

HR Leaders and Diversity Chiefs Continue to Push for Inclusion



HR leaders and executive recruiters alike say that promoting diversity and belonging in the workplace is not just a buzzword. It's a crucial aspect of modern businesses. Companies that foster diversity and belonging have been proven to have better financial performance, increased innovation, and a more engaged workforce. However, a recent report from **The Christopher Group's** Pam Noble explains that with the recent supreme court ruling on affirmative action in colleges and universities the question arises, 'Do all companies need a chief diversity officer (CDO)?' and 'what happens when they aren't present?'

"A CDO is a high-level executive responsible for developing and implementing strategies that promote diversity and belonging within an organization and the community it supports," said Ms. Noble, who serves as president, executive recruiting solutions & DEIB practice leader. "They work to create a workplace culture that values and respects differences and ensures equal opportunities for all employees regardless of their race, sexual orientation, religion, subculture, neurodiversity, or any other personal identity."

One aspect of a CDO's role is to create policies and practices that promote diversity and belonging, educate employees on bias and sensitivity, and ensure that employment policies, procedures, and practices are fair and unbiased, according to Ms. Noble. She says that they help create space so every employee can be their authentic selves at work.

In addition to their responsibilities within the organization, CDOs play a crucial role in connecting the internal and external components of their work, including investing time and funds in the communities they serve, Ms. Noble explains. "As advocates for diversity and belonging, CDOs recognize that their impact extends beyond the confines of the organization and into the broader community," she

said. "They understand that investing in diversity and belonging is beneficial for the company and society at large."

Do All Companies Need a CDO?

The answer is complex, as it depends on the company's size, industry, and current diversity initiatives. Some companies may not require a CDO if they already have a strong culture of diversity and belonging where all employees, regardless of background, feel they can bring their authentic selves to work – creating an environment where they belong. Other businesses, while they may not require a full-time CDO, can benefit from hiring a diversity consultant to guide their diversity and belonging efforts.

Research has shown that companies without a CDO are less likely to have diverse leadership and employees. "This lack of diversity can result in a homogenous workplace culture that is less innovative and less competitive," said Ms. Noble. "Homogeneous goes beyond someone like me – like me means similar thoughts, ideas, and viewpoints limiting an organization to look beyond what is in front of them. A homogenous workplace can also make it challenging for the company to attract and retain top talent, particularly from under-represented groups. The gap doesn't allow the organization to break through the system creating stasis and limiting the view of what is possible and new ways of thinking. The absence of a CDO can also impact a company's bottom line. A lack of diversity and inclusivity can lead to lower employee morale, decreased productivity, and higher turnover rates. Furthermore, companies that lack a CDO may be more susceptible to lawsuits related to discrimination and bias."

BY THE NUMBERS

Is Your Company Inclusive?

Only **58%** say their companies are inclusive to a large extent.

Source: Heidrick & Struggles

What Happens When a CDO is Present?

When a company has a CDO, it can experience many benefits that positively impact its success, according to Ms. Noble. "A CDO can help create a workplace culture that values and respects differences and ensures equal opportunities for all employees," she said. "By fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, employees are more likely to feel valued, included, and motivated to contribute to the company's success."

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IN THE NEWS

Storbeck Search | Diversified Search Recruits First Female/Black President for Boston University



Higher education-focused **Storbeck Search**, part of the **Diversified Search Group**, has assisted in the recruitment of Melissa L. Gilliam as the 11th president of Boston University. Robert Brown

announced that he will retire as president at the end of the 2022–2023 academic year. “Dr. Gilliam will be the first female president of Boston University and first person of color to lead our proud 184-year-old research institution,” said Ahmass L. Fakahany, chair, board of trustees. “We couldn’t be more thrilled to welcome her to our community, one that is in continual ascension and shimmering with promise.” The assignment was led by Shelly Weiss Storbeck, global education practice lead and managing director; R. Thomas Fitch, managing director; Linda Chavers, managing associate; and senior associates Amanda Bennett and Lisa Solinsky.

Dr. Gilliam’s appointment caps a search that lasted more than a year and yielded close to 400 potential candidates from around the world. Hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and alumni participated in the process by sharing the characteristics and qualifications they hoped to see in their next president, input that helped shape a presidential profile and guided the work of the 16-person presidential search committee.

Ms. Noble also explains that a diverse workforce combined with an inclusive culture can bring new thoughts, ideas, and perspectives to the table, leading to increased innovation and creativity. “Companies with a CDO are more likely to attract, retain, and engage employees from diverse backgrounds who can bring unique ideas and experiences to the company,” she said. “Additionally, a CDO can help the company make better business decisions by ensuring that the decision-making process considers the perspectives and experiences of all employees. This approach can lead to better-informed decisions that consider the needs and interests of all stakeholders and the current and future communities they serve. Employees are more likely to stay with a company that values and respects their differences. Companies with a CDO are more likely to have a diverse workforce throughout the organization and a workplace culture that promotes belonging, which can lead to better employee engagement and retention.”

Furthermore, Ms. Noble notes that it is important that the employees within a company reflects the population it serves. “This allows companies to understand better and cater to the needs and preferences of their target audience,” she says. “This alignment fosters a deeper connection and trust between the company and its customers or clients. When people see themselves represented within an organization, they are more likely to feel understood, valued, and supported. This sense of belonging can enhance the company’s reputation and strengthen its

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relationship with the public, leading to increased customer loyalty, improved sales performance, and a competitive edge in the market.”

However, progress is only made when a CDO partners with business leaders to infuse diversity and belonging into all ways of working, Ms. Noble explains. “A CDO needs the entire organization’s partnership, from leadership to employees, to effect real change. Initiatives must be ingrained in the organization’s culture and supported by all employees,” she said. “Additionally, the CDO must have the necessary resources, such as a budget and staff, to implement their initiatives successfully.”

“Organizational leaders must proactively evaluate not only their hiring processes but also evaluate promotion and retention policies.”

Overall, Ms. Noble says that promoting diversity and belonging in the workplace is crucial for modern businesses. “Whether a company needs a CDO depends on various factors, including size, industry, and current diversity initiatives,” he said. “A lack of a CDO can hinder progress toward a more diverse and inclusive workplace, while a CDO can significantly aid in promoting diversity and belonging. However, a CDO alone is not enough, and organizations must support diversity initiatives at all levels to effect real change. Ultimately, creating a diverse and inclusive workplace benefits everyone, from the employees to the company’s bottom line.”

Creating Company-Wide Change

DEI challenges in organizations have traditionally been addressed through content-based approaches like networking and mentoring, according to Tom Connolly, chief human resources officer at **Kingsley Gate**. “However, today we are witnessing a shift towards structural responses that address inherent biases within organizations and talent placement as companies understand that mentoring alone won’t fix the structural barriers in place,” he said. “Now, companies are looking at their recruiting process and saying, ‘Wait, this process is inherently biased’, and re-assessing how to make it more fair...using things like algorithmic search” to go after a more diverse pool of qualified candidates.”

Furthermore, building out this holistic strategy includes not just bringing in diverse talent but also building out a supportive pipeline so they can eventually become leaders in the organization: “It’s on leaders and boards to be very purposeful about the value that having a really strong DEI approach brings; it’s not just about gender, it’s not just about race, it’s about cognitive diversity as well, and enabling those people to be accepted and actually have a journey through the companies,” said Francesca d’Arcangeli, chief operating officer at Kingsley Gate. “And that’s very much from the top, all the way throughout the organization. And actually, it’s our job as executive search consultants to ask and make sure that the companies we’re working with are doing that.”

A Top Down and Bottom Up Approach

A collective effort is crucial in successfully driving DEI initiatives within organizations so that DEI is *(cont’d. to page 4)*



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INSIGHT

How HR Can Harness AI to Advance DE&I



In today's rapidly evolving corporate landscape, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have emerged as crucial imperatives. Corporations worldwide are recognizing the inherent value of fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce, not only as a matter of ethics but also as a strategic

advantage. Darryl Miller and Sunil Gandhi of **The Taplow Group** says in a new report that CHROs across the landscape seek to find tools to advance their organization's progress in the utilization of best practices to continue progress. While AI has the potential to be a tool for CHRO's across the globe in advancing DEI initiatives, the report notes that there are also challenges to consider as the following only represents some of these challenges to AI being the silver bullet to solving the myriad of DEI obstacles:

Data Bias. Like all data driven tools AI systems are only as good as the data they are trained on. If the training data is biased, the AI system can perpetuate or even exacerbate existing biases.

Ethical Concerns. The use of AI in HR and DEI initiatives raises ethical questions about employee privacy and consent. It's crucial to ensure that AI is used in ways that respect these concerns.

Human Oversight. AI should complement human decision-making, not replace it entirely. There should always be a human in the loop to oversee AI-driven processes. As such each of our individual biases will always factor into the decision and implementation process for good and bad.

"Artificial Intelligence is a potent tool for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in corporations but just a tool in the larger CHRO's toolbox," The Taplow Group report said. "The potent tool will require a greater understanding of its potential impact on advancing DEI across the corporate landscape. By addressing inherent human biases and automating processes that can be made more equitable, AI can help create a more inclusive workplace."

embedded in company values and is being carried out by everyone rather than one individual with limited resources and impact.

"Organizations need to keep pushing and ensure there is an effort made by everyone in the organization – not just HR or a DEI officer," said Kasey Kaiser, partner, healthcare technology & life sciences, digital health & employer technology at **Direct Recruiters Inc.**

"Make sure DEI- related initiatives are ingrained in company core values, not just a quota and afterthought. Create an inclusive environment, empower people, and make sure company actions align with leadership's words. Continue conducting trainings, and benchmarking progress. Create a mentorship program to ensure there is an effort for growth and training. Research has proven that having people with seats at the table who have different perspectives leads to company growth... but it takes a conscious effort to make progress."

In order for DEI efforts to make an impact, they must be integrated throughout the day-to-day operations of an organization. "Leaders need to look at diversity not as a vertical, not as one person's role or one person's area of responsibility, but as a horizontal and something that needs to be everyone's responsibility and touch

every part of the organization," said Julio Suárez, managing director at **DRi Waterstone**.

Ben Warner, VP of talent at **Acertitude**, continues on a similar thread, explaining that the only way to help carry out the DEI initiatives each company envisions is for each employee to be considering how they can each individually integrate DEI into their daily lives and role at the company. "Sustaining momentum for DEI initiatives within organizations requires a strategic and concerted effort," he said. "To achieve this, organizations and diversity leaders should consider creating tangible DEI projects and activities that actively involve colleagues. Overall, sustaining momentum for these efforts not only fosters a culture of inclusivity, but also demonstrates a genuine commitment to DEI practices. The end goal is to create meaningful and lasting change within the organization."

Establish Baseline Metrics

Understanding where an organization stands regarding diverse representation is critical. By establishing baseline metrics related to gender, race, ethnicity, age, and other relevant factors, companies can identify areas for improvement and set realistic goals. "Many companies are holding themselves accountable by establishing metrics to monitor progress and ensure continual improvement," said Clinton Browning, partner and head of dreamscape at **Daversa Partners**.

Some organizations have actually created a standard metric for companies to use to assess their baseline from a DEI standpoint. The Council For Advancement in Support of Education created their own DEI index as a way to measure DEI. "It's a concept that could be used across any nonprofit environment," said Deb Taft, chief executive officer at Lindauer. "The idea is that one considers a set of measures and understands what the leadership looks like, where investments are being made, who's receiving professional development, what are the networks and the portfolios of the fundraisers."

When organizations have a measurement system for finding the baseline and tracking progress, they have completed a key step towards instituting change. Once these metrics are established, regular reporting on DEI metrics ensures accountability and transparency within an organization. Sharing this information with employees fosters trust and allows for collective ownership of the company's diversity goals.

Measuring Your Entire DEI Strategy

Similar to evaluating the overall DEI strategy to make sure it encompasses both content and structural DEI initiatives, organizations must take a similarly holistic approach to measurement. "Organizational leaders must proactively evaluate not only their hiring processes but also evaluate promotion and retention policies," said Carlos N. Medina, vice president for equity and inclusion and senior consultant at **Academic Search**. "This evaluation aims to eliminate biases and establish a truly equitable workplace where opportunities are accessible to all." Once a company evaluates these processes for biases, a measurement system must be put in place to track progress towards an equitable workplace.

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By establishing baseline metrics, organizations can identify areas for improvement and set realistic goals; regular reporting and sharing of DEI metrics fosters accountability, transparency, and collective ownership of diversity goals within the company. With a holistic approach to measurement ensuring that the evaluation encompasses all facets of the DEI strategy, including hiring, promotion, and retention policies.

Reflecting The Company's Mission / Clientele

Not only does a leader help shape the internal culture, but they also reflect the organization to the world. If the entire leadership team lacks diversity, any external statement on a company's dedication to diversity weakens. "Candidates want to see evidence of the board commitment to DEI based on its makeup," said Crystal Stephens, senior director at **Boardwalk Consulting**. "If the board is diverse, it is a positive sign that the organization holds diversity as a key priority. A diverse senior management team also reflects a commitment to DEI."

"A lack of a CDO can hinder progress toward a more diverse and inclusive workplace, while a CDO can significantly aid in promoting diversity and belonging."

This is particularly the case at the non-profit level. "Because so much of a non-profit's work is dedicated to philanthropic initiatives within diverse communities, the leadership must reflect the individuals the organization is helping," said Greg DeShields, executive director of tourism diversity matters at **Searchwide Global**. "Non-profits often work towards addressing social issues and promoting positive change in communities. Leaders must create a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion with ongoing commitment and effort. When leaders prioritize and actively champion these principles, they lay the foundation for an environment where everyone can thrive and contribute their best."

Most importantly, not only must leaders initiate and carry out the DEI efforts, but they must also be willing to listen and adapt so that their strategy truly helps increase DEI at the organization, according to Siobhan Doherty, partner & regional practice head, social impact and environment, Americas at **Perrett Laver**. "The willingness of leadership teams to actively listen and have, often challenging, conversations with their teams and stakeholders is critical to achieving greater inclusivity," she said. "Top leadership should not only make verbal commitments but also demonstrate their commitment through their actions and behaviors. Their actions should align with their professed dedication to diversity and inclusion. This entails actively participating in D&I initiatives, receiving training, and maintaining openness to feedback and ongoing learning."

Leadership goes beyond simply occupying a position; it encompasses shaping internal culture and (cont'd. to page 6)

reflecting an organization to the outside world. Effective leaders set the tone by establishing organizational values, inspire motivation by creating a sense of purpose, nurture talent through development opportunities, build trust as a foundation for success, and lead through change with resilience and adaptability. By understanding the profound impact of leadership in these areas, organizations can cultivate strong leaders who drive positive organizational culture and foster success.

AI's Limitations With DEI

Generative AI continues to be a key topic of conversation throughout industries and the search industry is no different. While there are plenty of potential applications for this novel technology, using it as a means of promoting diversity at organizations as well as assisting with DEI initiatives more broadly is definitely a widely held belief. Nevertheless the overarching sentiment is that AI is still a tool so it must be used with awareness and care rather than seen as a solution or a replacement to humans.

AI has become an integral part of our lives, revolutionizing industries and transforming the way we live and work, and the same can be said for the search industry and for DEI initiatives within organizations. "Depending on which side you ask, AI will lead to either a data-driven meritocracy or a DEI crisis," said Jin Ro, chief product officer at **ON Partners**. "In an ideal model, AI provides a wide aperture to a larger and more diverse pool of candidates where the best fit would emerge based solely on merit and fit."

"Nevertheless some limitations exist with this tool that must be considered when using it," Mr. Ro said. "There are built in social biases. AI models are only as good as its training data. Additionally, there is no recognition of recent events where a situation might require nuance or care. Finally, the internal workings and process are unclear to the user so it is difficult to parse through the source of the output. Nevertheless, AI has incredible potential to help recruiters find a wider pool of talented and qualified talent."

This is still an early tool and figuring out the balance for where the AI is used and where recruiters make decisions is a key part of the success. "We are still at the very nascent stages of what AI can do and the impact it will have on the hiring market in general. AI, when programmed properly, is exponentially more accurate and efficient at targeting profiles than a human is. However, once a profile has been identified by AI, I still believe that the most sought after candidates will expect to be contacted by a human being – not by an AI bot," said Dana Feller, founder & managing partner **Hudson Gate**.

Finally, the most important piece of the puzzle when it comes to DEI is to remember that at the end of the day, while an organization may have leadership that cares about DEI, it is incredibly difficult to make these goals a reality if the company doesn't align their DEI perspective with their business goals. It has already been proven time and time again– in studies from Deloitte that diverse organizations are twice as likely to exceed revenue goals, proving diversity increases the capacity for innovation, and others – that organizations with a diversity of viewpoints are more profitable than homogenous ones.



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SPOTLIGHT

Achieving Diversity for Non-Profits



*Deb Taft is CEO of **Lindauer**. She has over 25 years of executive and senior-level across the non-profit sector, from education to healthcare/ academic medicine to the youth service and voluntary sectors. Her expertise includes governance, strategic planning, fundraising,*

*program and staff management, strategic marketing, analytics, and constituent engagement, as well as talent recruitment, retention, and development. Ms. Taft recently sat down with **Hunt Scanlon Media** to discuss what it takes to find diverse talent for non-profits.*

How important is top leadership at non-profits in driving diversity and inclusion?

Top leaders are absolutely vital to driving diversity and inclusion at nonprofits. On an operational level, leaders establish policies and practices that frame and activate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and embed it into the fibers of the organization. On a personal level, a leader's own behavior sets the tone and creates accountability; by modeling equitable and inclusive principles, they signal to the rest of the organization that no one is exempt from upholding DEI values and outcomes. From their position at the nexus of the various units of an organization, top leaders actively instill DEI across and through their institutions rather than passively waiting for their commitments to trickle down to staff. Lindauer search consultants too often encounter scenarios in which a manager will say, "My boss is really committed to diversity and inclusion." When I hear this, my inner alarm goes off, because it indicates a gap between leadership and the teams whose work on the ground is so critical to advancing equity and inclusion. If a DEI strategy is bolted onto an organization without continuous internal acculturation work, mid-level managers and their teams are less likely to buy in to the program and more likely to go through the motions.

How can senior leaders get the rest of the organization to buy in?

To build support and buy-in, leaders must push into and through their organizations to train and develop their teams – especially managers who are hiring, doing performance management, and creating day-to-day context for employees. When this happens, team members are activated. They absorb core tenets, participate in shaping them for the organization, learn new competencies, and contribute to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in a meaningful, sustainable way.

What can non-profits do to better retain women and people of color?

To better retain women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ leaders, nonprofits can start by understanding why so many of these professionals are leaving their organizations right now. In general, leadership transitions are on the rise for a number of reasons, as leaders

reassess their priorities or retire after postponing their retirement plans at the height of the pandemic. While some women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ leaders may be stepping down for these reasons, there are other factors at play as well. Many Black professionals, for instance, are disillusioned, having been promised active and sustained support only to watch that support wane. Following long overdue renewed focus on systemic racism in the summer of 2020, organizations made commitments to change their policies and practices on everything from staffing to resources to organizational structure. Black professionals joined organizations or ascended to leadership positions with the understanding that implementing change would be a shared responsibility – that the institution was dedicated to the difficult work of reckoning with systemic inequities and reorienting itself around the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Over the past three years, these professionals have found that, with the passage of time, institutional promises have gone unfulfilled and original mandates under-resourced and unsupported.

Anything else?

Yet another factor that contributes to retention challenges is when staff from minoritized groups are expected to conform to the established culture of an organization without the necessary understanding and support. Lindauer vice president and managing director Faith Montgomery points out that managers can sometimes struggle to lead through this dynamic of differences if they do not have the right guidance and resources to draw upon. Supporting diverse staff requires being attentive to what they need in order to feel a sense of belonging and making an intentional effort to understand the challenges faced and the opportunities presented. Leading organizations understand the costs of not living up to their ideals relating to DEI. Self-assessment tools can enable organizations to discern where they have strengths and weaknesses and where they need to make systemic changes. Rather than shrink from the scale of the work to be done, these organizations lean into it, truly looking inward to address the processes, procedures, cultural dynamics, and ways of being that create difficulties and foreclose opportunities for people of diverse lived experience. You'll know organizations are making progress when you see tangible results – for example, in how professional development resources are allocated or who has opportunities to form relationships with key leaders, generous donors, and Board members.

In your experience, what are diverse candidates looking for from organizations that they are interviewing with? Are there red flags or positive signs in terms of diversity that they are on the look-out for?

At Lindauer, we advise organizations to be authentic and honest about where they are making progress and where they may be coming up short in their efforts to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Candidates *(cont'd. to page 9)*

don't necessarily expect perfection. They understand that the road to dismantling systemic barriers to equity and inclusion is long and arduous. Furthermore, they understand that, in certain parts of the world, local governments that are hostile to DEI are making it more challenging for organizations that value equity and inclusion. What candidates want to see, however, is a real roadmap and a genuine dedication to doing the work. Candidates will do their homework to gauge an organization's commitment to DEIB. They will reach out directly to women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ staff and stakeholders to gain insight into whether or not they experience belonging. They will ask questions in the interviews to discern alignment (or misalignment) across the organization – staff, leadership, and the Board. If a candidate senses that an organization is misrepresenting its culture or exaggerating the progress it's made in this area, they may take their talents elsewhere.

“Yet another factor that contributes to retention challenges is when staff from minoritized groups are expected to conform to the established culture of an organization without the necessary understanding and support.”

Will AI help or hurt DEI? Can it be used to improve diversity?

Generative AI can offer useful tools across the recruiting process, as long as organizations are careful to make sure bias hasn't been baked into the technology they're using. For instance, there are models that screen candidates for certain qualifications at the beginning of the hiring process. As well-intentioned as these models might be, they can discriminate against candidates from minoritized groups if the underlying data the models have been trained on isn't representative enough. As concern about bias in AI gains wider attention, new platforms are being designed specifically to be more inclusive. Chandra Montgomery, my Lindauer colleague and a leader in advancing equity in talent management, advises clients on tools and resources that can help mitigate bias in technology. One example is Latimer, a large language model trained on data reflective of the experiences of people of color. It's important to note that, in May, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission declared that employers can be held liable if their use of AI results in the violation of non-discrimination laws – such as Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. When considering AI vendors for parts of their recruiting or hiring process, organizations must look carefully at every aspect of the design of the technology. For example, ask for information about where the vendor sourced the data to build and train the program and who beta tested the tool's performance. Then, try to audit for unintended consequences or side effects to determine whether the tool may be screening out some individuals you want to be sure are screened in.

AI provides us with incredible capabilities, but we need to do careful work with it. Bias can enter the hiring process at any stage, and we must continue training staff in how to detect it and mitigate it – whether or not AI is being used.

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The Uncertain Future of Diversity and Hiring

Diversity has had it rough lately. First, there were cutbacks due to the economy and then came the Supreme Court's ruling against affirmative action. That was followed by a cohort of Republican attorneys general issuing a letter to Fortune 100 CEOs questioning the legality of some DEI efforts. The main issue for the moment centers on quotas, a topic which was at the heart of the recent Supreme Court ruling banning affirmative action at universities, according to a recent report from Korn Ferry. Though the ruling doesn't apply to the private sector, the attorneys general are raising questions.

For his part, **Korn Ferry** chief diversity officer JT Saunders says that no laws exist yet to address issues like this, but some form of legislation is likely down the road. "While quotas may have been useful as a safety net to encourage equitable opportunity, they are not the most effective instrument in the DEI toolkit," he said. "If you're only relying on quotas from a compliance-driven perspective, you're likely not getting the best results from DEI. You're creating an opportunity for it to be challenged quite easily. It can't be about checking boxes. It must be about business outcomes."

"Still, this latest wave of discontent directed at DEI is indeed worrying," said Andrés Tapia, a senior client partner in Korn Ferry's DE&I practice. "Especially given that firms' enthusiasm has shown signs of waning." At the end of 2022, the reported attrition rate for DEI professionals was 33 percent, compared to 21 percent for those in other roles. "Those who believe in inclusivity not to stay on the defensive but instead to bring the argument of diversity forward in a way that business can't deny," Mr. Tapia said. "These reactionary forces should be asked to make the argument against the innovation, marketplace growth, and talent optimization that comes from diversity. Let's have that debate."

Given that mandated quotas may have unclear implications, Mr. Tapia suggests that targets set by companies to achieve a level of diversity reflective of their consumer base should be seen instead as a strategic aspiration. The 2020 census marked the first time America's white population was in decline; it's currently at 57 percent and projected to be less than 50 percent by 2045. This has a clear impact on company profits, say experts. Hispanic consumers, for example, comprise over 18 percent of the total U.S. population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. Indeed, Latinx people in the US would reportedly have the fifth-biggest GDP in the world if they were their own country.

"Whether you like it or not, half of this country may be people not like you," said Mr. Tapia. "Do you know how to sell, design, and do customer service to people not like you?"

"The consequences of getting diversity wrong can have a big impact on an organization," said Alina Polonskaia, global leader of Korn Ferry's DE&I consulting practice. "At the height of the pandemic, pulse oximeters were the main tool used to determine whether or not one's blood-oxygen levels were healthy."

However, one study by scientists at Johns Hopkins University found that inaccurate readings from pulse oximeters (cont'd. to page 11)

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led to a failure to identify Black and Hispanic patients with low blood oxygen. Ms. Polonskaia wonders whether the reason the devices only worked on white patients was because the people who developed the technology were primarily white themselves – though this part isn't known for sure. "What is known is that the pulse oximeter promised to effectively serve people without regard for their race," she said. "But we now know that its promise was only fulfilled for white patients, not people with darker skin."

DEI Efforts Decreasing?

According to a recent survey of more than 1,000 firms, leadership support for DEI initiatives has fallen by 18 percent in two years. Today, one-fifth of companies offer no diversity programming at all. Some are actually being sued by activists to stop DEI efforts. At least 30 states are considering legislation to defund DEI measures in public institutions.

"DEI efforts need to be structural in nature. That involves multiple steps, including retooling job roles and requirements so they're accessible to more people, continuously building teams whose members have diverse backgrounds, and holding managers accountable for finding and developing talent from underrepresented groups."

Yet Korn Ferry says that inequality remains glaring in many organizations. For example, white men are 33 percent more likely than white women – and 300 percent more likely than Black men or women – to have a management role. In a slow-growth economy that's now three summers removed from the murder of George Floyd, Korn Ferry notes that organizations are questioning whether DEI is worth the effort.

DEI experts acknowledge that critics have a point, to some degree: a lot of programs haven't worked. Many organizations need to change their approach, the experts say; too many rely on awareness training and good intentions. "Diversity is a lot more complex," said Mr. Tapia.

One reason that programs don't work: Some training methods shame participants for feeling biases that are biologically innate, according to the Korn Ferry report. "Almost everyone shows a preference, explicit or otherwise, for someone who looks like them and has a similar background," it said. "Unconscious-bias training is a good step, but if all it does is label people as racist, experts say, it's being executed poorly."

"To have a chance at sustainable success," said Ms. Polonskaia. "DEI efforts need to be structural in nature. That involves multiple steps, including retooling job roles and requirements so they're accessible to more people, continuously building teams whose members have diverse backgrounds, and holding managers accountable for finding and developing talent from underrepresented groups. Running unconscious-bias training is easy, but transformations aren't."

Psychological Safety: A Foundation for an Inclusive Workplace

"When talking about diversity, something that often gets missed is being inclusive of it," said Saul Gomez, director of IDEA at **TI Verbatim Consulting**. "If we're not being inclusive of our diversity, then how are we leveraging it? How are we capitalizing on it? It's worth asking, 'Are we maximizing what our talent pool has to offer?' At the end of the day, people want to feel included... and in order to truly leverage the diverse talent that organizations have, individuals need to feel included, seen, heard, and valued."

When people feel safe being themselves at work – regardless of their race, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other aspect of their identity – they are more likely to thrive professionally and propose innovative and creative ideas that can benefit the organization. Furthermore, they are more likely to be open to carrying out broader DEI initiatives set forth by the organization. A viable DEI strategy can be traced back to the first three elements of psychological safety: inclusivity, curiosity, and trust. When leveraged, they can work to build a culture in which a sense of belonging and respect for people's differences is deeply integrated into an organization, which allows everything else to follow.

Sustaining DEI in the Workplace

As companies have continued to find that the DEI goals set forth to achieve have failed to come to fruition, it is important to leverage the foundation that psychological safety provides in order to restart the momentum. Then, to sustain these efforts, the final two pillars of psychological safety come into place: collaboration and resilience.

"Psychological safety is foundational to the success of a DEI strategy, and it starts at the top. Leaders and managers, first and foremost, need to be keenly aware of and familiar with what psychological safety is."

"You have to ask, do people at this organization feel valued and supported? Do they feel like they have the latitude and autonomy to explore, ideate, innovate, be creative and break a couple eggs to make an omelet?" asked Mr. Gomez. "These are important questions in probing beyond DEI as a check in the box, and instead, leveraging psychological safety to collaborate, learn and grow from mistakes and setbacks, and in turn, build resilience across the organization."

"More importantly, psychological safety is foundational to the success of a DEI strategy, and it starts at the top," Mr. Gomez said. "Leaders and managers, first and foremost, need to be keenly aware of and familiar with what psychological safety is – what it looks like, what it sounds like, and what it feels like. That way, they're able to model the behaviors and practices that help cultivate and sustain it throughout the organization."



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HR/Diversity Searches in the News...

Academic Search Seeking Diversity Leader for Lewis University



Cynthia Patterson, Maria Thompson, and Lauren Merriam of **Academic Search** are currently seeking a vice president of diversity for Lewis University. They seek a collaborative, creative leader with exceptional interpersonal

skills to lead the enhancement and promotion of diversity at Lewis University via the development and implementation of proactive diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives for the university. This full-time position serves as a member of the President's Leadership Team and will lead the development of a vision and effective strategy that champions the importance of and value for a diverse and inclusive university environment. The search firm is seeking a seasoned leader with substantial experience working with senior administrators while leading, managing, and implementing key inclusive excellence strategies, key priorities, and programs to advance and promote diversity and inclusion.

Blue Rock Search Recruits Global Head of Talent Acquisition for Cummins

Blue Rock Search has assisted in the recruitment of Basant Pandey as global head of talent acquisition for Cummins.

"Blue Rock Search was pleased to partner with Cummins on their search for their global head of talent acquisition," said Ruben Moreno, HR & diversity practice leader and founding partner at Blue Rock Search. "Remaining competitive in today's talent marketplace requires a forward-thinking strategy, a growth mindset, and a leader capable of driving these results. Basant Pandey brings decades of talent acquisition experience and considerable global leadership expertise to his new role at Cummins, and we look forward to seeing his exceptional abilities contribute to the company's goals and success." Mr. Pandey joins Cummins after seven years with Goodyear Tire and Rubber, the last six of which were spent as the global head of executive recruiting.



Academic Career & Executive Search Recruits Chief DE&I Officer for California State University, Stanislaus



After a national search, **Academic Career & Executive Search (ACES)** has assisted in the recruitment of Sacha Joseph-Mathews as founding chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer at California State University, Stanislaus (CSU). Dr. Joseph-Mathews has over 15 years of experience training executives, managers, and organizations in unconscious bias and diversity, equity, and inclusion. She joins CSU, Stanislaus from University of the Pacific, where she has served as the assistant dean of diversity, equity, and inclusion and community engagement in the school of business since 2020. Dr. Joseph-Mathews has also served as an associate professor at University of the Pacific since 2006, teaching courses ranging from DEI in business to services marketing and management.

...More Top Searches in HR/Diversity

Nexus Search Partners Recruits CHRO for Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Co.



Nexus Search Partners, an executive search and advisory firm in Charlotte, NC, has assisted in the recruitment of Tim Clinkenbeard as the new CHRO for Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Co. "Tim brings

a wealth of human resources experience to us from his previous employment, most recently at Lowe's Home Improvement," said Hooper Hardison, CEO of Charlotte Pipe. "Tim will collaborate with our officer group and divisional human resource departments to better align our investments in associates with our corporate strategy. Tim's more than 20 years of HR experience and record of success makes him ideal for this senior role at the company." While serving as vice president of human resources at the Lowe's, Mr. Clinkenbeard had the opportunity to lead many parts of the HR organization.

SearchWide Global Recruits Chief Diversity Officer for the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority

SearchWide Global has assisted in the recruitment of Herschel Herndon as chief diversity officer for the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA) in Boston. Executive recruiter Donna Thornton



led the assignment. "We are thrilled to welcome Herschel and have him join the leadership team at the MCCA," said David Gibbons, executive director of the MCCA. "After a comprehensive search process, it was clear that Herschel's leadership capabilities, experience, and knowledge of the DEI landscape makes him the perfect person to lead our efforts in truly making the MCCA an employer of choice." SearchWide was looking for candidates with a demonstrated ability to create and execute effective organizational strategies and transformations, as well as prior service building a diversity function and strategizing for organizations with diversity initiatives.

Caldwell Recruits CHRO for PFB Corporation



Toronto-based **Caldwell** assisted in the recruitment of Rob Kearley as the new CHRO for PFB Corporation in Calgary. The search was led by Drew Railton, Dinkar Farwaha, and

Les Gombik. Mr. Kearley is a human resources leader with over 25 years of experience that spans the globe. He has a track record of implementing cost effective HR strategies. Previously, Mr. Kearley was VP of HR for De Havilland Aircraft of Canada Limited. Prior to that, he held the same title with WesternZagros. Caldwell has conducted hundreds of human resources assignments across every major industry, including consumer products, manufacturing & industrial, technology, financial services, retail, and healthcare.

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