



ADVISORY

Winter 2022



How Pliancy **Puts People First** And Includes DEI in Every Part of Its Organization

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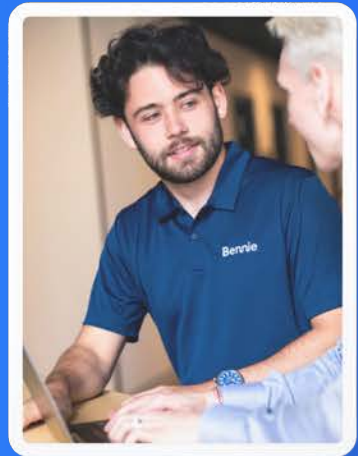
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A Note from the Publisher

Prioritizing DEI in a Transformative Year



2022 is shaping up to be a unique and transformative year, as we think through the bedrock of DEI strategy and what it means for the future of work. Implementing a powerful, cross-functional DEI framework has come to be the gold standard of organizations looking to attract top talent, bring forth the most creative ideas, and build an organization that can withstand even the most heightened level of growth. However, while the pandemic continues to unearth the fragility of our internal systems, the emergence of the “Great Resignation” challenges the very efficacy of our once celebrated efforts towards inclusivity and connection.

What role does DEI play in this current landscape? How can People leaders anchor their efforts to foster deeper belonging when many feel (and may actually be) farther apart? How can DEI programming, leadership, strategy, and planning lead the way in resolving the conflicts highlighted by the events of our world today?

Hiring is only the beginning. In this increasingly competitive market, the demand for great talent is at an all-time high. Companies are aiming much of their budget and people power into marketing, employer branding, and a revamp of their recruitment strategy as a means to gain the most traction with diverse candidates. However, extending that focus into areas that amplify new hire success like onboarding, mentorship, and a clear career path does more to attract and sustain talent than ever before. These areas demonstrate the intrinsic values of the organization and give potential candidates a window into the overall employment experience.

Equity is a moving target. In line with a competitive market, the growing inflation of salaries also lies across all industries and roles. This is truly a “sellers” market, where candidates can command salaries, benefits, and perks once reserved for more senior or tenured employees. Although lucrative for potential candidates, it places HR and People leaders at an increased risk of bias, as we go well beyond the pre-approved thresholds for each role. However, establishing a regular cycle for compensation review, using robust benchmarking tools, and engaging in transparent conversations with employees can help leaders stabilize the increasing volatility surrounding pay.

Measure what is meaningful. As leaders in HR and benefits, we have a powerful role to play in defining the benchmarks that demonstrate success amongst all factors of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is important that we expand what DEI means beyond the traditional differentiators like race, gender, or ethnicity. Do we truly understand how other socioeconomic factors contribute to individual success within an organization? How can we gain greater insight into these factors while creating comprehensive programs that tie directly into these areas? Lastly, what is the right benchmarking and measurement tool for understanding our success and opportunities? Stretching beyond the traditional focus areas of DEI enables us to not only make a greater impact on our employees but also support employees’ individual trajectory within the organization.

These are just a few highlights of today’s DEI conversation and some ways we can remain steadfast in amplifying DEI efforts in an unprecedented time. We are excited to share this issue with you and to hear from our amazing HRA members on how they are maintaining DEI momentum throughout 2022.

Sincerely,

Shavon Brown, Senior Director of People, Bennie



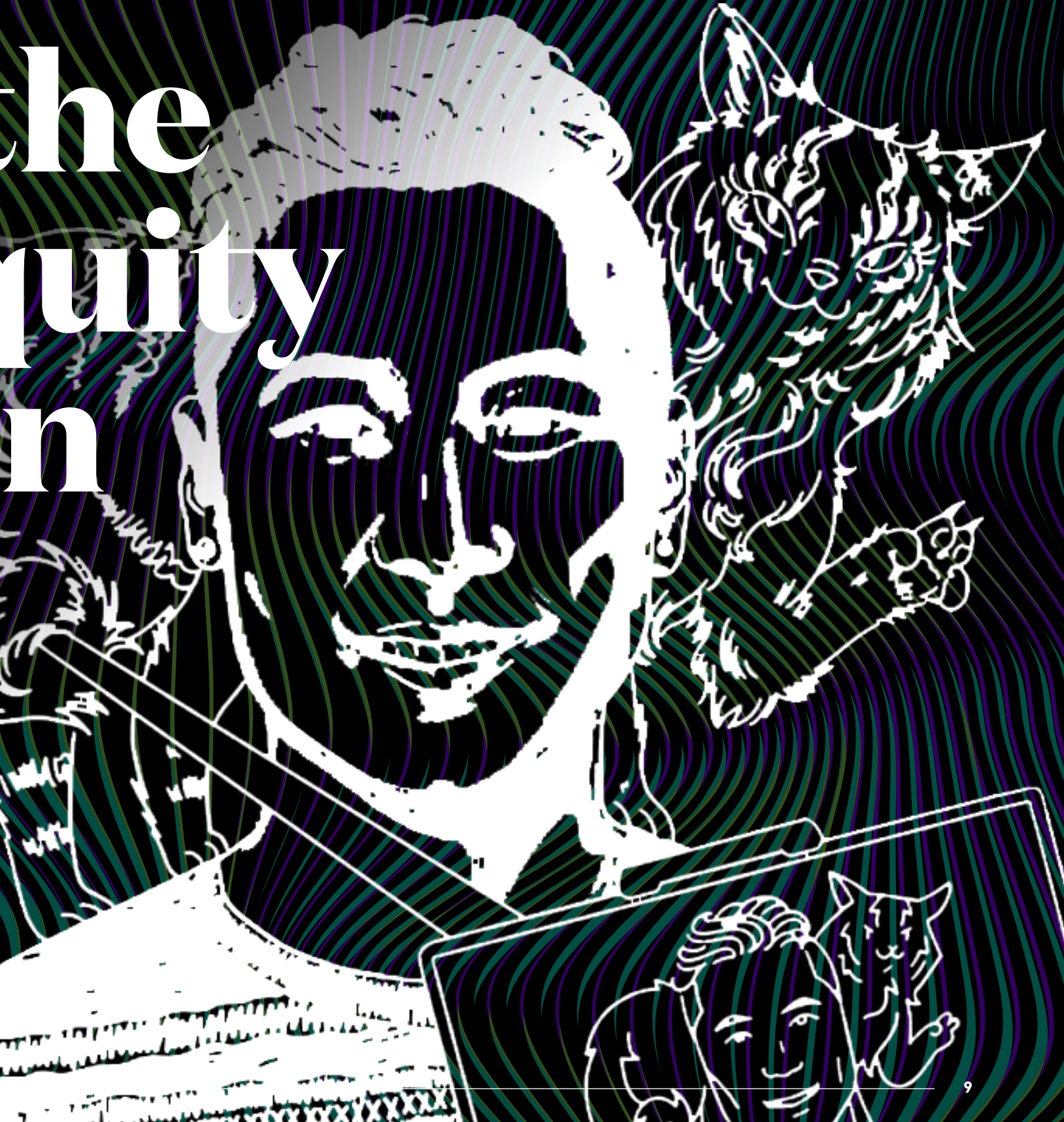
Are Psychedelics Positioned to

Transform Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Industry?

By:

**Steven Huang, Founder of Millennial HR Design,
a DEI x Psychedelics Consultancy**

the equity in



Two trends emerged in 2021.

First, the DEI industry continued to grow in size in the wake of George Floyd's murder and the social justice uprising. **Second**, psychedelic research became prolific, strategic, and even government-supported. A new wave of DEI practitioners are asking: can psychedelics be a tool for the social justice movement?

Psychedelics... Are We Talking About What I Think We're Talking About?

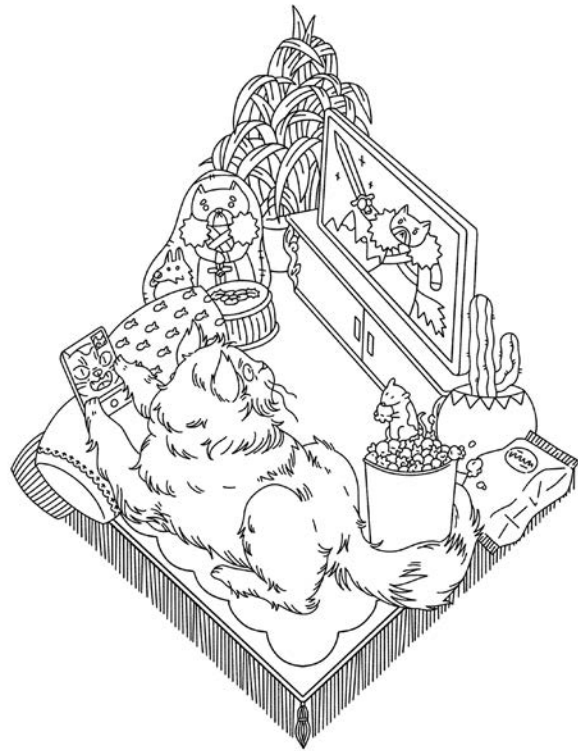
Yes - those psychedelics. Psychedelics are a class of psychoactive substances that produce changes in perception, mood, cognitive processes - and alter a person's awareness of their surroundings, thoughts, and feelings. The psychedelics getting the most attention right now are the ones in clinical testing phases: MDMA, LSD, Psilocybin ("magic mushrooms"), mescaline, and DMT. Ketamine, while not a classic psychedelic, is often grouped in because it is already a legal treatment for mental health. It is considered the best example of a mainstream, accessible, psychedelic-assisted therapy; and prescribable in all 50 states.

In 2023, it is likely that more psychedelic-assisted treatments will be legally available through two systems: MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD (regulated by the FDA) and psilocybin therapy for anyone who can safely benefit in Oregon (regulated by the Oregon Health Authority).

Why DEI Practitioners Are Buzzing About Psychedelics

After George Floyd's murder and the social justice uprising, DEI practitioners saw an outpouring of support and funding; and for many folks, an opportunity to capture the magnitude of the moment as DEI was prioritized across organizations of all sizes. But at the end of 2020, a lot of practitioners looked around and said "...we failed." They argue that not much has changed because most corporations don't want to change; they just want to look as if they're changing. It seems the workplace, and society, is more polarized than ever before. Cancel culture is rampant; while nuanced conversations with divergent perspectives are near impossible to find. It feels as though we are collectively trapped in a horrific cycle of injustice, then protest, followed by corporate spending - to what end?

DEI practitioners are coming to a realization that they're not having the type of impact they dreamed; that radical innovation will be required to drive towards the equitable outcomes we seek. As psychedelic research has made a renaissance, some DEI practitioners are starting to examine the potential relationship between these two seemingly unrelated worlds for the first time.



What the Connection Between DEI & Psychedelics Looks Like

Diversity, equity and inclusion - at its core, requires us to think critically about the structures of power in our world that perpetuate inequality. Beyond unconscious bias training, employee resource groups, or the myriad of other initiatives designed for under-served identities, a DEI practitioner's higher purpose is to ensure that the structures within a system work for everyone, not just a select few. Given a magic wand, a DEI practitioner would likely want to reimagine our history from one of colonialism and White supremacy towards one of fairness, equality and belonging - the ideals from which our founding fathers designed our nation.

During a psychedelic experience, a person experiences a non-ordinary state of consciousness. The effects of being on psychedelics vary. The magnitude of the effect will vary from person to person, and is also dependent on one's mindset and physical and emotional setting. The most common effects, however, are ones that can produce a positive affinity for the tenets of diversity, equity and inclusion: a feeling of oneness with others, acceptance of one's self, being able to deeply empathize with others, the ability to safely revisit and heal past trauma, and reduced anxiety.

The people who stand to benefit the most from psychedelics are the people who are most marginalized by society; the people that we center in DEI work. It is often these populations; BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, Veterans and Disability communities that are most traumatized, have least access to a diagnosis and even less access to adequate treatment.

Psychedelic research is underway to understand safety and feasibility to treat racial trauma.

Will Psychedelics Transform Our Toughest DEI Critics into Our Biggest DEI Supporters?

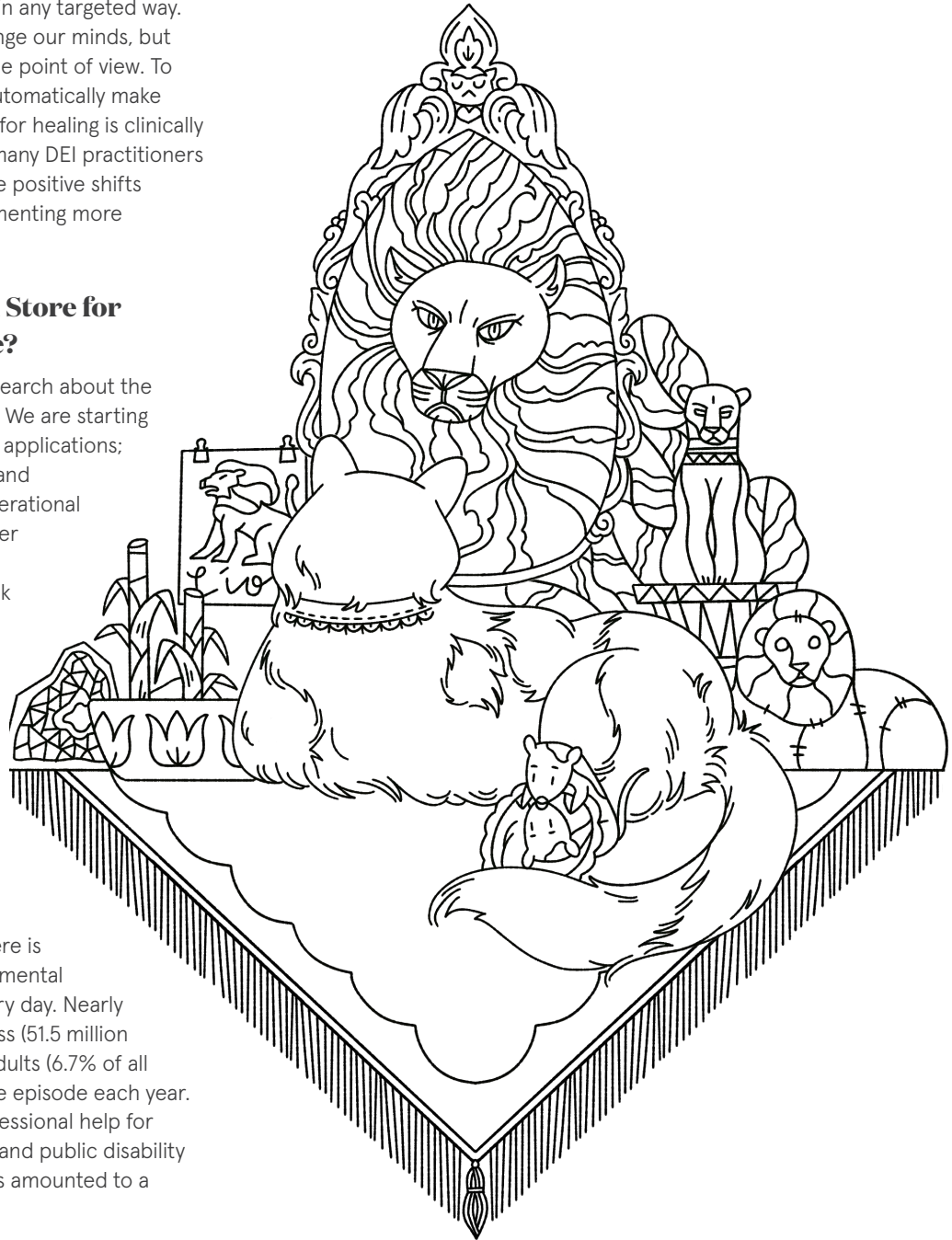
Broadly, we cannot assume that psychedelics are a panacea. It is well understood in the field that psychedelics are a “non-specific amplifier.” That is, there is no conclusive evidence that psychedelics can be used to change one’s political affiliation, religion, or worldview in any targeted way. Psychedelics open new pathways to change our minds, but those changes are not-specific to any one point of view. To put it another way, psychedelics won’t automatically make people more inclusive. But the potential for healing is clinically documented, and that is enough to get many DEI practitioners excited about the opportunity to catalyze positive shifts towards inclusivity and eventually, implementing more equitable policies within our workplaces.

What Does the Future Have In Store for Psychedelics in the Workplace?

We don’t have any existing, published research about the impact of psychedelics in the workplace. We are starting to see emerging research with tangential applications: ayahuasca is being used to bring Israelis and Palestinians together to heal a multi-generational rift caused by a centuries-old dispute over land and resources. While this is not the same conflict as the enslavement of Black people or the genocide of Indigenous people, there is some tangential reasoning that ayahuasca’s effects can heal multi-generational trauma that is the source of much conflict in the United States.

Ultimately, there’s still a lot that we don’t know. Only time will tell as to what emerging applications of psychedelics we will see in our future workplaces. Within the United States, there is good reason to hope for the best as the mental health crisis impacts our workforces every day. Nearly one in five adults lives with a mental illness (51.5 million in 2019). Over sixteen million American adults (6.7% of all American adults) have a major depressive episode each year. One in six adults is unable to access professional help for emotional distress. In 2012, lost earnings and public disability insurance payments due to mental illness amounted to a combined total of at least \$467 billion.

Psychedelic-assisted therapy, as an insurance-covered employee benefit, is no longer a pipe dream. To my peers, it is a catalyst for mass mental health and a promising strategy to make healthier and more inclusive workplaces. ■



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1. Ani Turner, The Business Case for Racial Equity: A Strategy For Growth (W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Altarum, April 2018). <https://altarum.org/publications/the-business-case-for-racial-equity-a-strategy-for-growth>.
2. PWC, "Medical cost trend: Behind the numbers 2021," June 2020. <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/health-industries/library/assets/hri-behind-the-numbers-2021.pdf>.
3. MercerMarsh Benefits, "Health on Demand: delivering the benefits

employees want now," 2021. <https://www.mercer.us/our-thinking/health/mmb-2021-health-on-demand.html>.
4. Cigna provides access to virtual care through participating in-network providers. Not all providers have virtual capabilities. Cigna also provides access to virtual care through national telehealth providers as part of your plan. This service is separate from your health plan's network and may not be available in all areas or all plans.

Pliancy

Bennie Customer Spotlight

How Pliancy Puts People First

And Includes DEI in Every Part of Its Organization

By: Kristina Dinabourgski, Bennie



Introducing Pliancy

Pliancy is an IT consulting organization with a people-driven approach to designing technology for capital management and life science industries. The team is primarily made up of IT consultants who provide on-site and remote support beyond break-fix solutions; they lead technology for clients, proactively come up with solutions, and give clients a competitive edge using technology.

Pliancy's purpose is to empower tomorrow's technology leaders to revolutionize how organizations value technology. By creating customized solutions, providing unparalleled service, and teaching people how to supercharge their teams with tools, Pliancy removes technological barriers for its clients and sets them up for success.

“Our vision is for technologists around the world to be regarded as enablers of human potential.”
-Rachel

Pliancy's Core Values

- **Putting People First**
Putting the employee at the center of everything
- **Persisting with Patience**
Iterating and improving with sustained focus on the long game
- **Leading Together**
Anyone can be a leader in any part of the organization
- **Creating Inspiring Experiences**
Going the extra mile to design thoughtful touchpoints and journeys

Pliancy's People Team

From overseeing HR functions to talent acquisition to learning and development, Pliancy's people team does it all. At Pliancy, the people team makes people operations a safe space where employees can be heard, get resources, and find value. They work with employees to develop partnerships and relationships and provide coaching and guidance. When it comes to promoting DEI in the workplace, the people team uses their unique backgrounds and skills to lead the way, creating an environment of inclusivity and advocating for every individual.

Get to Know the People Team



Rachel Noiseux People Programs Manager

Rachel is Pliancy's People Programs Manager and oversees all people operations functions. This includes everything from recruiting to onboarding to all aspects of the employee life cycle (programming development, starting benefits, employee relations, compensation, and learning and development). Before venturing into the world of HR, Rachel went to college with the goal to end up in education and be a teacher. When she got into student teaching, she realized it wasn't the right fit. After graduating, she fell into the recruiting sector, where she found a love and passion for human resources after working in a recruiting agency.

“You're really able to make an impact on individual employees' lives, which I find really rewarding.”

What interests her most about working in the HR space is the impact it has on the employee. As people spend much of their lives at work and around their colleagues, creating a positive work environment is essential. With remote work presenting unique challenges to companies, Pliancy (a hybrid company) emphasizes building a human connection and creating a community at a time when people may need more interaction. "We need to create space for our employees, so we make sure that we're checking in and communicating effectively through all these times."



Tiffany Kress
People Programs Generalist

As Pliancy's People Programs Generalist, she dabbles in a bit of everything, including supporting HR functions, people operations, and focusing on the general side of HR. Tiffany got her bachelor's in international relations and originally planned to work in international development. However, she decided to change directions after her studies and went into finance for a little bit before getting into an HR operations role early in her career. Before getting into her first role in HR, she got her master's in nonprofit management - and that's where her love for people operations and human resources began. Before starting her role at Pliancy, Tiffany did work in international development in various HR specialty roles. "I get really excited about how teams work together, creating spaces for people to develop their soft skills, and then simply being a resource for employees. One of my favorite things is just being able to help with quick problem-solving and creative solutions, ranging from complex people issues to the most basic of questions

about benefits." The most significant challenge she feels HR faces today is retention (the subject of her master's thesis). With the pandemic and The Great Resignation, there is a greater need for companies to take a step back and look at whether they're creating an environment where employees can truly feel like they're part of something, making an impact, and making meaningful connections. At Pliancy, the people team focuses on understanding employees' needs and removing barriers.

"The more we can create programming and initiatives that will make people feel even more seen and included in the workplace, that's really going to come to our advantage."



Lisa Nguyen
Learning & Development Specialist

Lisa's background is in education; she studied English in college, intending to become a professor because she loved academia. Following her studies, she decided to give teaching high school a try as the first step towards her professorship

career. In this role, she fell in love with teaching and realized that learning isn't as much about the content as it is about relationships and empowering students to self-actualize and gain confidence.

After teaching high school English for about eight years, she moved into the corporate world, where she curated the learning experience at an architecture firm. During this time, she desired more growth, and she found that growth at Pliancy. "What I do now is think about how to help people in different departments gain the knowledge and skills that they need in order to feel their most confident to do their jobs."

Helping people develop themselves is what Lisa loves most about working in the HR industry. When it comes to the learning and development space, she noticed that a lot of companies can be very separate or siloed in their approach. At Pliancy, Lisa focuses on creating a culture of learning.

"I believe everybody is a subject matter expert, and that meaning is most impactful when it is created collaboratively, when the authority on knowledge is decentered, basically. So I think that's a challenge that I want to solve because it just makes for a better culture of learning."

How Pliancy Makes DEI a Priority

"We all have to come with an open mind. There has to be a willingness to listen and be flexible." -Rachel.

At Pliancy, the people team places emphasis on making sure that DEI efforts are integrated into all different programming at all levels within the organization. For the people team, it's more about ingraining it into the company culture rather than checking a box. A big part of that is creating a culture of inclusion so that every team member can feel like they're a part of the community. DEI efforts don't just end at the point that an employee gets onboarded - it's a continuous process.

Pliancy's Essentials for a Successful DEI Program

"We're big on culture, and that was what drew me to Pliancy. I loved how in the job description it said, 'You're not just a culture fit but a culture add.' We're not just looking for people who are going to fit our culture, but contribute and cultivate it well." -Tiffany

Maintaining a culture of inclusivity is one of the main elements of Pliancy's DEI efforts. The goal is for people to feel like they can be themselves at work, and allow individuals' different experiences and backgrounds to add to and enrich the company's culture. Inclusivity should be woven throughout all processes, and this can start with job descriptions when hiring people. Inclusivity can also extend into company training and learning materials. For example, when writing content, consider people's neurological differences and the different ways they learn.

Leadership buy-in is also a critical element; there needs to be support from the top for the DEI efforts to permeate into the entire organization. The efforts don't necessarily always need to start at the top; they can start at the bottom as well - but those efforts need to make their way to the top for maximum effectiveness. Having leadership present at DEI meetings, for instance, sets a good example. A culture of learning and openness is also necessary, along with the understanding that there is a little bit of sacrifice within privilege. But it's important not to look at DEI as, "If this person's getting it, then this person isn't." Instead, look at it as "There's plenty of room for everyone." Everyone can have a seat at the table.

"I think it's about gaining that level of awareness and taking moments to practice empathy, to question who has the power here, whose voice is not being represented and really doing all you can actively to fight systems of oppression."

-Lisa

Overall, a huge aspect of making impactful change in an organization is by operationalizing what DEI means and providing foundational tools and training so that people can be equipped to welcome change and make that mental shift. DEI can be overwhelming, especially when there is so much to do, but it's more about starting small, supporting your colleagues, and taking steps to integrate DEI into all aspects of the workplace. ■



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How to Achieve Measurable DEI Progress

By: Susan Ladika



As the focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) has soared in the wake of George Floyd's death in 2020, small and midsize businesses are stepping up their efforts to create a more inclusive workforce.

When it comes to DEI in the workplace, "it all has to be genuine, rather than just hopping on the bandwagon because everyone else is doing it," says Laurie McCabe, Partner and Co-Founder of the SMB Group in Groton, Mass., which focuses on technology research and consulting for small and medium-size businesses.

Fostering DEI involves setting goals and then taking concrete, measurable steps to turn those goals into reality. Small and mid-size businesses need to "start with an understanding that this is what it (DEI) is, this is what it looks like, and this is why it is important for the company," McCabe says.

In a 2020 survey by the jobs website Glassdoor, more than three-quarters of employees and job seekers said a diverse workforce matters when it comes to evaluating companies they might work for, and more than 60% of employees say their employer should be doing more to increase diversity.

A survey by the SMB Group in November found that almost 40% of respondents had established a DEI program or were in the process of doing so, while more than one-quarter planned to start implementing such a program in the next 12 months. The focus on DEI "really has to start with the leadership team," says Portia Kibble Smith, head of DEI at Karat, which conducts first-round interviews of software engineers for other companies. "If an organization doesn't have leadership committed to diversity, it's just not going to work," she says.

At Seattle-based Karat, the decision to focus on DEI began when the company was created in 2014, and Smith was one of the first 20 employees the company hired. Karat now has about 160 employees and hopes to double its head count in the next year. "They knew that (DEI) was one of their core principles from the very beginning," Smith says. But many small and midsize businesses don't have that baked into their organization. For them, McCabe recommends surveying employees to see how they feel about the company's current

DEI efforts so they can determine “where we are today and what our goals are.” “How do you create goals if you don’t know where you are today?” McCabe asks.

A goal could involve hiring a wider range of people, such as those of different ages, races, genders, sexual orientations or life experiences, she says, or creating a culture where employees feel comfortable speaking out against inequality. Once goals are set, an organization needs to identify what resources, such as money or people, can help them meet their goals, McCabe says.

Joan C. Williams, a law professor and director of the Center for WorkLife Law at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, recommends using metrics-based methods to identify bias within an organization and then measure progress. She cites four key areas for bias to arise - hiring, performance reviews, compensation and promotions. Minor changes can make major differences in combating bias, such as using gender-neutral language in job postings so jobs may appeal to both men and women and pulling in a wider pool of job applicants, says Williams, author of the new book “Bias Interrupted.” Williams and a group of researchers have developed toolkits that are available for free on the website BiasInterrupters.org, which allows individuals, teams and organizations to assess bias and consider various ways to address it.

If a small or medium-size company wants to improve its hiring of diverse talent, Williams suggests that they track the



demographics of job applicants to assess such things as who has applied for a position, who is called in for an interview, who receives a job offer, and who is ultimately hired. A company can select someone who is involved in the hiring process to monitor it for bias and try to address it if it crops up.

A small or midsize business might do such things as tap into diverse networks to find potential talent, ensure that all

resumes are graded on the same scale, and use a standard list of questions during all interviews for a certain position. Williams then suggests organizations review the metrics they use to determine if bias has been addressed.

“Diverse teams help spark a lot of creativity and innovation,”
– *Laurie McCabe*

Identifying and then interrupting bias “is the key to making actual concrete progress” when it comes to improving diversity, equity and inclusion, Williams says.

At Karat, the company helps foster employee diversity by building relationships with a wide range of organizations, such as the local chamber of commerce and historically black colleges and universities, Smith says. When looking for diverse talent, it’s important to “look outside your circle,” Smith says. Karat also asks its employees who come from underrepresented groups, such as women and minorities, if they know others who are looking for jobs, she says.

Another way the company has boosted diversity is by setting up a program called Brilliant Black Minds, which offers students at historically black colleges and universities and those at other black organizations the opportunity to do practice job interviews, with Karat providing feedback on their performance, Smith says.

Diversity, equity and inclusion doesn’t stop with the recruiting and hiring process. To offer ongoing support, Karat has set up employee resource groups for women and black employees, and has established a Slack channel for working mothers, Smith says.

Studies by the consultancy McKinsey have shown greater financial performance for organizations with diverse executive teams. And by having diversity among employees, small and midsize businesses are exposed to a wider range of perspectives and ideas, Smith says.

That diversity also helps companies understand and empathize with a wider range of customers, McCabe says. “Diverse teams help spark a lot of creativity and innovation,” she adds. ■

The Pay Imp

By: Joanne Sammer



Equity Operative

Paying people fairly based on their jobs, responsibilities and performance is the cornerstone of any well-run organization. Yet, there are so many ways pay can get out of alignment and cause some people to be paid more than their peers even when there is no business reasoning for that disparity.

“There are rational reasons for differences in pay, like tenure, education level and performance rating,” says Cathrin Stickney, CEO of parity.org. “When you run out of rational reasons, then the reasons are likely to be irrational, like age, gender and race.”

Whatever the reason, the existence of pay inequities can be devastating to an organization, especially right now. The pressure on employers to demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) has never been greater. In this market, no employer can afford to be seen anything less than fair to its employees. Ironically, turnover and a dearth of talent for many jobs could force employers to offer higher pay to bring in new talent, potentially creating pay equity problems where none may have existed before.

Of course, it does not necessarily matter if problems with pay equity are the result of bias, market pressure or administrative neglect. The result will be the same with some employees making more than others for no discernible reason. And word will get out. “People talk,” says Don McDermott, president of compensation consulting firm D.G. McDermott Associates in Red Bank, N.J.. “There is no such thing as secrecy anymore” when it comes to pay.

Perhaps that is why organizations, like software company salesforce.com, Inc., release a written evaluation of pay equity efforts each year or provide information on pay equity on their websites or in DEI reports. In order to have good things to report on pay equity, organizations need to make sure their pay systems and structures are working as intended and pay for all employees is fair and equitable.

Is There a Problem?

To ensure pay equity in their organizations, HR executives must ensure that pay systems and structures are keeping pace with the market and working as intended. Employers should be regularly analyzing the pay levels of groups of employees in the same job or who do substantially similar work. In many cases, that means looking beyond job descriptions to focus on the work each employee or group of employees actually does on a day-to-day basis, which is not always what is laid out in the job description.

“This type of analysis does not have to be complicated,” says Tamsin Kaplan, an attorney with law firm Davis Malm & D’Agostine in Boston. The necessary information and data should be readily available in most organizations on a spreadsheet or via HRIS.

During this review, it is important to consider the skills, training, and education necessary for the job holder to have, as well as the responsibilities of the job regardless of the job title, including level of accountability, discretion, decision making authority and hours worked. “That’s the challenge in all



companies,” says Lane Transou, a compensation consultant based in Houston. “What does the person actually do?”

Next, employers can move on to comparing the pay and responsibilities for each individual in a given job or substantially similar positions.

“The individual qualities, experience, education, performance and seniority may all affect pay, but gender or other elements cannot,” says Kaplan.

For example, an individual with five years of experience who is making more than someone doing substantially similar work who has 20 years of experience could indicate a pay equity issue that needs to be addressed. This is especially true if both employees are equal in every other way. However, if further analysis reveals that the person with five years of experience earned a more advanced degree and travels much more frequently in their work than their peer with 20 years of experience, that could explain some or all of the difference in pay.

It is important to note that organizations may want to work with an attorney when conducting this type of analysis. This way, the results will be protected by attorney-client privilege if the analysis reveals pay equity problems.

Fixing Problems

Pay equity problems can occur for many reasons, including bias, neglected pay systems and structures, poor management and pay compression. “Asking why there are problems will become the basis for making changes,” says McDermott. “Things happen over time and everyone has biases, so it is important to put all the reasons on the table and acknowledge them.”

Part of this process is determining whether pay equity problems exist throughout the organization or if they are concentrated in specific business units, divisions or departments. For example, if the organization has recently undergone a merger or acquisition, it may be necessary to monitor pay levels during and after the transition to ensure pay equity is not adversely affected in the combined organization.

In some cases, a specific department or manager is responsible for many pay equity problems. In that case, HR leaders must be prepared to do a more granular analysis to identify what is causing the problems and provide feedback and any necessary training to the managers involved.

“If a department or division head has a \$20,000 budget for pay raises, there has to be accountability,” says Adam Calli, principal with Arc Human Capital in Vienna, Va. “The organization has to verify outcomes.”

Some pay equity problems can be traced to poorly thought out systems and processes and ad hoc decision making. For example, HR or hiring managers may be asking for candidates’ salary history, which has been shown to perpetuate pay equity issues. In other cases, managers may offer an off-cycle pay



“Asking why there are problems will become the basis for making changes,” says McDermott. “Things happen over time and everyone has biases, so it is important to put all the reasons on the table and acknowledge them.”

increase to retain a valued employee, which can cause a chain reaction that creates pay equity problems among that employee’s peers.

Of course, in a rapidly changing labor market, existing pay ranges may simply not be keeping up with the market. “If pay is not high enough to fill a job today, organizations need to adapt to the market,” says Stricklin. “Don’t keep salary ranges static then hire people at pay that is 20% higher.”

Staying Competitive

Whatever the reasons for pay equity problems, employers must act as quickly as possible to adjust pay for those affected, both to ensure fairness and to remain competitive when recruiting and retaining talent. Although organizations do not have to make these adjustments all at once, time is of the essence. “Employees aren’t waiting for this to happen,” says Transou. “Fixing pay equity issues can cost a lot of money but less than having those people walk out the door.”



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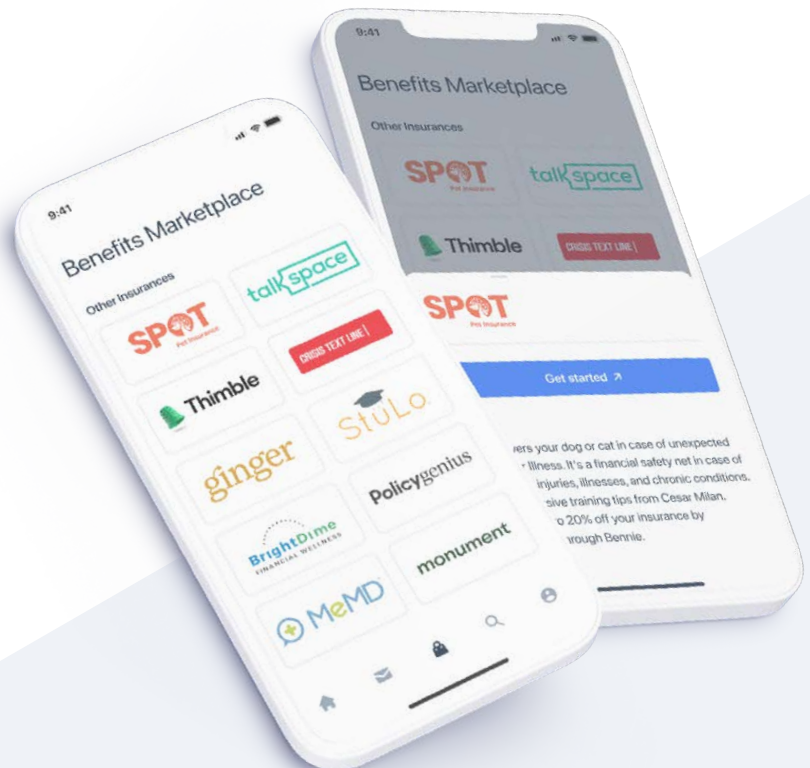
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Bennie BETTER BENEFITS

Creating a Diverse & Inclusive Environment in Non-Profit Tech

By:
Kristina Dinabourgski
Bennie



**Member
Spotlight!**



**CODE for
AMERICA**

Julie You, Senior Manager, Talent Acquisition at Code for America

Julie You, based in the Bay Area, has a unique background in talent acquisition, particularly in the academic, non-profit, and tech spaces. When they're not working, you can find them hiking, being outdoors, cooking, trying new cuisines, and spending time with family in Salt Lake City. In addition to having a passion for talent acquisition and giving back, Julie is also very invested in mental health, which is why spending time outdoors and work-life balance are so important to them.

Julie didn't expect to go down the recruiting path initially, though. During their undergrad studies, they doubled in communications with a focus on media effects and then sociology with a focus on social impact. After graduating, they immediately got a job at an education nonprofit in the tech space, where they worked as a resident advisor for students. During their role in the nonprofit,

they got an opportunity to get involved in initiatives that encouraged diversity, equity, and inclusion, while simultaneously encouraging education.

Following their role in the education nonprofit, Julie continued to work in the academic space doing recruiting, until they ventured into the tech atmosphere with an early-stage startup. In this role, they wore multiple hats and got a

lot of exposure to the world of talent acquisition. However, the growth-focused organization left them wanting to find a position that still allowed them to focus on helping people and creating a more inclusive environment in the workplace. "For me, that meant then having to figure out where I can have that happy medium. And that's what I found: Code for America, which is a non-profit but still within tech and really committed to equitable hiring."

As someone who has a passion for mental health and helping to create opportunities for others, Julie is grateful to do something they love. "One of those things I care about is that if I'm going to invest 40 to 80 hours of my life a week potentially, I want it to be doing something that's bigger and better than an impact I can do by myself."

Code for America

Code for America is a civic tech non-profit that focuses on improving government services through the mindful use of technology. "The services that we focus on are typically those that are impacting some of the most marginalized communities." The three main umbrellas that the organization works on include tax, criminal justice, and safety net spaces.

"The government can and should work well for everyone."

The organization is people-centered and creates its products with this principle in mind. "When we say that we are people-

centered, we really stick to it, even in the way we create our products. We are doing user research, and we have folks embedded who are going to be impacted by our products in the process of iteration of the product. And it's not us thinking that we're building for them, but that we're building with them."

Collaboration is at the forefront, and having a diverse team that brings different perspectives allows for better innovation and problem-solving.

"I think that's one of our ways of operating, as we see things as a collective collaboration, which is pretty different. And I think that might be one of the things that really distinguishes us; we want our method to be as inclusive as possible, not just for the sake of representation, but also understanding that that's what is going to get us to the best solution as quickly as possible."

Julie's role at Code for America has evolved over the years. When they came in, they were a single-person department, and the company didn't have any recruiting for a few years. A lot of their work involved building out a recruiting function, specifically around equity. Now, Julie leads recruiting at the organization. "Now, I've built a team, so a lot of what my role looks like is making sure that I'm looking at our overall process around equitable hiring, seeing where we can improve, and looking at data. Also, managing a team is another huge component of my role, while also still always having a hand in some recruiting, of course, whether that is on leadership or hard to fill roles."

Implementing DEI at Code for America

In addition to promoting a collaborative environment and having inclusivity in every aspect of how the organization's talent function operates, the HR team also makes sure that the organization regularly connects with employees through surveys. "We'll send out surveys, poll surveys, or just employee experience surveys to understand what people's experiences are in whatever XYZ category. But then we also ask every time around people's identities. Of course, we keep it anonymous as we get that data in, but we want to be sure we're capturing, 'Hey, what is this community and what is this identity actually being impacted by?'" The purpose of the surveys is to better understand how the company can recognize this community differently, find the needs that may be different, and address those needs.

Transparency is also key in having successful DEI efforts for Julie, along with a rotating, volunteer-based DEI committee.

"We're really big on tracking and actually publishing our report within racial representation, gender representation and really not shying away from those conversations. We have a DEI committee that is volunteer-based. It's usually a six-month term because we think that DEI isn't owned by a single individual or department, recruiting can only do so much."

To create an effective DEI process, Julie explains that the first step is to take a step back and look at things that have been a bit antiquated and built in an environment that maybe weren't fair - look at what has been perpetuating those practices. The second step is to evaluate the process and be willing to make the necessary changes while understanding the repercussions of those changes. The key is to always go back to data and look at if that uptick in what you wanted to see was worth the time expense that it took. For Julie, one of the things the data has shown to be very impactful is running job descriptions through a gender bias reader before they go online.

They've also seen that transparency in their hiring process has been effective in driving diversity within the team. "We're fully transparent about our salary bands, our target, and our job descriptions so that folks know exactly what it is that we're working with and what we'll be able to extend if they were to join CFA." Creating a consistent interview process has also proven to be helpful. "We're really strict on setting up standardized interview kits so that candidates are going through a consistent and fair process, being sure that our interviewers are trained, and that there's also representation on our on-site panels, but also being sure that we're not asking any BIPOC folks to do any unnecessary or more work than needed."

"DEI, for me, is representation and understanding of differences."

When it comes to advice for other HR leaders, Julie emphasizes that DEI has to be a priority of leadership. "The changes that are going to be made will impact business. It will impact culture. So the leadership needs to be invested." Another large part of having successful DEI efforts is to be honest and accountable, even when things aren't working.

If an organization (and the individuals in the organization) are open and welcoming to change, trying new things, and looking at things in a different way, it will open the door to a more collaborative, diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace. ■

Hiring a Remote, Diverse Workforce

By: Kristina Dinabourgski, Bennie

With remote work becoming more of the norm in many industries, HR professionals now have access to a larger talent pool, and in turn, job seekers can pursue a greater variety of opportunities that were once limited to local candidates.



When looking at the impact that remote hiring has had on diversity, equity, and inclusion, many HR leaders, recruiters, and employers have found the prevalence of remote work to be beneficial for DEI initiatives. “Having the ability to hire people in virtually any location allows you to cast a much wider net in terms of diversity,” says Charlie Gray, Founder and President of Gray Scalable, a consulting organization that offers HR solutions for startup and growth-stage companies.

Organizations that once focused their recruiting efforts on a specific location or a handful of metropolitan areas now have the opportunity to look into more underrepresented regions or cities that have plenty of talented candidates. But, while reaching a greater pool of candidates certainly helps with diverse hiring, the effort doesn't just stop there. Recruiters and hiring managers need to take a step back and examine their interview process and company culture to ensure that their hiring process and organization are equitable

and inclusive. Certain details, like good communication, providing adequate information about the role/company, meaningful interaction, and flexibility, become even more critical when it comes to remote hiring.

Rethinking the Interview Process

Removing the in-person element of hiring means that HR professionals and recruiters need to showcase their company's culture and values slightly differently. “You have to be more purposeful about how you connect with people,” says Lucia Smith, Senior HR Consultant at Gray Scalable.

Remote hiring has its own unique challenges that require a new perspective and strategy for the interview process. With a traditional in-person interview, the candidate can see the office, meet some team members, and get a feel for the environment and culture. However, when conducting a virtual interview for a remote position, you can't strictly rely

on these things to show who you are as an organization. “You need to be a lot more purposeful and shift to things that people are actually going to say in the interview process, rather than relying on it appearing through someone’s experience navigating your space,” Smith explains.

Not having that in-person interaction with potential employees can leave a lot of ambiguity on the table, and organizations need to put more thought into their communication and be more flexible to different interview styles. “It’s just all the more important to really lean into ways that you connect with people long distance to replace the ways you used to connect with people in person,” notes Gray. Not everyone works the same way or communicates the same way. While having a very consistent recruiting process has the goal of being equitable, you should evaluate whether that consistency is truly being inclusive to different needs. “If you want a diverse pool of candidates, you need to have a more flexible process that will accommodate people who do things differently or have a different experience than you have,” Gray explains.

There are a few ways recruiters or hiring managers can help make the interview process more smooth and inclusive for candidates and set them up for success. “One of the biggest things that I always advocate for is putting as much information as you can out there so that people don’t have to ask and so that people have more information.” Says Smith. “That could be materials that help sell the company, but also things that make candidates feel more at ease, which I think there’s a bigger need for when interviewing underrepresented and remote candidates.”



Helpful materials can include a one-pager on the company’s benefits, a description of what the overall interview process will look like, or additional information about who the

candidate is meeting with and some context about what they do. Proactively providing this information will help make the candidate feel less nervous, more informed, and understand the context.

Having a diverse interview panel is beneficial as well. “A diverse interview panel notices different things,” says Smith. Having a range of people with different backgrounds and experiences evaluating and speaking with candidates allows for different perspectives and shows the candidate that the company values diversity.

Being Authentic & Valuing Diversity as an Organization

It’s one thing to attract and hire diverse team members, but if the organization doesn’t truly value diversity, equity, and inclusion, those employees may not want to stay. DEI efforts don’t stop at the point where the candidate accepts the offer – it’s a continual process, and that process often needs to start from the top.

“There’s no company value more important than authenticity.” –Charlie Gray

Giselle Lazo, Director of Recruiting at Bennie, explains why authenticity matters, “When rolling out DEI initiatives, it is key to ensure there is internal alignment in leadership. It is important that as leaders of an organization we have a candid conversation around our internal values and how we want to amplify them through DEI initiatives. We have to do the internal work first, take the pulse of our employees, create a psychologically safe environment where employees can show up authentically themselves.”

From leadership to the overall environment, there needs to be a genuine interest and desire to create a more inclusive workspace and understand different experiences, perspectives, and needs. “With recruiting, while we have better access to candidates, there are gaps that we need to address both within the job market and internal processes. At this time, we are still tracking data to help us understand the new marketplace and how to better target qualified diverse candidates. There is more of a need to be intentional with our interview processes (using tactics to mitigate any bias, making sure it’s fair and equitable), getting buy-in and commitment from leaders, and defining creative sourcing tactics to make sure

there's qualified representation," Lazo says.

There is always room to grow and learn, and there's nothing wrong with being open and honest about that. Lucia Smith sums up why being open about areas of improvement is key, "What candidates are actually looking for are places that are open to trying things, to changing, that are self-reflective. And that's how you keep people. It's both that complicated and that simple."

Measuring the Success of Your DEI Efforts

Now, there's another important detail of remote diverse hiring that shouldn't be overlooked: measuring whether the changes you've made are effective. While it's hard to put a specific number or metric on DEI success (as every organization is different), setting goals for your team and establishing what diversity means for your company is a good way to start. "You really do have to start with where you are and set goals from there. And be realistic enough that you don't quit overnight or set goals that are going to be problematic to talk about. You also have to decide what diversity means to you" says Smith. One of the best ways to determine whether your DEI efforts

are genuinely working is by doing regular surveys with your team and getting their perspective. "There's no better recommendation than an annual survey like that. It really is such a powerful tool. It enables you to deal with what people think throughout the organization versus just what a handful of people on the executive team think," says Charlie Gray.

With these surveys, you can track your progress over time and see how the results align with your organization's inclusion goals. Making real change within a company is a marathon; it won't happen overnight, and it may even take more than a year. It's important to understand that there will always be room to improve and that it takes time to build cultural change.

The transition to more remote roles creates an excellent opportunity to break down barriers, reach a more diverse pool of talent, and create a more inclusive culture in your organization. ■



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From the Community: On Impact & Accessibility

"Bennie's HR Advisory community is truly something special! Not only does it remove the financial barrier making it accessible to an array of People leaders, but it also engages members through welcome swag, shared discussions, membership spotlights, magazines, community events and more. In an industry filled with professionals who are constantly giving, it's so refreshing to be a part of something that recognizes this and intentionally goes above and beyond to fill us back up! - Jasmine Francis, Senior Director of People & Culture, Thinx



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6 Key Steps to Jumpstart Your 2022 DEI Program

By: Kristina Dinabourgski, Bennie



Developing a diversity, equity, and inclusion program in your organization can seem like an enormous task, and sometimes it's hard to know the best way to go about it. If you're feeling overwhelmed, don't worry—DEI involves constant learning, growth, and evolving for everyone. What matters is that you take the first steps, recognize there is always room for improvement, and be ready to make a change.

Implementing a DEI program from the start is something that is very familiar to Christine McCallum-Randalls, HR & Operations Director at Test Double, a software development consulting agency. When creating the DEI program at her organization, she utilized the Centre for Global Inclusion's Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) as a tool to evaluate what needs to be done and how to do it. The global framework is developed and reviewed by DEI experts around the world and can be applied to various industries and regions.

If you're just getting started with DEI and aren't sure where to begin, these **six steps** will help you jumpstart your program.

Step 1

Get Leadership Involvement & Support

It would be challenging to have a successful DEI program without leadership buy-in, as DEI needs to be a part of the overall culture and incorporated into processes to be most effective. Suppose you have a DEI representative or HR leader trying to put change into action by themselves without having leadership take responsibility or get involved. In that case, they wouldn't be able to make much progress. "If diversity, equity, and inclusion is coming from the top, and leadership is directly involved in it and understands it, then it seems like things go much smoother for the companies than when it's not coming

from the top, when somebody is trying to change the company without the power to change the systems,” Christine explains.

Step 2 **Develop the Right Messaging**

There is a misconception for some that DEI programs are costly, not beneficial for business, and a zero-sum game, where if one person gets more, another gets less. That is simply not the case, and the messaging in your DEI program should address those misconceptions and help educate people so they truly understand the positive impact DEI has on an organization. “Something that people also tend to forget is that DEI, if done right, will uplift everyone,” says Christine. Both the people department and leadership team can work together to educate management and employees so that everyone can be on the same page. Understanding what DEI means sets the foundation for everyone in the organization to advocate for more inclusivity.

Step 3 **Apply the Program to All Aspects of the Business**

“You want to find a program that permeates through all aspects of your business,” explains Christine. DEI shouldn’t just be limited to recruiting and talent acquisition; it should apply to all parts of the organization, starting from its purpose and goals. Leaders should take a step back and evaluate whether the company’s overall vision and strategy include DEI. This is an essential element because when you integrate DEI into the core of the business, it helps include DEI in everything else that follows. This then creates an environment of accountability because people know what’s expected.

Step 4 **Have a Transparent Recruiting Process**

To ensure that employees get equitable compensation, there has to be transparency regarding salaries. Christine describes how addressing pay equity has made a difference at Test Double when growing a diverse team, “We’ve seen an upward trend in the diversity of our company, and a lot of that is because of two of the big things we addressed were the way we did recruitment and then also the systems we had to fix on the back end. So like, how does somebody grow at Test Double? How do you know you’re getting an equitable salary? These are things that people from underrepresented groups

don’t get to take for granted.” As a result of being open about salary ranges for different roles in the company, everybody ended up getting pay raises (especially as the market changed), and salaries went from being all over the board to more narrow for roles. This, in turn, helped attract more diverse candidates. “So you know what to expect, and you know that you’re getting paid equitably compared to the person next to you, no matter what their color or background or gender is.”

Step 5 **Read Books on DEI & Explore Different Resources**

Various resources provide insightful information and frameworks on DEI in the workplace, like the GDEIB, for example. “There’s a reason we use this program and it’s because this program was created by experts, and this program is updated by those experts of which I am not,” Christine explains. DEI is a constant learning process, and it starts with educating yourself and learning to see things from perspectives outside of your experiences. “The more that you are able to create an equitable and inclusive company, the more it eventually starts feeding itself. We’re not perfect. There are still things we will always be working on, but especially now that we have more people from underrepresented groups at Test Double, more people are speaking up. There are things that people are talking about that I can help them with that if they weren’t here or they were the only one, and they weren’t comfortable talking about it, I wouldn’t even know.”

Step 6 **Connect With the HR Community**

Navigating the right way to implement a DEI program involves a lot of work, but you certainly don’t have to do it alone. Many other HR leaders are going through the same thing, so don’t be afraid to reach out to the HR community and ask for advice or input. Everyone has a different way of doing things and has learned valuable lessons along the way. Not only can you get ideas on other ways to do DEI at your company, but you can also get advice on things to avoid doing.

As long as you have an open mind and are willing to listen, learn, and be ready to question things and look at things from different perspectives, then you’re already another step closer to creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. ■

Prioritizing DEI Work in the Non-Profit Space and Making it Personal.

By: Oskar P Castro, Director of Equity and Inclusion at Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Plenty of businesses, institutions, and organizations seek to make Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion a priority for their work culture. But is it enough, and will it make a difference? How do we make DEI work into personal work so that it shows up in our professional spaces? And what about organizations, like non-profits and particularly smaller ones, that may lack the resources to prioritize DEI efforts? How can they turn the dial and improve their workspaces?

Making it Personal

So much has changed in such a short time when it comes to deepening the understanding of racism and oppression in our society. A lot of that has to do with relatively recent events stemming, somewhat, from the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013, the 2016 election, NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick's sideline protest, and more recently, the police violence that took the life of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Authenticity is a key factor in approaching DEI work, which boils down to putting money where the mouth is. Having a department responsible for helping change happen is great and could be a place to begin pumping resources, but a DEI department is not solely responsible for the change that may need to happen. Every part of the organization is vital for transformation to happen.

It's been said that for DEI initiatives in the workplace to have any weight and substance, the leadership has to buy in. It should also be said that every employee, or a critical mass,

ce



also needs to be on board to see the change that needs to happen. While that kind of buy-in may be vocalized by many employers lately, how much of it is performative, and how much of that stems from a personalized belief and commitment to change?

When we leave the workspace, we may go back to homes and communities that don't fully embrace the idea of inclusivity and equity. Do we leverage what we are doing with our colleagues in the workplace to help us inform how we transform our personal environments? Or do we decide not to speak up or act differently when someone in our family or friend group says or does something that would not be tolerated in the workplace?

If we are being honest, we sometimes find it easier to let things slide in our social circles, while we may not have let those things slide in the workplace. But in order for your staff community to be filled with people committed to transforming the office culture into one that prioritizes equity and inclusivity, it must be filled with people who seek to prioritize equity and inclusivity consciousness into their personal lives as well.

Ideally, even if it's a struggle to unpack what white privilege, male privilege, ableism, gender bias, pronouns, etc. means to someone who is compelled to think about these things for the first time, there absolutely must be a willingness to learn by that person. They should step into it, accepting that part of learning will be by being vulnerable, making mistakes, and self-correcting.

DEI on a Budget

Making DEI work personal work that everyone does is the only way for office cultures to shift towards creating authentically safe workspaces.

Having a paid staff person or a team of employees to help move the dial on DEI comes with the cost of a salary and benefits. This may be a good start for an organization, but there are many businesses and nonprofits who simply don't have the financial resources to address the concerns of equity, diversity, and inclusivity in the workplace the way more well-heeled organizations may have.

With the tide changing and organizations taking on this work more seriously, funders are also taking a closer look. Many are willing to help grantees discern, design, and implement the work they may need to do to have equity and inclusivity priorities for their office culture. Now is the time to see what your current funders might support or what exists for groups like



yours. Checking in with volunteers in your community or even advertising for volunteer support with grant research/writing can get the needle moving.

For those who have a budget and aren't sure what to do with it, another initial step could be to funnel those resources towards a strategic planning process. Understanding your demographics and polling your staff on various subjects will yield data that can be useful in your DEI planning work. There are plenty of resources in the digital domain with articles like this one and countless online books, videos, and free webinars that can be part of your organization's learning curriculum, which wouldn't have to cost a thing other than the time it would take to curate those resources.

What it boils down to is the commitment to do the work. Start a DEI committee in your organization if you don't have the budget for a staff person and commit a budget for that team's work so that initiatives requiring funding can have a potential source for implementation. Figure out how to incorporate governance into the conversation and think about how we work with Boards of Directors to also take the work of DEI seriously so that it is prioritized.

DEI work is hard work, but it is important work both for the professional world and the social world, which are ultimately intertwined as culture permeates spaces based on the people in those spaces. When it comes to an equity mindset in the workplace, who you are should be who you are in all spaces you occupy. I encourage you to do the work and find ways to make this consciousness a part of your daily life for yourself and your colleagues. You can do it! ■

HR Advisory Dinners

This past year we kicked off in-person dinners! Community is so important, and we hope this is a time to connect and get advice on current challenges and get to know others in the same space. The energy at these events makes us excited for more dinners to come.



Nick Bilotta
Director of Talent Strategy

"I was blown away by the environment, the food was fantastic, and the conversations & connections were really easy to make. No one from Bennie tried to lead the conversation, instead we were able to comfortably speak to what we knew best: the triumphs and challenges of this incredibly difficult (but equally satisfying) work with the only other people on earth who truly 'get it'. As a result, I found the experience both fun and invaluable!"



Jay Gardner
Director of Talent & People Operations

"I'm so glad I was able to join the HR Advisory dinner in San Francisco! It was such an enjoyable opportunity to connect with other People leaders face to face, and it reminded me that even though I'm part of a very small People team at my growing company, I'm part of a much larger community of professionals who are focused on the People space and how to drive positive growth and change across the globe."



Jessica Chessare
Manager of HR and Recruiting

"If you have the opportunity to attend an HR Advisory Dinner – I highly recommend it! Absolutely fantastic time at the Chicago event. It's been so long since I have been to a networking event, it was great. Wonderful to meet some fellow HR Advisory folks in person. Great food and great conversation. Thank you, Bennie, for putting on such a fun event!"

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Winter 2022

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