioned that they are examining their ERGs and BU Councils to make them more effective at providing value for both employees and the organization. The objective is leveraging the grassroots efforts and moving from a programmatic focus to align with the business more closely. They are examining ways to view these opportunities as a development role and connect the talent with leaders in the business. They are also looking at a recognition/ acknowledgement strategy for ERG members.

6. Enhanced DEI&B Training and Development: One organization mentioned that they are rolling out a global training program focused on promoting cultural intelligence. The objective is to provide a consistent language around their organization's DEI&B values, bring awareness to unconscious bias, and enhance cross cultural team effectiveness. Other participants mentioned the need to provide greater clarity for their leaders about what good inclusive leadership looks like. There was agreement that to be effective, this needs to move beyond rolling out yet another toolkit and checklist. Participants mentioned that scaling this task can be challenging across a global organization. Some participants mentioned that providing safe spaces for peer-to-peer leader conversations around sharing their inclusion and diversity stories and practices has been an effective approach to draw leaders into the DEI&B conversation. To be effective, there needs to be a high degree of psychological safety to allow sharing without judgement. Another effective approach that was mentioned was 1:1 coaching, but reserved for specific situations, given the cost.

This Summary Report was prepared by Beth Flynn-Ferry and Karen Siewart for participants of the "Systemic Shifts in Belonging & Inclusion" Working Group.

The Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS) is an international center serving corporate human resources leaders and their companies by providing critical tools for building and leading high performing HR organizations.

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