

## 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023: HR Director Boardroom Summary



Our recent event was an insightful and informative discussion hosted by [Joanne Lockwood](#), The Inclusive Culture Expert at SEE Change Happen and chaired by [Helen Rice-Birchall](#), Principal Associate at [Eversheds Sutherland International LLP](#). Joanne shared her extensive knowledge and experiences on how to successfully implement diversity, inclusion, and why it's essential for businesses in today's world.

Joanne spoke about her passion for promoting equality within organisations and how Diversity and Inclusion can help to foster a creative, innovative, and inclusive working environment. The session began with interactive questions to find out what the attending HR Leaders wanted to learn from the session; understanding the barriers they face within their business and the impact of their own D&I strategy.

Our attendees wanted to get an understanding of what others are doing in the space, receive inspiration for things they can do in their company, find out what challenges others are facing, learn how to embed D&I into their business, as well as new ideas to measure the success of planned strategies. Conflicting priorities, finding resources to help them, and gaining senior leadership approval were the top barriers to implementing D&I strategies, according to HR professionals attending the event. A lack of budget for new tools and not knowing where to begin are the least prominent barriers.

Most reported that hiring more diversely and training for unconscious bias were the most significant impacts of their D&I strategies.

### What is your Why in D&I?

Joanne used the Greek mythology principles of Ethos, Logos, and Pathos as examples to live by. However, in today's climate, we must be put into the context of how they can benefit a business. Joanne emphasised that the human factor should not be overlooked when it comes to making decisions that have a positive impact on a business's bottom line. Investing in people and treating them fairly can lead to positive outcomes such as increased productivity, improved morale, better employee retention, and increased customer satisfaction. Compliance is a necessary action that must be taken, but it should never overshadow the importance of investing in people and treating them fairly. When it comes to making sure your business is successful, the human factor cannot be overlooked.



It is critical to look at your culture first to determine why you don't have a diverse workforce. Is it a good place to work? Is it somewhere that people feel psychologically safe? If the culture is right, then there should be a sense of belonging. In turn people will feel aligned with the organisation, feel they are included in the team and that they're led well. It is important to ensure that if you are committed to including diverse individuals in your organisation, the culture and environment should be inclusive and supportive. This can be done by actively promoting it through policies and initiatives such as Black Rights Matter, LGBTQ+ History Month etc. In addition, diversity and inclusion must also be matched by a genuine commitment in the workplace. This means ensuring

that the organisation's goals align with promoting diversity, and that diversity is embraced. Only then can you create a truly diverse and inclusive environment. Joanne quoted "You don't put a new fish into a dirty tank" meaning you must always clean the tank first, ensuring the culture is right and aligning your goals before thinking about hiring new people.

### **Your ROI 'Return on Investment or Return on Inclusion'**

A key goal of D&I is to create a positive people experience. Inclusion must be considered at every touchpoint in the talent acquisition process, from initial contact to after-hire support. By consciously trying to be inclusive, we avoid unintentionally excluding people.

Actively thinking about who and why, your brand, your alignment, how your people feel and being mindful of the moment is important. Gen Z graduates are looking for a different experience than Gen X or Millennials; from sustainability to support with the cost-of-living crisis. The real question is how can your business align its brand values with this upcoming generation?

The younger generations are the future, therefore it is necessary for older generations to reach down, learn from them and adopt their best practices to stay relevant. Businesses need to be open-minded towards change and not fall into the trap of believing that the old ways are the only ways to do things. Instead, we must look towards the future, keeping in mind that Generation Alpha (those born after 2010) are soon going to be in charge. This means that when making decisions, it is imperative to consider how they may impact Gen Alpha's lives and prepare for their future needs.

### **FREDA principles: Fairness, Respect, Equality/Equity, Dignity and Autonomy/Agency**



We can't always include everyone; Joanne used a new hire as an example... You may get 100 applicants, but you wouldn't be expected to hire every single person. We cannot design a product to suit every single person but it's about understanding 'are we being fair, respectful, equal and making sure they feel dignified and freedom of choice?'. If we apply these principles, we keep ourselves in check. Ask yourself 'was that fair?' 'Have I been respectful?'. If you've ticked these boxes when communicating, you know you're being as inclusive as you can.

To ensure that we are being fair, respectful, equal, dignified, and autonomous in our decisions, businesses leaders should always ask themselves: "Was that decision fair?".

Be mindful of the principle known as **FREDIE**. This acronym stands for **Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity and Experience**. If we take care to ensure that our decisions adhere to these principles, then we can be sure that everyone is being treated equitably and with the respect they deserve. By taking this approach, you can guarantee that your decisions are inclusive and just for all those involved. When combining FREDA and FREDIE principles it creates **DEADFIRE**. The **DEADFIRE** acronym stands for **Diversity, Equality, Autonomy, Dignity, Fairness, Inclusion, Respect and Experience**. These are basic principles professionals should bear in mind as a guiding light on whatever you do.

### **Inclusion**

Joanne defined inclusion as 'how you make me feel by how you treat me'. We all know when we are excluded or tolerated. We know when we feel barely accepted or if they're truly interested in you. It is important to make sure that your people, customers, and anyone else you touch feels appreciated. Showing that you care about them by being active and deliberate in your interactions can make all the difference. Showing empathy and understanding when they need it is an essential part of making them feel welcomed. It is not fair to 'test' those around us to see if they pass or not.

You often hear 'my doors always open' or 'if you're having an issue talk to me' and we assume people are happy unless they say otherwise. Instead, we need to actively engage and therefore actively listen. As a species we often like to talk and not necessarily listen and being inclusive is about being holistic, active, and deliberate not passive or incidental. Being inclusive is about listening to people, understanding their needs and the diversity of those needs.

### **Our brand – belonging**

You'll need to align your brand and values in the future in order to attract and retain customers and employees. It's about incorporating diversity and inclusion as part of your core ethos. There is fear of getting it wrong, so how do we communicate with people who are different from us? We lean away and claim 'you're different from me, what if I get it wrong and upset you?' which leads the person you're communicating with to feel that uncomfortableness around them. So how do we overcome this fear?

### **Acknowledge our Biases**

Unconscious biases and blind spots can significantly impact our decisions, whether it be hiring practices, salary reviews, or any other business area. It is critical to recognize these unconscious biases and take steps to address them. Being open to challenge and willing to listen to different perspectives are key first steps. Anonymous hiring practices can help to minimize the effects of unconscious bias and blind spots. By removing personal information from the process, hiring managers can evaluate applicants on their merits alone. Additionally, ensuring that leaders are involved in checking and challenging processes can help to catch any biases before they become an issue.

### **Thinking about Emotional and Cultural Intelligence**

Whenever we talk about our leaders, we are referring to the people who are the guardians of our culture and our people in the organization. They are the ones who have the most direct impact on your success and business. Are we hiring people for their skills who are fantastic at what they do? Are they great people leaders? Emotional intelligence has multiple competencies such as emotional awareness, what do I stand for/how do I come across/showing you care. Think about asking 'how do I come across?' Are you self-reflecting, are you introspective, do you care how you come across or do you have a personality of 'I am who I am, they have to deal with it.'? Recognising that when you are stressed or under pressure you may display behaviours such as becoming dismissive, insular or lacking communication.



You don't need to change yourself; you just need to evolve yourself and who you are/how you are perceived. You can then be more socially aware of your body language to help build stronger relationships by picking up on those triggers.

Being culturally intelligent means being comfortable in situations involving cultural diversity. Extending beyond orientation, religion, disability etc. It is about recognising culture. Joanne used the example of a hearing impairment such as being deaf. You have those who were born deaf who use the word 'Deaf' (uppercase D) and those who acquired a hearing impairment who use the term 'deaf' (lowercase d), some use implants, some lip read, some sign. This is just one example and by just thinking about an experience and the awareness/intelligence behind it you can drive yourself to find

out more and educate yourself. Once we have this knowledge it can be put into some kind of strategy in your head. Build a strategy and then be competent to put that into action.

### Understanding Impact vs Intent and being accountable

How often do we hear 'that wasn't my intention, I got it wrong, it's a joke or banter, or we live in a snowflake society?'. Joanne addressed intent is how we believe we are communicating for example 'I intended to say/do' but the impact is how it was received on the other side. You didn't intend it to be offensive, but the impact is that it was. Joanne mentioned a Plan B, which is usually understanding the challenges, saying you're sorry and asking how it can be worked on together?

The simple fact is, if we keep making the same mistake, it's no longer a mistake, it's a habit you do continually. You need to look at the processes, the way we treat people.

### Perspective is everything



Joanne mentioned an equation that states: Event + Reaction = Outcome (ERO)

The simple act of what I believe vs what YOU believe. The plus in the equation is the perspective on our biases, our lived experience, exposure to the media, etc. Everything you've acquired in life gives us perspective. As Joanne explained, when you go to the polling station you look at the list. If you want a local representative, you might like a particular name or political colour. There are a lot of factors behind why we choose who we want. It's not about being right or

wrong it's just our perspective of who will do the most effective job. It's far more engaging than just disagreeing, to discuss why you think that way. Be open and curious!

### Strong Opinions Weakly Held

It is often found that we grip onto our opinions so tightly that when we are proven wrong there is a feeling of being trapped in a corner. You cannot change your mind without changing your opinion. Engaging in conversations where you know you're not right is a fantastic way to learn. Joanne used science as an example. It is a career based on the art of trying to disprove somebody else or yourself. There are theories out there with the aim of being disproved as that is what tests the theory to begin with.

### Check your privilege

Joanne defines privilege as recognition through no fault of our own, having more advantages than others through how we're born. This is due to our ethnicity, sexuality, gender etc. It's an opportunity to do more because of who we are; our perspective can sometimes be clouded by our privilege and we see and act through our own lens of privilege.

Joanne referred to a quote that says '*when you are accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression*'.

### Exemplify best practice

Joanne used an example that the white community may feel disadvantaged by a black support program or men might feel disadvantaged by female empowerment programs. Joanne also mentioned '*privilege is not about what you have been through, it's about what you haven't had*'

*to go through because of the colour or your skin or gender.'* It is therefore important that you also must be careful not to disenfranchise people of privilege, you can be inclusive by excluding people from the conversations. It's about making sure our voices are heard and we understand our role and what needs to change. It does not have to be like Noah's Ark where there are two of everything. The key is to trust, and understand different views on faith, race, or sexuality. Through focus groups and conversation, we can create a level of trust and belief that everyone is being represented.

Consider who you are not including, who's not in the room? How can you practice active allyship and inclusion? How can you make sure you are always asking yourself who am I not including? Is there bias there? Are our policies inclusive?

Joanne used the Ashley Kate HR Director Boardroom event as an example, by hosting the event it is setting the example that we are associated with change.

#### **Four steps to achieving your EDI goals:**

1. Define & assess – where are we now: think about why EDI is needed and assess the current level of understanding? Have you got employee engagement surveys? How do your people/customers feel? Data provides insight into who has said what and why. The Culture Engagement Service: People get a lack of activity, not servitude. You said we did.
2. Set out plans and targets tailored to the organisation and its starting point – velocity and trajectory. People get change fatigue. What velocity can your business/people handle? Why do you want more people of colour or women in your organisation? Do you have a wider vision or are you just ticking boxes?
3. Take action: communicate, involve resources and embark on the journey.
4. Performance monitoring: Be transparent and publicise the organisation's progress, internally and externally. We must be authentic and held to account as to why we're not doing something.
5. Repeat: This is an ongoing process. It is imperative to revisit, assess and replan to ensure action is still relevant.