



THE CASE FOR INCLUSION & BELONGING IN A DIVIDED AMERICA

**BUILDING AND DEEPENING INTERNAL SUPPORT
FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
WHAT IS INCLUSION AND BELONGING?	2
THE BUSINESS CASE: TALKING POINTS	5
THE CUSTOMER CASE: TALKING POINTS	8
FOUR KEY PUSHBACKS AGAINST ATTACKS	10
OPEN TO ALL RESOURCES HELP COMPANIES BUILD BETTER DEI PRACTICES	14
ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS	22
CONCLUSION	29

INTRODUCTION

This is what we know: Organizations and companies with diverse employees and leaders succeed and innovate at higher levels than their less diverse peers. They are better able to adapt to an increasingly diverse, global customer base, including Gen Z, and to compete more effectively by attracting top employees from the greatest pool of applicants. But to achieve authentic inclusion and belonging requires business strategies and personnel policies that are centered in the values of inclusion and belonging. These efforts can't succeed without broad-based internal buy-in from across departments and levels.

The [political backlash](#) to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is prompting some business leaders to reduce their dedicated DEI staff and soften their visibility. So, the challenge is clear: How do we build a successful culture of inclusion and belonging, expansively applied, while staying outside the political arena? How do we reaffirm our commitment to the practices and ideals that power successful organizations, even as those very things are under attack from elected officials and candidates, social media influencers, and others who wield power over our laws and the national conversation?

This overview contains data, talking points, assessment tools, and resources to help build internal organizational support – a first step toward increasing business success and shaping a world where each of us may contribute and thrive just as we are.

WHAT IS INCLUSION AND BELONGING?

Diversity, equity, and inclusion, taken together, make up a values framework for creating an organization that reflects fairness, empathy, and a focus on thriving. It is grounded in the belief that leveraging a multitude of different perspectives based on diverse individuals' identities and status in society produces results that benefit us all. It also results in greater individual well-being and employee satisfaction, flourishing communities, and improved global competitiveness.

At the core of inclusion and belonging is the acceptance of all members of society, not only members of a minority group. Belonging stems from inclusion, which requires that each person's unique identity is valued; assimilation is not the goal. A business culture that stems from inclusion is marked by high-quality interpersonal relationships and social ease, deeply considered decision-making, and organizational adaptability to change. These elements drive better business outcomes by reducing turnover, improving employee engagement and performance, strengthening team cohesion, and in turn, encouraging growth and innovation.



INCLUSION AND BELONGING IS:



The state in which everyone – regardless of age, class, religion, disability, immigration status, sexual orientation and gender expression, sex, and ethnicity – is seen as their authentic selves and is meaningfully integrated into a group’s mission and culture.



The belief that everyone with good-faith intentions has a role in finding solutions to our challenges, whether business problems or social divisions.



The set of values that often lead workplaces to have employee resource groups, pay transparency, an intentional leadership pipeline, mentoring and apprenticeship programs, work schedules that accommodate caregivers, paid family leave, recruitment activities that reflect new venues and strategies, and policies for psychological safety for all.



The understanding that all of us may have faced grief, trauma, or challenges, and so all of us deserve empathy and a recognition of the dynamics and experiences that shaped us. This understanding must be layered with the reality that some of us have navigated adversity with inherent advantages. And some have not.



A climate in which employees are offered psychological safety – the space to take risks, make mistakes, learn from them, challenge the status quo, and innovate without fear of punishment or the expectation that they mask their unique identities in order to assimilate.

INCLUSION AND BELONGING IS NOT:



Workplace training that makes anyone feel like an outsider or assigns blame to individuals for societal ills



Performative measures intended to give the impression of progress or to check boxes



Shorthand for matters pertaining to human resources; DEI is not a catch-all term for employee training, mediating interpersonal conflicts, or providing disability accommodations.



A hiring strategy exclusively designed to increase staff diversity; instead inclusion and belonging encompasses considerably more, such as psychological safety, an environment where everyone is seen and respected, and the authentic integration of diverse individuals into an organization's mission.



A partisan construct

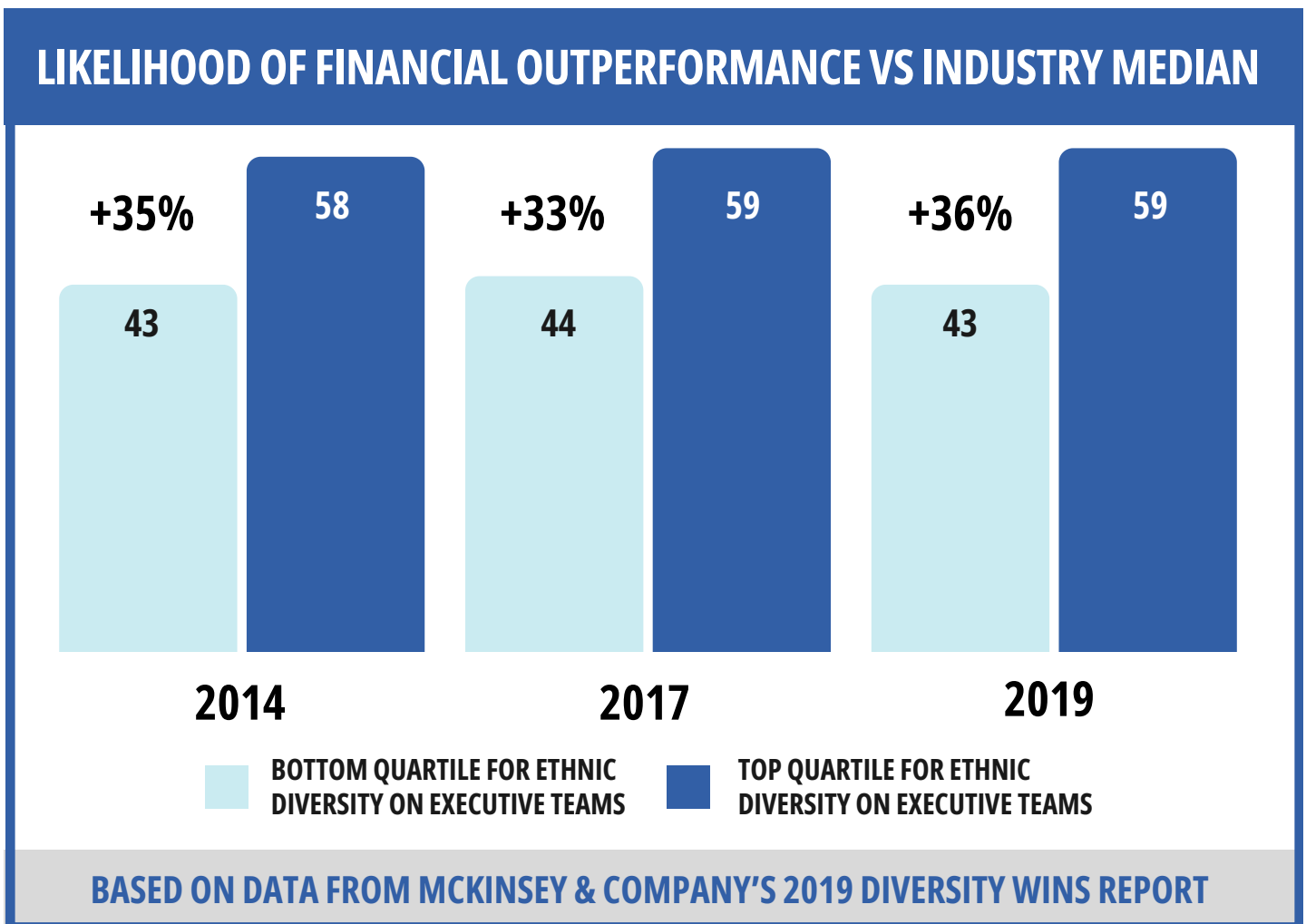


A zero-sum game in which one group loses something to another group. All employees benefit when all employees belong and can work well together.

THE BUSINESS CASE: TALKING POINTS

Business success depends on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. It's not just the right thing to do. It's a smart thing to do.

McKinsey & Company found that “the most diverse companies are now more likely than ever to outperform less diverse peers on profitability.” When it came to cultural and ethnic diversity, McKinsey found that “top-quartile companies outperformed those in the fourth one by 36% in profitability, slightly up from 33% in 2017 and 35% in 2014.”



According to [a Moody's analysis](#) of 596 rated companies, North American companies with higher ratings tend to have greater racial diversity on their boards and in their executive ranks.

There is a feeling that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has rising importance among leaders.

[Workday](#) released survey results in February of 2024 that found 78% of 2,600 global business leaders across departments said the importance of DEI increased in the past 12 months. Some of the top reasons for supporting DEI in the [Workday survey](#) results include:

- Positively impacting business success and results (39%)
- Improved employee engagement (40%) and staff well-being (41%)
- Attracting and recruiting a diverse workforce (43%)



Inclusion and belonging are foundational to American greatness.

It is these values – empathy, inclusion, connection across differences – that, historically, made America a global leader in business, innovation, culture, and governance. These foundational values, although adhered to imperfectly over the centuries, have allowed us to achieve great things – from scientific and technological breakthroughs to culture-defining creative works to our interstate highway system, public libraries, and other projects that have set us apart as a nation and powered our progress in equality and social mobility.

Business support for diversity is broad and understandably self-interested.

Dozens of major American companies argue that having a racially diverse workforce helps them succeed. More than 80 corporations and businesses made their positions known in briefs to the U.S. Supreme Court in support of upholding affirmative action. They include [signatories](#) from Apple, Inc. to Bain & Company to IKEA Retail, USA, and so many others.

Workers like DEI.



More than half – 56% – of employed adults in the United States say focusing on increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion at work is mostly a good thing, according to a [Pew Research Center survey](#). That percentage is lowered by workers who are close to retirement, of whom 52% agree, but raised by the young, those aged 18-29, of whom 68% agree. It is these workers who will be in the workforce for decades to come. Starting now with commitment to DEI will help position your company as a destination employer in the future.

The same study found that 60% of surveyed employed adults claim a staff member whose main job is to promote DEI has had a very or somewhat positive impact on where they work.

THE CUSTOMER CASE: TALKING POINTS

66%

OF US CONSUMERS SAY SOCIAL VALUES
SHAPE THEIR PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

The Deloitte Global 2022 Gen Z & Millennial Survey

DEI prepares businesses for future customers (and increasingly, today's customers)

Creating a sense of belonging for all enables us to work with increasingly diverse customers, citizens, employees and vendors, while allowing us to meet the challenges of the future. U.S. Census data show that the U.S. Diversity Index – a measure of the chance that two randomly chosen people will be from different racial or ethnic groups – was 61.1% in 2020, rising 6 points over 10 years, as reported in [Tableau](#). Expect this figure to keep rising.

Customers are following their values. This creates an opportunity for businesses.

[Edelman](#) found that 64% of consumers choose, switch, avoid, or boycott a brand based on its stance on societal issues. And that almost two-thirds of millennials and Gen Z express a preference for brands that have a point of view and stand for something, according to [Kantar Consulting](#). And [Unilever](#) found that 33% of consumers choose to buy from brands they believe are doing social or environmental good. [An Ipsos survey](#) found that 88% of respondents said companies and brands have a “great deal/fair” amount of responsibility to treat people of different ethnic groups or backgrounds equally, and [49%](#) said they were more likely to purchase something from a brand if it supported diversity and inclusion initiatives.

A retail site that is unwelcoming to ethnic minorities damages the brand and turns off customers.

A [SEPHORA](#)-commissioned study on racial bias in the retail sector revealed that shoppers of color commonly adopt “coping mechanisms” to prevent and respond to bias. These include:

- avoiding store samples
- interacting with store employees to show an intention to buy things
- keeping their hands out of their pockets and other body-language adjustments
- avoiding storefronts in favor of online shopping
- dressing up to project an image of spending power by bringing a designer handbag, for example

The survey found that 30% of shoppers of color felt they were treated unfairly because of their ethnicity, but only 13% spoke up to store management. As a result:

- 3 in 5 of these customers who felt unwelcome said they would not visit that store again and
- 2 in 5 said they would avoid that store at any location.



50% of Black shoppers and 41% of Hispanic shoppers reported being followed or watched by a store employee (compared to 24% of white shoppers); 25% of Black shoppers and 22% of Hispanic shoppers reported being mistakenly accused of shoplifting (compared to 9% of white shoppers), according to [Ipsos Consumer Tracking](#).

FOUR KEY PUSHBACKS AGAINST ATTACKS

1. Inclusion and belonging works.

Diverse teams tend to engage in a more rigorous and thoughtful decision-making process because of the greater potential of different viewpoints. This variety of perspectives pushes individuals to think critically ([Legal Defense Fund](#)). As a trio of workforce experts put it in [The New York Times](#), “Getting people to share what they know that other people don’t know is essential to collective performance.”

Diverse teams make better decisions 87% of the time, according to a [Cloverpop](#) study of 588 decisions made by 184 teams in a wide variety of companies over two years.

“Racial diversity is associated with increased sales revenue, more customers, greater market share, and greater relative profits ,” according to one meta-analysis. ([Legal Defense Fund](#))

“Granting freedoms to one group does not inherently take them away from another,” says an author and researcher in the [Harvard Business Review](#), who argues that “being our authentic selves, becoming our best selves, occasionally fading into the background, and failing in ways that help us and our teams learn” benefits all workers and increases productivity.



Racial diversity is associated with increased sales revenue, more customers, greater market share, and greater relative profits.

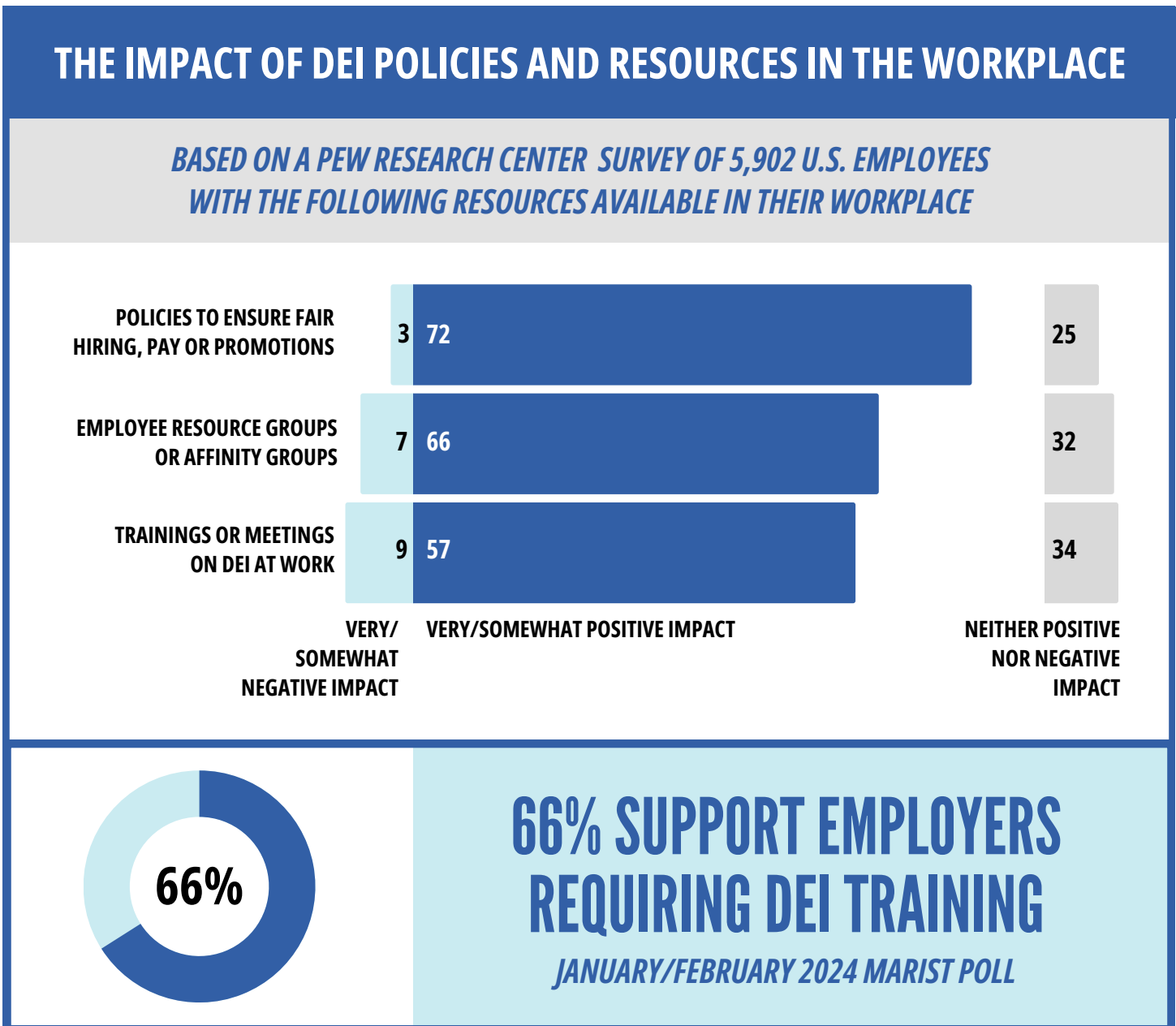


Excerpt from the Legal Defense Fund’s [The Importance of Educating and Employing a Diverse Workforce](#)

72% said policies to ensure everyone is treated fairly in hiring, pay and promotions had a very/somewhat positive effect on their workplace, according to a Pew Research Center survey in February of 2023. Pew also found that:

- 60% said that employee resource groups or affinity groups had a very/somewhat positive effect.
- 57% said trainings or meetings on DEI at work had a very/somewhat positive effect.

66% supported employers requiring DEI training , according to January/February 2024 Marist polling.



78% support businesses taking active steps to ensure companies reflect the diversity of the American population, according to a [Harris/Black Economic Alliance Foundation poll](#) of Americans across diverse racial, generational, and ideological lines in August 2023. This poll also found, with regard to **the effects of racial diversity** on a business, that:

- 87% of respondents agree they help businesses *understand* a broader set of customers.
- 86% agree they help businesses *reach* a broader set of customers.
- 84% agree they help businesses *innovate*.
- 82% agree they have a positive impact on employee performance.
- 80% agree they have a positive impact on talent recruitment.
- 80% agree they have a positive impact on compliance and risk.
- 79% agree they boost profits.
- 79% agree they improve employee retention.

2. Business wants this. And leaders are speaking up.

Diversity efforts are part of the business sector's competitive strategy: [Historic number of corporations filed amicus briefs in U.S. Supreme Court in support of college admissions policies that foster diversity](#)

The ability to communicate and empathize with those who are different from us has become a critical professional competency: Leading American businesses confirm that the ability to relate to people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds is an indispensable skill for job candidates. Students of all racial backgrounds benefit from racially diverse learning environments, which better prepare them to succeed in diverse workplaces and serve a diverse clientele. ([Legal Defense Fund](#))



3. Supporting inclusion and belonging is a fundamental way to gain customers and grow business.

Look to Disney, which has been targeted for its inclusive programming and policy positions. The company's CEO, Bob Iger, [told CNBC](#) that the company's primary goal is to be an "entertainment first company" but was clear that Disney is "trying to reach a very, very diverse audience." Added Iger: "And on one hand, in order to do that, what you do, the stories you tell, have to really reflect the audience that you're trying to reach, but that audience, because they are so diverse, really, first and foremost, they want to be entertained And we just have to be more sensitive to the interest of a broad audience."

4. These ideas are not new. In fact, they're part of our history.

When the issue of race-conscious college admissions was pending before the U.S. Supreme Court, IBM, Aeris Communications, Inc., the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford University, submitted a [brief](#) in which IBM said:

"The diversity of people, cultures, thoughts, and ideas within the STEM workforce is essential to IBM's business – indeed, to its ability to deliver innovative, superior technologies worldwide. This is not a statement of fad or fashion. In 1953, IBM's then-President, Thomas Watson, Jr., sent a letter to all IBM employees, emphasizing IBM's need for a diverse workforce."

1993 DISABILITY RIGHTS PARADE CELEBRATING THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT



OPEN TO ALL RESOURCES HELP COMPANIES BUILD BETTER DEI PRACTICES

Open to All® is a nonprofit nondiscrimination program that believes everyone should be welcome regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, immigration status, religion or disability. Open to All works with nonprofit coalition members and [corporate partners](#) to create a culture of belonging, including our Inclusive Retail campaign and the Mitigate Racial Bias in Retail Charter. By convening nonprofit members of the civil rights community and business leaders, Open to All develops resources and trainings, as well as ongoing programming, to support businesses large and small to be truly Open to All.

Open to All is a member of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.



At a time of deep divisions, we're joining together from all walks of life and work to build a thriving and inclusive world where all are welcome. Businesses, nonprofit organizations, service providers, cities, states, and elected officials can all join Open to All. Our membership includes nearly 700,000 businesses and over 200 nonprofit members. While our corporate partners may be competitors in the marketplace, they come together to help shape Open to All's campaigns, resources, and share best practices in order to transform industries, from retail to beauty to apparel to luxury. Never before have so many businesses and nonprofits joined together in a single, unified campaign that sends a message that everyone is welcome, valued and respected. Because when a business is open to the public, it should be open to all.

Open to All's Theory of Change supports our vision for a thriving, inclusive, competitive America where everyone is welcome. We believe that Open to All can:



BUILD POWER

Build a powerful coalition of businesses, nonprofits, service providers, and public officials capable of advocacy and political pressure by showing the public and elected officials that the companies they respect support nondiscrimination.



CHANGE HEARTS, MINDS & THE CONVERSATION

Change the public and political conversation about nondiscrimination by positioning businesses to create a visible culture of inclusion and fairness, serve as models for other businesses, and transform America beyond the walls of their business.



DRIVE BUSINESS INNOVATION TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Drive change through branding, employee training and business innovation, and to take nondiscrimination work to the next level. The public supports organizations that support nondiscrimination through lists of OTA members and a buy-in strategy.

RESOURCE AND PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

BUSINESS RESOURCE TOOLKIT

Upon joining Open to All, every new business receives our [Business Resource Toolkit](#), which contains an unconscious bias eLearning, co-produced with Ralph Lauren, resources to better serve the populations in our business pledge, sample communications to employees and customers, a downloadable breakroom poster, and consumer research data demonstrating how customers, especially younger generations, seek out brands that align with their values.

INCLUSIVE RETAIL

Frontline workers can face the brunt of customer frustration, which can often manifest in racist or discriminatory ways. While retailers have long trained frontline workers to respect and serve a diverse customer base, Open to All asks customers to join as part of the solution. In 2021, Open to All announced its groundbreaking initiative, Inclusive Retail, a campaign that puts tools and resources in the hands of businesses and customers alike to ensure the inclusion, safety, and acceptance of those on the frontlines of retail: floor staff and sales associates.

Inclusive Retail offers two resources to practice effective allyship and create safe shopping experiences for everyone in retail environments: The [Customer Action Center](#) and [the Inclusive Retail Toolkit](#). These tools contain videos, articles, sample policies, and supplemental materials that continue to build Open to All's library of resources available to those who believe in the culture of inclusion and belonging necessary to being Open to All.

RETAIL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM PILOT BLUEPRINT

VF Corporation's Limitless Learning Retail Apprenticeship program is a year-long program that grants retail associates the chance to develop new skills and make connections in a corporate setting. Presented at [OTA's November Mitigate Racial Bias in Retail Working Group meeting](#), our partners were both inspired and engaged, asking detailed questions so they could explore forming their own pilot apprenticeship program. Open to All and VFC collaborated to create a blueprint for those interested in starting their own pilot apprenticeship program, published exclusively for Open to All members in February 2024.

RESOURCE AND PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP GUIDEBOOK

Open to All, Michael Kors, and Seramount worked together to create a 100+ page resource designed to support both the establishment of new ERGs and refinement of existing ones to bolster their business influence. Adapted from the Seramount ERG Leadership Handbook (2017), the ERG Guidebook features support to further engage store and warehouse teams through unique case studies and industry-wide best practices around the globe. The guidebook will be available exclusively to Open to All corporate members and Seramount partners.

FORTHCOMING RESOURCES

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCES *PUBLISHING IN JUNE 2024*

In partnership with the Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA), the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and Right to Be, Open to All is devoting six-months of our interactive programming to crisis management to address preventing violence, harassment, discrimination in retail locations.

Open to All is prioritizing the creation of a Crisis Management Toolkit that will capture crisis communications planning, brand reputation, safety and security protocols, and other key takeaways for our members.

DISABILITY INCLUSION TOOLKIT *PUBLISHING IN LATE JUNE 2024*

Open to All is partnering with a corporate partner and the American Association for People with Disabilities to create a Disability Inclusion Toolkit to better serve customers and clients with disabilities.

MITIGATING RACIAL BIAS IN RETAIL

Sephora’s Racial Bias in Retail Study: In January 2021, Open to All Leadership Circle member Sephora to release a groundbreaking, large-scale study on [Racial Bias in Retail](#), which found that racial bias in retail is pervasive for both shoppers and employees. As part of [their announcement](#), Sephora unveiled a detailed action plan to tackle bias across all aspects of the organization, including doubling its assortment of Black-owned brands by the end of 2021, implementing new training modules for employees, creating a system for client service and feedback, and building new programs to support sourcing, hiring, and advancement of employees of color. Open to All is a proud partner in this work.



To implement strategies across the retail sector, Open to All partnered with Sephora and members of OTA’s Inclusive Retail working group to collaborate on our Mitigate Racial Bias in Retail Charter, was launched in mid-May 2022. To date, we have nearly 100 signatories. Our ongoing work on this project includes the following components:

- **Anti-racism Training:** Open to All rolled out a Reducing Racism in Retail (R3) training to all companies and organizations signing the Charter. We encourage all Charter signatories that do not have an established anti-racism curriculum to offer the R3 training to their employees.
- **Sharing Best Practices:** On a monthly basis, the OTA Racial Bias in Retail working group meets to share best practices and invites companies to present their work with cross-departmental team members from marketing, human resources, asset prevention, learning and development, talent acquisition, etc.
- **Reporting Progress Annually:** Open to All includes specific data and benchmarks about this collaboration in our annual Open to All Impact Report.
- Collaboration honored by [Fast Company’s Leadership for a Changing World](#) awards in three categories.

INTERACTIVE PROGRAMMING

INTERACTIVE BRIEFING SERIES

One of Open to All's most popular offerings is our monthly briefing series, where we feature nonprofit coalition members, subject matter experts, and corporate partners to share innovative work. Some topics we covered recently: how to best support Muslim employees and customers during Ramadan presented by Muslim Advocates; addressing the rise in anti-Semitic hate crimes with ADL, legal analysis of the United States Supreme Court's decision on affirmative action and implications for corporations with Legal Defense Fund, managing conflict in retail environments with Right to Be, access and accommodation – disability inclusion in the workplace presented by the American Association of People with Disabilities and Disability:IN, and an overview of national and state-level attacks on LGBTQ people with the Movement Advancement Project.

Our briefings are recorded for members to watch at a later date and to share internally. We publish a [blog post](#) following each briefing and share on social media.

OPEN TO ALL ANNUAL CONVENING

In October, Open to All hosts a [hybrid convening](#) in San Francisco and New York. Open to All corporate partners attend [programming](#) over the course of two days, with an awards happy hour. The next convening will be held in mid-October 2024 in San Francisco, and in 2025 in New York.

OPEN TO ALL'S ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

Open to All's [Annual Impact Report](#) dives deeper into this work, highlighting Open to All's growth, interactive programming, resources, and initiatives. The report reflects research, analysis, and interviews with key partners, offering a holistic overview of the major trends and challenges within the realm of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

According to survey respondents, 52% of partners joined the coalition to share and learn best practices from other businesses, researchers, and Open to All resources. 17% of respondents indicated that they joined to drive change in experiences for both employees and customers. 24% wanted to make a collective impact at the industry level more broadly.

COMMUNICATING WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS



Newsletter(s): OTA publishes two newsletters, a monthly edition for a corporate audience and a quarterly one for our nonprofit coalition. Content will include awareness/recognition month programming (e.g., Black History Month, Women’s History Month, Pride, etc.), nonprofit coalition member spotlights, welcoming new members, resources, and advocacy/engagement opportunities, among other content. This allows our members to see how we are addressing the unique needs of the populations in our pledge and center our intersectional approach to fighting discrimination and creating a culture of belonging.



Circle Community: Circle is a community engagement software with a message board, where we house our resources, trainings, toolkits, briefing recordings, etc. in one place. This confidential space is only available to our corporate members, and members are encouraged to post on the message board whenever you have a question for the Open to All corporate community. We encourage staff from various departments to participate, including diversity, equity, and inclusion, human resources, purpose, legal, marketing, public relations, loss prevention, retail operations, and government affairs.

Listserv: In addition to our Circle community, we also have an Open to All listserv to communicate with our community, especially when we are sharing breaking news and resources.

Committees: Open to All hosts two monthly committee meetings, one for communications/PR staff, and an advocacy committee for government affairs and policy staff.

OPEN TO ALL VISIBILITY

Window Clings and a Digital Badge: As part of corporate membership, corporate partners have access to Open to All window clings in English and Spanish, as well artwork in additional languages for global companies. For social media and websites, we offer a digital toolkit and badge. For businesses on Yelp, we have an Open to All attribute so consumers can search for our members by region.



Social Media Assets: Open to All offers an editorial calendar that highlights recognition months, commemorative days, historical moments, and more. As a resource for members, we share Open to All-branded social media assets for these key moments on a monthly basis. Corporate partners are welcome to partners to share internally with employees and employee resource groups, as well as externally on social media if they wish.



Annual Open to All Holiday Gift Guide: The [Open to All Holiday Gift Guide](#) is our only customer-facing publication that we release every year, which includes businesses of all sizes that invest in creating a culture of inclusion and belonging. With products at every price point from an array of inclusive retailers, the Holiday Gift Guide celebrates Open to All's core principle that any business that is open to the public should make everyone feel welcomed, valued, and respected. Featuring iconic global brands and small businesses alike, the Open to All Holiday Gift Guide creates the opportunity for customers to leverage their purchase power in support of businesses that share their values.



ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

The following questions offer a starting point to help DEI leaders internally assess the degree to which key values and processes are present within their organization. These questions, though not a comprehensive list, also provide DEI leaders with ways to think about the dynamics and scope of their position and their strategy for achieving results, while considering the more expansive role that inclusion and belonging may play across their organization.

COMPANY VALUES AND STRATEGY

How are diversity, equity, and inclusion reflected in your company's decision-making processes?

INSTEAD OF THIS

Promoting an employee to a DEI role without the required training and support to be effective in the role. Making the assumption that being a member of an underrepresented group is all that is required for success.

CONSIDER...

Incorporating dedicated DEI professionals into decisions across departments, from marketing and communications to legal to human resources, etc., to ensure their broad-based influence and guidance.

What presence do DEI professionals have in decisions related to personnel, budgets, strategy, product assortment, and asset protection?

What DEI efforts have brought desired results? Which have been ineffective? And how could those be modified for improved results?

How diverse are the vendors your company uses? And what steps are taken to amplify diversity?

How do you track the demographic diversity of your employees?

How do you track the demographic diversity of your customers?

INTERNAL BUY-IN

How do you gather employee feedback about DEI, culture, advancement opportunities, branding, or other topics from members of underrepresented groups within the company?

INSTEAD OF THIS

Asking staff members to raise their hands and take the mic in front of a large group during all-staff meetings or – the other extreme – offering an anonymous comment box where people can vent without any way of having a dialogue with leadership; expecting employees to assimilate into the majority culture, which limits their personal and professional potential, reduces their sense of belonging, and curtails the critical advantages their employer gains from their perspective as it relates to appealing to diverse customers and job applicants, innovating, and fueling business growth.

CONSIDER...

Holding lunch 'n' learns in which one department presents to colleagues from other departments and gathers feedback; creating informal open-door "office hours" as a standing block on the calendar so that employees may stop by to speak privately with their manager or leadership; holding focus group-style polls of employees on potentially sensitive topics, including external branding decisions.

How do you internally communicate company values related to DEI?

INSTEAD OF THIS

Relying on external communication to double as internal communication, so that the public and company employees find out about company values at the same time; arguing solely on behalf of social justice while omitting any connection between DEI and the company's mission.

CONSIDER...

Incorporating your approach to DEI into your job postings and new-employee orientation materials and onboarding activities; recognizing diverse calendar observances in employee newsletters, staff-wide emails, and employee intranet announcements; regularly reminding staff of the benefits and accommodations available to those with diverse identities, including those with caregiving responsibilities; informing staff of the existence of ERGs, communicating that ERGs are not exclusionary, and inviting all to be involved as allies or members of the community; regularly making the case that DEI serves the company mission and drives innovation, growth, and talent acquisition.

If you have employee resource groups, how do you gauge their effectiveness? Do your ERGs serve as touchpoints in broader company communications and strategy?

INSTEAD OF THIS

Leaving ERGs entirely alone, assuming their existence checks an "inclusion and belonging" box.

CONSIDER...

Asking ERG leaders to regularly brief leadership on their group's discussion, activities, interests, and concerns; asking ERG members to consult on topic-specific matters – such as specific products and messaging, identity-based observances, or current events – as a way of leveraging their insights and experiences for the good of the company.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

What actions have been taken to communicate a commitment to DEI externally? What were your goals? And what public response did you receive?

INSTEAD OF THIS

Surprising employees by releasing ambitious DEI statements publicly, despite any genuine reflection of those statements in company operations, human resources policies and staff makeup.

CONSIDER...

Laying the culture and policy groundwork internally first to ensure the external and internal messages are consistent with one another. Lean on the appropriate ERG to ensure external messaging is not shaped by any stereotypes or tokenism.

How do you vet external partnerships, influencers, and co-branding opportunities related to DEI?

INSTEAD OF THIS

Making unilateral decisions within one department, such as marketing, with no input from other departments, ERGs, or members of the community that is about to be highlighted through the elevation of a particular influencer or outside brand.

CONSIDER...

Seeking broad-based feedback across the staff, including ERG members; search social media for any controversies that should factor into any future affiliation; gather information about any past co-branding or spokesperson activities to ensure past associations align with your company's goals and audience.

HIRING, PROMOTING, AND RECRUITING

What processes or tools do you have to ensure a diverse leadership pipeline?

INSTEAD OF THIS

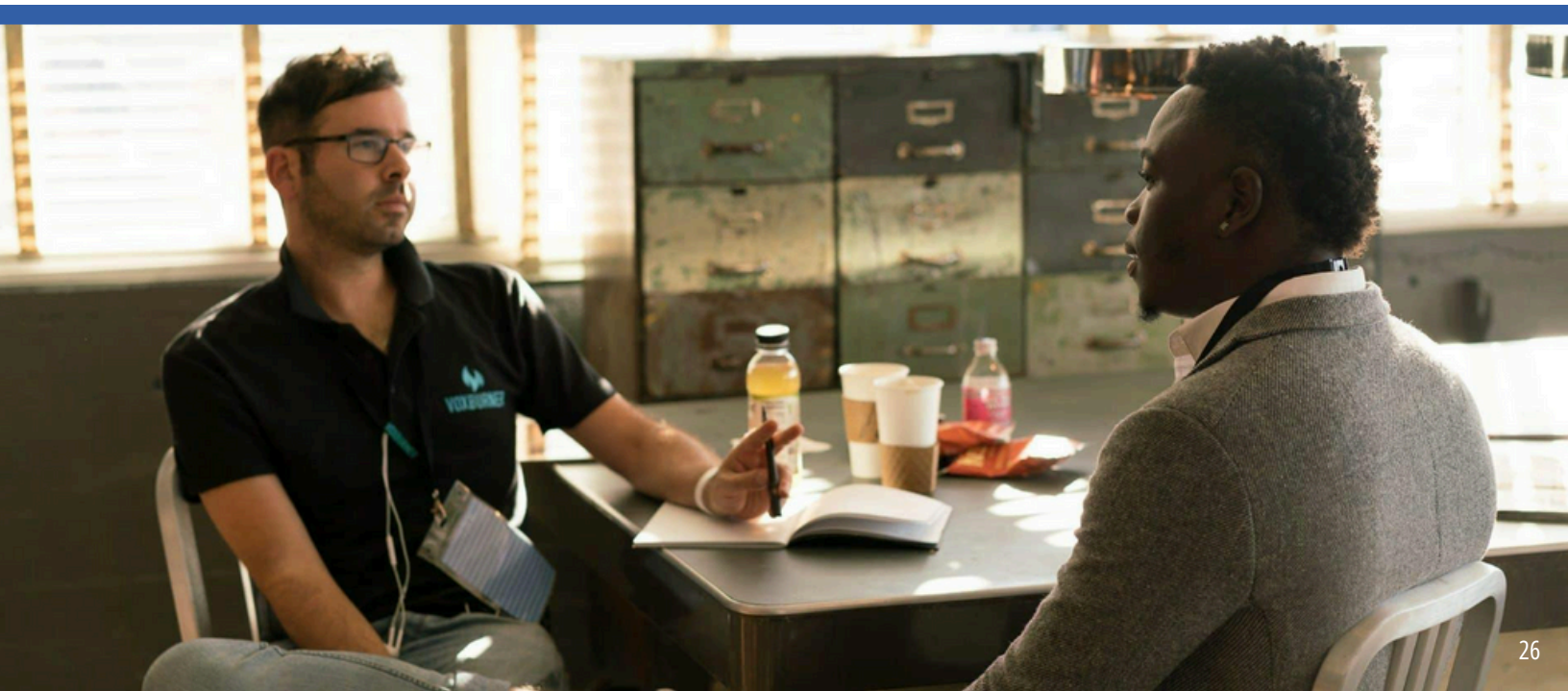
Relying on longstanding friendships, shared organizational membership and hobbies, alumni events at the CEO's alma mater, favors to friends' and neighbors' children, and other avenues that preserve homogeneity.

CONSIDER...

Recruiting employees and interns from diverse sources, including HBCU job fairs and high schools with high percentages of underrepresented students; creating an apprenticeship or mentoring program for entry-level employees and interns; look at engaged ERG leaders for possible advancement.

How do your employee recruitment processes reflect your commitment to DEI?

What aspects of company culture or onboarding provide psychological safety to employees?



HOW THEY DID IT: INNOVATION CASE STUDIES

These companies show us how their commitment to inclusion fueled innovation and expanded their reach and customer appeal.

WE ARE ALL EXPLORERS

JanSport has long envisioned a world where everyone can easily explore. With their Adaptive Collection, the company is one step closer to making this vision a reality. For three years, JanSport worked with the disability community and the renowned disability advocacy organization, [Disability:IN](#), to design a collection of adaptive products designed to empower individuals with diverse abilities, including those who use a wheelchair.

When JanSport decided to enter the adaptive technology space, they understood the importance of hearing directly from the mobility device community. With the guidance of Disability:IN, JanSport conducted extensive research, including focus groups, polling, and wear testing, to tailor the products to those who needed them most. Featuring adjustable straps, accessible zippers, and durable fabrics, the company's adaptive backpack and crossbody reimagine iconic JanSport products to be more functional for everyone.

JanSport's commitment to inclusion and innovation is highlighted in their cross-departmental work to release these products. Not only were members of the mobility-device community engaged in focus groups and product testing, but the marketing campaign's producer, actors, and models were all members of the community.



A HEALTHIER OPTION FOR EVERYONE

In 2014, Jody Wood, a meal coach at a [Wegmans Food Market](#) in Bridgewater, New Jersey, was looking for healthy foods for her husband, whose Type 2 diabetes was making it difficult for him to walk. A conversation with a Wegmans customer led her to search for low-glycemic recipes, including cauliflower “rice,” finely chopped cauliflower which can be swapped for high-starch rice. After some collaboration and experimentation with her teammates at Wegmans, Wood connected with senior leadership, which had a culture of seeking ideas and experiences from front-line customer-service employees. Cauliflower rice would soon be offered at about 100 Wegmans stores.



“Cauliflower rice helped keep Wegmans on the cutting edge of innovative foods for health-conscious consumers,” reported [GreatPlaceToWork.com](#). “And it has been such a hit that Wegmans says it has doubled the volume of cauliflower it sells.” ([Cooking Up Innovation at Wegman’s](#))

MORE SIZES, MORE CUSTOMERS



In March of 2023, H&M U.S. expanded their extended size assortment, featuring products that go up to 2XL in stores for women and men and up to 4XL online for women and 3XL for men. Acknowledging the industry-wide challenges that prohibit size-inclusive change, H&M U.S. took steps to make the brand more inclusive for the plus-size community by having an explicit focus on offering a more comprehensive and diverse assortment of sizes for all body types. H&M U.S. worked behind-the-scenes to identify specific areas of improvement by making fashion accessible to all customers, which included how best to photograph and represent this customer in their marketing and imagery.

CONCLUSION

82%

AGREE ACTIONS ON INCLUSION AND EQUALITY
MEAN NOTHING UNLESS THEY ARE INTEGRATED
THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE BUSINESS.

The Deloitte Global 2022 Gen Z & Millennial Survey

From the business case to the consumer case, we know that a sense of belonging means that when our different identities, life experiences, and perspectives are allowed to surface authentically, we all enjoy wide-ranging benefits such as innovation, national competitiveness, profits, and improved quality of life.

We must all work together to shape a future in which job applicants know their merits are being genuinely considered, and that their gender, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, religion, or other identity-based qualities are not quietly disqualifying them. We must all help to advance a society in which everyone feels safe and respected and has something to contribute. **Open to All is your partner in this work.** We convene business and civil rights leaders to share best practices, to learn and grow with one another, acknowledging that this work can be challenging and wide-ranging.

Today there are so many attempts to divide us, to insist that one person's dignity is a loss for someone else. But we can turn back the divisiveness. We can come together and create a world where we are all welcomed, valued, and seen – and let us all share in the rewards.