

WHITE 20
PAPER 23

5 EFFECTIVE MEASURES

to navigate the shift to an inclusive
and performing corporate culture

DESIREE ● JONEK

With friendly support by...



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Abbreviations

DEI - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

DEIB - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

LGBTIQ+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersexual, Queer, and more

VUCA - volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity

L&D - Learning & Development



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Desiree Jonek-Lustyk strategically accompanies organizations and trains leaders in shaping and effectively implementing an inclusive organizational culture. Since 2019, she has been running the mentoring program '[WoMentor](#)' and built up a community of over 1.200 people. As a TEDx speaker, she also delivers inspiring keynotes on achieving fair participation and responding to a shift in the working world. As a Gen Y, her strength is serving as a bridge maker between generation X and Z.

White Paper mentored by

Marilena Maris, Shareholder & Partner MDI Management Development International

Acknowledgement

A special thank you goes to the interview partners who have shared their experiences, good practices, and business challenges, that served as a foundation for this white paper. I'd like to thank Marilena Maris, Shareholder & Partner at MDI Management Development International, for driving this white paper, as well as pushing me to dive deeper whilst remaining empathetic. www.mdi-training.com

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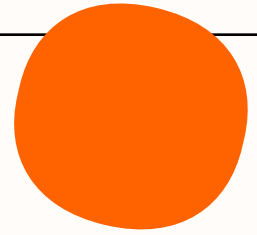
Instead of an executive summary: My personal learnings

When I decided to start conducting interviews with general leaders, HR specialists, and Gen Z's, I was expecting quite a gap between their expectations of work culture. The gap turned out to be less pronounced than I had expected. I was even positively surprised by the open mindset that many leaders from Gen X to baby boomers showed and the magnitude of novel measures they had already tested or were pushing for. One thing that I'd like to avoid is stereotypical thinking. There is no right or wrong, there is no either, or, no general conclusion that will allow interference from one generation's representative to a whole generation. It is essential to adapt work and corporate culture, as times and values change, to create a work culture that works for us. It will certainly demand a lot of experiments and trial and error of different measures until we know what truly works for us, in our company. I see a lot of will with many leaders, a will to change a culture, to become more inclusive, and more human. My hopes are hence high - because when there is a will, there will be a way. A way to experiment, to be bold and try new things, to fail fast, and to learn from each other.

This white paper shall inspire you to find your way.

01

KEY FINDINGS



Five effective measures to navigate the shift to an inclusive and performing corporate culture

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <p>01 Flexibility</p> | <p>02 Employer brand</p> | <p>03 DEIB measures</p> | <p>04 Learning & development</p> | <p>05 Skills</p> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|

Finding and attracting qualified talent is a massive challenge for most companies these days. The post-pandemic era brought many novelties to organizations - some of which stayed, such as more flexible work conditions. In this white paper, you will find good practices and measures in HR and necessary mindset shifts, condensed from qualitative interviews with HR leaders & practitioners, CEOs, and middle management, as well as Gen Z's, enriched with findings from reputable strategic papers. The key challenges reported by most interviewees were 1) geopolitical and macroeconomic challenges, 2) balancing the wish for individualization with a sense of community at work, 3) lacking diversity of leadership, and 4) a never experienced need for broadly skilled talents. These challenges can be addressed by five measures, to navigate the shift to an inclusive and performing corporate culture.



1. Offer flexibility with options for mobile or hybrid work:



Leaders in organizations with flexible work conditions (such as different levels of flexibility that employees can choose from) reported fewer challenges and greater competitive advantage to successfully retain skilled talents.

Recommendation for action



01

Benchmark your current remote work policies:

What are other industry players offering? What are your employees demanding?

02

Review performance assessment criteria:

How do you currently review if goals have been achieved? Did the employee's performance differ during times of pandemic, for instance? Which criteria besides hours and office presence could you use to review performances?

03

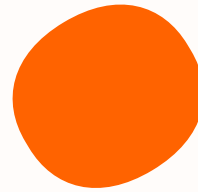
Review your remote work policies:

Once you have gathered data and reflected, you can consider adopting your remote work policies.

2. Create a strong employer brand:

In the run for skilled talents, leaders reported a focus on the creation of a strong employer brand to stand out.

Recommendation for action



01

Strategically review and define your employer brand:

What are your company's values, your USP? Why do employees want to work with you?

02

Invest in your employer brand:

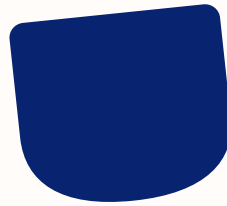
If your brand is not aligned with your values and target groups, you might want to invest in new positioning (from corporate identity to choosing and establishing marketing channels)

03

Drive employee engagement:

How can you win your employees as ambassadors? Define an authentic content strategy and stick to it.

3. Create an inclusive culture with DEIB:



Various studies have proven the positive effects of diversity and inclusion on the company. Employees report 70% more psychological safety and sense of belonging at work^{1,2}. In terms of performance, 19% increased revenues with innovative products and services by diverse teams can be expected.³ In terms of employer branding, 60% of millennials see diversity as a determining factor in their decision for an employer. Many leaders are aware of this - however, they find it challenging to strategically prioritize DEIB.

Recommendation for action:

Create an inclusive and engaging corporate culture to attract and retain diverse talent



01

Analyze your organization's DEIB status quo

(feel free to use the checklist in the appendix)

02

Gather the responsible people in your organization and discuss:

What is your DEIB goal - a diverse workforce, leadership team, more DEIB awareness, more inclusive communication, better retention? Who is responsible for driving this? What will be the next steps and when?

03

Start an action plan and execute your strategy:

Define your DEIB roadmap with concrete deliverables, dependencies, and responsibilities.

1. Inclusive Intelligence: How to be a role model for Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace. Furkan Karayel. (feel free to use the checklist in the appendix)
 2. The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths. Deloitte Review (2018)
 3. Lorenzo, R., Reeze, M. How and where Diversity drives financial performance. Harvard Business Review, 2018.

4. Invest in your employees with learning & development:



According to the Future of jobs survey (World Economic Forum, 2020), access to reskilling and upskilling is provided to 62% of the workforce, and will even be expanded by 2025. There are more ways than a competitive salary how to convince employees of your attractive employer brand. Besides flexible work conditions, and inclusive company culture, especially Gen Z's are interested in self-development and re-skilling.

Recommendations for action

01

Analyze your past and current training offers:

What has been your focus? How should the focus shift, according to your industry's strategic future?

02

Conduct employee surveys

to find out the need for specific training offers, also technical versus self-management

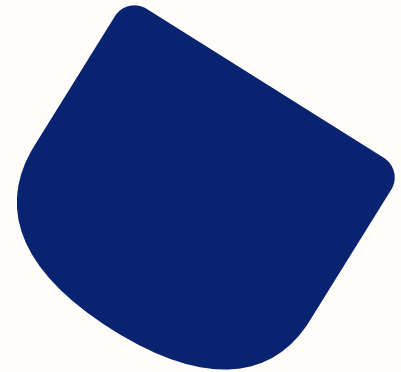
03

Analyze your employee benefits and packages:

How could you include training and personal/professional development to provide further (non-monetary) benefits to your employees?



5. Do not underestimate the power of these (future) skills:



Along with the rise of new technologies, and new roles, the development of new skills, in response to these shifts, is necessary. The following skills have been reported as crucial by the interviewees, and are also aligned with the top 15 skills for 2025 (World Economic Forum, 2020.)

Recommendations for action:

Use the checklist in the appendix to rate and reflect on your skills capacities: 1) Openness & acceptance, 2) Ability for self-reflection, 3) Culture of failure, 4) Conflict management skills, 5) Humanity Comparing what employer and employees, generation baby boomer and generation X expect from a healthy, inclusive and performing work culture turns out to present less of a generation gap than one might think, and more of an opportunity to shape the future of work together. Get inspired by the good practices in the following chapters.





02

METHOD & INTERVIEWS

11 qualitative interviews with leaders from different industries have been conducted, as well as interviews with representatives from Generation Z. This paper is not a representative nor qualitative study - it's a white paper addressing HR and General Managers, summarizing findings and concluding trends from the interviews, as well as referring to further quantitative studies. The interviews have been conducted with representatives from the following generations:

| GENERATION | YEAR | # INTERVIEWS |
|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Baby Boomer | until 1964 | 2 |
| X | until 1980 | 4 |
| Y (Millennial) | until 1995 | 3 |
| Z | after 1995 | 2 |

In terms of geographical representativeness, the interviews have solely been conducted with company representatives from central Europe (Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France). However, most of the companies have international subsidiaries and hire international staff. This local dimension has to be taken into account, especially acknowledging that culturally, the United States for instance has conducted more research in DEIB in the past years compared to central Europe.

The interview partners were leading various employees, ranging from 0-10 to up to 1,000 employees (indirect reports). Gen Z's did not have team responsibility (yet). Some of the findings and quotes in this paper directly refer to the interview partners, while others chose to stay anonymous.

03

THE BIG CHALLENGES MANY COMPANIES ARE FACING

Do you agree that the 'run for talents' is more urgent than ever before? Are you in the position to look for (new) talents for your company? Do you want to not only attract but also keep your talents (ideally longer than the onboarding takes)? Do you wish that the other generation would understand your situation, and your challenge better? In this white paper, you will find good practices and measures in HR and necessary mindset shifts, condensed from qualitative interviews with HR leaders & practitioners, CEOs, and middle management, as well as with Gen Z's, enriched with findings from reputable strategic papers. As a Millennial, or a Gen Y, my goal is to build a bridge between the supposedly different expectations of different generations, of employers and employees, and to show that if we work together, take a step towards each other and open up for a different perspective, we will all win in the end, by creating an inclusive work environment, where everyone can thrive.

What young people demand can also be an opportunity for older people to question existing values.

Torsten Fremery
General Manager E.M.S. DACH, Gen X

It's a VUCA world, with many uncertainties, geo-political challenges, economic recession, inflation, and war. To put current challenges related to human resources in context, the following challenges on the micro- and macroeconomic levels have been named by the interviewees:

Macro-economic level

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Geo-political, e.g. wars | Inflation | Labour law |
| Strong growth & scaling | Onboarding & Culture | Run for talents, Retention |

Micro-economic level

On the macroeconomic level, the inflation and rising cost of living further emphasize **employee's demand for higher salaries** to cover the risen cost.⁴ Furthermore, **employment law** is still behind current practices such as the popular remote or mobile work, or home office regulation, another practice much needed, even hygiene factor for the Gen Z's when choosing an employer:

It is essential to me that there is flexibility and that I can decide for myself when I work where and where I am most productive. It would be even better if I were not tied to a country or a city

Sabrina Burkart
Marketing Manager, Gen Z

⁴ World Economic Forum, 2022, 2023

On the microeconomic level, companies with strong growth and profitability have an increasing need for more workforce, which results in the **biggest talent** shortage we might have ever experienced. Simultaneously, strong growth leading to fast scaling also represents a challenge to keep and successfully transmit your corporate culture and values during the onboarding process.

No growth strategy without HR strategy.

Torsten Fremery
General Manager E.M.S. DACH, Gen X

Recruiting has turned around - companies now apply to the applicant.

Victoria Schmied
COO ÜBERALL scene development, Gen Y

Individualization vs. community

How do these challenges impact companies, namely their human resources departments? It is evident that solid HR strategies are more needed than ever, in order to successfully attract and retain the talent needed to sustain the company's growth. One field of tension is the feeling of community versus individualization. As a result of the pandemic, the practice of home office, remote or hybrid work, allowing for increased flexibility in terms of time and task management, has become increasingly popular among employees. HR leaders and managers are balancing between granting their employees this freedom, whilst convincing boards of the new measures. What is providing flexibility and freedom for employees, is in some cases interpreted as a strong individualization and prioritization of individual needs, from the employer's perspective. The employer's challenge is hence to reactivate a feeling of community among teams and to make them want to come to the office:

If I only work at home, it doesn't matter which company I work for. The task of the employer should be to make an office so attractive, that people like to come to the office.

Anonymous
Baby Boomer

It would be even better if I wasn't tied to a country or a city, but if it didn't matter where I was. In the end, it's only about doing my work - from where and when shouldn't matter

Sabrina Burkart
Marketing Manager, Gen Z

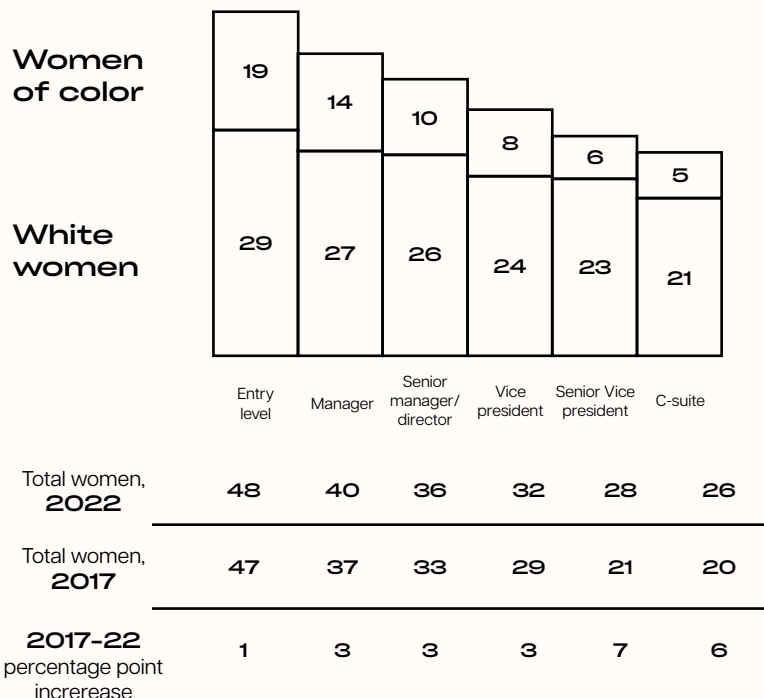
Zero office would be a no-go for me - it's important to me to get together with the team, and that's also part of the culture for me.

Rika Mader
General Director erdbeerwoche, Gen Z

At the end of this field of tension, the risk of not responding to the employee's wish for flexibility is to fall short in the run for talent. Taking a look at the state of the labor market in the United States shows that not responding to employees' needs might result in the phenomenon of 'Great Resignation' or even higher employee turnover rates, which are especially pronounced for female leaders⁵

Lacking diversity of the leadership

Diversity refers to the practice or quality of including and involving people from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds, gender, sexual orientation, and ages, with different physical and psychological abilities⁶. When there is a high demand for a



[Women in the Workplace, McKinsey & Company \(2022\)](#)

⁵ [Women in the Workplace, McKinsey & Company \(2022\)](#)

⁶ Oxford Language Dictionary

workforce, excluding any skilled talent, is not a beneficial option. The need, especially for diverse skilled leaders, for example in technical and/or sales roles, remains high, but the pipelines remain almost empty. One of the challenges is balancing the prioritization of DEIB on the general company roadmap. A C-level manager has a lot on his/her/their plate -

from managing in uncertainty to being able to keep shareholder value and pay everyone's salary. The topic of diversity, equity, and inclusion does in many cases not make it (yet) to the top of the strategic agenda. However, we see a rising awareness and wish for an inclusive and diverse company culture - both from employees, but also from the C-level side. And when there is a will - there will be a way. This white paper is hence written with the intention to provide many possible 'hows' - in terms of good DEIB practices, that different organizations may find inspiring in order to initiate a process defining the appropriate DEIB strategies for them.

'Bringing diversity to the leadership is sometimes the famous chicken-egg challenge: while it is always expected from HR to come up with a strategic plan - this is not enough. The executives and key players need to ask for it and implement it.'

Ernst Wühr
General Manager E.M.S. Electro Medical Systems, Gen X

'One of the reasons I am at 'erdbeerwoche' is because I know DEI is important to them. When I think about my past employers (corporations and startups) - the lacking implementation of any DEI measures was certainly a reason why I left

Rika Mader
General Director erdbeerwoche, Gen Z

Lacking diversity in leadership roles is truly nothing new - the latest results of the 'Women in the workplace' report (2022, McKinsey & Company) underlines the lacking representation of women and women of color by increasing leadership positions. The danger of rising inequalities has also been mentioned as one of the biggest threats to global economies by the latest reports of the Global Economic Forum (2020, 2022, 2023).^{7,8}

To respond to the lacking diversity in leadership, different measures have been tested and implemented by the interviewee's companies. The measures and their effects are categorized in chapter four.

⁷ [Future of work \(World Economic Forum, 2023\)](#), [The Good Work Framework: A new business agenda for the future of work \(World Economic Forum, 2022\)](#)

⁸ [The Future of Jobs Report \(World Economic Forum, 2020\)](#)

Broader skills and qualification

Lastly, leaders reported that it's not only the amount of workforce that is needed - the necessary width and depth of skills has also increased more than ever. New positions, for example, content or video producers in marketing, are arising, that demand more diverse qualifications, and that have previously been covered by different roles. The need for a broader qualification comes with the need to offer up or reskilling for the existing workforce. Equally, for tech positions, the need for constant training to keep the staff up to date with the latest technologies is very high. According to the World Economic Forum's 2020 Future of Jobs Report, the skills required for existing jobs will change considerably – by 40% on average from 2020 to 2025. On average, companies estimate that half of the workers will require reskilling by 2025.



04

FIVE EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO NAVIGATE THE SHIFT TO AN INCLUSIVE AND PERFORMING HEALTHY CULTURE

The goal of this white paper is to provide an overview of five good practices by different companies, in order to respond to the described challenges. The following examples can serve as inspiration for you, to assess where your company is at, to get a better understanding of what other industry players are offering, and how your organization performs in comparison. It must be said that the measures and their efficiency were not analyzed in depth as part of the interviews. You are invited to initiate a strategy process or at least a discussion with your HR department after the lecture of this white paper, if you'd like to take a closer look at where your company is at, strategically and operationally. To do so, you can use the attached checklist in the appendix.

Five effective measures to navigate the shift to an inclusive and performing corporate culture

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 01 Flexibility | 02 Employer brand | 03 DEIB measures | 04 Learning & development | 05 Skills |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|

1. Offer flexibility with options for mobile or hybrid work

Harness the power of flexibility to foster inclusion and bring the ultimate competitive advantage Many employees appreciate working remotely, hybrid, mobile, in the home office, or however your company calls it. The same goes for leaders and management staff.

On the subject of flexible working - I wouldn't say the younger you are, the more flexibility you want. My generation also chooses jobs according to the degree of flexibility. We no longer want to do without this freedom.

Vincent Stueger

VP Software Development, Dynatrace
Austria, Gen X

'Buzzword mobile work - it's a no-brainer that younger generations see it as a hygiene factor, and one day a week is not enough!'

Ernst Wühr

General Manager E.M.S. Electro Medical
Systems, Gen X

What has been a constant and necessary companion during the pandemic starting in 2021, might have come to stay. In every single interview, with any generation, the possibility of remote work has been a topic, and across all interviewees, there was an agreement that flexible home office policies are an asset. According to a study by McKinsey (2022), 71 percent of HR leaders say remote work has helped their organizations hire and retain more employees from diverse backgrounds⁹. The attitudes, and accordingly the regulations in the companies, as reported by the interviewees, can be grouped into three categories:

Home Office Policies

Harness the power of flexibility to foster inclusion and bring the ultimate competitive advantage. Many employees appreciate working remotely, hybrid, mobile, in the home office, or however your company calls it. The same goes for leaders and management staff.



⁹ Women in the Workplace Report (McKinsey & Company, 2022)

1. Corporate culture defined by the physical office space

We do not see why employees demand so much home office and flexibility, we see it as the employer's responsibility to create an office atmosphere where employees like to go to.

2. Rather open, but difficulties finding the right balance

As a manager, I travel a lot for my work, I work remotely a lot. I am open to it - but I have to convince the board.

3. Very open with flexible models to choose

we have understood that we cannot afford to take away the freedom and flexibility from our employees. We make the team the decisive factor, about how, when, and where they get their work done collaboratively.

Regulation

f. example 50 days/year(=1 day/ week) can be taken as remote work (in accordance with the team lead)

Regulation

f. Example 50 days/year (+1 day/ week) can be taken as remote work (in accordance with the team lead)

Regulation

Option 1 = 100% remote
 Option 2 = flexible in the office with 3 days. Per week in the office
 Option 3 - 'flex remote' with only a few days in the office.



Rather deprecating

Very open, flexible

The best practice in terms of remote work regulation across all interviews was the company that was able to successfully attract the talent needed, even at a growth rate of 30% - by offering maximum flexibility. The company offers three models that employees can choose from every three months:

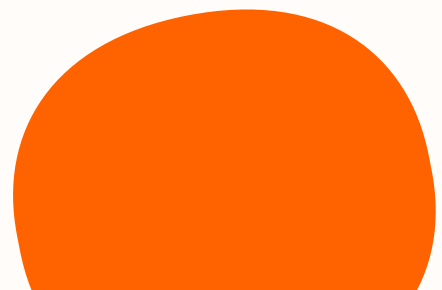
- **Option 1 is to be 100% remote**

- **Option 2 is to be flexible in the office with 3 days per week in the office**

- **Option 3 is to be 'flex remote' with only a few days in the office.**

Employees can submit and change their preferences every 3 months, and the office capacity is planned accordingly. I believe this is a very interesting practice, trusting the employees by giving the responsibility to the teams to work towards a goal and reach it together, in the best way possible.

¹⁰ [Future of work \(World Economic Forum, 2023\)](#)



If you don't have that flexibility in our industry, you have a significant problem, you're not competitive. You can't compensate for a home office with more salary.

Vincent Stueger

VP Software Development, Dynatrace Austria, Gen X

The companies of categories 1 and 2 were all aware that the option to work remotely was a very important factor for their employees and stated that new regulations would be announced and planned in Q1 and Q2.

Finally, another interesting best practice to mention is the '**4-days-week**', which is most common among creative agencies. The ÜBERALL scene development GmbH has implemented this practice since 2019, even before the pandemic. The workload is done in 32,5h during 4 days. This measure is also combined with remote work, and results in very satisfying and productive work, according to the COO Victoria Schmied. This is also aligned with the latest recommendations for the future of work by the World Economic Forum (2023).¹⁰

Recommendations for action

Benchmark your current remote work policies:

What are other industry players offering? What are your employees demanding?

Review performance assessment criteria:

How do you currently review if goals have been achieved? Has the employees' performance differed during times of pandemic, for instance? Which other criteria than hours and office presence could you use to review performances?

Review your remote work policies:

Once you gathered data and reflected, you could consider adopting your remote work policies.



2. Create a strong employer brand

Stand out and make your application for talents successful

Recruiting was yesterday, and employer branding is today. The overall impression and results of the interviews with HR and General Managers, who were directly or indirectly responsible for attracting and retaining talents, was that attracting talent is and remains tough business. Companies are still involved in different recruiting activities, from direct sourcing to headhunting and working with external agencies and networks. It remains a challenge to find broadly skilled talent, that matches the organizational culture. Choosing a variety of recruiting approaches is not sufficient anymore - creating a strong employer brand, with the employees as ambassadors, is perceived as a competitive advantage, to stand out.

Employer branding measures that have been mentioned as beneficial and effective were...

Transparency & Employer Branding | External survey providers such as the 'Great Place to Work' survey have been mentioned, to get feedback from the team, and showcase and promote results of a strong and positively perceived employer brand

Internal Surveys | As opposed to the 'Great Place to Work' survey, internal surveys that team leads share with their teams to get a better understanding on what is going on, and what could be changed or improved, are a powerful and meaningful tool mentioned by a few of the interviewees.

Open door policy | Engaging open and two-way communications with your employees, via open-door policies, town hall meetings, or alike

Engagement | Activating employees as ambassadors to activate their network becomes increasingly popular, with new roles focusing on employee engagement.

Social Recruiting | The use of Social Media, such as LinkedIn, XING, or Facebook, not only for marketing purposes, but also for positioning with content as employer brand, and to actively source for talent or publish job openings

'Tell a friend' | Incentivizing the network of the employees, attached to financial remuneration in the case of a successfully onboarded talent. If you have a rather homogenous staff, you risk diversifying though, by recruiting from the same 'bubbles'

Building and rebuilding trust - a lot of companies have challenges with retaining people, so the engagement of your employees is crucial!

Mariann Bencze
Head of Culture, Engagement & DEIB, Adverity

Recommendations for action

Strategically review and define your employer brand:

What are your company's values, your USP? Why do employees want to work with you?

Invest in your employer brand:

If your employer brand is not aligned with your values and target groups, you might want to invest in new positioning (from corporate identity to choosing and establishing marketing channels)

Drive employee engagement:

How can you win your employees as ambassadors? Define an authentic content strategy and stick to it.

3. Create an inclusive culture with DEIB

Creating an inclusive and engaging corporate culture to attract and retain diverse talent

Most interviewees agreed that diversity is not a trend, but a fact that had always been part of society. employer brand, with the employees as ambassadors, is perceived as a competitive advantage, to stand out.

Diversity is much more than a trend, 30 years ago people already knew that a heterogeneous team is superior to a homogeneous team.

Gunther Fürstberger
CEO MDI Management Development International, Gen X

Diversity is not a trend! It has always been there. It's not a fruit basket that you buy and then you can check off. It is rather becoming more work, than less. The return on investment comes, but it comes much later.

Victoria Schmied
COO ÜBERALL scene development, Gen Y

It is important to me that I set the framework conditions so that my employees feel comfortable and can come out - whether sexual orientation or headscarf. There has to be room and acceptance.

Anonymous
Gen Y

Even though the theoretical importance of diversity is high to all interviewees, the strategic implementation of effective tools is less common. Interviewees with awareness of DEIB (because it is either part of their role, or because they belong to a minority) were more engaged in or aware of current DEIB measures in the company. Another differentiator is the degree of internationalization of the companies - especially the companies with subsidiaries in the United States were more advanced in terms of DEIB awareness and the implementation of effective measures.

Why invest in DEIB? Various studies have proven the positive effects of diversity and inclusion on the company. To only name a few effects: Employees report 70% more psychological safety and sense of belonging at work^{11,12}. In terms of performance, 19% increased revenues with innovative products and services by diverse teams can be expected.¹³ In terms of employer branding, 60% of millennials see diversity as a determining factor in their decision for an employer.¹⁴

It is important to understand that DEIB is not a luxury for an organization anymore - it is crucial in order to create a performing and engaging culture!

Mariann Bencze
Head of Culture, Engagement & DEIB,
Adverity

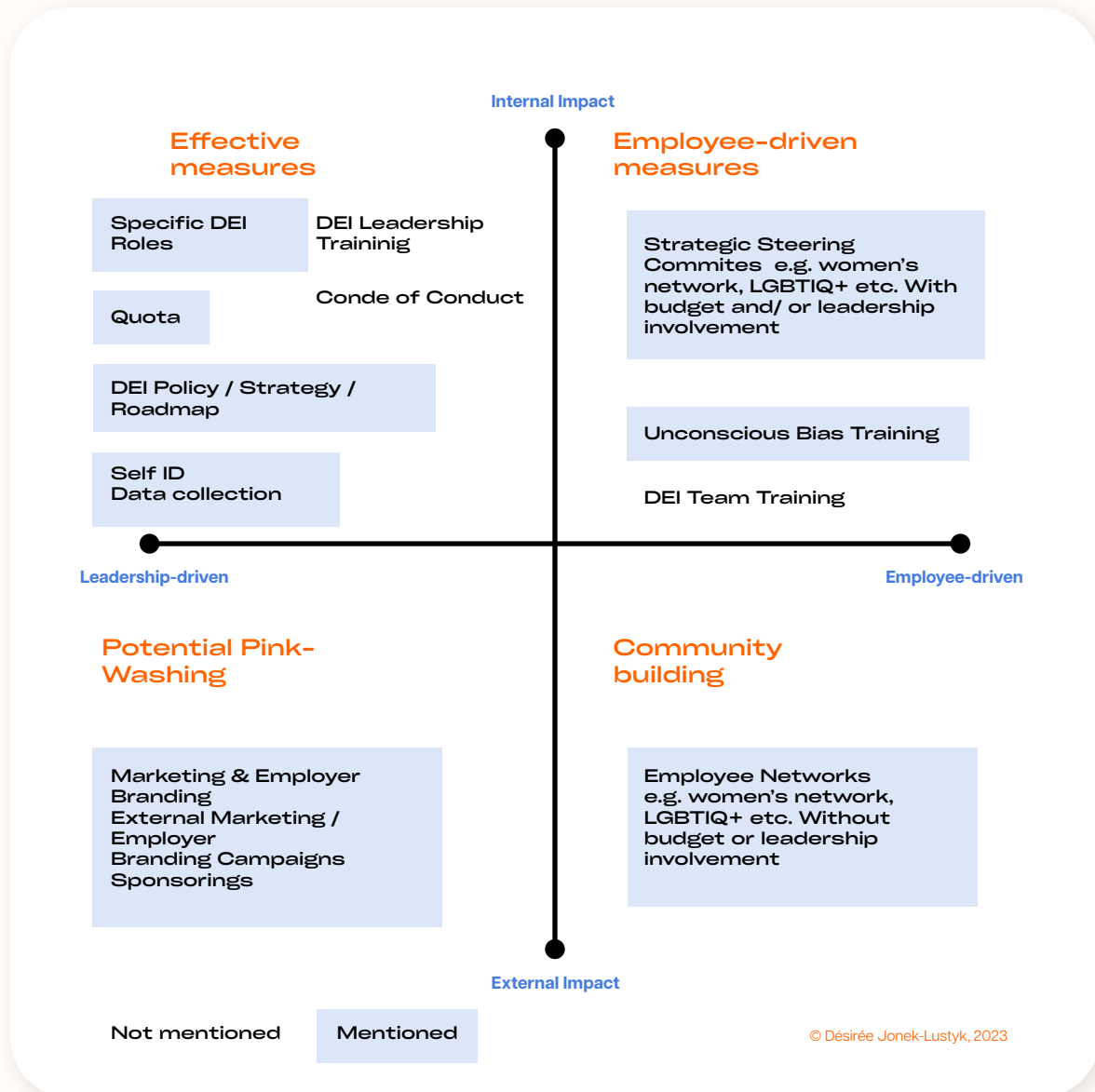
All reported DEIB measures, additionally highly effective ones, that have not been mentioned, have been categorized into four categories. The differentiation is made whether measures are being pushed in a bottom-up process (employee-driven, most often without budget or strategic anchoring) vs. leadership-driven (coming with a budget and strategic anchoring), whether the measures are rather communicated externally (marketing) or driving internal change (strategy & implementation).

11 Inclusive Intelligence: How to be a role model for Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace. Furkan Karayel.

12 The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths. Deloitte Review (2018)

13 Lorenzo, R., Reeze, M. [How and where Diversity drives financial performance. Harvard Business Review, 2018.](#)

14 Vielfalt. Dohmeyer, M., Dittrich, C.; truffis, (2020)



Four categories of DEIB initiatives (Désirée Jonck-Lustyk, 2023)

Potential Pink-washing: Pink-washing refers to companies investing the total of their DEIB budget into marketing, failing to invest in the creation of an inclusive culture.

The good: Potentially efficient in attracting new talents quickly

The bad: Not effective in terms of employee retention, if the actual culture does not hold what has been promised in the campaigns

Community building: Bottom-up approach, where mostly employees from marginalized groups form internal networks (e.g. LGBTIQ+, women, BPOCs networks etc.)

The good: Feeling of comfort & understanding, providing safe spaces for minorities, can enhance internal representation¹⁶

The bad: Often little to no management exposure and budget, limiting the effectiveness of measurable outcomes

Employee-driven measures: Evolvement of community building, by adding budget and/or leadership commitment, the magic can happen (example: Strategic steering committees)

The good: Powerful method, where both employees, as well as leaders get involved

The bad: Ideally, the committee follows or defines a strategic plan

Effective strategic measures: The most effective measures are the ones that can be quantified (e.g. quota for minorities in leadership positions, fathers on parental leave etc.), and follow a carefully crafted DEIB strategy, with leadership & budget involvement.

The important message is: The more different measures a company will combine, the better the chances for actual impact. It is not recommended to set all budgets on external communication only - the risk is to quickly lose new hires if the organizational culture is not aligned with the communication. Also, an in-depth understanding of the organization's status quo is recommended, before setting up a strategic plan and defining measures to be implemented.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution: It needs individual measures for different companies. Best practices from other companies might not be the right ones for you. Maybe you have more people with disabilities or people from older generations. You need to get to know your people in depth!

Mariann Bencze

Head of Culture, Engagement & DEIB, Adverity

To get awareness for DEIB you have to actively approach the leadership and invite them. Actively drive the issue, show face, and fly the flag. And then budgets have to be made available.

Anonymous
Generation Y

How to move towards effective DEIB measures? The factors of **management and budget involvement are important success criteria** to create an inclusive company culture, not only focusing on external communication.

‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast’ (Peter Drucker)

It has been proven that heterogeneous (or diverse) teams outperform homogeneous ones - but only when well managed.¹⁵ Organizations with sensitized leaders who can speak and act confidently about diversity and inclusion have very good chances to shape an inclusive company culture, attracting and retaining diverse talents.

¹⁵ Unraveling the diversity performance-link in multicultural teams. Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt & Jonsen (2007)

Recommendations for action

Analyze your organization's DEIB status quo

(feel free to use the checklist in the appendix)

Gather the responsible people in your organization and discuss:

What is your DEIB goal - a more diverse workforce, leadership, more DEIB awareness, more inclusive communication, better retention? Who is responsible for driving this? What will be the next steps and when?

Start an action plan and execute your strategy:

Define your DEIB roadmap with concrete deliverables, dependencies, and responsibilities. Make sure to include measures actively engaging employees and transforming towards an inclusive culture.

4. Invest in your employees with learning, development, and re-skilling

Investing in your talent to enhance employee qualification, satisfaction & retention

One of the big challenges of our times is the need for more diverse, more varied, and different in-depth qualifications of the staff. New roles and capacities have been raised, which have previously been unknown. This trend is especially pronounced in the tech industry, where the speed and development of new technologies is even faster. One of the most common solutions mentioned by almost all interview participants is to offer the staff the possibility for up- and reskilling by providing specific training opportunities. This comes with two advantages, according to the interviewees:



1. Employee satisfaction:

Salary was only one out of many motivating and determining factors when choosing a (new) employer. Especially Gen Z's have proven to be equally motivated by other factors, such as their personal development, flexibility, and an inclusive work environment.

2. Employee qualification:

Giving the employees a chance to develop themselves will respond to their curiosity and motivate them to try new methods, tools, and technologies, resulting in intrinsically-driven development.

Paid or specialized training offered by my employer is super important to me, to develop myself.

Sabrina Burkart
Marketing Manager Exakt Health, Gen Z

It is not about training per se - but about further development. People want to progress, to develop. That is a great motivator. Training is not the only measure that contributes to further development. It is even more exciting when companies offer development journeys, for example: A person comes with their strengths and weaknesses, and then we develop a learning journey and only then do we come up with concrete measures such as training.

Marilena Maris
Shareholder & Partner MDI, Gen X

According to the Future of jobs survey (World Economic Forum, 2020), access to reskilling and upskilling is provided to 62% of the workforce, and by 2025 this will be expanded to a further 11% of their workforce. An analysis of the online training provider Coursera has shown a difference in training offers chosen by employed versus unemployed. Unemployed people have access to more technical online learning courses, such as data analysis, computer science, and information technology. However, employed people have completed courses helping them maintain their health and well-being, especially when working or managing remotely, such as meditation, time, and self-management.

Recommendations for action

Analyze your past and current training offers:

What has been your focus? How should the focus shift, according to your industry's strategic future?

Conduct employee surveys

to find out the need for specific training offers, also technical versus self-management

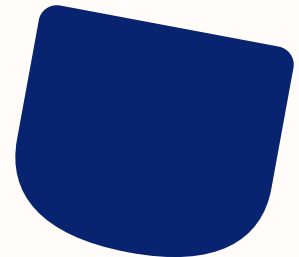
Analyze your employee benefits and packages:

How could you include training and personal/professional development to provide further (non-monetary) benefits to your employees?

5. Future skills for inclusive leaders

Do not underestimate the power of these (future) skills

Connected to the rise of new technologies, new roles, and new qualifications, the development of new skills, in response to these shifts, is necessary. Across all interviews, these skills have been mentioned as the most important ones to provide authentic and inclusive leadership. These skills have also been mentioned (on a higher level) among the top 15 skills for 2025 (World Economic Forum, 2020) and are equally aligned with the 6'cs for inclusive leadership.¹⁶



Openness & acceptance towards people of different backgrounds (e.g. ages, gender, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientation)

see #6 Leadership & Social Influence, #11 Emotional intelligence

The ability for self-reflection
- especially relevant for leaders with personnel responsibility

see #2 Active learning & learning strategies, #4 critical thinking & analysis

Culture of failure

see #2 Active learning & learning strategies, #4 critical thinking & analysis, #9 Resilience, stress tolerance & flexibility

Conflict skills

see #9 Resilience, stress tolerance & flexibility, #12 troubleshooting & user experience

Humanity - Dissolution of the separation between professional and private roles

see #11 Emotional intelligence

¹⁶ Dillon & Bourke (2016), Deloitte University Press

Top 15 skills for 2025

1. Analytical thinking and innovation
2. Active learning and learning strategies
3. Complex problem-solving
4. Critical thinking and analysis
5. Creativity, originality and initiative
6. Leadership and social influence
7. Technology use, monitoring and control
8. Technology design and programming
9. Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
10. Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation
11. Emotional intelligence
12. Troubleshooting and user experience
13. Service orientation
14. Systems analysis and evaluation
15. Persuasion and negotiation

SOURCE
Future of Jobs Survey 2020, World Economic Forum.

Recommendations for action

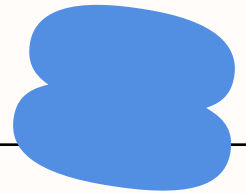
Take the opportunity to reflect....

You can use the checklist in the appendix to rate and reflect.

When was the last time you did show these skills? Can you remember a specific situation or example?

When was the last time someone in your team (your superior or a report), showed any of these skills, or their absence? How did that make you feel?

What can you do, as a leader, to encourage the development of these skills? Think of how to encourage behavior, and other direct and concrete measures, such as team workshops or 1:1 coaching to develop these skills for you or your team.



05

OUTLOOK | HOW TO SHAPE AN INCLUSIVE AND PERFORMING CULTURE

This white paper was written as a 'bridge maker' between supposedly different generations with different expectations towards their work environment. In the end, it turned out that the 'generational gap' is likely to be overcome by considering the five presented measures to navigate the shift towards an inclusive and healthy company culture, as well as taking into account the following wishes of the different sides.

I think you have to adapt to what the younger generation thinks. I wouldn't call it a generation gap.

Vincent Stueger

VP Software Development, Dynatrace
Austria, Gen X

The future of our development, in general, has changed - we can learn a lot from the new generation: For example, 'f*ck-up nights' - my generation doesn't talk about mistakes. Learning from TikTok videos - that's microlearning. The younger generation doesn't want training - they want to do workshops and learn in the process, even if they are not yet experts. We can be more courageous with our formats and how we think about L&D.

Marilena Maris

Shareholder & Partner MDI, Gen X

To be more open to the fact that we work differently now, that things are different today than they used to be. You worked your way up and had enough to live on in the past - that's hardly possible today. You can't afford your own house anymore anyway, maybe you don't even want to.

Rika Mader

General Director erdbeerwoche, Gen Z

Developing more understanding of each other would do both sides well.

Gunther Fürstberger

CEO MDI Management Development
International, Gen

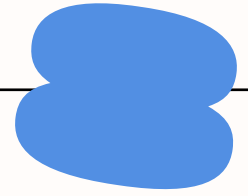
To close the gap between what's expected of managers and what is expected of young talents entering the organization, these **key aspects** have been mentioned:

| | For young talents | For employers |
|---|-------------------|---------------|
| Patience 'that the company will invest in me and my skill set' | ● | |
| Loyalty and perseverance 'My generation was too loyal and submissive, the younger generation, I miss loyalty entirely' | ● | |
| More openness and allowing for more flexibility , when and how work should be done | | ● |
| Feeling of community 'We would wish for more understanding that there is a collective' in addition to the individual.' | ● | |
| The ability to take and understand the perspective of the other. | ● | ● |
| Understanding that DEIBB is crucial for a healthy company culture | | ● |
| Going the extra mile to make everyone feel included and welcome. | | ● |
| Freedom and trust to take on responsibility, even with little experience. | | ● |

Are you feeling inspired? Feel invited to fill out the **checklist** in the appendix, to get an impression of your organization's status quo regarding the presented **five success measures** for a healthy, performing, and inclusive company culture.

Since I am myself an advocate for more awareness of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the organizational context, there is an extra deep-dive covering this chapter, stressing the importance of a balanced-out DEIB strategy for your company, including both employee- and leadership driven, as well as internal and external communication.

If you are interested in diving deeper with your team or your organization, please feel free to reach out to learn more about our training, strategy & awareness offers.



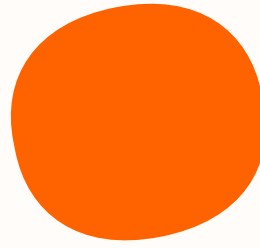
APPENDIX: CHECKLIST FOR A HEALTHY & INCLUSIVE COMPANY CULTURE

Use this checklist to get an impression of your organization's status quo. It can inspire you to take the next steps. This checklist does not replace in-depth strategic consulting.

1. Flexibility

Three categories of attitudes and policies have been presented. Please rate your organization's attitude and policies towards remote work and the resulting flexibility.

| | I agree | partly agree | disagree |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Our physical office space is part of our corporate culture, but not crucial | | | |
| We have different 'home office models' that employees can choose from. | | | |
| When employees ask for more flexibility, we can discuss it | | | |
| Our employees can work up to 100% remotely, if they want | | | |
| We give full flexibility to our teams to decide themselves, when, and how they want to work | | | |
| SUMS Please count your crosses The more, the stronger the tendency | /5 | /5 | /5 |
| TENDENCY | Very flexible | Finding the right balance | Rather rigid |



2. A strong employer brand

Please check which of the following employer branding measures your company has implemented, or what is planned.

| | Implemented | Planned | Not planned |
|--|--------------|------------|--------------|
| STRATEGY | | | |
| Definition of company values, USP as employer brand | | | |
| BRANDING | | | |
| Corporate identity matching your values and employee target groups | | | |
| Appropriate marketing channels and authentic content | | | |
| External quality labels, e.g. GPTW | | | |
| ENGAGEMENT | | | |
| Internal employee satisfaction surveys | | | |
| Open-door-policy | | | |
| Specific engagement position | | | |
| Investing in personal growth / L&D | | | |
| RECRUITING | | | |
| Social Recruiting (via Social Media) 'Tell a friend' | | | |
| OTHER | | | |
| SUMS | | | |
| Please count | /11 | /11 | /11 |
| TENDENCY | Professional | On the way | Not for you? |

3. DEIB measures

Based on the model of four categories of DEIB initiatives (see 4.3), please check what your company has implemented, or what is planned.

| | Implemented | Planned | Not planned |
|---|--------------|------------|--------------|
| POTENTIAL PINK-WASHING Employer Branding / Marketing Campaigns focusing on DEIB / Inclusion | | | |
| COMMUNITY BUILDING Internal employee networks | | | |
| EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN MEASURES | | | |
| Strategic Steering Committees | | | |
| Unconscious Bias Training | | | |
| DEIB Employee Training | | | |
| EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC MEASURES | | | |
| Specific DEIB Role Quota (e.g. women/minorities in leadership, father parenthood...) | | | |
| DEIB Policy / Strategy / Roadmap | | | |
| DEIB Leadership Training | | | |
| Employee Data collection (DEIB- focused) | | | |
| OTHER | | | |
| SUMS Please count | /11 | /11 | /11 |
| TENDENCY | Professional | On the way | Not for you? |



4. Learning & development

Please assess your previous training offer. This task should be done by the HR department or anyone responsible for L&D in the company.

| | Previous years | This & next year |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <p>REFLECT Which skills will be increasingly important for your industry? These could be technical, but also 'soft' skills (check chapter 4.5, future skills, for inspiration)</p> <p>FOR ONBOARDING Number & names of training offer</p> <p>FOR STAFF Number & names of training offer</p> <p>FOR LEADERSHIP Number & names of training offer</p> | | |
| SUMS | # of previous training offer | # of planned training offer |



5. Skills

These skills have been named as highly relevant to shape performing and healthy company culture. If you are a leader or an employee - please rate your own skills (self-assessment) and then ask your colleagues, leaders or peers, to rate you as well (external assessment). Compare the results (you can calculate the difference) - you might be surprised how your self-perception differs from the external perception.

1 = low, 4 = very high

| | Step 1 Selfassessment | Step 2 External assessment | Difference |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Openness | | | |
| Ability for self-reflection | | | |
| Accepting failures | | | |
| Conflict management | | | |
| Humanity | | | |

This exercise can also be done for rating company values in a team or leadership workshop.

Additionally, take the opportunity to reflect....

When was the last time you did show these skills? Can you remember a specific situation or example?

What can you do, as a leader, to encourage the development of these skills? Think of how to encourage behavior, and other direct and concrete measures, such as team workshops or 1:1 coaching to develop these skills for you or your team.

When was the last time someone in your team (your superior or a report) showed any of these skills or their absence? How did that make you feel?

YOUR RESULTS & CONCLUSION

| | Your result e.g. 'Flexible', 'On the way', training offer, etc. |
|---|---|
| 1. Flexibility | |
| 2. A strong employer brand | |
| 3. Inclusive culture / DEIB measures | |
| 4. Learning & development | |
| 5. Future skills | |

This is going well already... _____

This we want to work more on _____

These measures are not for us... _____

Which will be your three next steps to navigate towards a healthy and inclusive corporate culture in your company?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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