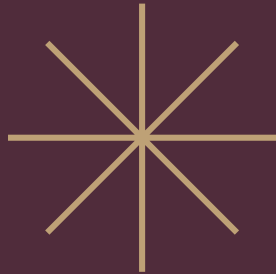


BADENOCH
+ CLARK



WORKPLACE INCLUSION IN TIMES OF COVID, CRISIS AND BEYOND

WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY AND WHAT IT MEANS
FOR WORKPLACE CULTURE, RECRUITMENT
AND LEADERSHIP



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Badenoch + Clark has always recognised the imperative of a diverse workforce. We know that by hiring and developing people with a broad range of experiences, backgrounds and skills, we can continue to learn as an organisation, and help our clients to build positive, inclusive and successful workplaces.

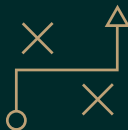
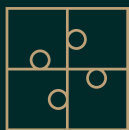
Our commitment to supporting inclusion and enriching hiring strategies can only be realised when we are accessing the widest range of talent. The strength and relevancy of a workforce is intrinsically linked to the people who are part of it – and diversity brings new ideas and mindsets which, in turn, opens up dialogue, pushes creativity and challenges the way we approach our work.

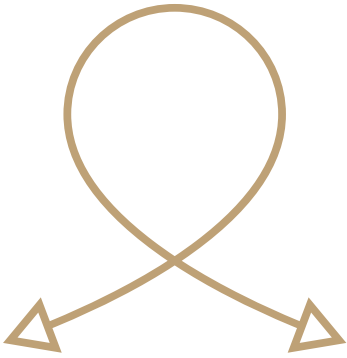
The recent growing attention around social inequalities has encouraged all of us at Badenoch + Clark to look harder at ourselves to ensure that we are doing everything we can to support an open and fair recruitment process and to fulfil our vision of “Making the future work for everyone”.

Mark Hall, Head of Professional Recruitment,
Badenoch + Clark

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INTRODUCTION

Organisations are rapidly having to adapt to an increasingly volatile and changing world. The COVID-19 pandemic and growing global anger at social inequalities in particular are forcing employers to adopt new ways of working and confront more challenging issues of inclusion and equity in the workplace and beyond.

To better understand the implications of this for inclusion strategies, and how people currently view the success of their employers, Badenoch + Clark, part of the Adecco Group, commissioned a survey at the beginning of lockdown of over 1,000 employees in the UK. The results showed that inclusion continues to play a vital role in creating workplaces where diverse talent can flourish. However, whilst there is progress, employees think there is more to do, with training their preferred intervention.

For workplaces, this means listening to employees and tailoring approaches to diversity and inclusion accordingly – not rushing in to apparently easy quick fixes. It means workplace practice and culture will continue to need to adapt to an evolving ‘new normal’.

For recruitment, it becomes time to re-evaluate strategy with a new depth and breadth of understanding, underpinning this with credibility – in words and in actions.

And for senior leaders, there is a wake-up call to be curious, to be visibly active and truly authentic. Inclusive leaders bring people together, especially in times of crisis, and their role has never been more critical.

Now is a time for honesty, resilience and much greater collaboration – across people, organisations, roles and disciplines. For just as global events and pandemics send shockwaves through society, positive change across workplaces improves individual lives and changes the communities that we are all part of for the better. That change is one we commit to and one we will work with our employees and clients to help achieve. This paper explains more and asks how you will embrace the journey.





1.

COVID, CRISIS AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

In a world where employers face challenge on an unprecedented scale, workplace inclusion has never mattered more.

The global COVID-19 pandemic means that employers have rapidly adapted to remote and more agile working. Recruitment, digital accessibility, skills and resilience have needed fresh approaches. As employees return to workplaces, the new reality is a hybrid of home and office working for many - at least for the foreseeable future.

The spotlight is also on social inequality. In particular, the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and many others have led to the rapid global rise of Black Lives Matter and growing awareness of the impacts of race inequality, past and present. The strength of public reaction and emotion, not only in the US but also around the world, has meant that organisations can no longer remain silent. They need to actively facilitate positive change.

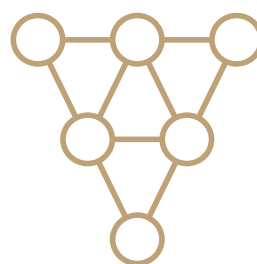
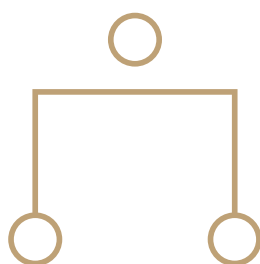
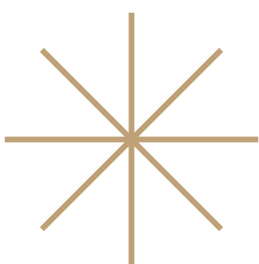
Meanwhile, the fight to gain, and protect, hard-won LGBTQ+ rights (including in the workplace) continues and violence against trans people (especially trans people of colour) remains prevalent. Workplaces are increasingly complex cross-sections of society where gender, multigenerational workforces, mental health, differing abilities and more intersect.

Workplaces are increasingly complex cross-sections of society... For employers, this opens new, and sometimes uncomfortable, conversations.

For employers, this opens new, and for some uncomfortable, conversations, often taking workplaces beyond concepts of 'diversity' and 'inclusion' (terms too often used interchangeably) to embrace 'equity' and 'empowerment'.

Employers have also discovered that what happens in one part of the world sends ripples, or shockwaves, to workplaces globally.

To better understand perceptions of workplace diversity and inclusion, and how employers need to evolve, Badenoch + Clark commissioned a major survey of 1,163 workers across sectors to explore what employees think about inclusion and how employers could improve. This paper shares the findings, and explores the lessons and actions that can be taken by senior leaders and organisations to improve workplace culture and recruitment processes. Now is the time to re-evaluate inclusion strategies and action in more depth than ever, not to roll on with existing approaches.





2.

WHY INCLUSIVE CULTURE MATTERS

Inclusive workplaces that attract diverse talent are good news. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reports that inclusive workplaces attract, retain and engage talent. They foster innovation, improve competitiveness and grow influence; they help maintain positive corporate reputations and outperform financially, benefiting every aspect of operations.

The statistics on benefits of diverse workforces in inclusive workplaces are varied but positive. McKinseyⁱⁱ highlight how ethnically diverse companies are 36% more likely to outperform competitors; gender-diverse ones are 25% more likely to do the same. BCGⁱⁱⁱ found companies with above-average management team diversity had innovation revenue (income from new products) 19% higher than companies with below-average leadership diversity. Research by Cloverpop^{iv} shows diverse teams make better decisions 87% of the time – and inclusive practices boost team results by 60%.

In short, diverse teams in inclusive workplaces have higher employee engagement, lower employee turnover, greater collaboration and are more successful.

The constant theme is that hiring diverse talent isn't enough. People need truly inclusive workplaces to flourish and for Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategies to succeed. 'Diversity' and 'Inclusion' are not interchangeable terminology or practices. In the context of the workplace, diversity equals representation while inclusion creates a sense of belonging for all employees.

Almost a third of the UK workforce is considering changing roles post-pandemic... Inclusive workplaces just became even more vital.

Hiring diverse talent isn't enough... talent needs truly inclusive workplaces to flourish.

Badenoch + Clark's parent company, the Adecco Group, conducted its own research^v by surveying 1,000 UK workers, and revealed that almost a third of the UK workforce is considering changing roles post-pandemic. Workplaces where everyone is, and feels, welcome and empowered just became even more vital.





3.

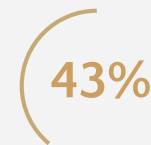
WHAT EMPLOYEES SAID

Our survey was conducted in April 2020, a month after UK lockdown began, but before Black Lives Matter gained global momentum. In the results, we found some positive messages, but with challenges for employers to progress. In particular:



Inclusive workplace culture matters:

43% of women told us that inclusivity was 'very important' when considering job offers (for men, this was 35% - lower but still significant). Where inclusion was not a strong focus, employees saw key impacts such as lower morale, less teamwork, discrimination, were felt in workplace atmospheres. They also recognised that the lack on inclusion hits confidence, staff attraction, retention and productivity.



43% of women rated inclusivity as 'very important' when considering a job offer, compared to 35% of men



There's more to do:

70% of employees felt organisations could do more to create inclusive cultures, with training development or learning preferred to achieve this. Employees of larger organisations considered their employer to be doing better than those in smaller organisations and views varied by age - Compared to 59% of those aged 55+, just 42% of employees aged 16 to 24 said their workplace is diverse and inclusive,



70% of employees felt their organisation could do more to create an inclusive culture.



Experience and perception vary:

Senior employees and directors (and often graduates) rated their organisation more highly for valuing difference, promoting authenticity and enabling employees to effect change - but junior managers, clerical and manual staff did not agree as strongly. Just under half of respondents rated their employer highly (80%+ positive) on the effectiveness of their inclusion strategy. Graduates and junior managers were more cautious (about a third rated it 80%+) compared to senior managers and directors (over half rated it 80%+).

Senior managers and directors rate the effectiveness of their inclusion strategies more highly than graduates and junior managers do.





4.

LESSONS FOR WORKPLACE CULTURE

Lockdowns, hybrid working styles, experiences of social inequality, and the importance of inclusion to jobseekers (especially younger people and women), mean inclusion **must** be central to workplace culture. Two themes stood out:

Listen to employees, tailor your approach

Almost a quarter of respondents said learning, awareness and development was key, followed by mentoring, D&I events and senior leaders championing inclusion within their organisation and externally.

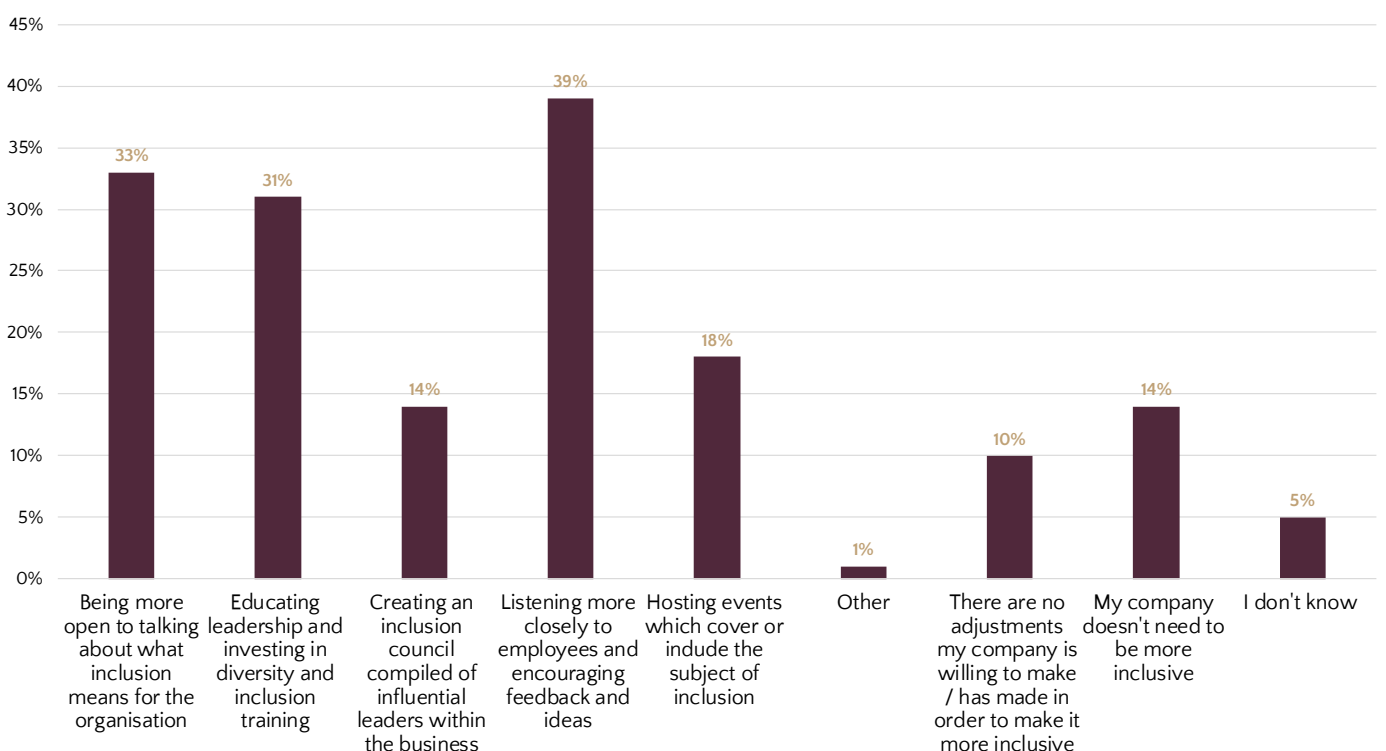
Overall, learning was the inclusion intervention most wanted by employees, but views vary across roles, hierarchy and diversity.

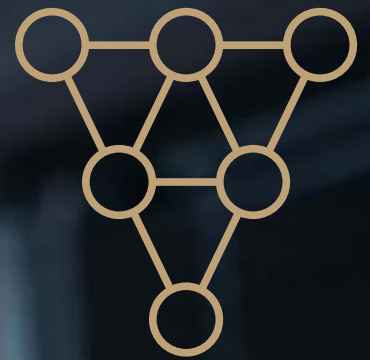
However, views differ. Over three quarters of graduates, senior managers and directors thought they had enough learning; junior managers, clerical workers and manual workers wanted more.

Directors prioritised career progression for diverse groups and wanted more senior leaders championing inclusion. Graduates wanted social events. Employees from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds said they value development and career progression most – as did white employees who more often also cited mentoring and committed leaders.

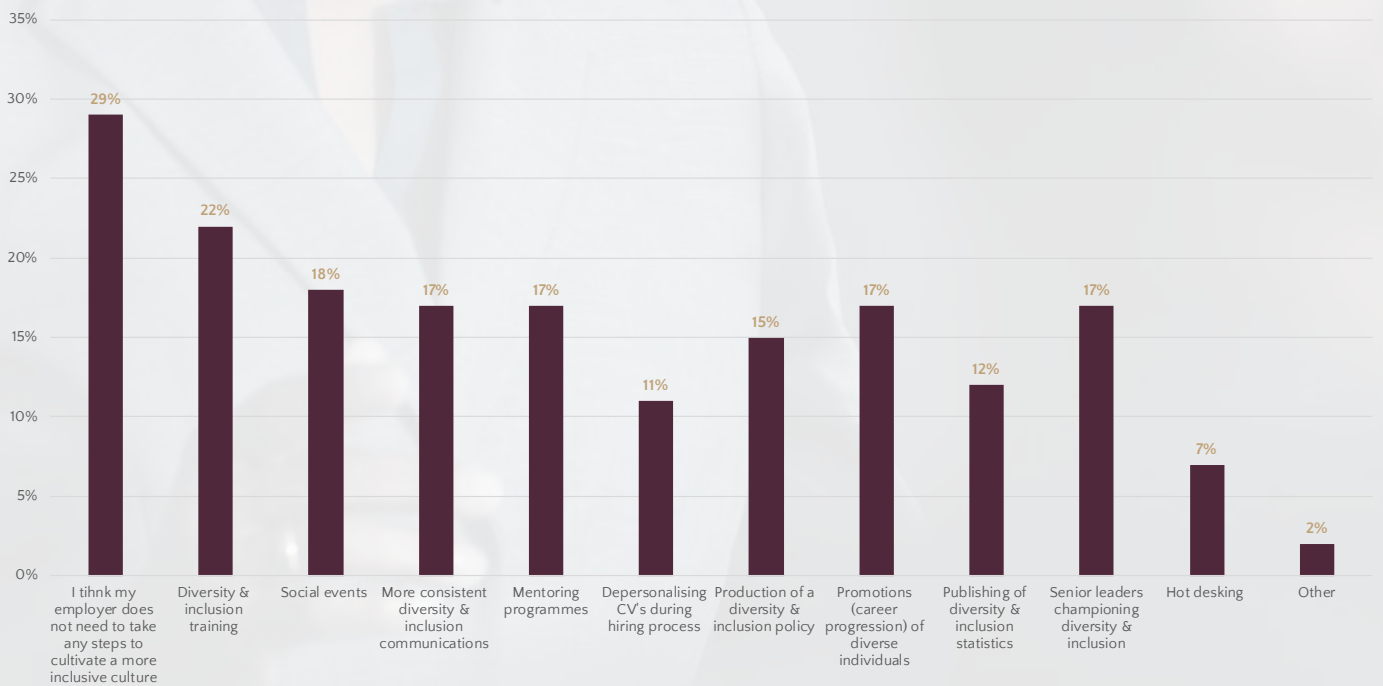
This may tempt employers to hastily roll out online unconscious bias training organisation-wide to prove they are ‘doing something’ and reaching remote workers. However, any learning must be approached with authenticity and critical assessment of need, options and outcomes. E-learning modules are not quick fixes; culture is a long, evolving journey requiring continuous focus, review and investment.

What adjustments do you feel your company is willing to make / has made in order to be more inclusive?





What steps could your employer take to cultivate a more inclusive culture?



Why neurodiversity should be included in recruitment and inclusion strategies

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term used to cover a broad range of developmental conditions the most widely recognised being Autism/ASD, Dyslexia, ADHD/ADD, Dyspraxia and Tourette's.

Whilst the term is not new, there is an ever-growing awareness of neurodiversity, and research suggests that companies are not keeping pace. A recent research study by the Adecco Group of 1,000 workers, revealed that 53% of respondents had never heard of the term neurodiversity while less than 20% had heard of the term neurodiversity through or within their work environment.

Less than 20% had heard of the term neurodiversity through or within their work environment.

Neurodiversity just simply isn't on the D&I agenda for most companies. "10% of HR professionals in the UK say consideration of neurodiversity is included in their organisation's people management practices" according to a poll by the CIPD from early 2018. A further 17% weren't sure and a disappointing 72% of HR professionals questioned said that consideration of neurodiversity wasn't part of their people management practices.

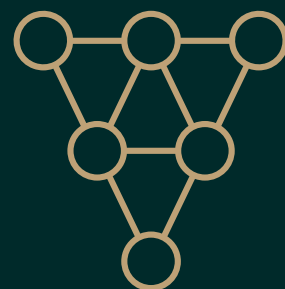
There is a range of reasons why businesses should incorporate neurodiversity into their recruitment and inclusion strategies:

- It's the law: Neurodivergence will usually amount to a recognised disability under the Equality Act 2010. As employers, the legal implications of not supporting neurodiversity are the same as not supporting any other person who has a form of registered disability.
- You are missing out! Creativity, lateral thinking, a different perspective, highly specialised skills and strict consistency are commonly associated with neurodivergent people.
- Build winning teams: If employers understand more about individual profiles, strengths, weaknesses and communication styles then they can build stronger, more innovative, rich teams.
- Access a wider talent pool: Failing to engage fully with your talent pool will cost you time in hiring and potentially increase the cost of attraction, as well as increasing the risk of missing out on valuable innovation.
- 1 in 5 between the ages of 16 and 24 identified as neurodiverse, compared to 1 in 30 over the age of 44 in our survey. Employers need to be aware that more young people are identifying as neurodiverse.

1 in 5 between the ages of 16 and 24 identified as neurodiverse, compared to 1 in 30 over the age of 44.

Furthermore, 35% of respondents in the survey said they would either be "not very comfortable" or "not comfortable at all" asking their employers for reasonable adjustment. These figures suggest that is 1 in 3 people feel unable to ask for the support they need. There are simple steps that employers can take to counteract this, starting with the hiring process itself.

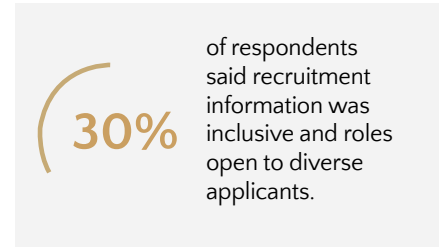
1. **Think about the language you use: Avoid ambiguous or generic job adverts and don't ask for things you don't really need. Keep it clear and think about how you present the information.**
2. **Offer multiple application methods: Encourage people to call to ask questions. Allow people to provide covering messages via video. Offer choice where possible.**
3. **Make the interview and selection process relevant: Clearly outline what information you need from the interview and approach it as an opportunity to learn about an individual.**
4. **Take the first steps: The most important part of this is making the decision to start to address your company's approach to neurodiversity.**



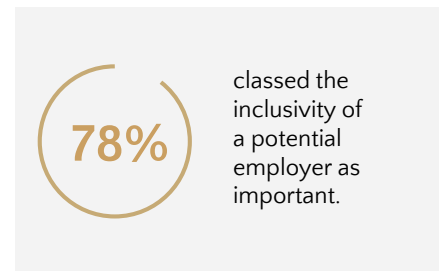


5. LESSONS FOR RECRUITMENT

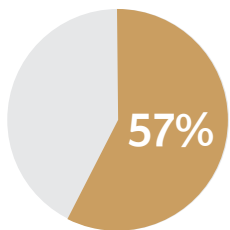
Inclusive workplace cultures are central to diversifying the workforce, but more focus is needed on attracting diversity. Only 30% of our respondents said recruitment information was inclusive and roles were open to diverse applicants. Just 18% saw diverse people involved in recruitment processes.



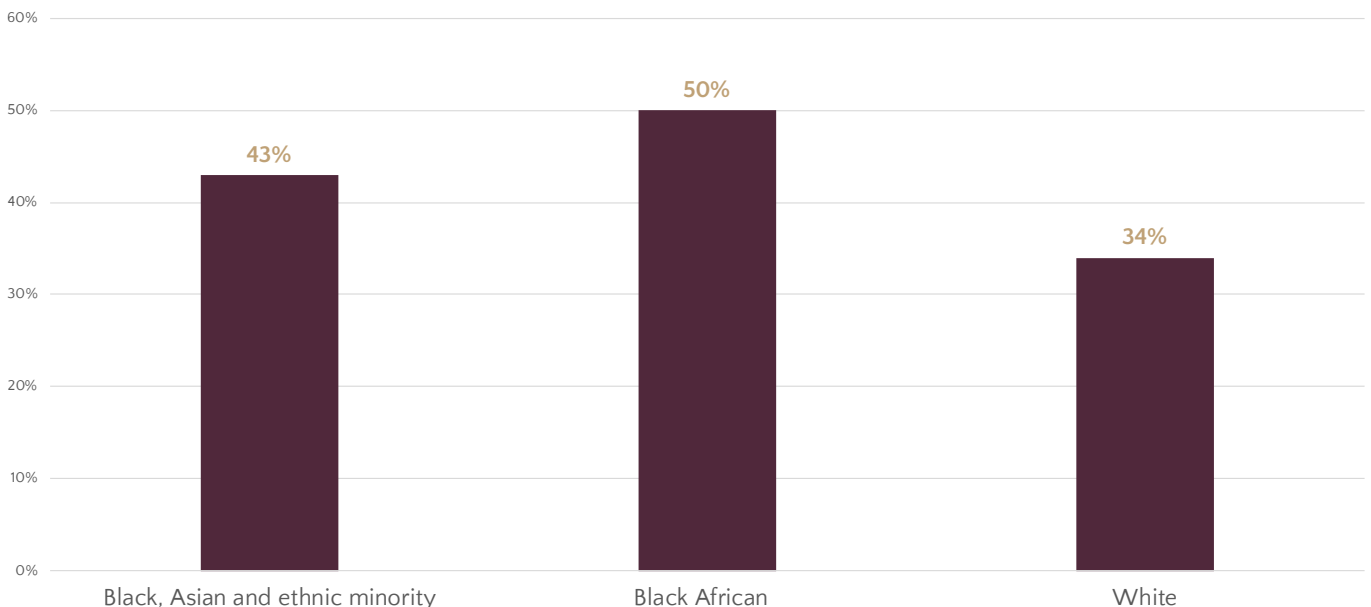
More positively, 80% of those surveyed said workplace culture and inclusion were discussed at interview. That's essential when 78% view a potential employer's inclusivity as 'very' or 'somewhat' important. It varies across candidates: 43% of women said inclusivity of a potential employer was 'very important' compared to 35% of men; it was 'very important' for 57% of senior managers and, on average, for 43% of black, Asian and ethnic minority employees (rising to 50% for Black African employees) compared to 34% for white employees.



Education for white employees and involvement within D&I activities is key because:



of senior managers rated inclusivity as 'very important'.
These senior managers were:





This has implications for recruitment professionals:



Re-evaluate recruitment strategy

Recruiters need to reach out beyond traditional recruitment channels and use inclusive language in their materials. However, diversity within recruitment teams and collaboration with communities are also essential to understand and remove barriers that disadvantage or turn away potential candidates. That requires depth of understanding and nuanced and targeted approaches, not generic ones.

With rising redundancies, those actively recruiting can additionally rethink roles, making more of transferable skills in the marketplace (whether in-house or with freelancers). This may present more opportunities to recruit diversity.

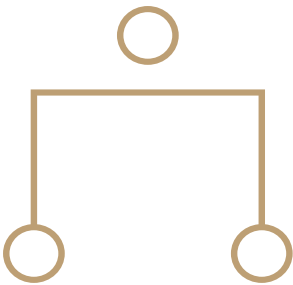
Flexibility, engagement, learning, and openness make it easier for companies to embrace the full range of talent diversity, while also reshaping their organisations to better reflect the societies in which they operate.

Reliance on more digital approaches to recruitment also assumes access to appropriate technology, IT literacy and candidate comfort at being on-screen. This may need new reasonable adjustments in process, technology or assessment style. It needs recruiters to be proactive in order to avoid potential candidates being missed for fear of disadvantage or discrimination.

The path to inclusion starts with a single-minded focus on skills: on what each candidate or employee can do, rather than what he or she cannot undertake. Such an approach not only helps candidates, it also enhances the companies' clients' talent pipelines, innovation ability, and competitiveness. The Adecco Group has adopted the broad slogan of 'Talent without Labels' to define its commitment to this approach^{VI}.

In career succession, diversity thinking, experience and perspectives should also play a role, alongside more traditional factors such as performance and leadership skills. That ensures a culture of inclusion which empowers employees, boosts collaboration, increases engagement and inspires innovation.





Credibility is everything

For employers, conversations at interview (with recruiting managers who can confidently talk about inclusion) continue to be important, but inclusion runs deeper than that or a rainbow lanyard. Candidates want evidence of achievements and authentic advocates of a potential employer's culture to know they will be welcome and could succeed there. Visible diversity within recruitment teams also sends signals that candidates notice.

For recruitment partners, clients will increasingly want to work with recruiters who demonstrate they understand diversity and can successfully secure diverse talent. That needs recruiters to have the right skills, knowledge and networks. It requires credibility with candidates and evidence of embedding inclusion within their own organisations.

Of course, recruitment is one part of the picture. Unless inclusion is understood and embedded at every stage of the employee lifecycle (including onboarding, training, career development, culture and exits), recruitment investment is at risk.

Clients will want to work with recruitment partners that can demonstrate understanding of diversity, credibility with candidates and commitment within their own organisation too.

Organisations need to take bold steps to strengthen inclusion. Drawing on best practices from the firms they surveyed, McKinsey's report highlights the following five key areas of action for companies:

- Increase diverse representation, particularly in leadership and critical roles.
- Strengthen leadership and accountability for delivering on I&D goals.
- Enable equality of opportunity through fairness and transparency.
- Promote openness and tackling bias and discrimination.
- Foster belonging through unequivocal support for multivariate diversity.



Here are some practical steps and initiatives that organisations and recruiters can adopt during the hiring process:

1. Recruit a **diverse workforce**. A wider recruitment scope will broaden your talent pool.
2. Create a defined **D&I policy and statement**. The clearer it is, the easier for employees to process and implement it.
3. Add your **D&I commitment statement** to your job descriptions and careers page. This sends out a strong message to your applicants.
4. Convert all job descriptions to **gender-neutral language**.
5. Write **results-based job descriptions**. Focus on what's expected in the role rather than qualifications or a checklist of skills.
6. Conduct **blind screenings** of CVs to minimise unconscious bias.
7. Don't use **'culture fit'** as a reason for rejecting a candidate – it could be indicative of unconscious bias.
8. Explicitly request a **diverse range of candidates**, even if some don't fit the traditional profile.
9. Have a **structured interview process**. By asking each candidate a similar set of questions, this gives everyone the same chance at the job.
10. Ensure that **underrepresented employees** are included in your interviews.
11. Make sure that **equal pay policies** are applied even in the interview process – no negotiation, no exceptions.
12. **Revisit your visuals** – look at your careers page, office walls, signage, marketing. Candidates can interpret a lack of diversity as a sign of a non-inclusive workplace.
13. Use **supporting technology** to assist you. For example, Textio (job descriptions), Interviewing.io (objective technical hiring) and Allie (inclusion Slackbot).
14. **Communicate actively** about D&I in the workplace – promoting your company's commitment and interest will attract more diversity.
15. Talk about D&I as part of the **onboarding process** and establish a **training programme** for new hires.

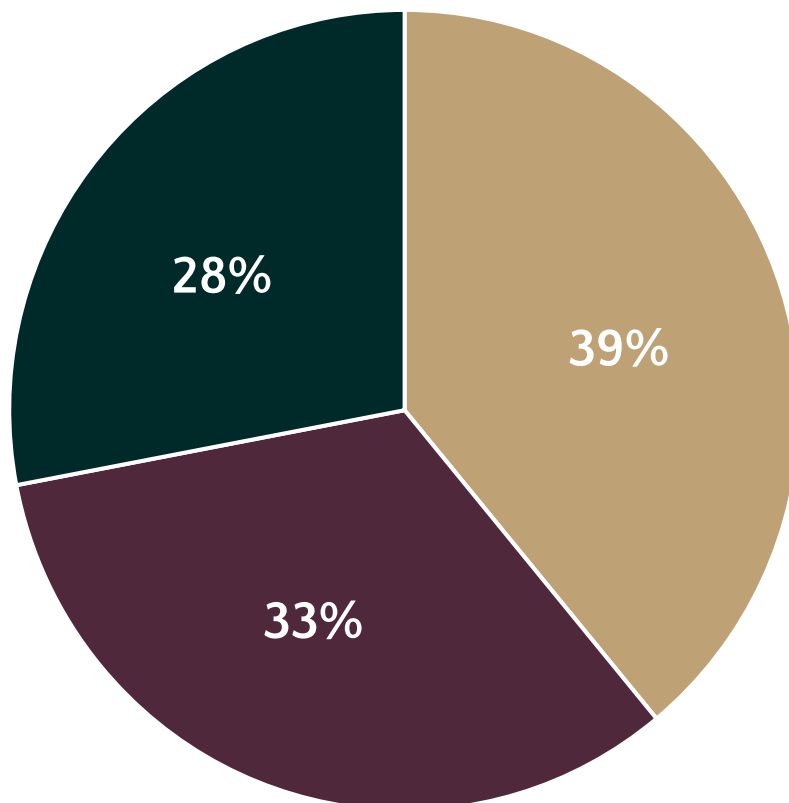


6. LESSONS FOR LEADERS

When building inclusive workplaces, the consistent theme from those surveyed was 'listen, educate and lead'. For senior leaders, this means more than writing a blog with a trending hashtag during Pride or Mental Health Awareness Week. It goes deeper than posting a black square on social media while television covers Black Lives Matter protests, then returning to regular business.

The consistent theme from those surveyed was for leaders to 'listen, educate and lead'.

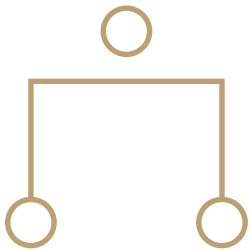
Some 39% of our respondents thought their employer should listen more closely to employees and encourage feedback. A third wanted more open conversations about what inclusion means for their organisation, whilst just under a third considered educating senior leadership and D&I learning as key. There's clear scope for leaders to step up here – **less than half (47%) said their leaders are role models for diversity and inclusion who implement inclusion initiatives.**



- want employers to listen more closely to employees and encourage feedback
- want more open conversations about what inclusion means for their organisation
- consider educating senior leadership and D&I learning as key



So, what does this mean for leaders?

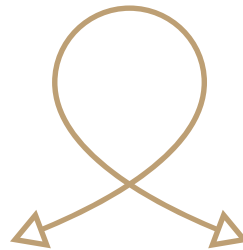


Be curious

Leaders have a responsibility to educate themselves on the reality of their workplace culture. Done well, it will often lead to uncomfortable conversations – whether from understanding systemic racial bias or the realities of service provision for minorities. This is about self-education rather than following best practice and hoping this will suffice. Leaders should enter conversations informed, seeking to genuinely add to their understanding, not relying on minority groups to set everything out for them as having to constantly educate others can be exhausting. It is only by understanding the issues that an organisation can build a truly inclusive culture.

Self-education is key. Don't rely on minority groups setting everything out for you – having to constantly do so can be exhausting.

Leaders must avoid assuming their personal journey and experiences within their organisation are typical for all employees too – experience and perceptions differ hugely. When surveyed, 76% of directors said all employees are offered equal career opportunities in their organisation, but only 50% of graduates agreed.



Be visibly active

Leadership brings privilege and ability to create positive change. That requires visible championing of inclusion and active collaboration with others.

Great leaders share their platforms, giving unheard or quieter voices airtime; they speak up on issues like racism and discrimination, realising that silence is a licence for those issues to continue under their watch. They empower employee networks to bring change and collaborate to remove barriers to that success without just delegating delivery of their D&I strategy to minorities.

Leaders have privilege and the ability to positively change an organisation... Silence on issues like racism is effectively a licence for it to continue on their watch.

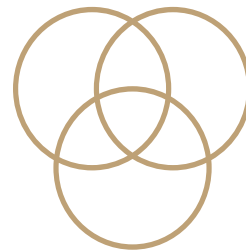
Right now, leaders need to actively champion and protect their D&I functions – they will be increasingly significant.



Be authentic

When leaders can be themselves, they perform better and employees notice. Employees look for role models and to see themselves reflected in the leadership of an organisation. This requires leaders to embrace their own vulnerability on inclusion – they cannot know everything and will make mistakes, but mistakes that are well-intentioned are more forgivable than inaction.

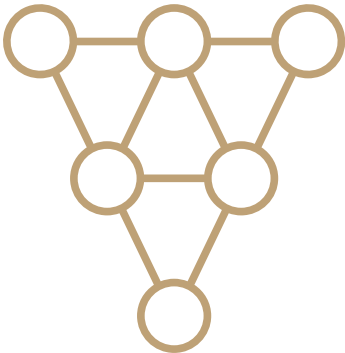
Inclusive leaders bring people and organisations together, keeping them resilient and progressive, especially during times of crisis and change.



Be empowering

Leaders need to empower their employees to actively promote inclusion within their teams and workplaces. This is even more vital when employees are dispersed, working remotely and impacted by global events. Authentic, inclusive leaders bring people and organisations together, keeping them resilient and progressive. Leaders must also be prepared to 'pass the mic' to someone else if they aren't the best representative in a particular situation or scenario. It's about actions not just words. This must be the goal for all leaders, and if you are a leader reading this – that means you!





CONCLUSION

Whilst employers have made progress on inclusion, there remains more to do. This is even more critical in a world where a global pandemic brings ongoing rapid change to how we live and work, and where there is soaring depth and breadth of anger at social inequalities, past and present.

In such times, inclusion brings the creative ideas, flexible solutions, fresh perspectives and engaged, connected teams that organisations need to make better decisions, innovate and ensure better outcomes for all. It develops understanding of institutional barriers and bias, unlocking options to respond as an employer, service provider and part of the community.

Employers must now initiate and embrace those potentially challenging conversations to understand the reality of their workplace cultures. They must proactively work with and empower employees and communities to identify and remove barriers to inclusion and equality. Senior leaders need to be accountable, admit where they have it wrong, and commit to ongoing, visible action to bring change.

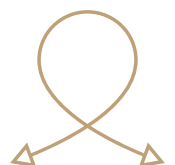
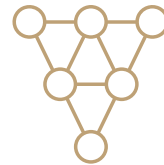
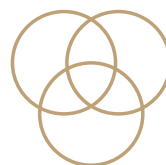
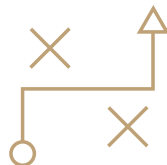
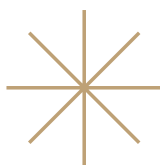
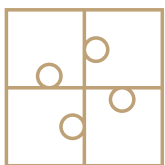
For just as global events and pandemics send shockwaves through society, positive change across workplaces not only improves individual lives and prospects, it changes the communities we are all part of for the better. That's a world we want to see and one we will work with our employees and clients to help achieve. The question is – how will you embrace the journey?

Now is a time for honesty, resilience, and much greater collaboration – across people, organisations, roles and disciplines.



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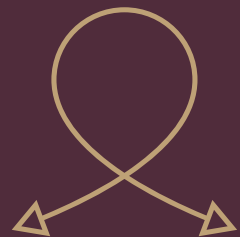


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