

FREE TO
GROW

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP



CREATING A CULTURE OF EMPOWERMENT,
ACCOUNTABILITY AND BELONGING

PRODUCED BY:



CENTRE FOR
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

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PREFACE

This report takes a look at best practices from twelve leading international companies that are certified in gender equality in the workplace by DiversityInc (international focus) and Women in Governance (Canadian focus) and identifies various approaches and tools used to attract and retain a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Companies selected¹ had to:



Provide a publicly accessible annual report that is focused on, or includes, their diversity and inclusion practices;



Have been platinum certified through the Women in Governance Gender Parity certification program (valid for 2 years); or



Have been listed as one of the top 5 highest performing companies by DiversityInc in either 2018 or 2019.

The Centre for Social Intelligence (CSI) is pleased to provide this report (March 2021) for the Free To Grow in Forestry project - a Canadian forest sector initiative aimed at increasing inclusion and diversity in Canada's forest sector. For more information please go to: www.freetogrowinforestry.ca.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The landscape of the Canadian workforce is changing rapidly and as baby boomers retire, leaders in the forest sector are grappling with how to attract and retain the best and the brightest talent. Canada is increasingly a cultural mosaic and millennials are predicted to comprise 75% of the workforce by 2025. This diverse and younger generation is seeking employment at places where social values and actions are at the forefront of business strategy. As a result, leaders need to quickly ascertain how to create an inclusive culture and a place where everyone feels they belong.

Belonging is something every human seeks in their lives – and when achieved in the workplace, allows for profound social and economic rewards to manifest. According to leading research, people who feel they belonged in their workplace were linked to a 56% increase in job performance, leading to less turnover and greater creativity and ability to problem solve.

Leading international organizations that have received recognition through Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) awards or through certification bodies have figured out a game-changer approach to attracting and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce. They have positioned themselves for success by linking their company objectives to the community, to a national and international agenda. They embed accountability for behaviour throughout the organization, and reinforce it through recognition, be it social or financial.

These organizations at the cutting-edge of this issue have shifted leadership gears up a notch to be inclusive of all people (i.e., gender identity or expression, race or ethnic origins, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, people living with disabilities, generations, or veterans) and have embedded a social agenda into their business model that acts like a moth to a flame for high performers. They have acquired new skills and approaches to doing business that moves away from leader-follower/power-control mentality to mutually enabling practices such as collaboration, power sharing (i.e. co-creation) and empowerment. These companies instill a nurturing approach to the employee life-cycle, creating a cascading effect of support, safe spaces to “be your authentic self” and greater sense of belonging.

Having an *inclusive leadership* style is the secret sauce to creating a sense of belonging. This report articulates the key attributes and benefits of moving the forest sector from traditional leadership to an inclusive leadership approach. It also gives a window into the key actions leading companies are undertaking to attract, retain and retire their employees. Companies are using new approaches such as deploying progressive AI tools to seek new talent in new ways; they are partnering with diverse local companies and organizations, and are offering competitive benefit packages that are in keeping with the realities of diverse and inclusive cultural needs.

Embedding I&D into corporate social responsibility creates an opportunity for all employees to feel valued and empowered. Creating a connection to a greater social purpose, be it at the community, national, and/or international level, helps organizations articulate a value proposition that attracts and retains high performers in today's globally competitive market.

A notable aspect of tracking social issues that are of importance to employees is through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). ERGs create an open forum for employees who share common identity to meet and support each other in building their community and sense of belonging. They also facilitate a clear line of communication to senior management to collectively voice issues of concern and solve problems.

On the flip side, management can engage ERGs to seek their advice and input on products, issues and branding to help the organization be its best – for both internal and external stakeholders. This creates a win-win for leadership and employees, and creates a shared effort to solving issues of importance to them both.

The workforce of tomorrow is looking for more than a job, they are looking for a place that operates with integrity, respect and accountability. Where values and a code of conduct are sung from the rafters and are known to be adhered to at each level of the organization. Where each employee using their social media feels empowered and proud to showcase the successful actions their organization is taking to address pressing social issues. This inclusive mindset is how organizations don't just survive, but thrive.



INTRODUCTION

Social belonging is a fundamental human need that some would say is an integral part of our DNA. However, according to a recent study, 40% of people say they feel isolated at work, resulting in lower organizational commitment and engagement. In the US alone, businesses are spending close to \$8 billion dollars each year on diversity and inclusion training but are not making a sustained impact because they neglect to address the need to belong. Feeling excluded is quite damaging to the individual. As one study puts it “exclusion actually hurts – it’s akin to physical pain. And it’s a sting that everyone has experienced at one time or another. To feel left out is a deeply human problem, which is why its consequences carry such heft and why its causes are so hard to pinpoint.”²



Belonging is good for business. A recent study showed that companies reap substantial bottom-line benefits. People who felt they belonged in their workplace were linked to an incredible 56% increase in job performance, a 50% drop in turnover risk, and a 74% reduction in sick days.³ To put this in perspective, a company that employs 10,000 people, this would result in annual savings of more than \$52 million.⁴ According to psychologists’ reports dating back since 2005, being excluded can impair performance on cognitive tasks, reduce the ability to problem solve in the face of adversity and may reduce creativity.⁵

Belonging – The feeling of trust and acceptance, where we feel safe being our authentic selves. (Hilton, D&I Report, 2020)

Johnson & Johnson focused on inclusion in their organization and achieved “27% reduction in turnover; 40% reduction in safety incidents; and 12% increase in productivity.”⁶ Further supporting evidence for belonging states that “employees with higher workplace belonging also showed a 167% increase in their employer promoter score (i.e. their willingness to recommend their company to others). They also received double the raises, and 18 times more promotions”.⁷

Inclusive leadership is a means to turning exclusive workplaces into inclusive ones and creating a sense of belonging. As pointed out by lead researchers in this area, there is a direct link between feelings of inclusion and innovating on the job, for example identifying opportunities for new products and processes and trying out new ideas and approaches to problems. Inclusion is also tied to “team citizenship”, behaviours such as offering help to colleagues, and volunteering assistance to one’s manager.⁸

Inclusion –
Simultaneously balancing the value of diverse talents and experiences that employees bring with identifying common ground among employees. (Catalyst, 2014)

According to Catalyst, inclusion means *simultaneously* balancing the value of diverse talents and experiences that employees bring with identifying common ground among employees. Focusing too much on the former could lead employees to feel alienated or stereotyped. Focusing primarily on the latter can leave employees reluctant to share views and ideas that might set them apart, increasing the odds of problems like “group think”. When employees feel unique – recognized for their differences – and feel a sense of belonging based on sharing common attributes and goals with their peers, organizations best increase the odds of benefiting from workforce diversity.

Studies show that a balanced strategy of meeting employee’s needs for uniqueness and belongingness can be more impactful in increasing employee innovation and engagement than a strategy focusing on only one or the other of these needs.⁹

The key attribute that sets the leading companies in the area of inclusion and diversity apart from others is their ability to run the organization with an inclusive leadership approach, linking the corporation’s purpose to more than just an economic return. Inclusive leaders have a social capital focus, and power is seen as distributed throughout the system, with a spotlight on collaboration, power sharing and empowerment. They focus on creating safe spaces, setting clear boundaries, looking at things through a “we” lens, and create a process for continuous engagement. Employees need to feel like they belong to something of value, something beyond making their organization make money.

This report begins in chapter two with further clarifying what inclusive leadership is compared to traditional leadership thereby setting the context of what forward-looking organizations are doing to attract and retain top talent from all race/religions. It also takes the reader through how to position diversity and inclusion for success and walk the talk on this important issue.

Best practices to nurture diverse and inclusive talent through the entire employee life-cycle including recruiting, retaining and retiring – are shared in chapter three, along with cutting-edge helpful software tools that can be used to support any organizations I&D efforts.

At the core of all of this approach to diversity and inclusion is accountability – from the Board level and throughout the organization, with specific targeted actions to make the LGBTQ2S+, people living with disabilities (including mental health), race or ethnic origins, Indigenous, and generations – to ensure everyone feels a sense of belonging. This is explained in chapter four along with helpful approaches to strengthen efforts with these key groups, and touches on greater impacts that can be made through the supply chain.

By embracing an inclusive leadership mindset as well as the I&D best practices approaches and tools outlined in this report, the Canadian forest sector will position themselves to be a lightning rod for top talent, while simultaneously strengthening its impact in the area of corporate social responsibility.

AN INCLUSIVE STORY

Working in a male-dominated management team since she started her career, Rachel knew a thing or two about connecting with the guys. Whether it was cracking jokes, going along with their innuendos toward others, or dismissing overtures for the sake of the job, she managed to find a way to be one of the boys and yet still be quite visibly a woman.

One night working late like they often did, the boss suggested that the guys on the team – which translated to everyone but Rachel – come over to his house that Saturday night to watch the hockey game. All the guys were pleased to have this offer and naturally took this opportunity as a sign of friendship, not just a working relationship. Rachel on the other hand, was not offered the same invitation.

Suddenly the dynamics between Rachel and her male colleagues shifted. There was an imbalance in the power dynamic and access to the boss that hadn't existed before. How could Rachel compete with her male counterparts when she clearly is no longer in the loop on this new level of relationship that has been created? This natural overture by the boss was likely not done with ill-intent toward Rachel, however, the ramifications would be many for her. Getting that extra time together becomes a differentiator between inside chats about work – the people – upward career opportunities or mentoring – that is now no longer available to Rachel. She cannot impose herself on her boss for an invitation because she felt it would be awkward to do so – the optics of the genders connecting on the home front aren't good for anyone's personal relationship.

For the rest of the week Rachel's mind was distracted by this power imbalance that was unfolding as the guys chatted up about the plans for that evening. And after that weekend, the conversations took a different tone – new inside jokes emerged, making Rachel feel excluded and no longer part of the team. Rather than being engaged, Rachel grew more aware that she indeed was not one of the boys and was foolish to even think she could be. As the offers to connect over hockey continued, Rachel started to see her interest in working there, wane. She found herself spending some of her time now looking for a job elsewhere, where she could feel more included and equal. This distraction diluted her performance.

Rachel's story highlights a real challenge that leaders increasingly face in today's global business landscape – how to create diverse teams where co-workers of all genders, ethnicities/races, disabilities, generations, feel included. Small acts, even well-intended ones, can create dividing lines and contribute to a sense of exclusion – with consequences for individual and team performance. To optimize the performance of diverse teams and become more mindful of the small moments that define whether employees feel included or excluded, global leaders must wrestle with some big questions.

First- what leadership behaviours can promote inclusion? Are there gender differences in what makes employees feel included? How does traditional leadership differ from inclusive leadership? How do we 'walk the talk' with our "code of business conduct" to be a fundamental aspect to inclusiveness? And finally, are there ways to overcome exclusionary behaviour? - how does inclusive leadership create a "free flow" of stronger relations among employees and the community with which the organization works, to ultimately lead to greater empowerment, accountability and belonging?

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP A “BUSINESS CRITICAL” STRATEGY

POSITIONING FOR SUCCESS

Of the leading companies on inclusion and diversity (I&D) that were reviewed for this report¹⁰, all shared similar positioning and messaging about their company, namely: links to a global sustainable development agenda; clearly demonstrating that their corporate values are not just window dressing; and a comprehensive governance structure across the organization. Each company also emphasized a purpose driven statement beyond economic returns. Johnson & Johnson’s for example states:

“Through our unifying global D&I strategy, we believe we will enable our employees to deliver on Johnson & Johnson’s purpose to change the trajectory of health for humanity.”¹¹



Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) is about Gender Equality and is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations in 2015. The official wording of SDG 5 is "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

Sustainable development means not compromising the environment or social aspects in favour of the economy. Looked at another way, a company that operates with a sustainable development lens does all it can to improve the social issues and reduce the environmental impacts as much as possible. Leading companies recognize that to attract the next generation, they must operate with a sustainable development approach to doing business.

Linking SDG5 to company business goals and objectives lets stakeholders know that there is a greater purpose – a social purpose - behind what the company is doing to contribute to a global agenda – which helps frame the conversation on why they operate in an inclusive leadership manner. One of the leading companies reviewed Intact Financial Corporation, states “in a rapidly changing world, it is critical that businesses fully integrate societal impacts – environmental, social and corporate governance – into their business strategy.”¹²

These leading companies have figured out that the social component of sustainable development is what grabs peoples’ attention – from new employees to shareholders, who recognize this is an economic driver. AT&T for example states that “when a workplace reflects a vibrant, inclusive community, people take note, [they] embed equality as a core value in the business and put it to practice every day.”¹³

Sodexo is committed to leveraging their I&D expertise as a competitive advantage in the marketplace, to add value for clients and customers, enhance their brand and grow and retain their business. Underpinning these efforts is their “commitment to showing leadership as a global corporate citizen by investing in and strengthening the diverse communities we serve.”¹⁴

*“We believe we have a duty to enable inclusion in the workforce for the benefit of all workers and the businesses they support.”
Carlos Rodriguez,
President and CEO,
ADP Inc.*

As these leading companies evolve and “mature” in their sustainability efforts, they are moving from managing risk to seizing opportunity with the goal of “expanding beyond compliance and reputation management to innovation and value creation. Moving from driving cost efficiencies to growing revenue, and from making sure we do no harm, to owning our opportunity to lead with purpose.”¹⁵

*“Creating a safe space to allow for positive conflict is key to inclusion”
AT&T Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report 2019*

Another cornerstone aspect of each of these leading organizations is that they frame and embed inclusion and diversity into their company **values**. Integrity was most often stated from the companies reviewed, along with values of decency, trust, and accountability. The values of these organizations form the backbone of their culture and help position the company to attract top talent.

However, as many know, stating values is not enough. Establishing a **Code of Business Conduct and Ethics** moves the organization from talking the talk to actually walking the walk. Meaning the Code of Business Conduct comes with teeth – with accountability for behaviour at each level of the organization that ensures all levels are aware and engaged. In some instances, and this will be raised later in this report, this code of conduct extends to the supply chain of companies that the organization works with. Most of the leading companies reviewed have a well-known “ethics helpline” that can be used for any issues that call into question the integrity of the organization – whether it be financial or the well-being of employees.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP



Falling out of line from these values and this code of business conduct can create serious repercussions to the employee and to the bottom line. With Board oversight, many of these companies implement programs and practices that are designed to encourage ethical behaviour and manage and govern risk in order to protect the Company’s brand and reputation and grow shareholder value.

In fact, in these leading organizations, ***I&D is governed across the organization***. The audit and compliance aspect of the business includes I&D – starting with an audit committee at the Board level to the executive levels and into the day-to-day management/business unit level. I&D is not siloed into the HR branch and led by one individual. Rather it is wide spread engagement and governance at all levels that ensures it is embedded into the mainframe of the organization. All of these leading companies have a diversity leader - a Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer (CDIO) that leads a team made up of senior executives, management, and employees that represent various business units. The CDIO often engages an I&D expert as not only an advisor, but also a key outside “disrupter” that supports the team and positively affects change throughout the organization. These companies know that a holistic approach to implementing I&D across an organization is what creates sustained change.

Positioning the company to regularly message and tie their values to the day-to-day operations, and to have consequences for bad behaviour creates an inherent safety net, and allows employees to feel supported. This support and “safe space” mindset creates trust, which in turn creates a sense of belonging.

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP?

Inclusive leadership is essentially an extension of diversity management. It focuses on valuing diversity and the effective management of diversity and inclusion of all employees. This includes gender identity and expressions, LGBTQ2S+, people living with disabilities, Indigenous, race or ethnic origins, and generations. One of the leading company’s reviewed for this report - Norton Rose Fulbright - states “our diversity is a strength that benefits both our people and our clients. It fosters a welcoming, accepting and supportive environment where all of our people can bring their whole selves to work and realize their career potential. This commitment is integral to our business approach.”¹⁷



Leading organizations recognize that an inclusive mindset is critical to their growth strategy. For companies that find themselves faced with global competition and surrounded by a diverse population, it is the key ingredient that moves the organization from surviving to thriving.

Inclusive leadership shifts the focus from affirmative action and equity toward equality, social justice, fairness, and the leveraging of diversity effects in the system. Experiencing inclusion in a group or organization involves being fully part of the whole while retaining a sense of authenticity and uniqueness.

Inclusive leadership extends our thinking beyond assimilation strategies or organizational demography¹⁸ to empowerment and participation of all, by removing obstacles that cause exclusion and marginalization (i.e., obstacles such as: lack of access to opportunities, lack of engagement). It requires particular skills and competencies for relational practice, collaboration, building inclusion for others, creating inclusive workplaces and work cultures, partnerships and consensus building, and true engagement of all. As identified by Catalyst¹⁹, specific skills or attributes of an inclusive leader include:

Empowerment – Enabling direct reports to develop and excel.

Humility – Admitting mistakes. Learning from criticism and different points of view. Acknowledging and seeking contributions of others to overcome one's limitations.

Courage – Putting personal interests aside to achieve what needs to be done. Acting on convictions and principles even when it requires personal risk-taking.

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

Quick Tips to Create Inclusion:

- *Hold all employees in positive regard and value their contribution;*
- *listen carefully and be respectful of everyone's humanity;*
- *Give voice to all;*
- *Don't make quick judgements or feel pushed toward a specific groups point of view;*
- *Don't pretend to know everything; allow for vulnerability;*
- *Foster values of respectful dialogue, mindful inquiry, civil dissent.*

To help clarify what inclusive leadership is, it's helpful to compare it to traditional leadership (see Table 1). An inclusive workplace is defined as one that values and utilizes individual and intergroup differences within its workforce. It's also tightly woven into cooperation and contribution to its surrounding community. It collaborates with individuals, groups and organizations across national and cultural boundaries. All people from diverse backgrounds feel valued, respected, and recognized. Inclusive organizations function multiculturally and are places where there is equality, justice and full participation at both the group and individual levels – differences of all types become integrated into the fabric of the business, such that they become a necessary part of doing its everyday work. And as noted by Sun Life, “companies with inclusive cultures and diverse teams are more likely to be innovative and agile. They're also more likely to outperform their peers.”²⁰

In essence, in a truly inclusive organization, no one will feel left out or not valued. The talk we hear now such as “what about me and my... (gender, sexual orientation, culture, age, disability)”, becomes a thing of the past.

TABLE 1: TRADITIONAL VERSUS INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES²¹

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

Focus of the leader

- Entity (individual reality) perspective; subject-object understanding of leadership; human capital focus
- Leader centered; focus on follower-leader exchanges of the leadership process
- Focus on me, us, and them
- Focus on difference, similarity, and common ground
- Orient to outcomes and business processes

The use of power

- Power is seen as a commodity, a leadership tool, concentrated in certain individuals
- Forceful and controlling
- Smooth things over
- Hierarchical and positional

Decision-making processes

- Direct, tell, and sells
- Give marching orders
- Make decisions
- Engage in directing and delegating

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Focus of the leader

- Relationships (multiple reality) perspective of leadership; understanding throughout organization; social capital focus
- Relational context and process centered; focus on various forms of relationships and networks of reciprocal social interactions; social constructions made in a process
- Focus on us and all
- Value and pursue diversity and multiple viewpoints
- Orient to outcomes, social processes, context, and business processes

The use of power

- Power is seen as distributed throughout the system; focus on mutual enabling practices such as collaboration, power sharing, and empowerment
- Thoughtful, reflective, transparent, participating, and inclusive
- Set courageous expectations
- Networked

Decision-making processes

- Elicit and facilitate; create space for dialogue
- Set boundaries and frame the intention
- Create a process for engagement, decision making, and leading as learning
- Engage in meaning making and opportunity creating, agency and partnerships

TABLE 1: TRADITIONAL VERSUS INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

The role of leadership

- Leadership seen as a formal role that drives organizational process
- Entity-based process of leading
- Positional, formal and informal

The role of the leader

- Create and enforce rules and regulations
- Take control and solve problems
- Focus on me, us, and them
- Focus on similarity and common ground

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The role of leadership

- Leadership seen as generated in social dynamics
- Collective, consensual process of leading
- Community and collectives of leaders, and leaders in place, formal and informal

The role of the leader

- Question dominant and normative practices; focus on fairness, equality, and civil dissent.
- Create a holding space for followers to solve problems
- Focus on we and all
- Value and pursue diversity and multiple viewpoints

Positioning the organization to embrace I&D is key to its successful implementation. Such things as arming a company with an inclusive leadership approach, ensuring accountability for adhering to corporate values and allowing employees to bring “their whole selves” to work, allow for an inherent trust factor to kick in. By doing so, employees, and indeed all stakeholders, are more likely to be committed to the each other and the organization, creating a greater sense of belonging.



Tips to Be an Inclusive Leader

Understand your Privilege— Each person’s race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, physical ability, religious practices afford them different levels of access and privilege. Simple acts like walking through a parking lot at night is not something everyone feels safe doing. Women have traditionally taken more care with booking travel than men do because they’ve learned to be more cautious. Recognize distinctions that each person has and approach the conversation with understanding and consideration of their point of view.

NURTURE DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE TALENT

The Employee Life-Cycle begins with finding new ways to attract and recruit a diverse pool of top talent, to retaining them with specific inclusive behaviours and programs, through to respectfully moving them through to retirement with dignity. Each part of the cycle has an opportunity to create deliberate intentions toward a healthier workplace culture – one that sends the pulse of corporate values throughout the organization like a beating drum.

Whether it is the next generation launching into their career for the first time, or people seeing there are organizations that have a greater social purpose and wish to switch mid-career, high flying talent of today are watching this bigger-picture thinking and new way of leadership and want to be a part of it.



SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND - RECRUITING

It starts with onboarding new recruits into the corporate inclusive culture – a culture that demonstrates support and empowerment by giving specific knowledge and tools on I&D (e.g. anti-harassment; unconscious bias; advancing inclusion skills; respect in the workplace training) that make the new employee feel valued and gives an immediate sense of belonging.

New hires today want to work for ethical companies.²² And the best companies have created a “candidate experience” that itself has become a competitive advantage.

These companies are also clearly establishing a sense of belonging in their workplace culture. Belonging is shown through their recognition and engagement with diverse and inclusive cultures (e.g. gender identity or expression, race or ethnic origins, Indigenous, people living with disabilities – including mental health, and generations); a commitment to accountability for their behaviour; and operating with an inclusive leadership mindset.

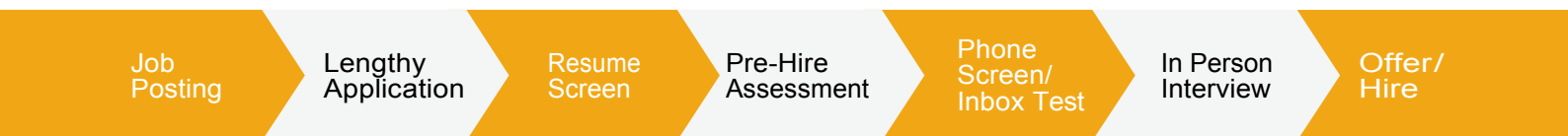
The key actions used by leading companies beyond branding themselves in this manner can be boiled down to a few notable recruitment tactics: strategically using AI; proactively engaging with the community; and a competitive benefits package with added “sweetener”.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TO ADVANCE I&D RECRUITMENT

Individuals seeking employment these days are often feeling defeated, or even hopeless, as the world economy struggles through an international pandemic. Leading companies have learned to pivot and find new ways to make the candidate experience as attractive as possible, and as a result, are able to attract the best to them.

Candidates are paying attention to companies with a demonstrated practice of I&D efforts, rather than just “lip service.” A diverse leadership team, a stance on social justice issues, and strong employee culture are top-of-mind for candidates. This is particularly prevalent for GenZ (i.e. those born between 1997-2015). According to a 2020 McKinsey Co. report, “the number of candidates who value diversity and inclusion will only increase in the future”.²³ As a result, a shift is needed on how the hiring process works.

Consider the traditional hiring process: time-consuming for recruiters and candidates alike. The process can take months, and many candidates don’t know where they stand, and may never know.



The modern hiring process: is efficient, standardized and consistently updates candidates, so there is no more ambiguity.



In today’s fast-moving world, and with many of the younger generation being extremely well versed in technology and how to navigate platforms, its critical to have AI hiring practices that reach all diverse pools of candidates. Being able to set up various channels for candidates online helps to streamline the hiring process considerably.

Beyond the hiring process itself are many software tools that specifically track key performance indicators on I&D. Such things as pulse surveys, gender decoders, pay equity tools, employee engagement and retention tools to name a few - all of which link I&D to ROI.

These HR products help companies become more inclusive by analyzing their demographics and with various aspects of the employee life-cycle. Look at these tools as examples of what is possible to stimulate thinking of what else is out there. There are cutting-edge ideas developed every day. Below are just a few software tools that were shared by leading companies, that are designed to help with I&D recruitment efforts:²⁴

Vantage

An all-in-one solution for strategic human capital management. Features a visual search capability that helps companies reduce unconscious bias in the hiring and promotion process. Users can perform a blind resume search, prioritizing best-fit candidates based purely on skill-fit for the role, while hiding name, geography, school or other characteristics.

Pay Equity Explorer

This tool uncovers inequitable payment for the same job. Its unique approach allows the user to understand the data behind such discrepancies, whether there are appropriate reasons and if corrective action should be taken.

Gender Decoder

Software that enables the use of gender-neutral language and pronouns for job descriptions.

Diverse Slates and Panels

Also worth noting, although not a software tool but helpful at the recruitment stage is to have a diverse slate of panel representatives as part of the hiring panel. As well, for those applying, there must be a diverse set of applications to choose from before the hiring process can proceed. If an HR firm says “we can’t find diverse candidates”, send them back to the drawing board. For example, there are now HR firms specifically focused on the hiring of women (e.g. www.female-executive-search.com).

Beyond these AI tools, leading companies are providing e-learning for hiring managers on hiring and promoting top talent inclusively - meaning they are providing training in competency-based hiring and mitigation of bias in the recruitment process. As GenZ and other digital-native generations enter the workforce, it is anticipated that there will be continued adoption of text messaging in the hiring process for quicker responses and communications between the candidate and the hiring organization.

PROACTIVE OUTREACH WITH COMMUNITY

Leading companies recognize that to have a diverse and inclusive workforce there must be an emphasis on attracting and hiring talented people who are a mix of genders, races, abilities and experiences – people who reflect the world in which we live and work. Specifically reaching out to these groups in meaningful ways is key to attracting them to the organization. All companies reviewed operated in this manner and successfully achieved their I&D objectives by doing so.

Tip for Being an Inclusive Leader

Make Unwritten Rules Clear For All - Every group and organization has cultural norms but if they aren't clarified at team meetings and understood by all, it can make it hard for new members of diverse teams to know them. Some cultures see interrupting others as a sign of disrespect and will not speak up much, leaving the misperception that they are not interested/engaged. Be clear with your team by letting everyone know they can simply raise their hand if they'd like to speak. This levels the playing field for all cultures involved.

AT&T put this into practice in 2019 by recruiting at colleges and job fairs, partnering with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Mining Serving Institutions, sponsoring conferences and events, participating in workshops and on panels, and supporting organizations and initiatives committed to providing an equal opportunity for all people. And the results showed it was worth it. They were able to attract a diverse talent pool to their hiring processes and now are recognized and boast they are in the *Fortune Best Big Companies to Work For*.

Eli Lilly and Company launched a number of I&D initiatives in 2019 including programs focused on people with disabilities and veterans. They are improving accessibility for employees living with visible and invisible disabilities – garnering recognition as the second-best company by DiversityInc in that category. Veterans bring considerable skills to a business, however, they are often overlooked. Outreach programs in the community aimed at attracting veterans creates new recruitment opportunities for companies to realize an inclusive workplace culture. The more companies demonstrate this acceptance of all people, the greater the sense of belonging that is palpable across its workplace.

Another notable avenue for community outreach is to seek out future employees through high school events. Most leading companies deepen their connection with the community by pursuing this type of outreach. Investing in engagement with young adults and branding the company to be inclusive to everyone will open the minds of the next generation and orient them to potentially become future employees.

**Proactive
Community
Engagement Ideas:**

- *Get engaged with local universities – give presentations; participate in job fairs; sponsor events;*
- *Deepen relationships with diverse student organizations;*
- *Partner with diverse professional organizations to identify and attract new talent;*
- *Take up a cause and be known for it – eg. Bell Let's Talk (for mental health) and work with your communications team to brand events – showing inclusive leadership in practice.*

COMPETITIVE BENEFIT PACKAGES

Offering a competitive benefit package is an obvious recruitment strategy for most traditionally run companies, however, there are some key tactics that can “sweeten the pot” that leading companies do consistently. For example, establishing a “pay for performance culture” that incorporates inclusive leadership skills development, and establishing performance metrics for those who recruit diverse and inclusive cultures. This not only shows a commitment to I&D in the organization but also allows for recognition to the individual for their efforts. All of the companies reviewed for this report claimed a positive ROI from this approach.

Other “sweeteners” that go above and beyond the norm for a competitive benefits package and that contribute to the larger picture of nurturing employees includes caring for their well-being – whether it’s physical or mental. Contributions to fitness centres, tuition reimbursements, paid parental leave, on-site childcare, or allowing flexibility for those going through a difficult period in their lives to have their dog with them for the sake of their mental health, are all examples of looking out for their employees and be supportive for their livelihoods.

One of the leading companies, Intact Financial Corporation, gives the added benefit of paying annual membership fees for all accredited professional associations related to an employee’s position as well as any registration and licensing fees.

ADP has a long tradition of promoting health, wellness and safety within their culture and making it a part of their corporate identity. They have created and implemented programs that help employees pursue a *healthy lifestyle* and reduce absenteeism and lost time due to injuries. By providing financial support to fitness centres, ADP is able to support employees with remaining fit for their job, leading to less health and safety concerns on the job.

Companies that allow for these flexible options show care for the needs of their employees and give a strong signal that their employees *belong*. It shows support on several levels, a safe space to “bring your whole self to work”, and to therefore not have distractions that would otherwise prevent people from performing at their best or showing up to work at all.

Lastly, not all leading companies publicly speak of clear targets to create diverse and inclusive cultures. Those that do, however, are close to achieving it. More often than not there is a focus on initiating a process for engagement and tracking performance. There is also a recognition for continuous improvement – to strive to do better and create a workplace culture that is truly representative of their community and the world.

Tips to Be an Inclusive Leader

- *Focus on culture add not culture fit*
- *Tie psychological safety to physical safety*
- *Ask questions; don’t assume*
- *Listen more*
- *Educate yourself*



Instead of thinking targets and numbers of diversity, think getting started. Tracking the efforts and performance made on I&D will guide the next step on actions to be undertaken and before long, there will be much to talk about. This in turn attracts more diverse and inclusive cultures to the organization.

THEY'RE IN THE DOOR – NOW WHAT? RETAINING YOUR DIVERSE & INCLUSIVE TALENT

Although the way in which the organization is run overall is part of the attraction to it, once hired, retaining these high performers requires other key measures to be in place. Work-life balance, programs that support career development, and establishing networks such as Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), are all means for the company to show employees they are valued and belong, and not just a means to increasing productivity and profits.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE CULTURE

Leading organizations all pay close attention to optimizing performance by providing flexibility to the way work gets done. Sodexo recognizes this: “the future of work and growing the business is reliant on our ability to attract, engage and retain top talent. This requires that we foster a more flexible culture that enables enhanced collaboration.”²⁵



By promoting open lines of communication, managers empower their team to propose changes in their schedule, location or manner with which they work. Together they reach a mutually beneficial situation. This flexible approach is what millennials are asking for and it reaches further down the generations for those transitioning from university and entering the workforce (i.e., genZ). The most common focus is giving adjustments to parents who have sick kids or appointments to tend to. But what about employees that occasionally need a “mental health day” to stay at home and work in a quieter setting to recharge themselves? Or maybe a person living with a visible disability that is unable to drive in poor weather conditions? This flexible approach allows people to live their lives, (not just build their careers) with a work-life balance. Being able to work at different times of day, or at a different location to accommodate family demands (child or elder care) goes a very long way to creating loyalty. It also creates a feeling of belonging.

TARGETED PROGRAMS

All leading companies speak of the need to conduct *mentoring programs* for all employees – women, visible minorities, Indigenous, people living with disabilities, LGBTQ2S+, and different generations. Mentors have the power and influence to be an ally for them – making the difference for many of them to access senior decisionmakers and achieve career advancement.

Specific and notable programs that also demonstrate support for employees include such things as a *career launchpad program* – designed to successfully re-enter employees who have been off work for a longer period of time due to such things as physical or mental illness, veterans re-entering the workforce, or parents who have taken a time-out from their career to focus on family. An organization that respects the employees “whole self” creates a sense of mutual commitment, leading to longevity with the organization and the feeling that they are more than just a box in the org chart.

What is the purpose of an Employee Resource Group (ERG)?

- *Creates an open forum for employees who share a common identity to meet and support one another in building their community and sense of belonging;*
- *Empowers these groups by offering them financial support, organizational support and access to decision makers to run their group;*
- *Facilitates a clear line of communication from ERGs to leadership to create a voice for concerns and solve problems;*
- *Is a resource for leadership regarding employee/community issues, development, business needs and policies;*
- *Advances a respectful and inclusive company culture.*

Retaining employees also requires investment into training programs on such things as furthering their knowledge and skills on I&D. Moving from basic awareness of different cultures and genders to deepening their knowledge on how to be a better ally; recognizing privilege; how to overcome resistance to I&D and leadership skills, with the goal of making all employees ambassadors of inclusive leadership. This investment in their development demonstrates commitment to them as individuals and a commitment to improving the workplace environment for the sake of everyone.

Having a recognition program on I&D is also key to inspiring people to act and create sustained change. Intact Financial Corp., has an excellent program called Bravissimo – this award is presented to individuals or teams that have exemplified the company values and I&D ethos through a given project that made a significant impact on the organization. The reward is a full-day off-site leadership day, incentivizing top talent to excel even further.

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Without a doubt the biggest take away from these leading companies is their support for *Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)* - ERGs or (Business resource groups) are voluntary groups of employees that help share the culture and support key business initiatives. They are instrumental in allowing everyone to feel welcome and included. They also increase awareness, advance business objectives such as expanding marketplace reach and support the recruitment and professional development of multicultural groups. As noted by AT&T however,²⁷ there needs to be deliberate attention paid to not creating silos with groups, but rather finding ways to engage all people into all groups.

Conducting consultations across the company is an effective means to identifying what ERGs are of most importance to a given organization. They often include a focus on women; Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+; people living with disabilities; generations; and various specific cultures. People are drawn to an ERG for the “safe environment for networking and talent development...people want to have professional development and to understand how they can get to the next level.”



ERGs bring value to the company and its employees in several ways:

- They build a sense of community and belonging for employees by connecting people in a social and professional way and encourage interaction between employees.
- They empower employees by giving each group a collective voice to speak with decision makers and management. Groups are also empowered to assemble and voice concerns as a community.
- ERGs support learning and development by offering formal and informal leadership opportunities and creating visibility for employees who are active.
- ERGs also provide a resource for leadership and decision makers regarding staff/community issues, product development, and policies.
- ERGs offer to the company their expertise and experiences to improve equality and equity. They can also be an asset in business decisions to make better, more inclusive products and services.
- Lastly ERGs support retention because employees are likely to stay with the company longer if they have built or are part of a strong community within the company and feel heard.

Companies should not dictate which groups should form, who should join each group or what impact the groups should have. That should be a decision of the group, but it's important for the organization to provide them tools to work towards and measure that success. This could include: charter documentation, purpose workshop, road mapping templates, budget tracking tools, support in setting a platform for communication with their group and potential members, visibility within the organization and meetings with senior leadership. CBC created an “inclusion hub”²⁷ – a microsite to create and foster an inclusive and equitable workplace. It includes articles on allyship, microaggressions, best practices, anti-racism action, events and more.

For smaller communities, ERG's may seem impossible to create, however, IT has bridged this problem and people are moving online as a solution. Creating a virtual ERG that draws people and potential candidates from a wide variety of locations provides an immediate impact and benefit to the organization, and one that millennials and GenZ generations can seamlessly onboard.

A great example of an ERG was at Dell Canada. A new recruit noticed there were a lot of young people working in their own cubicle and mostly in isolation from one another. There was no means to connect with each other and network or have an impact on the company. This recruit decided to start an ERG with the goal of professional and leadership development, creating an increased sense of community, and to help the company reach younger consumers. The group went viral across the company and proved itself invaluable. Dell was able to tap this ERG as a test market when it developed a new tablet, providing feedback and strengthening the overall product. What happened at Dell is being mirrored at many of the DiversityInc Top 50 companies.

Building a strong network or community is a key step in creating the psychological safety for diverse and inclusive groups, ultimately leading to a greater sense of belonging.

RETIRING WITH DIGNITY AND GRACE

People often have mixed emotions about the idea of retiring. Some find it as a new lease on life, ready to explore hobbies and a slower pace, while others have their identity intertwined so tightly to their career that it's hard to let go. The connection to peers and the social element is another aspect that can make it tough to "move on." More often than not, employees power through to their last day, pack up their desk, have a retirement party and are on their merry way.



It is possible however, to make these hard working, dedicated people into ambassadors for the company at this stage of their career. Giving them roles as mentors or providing speaking engagement opportunities where they feel they can give back to the community on behalf of the organization. This can go a long way to showing respect for what they have to offer and allows them some dignity by doing various things that are still tied to the organization. And at some point, they can choose to gracefully decline any further involvement, at their own pace.

At Sodexo, they value the diverse perspectives that each generation brings to the workplace and marketplace. "It is critical that the institutional knowledge and historical views of our most tenured employees, along with the progressive mindset of our emerging talent are both leveraged" - through training and initiatives including reciprocal mentoring, we are able to create cohesion across the generations .²⁸

Other organizations recognize this final chapter in the employee life-cycle with a "circle of knowledge program." It provides the benefit of less hours but engagement at various targeted initiatives for the retiree to pass on career experience to the next generation(s).

SOLIDIFY I&D WITH CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We have heard the term ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR) for decades but how does inclusion and diversity fit into it? For those on the leading edge of I&D, it has moved from a “nice to do” to a “must do” and has become a clear differentiator between companies that attract the best with those that don’t. This section of the report looks at how I&D links intrinsically to CSR and why it’s important. It also provides some suggestions on how to go about it as well as ways to influence the supply chain of the sector.

Leading companies are leveraging philanthropy and corporate social responsibility (CSR) to create influence, engage employees, and drive meaningful change. Organizations are more often than not judged on the basis of their treatment of employees and customers, and increasingly, their impact on social issues. An organization’s CSR track record has direct bearing on brand reputation, attracting and keeping talent, and developing consumer loyalty.

According to demographic experts, the millennial generation is predicted to comprise 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025.²⁹ Millennials (i.e. those born between 1981-1996) are the most diverse, environmentally aware and socially driven employees in the workforce. This generation presents a distinct talent advantage to organizations that recognize what they care about and take action to engage them in meaningful change. The same report states that 75 percent of millennials would take a pay cut to find work that matches their values. As millennials advance into positions of leadership, the focus on impacting social change is likely to grow even more.

Diverse views enrich collaboration and provide deeper insight to important societal concerns. Structuring a strong partnership between I&D and CSR ensures that the organization’s philanthropic strategy centres around the diverse values and perspectives of employees, customers and communities. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can serve as an effective vehicle for advancing CSR goals by contributing different points of view and *connecting the organization with diverse communities*.³⁰

CSR programs have a unique opportunity to influence corporate decision-making and champion I&D. Leading edge companies are intrinsically connected to the consumers they serve, the people they employ, and the communities in which they operate. As the number of diverse stakeholders grows, so does the need to incorporate new voices and different perspectives into the business strategy. At the same time, demographic shifts and an increasingly global marketplace have made the talent pool more diverse than ever.

Tip for Being an Inclusive Leader

Watch your Assumptions—Bosses in today’s work places can often overlook working parents for a promotion because they assume they wouldn’t want the added responsibility. Having assumptions isn’t wrong or bad – it’s part of how all people fast track understanding. The problem arises when you’re not even aware that you’re making them.



All of the leading companies reviewed for this report have embedded I&D into their CSR. Sodexo for example has a strong focus on strategic partnerships that improve quality of life for employees and society with various initiatives such as violence against women and supporting the LGBTQ2S+ community with an “out and equal” campaign. Johnson and Johnson focus on girls and women in science and health careers with programs that educate youth, university level and career women to aspire to be their best in the science and health professions.

As they deepen their connections in the community (or the country), leading organizations not only find new ways to show they care about the cause itself, but also demonstrate to prospective employees that they are accepting of all people and that they belong.

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENT

CSR drives employee engagement. As mentioned, today’s workers want more than a competitive salary. The ‘employee experience’ has become key to attracting and retaining talent, and leading companies are empowering employees to try new roles, collaborate, and get engaged in causes they believe in. Providing employees opportunities to participate in and lead CSR initiatives can help them stretch and expand their skill sets and build important relationships across the organization, including with senior executives. When the CSR strategy is well-aligned with the company’s capabilities and competencies, employees can make a significant contribution through in-kind donations of time and expertise.



Showcasing CSR initiatives is an effective means to attract and retain top talent. It provides clarity on where the organization stands on certain issues and why they have this focus. Linking the business strategy to the “why” provides strength of purpose for the organization and allows top talent to align their own values, social issues and in a sense, identity, to that of the organization. Featuring CSR in recruitment and marketing materials lets candidates know not only what they can get by taking the job, but also how they will participate in a culture of giving back.

Leading companies present their CSR priorities through telling compelling stories. They highlight the issue through the eyes of their employees and show meaningful impact – both through successful results obtained in the community and through the *retention, loyalty and satisfaction* of their employees. Collaborating with communication professionals, brand managers and I&D professionals gives a holistic view of telling stories centred around values, inclusive culture and workforce diversity. Employees lend authenticity and credibility to the CSR narrative. Encouraging employees and ERGs to share their experiences and speak directly to customers and new employees through social media and other community-based platforms is also effective. Making it more real through videos and testimonials showcases how employees have participated in CSR activities and provides a window into the different ways the company supports their interests.

Leading companies engage a broad array of groups within the community as partners and set targets for growing their groups and expanding their reach. For example, the National Film Board (NFB) partnered with Indigenous Works—a non-for-profit business recognized for its leadership in workplace inclusion and for facilitating stronger Indigenous inclusion strategies in Canadian corporations—to review its employment practices. Based on this report, as well as a review of best practices by other Indigenous organizations, the NFB will enrich its recruitment strategy to increase its ability to reach qualified Indigenous candidates. It will also improve onboarding, retention, and professional development practices in its workforce.”³¹

INFLUENCING THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Leading organizations also find innovative ways to affect their supply chain on I&D. Mastercard for example has a Supplier Code of Conduct that stipulates specific principles, guidelines and expectations for establishing and maintaining a business relationship with them. In their words, they “are committed to developing partnerships with suppliers that share our dedication to conducting business in a legal, ethical and socially responsible manner.”³² This code of conduct requires every supplier they work with to abide by labor laws, and operate in alignment with globally recognized human rights principles. Essentially all companies that work with Mastercard must abide by their code and the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Another notable action for leading companies is their drive toward equal opportunity for small businesses and diverse suppliers to be able to compete for their business. Diverse suppliers are defined as companies that are majority-owned, operated and controlled by one or more citizen that is an ethnic minority, woman, Indigenous, veteran, LGBTQ2S+ or a person living with a disability.

Hilton for example has an award-winning supplier diversity program, which began almost ten years ago. They now claim supply chain relationships with more than 3,352 women, minority, veteran, LGBTQ2S+ owned businesses, by developing strategic alliances with companies whose culture and values are consistent with theirs.³³

Targeting the amount spent on supplier diversity is another tactic used to increase the I&D reach in the supply chain. Having 10% of a company’s spend targeted toward diverse-owned and small businesses helps any company toward achieving a spot on the DiversityInc’s list of the Top 50 Companies for diversity. Furthering the Hilton success story, they claim over \$436 million on their supplier spend.³⁴

At AT&T, the supplier diversity program is tied directly to their business practices. It connects certified, diverse-owned businesses with opportunities to provide products and services to them around the world. Their supply chain process embraces the AT&T culture of ensuring that inclusion and diversity is a significant factor in all corporate endeavours. The program sees to drive accountability and rewards suppliers who demonstrate strong I&D values, enabling AT&T to make a positive impact in the economic growth of diverse communities.

Other ways to influence the supply chain is through education and mentorship programs. These programs match a select group of business executives with mentors and experienced business leaders to assist with overall business growth. This helps diverse-owned businesses with building their internal capacity and enabling them to bid on projects where they were not able to do so before.

CONCLUSION

Organizations are increasingly learning about the impact they have, and the benefits they can accrue, from owning a social agenda as part of its business strategy. Connecting this strategy to regional, national and international social objectives demonstrates to employees that there is awareness of the bigger picture, and more depth of corporate character than just the bottom line.

With millennials of all diverse gender identity and expression, race and religions having such a strong focus on social issues, and being the majority of the working population in less than 5 years, it's imperative that business leaders connect their social agendas to their business strategies to attract and retain this dominant workforce. Having an inclusive leadership mindset that is thoughtful and reflective, and sees power distributed throughout the system allows employees to feel a part of something much more important than just having a job, creating a sense of belonging. There is a focus on collaboration, empowerment, and accountability for behaviour - and values are upheld with zero tolerance policies.

A powerful way to build a culture of inclusion and belonging is to provide employees with opportunities to shape and participate in causes that matter to them. Bringing them into the corporate story by connecting with causes that are meaningful to them, enabling them to participate in these causes and then communicate what has been successfully achieved, all contributes to a high performing workforce, firing on all cylinders and branding the organization as a progressive, inclusive and dynamic place to work.

Think of the impact you want to make in your city, region, and country. Now walk it back to your organization, and in turn to the individuals who work at your organization. What resonates best? Collaboratively identifying social issues using Employee Resource Groups is a winning formula for success. People will be inspired to work for you because of the purpose driven work you do, and the social and ethical standards with which you opera

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