

# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

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NEEDS A RETHINK

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ON CULTURAL BIAS



**Discover 5 things inclusive  
leaders do differently.**

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## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

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### CULTURAL EXTENSION

# Firms obsessing over 'culture fit' need a shake-up

Recruiting and developing employees who fit neatly into a pre-defined culture can create a one-dimensional workforce, and this attitude needs to change for businesses to be truly inclusive

Iman Amrani

**W**hen Reveal at the Center for Investigative Reporting decided to dig around the diversity data in Silicon Valley, some organisations pushed back.

Data-mining company Palantir argued that publishing the one-page document, which all companies with 100 or more employees need to send to the US federal government each year, known as EEO-1 reports, would put them at risk of having their diverse talent poached by competitors.

Yet when they were forced to publish their 2015 diversity numbers after a public records battle, it turned out they in fact had no female executives and only one woman, who was white, among its managers. Both Oracle and Pandora offered up similar reasons to not publish their EEO-1 reports as they fought to keep their diversity statistics a secret.

The reality is that these companies were scared of what the data would say about them. Silicon Valley is known just as much for its difficulties with diversity as it is for technology and it's an issue that isn't going anywhere. Many tech giants, such as Apple, Facebook, Uber, Google and Amazon, have accepted this and already release their EEO-1 diversity numbers publicly.

With the focus on diversity intensifying, companies burying their head in the sand are in for a rude awakening. Instead of fighting the inevitable and trying to cover up homogenous working environments, forward-thinking businesses are looking at how to embrace the future and strengthen not only their workforce, but also their brands, which will help them to continue attracting the best people to jobs.

Fed up of consistently being the only black woman in the room, Kike Oniwinde started the BYP Network to help connect talented black young professionals for networking and career opportunities.

"Millennials are big on diversity and inclusion," she says. "They aren't keen on working for firms that aren't diverse so those places are missing out on this young talent."

This prioritisation of diversity isn't just limited to millennial employees from minority backgrounds. According to the Institute for Public Relations, 47 per cent of millennials in the United States cite diversity and inclusion as important factors in a job search. In short, if



Hafeez Razali/Shutterstock

companies want to attract the best people, they will have to prioritise diversity too.

The fallout of #MeToo, the gender pay gap and a rising social awareness around issues affecting minority groups has put a spotlight on our attitudes in the workplace. Compulsory unconscious bias training and sessions around behaviour at work can be uncomfortable, but their prevalence in recent years show that things are moving in a new direction. So how can managers really improve their environments long term?

The answer lies squarely in hiring and retaining the best talent from a variety of backgrounds. According to a HackerRank survey in 2017, hiring managers' top priorities are the right skills and culture

fit (80.5 per cent), future performance (50.6 per cent) and retention (37.8 per cent).

The issue is that managers who continue to recruit in their own image and remain focused on potential employees being a "cultural fit" will find their pool of talent to be limited and the culture of their working environment similarly constrained. To build dynamic teams with fresh ideas, managers need to remain open to things they aren't familiar with.

Liz Johnson, who won a gold medal during her career as a Paralympian swimmer and last year launched a recruitment consultancy The Ability People to promote diversity, doesn't think that the sidelining of certain demographics is necessarily intentional.

"There's a completely untapped pool of people who were being completely ignored because people make assumptions," she says. "Quite often people live in their bubble and until you come across different people, they aren't on your radar; you just don't realise they are out there."

Ms Oniwinde cites this as one of the factors that has affected Silicon Valley. "In the tech world, this happens a lot because of the rapid expansions, because they want to grow so quickly, they aren't looking beyond their networks," she explains.

Getting a diverse pool of applicants is just the first hurdle. More than half of disabled adults in the UK are unemployed, compared with just one in five non-disabled adults, according to a 2017 study by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. In many cases it's not their ability to do a job that holds them back, but different barriers to conventional working environments; barriers that employers could help to alleviate.

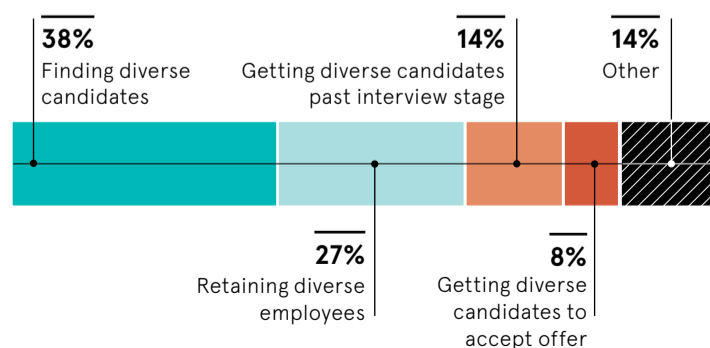
"More and more organisations are finding the benefits in flexible working, working from home or in other locations," says Ms Johnson. "We don't prescribe any working hours for our staff. They are given roles to work on and tasks to do; we trust that because they are committed they will get it done."

Mario Debout, who heads up Robin des Bois, an international commercial agency in Austria's capital Vienna, says: "What we clearly say in our hiring process is that it's less about the culture, it's more about the values that matter to us. If you want to go global as a company, you need a global team; every employee you bring in has their network in their country of origin."

He concedes, however, that having a diverse workforce has presented its challenges. "At the beginning, we had to grow quite fast and I think I underestimated the language barrier. I thought because we are all creatives and everything we do is visual that in the end it would all sort itself out, but it's not the case," says Mr Debout.

If organisations really do want to create long-lasting cultures that serve to maximise productivity and attract the best new talent, it will require creating processes to support employees. Mentoring, flexible working and extra training take time, money and resources, but companies can't afford not to take steps towards the future if they want to exist in it. ●

### EMPLOYERS' BIGGEST BARRIERS TO IMPROVING DIVERSITY



LinkedIn 2018

# Five things inclusive leaders do differently

Inclusion doesn't just happen. Here's what leaders can do

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) is trending. Heads of talent recently surveyed by Gartner selected D&I as the chief executive's number-one talent priority. While culture is the most cited talent management issue on earnings calls with investors, mentions of D&I have risen by 17 per cent since 2011 as executives increasingly recognise its close alignment with the overall success of a business.

"D&I is adjacent to so many business priorities," says Lauren Romansky, managing vice president at Gartner Research & Advisory. "We already know that diverse and inclusive workforces drive employee productivity and retention.

"More broadly, cultures in which leaders and employees are tightly aligned in messaging, behaviour and processes can improve their performance by up to 9 per cent against revenue goals, up to 22 per cent against employee performance goals and up to 16 per cent against reputation outcomes."

But inclusion is a discrete piece of the culture and performance puzzle that not every organisation tackles explicitly. And in the age of digitalisation, when innovation and collaboration are paramount, a lack of inclusivity will directly hurt business performance.

"CEOs want the best ideas and that means getting a diverse set of contributors, different opinions or points of view that challenge the mainstream," says Ms Romansky.

Take Red Hat, the world's leading provider of open-source enterprise

solutions, including Linux, and well known as an innovative organisation. The company has built into its processes the expectation that all decisions will be made inclusively. The company believes, and Ms Romansky concurs based on Gartner research and client engagements, that decisions made with diverse input produce better outcomes than those without it.

"Leaders who are inclusive build inclusive teams and those teams clearly outperform all other teams," says Ms Romansky. "In fact, teams with high inclusion and high diversity even outperform teams with high diversity but low inclusion, by 1.4 times."

So what should you do to be more inclusive or develop inclusivity in your leaders and teams? Ms Romansky offers a guide to the five things that inclusive leaders do differently.

**Show integrity and settle conflict productively**

These behaviours really differentiate the most consistently inclusive leaders, who are always fair and productive both in their own behaviour and how they allow others in their team to interact with each other. They make clear you want to hear the truth about a situation no matter how inconvenient or unpleasant, and ensure task conflicts are resolved in ways that leave all team members feeling respected and heard. Inclusive leaders are able to leverage conflict productively to enhance team performance.

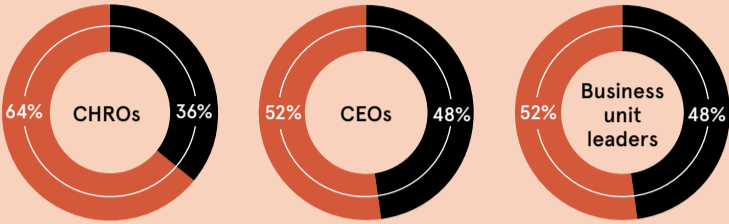
“Leaders who are inclusive build inclusive teams and those teams clearly outperform all other teams

## Commercial feature

### LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Percentage of heads of D&I who said their organisations hold the following leaders accountable for D&I progress

● No ● Yes

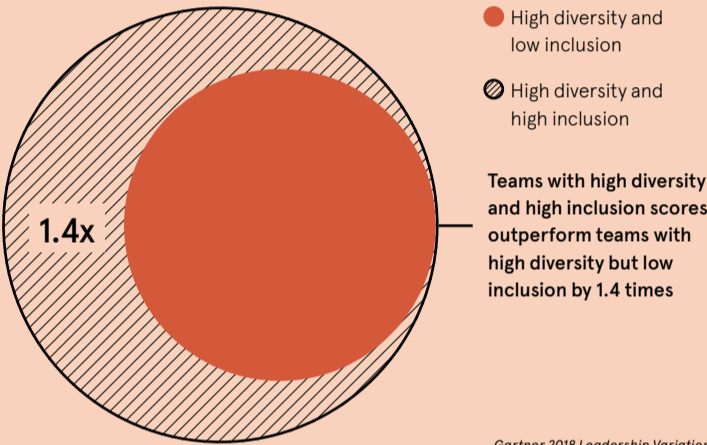


Gartner 2018 Diversity & Inclusion Agenda Poll

64%

of CHROs are held accountable for D&I progress. CHROs report their CEOs are more closely involved in D&I than any other talent priority.

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPACTS EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE



Gartner 2018 Leadership Variation Study

Inclusive teams – where all members are treated fairly, have equal access to opportunities, and can contribute to their full potential – work ...

12%

harder and are ...

57%

more collaborative.

#### Create a safe space where people feel free to take risks

The goal is to create a setting where everyone is safe to take risks, voice their opinions and ask questions. To make this "psychological safety" routine, inclusive leaders consistently seek different perspectives, set up check-ins with team members from different backgrounds and ask about their perceptions of work and communication styles, and inclusion. To encourage participation, they leverage employee resource groups and partner with them on discussion around difficult D&I topics and current events.

#### Walk the talk and back it up with processes

As mentioned, culture is the backdrop to D&I. The most effective leaders not only act as role models through their words and personal actions, they also ask the critical question: "Do the

processes and policies I am responsible for live the culture?" Let's say an organisation is trying to drive a culture of collaboration and yet its people are constantly forced to say, "Great idea, but I don't have that in my budget". The siloed budgeting process is acting as a barrier to collaboration, probably inadvertently, but it is nevertheless sabotaging efforts to include a variety of stakeholders and opinions. Leaders own these processes and must take responsibility for removing process barriers to D&I goals.

#### Be accountable

Metrics are crucial to tracking progress against inclusion objectives, though they should be consistent with the organisation's culture to ensure success is tied to performance goals. Inclusive leaders ask employees about mindsets, behaviours observed and outcomes they're looking for. When possible, they also ask employees what they see, compared with what they do themselves. In our experience, this approach elicits more honest answers. Though it's productive to partner with human resources to develop metrics and garner feedback, we've also seen leaders successfully captain their own surveys across business units.

#### Broker network connections

Leaders can't be all things to all employees. Their team members

may be looking for mentorship or support, especially if they're under-represented at the organisation or see themselves as an outlier in any way. Inclusive organisations use their networks to broker meaningful connections for employees and support their participation in firm initiatives, such as business-aligned employee resource groups. If done well, these groups can drive inclusion and empower employees.

#### How inclusive is your team?

Download your self-assessment to find out and get exclusive access to our latest content on D&I. Hear from our leading speaker Lee-Anne Vallée, director of HR advisory at Gartner, to learn how you can eliminate bias within processes to ensure equitable hiring, pay, reviews and assignment of promotable work. Get your inclusivity assessment and watch on demand at: [gtnr.it/d-i](https://gtnr.it/d-i)

For more information please contact [hrleaders@gartner.com](mailto:hrleaders@gartner.com)

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Drew Angerer/Getty Images

## TRANSPHOBIA

# Businesses must do more to tackle transphobia

With discriminatory attitudes to trans people still rife in the workplace, it is vital that business leaders are proactive in making all employees feel comfortable and supported

Nichi Hodgson

A damning new report from Stonewall has highlighted transgender discrimination in the workplace. Interviewing 871 trans and non-binary people, the report found that 51 per cent had hidden their identity at work for fear of discrimination, while one in eight had been physically attacked by a colleague or customer in the past year.

So just exactly what is it like to be transgender in the workplace? What are the persistent problems, how can they be overcome and what constitutes a supportive work environment?

In the first instance, discretion is a vital component of combating transgender discrimination and ensuring trans employees feel comfortable at work. Sarah Linhart, 47, is a Hertfordshire IT consultant who chooses to keep trans identity private at work. To date, Sarah has preferred to take on shorter contracts, in part to protect her privacy, although it hasn't always been a safeguard. "About five years ago, I had the wrong documentation and the HR lead came running down the corridor to tell everyone, basically outing me," Sarah says.

For Mal Clarke, 21, a customer-facing hospitality worker from Cambridge who is out at work, employer support makes all the difference when protecting against transgender discrimination. "At one workplace, three male customers started shouting abuse at me in reception. A colleague stepped in and said we've got to tell them they're breaking the law, before a manager removed them from the site. It made such a

difference that my colleagues had my back," Mal says.

On changing jobs, Mal was instrumental in helping to write the new employer's trans policy. "The management firstly asked lots of questions. Then there was admin to deal with, such as how the business filed documents in old and new names if people had not legally amended all paperwork," Mal says. "Initially my pay slips came up in my old name and were visible to other staff. We devised a separate filing system so that things with my old name were stored in a private database."

Uniform policy also needed revising. "Hotel staff tend to wear male or female uniform. We changed people's choice to wear either or both, depending on preference, and started referring to them in terms of sizes rather than gender," Mal adds.

Mal even helped with updating the recruitment forms, suggesting a gender-neutral title and preferred name option, and an option to state if they were trans.

For Mal, comfort at work is dependent on a supportive manager: "She's put the policy we devised up in the office to remind everyone of what's acceptable, from asking what pronouns to use, to how to support someone in front of a troublesome customer. In the past, I've had managers not guide the staff and then staff get it wrong, making it much harder."

While Mal was happy to help devise company policy, the onus should not be on transgender staff to create or implement it, says Gina Battye, an LGBT+ inclusion consultant. "The best organisations act before they even think they have a transgender or non-binary employee," says Gina. "This means staff-wide training at all levels, updating any existing diversity and inclusion policies, and role modelling around inclusion,

getting leaders to demonstrate they are being authentic, which encourages everyone in the organisation to do the same."

When Veronica Mead, a project supply manager at Airbus, came out to her employers about transitioning, they did not initially have a policy against transgender discrimination either. "Airbus has always been a very people-friendly organisation, partly, I believe, due to their European outlook," says Veronica. "They learnt with me during the process and it helped when they took the lead on things, such as HR emailing everyone that someone was transitioning, and offering to announce that in a site-wide communication to the staff. Ultimately I decided to do this myself, but their offer mattered."

And when it came to taking time off for medical treatment, Airbus did not push Veronica to use her holiday leave, something still commonplace in many organisations. But despite a supportive management and HR team, there were still some IT-based oversights along the way.

"By the time I'd transitioned, we had worked out an organisation-wide communications plan, and HR records and IT systems were largely updated," says Veronica.

**"I had the wrong documentation and HR came running down the corridor to tell everyone, basically outing me**

# 51%

of trans people had hidden their identity at work for fear of discrimination

# 24%

did not get a promotion they were up for at work because they were trans

Stonewall 2018

# 88%

of UK employers do not have any policies specific for transgender workers

# 1 in 3

have admitted they are less likely to hire a trans person

Crossland Solicitors 2018

"But there was this email distribution list which contained my old name from before I transitioned. More than three years later, I still ended up receiving an email containing my old name. IT needed to have changed the script so that my old address was dead, but we hadn't thought about this."

Other repeat sticking points included colleagues not using the correct name or pronouns and security passes not being regularly updated during the process of someone transitioning, all of which inclusion consultant Gina believes can be ironed out with business-wide training. "Most of the time, people don't come out unless they're ready to transition, especially when they're non-binary; unconscious bias is such a big hurdle. But if you train people from the off, the empathy will develop that can offset this," says Gina.

And it's still so necessary. For Sarah, remaining quiet about being trans doesn't exempt her from transgender discrimination. "Someone I once worked with once said, 'If I was ever sitting next to one [someone transgender], I'd know 'cos I'd smash their face in'. It sometimes seems like we're the only people left that it's OK to mock," says Sarah. "When the manager doesn't cut that kind of talk down, it's simply unacceptable." ●

## SOCIAL MOBILITY

# The true cost of unpaid fashion internships

Unpaid internships in London's elite fashion industry are hindering social mobility, with the costs involved simply out of reach for many aspiring professionals

Ana Santi

**I**ncestuous networks need to be dismantled. Black books need to be opened up. We need to start recognising that those who look, feel and sound different to us are probably the greatest gift the fashion industry could ever receive."

For an industry that has traditionally relied on recruiting through cliques and unpaid internships, fashion has a saviour in Farrah Storr, the editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan*, whose impassioned words reflect a mission to open up opportunities in the industry.

Last month, the women's glossy magazine launched a competition in partnership with flatshare site SpareRoom to offer four people a month-long paid scholarship with accommodation in central London included.

"One of the biggest criticisms of the media, and by association the fashion media, is that it is populated by those from a certain socioeconomic background," says Ms Storr. "You generally need to be in



the capital to take up unpaid internships. That means you either need to be based in or around London, or have sufficient means by which to support yourself. So right there you are excluding large swathes of talent because of the class and postcode into which they were born."

The reaction from a former fashion publishing intern, who spent several months at *Vogue* on an unpaid internship, was happy disbelief. "They get free accommodation? And the London living wage?" she asks. "I had to sleep on friends' sofas and get help from my parents. Once *Vogue* was on my CV, I started to get loads of requests from other magazines to

do unpaid internships. I thought a job would be just around the corner, but after 18 months my parents said enough was enough. I remember my dad saying that the industry was funded by the parents of intelligent young women."

A recent study from The Sutton Trust, which aims to enhance social mobility through educational opportunity, found that 86 per cent of internships in the arts – TV, theatre, film, fashion – were unpaid.

"For young people trying to break into the fashion industry, taking on an unpaid internship is often their only route in. The sheer prevalence of them is a major roadblock to improving social mobility," says Rebecca Montacute, author of the report, which found that it costs an intern £1,100 for every month they work unpaid in London.

"These sums are out of reach for anyone without family who can foot the bill," adds Dr Montacute. "Our research found high levels of social segregation in the industry, with working-class graduates substantially under-represented."

Legally, an intern's rights depend on their employment status. If an intern is classed as a worker, asked to commit to set hours and perform the same tasks as a member of staff, they're due the national minimum wage. But employers don't have to pay it if an internship only involves "work shadowing". Not only is this a huge grey area, but carrying out work is one of the main reasons for taking up an internship. Who wants to photocopy when they could write?

"Things are changing, but it's long overdue," says Tanya de Grunwald, founder of careers blog *Graduate*

*Fog* and a campaigner for fair internships. "Although the law is on interns' side, the complaints process means the weight of responsibility is on former interns to take action against their employer once the unpaid internship is completed, something few are willing to do, as they need a reference."

One fashion merchandiser, who completed a paid six-month placement at Stella McCartney two years ago, says she regularly worked 13-hour days and most weekends. "I was burnt out at the end," she recalls. "I had to get additional financial help from my parents. And it's not just the placements themselves that make you think twice; there's no guarantee of getting a job afterwards, so you don't know how long you'll have to live this way."

A statement from Stella McCartney says the designer label, which recently launched diversity bias training across its global business, last year began working with The Girls' Network, a charity that partners girls from disadvantaged communities with a professional, female mentor.

Luxury online fashion retailer Matchesfashion.com says it ensures there is a clear structure in place

Stella McCartney spring-summer 2019 fashion show in October; the brand recently launched diversity bias training for employees and is working with The Girls' Network to empower girls from the disadvantaged communities

for developing young people and is looking at new ways to attract a diverse pool of talent.

"We offer an annual paid internship where candidates are paid above the national living wage," says Heidi Coppin, chief HR officer. "They enter the business as an entry-level employee so are entitled to the same level of care, support and company benefits. We only accept applicants who are in their sandwich year at university. What we have seen is that this is a really nice way of framing what an internship is about and we often go on to hire people once they have finished their degree."

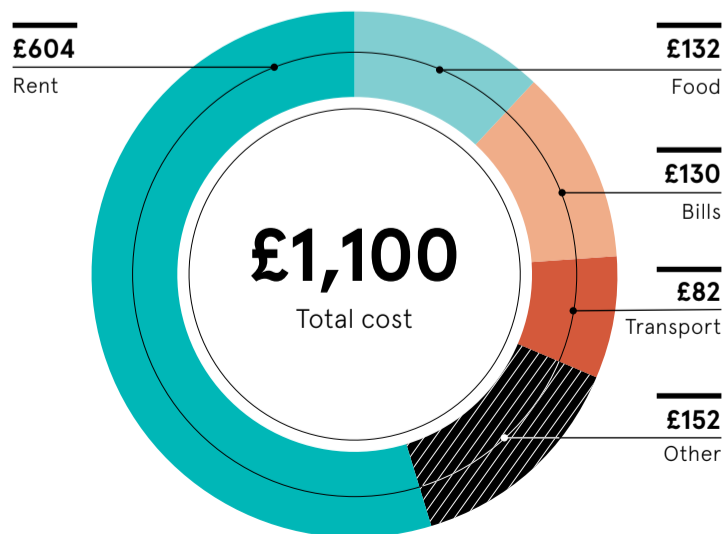
"This year we are partnering with the Mayor's Fund Access Aspiration work experience programme, where we take on four students from underprivileged backgrounds who wouldn't necessarily have the means to find their own work experience."

This is key. Working with external partners helps to get the word out that these opportunities exist. That's why Ms Storr is also working with the Prince's Trust, on-the-ground organisations and using social media to get *Cosmopolitan's* scholarships in front of as many people as possible.

"We need to dismantle the cold, cool image that some of the fashion industry has and still insists on creating. Most of the people I know who work in it are incredibly warm and funny and down to earth," she says. "But from the outside it doesn't always look that way. It looks perfect. And perfection is intimidating if you're a kid from Salford, like I was, looking out at this world." ●

## MINIMUM COST OF A ONE-MONTH INTERNSHIP IN LONDON

Even if transport costs are provided, unpaid internships are simply out of reach for many young people and can be a significant obstacle to social mobility



The Sutton Trust 2018



Those who look, feel and sound different to us are probably the greatest gift the fashion industry could ever receive

# Banking on a place to belong

The more diverse the workforce, the greater the creativity and productivity of employees. With research to validate this premise, most organisations now include diversity among their values and inclusivity within their policies and strategies

**F**or global financial services firm Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), diversity and inclusion is not only the right thing to do, it's also the smart thing to do. It lies at the very heart of the firm's culture and has been throughout its 150-year history.

Graeme Pearson, managing director, global head of research and head of European equities, and a member of the European Diversity Leadership Council, explains: "A diverse and inclusive environment is more than just a high-level ambition, it's a part of our ethos."

**“People who have taken time out of the workforce can bring a fresh perspective and new skills**

Fiona Daly, director, European equity sales, capital markets – RLaunch

"We recognise that a diverse team can lead to more creativity, but there's a difference between generating more ideas and being able to implement them. A truly diverse workforce requires strong leadership to manage the different points of view to achieve real productivity gains, and that's why we look for strong diversity at all levels when hiring and are keen to tap different talent pools."

A great example of this is gender diversity, where RBC faces fierce competition for female talent and strives to go further than its peers to attract and retain the very best in the industry.

The results are highlighted by the latest hiring figures across the UK business, where the number of female graduates has increased from 33 per cent to 54 per cent between 2017 and 2018.

The company has also launched RLaunch, an innovative programme designed to hire people returning to work after a voluntary career break. While RBC has a history of supporting returners back to the workforce, the formal programme is paying dividends in terms of gender diversity and attracting talented candidates.

"While many programmes in the marketplace offer internships with no guarantee of a job, RLaunch provides a more agile approach to matching someone's experience and skills to opportunities across the firm. In the end, we flip the recruitment process around by matching candidates to permanent positions," says Mr Pearson.

"We put the candidate first and ensure that when they return to work, we onboard them in such a way they feel like fully fledged employees from day one."

Retention is the next part of the firm's strategy, with a parental leave offering that further enhances its commitment to gender diversity. In addition to competitive leave pay, RBC offers one-on-one coaching sessions, phased return to work and an online portal, which parents can access at any time before, during and after their leave, and covers everything from parenting issues to their rights and entitlements. Through a buddy scheme, expectant parents can also access support from colleagues who've been through the same experience.

"We recognise that employees go through 'life events' that require a greater degree of support and flexibility from their employer. Our focus is on building a full suite of market-leading practices to support employees through every possible life event, enabling them to thrive through these experiences," Mr Pearson adds.

RBC's diversity and inclusion strategy also targets an often untapped level of

talent that some firms in the City might not consider. Founded in 2010, the RBC Academy has played a vital role in strengthening diversity among youngsters from economically challenged areas with poor access to typical City graduate recruitment programmes, by providing a structured pathway for learning and work experience.

The Academy includes workshops for 16 to 17 year olds to find out more about careers in the City as well as CV-writing and interview skills workshops. A select number are invited to summer placements at the bank and can apply for financial support during university.

Pinar Parlar, who joined the RBC graduate programme in 2008 from one of the now-RBC Academy schools, says: "I have been supported through my development as an associate and a VP, was promoted to a director level three years ago and recently to head of UK credit sales."

RBC regularly attends campus recruitment events with a focus on diverse groups, including Open Doors, for year 12 and 13 female students from state schools in the London area, studying all subjects, including science, technology, engineering and maths, and interested in exploring opportunities within the finance industry.

Beyond gender, Uncovering Prospects is a recruitment and networking event for high-potential

**L-R back**  
Michelle Lozano (RLaunch), Graeme Pearson (D&I Champion), Catherine Urbano (RBC Academy)

**L-R front**  
Fiona Daly (RLaunch), Pinar Parlar (former RBC graduate), Kofi Asiedu (RBC Academy)

students of black or Afro-Caribbean heritage, while Inside & Out is for first and second-year lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) university students to give them an understanding of the investment banking sector.

"RBC will always have a role for top talent; it's a case of getting that message out there and developing the most effective ways of discovering it," says Mr Pearson.

RBC's track record for supporting diversity in the workplace is matched by its commitment to building a culture of inclusion, backed up by a range of programmes and initiatives running throughout the organisation.

This includes a global call to action Speak Up For Inclusion®, where people from all walks of life, including RBC leaders, had frank discussions about inclusion and what could be done to create safe, productive and inclusive workplaces and societies.

The discussion continued on RBC's intranet in which LGBT+ employees shared their personal stories and challenges. They concluded unanimously that on joining RBC, they'd found a workplace where people feel respected, appreciated and accepted for who they are.

"Our D&I Blueprint 2020, sets out our direction and commitments on how we will advance inclusion across the enterprise. However, diversity and inclusion is more than just a strategic priority for us, it's in our DNA, reinforced from the very top of our leadership through strong communication about the power of inclusion and bringing your whole self to work," Mr Pearson concludes.

"Culture doesn't change overnight, it takes time. As we continue to talk about it, and acknowledge and celebrate our differences, we find our culture of inclusiveness is shifting to one of belonging, where people at every level of this organisation feel they are invited to the table, that RBC is where they belong, and that is an incredibly empowering place to be."

We have...

**81k+**  
full- and part-time employees who serve...

**16m**  
clients in Canada, the United States, the UK and...

**33**  
other countries

globally RBC gave over...

**\$175m**  
to the community in 2017 (donations and sponsorships)

Women make up...

**42%**  
of the board of directors of RBC's London branch

For more information please visit [rbc.com/diversity](http://rbc.com/diversity)

**Royal Bank of Canada**



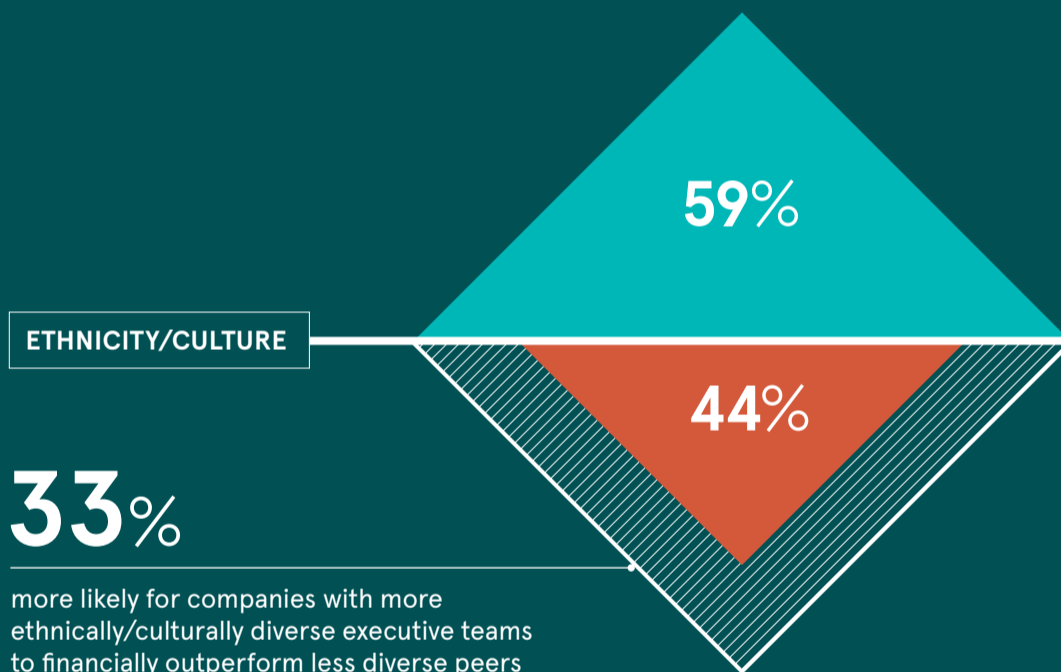
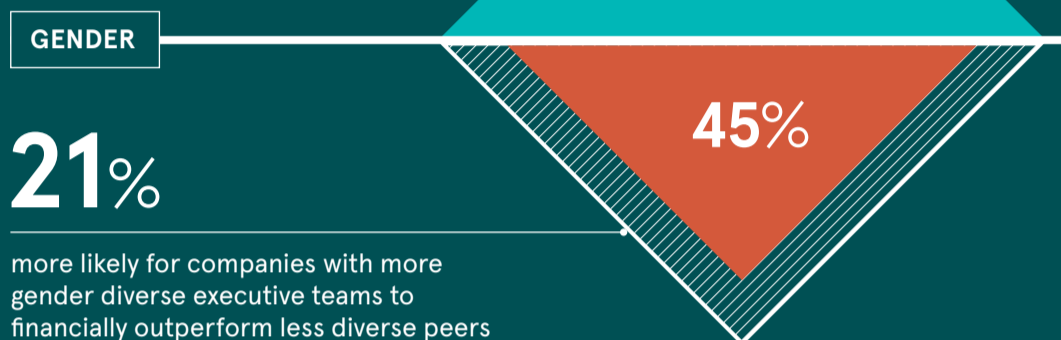
**“A big motivation for me was the opportunity to have an RBC paid internship and bursary to assist me at university**

Kofi Asiedu, associate, relationship management, wealth management – RBC Academy

## HOW DIVERSITY CORRELATES WITH FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Comparing operating profit margins of companies in the top and bottom quartiles for diversity on executive teams with the average

- Top quartile
- Bottom quartile
- ⊙ Likelihood of companies with more gender diverse executive teams to financially outperform less diverse peers

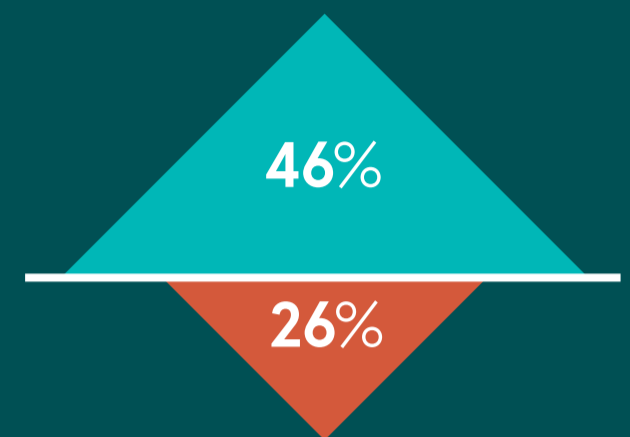


McKinsey 2018

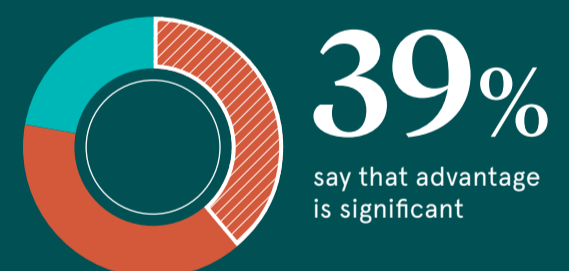
## DIVERSE LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION

Total company revenue from new products and services launched over the past three years (otherwise known as 'innovation revenue'), by diversity levels within leadership

- Above-average diversity scores
- Below-average diversity scores



Boston Consulting Group/Harvard Business Review 2018



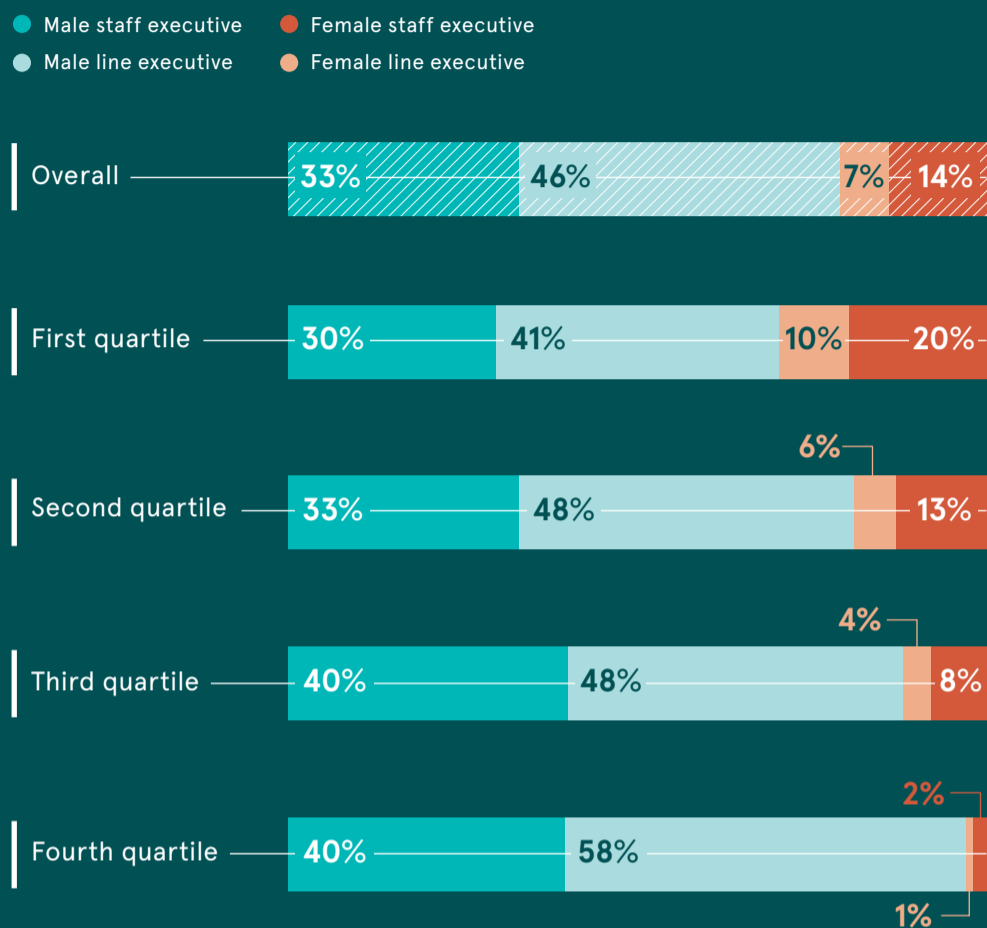
Deloitte 2018

# DIVERSITY DIVIDEND

The moral and ethical reasons for diversity in the workplace are clearcut, and businesses should play their part in improving the standing of under-represented members of society. However, diversity is more than just an issue of fairness. The financial drivers are less well known and this lack of knowledge can often stand in the way of changing the status quo. So can improving diversity actually have an impact on the bottom line, and what can be done to drive change in an organisation?

## GENDER DIVERSITY, BY LEVEL OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Gender split in executive teams, by companies with above-average operating profit margins

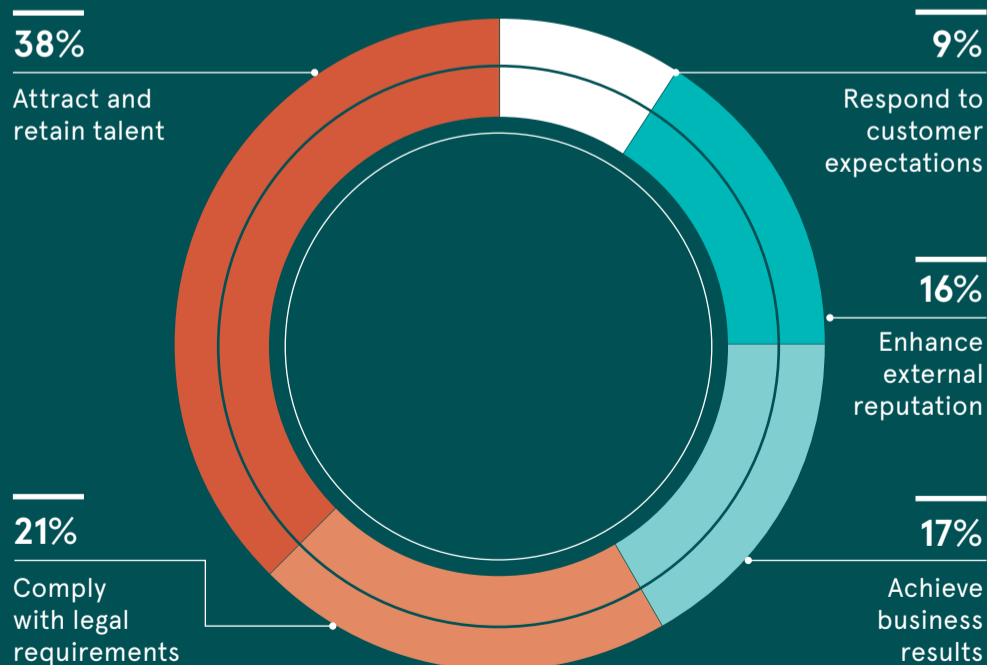


Figures may not add up to 100 due to rounding

McKinsey 2018

## PRIMARY OBJECTIVES OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PROGRAMMES

Few business leaders are actually targeting business performance with D&I efforts



PwC 2017

## TOP EFFECTS OF INCLUSIVE GROWTH ON BUSINESS

Executives were asked to select their top three



Deloitte 2018



## LANGUAGE

# Outdated language still a major barrier to inclusion

Many organisations are only paying lip service to inclusion, with outdated, discriminatory and inappropriate language often standing in the way of creating a safe and open culture

Rebecca Hallett

Language is a tool for communication, and in the workplace it can convey extremely important information about whether a company has considered the different needs and experiences of its employees.

But it's not just the content of the speech which says this; it's also the tone and phrasing. Creating and enforcing an inclusive language policy may seem daunting, with accepted terms appearing to change every day, but it's essential if you want to create an environment where everyone is able to contribute their talents to drive organisational performance.

But how do we define inclusive language? There's a common perception that it means tiptoeing around issues, never referring to a person's gender, race, religion or any other characteristic for fear of offending them. Really, it's quite the opposite: it seeks to acknowledge and celebrate diversity, considering with sensitivity the experiences of all people.

Essentially, all it means is avoiding words, phrases or ways of communicating that are harmful or exclusionary, or reflect and propagate stereotypes and prejudices.

When setting up inclusive language guidance, a company must consider the language used in both external and internal

communications. In the former, the benefit of using inclusive language is obvious: it helps foster an image of your company as forward thinking and may even attract a more diverse range of talent.

However, that image won't be maintained if official internal communications use outdated or discriminatory language. This would be a clear sign that the company's progressive image is just for show and not indicative of a genuine commitment to inclusiveness.

Casual interactions between employees are the hardest area in which to enforce an inclusive language policy. But simply making sure the guidelines are comprehensive and reporting procedures

are clear will help foster an open, trusting workplace culture. This will help encourage employees to report inappropriate language or even just have a frank conversation with their colleagues when an issue arises.

Though setting up guidelines to cover all these situations may be a daunting task, it's never been more important. People entering the workforce now, or in the first few years of their career, highlight good diversity and inclusion policy as one of their top priorities, and one of the largest factors in whether they decide to stay at an organisation long term.

Around two thirds of respondents to the 2018 *Deloitte Millennial Survey*, which also covers the younger Generation Z, feel that business leaders are only paying lip service to diversity and inclusion. The survey also shows there is a "very strong correlation between perceptions of workforce diversity and

loyalty", as 69 per cent of employees at organisations which they perceive as diverse are intending to remain there for at least five years. Only 27 per cent plan to stay that long if they don't see their organisation as diverse.

While a diversity and inclusion policy can't start and end with language, it is often the way potential employees form an impression of a company. Jay, a writer and project manager in London (name changed), has often turned down opportunities for this reason. Jay has a chronic condition, which means they need a workplace to be responsive to their health needs, and has noticed that the language used reflects whether this will be possible.

"If an interviewer's language indicates to me that their company would not be receptive to somebody with my condition, I don't accept the offer. You can often tell whether an organisation has clear policies just through the tone and phrasing they use," says Jay. "If somebody's going to be flippant about how they view health, that comes out in how they talk to you."

Of course, inclusive language guidance isn't only key to attracting the best talent, but also to retaining it. At Jay's previous employer, uninformed and discriminatory language was one of the factors which led them to leave.

"The most significant example was after I'd had a very bad run of health and was away for just over a week. When I came back, I was called into a meeting with HR and my line manager in which they asked whether I 'had plans to be sick again that year'. People often don't realise that a lot of the ways we talk about illness perpetuate the idea of sickness as something that you somehow invite; if you're sick a lot of the time, you must just not be trying hard enough," Jay says.

As this example shows, inclusive language is not just about avoiding slurs. It's also about giving people tools to facilitate more productive conversations. The language used by Jay's managers clearly indicated a misunderstanding of chronic health conditions and lack of clear guidance around how to deal with them.

So how can companies go about setting up guidelines on inclusive language? Wellcome, a research charity, offers a good case study.

"At Wellcome, our goal is to improve health by helping great ideas to thrive," says Kalaiyashni Puvanendran, diversity and



**Inclusive language seeks to acknowledge and celebrate diversity, considering with sensitivity the experiences of all people**

## CREATE A CULTURE WHERE PEOPLE BELONG

U T O  
P I A

weareutopia.co

inclusion project officer. "Great ideas come from a diverse range of people with different perspectives and backgrounds, so diversity and inclusion are fundamental to delivering our mission."

As you may expect from a workplace with a dedicated diversity and inclusion team, Wellcome is working hard to embed inclusion in its workplace culture. In fact, it was this awareness of diversity which prompted the creation of the guidelines.

"In the diversity and inclusion team, we often received queries from colleagues who were concerned about using language that could accidentally offend someone," says Ms Puvanendran. "It's something my team and I worry about too. But that worry can stop people from engaging in important conversations. We designed the guidance to facilitate conversations around diversity and inclusion, not block them. It's not a rulebook, but a resource that helps colleagues navigate the potential complexities of inclusive language."

They built the guidelines around the nine characteristics protected in UK law under the Equality Act of 2010, plus socio-economic status. Each section gives an overview of the topic, suggestions for and explanations of language to use and avoid, and resources for readers who'd like to know more.

It's also not a static document, but will be updated based on employee feedback, changes in equality law and general shifts in how we

## “Setting up clear guidelines on how to keep language inclusive will help to attract and retain a varied workforce

use language. Importantly, it was set up with input from a wide range of colleagues and networks, and the explicit support of senior management.

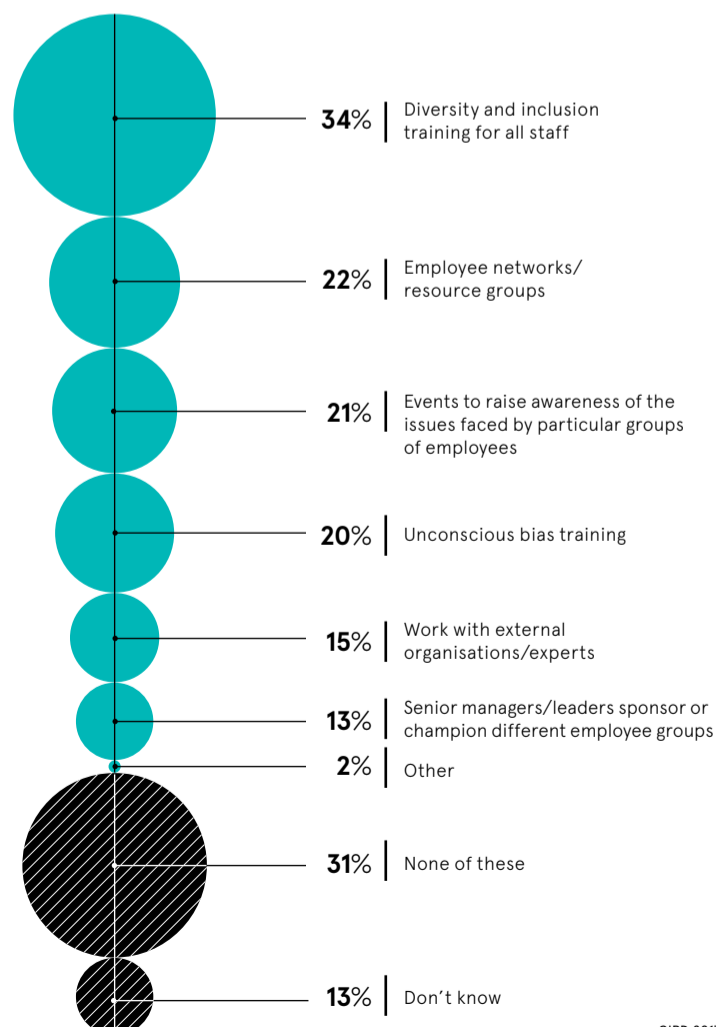
"The co-creation of the guidance was a major part of why it went down well with staff. So far, feedback has been positive and over half our workforce accessed the guidance within the first two weeks of publication," says Ms Puvanendran.

Whether or not there is a formal policy, people are communicating within and on behalf of an organisation, and the language they use will have a real effect. Setting up clear guidelines on how to keep language inclusive will help to attract and retain a varied workforce, and therefore a varied range of skills and perspectives.

Diversity is a fact of life, and by making a workplace feel safe and welcoming, it can be a huge asset to a company. ●

### WAYS IN WHICH UK ORGANISATIONS PROMOTE INCLUSION AT WORK

Survey of BAME employees only



CIPD 2017



# Reaping rewards of a diverse workforce

Supported by the right workplace software, neurodiverse people can add a missing dimension to many organisations

**F**inding, recruiting and retaining top-tier talent has been a long-term challenge for businesses of all sizes, with in-demand staff becoming more aware of their bargaining power as unemployment rates remain low. This shifting dynamic is driving companies to re-assess how they can tap into the skillset of an increasingly diverse workforce, in particular those with neurodiverse traits.

"In the modern workforce, most companies pride themselves on having a diverse and inclusive workplace when it comes to age, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. But the idea of a neurodiverse workplace is still relatively new," says Jason Gordon, UK workplace solutions manager at Texthelp, a leading provider of literacy support solutions.

It's estimated that more than 10 per cent of the UK population have some form of hidden disability, including dyslexia, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD. These types of hidden disabilities are now more understood than just a few years ago and businesses are growing acutely aware of the importance of ensuring work environments are welcoming to neurodiverse staff.

"Organisations are beginning to learn that they need the benefits that diversity can bring. For example, neurodiverse individuals may not flourish in a traditional interview format, but they still have lots to bring to the table, including the ability to approach problems from a different angle and consider innovative solutions to business challenges," says Mr Gordon.

Similarly, people on the dyslexia spectrum may be a good fit for careers in creative industries, due to their unique strengths in interpreting and visualising designs. Autistic people, too, are usually disproportionately skilled in data analysis and IT-related

tasks, compared with their neurotypical counterparts.

Many high-profile businesspeople, politicians and celebrities have spoken openly about their neurodiversity, such as UK health secretary Matt Hancock, Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson and Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. Prominent examples of neurodiverse individuals making their mark on the C-suite and, in part, crediting their rise to the benefits of their neurodiversity, clearly show how alternative thinking styles can make a real impact in business.

Yet the full potential of neurodiverse people isn't being realised as a result of both structural and informal workplace barriers, starting at the recruitment stage. "If you think of how companies recruit staff, it can be an unnecessarily complex process for neurodiverse job seekers. If you go on to the vast majority of job websites, they ask for a cover letter and CV, which means a lot of writing and literacy skills will be required in this process," says Mr Gordon.

When he advises organisations on how to reach out to the large number of talented neurodiverse job seekers, Mr Gordon always asks: "Do you want a member of staff who is good at interviews or one that is good at doing the job? For task-orientated jobs, like coding, it's better to have a task-oriented interview, where applicants are given a task to perform, demonstrating how they will actually do the work itself, rather than how they can answer questions."

Once a neurodiverse candidate has been hired, there can be issues around line managers not fully understanding what exactly autism or Asperger's is and how to support staff who are neurodiverse. Relatively simple workplace adjustments, such as providing a screen reader or noise-cancelling

headphones, can drastically change the work environment for neurodiverse people. Software, too, can be a key enabler.

"I've spoken to many people who, because of their neurodiversity, have had the glass ceiling imposed on them when starting a new job, but once they begin using our software, they start to climb the corporate ladder. It's a small piece of software that turns their career into a success story," says Mr Gordon.

Texthelp's solutions help businesses better support both their neurodiverse and neurotypical staff, alongside internal and external customers, and ensure compliance issues around reasonable adjustments and the Equality Act are dealt with in the most effective way.

"As a global company, with offices in the UK, America and Australia, we hear stories again and again, from the classroom to the boardroom, of how our software creates a more inclusive environment where students or staff can reach their full potential and thrive," says Mr Gordon.

"Diversity and inclusion are rapidly moving up the C-suite agenda, and what I would say to organisations is, don't be afraid of recruiting someone from a neurodiverse background. They can bring a great strength and a real depth to your business that you've never had before. This can enable your organisation to be more productive, more creative and experience more success in the future."

For more information please visit [text.help/neurodiversity](https://text.help/neurodiversity)



## NEURODIVERSITY

# Neurodiverse workers are untapped talent

A largely misunderstood and unemployed group of people could present companies with new ways of thinking, but stigmas are holding many back from fulfilling their potential

Cath Everett

**A**lthough neurodiversity as a term may have been around for the last 30 years or so, it is still not widely understood to refer to people with a range of neurological conditions from autism and dyslexia to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD.

Another issue is that because neurodiverse individuals have a different way of thinking about the world, they are often misunderstood, which tends to mean employment rates are low. Research by the UK's National Autistic Society indicates that while around 700,000 people, or 1 per cent of the population, have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), only 16 per cent are in full-time employment compared with 78 per cent of neurotypical individuals.

The US-based Center for Disease Control and Prevention, meanwhile, estimates that more like one in 59 people are on the spectrum, with the condition being four times more common in boys. But as few as 14 per cent currently hold jobs, according to the *National Autism Indicators Report* by Philadelphia's A.J. Drexel Autism Institute.

Mike Spain, founder of the UK's Cyber Neurodiversity Group, which co-ordinates inclusion activity across the cyber industry, attributes



# 16%

of people with autism spectrum disorder are in full-time employment, compared with 78 per cent of neurotypical individuals

National Autistic Society 2016

this situation to a "degree of fear" among many employers.

"There's an element of 'what would we be letting ourselves in for?'" he says, "but an even bigger fear of getting it wrong and possibly making things worse."

A key problem here is that ASD, along with other neurodiverse conditions, has traditionally been portrayed as a disability rather than simply a different way of thinking about things.

However, there are two sides to every coin, says Matt Trerise,

training and liaison worker at NHS Bristol Autism Spectrum Service, who is also providing training for the UK's Direct Marketing Association's Neurodiversity Initiative to help employers become more autism friendly.

"You could say that many people with autism struggle to work out what others are thinking and feeling as they find it difficult to read non-verbal cues, and this means they have insulated minds that aren't affected by others," he says. "But if you flip that, you could say

**“Having people with different problem-solving abilities, who are able to think in a different way, will become more and more important for organisational success**



## Finding new skillsets at KPMG

Due to the current, widespread struggle to find data analytics skills, KPMG's Audit Data & Analytics team (ADA) decided to broaden its search criteria.

After coming across Auticon, an IT consultancy comprised of workers with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), it established that the particular strengths of people with ASD could make them a good fit. With the consultancy's help, the ADA team evaluated existing job specifications and identified which elements would most suit different kinds of people.

Matt Campbell, KPMG's director of Clara Analytics, says: "A side benefit of this approach has been a greater focus on

ensuring people play to their strengths, which means being experts in their fields rather than doing a bit of everything."

Two Auticon consultants were initially taken on for a six-month contract, which has since been extended for another six, to complement the existing team of 100. Two more are expected to join in the near future and the longer-term aim is to recruit directly.

Mr Campbell concludes: "There's always a bit of fear of the unknown and apprehension about your own ignorance and things you've not thought about. So if we'd just jumped in, it could have been difficult. But this way we've had help to navigate some of the processes, and have benefited from high-quality work and a great skillset."

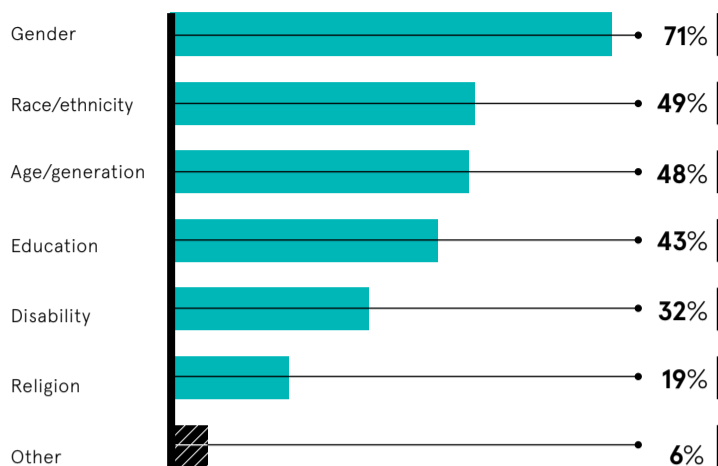
it means there's a possibility of genuinely original thought and it's always people who have thought differently that have made the major breakthroughs."

Mr Trerise indicates that it is important not to stereotype individuals with ASD by pigeonholing them into certain kinds of jobs and industries as their talents and abilities are as diverse as those of neurotypical individuals. But he acknowledges that many people on the spectrum are logical and analytical thinkers, show strong attention to detail and are good at spotting patterns. They also tend to be loyal, reliable and honest.

As a result, areas such as computer science, engineering, maths and the sciences in general are often a draw. Jobs in data science

## WHERE COMPANIES FOCUS THEIR DIVERSITY EFFORTS

Less than a third consider disability in their diversity and inclusion programmes



LinkedIn 2018

and analysis, as well as software development and testing, frequently appeal in sectors ranging from professional services and finance to IT and marketing.

But there are real commercial benefits to be gained from taking on neurodiverse people, which means activity needs to move beyond today's predominant realm of diversity and inclusion or corporate social responsibility initiatives, says Ray Coyle, chief executive of IT consultancy Auticon, which specialises in employing autistic adults. It should be about more than simply filling skills gaps, he says.

"Instead it's about improving business performance, especially as we become an increasingly technology and data-led society," says Mr Coyle. "So having people with different problem-solving abilities, who are able to think in a different way, will become more and more important for organisational success."

To obtain these benefits though, it is vital to have the right kind of inclusive company culture in place. Mr Spain explains: "It's about creating an environment in which people can excel. So it's not a case of singling out individuals with autism; it's about moving to an inclusive culture, where any changes you make will support and benefit everyone."

To achieve this, he says, requires three key elements: the right roles, the right environment and the right leadership. In leadership terms, for example, it is imperative that senior executives are on board to champion any cultural change and lead by example.

Investment in time and resources will be required on the part of line managers and their teams in the form of training. The aim is to help them understand the needs of neurodiverse people, how to communicate effectively with them and how to make the workplace adjustments required to ensure they feel comfortable.

For example, in communication terms, it is vital to speak in clear, plain English as people with ASD find it difficult to understand metaphors, irony and sarcasm.

As Mr Coyle explains: "Workplace communications and structures are built around neurotypical people, so there's lots of ambiguity and

unwritten rules that people with ASD don't understand. This means it's important to bring in a more logical approach and clarify reporting lines, so people don't end up getting contradictory requests that they have to prioritise."

The same theory applies to job adverts, which are usually written from the hypothetical point of view of an ideal individual. "But this doesn't work for people on the spectrum as they take the requirements literally and at face value," Mr Coyle says. "So job adverts need to be more concrete and specific in terms of the skills being looked for."

Undertaking skills testing rather than focusing on a traditional interview process can make a big difference. But once neurodiverse candidates have been recruited, another key consideration is ensuring the physical environment is appropriate to their needs.

For instance, some individuals with ASD are photo or sound sensitive and may benefit from sitting away from windows or working with headphones on. Many also find hot desking difficult due to its unpredictable nature and, therefore, value having a dedicated space of their own or working from home.

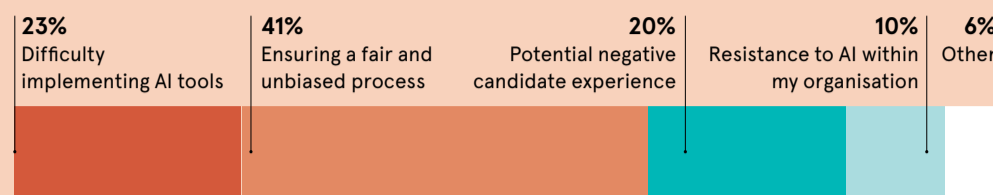
But as Mr Trerise points out, going down this route is generally beneficial for neurotypical people too. "Adjustments, such as cutting through jargon and adding more structure to meetings, aren't complex or expensive, but they can help to create a better working environment for all," he says. "It's about playing to people's strengths and supporting them to be the best version of themselves they can be, and that kind of approach benefits everyone." ●

**“It's always people who have thought differently that have made the major breakthroughs**

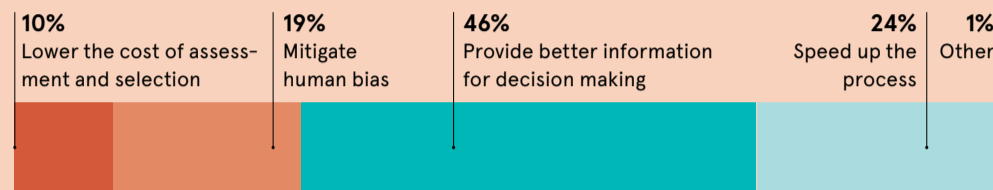
## Commercial feature

### Biggest concerns and potential with AI in talent assessment/selection

#### Biggest concerns



#### Biggest potential



Based on 375 responses from Europe and the US

# Machine intelligence takes bias out of hiring

Talent assessment solutions powered by artificial intelligence algorithms are removing the unconscious biases that have held back organisations in building diverse workforces

**H**iring processes have long been based on typical CV information, such as academic and professional achievements, followed by telephone and face-to-face interviewing. Now organisations are realising this has led to biased selection methodologies and resulted in the lack of diversity seen in workforces across multiple industries.

By looking for a narrow list of traits in a candidate, such as going to certain universities or past employment at particular firms, companies are restricting their ability to recruit from under-represented groups. Many hiring managers also unconsciously cede to the familiarity of hiring in their own image. When organisations are already made up predominantly of white men, it's no surprise what they're going to get.

"Selecting people like yourself leads to the same type of people across the organisation," says David Barrett, chief commercial officer at Aon's Assessment Solutions, which undertakes 30 million talent assessments each year in 90 countries and 40 languages. "That's particularly true of professional organisations like banks or accounting firms. You often just see young or middle-aged white men running around in blue or grey suits."

"Some have tried to adopt quotas but, while good-intentioned, that too can become prejudicial because you stop looking at who is best for the job. Promotions also often have the effect of an old boys' network. It's beginning to change, but it's still true that in many cases women face more prejudices and need to work much harder to succeed."

Sophisticated assessment solutions, powered by artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms, are now driving the changes needed to transform talent selection and enable more diverse recruiting. By using machine intelligence to compare people profiles and behaviour competencies with job specifications and organisational demands, businesses can consider a much bigger pool of talent and make more objective decisions.

Aon works, for example, with a British engineering giant to help it build a more diverse workforce. By implementing Aon's reduced biased methods and solutions, they have increased its female hires by 19 per cent, while participation in its talent assessments by underrepresented groups has surged by more than 200 per cent.

"A huge advantage in using standardised, systematic assessments with AI and predictive analytics is they are constantly loaded with more of the right people delivering better in-job results," says Suzanne Courtney, managing director at Aon's Assessment Solutions, UK. "We have now also achieved excellent outcomes in being able to use AI auto-scored video interviews to reliably replicate expert interviewers who are trained to be accurate and unbiased."

Evidence-based research of this type, combined with mobile and AI technologies, is likely to herald the end of high-volume face-to-face screening interviews.

Far from hiring in the image of their existing managers, the savviest employers now seek to hire in the image of their customers. Indeed,

88 per cent of job seekers are more likely to buy from a company that gave them a positive candidate experience when applying for a role, according to a study by the Talent Board.

By combining marketing principles with talent acquisition, organisations can achieve a better diversity yield. Aon has taken a mobile-first approach, designing its assessments shorter and in the form of social messaging apps. While the completion rates of desktop platforms are typically 60 to 70 per cent, Aon's are around 95 per cent and, the biggest increase in participation being among under-represented groups.

"When many companies look at what they were doing to assess talent five years ago, I think they will blush," says Mr Barrett. "They wanted to help in the context of diversity and under-represented groups, but their way of doing it was ill thought through and didn't address the business issue around why diversity is great. Our solutions, driven by AI algorithms and predictive analytics, give companies the objectivity to change the demographic of their workforce and the tools to recruit better talent at a lower cost."

To find out more, please visit: [assessment.aon.com/workplace-diversity](https://assessment.aon.com/workplace-diversity)

**AON**  
Empower Results®

## Q&amp;A

# What can The Open University do for you?

For five decades, The Open University has led the way on inclusion, making it possible for employees, students from all backgrounds and overseas learners to access world-class tuition. **David Willett**, commercial director at The Open University, explains why the institution remains a highly popular choice for learners around the globe



## Q What would surprise us about today's Open University?

**A** We are proudly celebrating our 50th anniversary this year, having grown into an extraordinary institution over that time. We have more than 174,000 students studying worldwide. Our student population is incredibly diverse with a 40:60 male to female ratio, ranging from the youngest graduate, at 13 years old, to our oldest who completed his degree aged 93. Around 75 per cent of current students are working while studying. Our mission and approach to social mobility are more

relevant to society than ever before. As testament to this, around 55 per cent of our students in England are from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Open University is uniquely placed to help individuals, companies and governments to tackle the skills gap and maintain vital economic output, for example through our apprenticeship programme. We are also leading the way internationally. Our partnership with the Arab Open University helps to enhance access to higher education across the Middle East. Through this partnership, there are currently 25,000 students signed up to Open University validated programmes and, highly significantly, 50 per cent of these are women.

students in the UK. Our course material is delivered in a variety of formats to make resources and assessments accessible, and we recently held a home degree ceremony for one of our disabled students in Scotland.

## Q What can businesses get out of The Open University?

**A** We offer a range of learning resources and programmes, from free OpenLearn courses to a whole range of training for employee development, as well as our higher and degree apprenticeships that focus on areas such as leadership and management, and digital skills, among others. Alongside standard courses for employee development, we can also curate bespoke solutions when needed.

We support 1,300 organisations throughout the UK with their learning and development strategies and requirements. From micro-businesses to large national employers such as IBM, BT and Unilever, we offer a single solution nationwide that most universities are unable to provide because of their limited geographic reach and classroom-based learning approach. Our focus is to understand an organisation's particular requirement set. There is a widely publicised skills shortage within organisations around the UK and we are able to help employers overcome their skill gaps.

## Q How can businesses "dip their toe in"?

**A** A quick chat with one of our business experts will help to identify the best option. We have a range of free courses to test the appetite for employee learning on a particular subject and have lots of shorter training options to help organisations meet current training demands. We are constantly innovating and are particularly proud of our new two-hour course on gender equality for companies that want to increase awareness and inclusivity across their workforce.

## Q And for companies that want to go deeper?

**A** We can help to provide short and long-term work-based solutions for organisations that are looking to enhance their learning and development programmes. Our programmes can upskill employees to become the leaders of tomorrow or close the gaps in areas such as IT where innovation is increasing at a faster rate than many organisations can keep up with. As a distance learning provider, we offer flexible solutions that allow employees to develop while at work, minimising the time spent away from their day-to-day role and responsibilities. We can also support employers who have an apprenticeship levy pot to use or want to invest in higher and degree apprenticeships for their employees but are unsure of funding or where to begin. We currently hold a 95 per cent apprentice retention rate and more than 1,000 apprenticeships with 300 employers across our management, MBA, digital, nursing and healthcare apprenticeship programmes. We are proud to have achieved a 98 per cent employer satisfaction rating, in the Department for Education's *FE Choices Employer Satisfaction 2018 Survey*, for delivering higher and degree apprenticeships. Our mission for life-long learning and tailored courses for business specific needs has also led to 60 per cent of the FTSE 100 companies

working with us to develop and upskill their workforce.

## Q How can The Open University help organisations to meet their diversity targets?

**A** The open and flexible nature of our education means that we can upskill and reskill employees who may not otherwise have such opportunities, due to life circumstances such as geographical location, educational level or societal constraints. We can work with organisations to help attract and retain a talented workforce. For example, we can help to attract applicants for apprenticeships into jobs where they would traditionally be under-represented at graduate level by helping organisations to engage with schools and colleges.

## Q What is the future for The Open University?

**A** It's an exciting time for us as we enter our 50th year. The Open University will continue to be true to our mission to being open to all places, methods and ideas. We will increasingly work to meet the requirements of employers, especially in these uncertain political times. The university will continue to support the public sector, notably the NHS, and through our unique Centre for Policing Research. We started in 1969 as a disruptive university, and I believe we shall continue to disrupt and innovate over the next 50 years and beyond.

To find out more please contact [business@open.ac.uk](mailto:business@open.ac.uk) to speak to one of our business experts about your organisation's needs or visit [www.open.ac.uk/business](http://www.open.ac.uk/business)



# 98%

employer satisfaction rating for delivering higher and degree apprenticeships\*

# 23k

students with disabilities study at The Open University

# 95%

apprentice retention rate

# 174k

total number of students, making us Europe's largest university

\* Department for Education's FE Choices employer satisfaction 2018 survey

# “

We started in 1969 as a disruptive university, and we will continue to disrupt and innovate over the next 50 years and beyond

SOCIAL MEDIA

# Bursting the filter bubble

Social media has transformed the nature of human interaction, and simultaneously created homogeneous newsfeeds that reinforce our social and cultural biases

Nick Easen

Countless millions of us are now influenced by social media on a daily basis. A Facebook post here, a tweet there, Brexit, Trump, *gilets jaunes* protestors, a friend's Instagram or opinionated feeds; our eyes have been opened to a brave new world of experiences.

On the one hand, we can now be served an incredibly diverse diet of ideas that is unparalleled in human history. On the other, social media curation allows us increasingly to indulge our biases, rather than challenge them, exclude viewpoints we don't agree with and live in a filter bubble, logging into a so-called 'daily me', where the only echo is of voices that sound like us.

"We're breeding ignorance in an age of enlightenment," says Stephen Frost, chief executive of Frost Included. "It's a double whammy; not only are we sleepwalking into polarised views, we simultaneously think we're more informed or even objective than at any time before. The problem is greater than we realise at the same time as our propensity to tackle it is diminished."

When we connect with peers online, the social biases that guide our clicks influences the information we communicate. Combined with self-serving algorithms and feedback loops, this can lead to a 'Netflix-ification' of our lives: "If you like that, you must like this", which has huge implications for our workplaces and how we view our colleagues, investors and clients.

"You have to be consciously competent about this issue as opposed to unconsciously incompetent," says Marjorie Strachan, global head of inclusion at Royal Bank of Scotland. "I have a positive view on this; technology and social media can also be a force for good. If people choose to be curious, they can expand their horizons and tap into much more diverse networks. We actively encourage this, but it has to be an active, not passive, process."

Like social media itself, views on its effects, positive or negative, can also be reinforced, depending on who you talk to or the research you wish to undertake. There's no doubt it's a double-edged sword. The key factor is to be fully conscious of social media's power to hamper inclusion, but also vastly improve it.

Getting as many employees from diverse backgrounds to join the conversation and create social media channels, which raises awareness, is a powerful initial step. "A key phrase from the disability movement is 'nothing about us, without us'," says Dr Laura William, director of the Diversity Interest Group at the University of Greenwich.

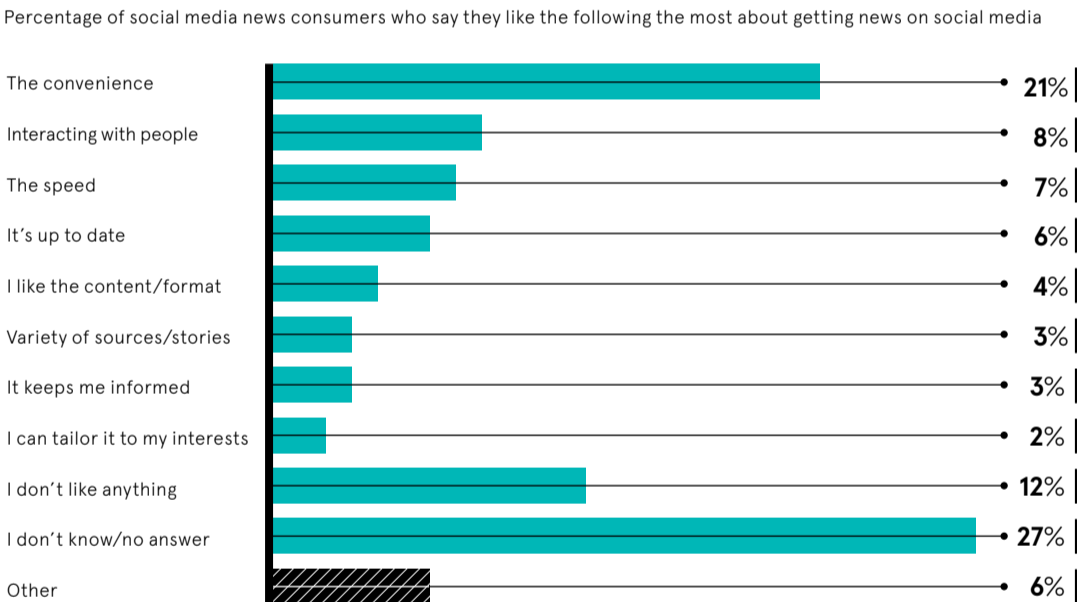
"It's imperative to engage people from diverse groups in how they want to be presented, what matters to them and their issues, rather than an elite bunch of individuals, who do not share those characteristics, imposing pre-set ideas of other groups and perpetuating them on social media."

On a positive note, recruiters are now more able to target diverse talent pools. Social media advertising is one of the most popular



Robin Worrall/Unsplash

## WHY PEOPLE USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS



Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding Pew Research Center 2018

channels. "We have found it to be an incredibly useful tool to reach candidates from all kinds of backgrounds," says Jill Bassett, workforce solutions director at ManpowerGroup Enterprise.

Social media can even bring together seemingly unconnected walks of life, which have similar diversity challenges, from disability advocates to faith groups. "Via social media, these two groups can find each other sharing the same memes and hashtags, as well as realise they have some of the same goals," says Nick Lum, founder of Read Across The Aisle.

"For me, the issue is that every idle moment, on the train, standing in line, waiting for a bus, is spent focused on our phones. This means we no longer see the people who stand right next to us. We aren't as likely to notice that they're perfectly nice people with different skin colour, clothing or jobs, who ride the

same buses and shop in the same markets we do."

Aside from more ethical algorithms, there are other things we can do to make social media more sociable. Mainstream outlets, such as *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, both have 'burst your

bubble' sections. Some tech firms have developed tools that adjust peoples' filter bubbles via sliders that control content filters.

"These tools have been met with a mixed reaction from social media giants, such as Facebook and Twitter, that arguably have a vested interest in controlling the filter bubble," says Dr Mary-Clare Race, president of Mind Gym's US business.

At the same time, Facebook has made all its unconscious bias training open source. Certainly, active advocacy of inclusive social media, rather than passive availability, will be the key to change.

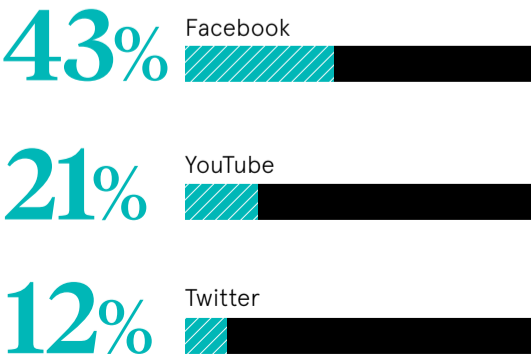
"Build on what people already like about diversity, such as foreign food and foreign travel, rather than force feed them diversity, which doesn't go down well. We need to excite employees about difference," Mr Frost concludes.

## Social media as a pathway to news


Percentage of social media users who use the following platforms for news



Pew Research Center 2018



“Social media allows us to live in a filter bubble, logging into a so-called 'daily me', where the only echo is of voices that sound like us



# Diversity. The art of thinking independently, together.

## Specialists in Unconscious Bias & Diversity Training

At Marshall's we pride ourselves on providing the latest and most accessible methods of training staff on a wide selection of diversity and equality topics.

We know that most organisations are looking to go beyond just complying with legislation and want to build environments that embrace diversity and deliver equality to support their aims and objectives.

We've refreshed, renewed and reinvigorated our unconscious bias and diversity training to make sure we meet the current issues that our clients face around diversity.

Our training courses enable people to feel comfortable and have the skills and abilities needed to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is a reality for everyone.