**CAHRS
Virtual
Working Group
Series:**

**Diversity,
Equity &
Inclusion**

# Part 2: Facilitating Constructive DE&I Conversations in the Workplace
## March 3, 2021

As employees across every industry engage in discussions of racial justice following the events of Summer 2020, companies are seizing this moment to consider their role in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) in their organizations. Recent data shows that the under-35 talent segment pays particular attention to organizations' DE&I efforts and values having tough conversations about the systemic bias that continues to pervade the workplace. This CAHRS working group focused on how organizations are facilitating constructive DE&I conversations.

# DISCUSSION TAKEAWAYS

1. Many organizations are taking a top-down approach to DE&I training, focusing efforts on people leaders and HR leaders first. **The power and influence to implement change across the organization lies with leadership.**

    a. "Micro-learning" opportunities focused on DE&I, role-play workshops, toolkits, and trainings for managers and senior leadership on how to have inclusive conversations about identity and race were frequently offered. These tools focused on encouraging people to be comfortable talking with each other, not necessarily on managers overseeing those conversations.

    b. A challenge is that because these training programs are voluntary, those leaders that do not see the value proposition of these opportunities will not participate. There is a need to hold all leaders accountable to engage in DE&I conversations, even if that accountability is learning how to navigate these discussions. It is also crucial that leaders communicate their progress and experiences with these trainings to their teams, so that employees can gain an awareness of what steps managers are taking toward inclusive leadership.

2. Organizations are also **engaging employees from the bottom-up.** This involves listening to employees through surveys and Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and then action planning based on what is heard.

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3. Organizations are holding themselves accountable by **setting company-wide DE&I goals and individual goals as a part of performance evaluations.** Employees track their progress through regular conversations with their direct supervisor. Some organizations are tying executive compensation to meeting these goals. It is important that any goals that are set are specific and measurable.

4. Organizations are **using data to identify which areas of the business are behind in diverse representation** within teams and among leadership. Disaggregating demographic data yields clearer results and sharing this data publicly increases accountability.

5. A continued challenge is to **bridge conversations about DE&I across global teams**, especially in countries with a more homogenous workforce.

6. **Organizations can build psychological safety in their workplace** by sharing commitments from leaders to continue to learn and take accountability for their actions. It is also important to take employee feedback very seriously to show that your company is committed to a safe environment. Safety can also be built for leaders by creating open forums to ask questions, seek advice, and share challenges they face when having DE&I conversations.

7. It has been challenging for some companies to source diverse candidates for offices that are not in diverse communities. **The post-pandemic workplace presents an opportunity to open hiring to new populations** as certain teams remain working remotely and offer location flexibility. Companies are leveraging external resources, such as partnerships with professional organizations and universities, to source diverse candidates.

8. To measure the success of DE&I programs and initiatives, it is important to **set up a baseline of where your organization is at and measure progress against those metrics.** Companies are measuring the impact of programs through data gathered from employee pulse surveys and other channels. It is essential that organizations do not just show their end goals, but understand the steps they will take on the journey to reach these goals and ensure that there is a process in place to get there.

This Summary Report was prepared by Brad Bell for participants of the Facilitating Constructive DE&I Conversations in the Workplace Virtual Working Group.

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