Think different about D&I
Everyone wants to feel included at work, and we all want the places we work to reflect the world outside. Often, though, there’s a gap between how inclusive and diverse we would like our workplaces to be, and how inclusive and diverse they really are. Having teams that can draw on different backgrounds, skillsets and ways of thinking, where everyone feels like they belong, would benefit any business – but how do we get there?

Many discussions at the HR Directors’ Forum focused on this key question, and we’ve rounded up some of the answers in this issue of thinkbites. Read on to find out what’s happening in D&I, some helpful ways of discovering how diverse and inclusive your company is, and what positive, practical steps you can take – right now – to start making it even better.

“ If people in powerful positions continue to hire and cast only people who look like them, sound like them, come from the same neighbourhoods they grew up in, they will never have a greater understanding of experiences different from their own. They will hire the same models, curate the same art, cast the same actors over and over again, and we will all lose.”

Beyoncé

Catch up notes
Neurodiversity
The inclusion barometer
You are here
Seven ideas for improving inclusion
Out of the mouths of babes
Catch up notes
What we learned from Richmond Events’ Human Resources Forum, 14-15 May 2019

HR directors report facing a wide range of challenges around D&I:

- Balancing the gender split – particularly in typically male roles / environments such as tech or engineering.
- Gaining genuine action-orientated leadership buy-in to a D&I strategy.
- Maintaining the diversity mix that exists across the whole organisation within senior management roles – particularly from an ethnicity perspective.
- Becoming more strategically focused when you are unintentionally diverse.
- Understanding what diversity and inclusion mean to younger generations.
- Giving diversity networks a clear and meaningful sense of purpose.
- Tapping into new pools of talent where resources are scarce – e.g. medical profession.
- Lack of data – people aren’t completing diversity profiles within HR systems.
- Making inclusion part of the day-to-day vernacular of the business.

Gender identity and mental health are key areas of focus for participants, with three in five identifying them as areas their organisations are proactively engaging with.

Neurodiversity is becoming a bigger part of the D&I conversation, but many participants felt lacking in knowledge.

Louise Breed
Associate Director
Karian and Box

Louise has over 15 years’ experience in engagement and communications. She’s worked in-house for many leading British brands and was Group Head of Engagement for the Co-operative Group. Louise now provides strategic consultancy for clients including Diageo, Nationwide and Standard Life Aberdeen.

See page five for our briefing.
Some big names are taking bold steps:

BACARDÍ are using a data-led approach to gender decoding — eliminating gendered words or bias — in their job ads and role profiles.

JOJO MAMAN BEBE have a different diversity challenge to most in that 87% of their workforce is female, and they are looking to recruit more men. They’re also looking to actively recruit ex-offenders.

PwC’s programme pairs disabled colleagues with senior staff to give leaders an insight into their daily experiences, while those at Cisco, Procter & Gamble and Deloitte pair millennial workers with Gen Xers or Baby Boomers. The intention in all cases is to share experience and knowledge both ways, giving senior leaders a chance to learn from more junior co-workers, while hopefully also passing on their own skills and insight.

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Mercedes don’t just strategize in the F1 pit lane — they have an eight-point D&I strategy focused on all areas of inclusion.

Accreditation helps. STOCKPORT HOMES have recently achieved Stonewall accreditation and have had a number of applications from people who felt it made them an organisation they would like to work for.

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Neurodiversity refers to the varied ways some individuals’ brains work and interpret information, and encompasses conditions such as autism, dyslexia and dyspraxia. Those individuals may describe themselves as ‘neurodiverse’, and their brain functions might mean they experience and process sociability, learning, attention, mood and language (among other things) differently.

The term is increasingly used as a means of empowerment to promote the positive qualities possessed by those with a neurological difference, encouraging people to view those differences as natural and normal variations of the human genome.

The neurodiversity paradigm is a way of understanding neurodiversity that gives it the same weight as other forms of diversity and recognises that it’s subject to the same social dynamics (including prejudice and oppression).

Where did it come from?

It’s a relatively new term, made popular in the 1990s by sociologist Judy Singer and journalist Harvey Blume. It evolved partly as a challenge to the view that neurodevelopmental disorders are purely medical conditions and suggests that it’s society’s attitudes, not the conditions themselves, that can limit or disable people.

What does it mean for me at work?

There are many potential benefits to a neurodiverse team, with individuals often able to bring a different perspective to projects. Positive traits / strengths of neurodiverse employees might include:

- Creativity.
- Lateral thinking.
- Focus on developing specialised skills.
- Consistency in tasks.

Being neurodiverse (the term ‘neurodivergent’ is also used, although some campaigners dislike the term as they feel it implies abnormality) can amount to having a disability under the Equality Act 2010, so it might be worth investigating the neurodiversity of your workplace.

Things to consider might include:

- Reducing any stigma around neurodiversity.
- How to recruit and retain neurodiverse individuals.
- Making sure existing neurodiverse staff feel safe and included.

Focusing on the specific needs, talents, desires and aspirations of a neurodiverse individual is likely to lead to far greater success.

15% of UK students have a learning difference
Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general. Who can say what form of wiring will prove best at any given moment? Cybernetics and computer culture, for example, may favour a somewhat autistic cast of mind.”

Harvey Blume, writing in ‘The Atlantic’

The Yes Team say:

"The neurodiversity paradigm oversimplifies complex medical conditions – like autism – and doesn’t reflect the reality of people living with them, or acknowledge the treatments they require. Those supporting the medical model of disability [...] identify the mental differences associated with these conditions as disorders, deficits, and dysfunctions, intrinsic differences in functioning which cause impairments in many areas of life. From this point of view, the mental states that are encompassed by neurodiversity are medical conditions that can and should be treated.”

Adam Feinstein, ‘Neurodiversity: the cases for and against’

The No Team say:

"Being different is a gift. It makes me see things from outside the box. I don’t easily fall for lies, I can see through things. If I would’ve been like everyone else, I wouldn’t have started this school strike for instance.”

Greta Thunberg, climate change activist and Nobel peace prize nominee (and autistic)

Learn more
- CIPD guide to neurodiversity
- ACAS guide to neurodiversity
- ‘The Power of Neurodiversity: Unleashing the Advantages of your Differently Wired Brain’ – Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D.
Want to get a broad sense of how inclusive an organisation is? Have a look at meeting culture: How are employees treated? How do leaders encourage inclusion? Where do your meetings sit on the scale?
You are here

On the journey towards better D&I, using a culture model to measure your organisation’s current attitudes can give you a good idea of what you’re doing well, and where you need to focus your efforts to get to where you want to go. James Tarbit, Senior Director at Karian and Box, explains.

How can we define culture, and how can we investigate it to find out how diverse or inclusive it really is? Whether it’s the view of leadership, of compliance, of HR, or of a regulator – to a certain extent everyone has a subtly different view.

So here’s how we see it at Karian and Box.

Culture is what happens when an individual’s behaviours meet an organisation’s. Every day, when we come into work, we carry a whole host of behavioural preferences with us.

And when we sit down at our desk, or our machine, or stand at the front of our store ready to welcome our customers, those preferences hit all of the ways that our company tells us it wants us to behave.

And it’s at the intersection of those two forces – personal preference and organisational imperative – where culture is created, formed, and potentially broken.

So when we talk about measuring culture, or evidencing culture, or professing culture we are, in effect, talking about behaviour.

Life through a lens

We like to look at culture through more than one lens. In fact, we like three – we call this the ‘Golden Venn’, creating three different views of culture by looking at how people feel (sentiment); how they are acting (behaviour); and the impact that sentiment and behaviour has on the business (performance).

It’s only by looking at the three in tandem that you truly start to uncover what is going on, and even start to find out why.

We firmly believe behaviour is the most important of these three aspects. It’s the bedrock on which sentiment and performance is built, and it determines the way you and your teams recruit, run your meetings, celebrate difference…all the things that contribute to a diverse, inclusive culture.

Our culture model

Our model focuses on the behaviours experienced in the workplace

At its heart, organisational culture is created in the interplay between individuals and their environment, the personal preferences of employees and the way the organisation wants them to behave.

However, this is not the complete picture of the culture

Behaviours desired by an organisation are rarely communicated overtly. Instead, they are signposted by the organisation’s purpose and values, hardwired in its policies and processes, and exhibited by its management.
D&I diagnostics

The first is our behavioural diagnostic. It's likely something you will have seen before (nothing new under the sun, I'm afraid). A word-picker that presents a balanced positive / negative matrix of behaviours, and asks respondents to pick the ten that most closely reflect the behaviours they see around them day-to-day.

What's so powerful about this is the very holistic view it can give us, not only of an organisation's culture overall, but even the sub-cultures that exist in different divisions or locations.

The second methodology is ipsative, or forced choice, questioning. One of the biggest problems we face as professional researchers is bias. Ask an employee their view often enough, or in the wrong way, and they can start to get a pretty clear understanding of the right answer. Particularly problematic if you are trying to uncover their behavioural preferences.

As such, rather than asking behavioural questions normatively – i.e. asking how much they agree with a norm like ‘This company is faultlessly diverse and everyone feels included, even those who don’t work here’, you ask people to pick between two equally positive, or equally negative statements:

Not an easy one to answer but, if you formulate the question properly, you can learn a lot about how an individual chooses to behave.

Engaging with your people in this way and running a cultural diagnostic on your company is an illuminating way of seeing where you are in terms of D&I. But it's also a way of broadening your understanding and moving away from a blinkered discussion about ‘ethical culture’, ‘risk culture’, ‘innovation culture’, or, yes, ‘diversity culture’.

Instead, you'll open a wider culture dialogue and a roadmap that will speak to the priorities of everyone around the leadership table – whether communications, HR, or the business – with benefits that go beyond D&I. We think that's a good thing.

You’re on a ledge. If you jump left you get eaten by lions. If you jump right you get eaten by bears. Pick.

12 core behaviours

Our model measures the 12 core behaviours that contribute to an organisation’s culture, grouping them into four areas: Communication, Enablement, Direction and Agility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Enablement</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Agility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Customer focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Psychological and physical safety</td>
<td>The vision and direction of the company are clear</td>
<td>The company is designed with the customer in mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness / Trust</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees are able to speak up</td>
<td>Employees can shape their work / take appropriate decisions</td>
<td>The company’s strategy and purpose have value for employees</td>
<td>The company takes rational decisions, for the long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness / Trust</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>Coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees are able to participate</td>
<td>The leadership and environment are supportive</td>
<td>Employees across the company are attached to its strategy and purpose</td>
<td>The company works in a participative, agile way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Further reading

Changing culture the ‘easy’ way in our annual thinkBox issue
Seven ideas for improving inclusion

1. **Recruit Smart**

   Good recruitment should be at the heart of a good D&I strategy. Inclusive recruitment is a huge topic to get your head around, but diversity consultant Teresa Norman's five steps are a good place to start.

   1. Write inclusive job descriptions. Get it right at the start: are your definitions clear? Could a third party easily understand it?
   2. Cast the net widely. Think about where you’re placing your ad. Will it reach different groups? Could you reach out to refugee/ex-offender/ex-military charities, as Tesco, Accor and JoJo Maman Bebe do?
   3. Shortlist fairly. Have at least two people shortlisting, one to be the conscience in the room and challenge the assumptions being made about each candidate.
   4. Prepare for an inclusive interview. Agree all logistics in advance (including access for candidates, if required) and consider how your biases might come into play.
   5. Get the interview right. Is the panel inclusive? Are your planned questions appropriate and focused on the candidate's motivation and the role's requirements?

2. **Leaders: Talk, Listen, Learn**

   It's hard to talk about inclusion, as it means talking about race, gender, sexuality, disability and more – not always concepts we feel equipped to discuss, even in terms of simply knowing the right language to use. Thinking of it as an ongoing conversation within an organisation can help.

   Jennifer Kim, writer of the ‘Inclusion at Work’ blog, says that as you move from ‘what’ to think about D&I towards ‘how’ to think about it, you’re going to make mistakes, but that the conversation matters. “Stop hiding your cluelessness. An honest acknowledgement can create space for real conversations – opportunities to listen and learn.”

   A few suggestions to guide your D&I conversations:
   - Don’t impose your views. Listen with empathy.
   - Admit to not having all the answers and uncover them as a team.
   - Play to your team’s strengths – showcase their diversity of thought and experience, and find a way to involve everyone.
   - Understand different generational views of diversity. Baby Boomers and GenX can be more traditional, while Millennials and Gen Z will take a much broader view.

3. **Training at the Top**

   Sonia Cargan, Chief Diversity Officer at American Express, told Forbes in 2018 that “inclusive leadership is simply good leadership.” With that in mind, Amex runs a training programme – the Inclusive Leadership Experience – focused on giving its leaders the skills and strategies they need to build and run inclusive teams.

   According to Cargan, “Your leaders are your best ambassadors. Educate your leaders about the power of inclusivity and its role in good leadership. Help and encourage them to model that behaviour for their teams.”

4. **Managing Meetings**

   You might have a diverse cohort in your meetings, but that doesn’t mean everyone feels included. Tech firm Autodesk uses some simple tactics to make meetings more inclusive, including:
   - Distributing materials well in advance (helpful for non-native English speakers, introverts, or those with learning differences, who may need more time to prepare and process information).
   - Making sure credit is given where it’s due.
   - Calling out interrupters and ensuring everyone is heard.
   - Being mindful of remote workers and providing the technology to let them participate.

5. **Learning from Your People**

   Like many organisations, leaders at global pharma manufacturer Merck & Co. Inc. receive unconscious bias training, but the company also uses its presence in 140 countries to learn lessons about D&I. Its Global Diversity and Inclusion Experience months have used presentations, theatre and panel discussions to explore and celebrate the differences of its 69,000 employees.

   **“Stop hiding your cluelessness. An honest acknowledgement can create space for real conversations – opportunities to listen and learn.”**

See page 7 for more on this topic.
Classical orchestras have long been accused of lacking diversity, with women currently making up around 30% of the top global orchestras and a proportion of just 1.8% African Americans in the US.

While these figures are low, they’ve been improved by the process of blind auditions – where musicians play behind a screen – which gradually became the norm over the 1970s and 80s (when women made up less than 10% of orchestras).

Although not perfect (critics point out that the talent pool must itself be diverse for blind auditions to truly enable inclusion), the process has been credited with helping to eliminate bias and improve gender diversity, showing that taking action on inclusion can produce results (oft-quoted tales of blind auditions being scuppered by women’s audible high heels on wooden floors may be apocryphal, though). So what action will you take to bring more harmony to your organisation?

6 FORMING INCLUSION COUNCILS

Jennifer Brown, consultant and author of ‘Inclusion: Diversity, the New Workplace & the Will to Change’, suggests creating a group of 8 to 12 influential leaders who are a few steps below the C-suite (or your equivalent top tier of management).

This group will enable conversations on inclusion across the business by:

- Setting goals around hiring.
- Looking at employee engagement in underrepresented groups.
- Advocating the D&I message.
- Acting as a channel between the top and bottom of the organisation.

Needless to say, this requires senior people willing to get involved and make things happen, and a willingness to listen from the top team.

7 MASTER YOUR MICRO-BEHAVIOURS

Micro-behaviours are the small gestures, expressions, shifts in body language and tones of voice that we use in our daily interactions. Our assumptions and biases feed into them too, which means they can signal our attitudes without us knowing.

Examples of negative micro-behaviours – or ‘micro-aggressions’, as diversity activist Salma El-Wardany refers to them – might include glancing at your phone when someone is speaking, greeting them with a cursory hand wave when they enter the room, or giving a junior staff member a slightly disparaging nickname.

Over time, these signals can lead to a person on the receiving end feeling thoroughly disenfranchised, so it’s important to reflect on where our unconscious biases might be, and how they might be causing us to act.

On the flip side, inclusive micro-behaviours can have a more beneficial effect. They might be:

- Inviting junior colleagues to present to the board.
- Giving focused attention to your team in one-on-one catch-ups.
- Keeping your phone away in meetings.
- Thanking colleagues for sharing ideas and asking questions to explore them further.

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FURTHER READING

- So you want to talk about race
  Ijeoma Oluo
- Men explain things to me
  Rebecca Solnit
- We should all be feminists
  Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- Reset: My fight for inclusion and lasting change
  Ellen Pao
Out of the mouths of babes

Using unexpected voices to speak truth to power

Senior-level corporate meetings tend to be pretty grown-up places, with their weighty subjects, tough decision-making and knotty politics. But sometimes we can be prisoners of our adult seriousness. To make the real breakthroughs, we need something a bit different.

We like to challenge Board and Exec conversations with unexpected voices, and there’s no voice less expected in this context than the voice of the child or teenager. It’s a classic approach with real pedigree: Gunter Grass’s landmark novel ‘The Tin Drum’ uses the point of view of a child who decides never to grow up as a way of exploring post-war European society, while Greta Thunberg’s recent interventions in public life are driven by her perspective as a young person mystified by adult inaction on the central issue determining her future.

But how can you use the power of the voice of the child? We create films, often featuring the children of members of the Exec, to provide a different take on the biggest issues that are facing the organisations. The voice of these children is:

Direct and uncompromising
Children can state unvarnished truths in a way adults would never dare – or never even consider. They’re not afraid to reduce things to binaries, either, as the climate change protests have shown – ‘never mind messing around with your adult politics, when are you going to sort this out?’

Future-perfect
Children tend to think about the future emotionally. ‘What will my world be like, what things will be in it, and how will that feel?’ Seeing the flesh-and-blood people that your organisation’s current actions will affect, with all their hopes and dreams, can open up a very different perspective.

Fun
Children can be absolutely hilarious and these films are great fun. But seriously folks, comedy is a useful way to get people to engage with tricky questions and move beyond circular conversations about organisational strategy and culture.

Pulling off this kind of intervention needs careful creative thinking and management (we all know the adage about working with children and animals). Here are a few tried-and-tested tactics:

The customers of tomorrow
Ask the children to talk about what they think the future will be like. Will there be self-driving hover-cars, skyscrapers for bees? Let their imaginations run free. Then ask them how they see their lives in the future. Make the link to their needs as future customers (your strategy), or the world they want to live in (your purpose and responsible business strategy).

The pace of change
Bring out the wild shifts in technology around us by getting children to play with ‘old-school’ tech from just a few years ago – especially if you have an archive of old kit (many telecoms and financial services businesses do). Seeing a five-year-old trying to touch the screen of a Nokia 3310 really underlines how quickly tech is changing our lives.

Of course, there’s a duty of care when you’re working with children and it’s essential that all the correct precautions and protections are in place, along with clear, specific consent from parents, carers or guardians – particularly around use and storage of video content.

Do it right though, and amidst all the bafflement about the things grown-ups think are important and your own nostalgia for playing Snake, you might just discover some wisdom.
We hope we’ve inspired you to think differently about D&I. Let’s keep the conversation going.

Connect with us directly or at Richmond Events forums in the future to explore more about how people power performance.