

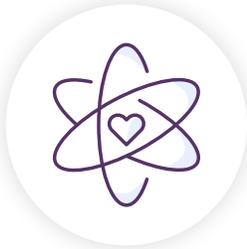


The comprehensive DEI playbook:

7 plays to launch your
culture of inclusion



INCLUSION PLAYS



Co-create purpose + values

Design a shared value system with your employees and implement it in your processes.

[GO TO PLAY 1 →](#)



Establish inclusive behaviors

Identify inclusive actions that leaders and employees can take regardless of bias.

[GO TO PLAY 2 →](#)



Model and reinforce behaviors

Make inclusive behavior a part of the day-to-day through reinforcement and storytelling.

[GO TO PLAY 3 →](#)



Engage + support your people

Allocate more resources to support systems, inclusive content and education.

[GO TO PLAY 4 →](#)



Make DEI a business imperative

Teach leadership how to connect diversity and inclusion to business outcomes.

[GO TO PLAY 5 →](#)



De-bias reviews + compensation

Eliminate glass ceilings in salary negotiations and performance reviews.

[GO TO PLAY 6 →](#)



Measure + evaluate progress

Look at data across the employee lifecycle to measure your inclusion efforts.

[GO TO PLAY 7 →](#)



Bonus: make technology equitable

Give every employee and role an equally robust digital experience.

[GO TO BONUS PLAY →](#)

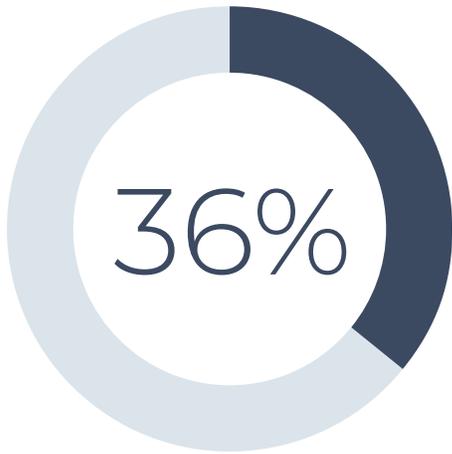


Beyond diversity: why now is the time to focus on inclusion

For decades, companies large and small have tried to address their diversity issues through recruiting. This has led to a number of advances in blind evaluation techniques, and a proliferation of tests and software designed to bypass recruiter bias. However, something critical has gotten lost in the shuffle. Once you recruit those diverse employees, how do you make sure they continue to develop, stay productive and stay engaged? How do you give all your people a sense of belonging?

This is the art of inclusion, and it's a lost art that companies need to rediscover. So we've put together a playbook to help you get started. Find out how to create a shared value system and a set of inclusive behaviors that everyone can participate in, make tangible changes to improve retention and measure the results of your efforts. We'll be honest: it won't be easy—it will take time, investment and executive involvement. But the results will be worth it for your employees and your business.

Diverse companies are likely to financially outperform their peers.



greater likelihood for ethnically diverse companies

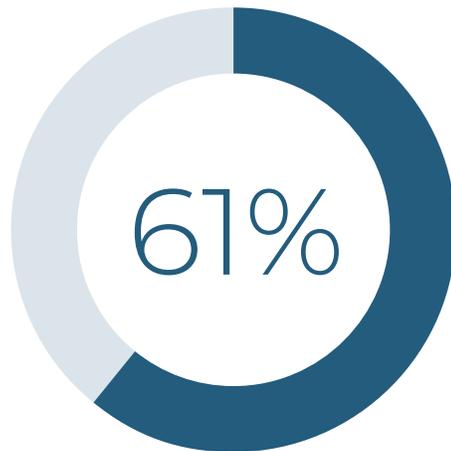


greater likelihood for gender diverse companies

The perception of diversity among employees is strong...
But the perception of inclusion is not.



of employer reviews online show a **positive** sentiment regarding progress on diversity



of employer reviews online show a **negative** sentiment regarding progress on inclusion

Source: McKinsey Report, "Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters," May 2020
<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters#>



PLAY 1

Co-create purpose + values

Why is it that some companies can live their inclusion ideals, while, at others, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are little more than boxes to tick? To become an inclusive organization, you'll need to create a shared value system that has buy-in from all your employees, and is woven into your daily processes. Sound like a daunting task? Let's break it down into manageable steps.

STEP 1

Start with executive leadership. Have a working session with your leaders to determine a forward-looking purpose, what new values the company should add and which old ones are no longer serving it well. Some organizations have found success by asking executives to prioritize the cards in a core values deck like this one.

STEP 2

Vet values with your people. Using the values that rose to the top in your executive session, elicit feedback from your employee segments via large numbers of focus groups and pulse polling. Pay special attention to employee groups that you know are underrepresented in your workforce, and employees who typically have a limited say in the company, such as lower-wage workers. Consider including anonymous surveys, as some of these employees may not feel comfortable openly expressing their opinions.

STEP 3

Appoint cultural ambassadors. Ask for volunteers from your various employee segments and employee resource groups (ERGs) to help incorporate your values into your day-to-day processes. Make sure the ambassadors include representation across racial, ethnic, gender and orientation lines, but be careful not to put the onus for creating inclusive culture on your diverse employees.

STEP 4

Nominate culture leaders. Choose a small number of leaders to oversee the efforts of your ambassadors, as well as to monitor any large values-based initiatives like fair pay or sustainability. Culture leaders should report back to the executive team monthly on progress and needed changes.

STEP 5

Run an educational campaign. Introduce a new value to the workforce each month. If you have an internal communications team or creative team, tap them to create a multi-month campaign. If the team executing the campaign is not yet diverse, vet the campaign elements with your ERGs and/or cultural ambassadors.

STEP 6

Include in onboarding. New workers will always be joining your company, so it's key to talk to them about your shared purpose and values from the start of the interview process. Onboarding materials can train them on these as well, but, to help them incorporate your values from the beginning, it's best to pair them with an onboarding mentor who can help them find their footing quickly.



“Organizations that are going to be successful have to understand that they can only be successful through their people. They can only be successful when they bring [out the best in their] people to help them to drive the strategy, to foster a culture that really [...] attracts talent, that engages talent, that inspires and motivates talent.”

ELIZABETH ADEFIOYE | CHRO, Ingredion



PLAY 2

Establish inclusive behaviors

Your company has probably already invested in diversity training. But diversity workshops alone can't unravel the biases and beliefs that employees have learned over the course of a lifetime. To create a work environment where everyone feels valued, teach your people a set of inclusive behaviors that anyone can perform regardless of their personal perspective. It's especially critical to establish these behaviors among those who hold leadership positions, from executives to middle management.

STEP 1

Ask for everyone's input. A survey by Avion Consulting found that the greatest driver of feeling valued was "being asked for my opinion on issues that affect me."¹ Anyone running a meeting or brainstorm can make this possible: when a new policy, strategy or idea is introduced, go around the room and give each employee an opportunity to comment. This prevents the most confident workers from monopolizing the conversation and allows for a more diverse array of perspectives. Be sure to thank employees who don't normally speak up for their feedback.

STEP 2

Give recognition. Employees who are recognized for work are more likely to put in discretionary effort. Create ways for workers and managers to recognize their peers for going above and beyond. This could include building a recognition and rewards program with monthly nominees, but it can also be as simple as peers sharing accolades on internal platforms.

STEP 3

Welcome during onboarding. Turn your onboarding focus to "settling in" rather than just getting to work. You can help new hires understand the inner workings of their company by providing org charts and explaining your team's communication styles.² Assign an onboarding mentor or "buddy" to help show them the ropes in their first weeks.

STEP 4

Promote equitable development. Make sure employees who have less representation at the company have a clear path to professional development and advancement. Managers should discuss career aspirations from the start and give employees continued coaching on how to achieve those goals. Later in this guide, we'll also share how to remove bias from your performance reviews.

STEP 5

Evaluate the experience. HR should continue to run periodic surveys to check in with employees on their experience, but that alone isn't enough to foster a sense of belonging. Managers should also take the time to have informal check-ins with their people and see how they're doing without the pressure of a meeting or performance review.

STEP 6

Listen to and act on comments. No employee likes to go through repeated feedback exercises that don't result in follow-through. When you request input from workers, make sure your team or organization actually takes action on the issues that rise to the top. Give your people updates on what steps you're taking and how it's going.



Less than half of workers believe diversity training has had a positive impact.

In a survey of more than 400 participants across industries, roles and leadership levels, only **46% of respondents** across all demographic groups believe that their diversity training has had a positive impact on the workplace.

Source: Avion Consulting, "Check the Box or Check the Behaviors," December 2020
https://mailchi.mp/5c2393c320ff/avion_check_the_behaviors



PLAY 3

Model and reinforce behaviors

Teaching your employees and executives new behaviors is a great start to building inclusive culture—but those behaviors won't stick if they aren't reinforced. By incorporating them into key processes and mechanisms, you can normalize and celebrate these actions until they become second nature to your workforce.

STEP 1

Include in performance review. Add inclusive behaviors to your annual performance reviews where appropriate. Are managers soliciting opinions from every team member and supporting their development equitably? Are rank-and-file employees showing appreciation for their colleagues and helping them onboard? Is HR soliciting employee feedback and measuring progress on inclusion? These tasks should be considered part of employees' defined responsibilities.

STEP 2

Hold leadership accountable. In a recent survey of 500 senior talent decision makers, only 4.6% of respondents said their companies linked executive compensation to DEI objectives.³ But, if you expect accountability from workers and managers, those at the top of your organization must be held to the same standard. Inclusion benchmarks should be made a part of leadership evaluations, and executive compensation/bonuses should be tied to achieving them.

STEP 3

Reward the right behaviors. Create a system to reward employees who perform inclusive behaviors or take actions that align with company values. This could be something as simple as an internal award, or HR could design a more long-term program that increases their bonus or total compensation when a certain number of awards are achieved. Your internal communications team may also know of small rewards that have worked well in past campaigns.

STEP 4

Create a format for feedback. If you've completed our first play, you've already created multiple feedback systems, but it's important to keep running polls to gauge employee sentiment around inclusion. Make sure you have a way to anonymize your polling, as studies show people of color and women may feel less empowered to take action when they experience unfairness.

STEP 5

Combat the nay-sayers. If there are individuals who consistently undermine a culture of inclusion, make it clear that their actions have consequences. Doing so will help the rest of your employees feel safer speaking up. However, make sure you focus the majority of your efforts on promoting positive behaviors, as a punishment-based culture can quickly become toxic.

68%

of company leaders said they create empowering environments where employees can be themselves, raise concerns and innovate without fear of failure. However, **only 36% of employees agreed.**

Source: Accenture, "Getting to Equal 2020: The Hidden Value of Culture Makers," March 2020
<https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/inclusion-diversity/culture-equality-research>



PLAY 4

Engage + support your people

Employees who don't feel included and supported by their company are likely to disengage, which can negatively impact organizational productivity and success. Companies must invest in consistent, beneficial methods of engagement and support to make all their people feel like company stakeholders.

STEP 1

Streamline to shift resources. Some HR teams spend as much as 75% of their time on HR processes.⁴ To focus more time and resources on developing your culture, streamline as many of those processes as possible. Reduce your HR tech stack to a smaller number of centralized platforms so you can easily control key functions like payroll, compensation and benefits. Work with your IT department to see if there is a way to further unify or automate these systems.

STEP 2

Create dedicated DEI content. You can use employee communications to reinforce inclusion in a number of ways. If your organization is global, internal comms can help promote cross-cultural literacy between your locations. You can also share progress on inclusion initiatives like diverse hiring and fair pay, deliver policy updates, promote training sessions and amplify the voices of your employee resource groups. The important thing is to keep up a steady stream of communications and ensure they're visible to all your people, including desk workers and frontline employees.

STEP 3

Offer voluntary workshops. A study of three decades of corporate data by the Harvard Business Review indicated that mandatory diversity training can often cause backlash, especially if it's required punitively in response to a negative incident. Voluntary diversity training, on the other hand, was shown to reduce bias.⁵ Consider creating "lunch and learn" workshops on different aspects of inclusion with interesting guest speakers from the company or the community. These more informal sessions can be a great way to highlight the positives of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) work and programs.

STEP 4

Develop support systems. If certain demographics are not well represented in your workforce, those team members may face additional challenges in their daily employee experience. You can combat this by providing multiple types of support networks:

Employee resource groups (ERGs), also known as affinity groups or employee networks, bring together employees of common backgrounds to share experiences and resolve challenges; some also invite allies to join and help raise awareness. Employee councils are similar to ERGs, but are smaller groups that liaise directly with the executive team to raise and resolve issues.

Mentorship programs help provide pathways to career development and advancement opportunities that have historically been limited for underrepresented groups. Studies show that mentoring has helped companies improve diversity by 9-24%.⁶



87%

of employee resource group members
felt more engaged at work due to their
participation in the group.

Source: Allegis, "Talent, Business and Competition: a New World of Diversity and Inclusion"
<https://www.allegisgroup.com/en/insights/diversity-inclusion-workplace>



PLAY 5

Make DEI a business imperative

Companies usually launch their diversity, equity and inclusion programs with the best of intentions, but good intentions aren't enough to make them a top organizational priority. To improve diversity and inclusion long-term, your executives must take ownership of your DEI program and prove that it can measurably impact business outcomes. Here's how:

STEP 1

Link DEI to business objectives. Audit whether the makeup of your workforce reflects the diversity and needs of your markets. Based on this information, C-suite executives should identify how the workforce needs to change, and how those changes can make the organization more competitive. For example, let's say a company wants to increase the number of women of color within its workforce. Can the company improve its brand affinity with customers of color by focusing that recruiting effort on certain business units? These are the sorts of questions C-suite leaders will need to answer.

STEP 2

Have your C-suite work with middle managers. While HR can lead efforts for diverse recruiting, and your chief diversity officer can set policy, senior leadership has the greatest power to influence management behavior. This is key, because managers have the greatest impact on the employee experience—one study found that they account for 70% of the variance in employee engagement.⁷ C-suite executives can mandate that managers incorporate DEI considerations into everything from job descriptions to compensation to succession planning.

STEP 3

Amplify the message. C-suite leaders should make DEI priorities a central focus of their company communications. For example, if a CEO does weekly video or email updates, make sure there is always an update on your inclusion initiatives. When you hold a town hall, leadership should be transparent about DEI progress (or lack thereof) and be prepared to answer inclusion-related questions. Executives have the ability to deliver transparency and propel change by setting the tone around this topic.



65%

of companies **agree or strongly agree that DEI plays a role in strategic planning**, while **57% say their DEI framework is formally integrated** into business strategies.

Source: HR.com, "The Future of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 2021"
<https://www.humanresourcetoday.com/2021/diversity/trends/?open-article-id=15576805>



PLAY 6

De-bias reviews + compensation

Equal pay has been widely debated for decades exactly because it's so difficult to address. However, if your organization wants to make measurable progress on inclusion, it can't shy away from the challenge. By taking steps to remove bias from the equation and auditing for pay gaps, you can make your compensation more equitable and your company more credible.

STEP 1

De-bias performance reviews. Companies often use performance reviews as their “objective” method for determining compensation, but these reviews are only as unbiased as a reviewer. For example, one study by bias researcher Joan C. Williams revealed that mistakes were mentioned in just 26% of performance reviews of white men, but in 43% of reviews of people of color.⁸ The good news is that you can revamp your reviews with free, open-source toolkits designed to prevent bias by using evidence-based guidelines.

STEP 2

Run thorough audits. Some employees are more likely than others to be overlooked for the work they're doing, or find themselves subject to “scope creep” and being assigned additional responsibilities outside their job duties. By comparing role definitions to actual workloads and compensation rates, your audit can reveal discrepancies in pay and advancement.

STEP 3

Make corrections. Once your audit is run, it's likely that you will find some discrepancies—and, to build trust in the company, your organization must commit to correcting them. You'll likely need to raise some salaries to create pay equity, but you'll probably also discover the need to reevaluate job titles. For example, an audit could find that women at director level are performing the same tasks as men at VP level.

STEP 4

Consider alternative solutions. To prevent pay gaps from recurring, some organizations have taken novel approaches. After noting that research shows men tend to negotiate salaries much more aggressively than women, Reddit's CEO decided to discontinue salary negotiations for new hires.⁹ Whole Foods and analytics firm SumAll took a different approach to the same problem, adopting policies that make salaries transparent across their organizations.¹⁰



Why you need to run audits every 2–3 years

Even when addressed, pay gaps can recur over time because of the confidential nature of salary negotiations and performance reviews. Salesforce is a well-known example of this: in 2015, the company audited compensation for male and female employees and **found a \$3 million gap**. Although they addressed it right away, **by 2017, the pay gap was back**, costing the company another \$3 million to correct.

Source: Fortune, "Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff: We're Erasing Our Gender Pay Gap—Again," January 2017
<https://fortune.com/2017/01/20/salesforce-marc-benioff-gender-pay-gap-davos/>



PLAY 7

Measure + evaluate progress

While diversity can be measured by headcount alone, measuring inclusion is more complex. You'll need to review both tangible metrics like advancement and retention, and emotional drivers like employee satisfaction. By comparing data from specific employee groups to your entire workforce and the population as a whole, you can figure out how much progress your inclusion efforts are making.

STEP 1 **Look at data across the employee lifecycle.** The employee journey has 6 stages: recruitment, onboarding, performance, development, exit, and becoming a former employee or company alumni. Use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to gauge employee engagement and sentiment at every stage. If you have a digital employee experience platform, you should be able to view insights from your employees' engagement, behavioral and polling data in one place.

STEP 2 **Measure diversity vs. market population.** This is especially important for global enterprises that have different racial and ethnic makeups in each of their operating markets. To identify shortfalls and areas for improvement, diversity or HR teams at these organizations should gather demographic data for each market yearly, and compare it to the makeup of their workforce in that location.

STEP 3 **Track and compare KPIs.** Compare data for specific employee demographic groups against your entire organization and the greater market.

Measure...	By tracking...	And comparing to...
Sourcing/recruitment	<Insert demographic> applicants as a percentage of total applicants	<Insert demographic> applicants as a percentage of available workforce for a given location or skill set
Inclusion and employee experience	Survey scores for <demographic> employee satisfaction	Survey scores for total employee satisfaction
Retention and bias in development	Annual <demographic> employee retention rate	Annual total employee retention rate
Bias in promotion or "glass ceiling"	Percentage of <demographic> employees at each level of the organization (e.g., line, management, leadership)	Percentage of <demographic> employees one level up
Pay inequity and bias in management pay decisions	<Demographic> employee average compensation per level or role	Average employee compensation per level or role

Source: Allegis Report, "Talent, Business and Competition: a New World of Diversity and Inclusion"
<https://www.allegisgroup.com/en/insights/diversity-inclusion-workplace>



BONUS PLAY

Make technology equitable

The way your company uses technology can also act as a roadblock to inclusion, because not every employee will have an equally useful digital experience. For example, IT often designs company systems around desk workers, but those same systems don't work well for frontline workers. Here are a few tips on how to change that:

STEP 1

Make sure all your people are reachable. When your company sends out communications about inclusion—or anything else—ensure that all your employees can receive it, no matter what channels or devices they use for work. That means if your salaried roles use laptops and the intranet, while your frontline workers use mobile devices and digital signage, your communication should appear in all those places.

STEP 2

Give equal access to tools and information. Desk workers are usually overwhelmed by too many tools and too much information, while deskless workers often don't have enough. Consider enabling all your people with a digital employee experience platform that sends them personalized tools and information on any device.

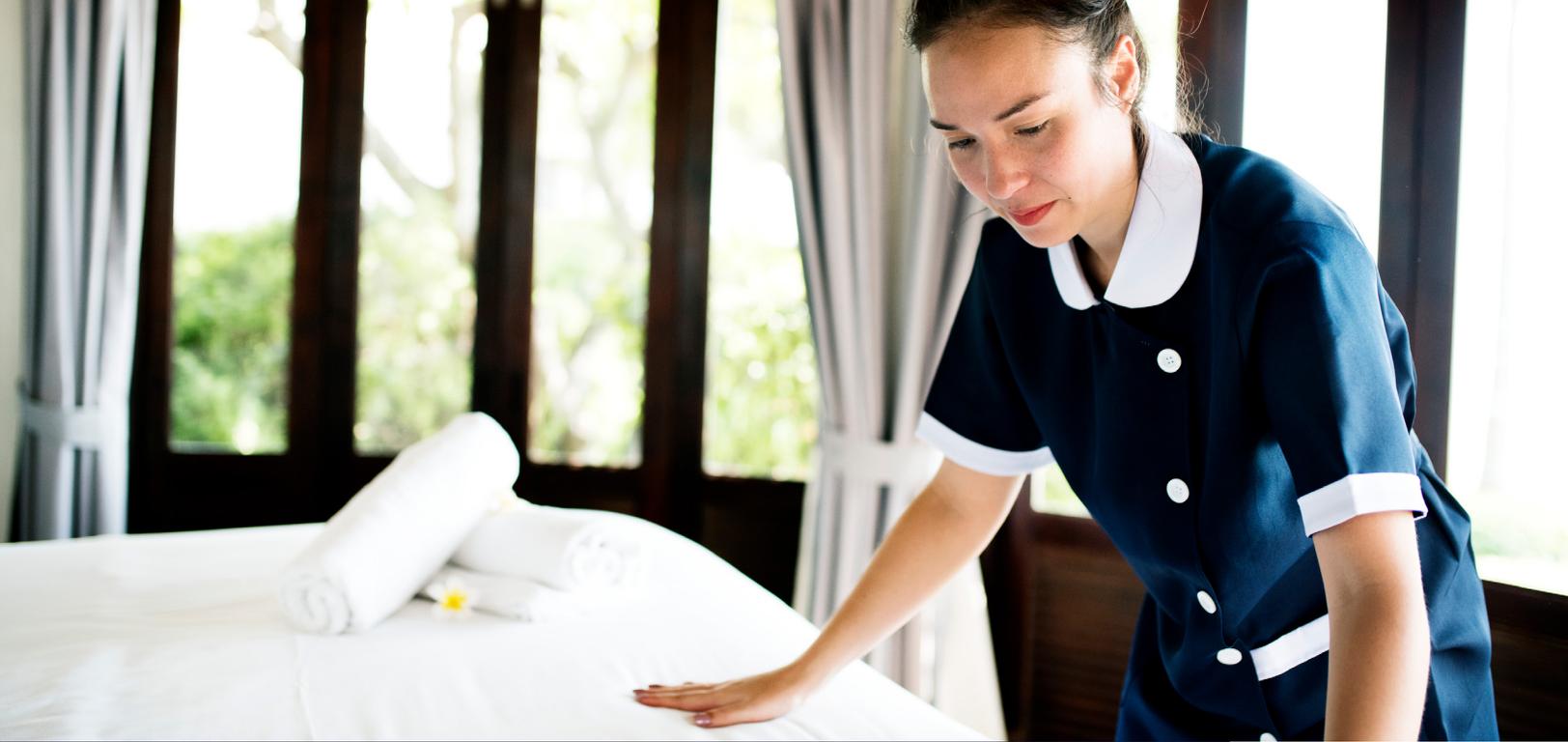
STEP 3

Provide a familiar user experience. Companies with a lot of hourly workers often assume they won't adapt well to technology. The reality is that these workers likely all use mobile technology and social media in their personal lives. If you provide them with a consumer-like user experience for tasks like scheduling their shifts, logging hours or reading company news, they'll adapt to it right away.

STEP 4

Use technology to build community. On the platforms where your company connects, give all your employees the ability to communicate. Encourage them to share their stories and comment on what's going on at the organization. This will allow them to bring issues to light, but also help create a sense of belonging and give the impression that the company cares about their feedback.





“The Firstup platform] was a way for us to include all of those employees, whether you sat at a desk in our corporate offices, or you’re on the floor servicing customers, or you’re part-time and might only work a couple of days a week, we were able to reach all of those employees with the same communication at the same time.”

MICHELLE DITONDO | Principal, Avion Consulting | Former CHRO, MGM Resorts

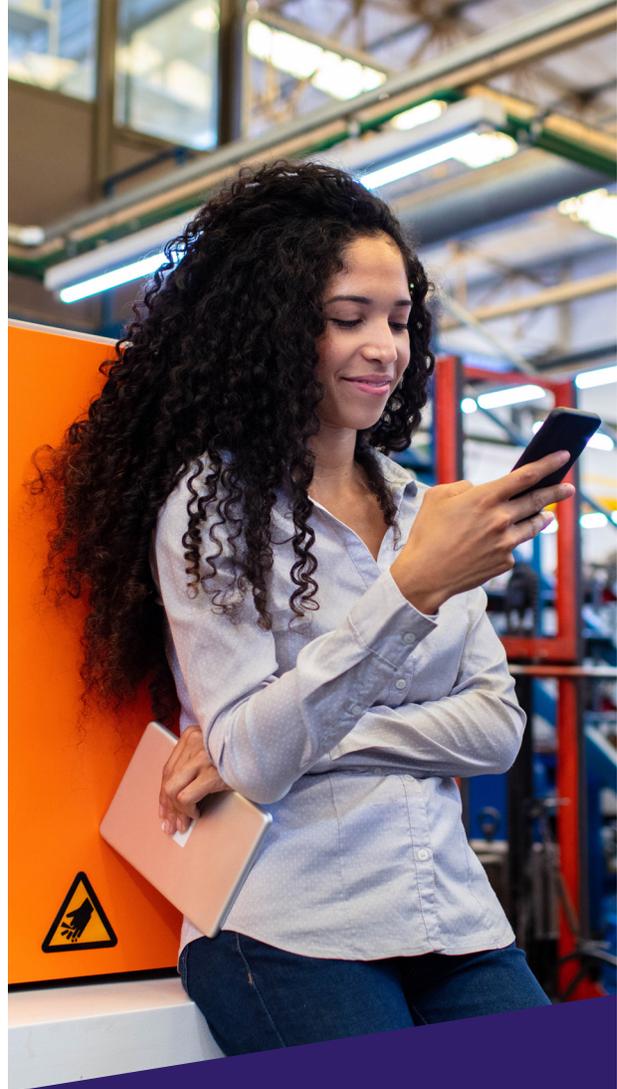
CONCLUSION

Most of today's executive leaders are not heavily focused on developing an inclusive culture.

Just 21% identify culture as a top priority, and only 23% have set a related target or goal.¹¹ This creates multiple opportunities for companies that excel at inclusion: they'll be able to recruit and retain more diverse talent, and boost employee engagement to make their people more productive, and ultimately create brands with broader appeal that deliver greater returns. This alone makes building a culture of inclusion worth the investment.

About Firstup

Firstup is redefining the digital employee experience to put people first and lift companies up. We make communication solutions that build authentic engagement and create two-way conversation between employees and companies. That's why 40% of Fortune 100 companies like Amazon, ABInBev, Ford and Pfizer have chosen us to unlock the potential of their workforces.



Find out how to give your people an equitable digital experience with the Firstup platform.

Learn more at [FIRSTUP.IO](https://firstup.io)

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³ Allegis, "Talent, Business and Competition: a New World of Diversity and Inclusion" <https://www.allegisgroup.com/en/insights/diversity-inclusion-workplace>

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