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AMPLIFY

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Anticipate, Innovate, Transform

Advancing Workplace Equity

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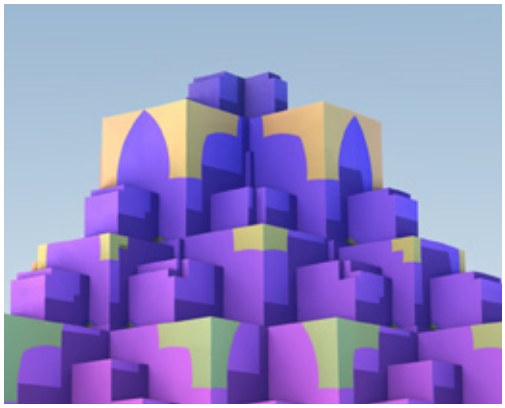

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ADVANCING WORKPLACE EQUITY

BY VIOLA MAXWELL-THOMPSON, GUEST EDITOR

The definition of equity — justice according to natural law or right, along with freedom from bias or favoritism — seems straightforward. Yet people still experience countless acts of inequity daily. We see this in many ways, including reports from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics showing much lower job growth for people of color. Among major worker groups, Black and Latinx workers have a larger percentage of joblessness compared to their white counterparts.[1]

How can this be the case when so many corporations strive to create equality in the workplace? Here's the problem: *equality is not the same as equity*.

An article published by George Washington University, "Equity vs. Equality: What's the Difference?" offers this explanation:

> While the terms equity and equality may sound similar, the implementation of one versus the other can lead to dramatically different outcomes for marginalized people. Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.[2]

Let's think about this with a visual example. The left side of Figure 1 shows each person being given one box; they are being treated equally. Of course, everyone has unique characteristics and needs. Clearly, the person offering the boxes didn't take height disparities into consideration. The person who is tall doesn't really need a box, while the shortest person requires multiple boxes (see right side of Figure 1). Taken a step further, a disabled person couldn't use a box at all. He or she might benefit from a ramp.

Have you experienced these types of situations in your everyday life, or place of employment? I'm a woman of color with more than 35 years' experience in technology inside corporate America, but I still find myself having to speak loudly and ask for considerations to create an equitable career path. Many times, I've felt like the purple person in Figure 2. As that illustration helps explain, one person has an enormous advantage, including access to items to make the task at hand easier. Contrast that with the individual who doesn't start off on an even footing. This is the reality many people of color experience as they pursue technology (and other) careers, strive for career advancement, and aspire to executive-level positions.

The first step in addressing corporate inequities is a reality assessment. What inequities exist within your company's culture, norms, and practices? Only with that understanding can your company build a strategy to move everyone toward equitable processes.

> Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.
>
> — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German writer and statesman

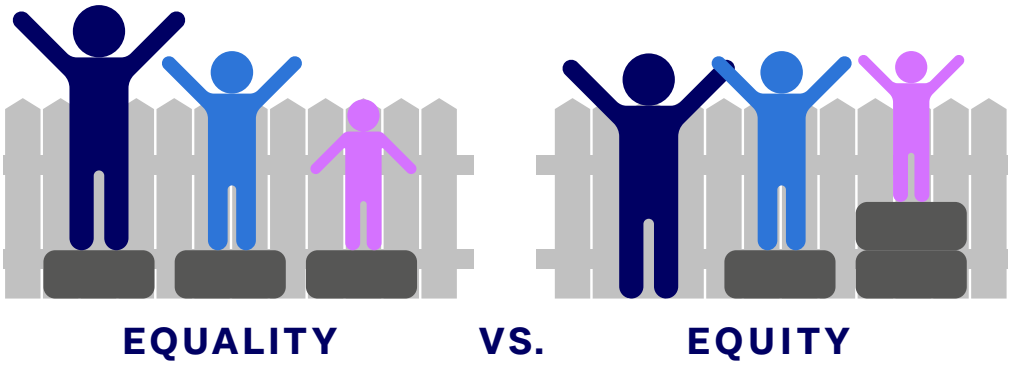

Figure 1. Equality vs. equity

Speaking of doing, each March, we celebrate Women's History Month, and during that time I pause to acknowledge the vast number of women who have successfully blazed trails. We have designated a month to highlight their accomplishments and thank them for the doors they have opened, the ceilings they have shattered, and the sacrifices they have made so that the next generation has "easier" experiences.

It is my hope that by next year's Women's History Month, we will see measurable differences in the percentages of women of color in entry-level through executive-level positions in the technology industry, as well as across the corporate world.

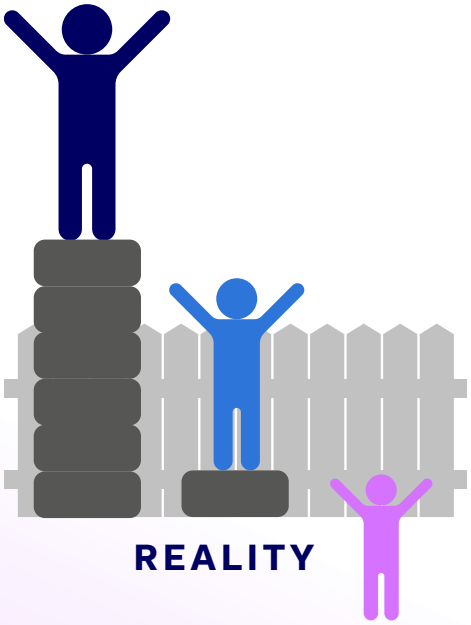

Figure 2. The reality of equity

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue of *Amplify* contains six articles written by executives, researchers, and professionals with vast experience and knowledge on the topic of equity versus equality. The first two articles provide global perspectives on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The third contains cutting-edge research that shows the reality of equity in many companies. The final three pieces describe best practices that companies have deployed to create a more equitable on-ramp as well as advancement opportunities for all employees, with a focus on women of color.

The first global perspective article is by DEI consultant Rohini Anand. She explains that a "willingness to expose oneself to experiences outside one's home country to truly understand local cultures and geopolitical contexts without judgement" is at the core of global DEI competency.

This type of exploration, according to Anand, encourages us to look inward, sharpen self-awareness and cultivate a global mindset. By doing this, we can be authentically curious about other cultures and continuously learn. Anand also encourages us to be strategic about integrating that global mindset and intellectual curiosity into our work.

This exploration and understanding should not only occur in the offices we visit abroad, but within our home countries as well. The US, in particular, is a melting pot of cultures, experiences, and ethnicities, so companies should implement this framework across the enterprise, encouraging employees to explore and understand their fellow coworkers.

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Our second global perspective article comes from David S. Lee who "offers an on-the-ground perspective of how diversity policies encounter issues once they leave home shores." He examines the construction of diversity policies along with relocation issues that come up and provides ways to enhance diversity policies in a more holistic way that considers cultural contexts.

Next, Matthew Walsh explores the results of in-depth research conducted to identify the inequities that women of color experience in the technology industry. Walsh specializes in workforce development projects and "how to create and connect people to good jobs that support individuals, families, and communities."

Walsh begins his piece by pointing out the "occupational segregation" that exists in the workplace with the underrepresentation of Black, Latino, and American Indian women in fast-growing sectors. To help mitigate this concern Walsh offers the Equation for Equality, a tool employers can use "to expand their talent pool in a low-risk way by identifying workers outside a given sector who use a similar skill set to the one required by an open position." By going beyond the traditional elements of sector experience, education, or firm history, "the equation helps employers identify good employment matches based on skills."

Our final three articles explain how organizations are addressing equity in the workplace. We start with Timicka Anderson and Philip Fitzgerald who highlight why diversity is both a strength and a priority at Citibank, a global bank committed to DEI as a core value with "the belief that transparency and accountability are key to success."

Anderson and Fitzgerald note that in spite of the contributions women of color make to the US economy when gainfully employed, they continue to have limited access on their career journeys. As the authors assert, "Technology jobs are one of the most prominent examples of this gap: only 5% of the tech workforce are women of color." The authors then explain the impact to the bottom line when companies increase access to nontraditional ways to pursue careers, rather than relying on traditional pathways. Anderson and Fitzgerald emphasize that "upskilling, the practice of facilitating continuous learning by providing training programs and development opportunities that expand an individual's abilities, is key." That's why Citi supports NPower's work in building a diverse technology workforce "through clear pathways for people of all ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds," with a particular emphasis on women of color.

Our second workplace article is by Eli Doster, an 18-year veteran of the staffing industry who "believes deeply in the power of culture and always putting people first." Doster shares that having a broken culture was not only terrible for staff at his company, Insight Global, it was also costly and had a negative impact on business. Five years ago, the company lacked values employees could believe in, which affected their decisions and actions. Furthermore, the company lacked "diversity of cultures, ethnicity, and perspective."

Doster talks about the signals that enabled its leaders to identify these problems and describes how they implemented the changes that transformed the culture and improved their overall results. He also shares how Insight Global's work in under-resourced communities is closing the gap on "social inequities, economic inequalities, and disenfranchisement" experiences that pose "serious challenges for people [of color] seeking to enter the workforce or advance their careers."

Our final article is from Linda A. Patterson who begins by talking about the strength that women of color possess that "stems from endurance, perseverance, and survivorship." Given their many roles in the workplace, home, and community, women of color excel at managing, creating, innovating, strategizing, and multitasking. These skills are often additive to their formal education and specializations.

So why aren't they being given an equitable seat at the table? Why do we still have low percentages of women of color in technology jobs, senior-level positions, and board roles? Patterson suggests five steps toward offering "equitable opportunities for women of color in a meaningful, sustainable, and measurable way."

As you read this issue of *Amplify*, be intentional about how you use this information. The best practices shared in our first two articles can be a meaningful starting point for companies that

are already global and those planning to expand into the global marketplace. The startling statistics in Walsh's article are intended to raise your awareness and, perhaps, incite you to take action. The vulnerabilities shared by our featured companies and individuals are designed to encourage you to take that first step — or to start over after stalling or failing.

> The most difficult thing is the decision to act,
> the rest is merely tenacity.
>
> — Amelia Earhart, US aviator

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About the guest editor

VIOLA MAXWELL-THOMPSON, NACD.DC

Viola Maxwell-Thompson is certified by the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD), a board director, former Ernst & Young Technology Partner, former CEO and president, industry thought leader, and innovative strategist with over 35 years' experience in executive-level management in corporate America and nonprofit organizations. She has a proven track record of successfully directing and managing engagements for multibillion-dollar companies across the financial, manufacturing, technology, and professional services sectors. Ms. Maxwell-Thompson has successfully launched start-ups drawing upon her expertise in strategic planning, business development, and fiscal management. She is a results-driven, conscientious leader with excellent problem-solving skills and adept in developing and executing effective risk mitigation strategies while implementing essential organizational change management. Ms. Maxwell-Thompson serves on audit committees and advises ESG committees' social initiatives.

A nationally recognized thought leader in business transformation, DEI and retention best practices, and leadership development training, Ms. Maxwell-Thompson is often featured in the media for her expert insights on business topics, including DEI and the retention of executives, work-life balance opportunities, and career management. She has been quoted in numerous leading industry and consumer publications and books, including *CIO Insight*, *Chicago Tribune, Black Enterprise Magazine, The Connector's Advantage*, *Diversity Careers Magazine,* and *IT Management Consulting*, among others. Ms. Maxwell-Thompson was nominated for the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Golden Touch Award, received the PinkTech award for her leadership in the tech industry, was a finalist for the Women in IT USA award, received the Harlem Fine Arts–Salute to African-Americans in Technology award, and was a finalist in the Leadership Character Awards. Ms. Maxwell-Thompson earned her bachelor of arts degree in psychology and education from Lake Forest College and holds certification from NACD and in project management. She can be reached at viola.thompson@tmtassociatesllc.com.

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LEADING DEI THROUGH A GLOBAL LENS

Author

Rohini Anand

One of the high points in doing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work is the opportunity to mentor DEI practitioners. Now, more than ever, they need support. Their resources are dwindling, they're exhausted, they're not positioned for influence and success, and they're burning out. At the same time, their role is shifting — diversity practitioners are expected to positively impact workforce inclusion and social justice not only in the US, but globally. As demand for DEI increases outside the US, there's a need for a movement toward global DEI, rather than just exporting US models.

With the heightened demand for DEI professionals, there are many new practitioners seeking guidance. There are also a growing number of seasoned DEI leaders being asked to expand their influence globally and are struggling. They pose the following question: "What are the core competencies we need to develop to lead global DEI work?" This article contains my best answer.

Whenever we move into a new practice area, there's a temptation to replicate what has worked elsewhere. Unfortunately, replicating initiatives without a nuanced understanding of local dynamics and awareness of our own cultural lens tends to be unsuccessful.

For example, I learned the hard way that, unlike in the US, mentoring in India could not be a mentee-led initiative. In a hierarchical society, it was not practical to expect a mentee to reach out to a mentor to share their objectives. Instead, we structured the mentoring relationship so that mentors could assist mentees in understanding how the mentoring relationship worked and help them identify their goals.

For DEI change agents to effectively guide senior executives through their DEI journeys to inclusion, they must constantly be doing their own discovery work. At the core of global DEI competency is the willingness to expose oneself to experiences outside one's home country to truly understand local cultures and geopolitical contexts without judgment.

The actions and words one chooses can take on wildly different meanings in various cultures, and the impact, rather than the intent, is of greater consequence. Cultivating global competencies can serve to close the gap between our intent (desire to effect positive change) and our impact (unintended consequences). DEI change agents can minimize the intent/impact gap by cultivating a global mindset, being curious about other cultures, and acting strategically.

WITH THE HEIGHTENED DEMAND FOR DEI PROFESSIONALS, THERE ARE MANY NEW PRACTITIONERS SEEKING GUIDANCE

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CULTIVATE A GLOBAL MINDSET

The first step is to look inward, sharpening your self-awareness and cultivating a global mindset:

- **Become self-aware.** Awareness of your own journey is key to understanding how you approach DEI and how you are perceived. What are your core values? How do you communicate those? Are you direct or indirect? Do you believe in hierarchy or equality? These dynamics differ across cultures, to the point where societies address DEI issues in very different ways. For example, if you are based in the US, do you approach global work with a civil rights mindset that might not resonate in another country? If you're based in Europe, do you struggle to understand the US's focus on race? If you are Brazilian, do you see class as being the defining issue rather than color? Someone might be in an underrepresented or oppressed group in one context (e.g., a community of color in the US) but perceived as simply "American" in another, with all the hegemonic, economic, and military power associated with that. Are you aware of both your intentions and your lived experiences and how you are perceived outside your cultural context?
- **Listen and learn without judgment.** Rather than assuming you know what is good for those from other countries and cultures and prescribing solutions, empower colleagues and local change agents to share cultural and historical information so you can learn.
- **Admit what you don't know.** The only way to successfully expand one's global literacy is to be honest about what you don't know and authentic in articulating your need to enhance your knowledge. Rather than passing judgment about cultural practices, seek to understand the rationale behind them.
- **Learn from those outside your home country.** We have much to learn from each other, and some countries are far more advanced in DEI work than others. For example, in some parts of the world, government quotas have advanced inclusion of people with disabilities far beyond what goes on in the US.

- **Build authentic relationships across cultures.** Assess how trust is developed across cultures and lean into it. Do you need to lead with credentials and experience? Do you need to go through a key influencer? Does working in this culture require spending informal time together and sharing information about yourself?

BE CURIOUS ABOUT OTHER CULTURES

With an increased self-awareness and a global mindset, you are in a better position to be genuinely curious about other cultures and open to learning:[1]

- **Learn about local politics, economics, laws, culture, and history.** Values and beliefs form the basis of why people behave the way they do. For example, in France, it is difficult to address race directly because there are laws limiting the collection of racial demographic data; even the word "race" is abhorrent. Some DEI practitioners operating from a civil rights mindset view this as a racist practice, but those seeking global DEI competence must educate themselves about a culture's historical and social roots, interacting with local change agents to find relevant, effective entry points to challenge racist beliefs. Understanding the history and cultural logic of a place lets DEI practitioners find ways to advocate for change that will resonate in the region.
- **Explore linguistic nuances.** Who are the underrepresented groups, and what language is appropriate to use? For example, the term "inclusion" translates better than "diversity" in some contexts. The word "minority" is not always understood the same way as in the US. In India, discrimination is usually based on religion or on caste; in Australia, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are systematically underrepresented. "People of color" does not always translate outside the US and is an offensive term in some countries.
- **Understand the complexities of data gathering.** Understand why certain data is not accessible. For example, data privacy laws in Europe make it challenging to collect personal demographic data. Insider/outsider groups vary in different regions. Seeing these dynamics through just one lens (e.g., race or gender) is not adequate. Local colleagues and change agents must be part of identifying what data is relevant.
- **Ask respectful questions.** To improve your knowledge, ask questions in a respectful way. Laws around maternity leave vary immensely, for example. Asking questions about the laws, practices, and their consequences in a place will help you understand the impact on, say, the advancement of women without assumptions or judgment.
- **Analyze hierarchies.** Understanding how decisions get made and who has influence within the national culture and a specific company's culture will help you better comprehend the power dynamics. It will also position you for strategic implementation (see below). The power brokers may not be the same as in your home country. How and where decisions are made is not always obvious. Seek to understand both formal and informal power structures.

ACT STRATEGICALLY

Strategic implementation is about integrating a global mindset and intellectual curiosity into how you implement your work globally:

- **Realize that solutions from outside won't always resonate.** Regardless of how effective you may think an initiative is because of its success in one part of the world, it is preferable to co-create solutions with local input to promote a sense of ownership and ensure authenticity. For example, an anti-racism training session addressing Black Lives Matter and Asian hate crimes might be successful in the US but not be well received in the Asia-Pacific region without a focus on local discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, or caste.
- **Bring the right stakeholders along.** Make sure to engage all key stakeholders by asking who else needs to be involved. Often, they are individuals who are not obvious based on your paradigm. For example, in France, Germany, and some other European nations, work councils and labor unions are key stakeholders. In China, businesses must work closely with government to make progress. In India, extended families are sometimes needed to garner support for female career advancement.
- **Be patient.** Attitudes toward time and deadlines vary between cultures. Maintaining relationships is critical, so it's usually better to slow down an initiative than to push hard to meet an arbitrary timeline.

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- **Be aware of language-translation issues.** It takes longer for those whose first language is not your language to communicate their thoughts. By overlooking those who must translate their thoughts before speaking, you may lose important information and ideas. Things can also get lost in translation, so work to clarify your understanding of their contributions. Ensuring that resources and key meetings are accessible in all relevant languages will enhance the likelihood of success.
- **Provide a clear global strategy framework with flexible objectives.** Allow local teams to figure out how to get to the outcomes you seek. They know what works and does not work in their cultural context.

> **LEANING INTO GLOBAL DEI WORK REQUIRES CULTIVATING A GLOBAL MINDSET, BEING CURIOUS, THINKING AND ACTING STRATEGICALLY, AND INTEGRATING YOUR SELF-AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE**

CASE STUDY: FEMALE CAREER ADVANCEMENT IN INDIA

I learned an early lesson in global DEI competency when I went to India to launch DEI for Sodexo, a food services and facilities management company. I was born in India and had spent my formative years there, so I believed I had a good understanding of the culture.

I met with 20 entry- to mid-level women to talk about the success we had had in the US with mentoring and leadership development initiatives. My intent was to start similar initiatives in India to advance their careers.

I was met with blank stares. I tried a few Hindi phrases to break the ice and signal I was one of them. Still no reaction.

Having grown up in India, I thought I understood what they needed — but I assumed too much. It was only when I paused to ask the women what would be helpful that one gingerly raised her hand and said, "Ma'am, we live with our in-laws and have to take care of them and the house and our children. If we stay late at work to finish our project, our mother-in-law gets angry." Then they were on a roll — this topic had struck a chord. One woman told me: "Even if our mother-in-law is home all day, we still have to take care of our children and cook the evening meal when we get home."

Wow! I had completely forgotten the multigenerational joint-family dynamic in India where many couples live with the husband's extended family and the daughter-in-law is expected to take care of all the housework.

The women suggested that we host a recognition day with awards and invite their extended families. I have to say that awards day was a highpoint in my DEI work in India. The extended families were so proud of their family members who worked at Sodexo. Did it shift the dynamic at home? I learned that it did to some extent. Many of the women could occasionally stay to finish a project without feeling conflicted, and sometimes they even came home to meals prepared by their mother-in-law.

CONCLUSION

Global DEI culture change can be incredibly gratifying, not least because it's an opportunity to build relationships with people who are different from you. They give you a window into their worldview and culture, broadening your exposure and experiences. Leaning into global DEI work requires cultivating a global mindset, being curious, thinking and acting strategically, and integrating your self-awareness and knowledge to become globally culturally competent. Those who have done the challenging work of DEI culture change in the US now have an incredible opportunity to develop their global DEI muscles.

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[1] Mitchell, Chuck, and Stephanie Creary. "Diversity and Inclusion: Global Challenges and Opportunities." The Conference Board, January 2010.

About the author

Dr. Rohini Anand is founder and CEO of Rohini Anand LLC, providing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) advisory services to clients in the public and private sectors. She is recognized as a pioneer in the DEI field. With expertise that spans executive leadership, human capital, global corporate responsibility, wellness, and DEI, Dr. Anand brings a unique perspective on the critical alignment of the business culture and the triple bottom line to drive exceptional performance. Her global experience, cultural dexterity, extensive network, and ability to influence leaders result in a reputation for judgment, integrity, and accountability. Most recently, Dr. Anand was Senior VP of Corporate Responsibility and Global Chief Diversity Officer for Sodexo. She is author of *Leading Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Guide for Systemic Change in Multinational Organizations*, has been featured in CNBC, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*, and has appeared on CNN, Bloomberg, and National Public Radio. Dr. Anand is the recipient of many accolades, including the Mosaic Woman Leadership Award, the Women's Foodservice Forum's Trailblazer Award, Webster University's Women of Influence Award, and the Who's Who in Asian American Communities Award (WWAAC), among others. She serves on the boards of several organizations, including WomenLift Health, a Gates Foundation initiative; Tent Partnership for Refugees; Pulsely; and Galt Foundation. Dr. Anand also serves on the external diversity advisory boards for Sanofi and Charter Communications and has chaired the Catalyst Board of Advisors. She is a Senior Fellow with the Conference Board and is on the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD) Center for Inclusive Governance's Advisory Council. Dr. Anand earned a PhD from the University of Michigan. She can be reached at rohinianand1121@gmail.com.

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MOVING BEYOND CHECK-THE-BOX GLOBAL DIVERSITY POLICIES

Author

David S. Lee

Pursuing diversity is a pressing initiative for many organizations and leaders, but implementations don't usually live up to the lofty rhetoric and goals that accompany their introduction. These challenges are particularly apparent when an organization crafts its diversity policy from a domestic perspective and uniformly rolls it out worldwide. For example, consider a firm headquartered in New York City that creates a diversity policy largely focused on American social justice issues with minimal input from global stakeholders. The power and impact of that initiative diminishes significantly as it is transmitted abroad.

This type of dilemma inspired my case-based article, "What Does Diversity Mean in a Global Organization?," published in the May/June 2022 edition of *Harvard Business Review*.[1] In the case, the CEO of a listed toy company is selecting a candidate to lead the company's Asia business, centered in China, an important driver for the firm's continued growth. The successful candidate also will join the company's board of directors. The company's leadership and board of directors is not diverse, and there has been a push from shareholders to increase diversity.

Within this milieu, the CEO is choosing between two candidates. Both candidates are strong, but one is a white male who has spent most of his life in Greater China, and the other is an ethnically Chinese female born and raised in the West. Inspired by an actual event, the case illustrates several issues around how companies interpret diversity and implement diversity initiatives.

For example, the case compels readers to grapple with whether or not diversity changes depending on the context. At the toy company's headquarters in Canada, the female candidate certainly satisfies diversity criteria; this might not be the case in China. Conversely, the male candidate would likely not satisfy standard diversity metrics in Canada, but in China, he might be considered to be contributing to diversity for certain demographic categories. Indeed, the male candidate spent many years of his life being the only non-Chinese person in many business situations.

Ultimately, determining which candidate contributes to diversity depends on the lens through which the candidate is viewed. As companies strive to implement diversity policies across global operations, various companies, especially those headquartered in the West, will encounter such issues. This is the reality of achieving diversity in a global context.

ULTIMATELY, DETERMINING WHICH CANDIDATE CONTRIBUTES TO DIVERSITY DEPENDS ON THE LENS THROUGH WHICH THE CANDIDATE IS VIEWED

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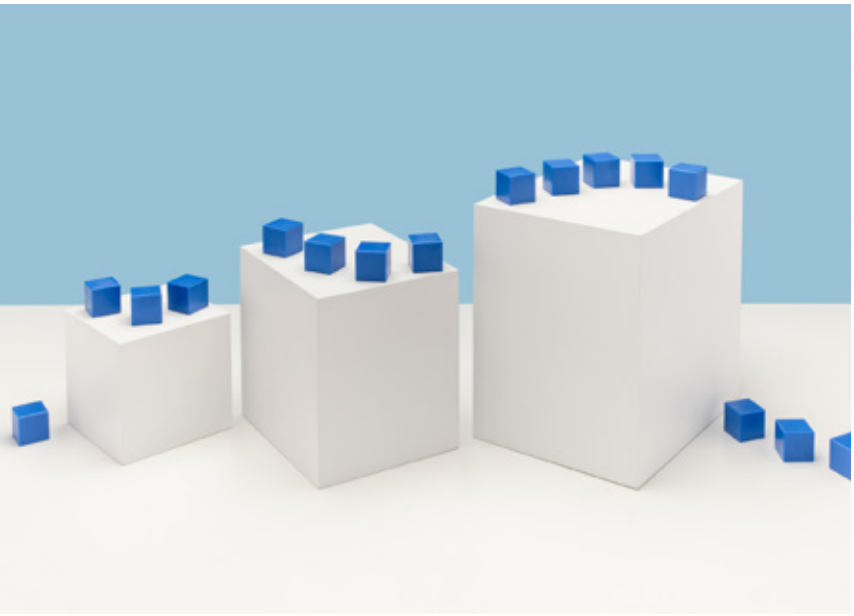
I have taught this case on numerous occasions to global business leaders and to MBA classes with students from around the world. I have also shared it with various organizations, including the Asia offices of Western companies. Informed by those enlightening discussions, this article offers an on-the-ground perspective of how diversity policies encounter issues once they leave home shores. The article examines how diversity policies are constructed and the issues that arise once relocated, then offers suggestions on how to refine diversity policies so they are more holistic and systematic, taking into account various cultural contexts and histories.



CRAFTING DIVERSITY POLICIES

Over the last four decades, there has been a proliferation of corporate diversity policies. By one estimate, more than 95% of organizations with more than 1,000 employees have some sort of diversity program.[2]

These initiatives are now quite visible as company websites have made room for carefully crafted diversity policies accompanied by images of an eclectic mix of employees. This part of an organization's website often highlights various employee groups, frequently referred to as "employee resource groups" (ERGs), that cater to different demographics or interests. For instance, Intel has more than 40 such groups, which they divide between ERGs and leadership councils "organized around race, national origin, gender identity, parenthood, diverse abilities, education, faith and beliefs, and other common affinities."[3]

Generally, this push toward diversity has largely been prompted by a few interwoven factors. The list below is not exhaustive, and there are certainly other contributing issues to consider, but for the majority of business leaders, these three factors are a good starting point:

1. **Righting wrongs.** Diversity initiatives often emerge from a desire to address social inequalities and injustices, many of which are rooted in historical legacies that have yet to be fully addressed. The legacy of the pernicious impact of these histories is the landscape that organizations navigate, especially in the social media age. For example, from slavery to the recent Black Lives Matter movement, racism and discrimination against African Americans have been a tragic part of US history. Consequently, for many American companies, diversity policies, at least initially, focus on addressing race-based inequalities and injustices.
2. **Stakeholder capitalism.** The rise of stakeholder capitalism over the last few years has also amplified the importance of diversity for many leaders and organizations. As companies look beyond shareholders and maximizing their value, other stakeholders have emerged as critical voices. Using the power of social media, employees, customers, and the communities in which companies operate have increasingly demanded companies commit to addressing social and political issues like diversity. Additionally, some investors have emerged as keen diversity advocates. For example, BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, announced a goal of 30% diversity in the boards of the US companies in which it is invested.[4] Stakeholder capitalism has heightened the importance of social and political issues on board agendas.
3. **Competing.** In a globally competitive marketplace, a company is at a disadvantage if it artificially limits the talent pool from which it hires or the customers it may serve due to discriminatory or otherwise unfair policies. Most companies claim they seek to hire the best people, but this is not feasible when discriminating against a particular gender or minority group. Companies

competing for talent, customers, and capital will be better served and better positioned to win by committing to meaningful, robust diversity policies. Ultimately, as workers and customers seek authentic, purpose-driven organizations to work for and patronize, commitment to diversity will be an integral part of such decisions.

It is important to note that in addition to the factors noted above, a company's diversity policy is generally an outcome of a particular path dependence. Path dependence is usually explained by the phrase "history matters," but for our purposes, it can be thought of as "context matters." For a company, the background of its founder, its industry, where it is headquartered, and when it was started are all examples of factors that can shape its pursuit of diversity initiatives. For example, a US company founded by an African American female in 2020 and headquartered in Silicon Valley will likely have a very different notion of diversity and how it should be implemented than, say, a Malaysian company founded in 1980 by a middle-aged, ethnically Chinese male who is a citizen of Malaysia and headquartered in Kuala Lumpur. Path dependence must be accounted for when transporting diversity policies across borders.

HOW POLICIES GET TRANSLATED WHEN LEAVING HQ

From leading discussions of my case for audiences from a variety of backgrounds and industries, it's clear that the daily reality of diversity policies is very different from lofty pronouncements from headquarters and diversity pages on a company's website. This is not due to bad intent; it reflects the fact that diversity policies are not plug and play.

In the wake of the unlawful killings of young Black men by police officers in the US that led to the Black Lives Matter movement, many global firms released statements against racial discrimination and organized events to discuss this pertinent issue. Although aware of the importance of fighting racial discrimination, employees working in an overseas office where their coworkers and customers are generally homogeneous may not feel a deep, personal connection to the need to address racial justice.

When employees consistently feel disconnected from a company's diversity initiatives, it will not only be less meaningful for them, it can lead to a belief that such initiatives are only relevant for headquarters. It's not that employees around the world don't feel the issue is important, they often do, but it is not relevant in their everyday lives since such issues are infrequent (or even nonexistent) in their home markets.

To move beyond lip service and rhetoric, global companies should localize policies to pursue more meaningful diversity outcomes. Such policies are consistent with broader organizational messaging but also consider the on-the-ground reality of a particular market. Doing this allows companies to create a more balanced approach to diversity that reflects a firm's values while impacting diversity in a meaningful way. Such an approach minimizes scenarios where one demographic becomes the main focus of diversity initiatives, resulting in policy imbalance.

SHIFTING FROM D&I TO I&D

Without giving it much thought, many firms describe their work in this space as "diversity and inclusion" (D&I). After speaking with a senior leader in the people function of a large professional services firm, I have reconsidered what should come first.

This leader's firm shifted from a D&I focus to an I&D one because the executives felt creating an inclusive workplace should be the priority. For one thing, the process of accomplishing inclusion requires diversity. For another, an inclusive workplace contributes to greater diversity, since inclusion helps attract and retain diverse talent.

In her recent book, *Rising Together: How We Can Bridge Divides and Create a More Inclusive Workplace*, best-selling author and leadership coach Sally Helgesen describes diversity as part of the path to achieving inclusion.[5] This distinction is important. Although diversity and inclusion are typically linked and almost viewed interchangeably in organizational jargon, they are actually different.

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Thus, it is important to remember that diversity initiatives are a critical part of achieving inclusion and that the key challenge for leaders is creating an inclusive organization comprising diverse talent, backgrounds, ideas, and lived experience.

GO BEYOND BOX CHECKING

In facilitating discussions about diversity, it's apparent that despite widespread support for diversity as a concept, many are frustrated with the check-the-box approach that organizations frequently take when promoting and evaluating diversity. This is an interesting aspect of my case since it requires the reader to determine which perspective they will take when viewing the candidates, since each brings some aspect of diversity to the table.

> **LEADERS SHOULD SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REEVALUATE ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE IN THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY GOALS**

With so much focus on diversity and an increase in the ways diversity is measured, it is easy to see why companies choose an expedient path to meeting external diversity goals. A check-the-box approach makes it easy for a company to show progress on diversity metrics since they are simple to manage and present. These approaches do serve a purpose and are a starting point, but they are not long-term solutions.

Indeed, employees and other stakeholders know when an organization is meaningfully committed to diversity and when the messaging is empty rhetoric. To avoid being viewed as inauthentic when it comes to diversity initiatives, leaders and organizations need to be much more intentional and holistic in the approaches they take to achieve diversity.

One immediate action is determining how corporate diversity policies are interpreted and applied in local markets that are dissimilar to headquarters. Organizations need to account for how home-country bias and path dependence shape the way diversity policies are crafted and transmitted from the home office to offices abroad.

As companies reconsider the relationship between inclusion and diversity, leaders should seize the opportunity to reevaluate organizational purpose in the context of inclusion and diversity goals. There should be consistency between organizational purpose and how that is supported and facilitated by inclusion and diversity. If this is not clear, the organization is at risk of promoting inauthentic policies that jeopardize morale, weaken culture, and impact talent acquisition and retention. The best organizations in the world strive to have consistency among purpose, inclusion, and diversity.

CONCLUSION

Meaningful organizational change around inclusion, diversity, and a culture that supports these aspirations cannot be accomplished through a check-the-box approach. Leaders play an important role in exhibiting the values and principles that an organization espouses and whether or not they will be viewed as authentic. Organizations must also have the right processes in place, especially around people. Hiring, evaluation, and promotion of people are all critical inflection points to reinforce an organization's commitment to inclusion and diversity. Each of those moments serves as a way to contribute or detract from an organization's culture when it comes to inclusion and diversity.

There is a contextual aspect of diversity that gets discounted when implementing a check-the-box approach and solely relying on quantitative measures to reflect diversity. Such measures serve a purpose, but if an organization genuinely believes inclusion and diversity are important, it should expend a commensurate amount of time, energy, and commitment as it does for other important initiatives.

For global companies, it requires extra time, energy, and commitment to ensure every diversity initiative resonates and is meaningfully implemented internationally. This is the challenge and hope of diversity in a global context, which — done effectively — contributes not only to a firm's performance and culture, but to a more understanding and just world.

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THE EQUATION FOR EQUALITY

Author

Matthew Walsh

Black, Latina, and American Indian women are underrepresented in most well-paying, fast-growing sectors, a phenomenon known as "occupational segregation." Mitigating this problem requires career transitions across roles and sectors so that women of color can attain good jobs in areas where they are currently underrepresented.

Career transitions are difficult because individual workers assume most of the risk. For instance, a person must decide to reallocate time during the week to invest in education, search for a new job, and travel to interviews, and then make the decision to leave a familiar job for a less familiar one.

Of course, employers do assume some risk when hiring someone making a career transition. If the hire is a bad match, the employer absorbs the cost of hiring and onboarding that person. This makes hiring managers averse to engaging with candidates without previous experience in the sector and/or a college degree linked to the open position.

This employer reluctance to engage with career-changers means that many individuals decide not to invest in education or a job search; they assume they will not be considered for a position for which they do not have work experience or a degree. That cycle cements occupational segregation.

The cycle has another effect: it exacerbates the perception of labor shortages. The average number of open job postings per unemployed worker has increased from fewer than one to more than two over the last three years.[1] That figure is increasing because the demand for new employees is rising faster than the supply of workers that employers are considering for open positions. But the more employers restrict the size of their talent pool (e.g., by requiring a candidate to meet a narrow résumé profile), the more difficult it is to fill open positions. Shortages are felt most acutely by employers that are reluctant to consider nontraditional job seekers.

The Equation for Equality, discussed in this article, tackles the issues of occupational segregation, labor-shortage acuteness, and the risks faced by both individuals and employers when engaging with career transitions.

The equation gives employers a way to expand their talent pool in a low-risk way by identifying workers outside a given sector that use a similar skill set to that required by an open position. Rather than viewing sector experience, academic pedigree, or employer history as the most relevant signals during hiring, the equation helps employers identify good employment matches based on skills.

> **CAREER TRANSITIONS ARE DIFFICULT BECAUSE INDIVIDUAL WORKERS ASSUME MOST OF THE RISK**

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By focusing on skills, the equation sets employers up to collaborate with skills-training organizations that can: (1) stand up to the type of training that employers need; and (2) connect employers to graduates of skills-training programs that teach the relevant skills, even if those graduates don't have the traditional work experience or educational background the employer typically requires.

CENTERING THE ISSUE OF OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

Black, Latina, and American Indian women hold 14.6% of jobs nationwide but only 8.2% of jobs that make more than US $25 per hour on average.[2] Among the 20 occupations with the greatest number of Black women, only three earn above $25 per hour on average. That figure drops to one for both Latina women and American Indian women.[3] People of color are overrepresented in the lowest-paying jobs, making up the majority of workers in all 25 of the lowest-wage occupations.[4]

A lack of upward mobility across occupations and sectors perpetuates the occupational segregation that locks women of color out of well-paying, fast-growing jobs. For example, nearly a third (32%) of Black women in the US would need to change jobs for their occupation mix to look like the mix of occupations held by all workers in the economy.[5]

To the extent that intergenerational mobility in the labor force does exist, it can largely be attributed to college education. Earning a college degree can break intergenerational correlations between the incomes and occupations of children and their parents.[6] A bachelor's degree boosts earnings by $20,000 over an associate's degree and $25,000 over a high school diploma.[7] Interventions that improve access to college and support college completion among women of color will undoubtedly reduce the wage and wealth disparities experienced by this group. But a college degree should not be the only way to break out of occupational segregation.

Indeed, if a college degree is the only way to break out of occupational segregation, we risk leaving many women of color without a solution. Only 35% of adults in the US have a bachelor's degree or higher. That figure drops to 27.7% of Black women, 21.6% of Latina women, and 18.1% of American Indian women.[8] Prioritizing college as the primary lever for labor force mobility would mean overlooking the millions of women of color who are already in the workforce and would face significant barriers returning to college.

The greatest potential lever for upward mobility is the vitality of the labor force. The US economy generates millions of job openings every month,[9] and policies and practices at the individual and firm level determine who fills those openings. Ultimately, employers should be the greatest accelerant of labor force mobility for women of color. Fortunately, employers have many tools, resources, and organizations that they can leverage to support equitable hiring; the Equation for Equality is one such tool.

UNDERSTANDING THE EQUATION FOR EQUALITY

The Equation for Equality aids in an equitable hiring process. It generates four helpful outputs:

1. **A top-of-the-funnel benchmark for candidate diversity.** Hiring managers should aim to meet or exceed this benchmark before advancing to interviews or subsequent stages in the hiring process.
2. **A list of skills-similar occupations to include within the talent pool for a given position.** This list of occupations expands otherwise narrow requirements around work experience and education.

3. **A list of skills that workers from the skills-similar occupations would carry into the new position.** These are skills that employers can test for during the hiring process to ensure a strong employment match.
4. **A list of skills commonly required by the new position that the worker from the skills-similar occupation would have to acquire.** Employers can train for some of these skills during the onboarding process and work with external training organizations for the rest.

THE EQUATION FOR EQUALITY IS BUILT IN 3 STEPS

1. **Create a skills-similarity score between occupations.** The equation relies on a score for skills similarity between occupations.[10,11] Skills similarity is the overlap in knowledge, skills, and abilities between two jobs. Although employment history is often a function of a given sector or career trajectory, many skills can be applied across multiple domains. For example, electronic medical records specialists have information system management, technical support, and data entry skills that are relevant in multiple sectors, not just healthcare.
2. **Review the feasibility and desirability of transitions.** Once a skills-similarity score has been created between all pairs of occupations, the equation takes into account the feasibility of the transition and the desirability of the transition. Feasibility refers to the two occupations having similar requirements between years of work experience and level of education. For example, an industrial engineering technologist and an industrial engineer may use many of the same skills, but the overwhelming expectation of a bachelor's degree for the engineering role means that a career transition is not feasible for an industrial engineering technologist without going back to school. In this way, the equation reduces the risk for individuals interested in making career changes by focusing on transitions that are feasible. The transition must also be desirable, meaning that the next-step job has higher earning potential or other desirable benefits.
3. **Bring in demographic characteristics.** Finally, the equation compares the demographic characteristics of a given occupation with the demographic characteristics of all the occupations that share a high level of skills similarity and for which a transition would be feasible and desirable. The equation can then be used to reveal job changes that let people of color move from areas where they are overrepresented to those where they are underrepresented.

From these three steps, the equation generates the outputs outlined above. The top-of-the-funnel benchmark comes from looking at the race/ethnicity and gender characteristics of the full talent pool — not just people with work experience in the desired occupation but everyone with relevant skills experience. The equation also provides guidance on the skill sets that need to be taught or reinforced for individuals changing careers. Employers can work internally or with outside partners to stand up that training.

The Equation for Equality represents both a practical tool for employers and a paradigm shift in how employers approach hiring. Focusing on skills development can enable the marketplace to break the strictures of occupational segregation.

APPLYING EQUATION FOR EQUALITY AT THE SECTOR LEVEL

NPower, a skills-training and advocacy organization, and Lightcast, a labor market analytics firm, are working to apply the Equation for Equality to the tech sector. This sector is a good example of the expanded talent pool revealed by the Equation for Equality. Rapid digitalization across a broad range of non-tech jobs and the importance within the tech sector of skill sets related to business, operations, user experience, and customer support coincide to produce a much larger talent pool for traditional tech jobs than is typically considered.

Black, Latina, and American Indian women hold 5% of tech jobs.[12] But when we apply the Equation for Equality to these occupations, we see that these women hold 10% of skills-similar jobs — those that use the knowledge, skills, and abilities commonly sought in the tech sector.

What's more, this tech-eligible workforce is more than five times larger than the tech workforce. There are close to 5 million workers in tech occupations in the US but more than 25 million workers in jobs that share a high degree of skills content with jobs in the tech sector.

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If employers tapped into this skills-similar, tech-eligible workforce, there would be nearly 250,000 more women of color in tech jobs today, double the number currently in tech.

APPLYING EQUATION FOR EQUALITY AT THE COMPANY LEVEL

The Equation for Equality can also be used at the company level. NPower and Lightcast applied the equation across tech jobs in 10 large US metropolitan regions. With this data, employers can see the current demographic characteristics of the tech sector in their market as well as the demographic characteristics of the skills-similar, tech-eligible workforce that they could access. Putting these two candidate pools together reveals the demographic characteristics of the full tech-talent pool.

Firms can use these figures to set goals and benchmarks for the diversity of their own tech workforce. During the hiring process, companies can set top-of-the-funnel and bottom-of-the-funnel goals and benchmarks. The top of the funnel refers to the candidate pool at the first stage of the hiring process. The bottom of the funnel refers to the individuals who are ultimately selected. If companies benchmark the top of the funnel against the full talent pool and the bottom of the funnel against the current demographics in the tech workforce, they can be sure their hiring will promote equity within the sector over the long term. Table 1 shows how this looks in the 10 metropolitan regions studied by NPower and Lightcast.

Companies can also refer to job-level data on the demographic characteristics of tech occupations and skills-similar, tech-eligible occupations. Table 2 shows a handful of examples. With job-level data, tech executives, HR professionals, and hiring managers can be intentional about recruitment and outreach to workers in skills-similar, tech-eligible jobs where women of color are better represented.

Finally, the equation can be applied at a company level to develop internal ladders for advancement. It can be difficult for C-suite executives to understand the internal pathways that exist within their workforce, but they often know which departments and teams are facing staffing challenges. By identifying the occupations facing staffing challenges, executives and HR leaders can use the equation to identify skills-similar feeder roles that can source talent for those occupations.

REGION	TECH SECTOR	TECH + SKILLS-SIMILAR, TECH-ELIGIBLE WORKFORCE
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	11%	17%
Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	9%	13%
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC/SC	8%	12%
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	6%	13%
Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	6%	9%
Jacksonville, FL	7%	12%
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	5%	14%
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY/NJ	5%	11%
San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA	2%	6%
St. Louis, MO/IL	4%	8%
Average across 10 regions	**6%**	**12%**
Average across all US metropolitan areas	**5%**	**10%**

Table 1. Percentage of underrepresented women of color in the tech workforce, by US region

Many companies, especially large ones, find that they already employ workers in those feeder occupations. They can then devote resources in a targeted way to upskill workers in feeder roles so they can transition into those in-demand roles. This process develops internal career ladders that benefit the incumbent workforce, supports retention, and meets the organizational needs of the company.

APPLYING EQUATION FOR EQUALITY AT THE ECOSYSTEM LEVEL

Employers will get the most out of the Equation for Equality when they tap into the broader workforce ecosystem to support skills development, recruit and retain diverse talent, and advocate for policies and practices that support diverse talent.

Workforce development organizations and advocacy organizations have deep experience working with groups that are underrepresented in well-paying, fast-growing career areas. Career service providers often serve underemployed individuals. Public funding and philanthropic giving are often connected to working with marginalized groups. Advocacy organizations and other nonprofits can help employers navigate access to complementary workforce assistance, such as housing and transit assistance. Employers can be key partners within this ecosystem.

When employers and outside partners use the Equation for Equality, they are able to speak the same language about talent development. Training programs that emphasize skills similarity between occupations will have an easier time attracting students because those students appreciate that with their existing skill sets, they are already on track to make a career change. Training programs that acknowledge those skill overlaps can also be more efficient, since they do not need to rehash the skills that students already possess. Employers are able to work directly with training providers, providing work-based learning, making commitments to hire from training programs, and replacing degree requirements with skills assessments.

For example, NPower assists with wraparound services such as transportation, career coaching, and access to professional networks and works directly with employers to develop relevant tech skills curricula. NPower and its employer partners roll out expedited interview tracks for program graduates and job-placement programs like apprenticeships.

SOURCE OCCUPATIONS			DESTINATION OCCUPATIONS		
Occupation name	**Current % women of color**	**Salary**	**Occupation name**	**Current % women of color**	**Salary**
Data entry clerk	26%	$28,127	Computer support specialist	9%	$49,664
Compensation/benefits specialist	25%	$49,879	Technical consultant/ analyst	8%	$89,902
Risk analyst	21%	$79,328	Cybersecurity analyst	6%	$85,483
Healthcare analyst	20%	$76,447	Programmer/analyst	4%	$82,915
Quality assurance (QA) specialist	19%	$54,993	Software QA analyst	12%	$69,806
Clinical data specialist	18%	$78,630	SAS programmer	4%	$98,961
Healthcare program manager	18%	$77,219	Technical consultant/ analyst	8%	$89,902
Clinical data analyst	16%	$69,079	Programmer/analyst	4%	$82,915
Customer experience manager	16%	$69,559	User experience (UX) researcher	7%	$102,522
Logistician	12%	$60,909	Network administrator	1%	$72,310

Table 2. Salary and percentage of underrepresented women of color in equity-building job transitions, by pair of source and destination occupations

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NPower has also put together an employer coalition: Command Shift. The coalition focuses on attracting women of color to tech careers, increasing the number of companies that hire and retain women of color, and achieving pay equity for women of color in tech. The coalition has a number of working groups where employer partners can collaborate, share best practices, and keep one another accountable.

The coalition model can be applied to other sectors and can be constructed locally within a laborshed. Linking employers and connecting them to the broader workforce ecosystem can increase the impact of applying the Equation for Equality to the labor force.

THE EQUATION FOR EQUALITY COMPLEMENTS OTHER STRATEGIES FOR EQUITABLE HIRING, RETENTION, AND ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN OF COLOR

CONCLUSION

Occupational segregation has perpetuated the underrepresentation of Black, Latina, and American Indian women in well-paying, fast-growing sectors. The Equation for Equality mitigates this problem by helping employers expand their talent pool for a given role. That expanded pool includes workers with many of the right skill sets but whose work histories are outside the sector or outside a narrowly defined occupation. Tapping into this expanded talent pool creates the potential for career changes that disrupt occupational segregation.

By moving employers to a skills-based paradigm, the Equation for Equality sets them up to address acute supply shortages, develop internal career ladders, and work in a more targeted way with skills-training organizations. The Equation for Equality both expands the talent pool and lowers the risk of bad employment matches by taking advantage of skill overlaps and bridging skill gaps.

The Equation for Equality complements other strategies for equitable hiring, retention, and advancement of women of color. The equation provides demographic benchmarks and targets the top and bottom of the hiring funnel, as well as internal promotions. The equation also encourages hiring discussions based on skills, which can be acquired at much lower cost to workers than earning a degree and reduces the need for career-changers to take a pay cut to enter an unfamiliar but faster-growing sector.

By prioritizing skill sets over sector experience, academic pedigree, or employer history, employers can expand their talent pool, mitigate the risks associated with hiring individuals making career transitions, and support labor force mobility for women of color.

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CREATING EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN OF COLOR

Authors

Timicka Anderson and Philip Fitzgerald

Women of color are economic engines. When they have sufficient access to jobs, families and communities benefit, as does the entire economy. Still, they continue to have limited access to professional, diversified careers. Technology jobs are one of the most prominent examples of this gap: only 5% of the tech workforce are women of color.[1] Delaying action that would help women of color gain meaningful employment is costing the tech industry nearly US $400 billion in potential revenue each year.[2]

What can the private sector do to help create equitable pathways for women of color in technology? Companies should leverage the broad range of resources (workforces, voices, and philanthropy) to create equitable opportunities for women of color in sustainable ways. Citi's longtime collaboration with NPower, a nonprofit creating on-ramps for women of color into the tech industry, embodies this approach, employing a wide range of corporate resources to move the needle. For many years, Citi has invested in NPower's vision through apprenticeships, mentorships, and access to Citi employee volunteers.

But company aspirational goals like this are not enough: companies must change how pipelines are created. They need to increase access to those who have followed nontraditional ways in pursuing careers and economic ambitions (e.g., paid internships, apprenticeships, technical training, and entrepreneurship programs), rather than relying solely on traditional paths (i.e., high school to college to career). Upskilling, the practice of facilitating continuous learning by providing training programs and development opportunities that expand an individual's abilities, is key.

ENHANCING DIVERSITY BY CREATING NEW PIPELINES

As the world's most global bank, Citi's diversity is a strength and a priority. Citi's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is at the core of Citi's values, including a belief that transparency and accountability are key to success.

In 2018, Citi set public, firm-wide aspirational representation goals for 2018–2021 that were met and exceeded. Doubling down, Citi announced 11 new, expanded goals in 2022 to include additional markets and underrepresented groups.[3] Globally, Citi aims to increase representation at the assistant vice president (AVP) to managing director levels for women to 43.5% by 2025. In North America, Citi seeks to increase representation of Black colleagues at the AVP to managing director levels to 11.5% and Hispanic and Latino colleagues at the AVP to managing director levels (in the US) to 16%.

AS THE WORLD'S MOST GLOBAL BANK, CITI'S DIVERSITY IS A STRENGTH AND A PRIORITY

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That's why Citi has supported NPower's visionary work to build a diverse US technology workforce through clear pathways for people of all ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

In 2011, Citi collaborated with NPower to create seven- to 10-week apprenticeship programs at Citi to provide on-the-job training to NPower trainees. In 2018, Citi and NPower launched a six-month apprenticeship program in the US state of Texas to support Citi's aspirational representation goals. The program was expanded again in 2021 to include the US states of New York and New Jersey, and some apprenticeships were expanded to 12-18 months.

Through this program, NPower trainees receive the US Department of Labor's IT Generalist credential and gain exposure to roles across Citi's Enterprise Operations and Technology group to apply their education in the real world. By offering opportunities for upskilling and expanding professional networks, the apprenticeship program serves as a transformational opportunity for career development.

DOUBLING DOWN ON UPSKILLING ISN'T JUST HELPING THE PARTICIPANTS, IT'S HELPING DIVERSIFY THE FIRM'S WORKFORCE

Remarking on her experience with the program, Citi's Senior VP of Workforce Strategy and Resource Management Shanice Whittaker says:

> NPower provides opportunity for continuous education and exposure to industry leaders and organizations who are looking for trained talent. I started as an NPower intern with Citi and over the years have developed a career I am proud of.

Another alumna, Angela Washington, an application support analyst with Citi, shares:

> I have been able to grow as a professional and a leader in this fastest-growing industry, and it's all thanks to NPower and its work with Citi. In less than two years, I was able to transition into a meaningful career, gain a sense of independence, and purchase my first home. Because of NPower and Citi, I have been able to change my family's financial trajectory.

Avneet Hall immigrated to the US from India in 2015 and had limited opportunities when she found NPower. She tried to teach herself to code while in high school but found it challenging without proper guidance or instruction. After completing NPower's Tech Fundamentals program, she enrolled in the firm's cybersecurity course, which provided both upskilling and invaluable hands-on experience in the form of a Citi internship. She quickly moved up the ranks and now works as a cybersecurity specialist earning six figures. Here's a comment from Hall about NPower:

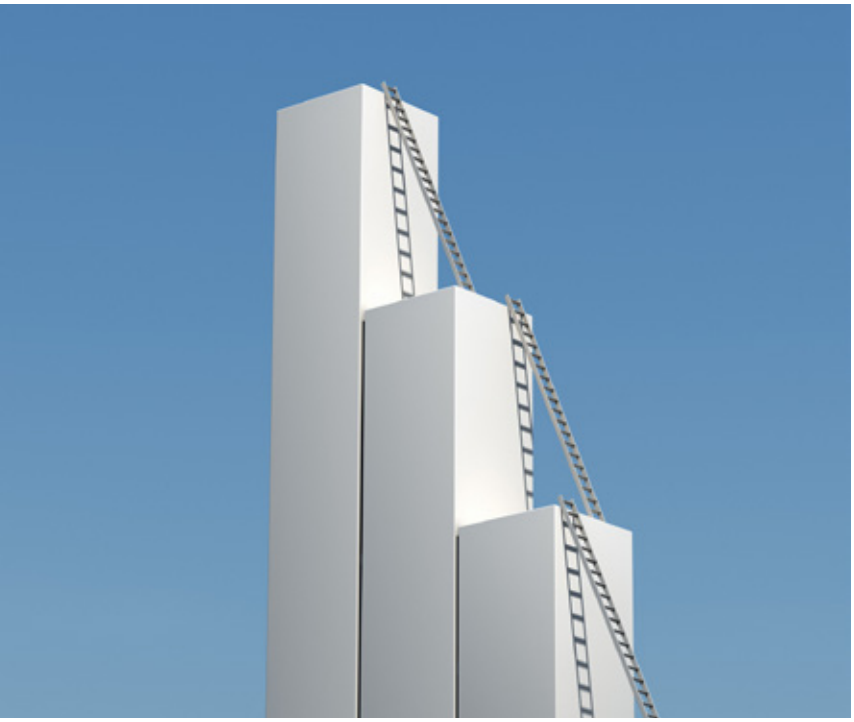
> Not having a formal degree and being the spouse of a veteran, I looked online for military support programs, and that is how I found NPower. They not only provide assistance to underserved communities, they also have a fantastic program where veterans and spouses can enroll in their technical fundamental programs and grow from there.

Since the apprentice program's launch in 2011, Citi has hosted nearly 550 NPower interns of diverse backgrounds and hired more than 200 NPower graduates. Citi employees have volunteered more than 15,000 hours to coach and mentor NPower students.

Doubling down on upskilling isn't just helping the participants, it's helping diversify the firm's workforce. This approach makes Citi's workplaces more productive, positively impacting the bottom line.

CITI FOUNDATION'S SUPPORT OF UPSKILLING

The need to upskill and reskill has become more urgent as the job landscape rapidly evolves alongside technology. The benefits of upskilling are evident. A 2021 Gallup study found that Americans who participated in an upskilling program saw their salaries increase an average of 8.6%.[4] Young people recognize the importance of these opportunities as well, with 78% of global youth (i.e., people between the ages of 18 and 24) in a Citi Foundation survey saying that access to internships and apprenticeships is critical to future success.[5] In that same survey, 60% of people between the ages of 18 and 24 said they felt there weren't enough opportunities where they live.



That's why the Citi Foundation in 2014 launched "Pathways to Progress," a global job skills-building initiative that addresses the persistent issue of youth unemployment. Pathways to Progress aims to address the skills mismatch and equip young people, particularly those from underserved communities, with the skills and networks needed to succeed in a rapidly changing economy.

As part of Pathways' efforts and recognizing the opportunity to support women of color through careers in technology, the Citi Foundation has provided more than $7.5 million in catalytic funding to NPower since 2018 to help it launch and expand its "40 by 22" initiative. The 40 by 22 program is an ambitious effort to increase the enrollment of young women in NPower's Tech Fundamentals program from 25% to 40% by the year 2022. Through the program, women are equipped with the technology skills and support needed to prosper in the digital economy.

The multiyear, flexible funding provided by the Citi Foundation bolstered NPower by giving it room to adjust, pilot, and scale its technology programming and help eliminate barriers for women. The results of this type of collaboration and funding speak for themselves. Since 2018, 40 by 22 has helped generate more than $58 million in annual salaries for women graduates at various companies across the US. NPower ended 2022 with 38% women enrolled in its Fall 2022 cohort, with a graduation rate of 35%. Although just shy of the 40 by 22 goal, NPower saw a 95% increase in women enrolled in its programs from 2018–2022. It also saw an increase in participation from women of color and veterans. Women of color enrollment increased by 105%, and women veteran enrollment increased by 122%, despite pandemic setbacks.

NPower's success demonstrates the power of providing nontraditional pathways to tech careers. In the beginning of 2022, Karla Medina found herself unemployed and a single, first-time mom to a one-month-old. She was forced to leave the university she was attending without obtaining her STEM degree and began looking for employment to support her son.

During her search, she came across NPower's Tech Fundamentals program, which didn't require previous experience and would provide all the skills she would need for an entry-level IT job after 16 weeks of coursework. The flexible nature of the program and the diversity of the students and instructors provided a comfortable environment for Medina to feel supported and to thrive. She now works as a logistics assistant at an IT company.

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Medina explains:

> I loved the sense of community within the NPower program. I think the biggest takeaway from it for me was the network of like-minded people I met. I made a friend who was also a mom and was also trying to transition into a tech job. I felt I had a new support system while starting this new phase in my life.

A MODEL FOR CHANGE

Leveling the playing field for women of color requires leadership from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to use their voice and influence. Using a comprehensive, multifaceted approach, including skills-based tech training, mentorship, and thought leadership, NPower's 40 by 22 program serves as a model for how stakeholders can strategically combine and use their resources to drive positive change.

Working with the public sector to bring attention to the need to support women of color in tech was a key piece of how 40 by 22 built its influence. In 2020, NPower established 12 March as "Women of Color in Tech Day" in New York City, designed to promote the importance of respect, dignity, fairness, and equity in supporting Black and Latino women as they pursue tech careers. In 2021, Women of Color in Tech Day gained additional recognition from elected representatives in Newark, New Jersey, USA; San Jose, California, USA; and the US State of Maryland.

Data and research were crucial aspects of 40 by 22's strategy. With support from the Citi Foundation, NPower released a groundbreaking report titled "Breaking Through, Rising Up" on the challenges women of color face when pursuing tech careers and the potential opportunities to address them.[6]

The report examined how NPower and similar organizations can improve the engagement, recruiting, and retention of young women of color in tech. It provides insightful recommendations on how stakeholders, funders, and policy makers can advance gender and racial equity in the tech sector.

For example, the report says, "technology-training practitioners should consider developing more flexible training options to accommodate women." It recommends employers consider individuals from nontraditional backgrounds and be intentional about mentorship and sponsorship opportunities for women of color. It suggests that philanthropic funders should go beyond funding classroom training to support wraparound services that help women of color pursue their studies and advance their careers.

Another vital element of the 40 by 22 initiative involved engaging volunteers across sectors and companies to guide and aid women of color throughout their career journey. In 2020, recognizing the ongoing role of mentorship in helping women of color see themselves in tech careers, as part of the Citi Foundation's grant, NPower launched a mentoring program. NPowerMATCH works with companies across the US to match employees with NPower students and alumni. It has successfully served more than 700 trainees, engaging more than 600 mentors from 40 companies who have contributed more than 3,000 mentoring hours.[7]

The blueprint created by 40 by 22 in harnessing thought leadership and cross-sector collaboration to encourage action paved the way for NPower's Command Shift coalition. This groundbreaking national consortium of women business leaders, corporations, nonprofits, and community organizations addresses the glaring inequities that women of color in tech face while advocating for creative strategies that will help them advance. Command Shift is driven by a need to diversify the tech workforce by centering on women who have the skills to enter tech but don't have a college degree or access to formal technology training.

The coalition has made great strides in the past two years, growing to 28 coalition members, garnering nearly 1 billion media impressions, and building momentum with more than 60 articles published to influence systemic change. Research produced as part of Command Shift's mandate, "Equation for Equality," shows how the tech sector

can be more inclusive by looking at a "skill-similar" talent pool for tech jobs. By the group's estimate, there are around 2.6 million women of color in the tech-eligible, skill-similar US workforce who could be filling tech occupations.[8]

To ensure the coalition remains aligned with the experiences and needs of women of color in tech, the coalition developed the Command Shift Alumni Council, a dynamic group of women who entered tech via a nontraditional path. These members have completed NPower's Tech Fundamentals program and are on their way to becoming the technology leaders of the future.

CONCLUSION

As employers, leaders, and community investors, private sector companies and corporate foundations are well positioned to help move the needle in advancing equity. The Citi Foundation and Citi have worked with NPower in unique ways to support women of color in tech careers. Citi and the Citi Foundation hope their example demonstrates how the tools of a company and corporate foundation can be leveraged effectively to change the technology sector and educational landscape for the better.

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HOW CULTURE DRIVES EQUITY & EQUALITY

Author

Eli Doster

Broken. That is how I describe our staffing company's culture in 2017. That's because in 2017, we hired 1,600 people, and 1,100 of them quit. Actually, quit is the wrong word. *They* fired *us*.

And that's just the people we hired that year. Our overall company turnover had skyrocketed to 65%. Yes, you read that right. We're not proud of it, but we own it. Having a broken culture was bad for the people working there; it was also expensive and bad for business.

The million-dollar question is: "Why did so many talented, hardworking people 'fire' us in 2017?" It's simple. They had lost their way. They did not feel like they mattered. As a company, we lacked the company values that we could believe in that would guide our decisions and actions. We lacked a unified purpose. We also lacked an effective way to develop and grow our people at scale. Furthermore, we lacked diversity — in every way. Diversity of cultures, ethnicity, and perspective, to name a few.

If there was *any* good news, it's that we knew we had to change by transforming our culture, and we knew we had amazing people. We got to work, starting with taking down our existing company values (our eight core principals) because they were hollow words on a wall. We got honest and real and replaced them with five shared values that represent the company we wanted to be:

1. Everyone matters.
2. We take care of each other.
3. Leadership is here to serve.
4. High character and hard work above all else.
5. Always know where you stand.

Every organization in the company was empowered to get together to create a sixth shared value, one unique to each group. Allowing each unit to craft its own sixth value would help ensure it would live out that value every day.

From that moment on, we made a promise that our shared values would never become just words on a wall and that they would lead our cultural transformation. To fulfill that promise, we have operationalized the values, weaving them into everything we do. This includes how we take care of our people, our clients, and our consultants; how we interview, hire, develop, and promote; and how we onboard and train. We are also committed to putting our values first when we make big company decisions.

> **THE MILLION-DOLLAR QUESTION IS: "WHY DID SO MANY TALENTED, HARDWORKING PEOPLE 'FIRE' US?"**

Overall, we made a promise to root ourselves in what matters most: to grow our people personally, professionally, and financially, so they can be the "light to the world" around them. That might sound lofty — and it is. But it's real, and for our people, there's no better feeling than serving one another, our clients, consultants, and communities. That's what gets us out of bed every day.

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ESG & TRANSFORMATION

Creating equality and equity starts with the right culture. Our culture is the product of living out our shared values and is the foundation our house is built on. But you can't stop there. You must build on that foundation by listening, learning, and taking action to create programs that matter to your people.

Everyone matters to us, and we take care of each other. That meant going *all in* on environmental, social, and governance (ESG).[1] We established programs like the Woman's Leadership Council, which is dedicated to empowering women as leaders. Today, more than 70% of our leaders are women, and that number is growing. The council has brought forward ideas, change, and perspectives that helped grow our company. This includes expanding our maternity-leave policy, offering paternity leave, and creating a Parental Program that offers strong support to our parents and advocates for fertility benefits coverage.

We also created a Diversity Council to cultivate and develop a culture of inclusion, and we've doubled our diverse hires since its inception. We developed a mentorship program called "Journey" focused on identifying future leaders from diverse backgrounds within our company. An executive mentor is assigned to each student, with the goal of helping every student rise to the next level so we can promote more diverse leadership. Half of the inaugural class has been promoted to higher-level roles, and we have since expanded this program.

We developed diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training that's woven into our core curriculum through Insight Global University, our in-house training program. Systematically weaving DEI content into our training is helping our people understand the importance of DEI to our culture and business; our company's future leaders will be more well-rounded because of their DEI training.

With our new long-term incentive (LTI) plan, every new employee receives US $5,000 worth of LTIs when they start. Those LTIs grow annually with the EBITDA growth of our company. We also formalized our ESG Executive Committee, which comprises 15 executives, including the CEO. The committee aims to ensure we're living out our values and purpose and that we know the status of our ESG goals.

Since rolling out our shared values and purpose and going all in on ESG, we've transformed our culture and our company. Turnover is down to less than 19%, our people are thriving, and our revenue grew from $1.9 billion in 2017 to more than $4 billion today. Our people stay because they feel cared for. They're engaged because they see a career path and know where they stand. Our revenue growth is proof that our approach is working.

When the pandemic hit, we leaned into our values and made the decision to promise there would be no layoffs. In fact, we continued to hire when much of the world did the opposite. Our company's mission positioned us to get jobs for people who had been laid off or forgotten due to the pandemic. We started to truly see the impact of being the light to the world around us through finding people jobs, which positively affected our local communities during a very difficult time.

LOOKING OUT

We are extremely proud of the internal programs we've built and equally proud of what we're doing externally. First, it's important to understand that being in the staffing industry we're experts at finding people jobs. We're also pretty darn good at training.

We know that finding a job can be difficult and stressful. Where do you even start? How do you write the best résumé and LinkedIn profile? What's the best way to conduct yourself in an interview? These things are hard for everyone, and there isn't much good information out there. People have to struggle to figure this out, and many don't have the resources, education, knowledge, or equipment to do it well on their own.

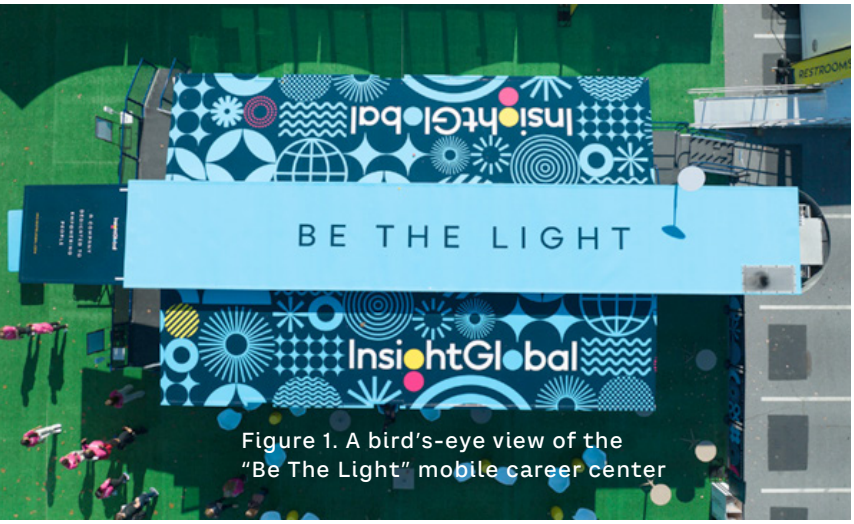

Figure 1. A bird's-eye view of the "Be The Light" mobile career center

As a staffing company dedicated to the empowerment of people, we felt a responsibility to act. About a year ago, we leaned into our values and purpose, and the "Be The Light" (BTL) tour was born. We decided to go big, so we took a 53-foot semitruck and turned it into a pop-up, full-service mobile career center with two classrooms (see Figure 1).

We decided to travel to under-resourced communities to provide free career networking, career advice, and interview training. We focused on Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, the BIPOC community (Black, indigenous, and people of color), first-generation college graduates, unhoused individuals, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ persons, justice-impacted persons, single-income families, veterans, women, and young adults.

Social inequities, economic inequalities, and disenfranchisement cause serious challenges for people seeking to enter the workforce or advance their careers. We wanted to remove as many barriers as we could, so the BTL tour provides free childcare, free food, free headshots (see Figure 2), and access to companies who are hiring.

Our goal is to impact 15,000 individuals from under-resourced communities over the next five years. To ensure we are taking the right approach in meeting job seekers where they are, we conducted a national survey to identify factors causing job-search hesitation.

We found that nearly 75% of job seekers didn't apply to their dream job because they didn't think they were a good fit for the role. Job seekers also said they weren't pursuing opportunities because they were intimidated by the job search (31%), lacked a college degree (24%), didn't know where to begin a job search (24%), or lacked confidence overall (33%). The survey found that people are motivated to look for new jobs by better pay (57%), a desire to create a better life for themselves (56%), and/or a desire to create a better life for their family or those who depend on them (45%).

The BTL mobile career center is designed to equip all job seekers with the tools and resources they need to successfully land their next (or first) job, but it has become much more than that. The individuals staffing the center observed that, many times, people simply don't feel they are enough. Due to past events or their current circumstances, they don't see their potential and don't realize that they are hardworking, skilled people who need support to pursue their goals. We aim to show them what their career future can look like if they harness the power of their full potential (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. Free LinkedIn professional headshots offered at event

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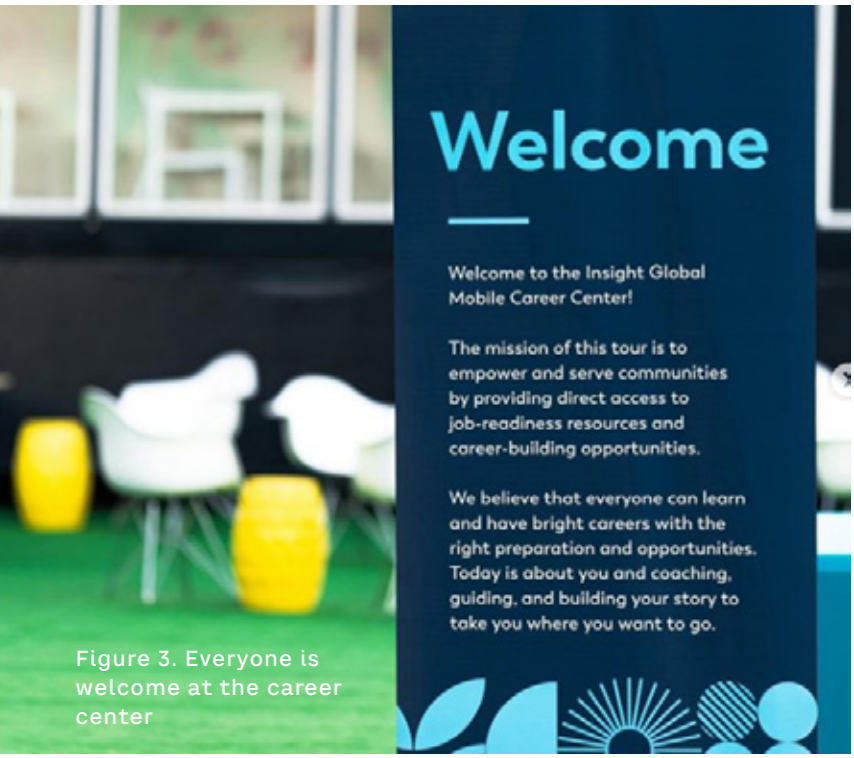

Figure 3. Everyone is welcome at the career center

In November, we held our first event at the Turner Field Grey Lot in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, USA. More than 600 people signed up for free support, and more than 150 folks from our company volunteered to help put on the event. In part, the event was successful because we went out into the community rather than waiting for job seekers to come to us.

> **AS YOU'RE READING THIS, YOU MIGHT BE THINKING, "WHAT'S THE CATCH?" THERE ISN'T ONE**

Some 90% of our attendees told us that they felt more confident and equipped to find a better job or career after the event. I've been with our company for 18 years, and being there was the proudest moment I have had. It represented our company's culture transformation, allowing us to live out our shared values and purpose, all to help other people. The mobile classroom will be a vehicle to drive better equality and equity — one stop at a time (see Figure 4).

As you're reading this, you might be thinking, "What's the catch?" There isn't one. We're a company that really believes in our values and purpose. I'm not saying our company is perfect. Far from it. We're honest about who we are and who we are working to become. But when your company is firmly rooted in values, with a culture of purpose that's centered around people and doing good in the world, you can do things you never thought possible, both within your company and outside of it. If we change just one life at each tour stop, it's all worth it. This is how we do our part in driving at better equality and equity, and this will be a continuing journey for us.

Be the light.

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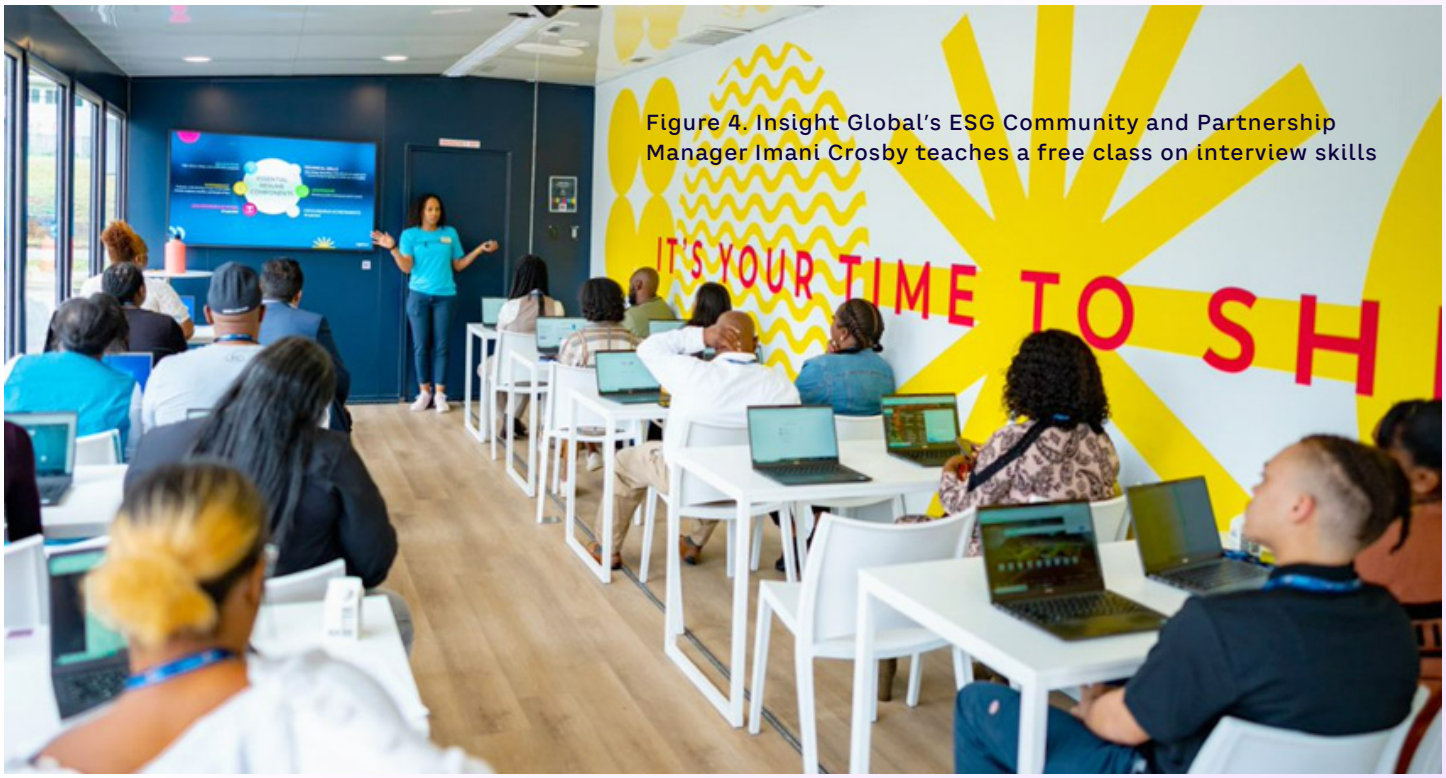

Figure 4. Insight Global's ESG Community and Partnership Manager Imani Crosby teaches a free class on interview skills

About the author

Eli Doster is the Chief Talent Officer at Insight Global, a talent solutions company. Mr. Doster is an 18-year veteran of the staffing industry and has spent his entire career with Insight Global, where he started at entry level as a recruiter. He now oversees all hiring, training, HR, and environmental, social, governance (ESG). Mr. Doster believes deeply in the power of culture and always putting people first. He can be reached at Eli.Doster@InsightGlobal.com.

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PRIORITIZING & ELEVATING WOMEN OF COLOR

Author

Linda A. Patterson

As a woman of color, it is important that when I consider employment with your organization, I see representations of myself in roles across the spectrum — including at the senior level. I'm not suggesting that job qualifications are irrelevant, of course, but I'm asking you to adjust your lens to look past gender and color for talent. Better still, look at women of color and recognize that your organization is in need of their talent.

Women of color are equipped with a tried-by-fire strength that stems from endurance, perseverance, and survivorship. Their formal education is greatly enhanced by the type of intelligence not found in books. Women of color know how to love with a strained, frayed heart and can face their fears without batting an eye.

As CEOs, mamas, and in every other role, women of color manage, create, innovate, strategize, and multitask. But even after adding these powers to their degrees and specializations, they remain a small piece of the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) chart, especially in the upper echelons.

The Lean In organization found that for every 100 men promoted to manager, only 58 Black women are promoted, despite the fact that Black women ask for promotions at the same rate as men.[1] This creates a deficiency in the number of Black women to promote at every level, increasing the representation gap.

Interestingly, women of color are projected to become the workforce majority by 2060.[2] Not only that, but they come bearing gifts: US $1 trillion in their role as consumers and $361 billion as entrepreneurs.[3] Talk about having a major impact on the marketplace. Clearly, companies without women of color are not going to succeed to the degree they would if they hired them. Indeed, these stats suggest businesses would be foolish to let their organization's talent pool be tainted by a lack of equitable opportunities for women of color. Equity aside, businesses are looking to see that your products or services have been vetted by a diverse group of individuals.

Figure 1 shows the five steps businesses can take to create equitable opportunities for women of color in a meaningful, sustainable, measurable way.

1. UNDERSTAND HER

Make a concerted effort to understand women of color. They want business leaders to appreciate and embrace their struggle. Get to know their well-designed minds and how their experiences impact the way they think, behave, and deliver. Know what is important to women of color (not just women in general) and get comfortable with the idea that they have unique variables at play.

For example, women of color are sometimes wary of acting assertively for fear they will be labeled as being too aggressive. In a similar vein, they may believe that asking too many questions will make them appear indecisive, and this can lead to them being less effective at their jobs.

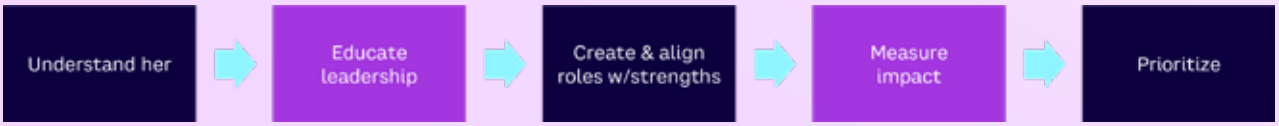

Figure 1. How to create equitable opportunities for women of color

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Another important variable is an extremely low tolerance for inequitable work practices and harassment. This stems from centuries of racism and thus is deeply rooted; for women of color, physical and emotional abuse by other races is a societal norm. Reducing these types of issues requires policies that ensure neither discrimination nor harassment based on race, gender, or sexual orientation will be tolerated under any circumstances, including by top leadership (i.e., "no one is above the law").

MAKE SURE A DIVERSE GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS WRITE, REVIEW, AND APPROVE YOUR POLICIES

Training is the key to reducing harassment incidents, always keeping in mind that employees are often unaware of what could be considered harassment. At a previous employer, HR investigated a situation in which I saw inappropriate pictures on the computer screen of a peer (a white male). Although I did not feel sexually harassed, HR left no stone unturned. It investigated, acted, and brought the case to closure. Although HR certainly cared about me, the employee, it was also avoiding the potential for a lawsuit. Harassment in the workplace is just that serious.

Make sure a diverse group of individuals write, review, and approve your policies. Regularly review those policies to ensure they evolve with your changing workforce. Consider creating an internal dictionary highlighting words and phrases that may come across as offensive to others based on their culture. The latter falls under the category of respect: demonstrating appropriate etiquette is the way we place value on each other.

2. EDUCATE LEADERSHIP

Leaders must be instructed by those at the very top to be intentionally inclusive and held accountable when they are not. They should be trained on the true meaning of DEI and exposed to the stories of women of color. Have them consider how a woman of color who had to constantly stretch a dollar to feed her family became a CFO. Note the ability of women of color to stand when others would collapse under the pressure of corporate America. Women of color are virtually unbreakable. As the poet Maya Angelou wrote, "You may shoot me with your words/You may cut me with your eyes/You may kill me with your hatefulness/But still, like air, I'll rise."

Look at corporate America's constant barrage at women of color's self-esteem and observe their ability to dodge those bullets and forge ahead. When women of color are rejected, they forgive and continue to extend courtesy to the people who rejected them.

Business leaders should be required to evaluate the impact women of color can have on the bottom line based on facts and what the market suggests. They should be encouraged to understand and respect the community that raised a woman of color and the place she received her education.

3. CREATE & ALIGN ROLES WITH STRENGTHS

Women of color have three particular qualities that make them excellent employees and leaders. The first is **resiliency**. When people are constantly offered opportunities, they develop the habit of expecting things to happen with little to no effort on their part. When people must fight for every opportunity, they become highly resilient. (On a personal note, I experienced the latter: made to feel inferior, unworthy, the wrong gender, and certainly the wrong color at every turn. The idea was to hold me back, but that clearly backfired.)

The second quality is **flexibility**. Women of color learn to be highly flexible and creative in order to support and sustain their families. For years, they have similarly found ways to make their voices heard and be recognized in a world reluctant to do so. Against all odds, they nurture those who are unkind to them and those who refuse to see their achievements as noteworthy.

The final quality is a fierce passion for **building relationships**. Women of color are like thoroughbred horses with blinders on: single-mindedly finding creative ways to form amazing relationships. Women of color are kindhearted and able to read between the lines. They know how to cut to the chase and how to categorize relationships so they yield the right results. Women of color see into the souls of others and bring out the best in them.

Could you use someone who possesses these skills? Resilient workers see projects/initiatives through to the end. Flexible leaders view issues from various perspectives and find creative ways to resolve them. Compassionate leaders form solid relationships that yield exceptional results for the organization.

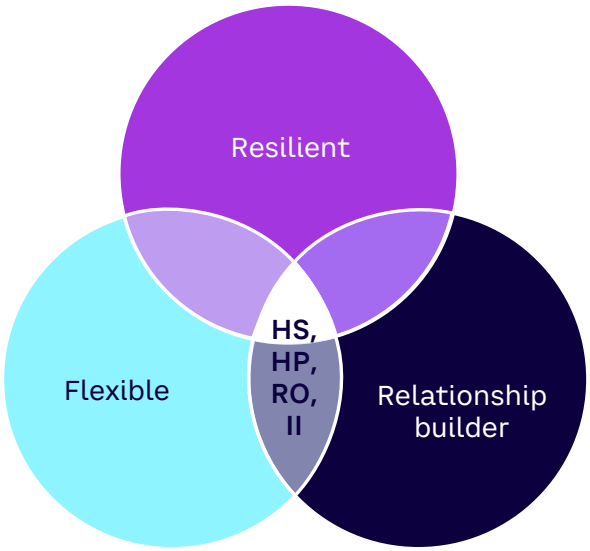

Figure 2. The intersection of resiliency, flexibility, and relationship building is a high-spirited (HS), high-performing (HP), results-oriented (RO), intentionally inclusive (II) business

The intersection, and your ROI, is a high-spirited (HS), high-performing (HP), results-oriented (RO), intentionally inclusive (II) business (see Figure 2). There are people in your customers' circle of business who look like women of color and share their experiences. Expand and grow your business with a brand that meets the diverse needs of your customer base. If you want to sell your new skin product to women of color, how will you do so without the marketing ability of someone who lives in that skin?

4. MEASURE IMPACT

Let business metrics, achieved or otherwise, tell the story. This creates an opportunity to exercise continuous quality improvement and celebrate successes. Your company's gender and talent mix should be as equally proportioned as possible. Perfection is probably not achievable, but more balanced results will demonstrate excellence in achieving diversity goals.

This will take time and work. Being intentionally inclusive of women of color cannot be a fleeting thought; it must be an actionable item. Aim to have women of color in executive roles in about the same numbers of women of other races. Note that the message here is equality: having more women of color than other races/ethnicities in key roles is also not the answer.

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Measuring your results is incredibly important. This is not complicated math. Measure the number of individuals joining your organization and note into which race category they fall. Be granular in your approach, comparing the education, experiences, and talents of each candidate. (This is a good place to say that your HR team must be well trained and intentionally diverse in their staff acquisition, employee retention, and talent management.) The numbers may look bleak at first, but that should help drive the type of II initiatives you create.

Develop goals that begin at the top and cascade down to your lowest staff level. Everyone's goals should be in alignment from the top, and the talent needed to fulfill them should be clearly identified. This includes women of color. When you observe the goals and their alignment with that of the organization, eliminate biases. An assumed bias or generalization is an opportunity for improvement and growth.

> **ASK WOMEN OF COLOR THEIR THOUGHTS, ENGAGE THEM IN CHALLENGING DECISION-MAKING, AND ASSIGN THEM HIGH-VISIBILITY PROJECTS**

Identify educational gaps and extend the mentoring, training, and resources needed to excel. Note where each woman of color started, her end results, and her motivators. Like everyone, the woman of color needs direct, concise feedback and celebration of her successes, large and small. For example, if the goal is to increase market share by 10%, track how the woman of color contributes to this goal. In other words, find where she thrives and utilize her in that capacity.

Establishing clear metrics, and measuring accordingly, will highlight even more of what women of color bring to your company, its relationships, and its bottom line. Allow your customers transparency into your DEI efforts and the impact of women of color.

Make sure to measure the "I can see myself" factor. When individuals in your organization see people like them in certain roles, their goals feel more achievable. When those seeking to join your organization can picture themselves there, it's easier to attract diverse top talent.

Measure how you are marketing for and attracting women of color. Build partnerships with organizations and associations that support women of color such as the National Black MBA Association (NBMBAA) and the Information Technology Senior Management Forum (ITSMF).

Ask women of color their thoughts, engage them in challenging decision-making, and assign them high-visibility projects. Uncast the shadow and let them demonstrate their value. If one woman of color does not work out, don't let them become a premise for avoiding such hires. You have every right to dismiss inferior performance; just make sure your practices are consistent across the board. Give the woman of color the same opportunities to succeed that you would her female or male counterpart of a different race.

5. PRIORITIZE

Does this sound like tedious work? It is, but it's achievable. Make time for it or leverage your staff. Consider hiring an intern or some temporary staff to do some of the work. Leverage the time and talent of your employee resource group (ERG) members. Don't have an ERG? Add this to the top of your DEI initiatives list! Don't have such a list? You're behind the eight ball and need to catch up — fast.

Women of color belong in your business. If you're not creating equitable roles for them, you're dismissing their immense value and may struggle to remain competitive as other businesses embrace their power.

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