



HAYS Recruiting experts
worldwide

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DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN ACTION

**Creating environments where people are valued
and their voices heard**

THE ENGAGEMENT GAME

The importance of engaging hearts and minds to build
strong D&I foundations

MESSAGING MATTERS

The need for clear, consistent, multi-channel communication

Partnering with:



Charlotte Sweeney Associates

50 YEARS
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WELCOME

Hays and Charlotte Sweeney Associates, both experts and leaders in their fields, have joined forces to share insights and examples of what works to support and enable organisations to build and leverage the value that difference and inclusion brings in all aspects of their business performance.

In each quarterly newsletter, we select two major D&I considerations and cut through the vast amount of information available. We share with you our assessment on what really works and how to convert your commitment into progress.

In the first couple of issues we have tackled making the business case, creating an inclusive culture, measuring impact and the link to a compelling and inclusive employee value proposition. In this our third issue our theme is bringing people along with us as we work to create a diverse and inclusive workplace, particularly considerations around culture of inclusion. We focus on proactive engagement and encouraging the sharing of views of your workforce. We also address the importance of creating and delivering an effective communications strategy.



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Diversity is difference, every aspect that is unique and different about an individual and much more than characteristics such as gender and age.

Inclusion is creating environments where people are valued and their voices and opinions are encouraged and heard.

THE ENGAGEMENT GAME

Ensuring effective engagement of colleagues at all levels across the organisation is a fundamental element to the success of any activity on inclusion and diversity.

In Charlotte's co-authored book 'Inclusive Leadership – the definitive guide to developing and executing an impactful D&I strategy' we focus on the two critical elements for success via the STAR framework – (i) engage everyone and (ii) embed inclusive thinking and behaviours into the day-to-day activities of the business.



Ensuring effective engagement of colleagues can sometimes be overlooked with many organisations opting for a 'top-down' or 'one way enforcement' of activity – which doesn't embrace the traits of inclusion!

How you engage your colleagues is really influenced by the **existing culture of the company** and what has and hasn't worked in the past – there is no 'one size fits all' method to do this.

Some of the more common ways companies have focused on engaging their employees into creating a more inclusive workplace include:

Listening / Focus Groups

These are usually created within organisations when there is an issue where capturing employees opinions is important, for example, the creation of the D&I action plan. Typically, these don't continue after they have served their initial purpose. Creating opportunities for employees to share their views and opinions on a whole range of work related topics, is an important signal that engagement is a firm part of the culture.

Networks / Employee Resource Groups

Creating employee networks has been on the top of the agenda for many companies as they start their focus on D&I. In some large organisations, operating on a global scale, the number of groups can exceed one hundred, which can bring it's own challenges. Many don't use the networks as effectively as they could and rather than being an effective conduit as real voice of the workforce to the business, they become more of a loose, 'social' opportunity.

Before embarking on an employee network plan, be very clear from the outset what the purpose of the networks are both for the employees and employer. An agreed charter/mission and the support of an executive sponsor tend to help keep focused, forward momentum. And increasingly we see collaboration across purpose and programming across groups to achieve greater impact.

Employee Engagement Surveys

How many of us have worked in an organisation where the response to the question 'I believe things will change as a result of this survey' has been less than positive? Employee engagement and honesty within surveys will only truly happen when employees feel listened to, that something will change as result of their opinions and they are informed of the changes that are introduced as a result of their responses (we look at communications a little later).

'Ask us anything' Forums

Whether it is facilitated online or face-to-face at wider company meetings creating a culture where employees can ask those burning questions is a great way of increasing engagement and inclusion. Some companies use leadership 'town halls' or off site get togethers to encourage the more relaxed and open airing of views and opinion. Others have introduced 'facebook style' online tools to facilitate the sharing of questions and answers, as well as giving employees the option to hide their identity when asking a question. The on line tools in particular are a great way to encourage two-way discussions and a good indicator of how the organisational culture is shifting if employees increasingly feel they don't have to hide their identity to ask some of the more 'difficult' questions.

Ideas hubs

Within the business forum 'Creating Inclusive Cultures', we regularly host 'innovation forums' across organisations with the aspiration of hearing different voices, different views and perspectives that will enable the creation of different solutions. Some companies host regular 'ideas hubs' within their companies. Open to all employees, they pose a business challenge and encourage all those available to share their thoughts and encourage them to build on others insights and views. Isn't this one of the benefits of creating a more diverse workplace that so many organisations are striving for?

How you choose to engage your employees should to be tailored to your company culture as well as tailored across the different countries and business areas. In the spirit of inclusion, it's important to ensure that (i) once you increase the engagement opportunities it becomes part of the wider plan and is continuously done and (ii) that the ways in which you do this are accessible to all e.g. ensuring those who may not be office based have the opportunity to contribute.

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COMMUNICATION

To encourage engagement, investing time to understand how well messages are being communicated and received is paramount.

So often, absent effective communication, we fill the gaps with our own assumptions and views of what is and is not happening. Any strategy and its subsequent implementation is not sustainable without the support of a good communications plan.

But communicating commitments to diversity and inclusion isn't quite the same as some conveying some other business messages. In this case, the authenticity of the message, the perceived commitment from the person sharing the message and the consistency of words and actions all play a vital part in us deciding if we believe the message, and the person delivering it, or not.

As with increasing engagement, there are a number of different factors to consider when focusing on the effective communication of any D&I message. A robust communications plan will include elements of the following:



Creating your key messages

Create a small number of key messages for your D&I strategy and delivery plan to ensure that all recipients are receiving a consistent and well thought through position relevant to your organisation. It is also important to create key messages that reflect the themes the organisation is already addressing and giving the impression that D&I is a core element in supporting the delivery of the business strategy and wider aspirations.



Adapting and Embedding into Everyday Messages

An important part of any effective communications plan is to ensure the key messages are included in other organisation wide communications such as messaging from the CEO, presentations and external interviews and quotes. Embedding into other communications will increase the assumption that this is 'how we do business here' rather than waiting for the siloed 'D&I update'.



Authentic Presenters

Whatever the message may be and whomever this may be coming from, it must be authentic and sound like the person or organisation that is speaking. It also has to be backed up with actions. We can generally, instinctively tell when the communications are 'corporate babble' rather than the messages that someone really wants to share.



Story telling

Support those sharing the messages to create the same meaning in their own words and what this means for them and their part of the organisation. Encourage personalization with little anecdotes, examples and stories to bring out the meaning and bring it to life... showing that they are human and understand these issues (or want to understand them).



Words that you use

Think about the titles and headings of the communications that are sent out. Ensure the wording reflects the actions, outcomes and the vision for the organisation rather. Many people, who don't feel that D&I has any personal or professional relevance and therefore benefit to them, will generally discard any communications which are positioned within an isolated D&I agenda.



Media channels

The way in which we can share the message has significantly increased over recent years with corporate messages being accessed through social media channels such as twitter, facebook and Youtube. As consumers of information, we expect the messages to be given in different ways such as e-newsletters, podcasts and video. Ensure you are using a diverse range of channels as well as ensuring that the communications are accessible to all.

Taking these steps will help ensure that you workforce is in the best possible place to understand and benefit from the investment your organization is making. After all, what's the benefit of delivering this aspect of cultural change if no-one knows about it?

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GET IN CONTACT

At Hays, we're passionate about placing people in a role where they can flourish and succeed. By valuing diversity, we're better informed to find the right job to transform a person's life and the right person to transform an organisation.

We know from experience that different outlooks and contrasting experiences lead directly to increased creativity and performance. In turn, these positively influence the achievement of an organisation's ambition. Recognising and harnessing the dynamism of equal opportunity is an essential element of our leading expertise.

Enabling people and organisations to fulfil their potential. That's the power of diversity at work. For further information please contact:

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Further resources are available on the **Creating Inclusive Cultures** app available on Apple and Android.



Charlotte Sweeney OBE is co-author of *Inclusive Leadership*. More information is available [online](#), and can be purchased from Amazon. *Inclusive Leadership* has been shortlisted for Management Book of the Year by The Chartered Management Institute (CMI).



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has been certified

The National Equality Standard (NES) is one of the UK's most rigorous and prestigious accreditations for equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I).

Diversity and Inclusion is integral to everything we do and this puts us in a small, select group of organisations nationwide to be accredited, recognising our long-term commitment to building a culture of meritocracy and diversity.

Through our expertise and partner network, we can help you recruit and retain a diverse range of talent.

To find out more about the power of diversity and inclusion, please contact Yvonne Smyth at yvonne.smyth@hays.com or call her on 020 3465 0055.

hays.co.uk/diversity