

# 5 Practical Ways to Move the Needle on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



As an active participant in the human resources, hiring, and recruiting space, you're no stranger to the topic of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Shifting factors in the workforce have made DEI a prominent initiative, including current events, the elevated role of HR as a strategic function, and the increased understanding of the ROI of diversity in the workforce make this topic stand out in the realms of human resources, hiring, recruiting, and beyond.



### Current Events

**The impact of COVID-19 on the economy and civil unrest from multiple racial injustices** in the United States has put a spotlight on DEI in both the business world and culture at large.<sup>1</sup>



### Evolution of Hiring and HR as Strategic Functions

**HR and hiring executives are increasingly expanding their role of compensation and benefits to play a more strategic role** in helping organizations grow and have a positive impact on their mission or vision.<sup>2</sup>



### Increased Understanding of ROI of Diversity in the Workforce

As businesses turn their attention to DEI, the **short-term benefits and long-term ROI is being put into real numbers**. Analysts are seeing a positive correlation between gender and ethnic diversity and financial outperformance of competition.<sup>3</sup>

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1. [Harvard Business Review](#)

2. [Deloitte](#)

3. [McKinsey & Company](#)

## *50% of talent practitioners say diversity and inclusion will become more of a priority as a result of the pandemic<sup>1</sup>*

But do you ever feel like you don't know what you can actually do to advance the mission of DEI within your organization?

Despite the fact that DEI as a field has grown extensively in the past decade, with prominent institutions like Gallup, Deloitte, and McKinsey & Company all championing DEI efforts, and lots of wins along the way, it's still very hard to identify actionable, practical ways to move forward with building an environment that more accurately represents and supports all of the ways human beings show up in the workplace.

In this guide, we present five practical moves organizations can take right now — before the end of the year — to move the needle on these important issues.

*“As we're thinking about bringing more diverse talent into our organization, we're also doing our best to ensure that we're building inclusive cultures so that everyone — as soon as they enter the organization — feels welcome, feels that they belong, and feels that they're a part of a larger mission for our organization and company.”*



**Jess Kimball**

Head of Inclusion, Diversity, and Employee Engagement at Ancestry

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# Assess Existing Buy-In



Every conversation around making progress in DEI begins with buy-in. Executive awareness and sponsorship is simply the most important way to ensure that initiatives related to DEI are seen and heard by everyone within an organization. But it's not always a practical goal to establish or build executive buy-in around DEI over a short period of time. Instead, most organizations need to start with taking an honest look at the state of existing buy-in.

## Consider the following examples of best practices in DEI shared by representatives from organizations like Ancestry, PagerDuty, and Fiix Software:

- **Ancestry** facilitates multiple opportunities for multi-tiered discussions about DEI, such as global company town halls and more intimate 1:1 check-ins
- **PagerDuty** runs a yearly inclusion survey to capture really nuanced details about various segments of their organizations
- **Fiix Software** partnered with [Crescendo](#) to curate DEI-related content for employees, supported by a monthly focus group for employees at all levels to connect and discuss current events

## PRACTICAL MOVE #1

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Do you see activity like this within your organization? If not, how difficult do you think it would be to start activities like this? Your answers to those questions will help you get a sense of your existing buy-in among executives and how that influences the rest of management and team leadership within your organization.

To get a better sense of what buy-in opportunities you can look out for within your organization, [click here](#) to explore [Crescendo's](#) coordinated business case for DEI buy-in.

“*In order to have an effective inclusion strategy, you must have senior leadership in the C-suite and even the board to buy in. That is the #1 thing. Everything will get done with buy-in.*”

*Build a relationship with your leaders, and then apply the reasoning why to your organization. That relationship will stem from getting to know them and how they receive information.”*



**Dean Delpeache**

Sr. Manager Talent Acquisition and Diversity and  
Inclusion Strategist at Fiix Software

# Screen Your Talent Pipeline



While many DEI efforts begin with existing employees, in reality, the first step is to evaluate your candidate pipeline. This is the source of an organization's diversity — or lack thereof — and a critical opportunity to make changes that immediately improve the state of DEI within your organization.

**Screening your hiring pipeline with the following important questions will allow you to identify the most promising opportunities for improvement:**

- ✓ *What percentage of inbound candidates are from underrepresented minorities?*
- ✓ *What number of underrepresented candidates make it into each stage?*
- ✓ *What number of underrepresented candidates are sourced or referred?*
- ✓ *Which channels are used to source candidates, and what is the demographic breakdown of candidates sourced from those channels?*

Understanding the data behind diversity in your candidate pipeline can make a big difference in which candidates move forward in the hiring process. Consider the following examples from Dean Delpeache, Sr. Manager Talent Acquisition and Diversity and Inclusion Strategist at Fiix Software:

## Explore ways to make the hiring process more welcoming

**Delpeache says:**

“Over 90% of candidates coming into our pipeline complete the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion survey to help us understand our candidate pipeline data. And I’ve come to find when I ask about their experience, many candidates will say that the reason they applied was our overly welcoming equity statement that goes above and beyond the standard, “If you require accommodations, please let us know,” to actually emphasize our desire to build a diverse candidate pool.

## Identify opportunities to create more equitable processes

**Delpeache says:**

“In one example, our team noticed that the hiring process for a very specific product area had the same proportion of females and males moving throughout the stages.

*But when it got to the final stage, we noticed that only 12% of the females were being hired compared to over 50% of the males.*

*When we got granular into the data, we realized there was always a female hiring manager in the interviews where a female was hired, while when a male was hired, the hiring team was all male. We were then able to change our processes so that, from now on, there has to be a female hiring manager in that stage of the interview process.*



## Use gender neutral language so underrepresented candidates don't opt themselves out

*Delpeache says:*

“ We now know that candidates of different genders interpret job descriptions differently. For example, women will apply to job descriptions only when they have 90-100% of the qualifications, whereas men will apply when they have 60-70% of the qualifications.

*By using less gendered language, or explaining job requirements in a different way, you can increase the likelihood these candidates will apply.*

*For example, instead of using words like, "We're looking for a strong leader," we might use words like, "We're looking for an exceptional leader."*

*Or instead of describing everything in our job description as a must-have, we might section out, "Here's what we really must have," and "Here's the nice-to-haves." Or we just don't put nice-to-haves at all, just so that we give people a stronger opportunity to look at a job description and really, want to apply, regardless of male, female, or nonbinary.*



Here's a checklist developed by the [Crescendo](#) team you can download to use to audit existing processes and policies in place: [Inclusion Audit: Processes, Structures & Policies](#)

*“Especially as we look at a very competitive market for companies that are in tech, we must continue to allow for remote channels to open up for people that are not in these industries and not in our locations.*”

*If you see that there are demographics that are not being represented in your pipeline and you have the opportunity to hire people remotely, you've got to do it. You've got to explore different markets and different areas to give access to people.”*



**Chez Jennings**

Technical Recruiter at Lever



# Update Internal and External-Facing Language to be Inclusive

How we talk about things matters, especially when it comes to hiring and recruiting. We see this in recent studies about gendered language, in which certain job descriptions were off-putting to female job candidates.

Jess Kimball, Head of Inclusion, Diversity, and Employee Engagement at Ancestry, saw the same thing happening in the way the marketing and sales team was talking to prospective customers. Exploring more inclusive uses of language when referencing historical events allowed the team to sell their product in a wider market and see measurable business results.

*“We created our inclusivity guidelines to help our marketing and our content creation teams better identify which terms to use when referring to specific demographics,” explains Kimball. “For example, if we're talking about the Black community in the United States, when do you use Black versus African American? Are there differences? And there are. And providing that language empowers all of our on-the-frontline content creators to make sure that they feel comfortable and confident that they're using the most inclusive language possible.”*

## PRACTICAL MOVE #3

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To move forward with this suggestion, take a look at the way you talk about your hiring funnel from top to bottom. Are you looking for a “culture fit,” which implies you want candidates that look like your current employees? Or a “culture add,” which implies you want to expand your talent in diverse ways.

For example, when hiring, Lever creates impact descriptions as opposed to job descriptions to ensure that we hire candidates based on their impact to the organization instead of just assessing job requirements or specific kinds of experience that shrink the hiring pool. [Harvard Business Review](#) reported that whereas men usually apply to jobs even when they meet just 60%+ of the requirements listed, women tend to apply only when they feel they meet 100%. By focusing on impact rather than background requirements, we help men and women see themselves here at a similar rate.

*“ At Ancestry, we involve a wide range of cross-functional leaders across departments like marketing and product in making sure the language we use is inclusive. This is especially important when we’re discussing very difficult topics that span across history — we want to make sure that we’re using inclusive language, not just within the organization, but within our products, within our market, and throughout all of our messaging.”*



**Jess Kimball**

Head of Inclusion, Diversity, and Employee Engagement at Ancestry

# Identify Tools That Support Your DEI Efforts



It can be difficult for even the most committed company to follow through on their intentions in improving DEI within the organization. Which is why part of a strong push for DEI must include an assessment of organizational tools that will support the accountability and longevity of the programs you initiate.

Which tools do you already use that provide structure and support for DEI efforts? Which tools do you need to fill in the gaps in your organization? Ask these important questions now so you can make a plan for the future that will take you where you want to go.

## Here are a few examples of DEI tools in action, courtesy of DEI specialists Dean Delpeache:

- Delpeache's team at Fiix Software partnered with [Crescendo](#), an inclusion platform, to send articles and videos on curated DEI topics through Slack or test new functionality in Microsoft Teams to encourage conversation and education. Delpeache has found this keeps the conversation going strong long after a semi-annual training on the topics takes place.
- Fiix Software also uses Lever's tools to capture feedback about their equity statement, track candidate demographics throughout the hiring process and then as full-time employees, and capture baseline DEI metrics to compare to their measures of success.

“Your actions for this work speak louder than words — you can’t just make a promise and do nothing about it. Tools that provide data to validate and support your initiatives, and systems of accountability — they help you ensure you progress towards your commitments and support more focused conversations at the executive level.”



**Phylicia Jones**

Senior Director of Global Talent  
Development at PagerDuty



Lever’s **Success Tracker** inserts a template of baseline benchmarks into your recruiting pipeline so you can easily develop measures of success for your organization.

[Click here](#) to learn more about how Lever supports DEI

“To create a truly inclusive workplace, every individual must be given the tools that allow them to learn and grow. These tools should enable DEI and HR professionals to meet every individual where they are on their learning journey. Crescendo makes it possible to scale your inclusion strategy worldwide and realize your DEI commitment year-round through nudge-based microlearning in the flow of work. This global, continuous approach is the key to long lasting, impactful behaviour change.”



**Sage Franch**

CEO and Co-Founder at Crescendo

# Make a Plan for 2021 Today



No organization can fulfill its commitment to DEI overnight. True progress in DEI is a long-term effort that requires a continued commitment — a commitment that lasts through next year and beyond as you seek out different voices and create a space within an organization for those voices to feel seen, heard, and represented.

Before the end of the year, create a plan for 2021. Identify the big pushes, such as DEI presentations, trainings, and employee resource groups — don't neglect the daily, weekly, and monthly follow-through that happens outside those big moments. Identify how you will support these efforts and follow through on the promises you're making today so that you have a roadmap to guide you in the new year.

*“We are trying to break down 400+ years of systems that haven't always catered to including or recognizing or giving opportunity to underrepresented populations,” says Phylicia Jones, Senior Director of Global Talent Development at PagerDuty. “When it comes to equity, we're really talking about a changing workplace, performance, and recognition experience for employees. And that's where training comes into play — you're not just doing training, but you're carrying it across various reinforcement mechanisms.”*

*“If you put your sole focus on a training program, it will limit your impact in really breaking down barriers. The biggest impact will come from training supported by on-the-job coaching and mentoring, informal conversations, and executive buy-in and leadership.”*



**Phylicia Jones**

Senior Director of Global Talent  
Development at PagerDuty

## **Taking Action Becomes Easier Over Time**

If you're passionate about advancing the mission of DEI within your organization, the time to act is now. In fact, it will never get easier than it is right now to take action on this important priority — even though it's hard to imagine you can make significant headway by the end of the year.

While there's no overnight or short-term solution to the inadequacies of our current approach to DEI, these five practical steps can help you make progress today — and create a vision of long-lasting change that will carry into the next year. Over time, this will allow the seed of true diversity, equity, and inclusion to thrive within your organization and deliver benefits for years to come.



“It’s not just leaders that need to ensure there’s belonging in the environment. Everyone plays a part, whether you’re writing an inclusive meeting agenda, trying to do an inclusive design thinking session, delivering coaching, or de-biasing your feedback.

*At PagerDuty, we don’t have a standalone unconscious bias training because we don’t want that education to be ‘one and done.’ Instead, we embed all our inclusive behaviors in every training. Because if you want to be an employee who works at PagerDuty, you have to live by our cultural values of creating inclusive environments.”*



**Phylicia Jones**

Senior Director of Global Talent  
Development at PagerDuty



## About Lever

Lever was founded in 2012 and supports the hiring needs of over 3000 leading companies around the globe, including the teams at Netflix, Shopify, Atlassian, KPMG, and McGraw-Hill Education. Lever is also fiercely committed to building a team culture that celebrates diversity and inclusion.

For more information, visit [lever.co](https://lever.co)



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## About Blueboard

Blueboard is a leading employee recognition and incentives platform powered by handcurated experiences (both in-home, and out in the world). We make it easy for companies to give meaningful employee rewards, incentives and gifts—from one-of-a-kind to once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Hundreds of companies like Pinterest, Google, Otis Elevators, GoPro and USI Insurance use Blueboard to reward their top performers with experiences - think local adventures like skydiving, couples massage, learning to surf, or luxury incentive travel in lieu of cash or gift cards. From helping people connect with family and friends, to escaping the everyday, Blueboard employee rewards are the best way to inspire and care for your top people.

For more information, visit [www.Blueboard.com](https://www.Blueboard.com)



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## Further Reading on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

[How to Elevate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work in Your Organization](#)

Wharton School of Business

[How to Measure Diversity and Inclusion for a Stronger Workplace](#)

SurveyMonkey

[Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging for HR: Resources and Templates](#)

Torch, Lattice, Lever & Checkr

