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# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN ACTION

**Creating environments where people are valued  
and their voices heard**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP**

The 'tone from the top' is a well-used, but still a highly relevant mantra

## **ARE WE 'IN THIS' AND READY TO COMMIT?**

Are you brave enough to actually create a diverse and inclusive workplace?

Partnering with:



Charlotte Sweeney Associates

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# WELCOME

Hays and Charlotte Sweeney Associates, both experts and leaders in their fields, have joined forces to share insights and examples of what works to support and enable organisations to build and leverage the value that difference and inclusion brings in all aspects of their business delivery.

In each quarterly newsletter, we select two major Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) considerations and cut through the vast amount of information available to share with you our assessment and advice on what really works to convert commitment into progress.

In previous issues we have tackled considerations such as measuring impact, creating a compelling and inclusive employee value proposition, the benefits of employee engagement and how to shape and deliver an aligned commercial and D&I communications strategy. In this issue, we review the importance of inclusive leadership. Are we ready to commit to designing D&I investment that result in positive, sustainable change?



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# THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The ‘tone from the top’ is a well-used, but still a highly relevant mantra when looking at the likelihood of delivering improved D&I outcomes. In our recently published *Hays UK D&I Report 2018 – Your keys to unlock the full potential of your talent* – there were some stark reminders of the difference (and often shortfall) between sometimes stated intentions and the reality of lived experience of whether a leader’s style is inclusive or otherwise.

Our research, drawn from 9,300 respondents, found:

- Only 35% trust their organisations’ leaders to deliver change on the D&I agenda
- Only 36% believe that their leaders fully understand the relationship between D&I and profitability
- Only 35% consider their organisations’ leaders to be role models specifically for D&I
- 58% believe their leaders have a bias towards people who look, think or act like them

This makes for uncomfortable reading with low ratings of confidence in leaders getting behind D&I commitments. This also re-confirms the fact that creating a diverse and inclusive workplace doesn’t tend to happen by default – but rather by deliberate design.

During Charlotte’s time researching the importance and impact of leadership with her co-author Fleur Bothwick, for their book published by the Financial Times *Inclusive Leadership – the definitive guide to designing and implementing an impactful D&I strategy*<sup>1</sup>, they consistently noted the positive impact inclusive leaders had on the culture of their organisation.

There is an increasing body of research that seeks to identify what the traits of inclusive leadership are, from Deloitte<sup>2</sup> with their ‘Six Signature Traits’ to Catalyst<sup>3</sup> with their global research ‘Inclusion Matters’ and many others in-between.

The Catalyst research, which articulates the global nuances around inclusion, found the four leadership attributes that directly link to inclusion are:

**Empowerment:** Enabling direct reports to develop and excel.

**Accountability:** Demonstrating confidence in direct reports by holding them responsible for performance they can control.

**Courage:** Putting personal interests aside to achieve what needs to be done; you act on convictions and principles even when it requires personal risk-taking.

**Humility:** Admitting mistakes, accepting and learning from criticism and different points of view; seeking contributions of others to overcome limitations.

When organisations take inclusive leadership seriously the results are clear. Catalyst found that:

- The more included employees felt, the more innovative they reported being in their jobs
- The more included employees felt, the more they reported engaging in team citizenship behaviours – going above and beyond the “call of duty” to help other team members and meet workgroup objectives

## If the benefits of inclusive leadership are clear, why is it so difficult to deliver?

As noted in our Report, the majority of employees don’t see their leaders role modelling the behaviours required to create a diverse and inclusive workplace. This creates a ‘trust deficit’ – where employees are not confident that their leaders will deliver change.

Inclusive leaders set the tone for an open and trusting workplace, leveraging their diverse teams to achieve improved organisational performance. Adapting our styles of how we lead can be daunting for some and may take a ‘leap of faith’ for others. To get started on the road of consciously creating an inclusive style of leadership, consider the following actions:

**Begin by being self-aware:** Inclusive leaders should ‘lead from the front’ as conscious and self-aware champions of change. Learn to recognise your own unconscious bias and actively consider how the mitigate any unintentional consequences these may have.

**Understand employee sentiment towards their leadership style:** Building an inclusive workplace relies upon all employees having the confidence that their opinions are heard, values and respected equally. Regularly seek opinions from all employees on the leadership style of those in positions of authority, and how your endeavours on D&I are landing in the organisation for all demographic groups. Actively ask for feedback on your own behaviours and the impact they may be having on others.

**Promote Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives:** Inclusive leaders should aim to clearly, regularly and effectively communicate that D&I is firmly on their agenda. Communicating policies, promoting initiatives and work that is underway and sharing personal and commercial successes as a result of these is critical for sustaining employee confidence.

This isn’t something that leaders and companies can ‘start and stop’. Once you have committed to creating a workplace where inclusive leadership is important, employees will clearly see when this is not happening and will react to this. As proposed above, the most effect way of progressing is to start the conversation, gain employee insights and be open to the feedback.

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**THE FULL POTENTIAL**  
**OF YOUR TALENT**

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#diversityandinclusion



# ARE WE 'IN THIS' AND READY TO COMMIT?

While presenting at a recent conference we asked the audience 'Are you brave enough to actually create a diverse and inclusive workplace?' With many of the audience members looking at each other a little confused, one person asked the question, 'Do we really need to be brave to do this?' Our response came back 'It depends what you mean by 'to do this''?

The challenge for many organisations is that even when they have the commitment from the top to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace, many of the actions they take will not create positive, sustainable change.

Change can be viewed, shaped and delivered through a series of initiatives and campaigns with timeframes and a start and a finish point. While this approach is useful to trigger a change in approach, action or behaviour, it runs the risk of omitting from the design the value of longer term learning, regular review and continual improvement as the commitments evolve to meet the requirements of a dynamic workforce and workplace. It is this inbuilt reflection and agility that will ensure that adjustments or changes introduced – be they major or just a tweak really 'stick'.

This need to understand, deliver and report on this long term and well planned commitment to change is increasingly important as the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) in the UK launched their findings on 'Board Diversity Reporting' in September 2018. This reported on the current extent and manner of reporting by FTSE 350 companies on diversity at board and senior management levels in their annual reports and concluded that increased reporting transparency had been a positive driver of change. As a result of this the UK Corporate Governance Code (effective from accounting periods from 1 Jan 2019) has a larger focus on reporting on progress, the talent pipeline, actions taken and progress made and that 'D&I should be built into companies' strategic plans for meeting their corporate aims'.

In a culture where organisations understand the need of continually attracting and retaining the best talent, as well as seeking to get the best from their existing workforce, there is no 'stop point' where everything is 'sorted'. Transformational change such as this requires clear attention on (i) understanding what the underlying root causes are which result in a lack of diversity within a workforce and a workplace which does not feel inclusive and respectful to all (ii) creating interventions to create a shift in the policy, process and behaviours which will change these outcomes (iii) taking the time and having the confidence to capture and consider the learning points from the interventions and (iv) creating those into a series of tailored 'nudges' or 'reminders' as to what the 'new normal' is. It involves taking the principles of continuous improvement to review, unpick and rebuild (where appropriate) all elements of what we do - regularly.

There is no 'silver bullet' to deliver transformational change. There are also a number of traps to avoid and be mindful of, these include:

**Starting with no destination in mind:** Without knowing where you ultimately want to be how do you know if the activity you plan to do will actually get you there. Although very tempting to just roll your sleeves up and get stuck in to delivering something, take a step back and create a clear vision of where you want to get to.

**The long action plan:** Yes, there may be a lot to do but creating a very long action plan will just make the whole work feel so much more daunting. Start with a maximum of three key areas of focus. Once they have progressed and making an impact then start to think of the other areas to introduce.

**Trophy change:** There is something to be said about going for the big, challenging changes required, however, the impact of these can be quickly diminished if they are not build on solid foundations. Start with the foundation, getting back to basics, ensuring that D&I is embedded into all your policies, processes and practices. Once you are comfortable the basics are in place then start to focus on the bigger change required.

**Following the herd:** Part of creating a clear strategy and action plan to understand what others are doing. This can become dangerous when this turns into copying what others are doing. Your D&I action plan should be developed purely to deliver to the issues within your company and directly link back to your wider business strategy – this is as an enabler to delivering business strategy rather than it being an end in itself.

As example of review, unpick and rebuild, specifically through a recruiting lens, it is important to understand the preferences we all have around different types of people around us and the assumptions we make about them.

Hays '[Candidate Journey Assessment Diagnostic](#)' assists in this. It's an interactive tool that allows you to evaluate how strong your candidate experience is against industry-leading best practice and creates a personalised report of recommendations on how to improve your candidate experience as is and within a framework of continuous improvement throughout.

Of course the attraction and The Candidate Journey is one aspect introducing positive and sustainable change for an employer and its workforce. [Review our report](#) for insights into some additional other vital ingredients such as the importance of capture and analysis of data, communication, culture and proactive career management.



Charlotte Sweeney Associates

Hays are proudly partnering with Charlotte Sweeney Associates to launch their programme 'What Works: Transparency and Truths', a blend of webinars and a face-to-face interactive event with '[The Human Library](#)'. To find out more about the programme contact [info@charlottesweeney.com](mailto:info@charlottesweeney.com)

# GET IN CONTACT

At Hays, we're passionate about placing people in a role where they can flourish and succeed. By valuing diversity, we're better informed to find the right job to transform a person's life and the right person to transform an organisation.

We know from experience that different outlooks and contrasting experiences lead directly to increased creativity and performance. In turn, these positively influence the achievement of an organisation's ambition. Recognising and harnessing the dynamism of equal opportunity is an essential element of our leading expertise.

Enabling people and organisations to fulfil their potential. That's the power of diversity at work. For further information please contact:

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Further resources are available on the **Creating Inclusive Cultures** app available on Apple and Android.



Charlotte Sweeney OBE is co-author of *Inclusive Leadership*. More information is available [online](#), and can be purchased from Amazon. *Inclusive Leadership* has been shortlisted for Management Book of the Year by The Chartered Management Institute (CMI).



## Footnotes

- 1 [www.diversityandinclusiveleadership.com](http://www.diversityandinclusiveleadership.com)
- 2 [www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html](http://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html)
- 3 [www.catalyst.org/knowledge/inclusion-matters](http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/inclusion-matters)
- 4 [www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/62202e7d-064c-4026-bd19-f9ac9591fe19/Board-Diversity-Reporting-September-2018.pdf](http://www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/62202e7d-064c-4026-bd19-f9ac9591fe19/Board-Diversity-Reporting-September-2018.pdf)

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