



The Year Ahead

in Diversity Equity & Inclusion

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From George Floyd to Peng Shuai, a lot has gone on over the last three years when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion. Add in a global pandemic and a Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and what emerges is an accelerated transformation of how people see, value and go about work. For many folks, managing all of the simultaneous and transformational demands unfolding within the worlds of technology, inflation, hybrid work, supply chain, ESG, etc. can be quite overwhelming. Seasoned leaders know the phrase “you can’t boil the ocean,” but the present status of every instrument and metric we have suggests we must advance on all fronts even if we are not sure where to begin and/or how to prioritize.

In the Eagle's Flight 2022 State of DE&I trends report, we noted the rapid rise of diversity, equity and inclusion professionals entering the corporate workplace. Nowadays, many of those same professionals find themselves fighting to maintain the relevance and integrity of their DE&I work in the ever-growing ocean of competing priorities.

As a global practice here at Eagle's Flight, we have the privilege of looking and planning into the future with many of our DE&I clients; as well as continuing to mature on our own journey of diversity, equity and inclusion as an organization. With the joy of walking alongside so many organizations from so many different industries around the world, comes a responsibility to share and be helpful. So here are three observations we at Eagle's Flight have noticed when it comes diversity, equity and inclusion, which may offer some food for thought as you plan and look forward in your own organization.

Neuro is the new Micro!

So much in the DE&I space has been dominated by the word “micro” over the last year and a half. It was such a buzz-worthy word that in early 2021, I put together a word tool where you can combine different words to create a trendy “micro-topic” and then interject them into DE&I conversations.

Say a Word From This List...		... and then add a word from this list...
Cultural	...then say MICRO...”	Aggression
Emotional		Bias
Explicit		Belonging
Implicit		Diversity
Psychological		Inclusion

The word tool was only relevant because the world of DE&I was so focused on the small, subtle biases and behaviors we have about a person’s race, gender, age and orientation, etc.. Now heading into 2023, keeping the word tool relevant may mean replacing “**micro**” with “**neuro**” as a growing number of the organizations we work with are shifting their focus and investment from combating people’s **implicit micro-aggressions** to learning how to harness the **psychological neuro-diversity** of their workforce.

If/as more organizations follow suit in this regard, I suspect it will spark further debate about what is at the heart of DE&I in the workplace. On one hand, organizations and DE&I professionals who encourage more focus on the neuro-brain science behind DE&I are doing so because they believe that while race, age, gender, orientation and the rest of our intersectionality are at the root of DE&I, the fruit of all that intersectionality is a person’s thoughts, perspectives and ideas which is what will ultimately be of value in the environment and context of work.

On the other hand, there are also practitioners and leaders who will contend the rise of neurology in the DE&I space is nothing more than a wash-out or a cop-out from doing the uncomfortable work to root out the “isms” that are negatively impacting our workers and work environments. To see this tension of “neuro” vs. “micro” first hand, one can google the United States Supreme Court’s deliberation of ending the explicit use of race in college admissions. The decision of this case could not only impact affirmative action policies and procedures across the United States and perhaps even beyond, but it may also signal where DE&I is headed in the days ahead.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Goes Salty!

No matter where we are on Earth, one of life’s great common experiences is salt. All of us can identify its distinct flavor (Give your taste buds a second to remember)... all of us have learned how salt can be used to preserve essential proteins for our survival... and all of us know salt is a key ingredient in almost any of the favorite recipes we hold near and dear.

In our experience as a global practice, the journey of diversity, equity and inclusion tends to follow the same path as salt. When organizations first step into the world of DE&I, their immediate need is often to understand what DE&I is and identify its distinct flavor in their particular context. Then eventually there is a need to learn how DE&I can be used to preserve the essentials of an organization’s survival in things such as ideation and innovation, talent acquisition, marketing, etc. Now heading into 2023, we’re having more and more conversation with clients around integrating DE&I as a key ingredient in larger recipes as opposed to DE&I remaining on its own or as one of many competing priorities on a strategic agenda.

Some of the key integrations for DE&I that we hear from our clients appear to be taking place around the employee life cycle, innovation and efficiency. For example, instead of just putting a workforce or a leadership population through DE&I learning and development, we see organizations also looking to integrate DE&I into their onboarding program for new workers. Instead of just offering inter-sectionally diverse slates, organizations also want to equip leaders who are on the frontlines of hiring with inclusive interviewing skills.

Many of the organizations we work with are asking us for help around how to apply DE&I skills such as acknowledging others and managing bias to specific parts of their business such as communication or running meetings to draw out more ideas and innovation from more people on their teams to fuel business priorities and efficiencies. On the flip side, nearly 60% of Employee Resource Group leaders do not have any management or leadership experience (according to [A Great Place to Work](#)); which has created a need to support and develop these DE&I leaders with essential leadership/management skills.

From Culture to Competencies

Last but certainly not least, many of the organizations we have worked with in the diversity, equity and inclusion space over multiple years are now asking us fundamentally different questions. Five years ago, many of the DE&I conversations we had centered on wondering “Is DE&I true?” From my perspective, this is why having well-researched DE&I business cases and/or having solid data + case studies, etc. to help people see the need to manage bias, etc. were so crucial to success for DE&I initiatives at that time.

Fast forward to 2023, and the questions I hear from many of those same leaders and organizations now revolve more around the underlying position of “does DE&I work?” As reported in the Eagle’s Flight 2022 State of DE&I trends report, some DE&I professionals and practitioners see less of a need to utilize DE&I business cases. This may be because they see the fundamental question around DE&I shifting.

Where the proverbial rubber really hits the road is understanding how this shift is causing DE&I leaders and organizations to move from seeing DE&I through the lens of culture to seeing it through the lens of competencies. As more and more organizations attempt this quantum leap from culture to competency, I suspect we may also see a few other “ripple effect” shifts happening at the same time. For example, one ripple effect may be a continued rise for leaders and organizations to measure DE&I improvement. Another ripple effect may be expanding what we might currently describe as “DE&I competencies” from skillsets such as acknowledging others and managing bias to also include competency around empathy, storytelling as well as cultural and emotional intelligence, etc.

