



3 Trends that Shape Today's DEI Strategy – and What CEOs Can Do

by Jim Rottman, Founding Practice Leader, AccelPeople™

The start to this decade has seen a call for greater diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) – as well as a need for social justice. The world and the workplace are re-focusing at light speed, challenging CEOs to confront this unique moment.

Recent events are a reminder of the persistent inequities that pervade our societies and economies. As organizations are asked to take on more responsibility for addressing social justice and ensuring that diversity and equality become the norm, there is an opportunity to implement an effective approach to diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace, together with a renewed commitment to tangible change.

The new social contract reinforces that CEOs can no longer ignore their role and their organization's responsibility to create a critical culture to future-proof and build organizational resilience. As a CEO, what do you believe about DEI? And specifically, what will you do to make your company more diverse? Now more than ever, amid such sweeping expectations, CEOs have an opportunity to make this a defining moment for their organization and their leadership brand.

Successful organizations are powered by their employees' diverse perspectives, ideas, skill sets, and life experiences. Inclusive organizations take a more comprehensive responsibility, not just for the impact on their employees' lives but also on the broader communities where they operate, working towards social justice and equity for all.

To tap into the full potential of human diversity, organizations need to hire, develop and advance diverse talent – and create an inclusive working culture enabling people to thrive at work. Ensuring racial justice, gender parity, LGBTQ+ equality and inclusion of all forms of human diversity needs to be the "new normal" in the workplace set to emerge from the pandemic and racial crisis.



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There are three trends that CEOs should not ignore:

1. The World is Watching

After George Floyd's death in May 2020 and the subsequent protests, many companies and their CEOs issued statements or spoke about the need to do more to address inequality in the workplace. There needs to be action behind those words.

Organizations that do take action will be rewarded and recognized. Those who say and don't act will be judged by employees, customers, investors, and stakeholders. Potential impact to your brand, your ability to recruit the best talent, and your perceived value depends on your actions, not your words. The spotlight is bright right now.

2. Employee Activism

The creation at Google of an employee union, a rarity in Silicon Valley, follows years of increasing outspokenness by Google workers. Leaders have struggled to handle the change.

The new union, the Alphabet Workers Union, was organized in secret for the better part of a year. Unlike a traditional union that demands that an employer come to the bargaining table to agree on a contract, the Alphabet Workers Union said its primary purpose was to become more vocal on matters like diversity, pay discrimination, and sexual harassment.

Are you listening to your employees? They may not be forming a union, but they are most likely the voice of diversity, equity and inclusion in your organization and leading the way. You can either let them define the new workplace values, mindsets and behaviors - or you can work with them to create a workplace culture that allows everyone to thrive.

3. A Need to Belong

Belonging is more than inclusion. You can be asked to join in and be included in something but not feel that you belong. Belonging at work means you are seen for your unique contributions, connected to your co-workers, supported in your daily work and career and proud of your organization's values and purpose.



What can I do as a CEO?

For most organizations, pursuing a more equitable workplace and a sense of belonging is like chasing a moving target. Will a new employee resource group, a better women's leadership conference, another day of training, a chief diversity officer, or a bigger donation to charity do the trick? These are worthwhile priorities, but don't address the fundamental challenge.

We believe that you need to start by shifting DEI from a priority to define it as an organizational value. The difference is critical, and vital to making significant changes happen. To make this a reality – from the boardroom and C-suite to all employees – shift your thinking to values. Values and beliefs drive culture and behaviors. Priorities can change at any time.

Done correctly, making small investments toward creating a culture of belonging and inclusion will pay huge returns as your company grows. Similar to compound interest, starting sooner rather than later significantly increases your return.

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It is the responsibility of leadership to create a culture and environment where you can fully realize the benefits of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. This is the critical differentiator, and it will be one of the defining leadership attributes for the next generation. What will you do to make every employee feel that yours is a company they are proud to be a part of?





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Rottman is the founding practice leader of AccelPeople™, Westwood & Wilshire's Center for Organizational Excellence, providing enlightened people practices for world-changing companies in life sciences, healthcare, and advanced technology. These practices cultivate an environment where all employees can thrive and contribute to business innovation, while leaving behind a legacy of positive impact.

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP WITH US...

If you would like expert advice on how to create an effective DEI and belonging strategy, re-focus your existing strategy or understand how to be a more effective CEO on the topic of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging please [get in touch](#). We'd love to connect.

ABOUT ACCELPEOPLE



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