

HR DIRECTORS BOARDROOM Manchester 2019

Diversity and Inclusion



Delegates gathered at Eversheds Sutherlands (International) LLP and participated in this thought provoking and informative boardroom event. Introduced by [Paula Shaw – HR Business Manager](#) and [Karen Brown – Senior Business Manager](#) for Ashley Kate HR & Finance, and chaired by [Naeema Choudry – Eversheds Sutherland \(International\) LLP](#).

[Tony Cooke, Human Resources Director North Europe at Adidas Group](#) led an open and honest and at times humorous discussion on Diversity and Inclusion, focusing primarily on the D&I journey undertaken by adidas. Whilst this had been a hot topic for many years, all delegates assembled agreed that this was an area that still needed a focus, and for many the starting point was still quite low.

To ensure that we all had a take out from the morning Tony threw out his first question – did we all know how to pronounce adidas?! There was no consensus in the room, but we all left knowing that it was defiantly ad – e – das not adeeedas.

adidas, as an international business employing over 60,000 employees across 80 different cultures, it was vital for Diversity and Inclusion to be part of the culture. In the first instance adidas made the same mistake that many businesses make, thought they were good at this, and thought telling people that they were good at this is the most important part – it is not! The most important part is making this strategic and having a true and compelling story to support your claims.

The driver to invest in Diversity and Inclusion came from Adidas's customers about 3.5 years ago, adidas have a very diverse customer base and this was not reflected in it's workforce.

Throughout the morning Tony was very honest about some of the mistakes that were made on this important journey, it was very refreshing to have the learnings laid bare so that all attendees can learn from this and/or empathise. One of the biggest learnings was not to assume that people have "got it" and are on the journey with you. By understanding them as individuals, you will be able to understand if they are truly onboard or giving you lip service without changing their behaviours. And clearly if these are senior leaders or managers they will be influencing the behaviours of their teams. Always refer back to the team make up and be armed for all of these.

Tony then reminded us of the 5 key benefits to becoming a truly diverse and inclusive business, these are well known, but worth continually coming back:

- Better Financial Performance
- Better Innovation and Group Performance
- Better Customer Relationships and Market Share
- Better Reputation (Internal and External)
- Better and Broader Talent

Whilst this has been a focus for many years, so many people still don't really understand what Diversity and Inclusion mean, so Tony has broken this down to:

Diversity – is simply a representation of many different types of people (gender, race, ability, religion etc)

Inclusion – is the deliberate act of welcoming diversity and creating an environment where all different kinds of people can thrive and succeed

Put simply:

Diversity is what you have

Inclusion is what you do with what you have

Tony spent time talking to us all about the need to for Diversity and Inclusion to become part of your organisation's culture and we all liked Tony's definition of culture which is:

The way we do things round here – when no one is watching!

There needs to be a natural embracing of this, and this may mean that there are casualties along the way.

In order for this to become embedded in your culture, you need to work on all the independent parts including:

Purpose – ensure that your employees are truly engaged and understand their contribution to the business

Leadership

Opportunity

Appreciation

Well being

Success

A key focus for Tony has been to review adidas recruitment, to ensure that they are recruiting from a diverse, qualified group of candidates to increase diversity of thinking and perspective. Key considerations are:

Question what your employer branding says about you

Remember the phrase “perfect fit” means that you are getting the same

Make sure that you assess where and why candidates “fall off the train”

Partner with specialist organisations who support your view

Review where you’re searching for talent

Get out and spread your story!

One of Tony’s pet hates is always looking for the same people so that they “fit” will always bring in people with similar views and ideas, so there is limited challenge, fresh perspectives and this leads which leads to stagnation.

People from different backgrounds and lifestyles naturally challenge each other

Diversity creates dissent – without it we’ll get no breakthrough or challenges

This healthy dynamic stops us getting too insular and out of touch and so we come up with a wider range of possibilities

Workplace Inclusion – foster a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility and fairness to enable all employees to contribute to their potential and increase retention:

- Make sure all senior managers are “all in”
- Invest in training – make sure that you have a budget
- Get the on boarding bit right – but don’t stop there!
- Does the look and feel of your offices help?
- Encourage employee advocacy groups
- Don’t forget about different generations and personalities
- Tell customers and partners what we stand for

Sustainability and Accountability – identify and breakdown systemic barriers to full inclusion by embedding diversity and inclusion in policies and practices and equipping leaders with the ability to manage diversity and be accountable for the results:

- Ensure advocacy groups have credibility and gravitas
- Do a full “de-clutter” on your policies
- Give the senior managers some real measures
- Bring inspiring speakers in to talk to your people
- Ask employees to help us with policy making
- Create meaningful mentoring opportunities
- Are we struggling anywhere?

Another step that adidas took was to introduce an employee group called Dive In – the Dive from Diversity and the In from Inclusion. (A name that Tony was very proud of!) This group was made up of people who had previously had bad experiences in other organisations and who were not senior in the organisation. They were empowered to “police” diversity and inclusion, they met once a month and brought forward ideas, brought in representatives from different communities to the business amongst other items. They fed back on poor D&I behaviour, but were only able to do if they had challenged this themselves. In addition any issue that they flagged, they had to have a solution for.

This group have now been rolled out across Europe.

From the work completed at adidas Tony was able to give the delegates some great advice on his learnings which included:

- Make sure you have a plan, a statement is not enough
- Don’t assume that your senior team are on board, make sure that they are bought in



Ashley Kate
HR & Finance

Don't allow the term "good fit"

Have a budget – you will need to invest in training

Be careful with your language – do not unintentionally isolate or offend people

Measure your progress

And one last pearl of wisdom from Tony;

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

We always aim to ensure that our discussions are frank and honest so that everyone can obtain the maximum from these events, so if you wish to find out more please contact us with regard to the HRD Boardroom events



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Ashley Kate
HR & Finance

HR DIRECTORS BOARDROOM

Thursday 5th March – Nottingham
Wednesday 25th March – Leeds
Thursday 2nd April – London
Thursday 30th April - Birmingham

EMPLOYMENT LAW UPDATES

Wednesday 13th May – Manchester
Thursday 4th June – Cambridge
Wednesday 17th June - London