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Principles of business operations often ripple around the world due to the Internet and social media enabling people to access information. They learn what others support, changes they want in their respective countries and workplaces, and strategies to drive change. DEI, for example, can be traced back to the social movements in the U.S. during the 1960s. It was not called DEI, but the acronym has become familiar globally. As the backlash to DEI grows in the U.S., so does the backlash in places like Europe. This is not a “follow

FOCUSING ON COMMON VALUES IN EUROPE'S WORKFORCE NATURALLY LEADS TO INCLUSION

the leader” event in Europe, even if it seems that way. It is more of a “stepping back” event to re-evaluate the future direction businesses can take to ensure no one loses the benefits of their efforts to date and future opportunities are offered equally and justly.

The European Commission has taken an active approach to DEI as a driving force for creating economic opportunities and promoting social transformation. The EU has 24 national Diversity Charters, 12,000 organizational signers, and 16 million participating employees. The implementation of Europe's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive has the effect of making DEI reporting mandatory. May is European Diversity Month, and the

focus is on connecting diversity to meeting critical issues like fostering a technologically skilled workforce, addressing the changing requirements of an aging workforce, and bridging skills gaps.

Aletta Gräfin von Hardenberg, Director of Charta der Vielfalt - Diversity Charter Germany, said, “There is an obvious link between society and the workplace. What matters is cohesion. What helps is diversity.” She goes right to the core importance of diversity. People in society are the same people in the workforce. Ensuring they succeed as community members and employees is a common goal. One of the reasons there has been some backlash against DEI is because some see it as reverse bias, as if diverse people have more rights and should have more opportunities than others. That left groups of people feeling excluded. It seems like an unsolvable problem.

Michael Stuber is a DEI pioneer with an international understanding of DEI principles. He is a global D&I engineer with a European identity, and he presents an interesting perspective and suggestion for closing the developing chasm between pro- and anti-DEI parties. He writes, “The focus on difference – or marginalised groups – has had similar effects both in Europe and in the USA: Polarisation (support vs. resistance), competition (for attention and resources) and eventual cannibalisation, and increasing confusion about what the shared (DEI) mission or common agenda is.” He goes on to say the increasing backlash seems to indicate that DEI messaging has not been effective. Is it time to re-engineer the diversity approach and rethink what is really about?

Stuber points out that unifying people is achieved through shared purpose, mission, and values in any organization. Focusing on what people have in common is a positive approach, and it is a

strategy that may help organizations overcome the negativity surrounding DEI that seems to be causing HR issues, defensive behaviors, and feelings of exclusion. As Stuber says, “helping people (i.e. everyone) to see themselves as part of DEI may well be the biggest need going forward.”

Stuber's approach strives to create an organizational agenda built on integrated principles of shared values, alignment, inclusion, unity, belonging, consistency, and performance. Instead of initiatives and templates, organizational members share these values to drive performance, commitment to organizational priorities, and working with others. If inclusion and belonging are shared core values of the organization as much as ethics and teamwork, a sense of common purpose develops, and bias and discrimination have no place. Upholding the values becomes essential to organizational and personal success.

If the acronym DEI is considered divisive, it does not need to be used in this operational model. Common values drive organizational behaviors. Diversity and inclusion offer so much good, an acronym should not hinder progress.



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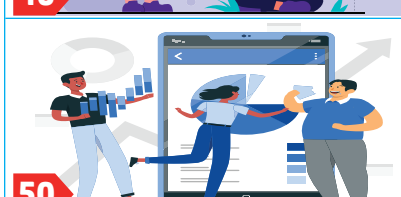
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Editorial Description

DiversityGlobal Magazine's mission is to generate conversation in Thought Leadership among thinkers, CEOs, managers, and entrepreneurs about the coming sea changes in global corporate diversity that will transform how people innovate and lead. DiversityGlobal captures the creativity, excitement and opportunity created by rapid societal, economic and technological change and brings it home to thoughtful managers.

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AI & Talent Transformation

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, AI is not just a tool—it's a catalyst for talent transformation. Organizations across industries are rethinking how they attract, develop, and retain talent in the age of automation and intelligent technologies.

In the Q2 issue of **Workplace Innovate Magazine**, this special section explores how organizations are leveraging AI to unlock human potential and accelerate business transformation. Join the conversation shaping the future of work.



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BRIEFS

HP Announces 2025 Digital Equity Accelerator to Drive Global Digital Inclusion



PALO ALTO, CA

HP Inc. (NYSE: HPQ) and the HP Foundation are launching the 2025 Digital Equity Accelerator to help bridge the global digital divide and prepare individuals for the future of work. This year's program focuses on equipping historically disconnected youth and adults with essential digital skills. Selected non-profits will receive \$100,000 in HP Foundation grants, HP technology (~\$100,000 value), and six months of programmatic support to scale their digital equity initiatives. Expanding its reach, HP is now offering the Accelerator to Greece, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Spain, with applications open until February 12, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. EST.

A \$1 trillion-plus digital divide continues to hinder billions from accessing education and economic opportunities. HP's Digital Equity Accelerator aims to close this gap by enhancing access to technology, digital literacy & AI, and skills training. Since 2022, program alumni have helped advance digital equity for educators, women, and disconnected youth, strengthening communities and expanding opportunities worldwide.

China Medical System (867.HK) is Included in the S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook 2025



SHENZHEN, CHINA

In February 11th 2025, with a Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA) score of 61, surpassing 93% of global peers, China Medical System Holdings Limited ("CMS" or the "Group") has been included in the S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook 2025 (the "Yearbook 2025"). This marks the Group's first inclusion in the global edition of S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook (the "Yearbook"), following the S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook (China Edition) inclusion for consecutive two years.

Since its launch in 2008, the Yearbook's professionalism and authority have been highly recognized by global ESG investors and other stakeholders. The Yearbook aims to identify outstanding companies in sustainable development from each industry. 7,690 companies across 62 industries were assessed, while only 780 stood out and were included in the Yearbook 2025. The inclusion in the Yearbook 2025 represents a high recognition of sustainable development practices of CMS.

Canadian Council for Indigenous Business and Schulich ExecEd Launch Mini-MBA Program to Empower Indigenous Business Leaders



TORONTO, ON

Schulich ExecEd and Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB) are proud to announce the launch of the inaugural cohort for the Schulich Mini-MBA for Indigenous Leaders. This program is designed to empower Indigenous business professionals by enhancing their leadership capabilities and equipping them with practical business solutions.

The Mini-MBA curriculum integrates practical skills and knowledge from industry experts, incorporating perspectives from the business community alongside the latest academic research, enriched with insights from esteemed Indigenous guest speakers. A key component of the program is the Capstone project, where participants apply their acquired knowledge to real-world business challenges. The program culminates with participants presenting their Capstone solutions to a panel of senior leaders, fostering opportunities for networking and mentorship.

Coke Florida's National Black History Month Programming Continues to Deliver on Commitment to Education & Economic Empowerment



TAMPA, FLA

As one of the largest Black owned businesses in the Nation, Coca-Cola Beverages Florida, LLC (Coke Florida) is proud to recognize National Black History Month and celebrate the many contributions that Black Americans have made in our Nation's history. Through the company's continued focus on Education and Economic Empowerment, Coke Florida will provide educational and technology resources to communities throughout the state. Through these initiatives, Coke Florida has been able to create a positive and lasting impact on the lives of Floridians.

During National Black History Month, Coke Florida will donate 300 new laptops towards this worthy campaign, increasing its total to nearly 1,800 laptops since the program began in 2016. Additionally, the company has begun developing and enhancing community tech labs with needed hardware since 2021 to support expanded access for students. With eight tech labs being dedicated this month, a total of 18 computer labs will have been refreshed across the state in just three years.

Top Canadian businesses pledge support for Veteran employment as part of the Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 legacy



VANCOUVER, BC

Eleven Canadian businesses have endorsed the Veteran Ready Canada Declaration, joining a growing movement to expand job opportunities for military Veterans. The announcement took place at the Veteran Employment Symposium, hosted by True Patriot Love during the Invictus Games Whistler Vancouver 2025, presented by ATCO and Boeing. The Symposium—supported by Boeing and Scotiabank—focused on helping Veterans transition to civilian careers, with notable attendees including Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, government officials, and industry leaders.

Endorsing organizations include True Patriot Love, Scotiabank, Boeing, Agilec, ATCO, AWS Canada, BMO, Challenge Factory, Cyber Catalyst Talent Solutions, Commissionaires, and Together We Stand. The Veteran Ready Canada Declaration supports the National Veterans Employment Strategy, committing businesses to developing Veteran-friendly policies, sharing best practices, and collaborating with the Canadian Armed Forces and Veteran-serving organizations. This non-binding commitment aims to create more career opportunities for transitioning service members, Reservists, Veterans, and their families.

ASEAN and Japan Women Entrepreneurs Lead the Way in Innovation, Sustainability, and Inclusivity at the ASEAN-Japan Women Entrepreneurs' Summit in Kuala Lumpur



KUALA LUMPUR, MY

The ASEAN-Japan Centre (AJC), in collaboration with key organizations, hosted the ASEAN-Japan Women Entrepreneurs' Summit in Kuala Lumpur, emphasizing the vital role of women entrepreneurs in driving economic innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity. In alignment with Malaysia's 2025 ASEAN Chairmanship, the event brought together over 100 women entrepreneurs, investors, and ecosystem enablers from across ASEAN and Japan, fostering dynamic discussions on the challenges and opportunities for women in business.

Key sessions addressed critical topics such as harnessing AI and digital skills, enhancing access to finance, gender-lens investment, and promoting sustainability for growth. Notable highlights included innovative solutions in the care economy and the need for stronger representation of women in investment. The Summit underscored the importance of collaboration between businesses, governments, and communities to empower women-led enterprises, aiming for greater economic integration and long-term prosperity in the region.



BUILDING A FULLY ACCESSIBLE BUSINESS: UNLOCKING GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

To do business in the European Union, businesses must meet the requirements of the European Accessibility Act in 2025. Compliance through accessibility improvements increases inclusiveness, leading to new opportunities for business success.

- BY **LISA TRUMBULL**

By June 28, 2025, European Union member states must comply with the requirements of the European Accessibility Act (EAA) by incorporating EAA requirements into their national laws. It is a comprehensive set of regulations designed to remove all barriers for people with disabilities, the elderly, and others with temporary needs, like pregnant women, in public and private spaces. The EAA provides guidelines addressing websites, physical environments, digital platforms, and mobile applications.

This legislation supports greater social inclusion, creating opportunities for the full economic and social participation of those with special needs. In turn, businesses can reach new markets, enhance recruitment and hiring systems, and strengthen their brands. While the EAA presents implementation challenges because of its in-depth requirements, a systematic, structured approach to meet them will uplift people and organizations.

STANDARDS FOR ALL ORGANIZATIONS

The EAA will ensure equal access to products and services for people with varying abilities by setting standardized accessibility requirements across all EU member states. Though directed at standardizing accessibility requirements in the EU, this legislation offers every organization that wants to ensure it provides maximum accessibility a set of benchmarks.

While there is a tendency to think of only people with disabilities needing enhanced accessibility, many others benefit. The EAA says, “The concept of ‘persons with functional limitations’, as referred to in this Directive, includes persons who have any physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, age-related impairments, or other human body performance related causes, permanent or temporary, which, in interaction with various barriers, result in their reduced access to products and services...” So, most people benefit, including the elderly and pregnant women. As the world’s population ages, the number of people needing better accessibility will rapidly increase.

Though industries are named in the legislation, the types of products and services specifically mentioned mean most businesses are impacted. Products included are computers and operating systems, ATMs and payment terminals (i.e., credit card machines), ticketing and check-in machines, smartphones, e-readers, other communication devices, and TV equipment. Specific services are also named, including e-commerce, websites, and mobile services.

ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH ANY MEANS

The EAA is partner legislation with EN 301 549 because it extends mandated accessibility requirements for websites, electronic apps, and mobile apps to private businesses. For example, images on the business website and social media sites should include alt text that screen readers use to replace images with text for the sight impaired. Websites should be navigable by a keyboard for people who cannot use a mouse. Including captions and transcripts for audio and video content ensures access for users with hearing impairments. These are just a few examples.

Additional accessibility features say digital platforms should support multiple languages and be culturally sensitive. Implementing language translation features and ensuring that language options are easily selectable enables greater inclusivity. Voice recognition systems, AI-driven

Global business leaders are encouraged to view accessibility not merely as a legal obligation but as an opportunity for growth and inclusivity.

en assistive technologies, and augmented reality tools offer innovative ways to enhance user experiences. For instance, AI tools that generate real-time captions or provide visual descriptions for images are increasingly valuable for inclusive design.

Cultural inclusivity involves using imagery, language, and design elements that reflect diverse communities and avoid stereotypes or content that may alienate certain users. Businesses should remain informed about emerging trends and explore partnerships with technology providers to incorporate these advancements.

The EAA also addresses physical space accessibility. Retail stores, commercial centers, and other businesses with public space should ensure accessibility via ramps, accessible restrooms, designated parking spaces, well-lit environments, sensory-friendly features like sound-absorbing materials to reduce noise levels, and more. The EAA promotes the concept of Universal Design principles, which advocate for designs that are usable by everyone without requiring specialized adaptations. These principles include equitable use, flexibility, simplicity, intuitive design, minimal potential dangers, low physical effort, sufficient space for approach and use, and perceptible information. While there are some questions about the cost and feasibility of adapting some existing spaces, all new physical spaces must incorporate these Universal Design principles.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES TO THRIVE

Complying with the EAA can drive business growth. People who cannot access a business physically or digitally will potentially gain access to products, services, and locations they cannot utilize. Over 100 million people in the EU have a disability so enhancing accessibility will open up a more extensive customer base. Also, the workplace is more inclusive, which expands the available labor market for filling positions and makes the company more attractive to potential job candidates. Improved accessibility can also enhance a brand's reputation in the marketplace, strengthening customer loyalty and trust.

Embracing the EAA requirements may seem daunting, but businesses can take a proactive and systematic approach to implementation. The first step is to conduct a comprehensive audit of digital and physical elements to identify areas that need updating or modification to meet the standards. From the audit, an implementation plan is developed and employees are trained, ensuring a smooth transition to full compliance.

Establishing a robust monitoring process ensures the business stays abreast of stakeholder needs and new technologies and designs. With technology advancing regularly, gathering feedback from the workforce and other organizational stakeholders becomes crucial in making informed decisions about resource allocation for new technologies or filling accessibility gaps. Providing accessible feedback channels—such as phone lines, online forms, apps, and in-person options—encourages

users to share their experiences and challenges. By acting promptly on feedback, businesses can demonstrate a genuine commitment to accessibility and inclusivity.

CREATING A MORE ACCESSIBLE WORLD

Global business leaders are encouraged to view accessibility not merely as a legal obligation but as an opportunity for growth and inclusivity. By proactively adopting inclusive practices, companies can better serve their communities, enhance their brand image, and comply with forthcoming regulations. Businesses must embrace a multifaceted approach that combines thoughtful physical and digital design, employee training, feedback mechanisms, community collaboration, and a commitment to innovation. By placing inclusivity at the core of their operations, companies enhance their brand reputation and contribute meaningfully to a more equitable and accessible world.



The concept of 'persons with functional limitations', as referred to in this Directive, includes persons who have any physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, age-related impairments, or other human body performance related causes, permanent or temporary, which, in interaction with various barriers, result in their reduced access to products and services...



FUELING INNOVATION AND BUSINESS GROWTH WITH EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP

Inclusive leadership empowers work teams by fostering a culture of belonging, psychological safety, and equal opportunity. This approach drives innovation and creativity and contributes significantly to long-term business success and growth.

BY BELINDA JONES

No matter how one describes leadership best practices, inclusive leaders are better able to make informed decisions, fostering innovation and business growth. The reason is inclusive leaders recognize their strengths and strive to overcome weaknesses, all within a “people context.” They develop leadership skills to leverage their role to ensure all team members have a voice and can express their unique perspectives and ideas.

Business studies have consistently found that inclusive leadership, which includes an inclusive mindset and behaviors, fosters a sense of belonging among team members. This leads to innovation and creativity as the expression of various perspectives is encouraged. Innovation is crucial to business growth, especially in today’s business environment.

CREATIVE RESET FOR INNOVATION THROUGH INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The importance of inclusive leadership is not a new concept, but the need to embrace it is more urgent than ever. Deloitte identified the six traits of successful leaders who manage diverse workforces. They are cognizant of personal biases, have curiosity that fosters different ideas and experiences, and possess cultural intelligence, the courage to take risks, collaboration skills, and commitment. Developing these traits creates leaders who treat people fairly based on their unique characteristics, helps personalize individuals and value their uniqueness, and leverages the thinking of diverse people and teams for innovative ideas and smarter decision-making.

Inclusive leadership is about creating a culture where all voices are heard, respected, and empowered to contribute. Organizations that prioritize this cultivate more dynamic teams and outperform their competitors in innovation, decision-making, and financial performance. Inclusive leaders foster psychological safety, which is vital for innovation. When team members feel safe and valued, they are more likely to share bold ideas, challenge the status quo, and take risks. Most importantly, inclusive leaders are good listeners who consider new ideas with an open mind.

Leslie Grady, Founder and Principal at The Product Guild, built one of her highest-performing teams by including people who had professional experience in unrelated fields. She would do things like adding a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and a professional dessert chef to a quality assurance team. The chef brought art and science to problem-solving. In her opinion, this is the type of nuances of inclusive leadership that many individuals overlook. “While it’s common for people to consider ‘icebreakers’ to encourage employee engagement within a corporate setting, meetings less commonly include a creative thinking exercise or creative project to reset the team from operational thinking mode to creative problem-solving mode.”

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Under the leadership of Satya Nadella, Microsoft made a significant cultural shift toward inclusivity-based leadership principles. Nadella emphasized empathy and listening as core leadership values, transforming the company’s internal culture. One standout initiative is Microsoft’s Autism Hiring Program, which was designed to attract and support neurodiverse talent. Through this program, Microsoft recognized the unique strengths of individuals on the autism spectrum, like pattern recognition, attention to detail, and analytical thinking, and integrated these strengths into their engineering and research teams. This hiring approach led to developing products that better serve a wider range of users, improving internal innovation and expanding Microsoft’s customer base and reputation for social responsibility.

As another example of how inclusive leadership works, consider Aaron Haynes experience at Firetrace, a Halma company. He joined the company as a Senior Market Segment Manager, but was uncomfortable expressing differing opinions. Safiyyah Khan, Head of Marketing, New Product Development and the Clean Energy Segment, coached Aaron and worked with other leaders to help them understand cultural norms and values. As a result, Aaron was promoted to Director of Strategic Marketing and has overseen the introduction of nine new products in two years, which contributed 10% of the company’s revenue. Before that, no new products had been introduced in the prior 10 years.

CLOSING THE IMAGINATION GAP

Inclusive leaders, with their empathetic and curious nature, are well equipped to manage in an age of disruption. To succeed, businesses and their people must be adaptable and able

to drive new value, requiring imagination to cultivate innovation. Rather than focusing on training employees in specific skills, the inclusive leader cultivates employee capabilities that allow people to adapt and imagine a different future.

There is an imagination deficit today. A 2024 Global Human Capital Trends survey asked business leaders, “How important is ensuring that the imagination and curiosity of the humans in the organization keep pace with technological innovation to your organization’s success?” and “Where is your organization in its journey to address this issue?” Though 73% acknowledged the importance, only 37% were doing something, and 9% were doing great things.

Organizations that bridge the gap between acknowledgment and doing great things are 1.8 times more likely to achieve desired business outcomes and 1.9 times more likely to achieve positive human outcomes. The more technologies, like AI, perform the functional and technical aspects of work, the more innovation will depend on human curiosity and empathy. These qualities fuel the imagination. Inclusive leaders need to cultivate these qualities in employees by providing workers with tools, safe spaces, and encouragement to experiment and envision different futures.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IS A POWERFUL ENGINE FOR PEOPLE AND BUSINESS GROWTH

Inclusive leaders encourage debate, seek different perspectives, and avoid groupthink, resulting in more robust strategies and outcomes. Inclusive leadership is a moral imperative and a strategic one. Organizations that embrace inclusive leadership have a clear advantage in an increasingly complex and competitive business landscape. Inclusive leadership fuels sustainable growth by empowering diverse teams, fostering imagination and innovation, and enhancing employee relationships. When inclusion is prioritized at the leadership level, it becomes a powerful engine for transformation and success.



Inclusive leadership is about creating a culture where all voices are heard, respected, and empowered to contribute. Organizations that prioritize this cultivate more dynamic teams and outperform their competitors in innovation, decision-making, and financial performance.

DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR CURRENT AND POTENTIAL LEADERS

Developing inclusive leadership skills is necessary to create and sustain an organization's culture of inclusion. Skills development should apply to all leadership levels and potential leaders, not just executives and senior leaders.

- BY JOSEPH WARREN

Inclusive leadership, a style of leadership that ensures inclusion is practiced in talent management systems, daily decision-making, teamwork, and any other process the leader manages, is crucial for fostering a culture of inclusion. Inclusive leaders are empathetic, aware of biases and discrimination, inclusion advocates, effective communicators and listeners, team builders, and strong advocates for all people on an equal basis. They are courageous, culturally intelligent, and collaborative.

Inclusive leadership is distinct from other leadership styles in that it promotes a sense of belonging and encourages employees to utilize their strengths or competencies. Leaders with these types of skills are needed to foster a culture of inclusion at every level of the organization. The key to success is ensuring leaders at every level of the organization are included in ongoing leadership development opportunities. Leadership development can and should also include employees with the potential to become leaders. Development programs can take many forms, so a structured approach can support the design of a program that best fits the organization.

TAKING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Developing programs to nurture inclusive leadership skills at all levels of an organization requires a strategic approach that integrates education, practice, and culture-building. This strategic approach provides a clear framework that defines the key competencies leaders need, including recognizing biases and understanding diverse perspectives, valuing and working effectively across cultures, and encouraging diverse opinions and shared decision-making. It reassures the workforce and the participating leaders about the effectiveness of the process.

Some organizations offer training modules, each addressing topics like unconscious bias and how to reduce its impact and



INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IS DISTINCT FROM OTHER LEADERSHIP STYLES IN THAT IT PROMOTES A SENSE OF BELONGING AND ENCOURAGES EMPLOYEES TO UTILIZE THEIR STRENGTHS OR COMPETENCIES.

cultural competency, including inclusive language. One of the essential leadership skills is active listening and communication, as well as knowing how to foster open dialogue and ensure diverse voices are heard. Leadership development programs can include interactive workshops that embrace experiential learning.

Sponsorship and mentorship programs are another form of leadership development. There are several strategies. Leaders can be paired with diverse leaders in a diverse mentoring relationship. Reverse mentoring, a form of mentoring where a leader learns from a junior leader with different experiences or perspectives is also effective. A key characteristic of effective leadership development is that it is structured and supports a continuous learning organizational culture. This has become essential in a dynamic business environment that is constantly changing.

Integrating inclusive leadership principles into existing and new leadership development programs is important. Customized coaching for leaders is used to address individual issues. Being a truly inclusive leader requires being empathetic, collaborative, and able to leverage feedback to build teams and increase team productivity. A study of the role of supervisor developmental feedback in meeting employee growth needs found that targeted developmental feedback more effectively promoted employee workplace well-being and vigor. This study suggested that inclusive leadership was the most appropriate leadership behavior to promote employee well-being compared to other leadership styles, like neuroleadership, servant leadership, happiness leadership, etc. The reason is that inclusive leadership promotes a sense of belonging and encourages employees to utilize their strengths or competencies.

Inclusiveness is only achieved through unbiased leadership that has skills in areas like neutral language, giving employees a voice in general and ensuring meetings are inclusive, fostering an inclusive culture, using inclusive hiring and promotion practices to model fairness and equity, and ensuring employees have opportunities to use their competencies and pursue their goals. For instance, using gender-neutral terms like 'they' instead of 'he' or 'she' is an example of inclusive language. Inclusive hiring and promotion practices could involve blind recruitment processes to eliminate bias based on gender, race, or other factors.

Many companies are embracing leadership development platforms today because they are accessible 24/7. This not only offers structured development but also ensures that development data is easily accessed. Coupled with periodic feedback collected from team members, this approach reassures the effectiveness of the leadership development process.

PLANNING THE FUTURE: INCLUDING LOWER-LEVEL MANAGERS AND HIGH-POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES

One of the most inclusive practices an organization can embrace is ensuring that lower-level managers and people with a high potential to become future leaders are included in leadership development programs. Nurturing these employees is vital to the organization for many reasons, including inspiring them by recognizing the impact of their work and motivating them to continue their efforts.

Another reason is that corporations have strived to be more inclusive of minorities and women, so millions are working in entry-level positions or are low-level managers who can fill the leadership pipeline to higher positions with the right development opportunities. Lower-level managers often represent future senior leadership. Making real progress in increasing the representation of minorities and women in executive and senior management positions will depend on how well organizations retain and develop their talent.

Investing in lower-level manager development ensures a pipeline of diverse, well-rounded leaders who effectively manage a diverse workforce. Companies prioritizing inclusivity gain a competitive edge by cultivating leaders prepared for the complexities of a global business environment. Lower-level managers also play a significant role in shaping daily employee experiences and reinforcing the company's culture. The organization consistently practices the company's core values by developing leaders at this level.

Leadership development should be continuous, as mentioned. One strategy for reinforcement of learning and ensuring leadership development that keeps leaders up-to-date with new information is to incorporate microlearning opportunities for ongoing reinforcement. This commitment to continuous learning inspires leaders to adapt to the increasingly diverse modern workforce and be better prepared to manage multicultural teams.

DESIGN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR THE ORGANIZATION

Leadership development structures can take many forms, and the best approach blends several structures to fit participant learning styles and professional goals. They include formal training programs, experiential development, mentoring and coaching, consultant workshops with peers, self-directed learning, and 360-degree feedback. Each structure can be customized or combined to create a comprehensive development framework that matches the unique needs of individuals and the organization. Successful programs consider the needs of the person and the organization to ensure the best structures are chosen, making ongoing development continuously effective.





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Black Philanthropy: Illuminating the Path to Racial Justice and Equality

Black philanthropy is quietly filling the unmet needs of underserved groups. Small to large nonprofits are working to shape social change.

- BY BETTY ARMSTRONG

The extent of Black philanthropy and the change it brings to society is not generally known. Some large nonprofit organizations are familiar, like the National Society of Black Engineers, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Girls Who Code. However, hundreds of smaller nonprofits, some local and some national, are achieving remarkable results as they work within communities for racial justice and equality. This is a tribute to these organizations and the people with a vision of shaping social change.

Making a Vision Come True by Filling a Need

Ujamaa Place provides a holistic transformation for young African-American

men experiencing inequity due to race and poverty. Located in Saint Paul, MN, it operates on the principle of its evidence-based Theory of Transformation. The Transformation embraces housing, education, career acquisition and retention, family connections, emotional and social traumas, and elimination of contact with the Criminal Justice system. Participants are empowered to be change agents in their communities. Ujamaa Place has served 6,000 men who have a 4% rate of recidivism compared to the state rate of 35%. The young men share their stories on ujamaaplace.org, about wanting to give up but finding the help needed to succeed.

The nsoro Educational Foundation, founded by Darrell Mays, works with young people aging out of the foster care system to alter the “predictable” path. Nsoro offers educational opportunities and a community of support. The organization's mission is to provide access to and attainment of post-secondary education. A scholarship includes mentoring in emotional intelligence, financial literacy, and workforce readiness. The website nsoro.foundation shares that its work has achieved an 81% graduation rate among 435 participants but notes that 20,000 youth age out of foster care each year. Nsoro has awarded \$4.3 million in scholarships and college preparatory programs. A class example is the 2021-2022 class of 55 graduates who were 72% Black, 19% Latinx, 8% Caucasian, and 1% other. Forty percent (40%) earned degrees in STEM, 33% in social sciences, 18% in business, 7% in performing arts, and 3% in education.

The Lantern Network (lanternnetwork.org), founded in Irvine, CA, offers mentorship to college students, an entrepreneurship program for new Black entrepreneurs, and the production of high-quality streaming stories to inspire underserved youth across the country. The main offices are now in Brentwood, TN, and the nonprofit has formed partner-

ships with some of the country's largest corporations, such as Deloitte, Hyundai, and J.D. Power. Started in 2020 to work with the “underestimated,” the Lantern Network has already served 288 mentees nationwide and provided 251 internship and job shadowing opportunities to college students and early professionals.

With a mission of advancing Black communities one gift at a time, the Kansas City G.I.F.T. nonprofit (kansascitygift.org) awards grants to Black-owned businesses in low-income neighborhoods. These are mostly historically redlined neighborhoods. KC G.I.F.T. was started in 2020 and has given out \$1,237,000 to 63 Black-owned businesses, creating 100 new jobs. Of the 63 businesses, five of nine applying for traditional bank loans have been approved. The nonprofit developed the Black Business Market, a product-based platform, and opened a business center on 50th & Prospect.

Started by single mother Kenita Smith, H.O.P.E. (Helping Other People be Empowered) (hopbe.org) assists single parents in Georgia financially while attending an accredited college or university if they were employed for at least six months before applying. The financial assistance includes money for rent or mortgage payments and licensed childcare providers. H.O.P.E. also offers one-on-one budget coaching, professional counseling, and social services. Participants have an 80% graduation rate. Smith was inspired by her personal difficulties as a low-income single mother working on a college degree.

The Pointtters Community Initiatives (PCI) in Menasha, WI, is a community-based nonprofit dedicated to empowering African Americans, refugees, immigrants, and other minorities through comprehensive workforce development and fostering mental health and well-being. PCI was started in 2017 by Di-

meji Tomori, an African immigrant, as a grassroots campaign after he lost his job during the COVID pandemic and was unable to find new employment, making him acutely aware of the challenges African Americans and other minorities faced before being able to establish themselves in a community. To date, PCI has served over 800 high school students and made 35 job placements. Five programs are now offered: Workforce Development, Mental Health Services, Refugees Support Services, Soccer Without Boundary, and Social Connection for Seniors, which you can read more about at pointtters.org.

Inspired by Life Experiences

Achieving social change is a testament to the relentless work of tens of thousands of people who give their time, energy, and resources. These Black philanthropic organizations are just a small sample of grassroots organizations' critical work and astonishing success. Some work locally, while others have achieved a national role. They all achieve measurable and impressive results with limited funding that elevate people and communities. They rely on private and corporate donations. Black families donate 25% more of their annual income than white households. Two-thirds of African-American households donate \$11 billion annually to organizations and causes.

The Black philanthropy organizations mentioned serve people in many ways – emotionally, financially, entrepreneurially, educationally, and socially. They see a barrier as something to cross. There is not enough room to mention all the organizations, but they exist in every city, county, and state. A desire for social justice and equality is the driving force, but they have another thing in common. Community-based organizations were started by people leveraging their life experiences to help others succeed, creating a powerful network of change.

These Black philanthropic organizations are just a small sample of grassroots organizations' critical work and astonishing success.



Black Entrepreneurs Bringing Fresh Insights to Transform Diverse Industries

Black entrepreneurs are bringing innovation to diverse industries, tackling challenges to improve the lives of the underserved. Their pioneering perspectives and utilization of technology are improving the quality of life for people and communities

- BY SHANIQUA THOMAS

Black entrepreneurs are transforming entire industries. Their unique problem-solving approaches are building profitable ventures that address systemic issues, create opportunities, and inspire future generations. These innovators are disrupting industries with groundbreaking startups and fresh approaches, all while overcoming challenges like accessing capital.

Technology: Building the Future

In the tech industry, Black entrepreneurs are bridging gaps in representation and innovation. Goodr, founded by Jasmine Crowe in 2017, uses its app to connect food industry businesses with nonprofits. The company's mission is to "feed more and waste less" and the company leverages technology to make hunger relief solutions more effective and efficient through data collection, route optimization, and online registration. Organizations can order a food surplus pickup via the app and track it to donation. The data enables delivering real-time social and environmental analytics. Crowe was the 35th Black woman to raise more than \$1 million in venture capital for a full-scale waste management and hunger relief company.

Another trailblazer is Brian Brackeen, who founded Kairos to tackle diversity bias in AI in the field of facial recognition. The developer and his team are creating an inclusive AI ecosystem with unbiased algorithms by curating datasets representative of various genders, ethnicities, and age groups. Kairos can recognize faces in photos, videos, and the real world. The company has clients in FinTech, Education, Retail, Facilities Management, and more. Now a global company, the company is venture-backed.

Finance: Redefining Access to Capital

The finance sector, often criticized for its systemic barriers, is being reshaped by Black entrepreneurs. They are creating platforms and promoting financial inclusion and literacy. Tanya Van Court, the founder of Goalsetter, is a prime example. Her app combines saving tools with financial education, targeting families

and young people. By gamifying savings and offering culturally relevant financial content, Van Court is empowering Black families to build generational wealth. The company won the FinTech Breakthrough Award for “Best Financial Education Platform.”

Another key player is Abadesi Osunsade, the founder of Hustle Crew, a platform that provides resources and coaching for underrepresented groups in tech and finance. Hustle Crew’s mission is to democratize access to high-growth careers, helping individuals from diverse backgrounds break into industries that have historically excluded them.

In the investment space, Henri Pierre-Jacques and Jarrod Tingle, co-founders of Harlem Capital, are reshaping venture capital. Their firm aims to invest in 1,000 diverse founders over 20 years, providing funding and mentorship to help these startups scale. By prioritizing underrepresented voices, Harlem Capital challenges the status quo and diversifies the investment ecosystem.

Health: Addressing Disparities

Healthcare disparities disproportionately affect Black communities, and Black entrepreneurs are stepping up to address these inequities. Dr. Ivor Horn, a pediatrician and health equity advocate, is leveraging technology to close gaps in healthcare access. As the former Chief Medical Officer at Accolade, she has worked to create patient-centric healthcare solutions that prioritize personalized care and equitable access. Dr. Horn is an angel investor and start-up advisor and is currently Google’s Director Of Health Equity & Product Inclusion.

In mental health, Bea Arthur, a Columbia University-trained psychotherapist and the founder of The Difference, is revolutionizing access to therapy. The Difference is the first on-demand therapy service. The teletherapy platform connects users with licensed therapists, offering affordable and accessible mental health support. As a pioneer in the e-therapy movement, Arthur’s work is particularly significant for Black communities, where mental health issues are often stigmatized or overlooked. Moving therapy online has broadened the reach of therapists.



Healthcare disparities disproportionately affect Black communities, and Black entrepreneurs are stepping up to address these inequities.

Education: Empowering the Next Generation

The education sector is another area where Black entrepreneurs are making significant strides. Chris Emdin, an educator and founder of the HipHopEd movement, has reimagined how STEM subjects are taught in schools. HipHopEd is a multi-platform and cross-curricular initiative that educates stakeholders in education and related fields about the intersection of education and hip-hop. Emdin engages students who might otherwise feel disconnected from traditional teaching methods by integrating hip-hop culture into the curriculum. His approach makes STEM more accessible and celebrates the cultural identities of his students. Dr. Christopher Emdin is the Maxine Greene Chair for Distinguished Contributions to Education and Professor of Science Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He is also the Director of Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the STEAM DREAM and Ideal Lab.

Frederick Hutson, the founder of Pigeonly, is addressing educational and communication gaps for incarcerated individuals. His platform, accessible on a smartphone, provides low-cost communication tools for families to stay connected with loved ones in prison. Services on the app include sending photos, postcards, letters, greeting cards, and information, plus getting inexpensive talk time. By prioritizing education and family support, Pigeonly aims to reduce recidivism and create pathways to success for formerly incarcerated individuals.

Melissa Bradley, co-founder of 1863 Ventures (being renamed New Majority Ventures), is working to bridge the gap between entrepreneurship and education. Her organization provides training, mentorship, and resources to underrepresented founders, helping them navigate the complexities of building and scaling businesses. By fostering a continuous learning culture, Bradley equips Black entrepreneurs with the tools they need to succeed. The goal is to reach \$100 billion in new wealth generation with the support of entrepreneurs.

Bringing New Perspectives to Traditional Industries, Overcoming Challenges, and Looking Ahead

Black entrepreneurs are disrupting industries and revolutionizing them by bringing fresh perspectives to traditional sectors. Their lived experiences and cultural insights allow them to identify unmet needs and craft innovative solutions others might overlook.

For instance, Tristan Walker’s Bevel razor was a response to a specific problem faced by Black men. Dr. Michael Vincent Smith is a former heart surgeon who founded Marti Health, which strives to improve the quality, consistency, and equity of health outcomes for socially at-risk populations and is currently enrolling high-risk patients with sickle cell disease. Their impact on these industries is profound and inspiring.

Of course, while these Black entrepreneurs are driving innovation, they also face unique challenges. Funding remains a significant hurdle. Black founders receive a disproportionately small percentage of venture capital funding, a gap that organizations like Harlem Capital and Blavity’s AfroTech aim to close. Networking events, pitch competitions, and accelerator programs tailored to Black entrepreneurs are helping to level the playing field, but bias still exists in funding opportunities.

Nevertheless, as these trailblazers continue to break barriers, their impact will reverberate across communities and industries, driving progress and equity on a global scale. In technology, finance, health, and education, Black entrepreneurs are innovating and challenging the status quo. Their work underscores the importance of diversity and inclusion as catalysts for meaningful change. By supporting these entrepreneurs through funding, mentorship, and recognition, it is easier to imagine a future that celebrates and leverages all talents.



In the modern era, Black academics and thought leaders are at the forefront of reshaping global discussions on race, identity, and power. Their work spans multiple disciplines, creating a rich tapestry of ideas that challenge systemic inequalities and envision more equitable futures. These thinkers and scholars engage in groundbreaking research, community advocacy, and public discourse, addressing historical legacies of racism and contemporary challenges.

Presenting Black Intellectuals Changing the Dialogue on Race

One of the most prominent intellectual voices on race is the activist and scholar Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, whose works on anti-racism have garnered international attention. Kendi has written numerous award-winning books, including *How to Be an Antiracist*, which guides readers to understanding racism not as an individual moral failing but as a structural and systemic issue embedded in policies and institutions. As the founding director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research, Kendi emphasizes the importance of actionable change, advocating for policy reforms that dismantle racist systems and replace them with equitable alternatives.

Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw's groundbreaking concept of intersectionality continues to shape conversations around identity and oppression. Dr. Crenshaw coined the term 'intersectionality' in 1989 to describe how race, gender, class, and other characteristics intersect and play a role in identity politics and racial justice. She said, "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects."

As a legal scholar and activist, Crenshaw highlights how overlapping identities interact to create unique forms of disadvantage. Using a framework of whether it is a race problem or a gender problem ignores the fact people experience bias and discrimination due to all their characteristics and not just one. Her work underscores the necessity of addressing these intersections to achieve social justice. Through initiatives like the

Thought Leaders Challenging and Shaping Perspectives on Race and Identity in Black Communities

Black academics and thought leaders present ideas and analyses that challenge the status quo concerning race, identity, and power. Their perspectives are steeped in history and blended with today's realities while keeping an eye on an unbiased future for all.

- BY DEBRA JENKINS

African American Policy Forum, Crenshaw works to center the voices of marginalized communities in policymaking and public discourse.

In the realm of sociology, Dr. Ruha Benjamin, Associate Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, has emerged as a critical voice examining the intersections of race, technology, and power. In her book *Race After Technology*, Benjamin explores how emerging technologies can reinforce existing social hierarchies, often under the guise of neutrality or progress. She challenges technologists, policymakers, and academics to imagine and create more inclusive technological futures. Benjamin's work has sparked vital conversations about algorithmic bias and the ethics of artificial intelligence, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that innovation does not perpetuate systemic injustices.

The field of history also boasts transformative contributions from Black scholars like Dr. Carol Anderson, who showcases the persistent barriers to racial equity in America. She is the Robert W. Woodruff Professor of African American Studies at Emory University. In her book *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*, Anderson analyzes the historical backlash to Black progress, showing how policies and practices have systematically undermined racial justice. Her incisive critique of voter suppression laws and other forms of structural racism has brought greater awareness to the ongoing struggles for civil rights and democratic participation.

In literature and cultural criticism, thinkers like Dr. Saidiya Hartman, a Columbia University Professor, redefine history, memory, and identity. Hartman's works, such as *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, blend archival research with innovative narrative techniques to recover the stories of marginalized Black individuals whose lives have often been overlooked or erased. By centering these narratives, Hartman challenges dominant historical accounts and highlights the agency and creativity of Black communities in the face of oppression.

Dr. Eddie S. Glaude Jr., the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor at Princeton University, is another key figure in contemporary thought, bridging history, philosophy, and public

commentary. As the author of *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own*, Glaude draws on Baldwin's legacy to examine America's ongoing racial struggles. Through his work, Glaude emphasizes the moral and ethical imperatives of confronting racism and advocates for a collective reckoning with the nation's history. His contributions as a public intellectual on platforms like MSNBC and in his role as a professor have made complex discussions about race and democracy accessible to broader audiences.

In addition to these established figures, younger scholars and activists are also reshaping discourse on race and identity. Dr. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, a historian and writer, has made significant contributions to understanding the intersections of race, class, and capitalism. Her book *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* explores how discriminatory practices in housing and lending have perpetuated economic inequality. Taylor's work critiques systemic injustices and highlights pathways toward economic and racial justice.

The increasing visibility of Black voices in media and on digital platforms amplifies the contributions of these scholars. Social media has become a powerful tool for Black intellectuals to share their ideas and engage with diverse audiences. Figures like Dr. Marc Lamont Hill and Dr. Brittney Cooper use platforms such as Twitter and Instagram to discuss pressing issues, from police violence to gender equity, making academic insights more accessible and actionable.

Imagining the Transformation

The impact of Black academics and thought leaders extends beyond the academy. They collaborate with activists, policymakers, and community organizations to translate their research into tangible social change. Black academics and thought leaders challenge society to question the status quo and imagine transformative possibilities. Their work critiques existing systems and offers frameworks for building inclusive and equitable societies. As their voices gain prominence in public discourse, they continue to inspire new generations to engage in the collective work of social justice and systemic change.



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BRIDGING CULTURES AND BUILDING FUTURES BY ADVANCING CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN STEM EDUCATION

Incorporating cultural competence in STEM education is essential to preparing students for success. It promotes diversity, collaboration, and innovation.

- BY DEBORAH JENKINS



The significance of incorporating cultural competence into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education cannot be overstated. This approach, which fosters understanding, appreciation, and effective interaction with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, is pivotal in creating inclusive learning environments and promoting diversity within the STEM fields.

By embedding cultural competence into STEM education, science and technology become more accessible and equitable, enriching the learning experiences of all students. This ultimately leads to a more innovative, globally competitive workforce. The broader representation of talent in STEM careers, attracting students from diverse communities who might otherwise be excluded, is a testament to the benefits of cultural competence in STEM education.

Understanding Cultural Competence in STEM Education

Cultural competence in STEM education covers a range of skills and attitudes that enable educators and students to navigate and appreciate cultural differences. This includes recognizing biases, understanding cultural contexts, respecting diverse perspectives, and employing inclusive teaching strategies. In the context of STEM, where the underrepresentation of certain

demographic groups persists, cultural competence is essential for dismantling systemic barriers.

Despite efforts to increase diversity in STEM, significant gaps remain in the representation of women, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, women and people of color continue to be underrepresented on a global basis in fields such as engineering and computer science. These disparities are often rooted in systemic inequities, including limited access to quality STEM education, lack of mentorship opportunities, and pervasive stereotypes about who can excel in these disciplines.

Incorporating cultural competence in STEM education directly addresses these disparities by creating a more supportive and welcoming environment for underrepresented groups. For instance, programs like Black Girls CODE, which teaches coding and technology skills to young Black girls, or the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE), which provides mentorship and networking opportunities, illustrate how culturally responsive initiatives can inspire and support diverse student populations. When students experience a curriculum that includes elements of their cultural backgrounds and life experiences, they are more likely to engage with the material, persist in their studies, and envision themselves as future STEM professionals. Culturally competent educators are better equipped to identify and mitigate biases that may hinder student success.

Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

Inclusive learning environments are characterized by respect, equity, and a sense of belonging for all students. Cultural competence is a cornerstone of such environments, as it promotes teaching practices that recognize and accommodate diverse cultural norms and learning preferences. For example, culturally responsive teaching involves using real-world examples and case studies that reflect students' diverse backgrounds, making STEM concepts more relatable and relevant. A biology teacher might incorporate indigenous knowledge systems when discussing ecological conservation, or a mathematics instructor could use examples from diverse cultures to demonstrate geometric principles, such as African fractals.

Fostering collaborative learning opportunities that value diverse perspectives encourages students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills within a multicultural framework. Initiatives like the Inclusive STEM Teaching Project, which offers professional development courses on inclusive practices, help educators create classrooms where all students feel empowered to contribute.

One practical approach to building cultural competence in STEM education is through professional development for educators. Training programs help teachers develop the skills to create culturally responsive curricula and implement inclusive teaching strategies. These efforts benefit underrepresented students and enhance the overall quality of STEM education by fostering a more prosperous, more dynamic learning environment.

Promoting Innovation Through Diversity

Diversity in STEM is also a powerful catalyst for innovation. Research consistently shows that diverse teams outperform homogeneous ones in problem-solving, creativity, and innovation. When individuals from different cultural backgrounds collaborate, they bring unique perspectives and ideas that can lead to breakthrough discoveries and technologies, inspiring everyone with the potential of diversity in STEM.

In fields where creativity and adaptability are paramount, diverse representation is critical for developing equitable and effective solutions across global contexts. Programs like the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) in the United States and Girls Who Go Circular, funded by the European Union, actively work to increase diversity and innovation by providing support networks and resources tailored to providing STEM skills to underrepresented groups.

Integrating cultural competence into STEM education lays the foundation for a more diverse and innovative workforce. Students who learn in culturally competent environments are better prepared to work in multicultural teams, communicate effectively across cultural boundaries, and apply their knowledge to real-world challenges in socially responsible and ethically sound ways. In higher education, students must also learn to collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds. However,



Cultural competence in STEM education covers a range of skills and attitudes that enable educators and students to navigate and appreciate cultural differences.

the learning should begin in primary and secondary or elementary and high school, depending on the country.

The Role of Policy and Institutional Support

Integrating cultural competence in STEM education is a necessity that requires systemic change. Educational institutions, from primary schools to universities, play a crucial role in shaping the future of STEM by adopting inclusive curricula, recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, and creating policies that promote equity and inclusion.

Policy interventions at all government levels are also essential. Policies that prioritize funding for diversity-focused STEM initiatives mandate cultural competence training for educators and promote equitable access to STEM resources. Furthermore, partnerships between educational institutions, industry leaders, and community organizations can amplify the impact of these efforts. An example is the AFCEA Educational Foundation grants available to European chapters to promote STEM innovation in the classrooms. There are many funding opportunities like this one around the world.

Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

Integrating cultural competence in STEM education is a powerful strategy for creating inclusive learning environments and promoting diversity in the field. By recognizing and valuing the cultural richness of all students, barriers to STEM participation are broken down, educational outcomes are enhanced, and a generation of STEM professionals equipped to address the complex challenges of the 21st century is cultivated. The benefits of cultural competence extend beyond individual success, driving innovation, equity, and global competitiveness. Educators, policymakers, and stakeholders have a collective responsibility to embrace cultural competence as a fundamental pillar of STEM education.



FIGHTING BACK AGAINST CYBER ATTACKS WITH NEW STRATEGIES

As cybercriminals continue to develop new, sophisticated ways to attack technology infrastructures and programs, industry experts are also on the job. They proactively develop risk management and mitigation technologies to keep networked systems safe.

- BY KAREN WHITE

Cyber attacks are increasing in frequency and getting more sophisticated, making it difficult for organizations to stave them off. This is especially true for businesses using global networks. New cyber security threats are regularly discovered, sometimes later than sooner, because of the increasing ability of hackers to find new ways to invade business systems. The innovativeness of hackers means new strategies are needed to protect organizations and their stakeholders. Some of the recent approaches include developing artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning threat detection and prevention programs, employing encryption algorithms, and creating Zero Trust Architecture (ZTA).

Rapidly Evolving Cyber Security Threats

As technology advances and becomes more complex, cyber criminals develop equally complex and innovative ways to attack businesses. For example, AI is used to craft convincing phishing emails and evade detection by traditional security tools. In this type of

cyber attack, something else may be used, like a deepfake voice or a video attack impersonating an executive for fraud.

The CEO of WPP was the target of a deepfake scam that involved an AI voice clone. The cybercriminals created a WhatsApp account with an image of the CEO, Mark Read. Then, they set up a Microsoft Teams meeting that appeared to be attended by Read and another senior executive. The voice clone tried to convince an “agency leader” to establish a new business, allowing the fraudsters to steal personal details and solicit money. The attack failed, but it shows the extent to which cyber thieves can utilize technology.

In some cases, hackers infiltrate corporations through their third-party vendors or suppliers. Another growing threat is using IoT devices as entry points for attacks. The IoT network is a set of interconnected devices and presents vulnerabilities. One compromised IoT device can compromise the security of an entire network.

Smaller businesses are particularly vulnerable because their technologies are not always updated due to the expense. Cyber attacks have become so mainstream that ransomware is now available as a subscription service, meaning less-skilled hackers can become threats. Ransomware as a Service (RaaS) is a cybercrime business in where developers lease or sell predeveloped ransomware tools.

Healthcare systems have been frequent targets of RaaS, where cybercriminals use ransomware tools to encrypt hospital systems. The

criminals then demand a ransom payment to restore access to patient data and medical operations. Hospitals have proven to be easy targets because they have complex technology infrastructures, often piecemealed together with outdated technology, store large amounts of valuable patient data, and have small IT and cyber security staff.

Quantum computing is a new technology that presents opportunities to strengthen cyber security while also presenting a threat because of its ability to break current encryption methods. The quantum security field is developing to leverage the opportunities quantum computing presents. This is a critical because quantum computers are on the verge of breaking traditional cryptography, which would be a security disaster.

Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs) are government-sponsored or highly organized groups. APTs infiltrate a company's network over time, stealing something like intellectual property. The infiltration is pulled off using targeted phishing emails, zero-day exploits, and custom malware to maintain access. Firms must always stand guard against APTs.

Going on the Cyber Defense

Cyber security strategies must be as sophisticated as cybercriminals' strategies. AI may be used to infiltrate a system, but it can also be used for advanced threat detection and prevention. Compared to any other technology, AI and machine learning (ML) can do a better job of detecting real-time anomalies in network traffic and performing behavior analytics to identify potential insider threats. Since it learns, AI and ML can adapt as cybercriminals change their approaches. Using Extended Detection and Response (XDR), the technologies integrate data from all sources, including servers, endpoints, and cloud services. AI and ML can also produce behavior analytics to identify potential insider threats.

Using the principles of "Never trust, always verify," Zero Trust Architecture (ZTA) is a strategy of continuous authentication. It includes micro segmenting networks to limit lateral movement. ZTA is a new strategy for modern times. It is designed to protect complex multi-cloud networks accessed by remote workers, people using personal devices, IoT devices, SaaS apps, hybrid cloud services, and more. Instead of mainly protecting the endpoints of networks with firewalls and other security measures with the assumption users inside the network are trustworthy, ZTA considers every endpoint and user and their connection request as a potential threat. Every request to connect to a resource is continuously validated.

Some other strategies focus on enabling organizations to share and receive updates on emerging threats. Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISACs) are non-profit organizations that provide collaborative platforms for gathering information on cyber threats. ISAC entities are infrastructure owners and operators. ISACs collect, analyze, and disseminate threat information and share tools to mitigate risks and improve resiliency.

Another strategy organizations are adopting is the Secure Development Lifecycle (SDLC), a set of practices for identifying and mitigating vulnerabilities during the development phase of new software. It is a multi-step approach consisting of rules, procedures, and standards. SDLC is a risk management process that includes creating security requirements for software functions, code reviews, architectural analysis, security testing, and risk analysis.

Trusting the Experts

There are no easy answers to preventing cyber attacks, but some of the best minds in the technology industry are working on finding them. The level of sophistication in cyber security is remarkable, and people are experiencing it without even realizing the complexity. For example, Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) combines a password, a device, and maybe biometrics, like fingerprints or facial recognition, to verify identities and prevent attacks. Consumers know it as two-step authentication, and this process protects their identity and data. It is also applicable in the workforce.

As cybercriminals work to improve their ability to attack technology-based systems, technology experts are working just as hard to prevent those attacks by staying ahead of them.

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Empowering Consumer Preferences: The Driving Force Behind Corporate ESG Strategies

Businesses succeed by delivering the products and services customers want and need. As consumer interest in sustainability grows, organizational leaders are developing new strategies in supply chains to match consumers' interests.

- BY **ROBIN BYRD**

The rise of consumer preferences for sustainable products has created a significant ripple effect on corporate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategies.

Consumer preferences are influencing everything from sourcing based on ESG principles to product and services designs that minimize environmental impacts, showcasing the dynamic and responsive nature of businesses. Companies are increasingly adapting their practices to align with their customers' evolving expectations. This alignment is a response to market demands and a strategic move to ensure long-term viability and competitiveness.

Reconsidering Impacts on People and the Planet

Consumer preferences for sustainable products are driven by heightened awareness of climate change, ethical concerns, and regulatory pressures. People are now more informed about the impact of their consumption choices and actively seek out products that minimize harm to the planet. From organic food and electric vehicles to cruelty-free cosmetics and sustainably sourced apparel, the demand for environmentally and socially responsible goods has reached unprecedented levels.

One significant impact of this trend is the integration of sustainability into corporate ESG strategies. Businesses recognize that addressing environmental and social concerns is essential for meeting customer expectations and mitigating risks associated with climate change, resource depletion, and regulatory compliance. Thus, companies increasingly incorporate sustainability and social responsibility practices into their operations and supply chains. These initiatives



are often highlighted in ESG reports, which serve as a transparent means for businesses to communicate their strategies and results to stakeholders.

The demand for sustainable products has influenced the governance aspect of ESG strategies. Boards of directors and executive teams are prioritizing sustainability as a core component of their decision-making processes. This includes setting goals such as achieving net-zero emissions or ensuring 100% sustainable materials sourcing. By embedding sustainability into governance frameworks, companies are better positioned to align their operations with consumer expectations while ensuring accountability and oversight.

Turning Principles into Practice

Customers increasingly scrutinize how companies treat workers, support local communities, and uphold human rights in operations and supply chains. This scrutiny has led businesses to adopt more transparent and equitable labor practices, invest in community development, and ensure ethical sourcing across their supply chains. For example, fashion brands are embracing fair trade certifications and disclosing the working conditions in their manufacturing facilities to build trust with ethically conscious consumers.

For the H&M Group, headquartered in Sweden, sustainability is a core principle. The brand has taken multiple paths to support ESG in the fash-

ion industry. For example, in 2023, 85% of materials sourced for commercial goods were recycled or sustainably sourced. H&M Group also works to improve working conditions and wages for people in fashion supply chains through focused strategies and partnerships. The fashion industry experiences significant consumer criticism due to fast fashion practices. These practices include using unsustainable materials and exploitation of workers through low wages, child labor, and unsafe working conditions. Companies like H&M Group are driving measurable change.

The financial implications of consumer preferences for sustainable products are profound. Companies that fail to adapt risk losing market share. On the other hand, businesses that align their ESG strategies with consumer values often enjoy enhanced brand loyalty, higher customer retention rates, and access to new markets. Investors also pay close attention to companies' ESG performance, as sustainability is increasingly linked to financial resilience. This dynamic has created a strong incentive for companies to prioritize ESG considerations to satisfy consumers and attract and retain investment.

Innovative product design is another area where consumer demand for sustainability is reshaping corporate strategies. Companies are investing in research and development to create products with reduced environmental footprints. For instance, multinational corporations like Nestlé have committed to making all packaging biodegradable, recyclable or compostable and are near their goals.

Transparency and communication are crucial elements of successful ESG strategies in the context of consumer preferences. Consumers expect companies to provide transparent and verifiable information about the sustainability attributes of their products. This has led to the rise of certifications, labels, and reporting frameworks so that businesses can demonstrate their commitment to ESG principles. By fostering transparency, companies can build credibility and trust, which is essential for maintaining consumer loyalty in an increasingly competitive market.



INNOVATIVE PRODUCT DESIGN IS ANOTHER AREA WHERE CONSUMER DEMAND FOR SUSTAINABILITY IS RESHAPING CORPORATE STRATEGIES.

Not So Ordinary

Supply chain management has also significantly transformed due to the demand for sustainable products. Companies are mapping their supply chains to identify areas where they can reduce environmental and social impacts. This includes sourcing raw materials responsibly, partnering with suppliers that adhere to ethical practices, and optimizing logistics to lower carbon emissions. By taking a holistic approach to supply chain sustainability, businesses can ensure that their products meet the expectations of environmentally and socially conscious consumers.

The Ordinary, an Estée Lauder company, is prioritizing customer education and transparency. The brand's marketing strategy focuses on building trust and loyalty by providing consumers with the information they need to make informed skincare choices. Its extensive sustainability focus includes detailed product and ingredient lists, eco-friendly recyclable packaging, ethical sourcing, PETA and Leaping Bunny certification as cruelty-free, repurposing of products when possible, reduction in emissions and use of renewable energy, and water conservation. All suppliers must adhere to the Ethical Code of Conduct, requiring environmental sustainability and the well-being of communities.

Another noteworthy trend is the role of technology in advancing ESG strategies to meet consumer demands. Digital tools are being used to enhance transparency, traceability, and efficiency in supply chains. For example, blockchain technology allows companies to verify the origin and authenticity of their products, ensuring that they meet sustainability criteria. Similarly, AI-powered analytics can help businesses identify opportunities to reduce waste and optimize resource use.

There are "deeptech" companies in Europe shaping the future of sustainability in traditional industries. The German company, peaQ, is pioneering layer-1 blockchain to empower people to own and benefit from innovations in energy, mobility, the environment, connectivity, agriculture and digital infrastructure. It supports more than 45 applications across 18 industries with its Decentralized Physical Infrastructure Networks. The goal is to develop increasingly advanced machines to serve humanity equitably by democratizing opportunities through advanced technologies.

While the growing demand for sustainable products presents opportunities, it also poses challenges for businesses. Balancing sustainability with affordability and convenience remains a significant hurdle. Many consumers are willing to pay a premium for sustainable products, but others prioritize cost and practicality. Companies must strike a balance by developing solutions that are both eco-friendly and accessible to a broader audience. This often requires innovation, strategic partnerships, and investment in sustainable technologies.

The Ripple Effect

The influence of consumer preferences extends beyond individual companies to entire industries. In addition to the industries mentioned, sectors like transportation are undergoing transformative changes driven by the demand for sustainability. Industry leaders are setting benchmarks for ESG performance, inspiring others to follow suit.

As these changes ripple through the business ecosystem, the collective impact on environmental and social outcomes is significant. Consumer preferences for sustainable products are reshaping corporate ESG strategies. Companies can enhance their competitiveness, build trust, and contribute to a more sustainable future with a holistic approach that integrates ESG considerations into every aspect of business operations. While challenges remain, the potential benefits of embracing sustainability are too significant to ignore.

Unlocking Employee Potential with AI-Augmented Coaching

AI-augmented coaching delivers many benefits, from scalability to goal-oriented direction. Like all technology that relies on large amounts of data, it also has risks.

- BY INGRID JOHNSON

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the business landscape, and the Human Resources (HR) function is no exception. AI-powered solutions are becoming integral to modern HR strategies, empowering organizations to optimize talent management, enhance employee engagement, and improve overall efficiency. Coaching practices have emerged as a key focus among the many areas influenced by AI. This technological evolution offers significant opportunities to shift how HR professionals work to coach employees, but it carries notable risks and challenges that HR must carefully manage.

Reshaping Traditional Coaching

AI-driven tools are reshaping traditional coaching practices in several ways. One of the most significant impacts is the enhancement of personalization in employee development. AI systems can analyze vast amounts of data, including performance metrics, feedback, and learning patterns, to create customized coaching plans tailored to individual employees. This approach allows organizations to move beyond one-size-fits-all coaching methods and offer personalized guidance that addresses each employee's unique needs and aspirations.

Another advantage of AI in coaching is scalability. Traditionally, effective coaching has been resource-intensive, requiring significant time and effort from experienced coaches or managers. It can also be expensive. AI-powered coaching platforms, however, can deliver real-time feedback and guidance to large groups of employees simultaneously. Chatbots and virtual coaching assistants use natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning algorithms to simulate human-like, context-aware interactions, offering support, suggestions, and motivational tips whenever needed.

This accessibility democratizes coaching, making it available to more employees at all levels of an organization. This is crucial to ensuring all employ-

ees are given equal opportunities to develop their skills. The results can help managers identify potential future leaders.

Additionally, AI enables continuous performance monitoring and proactive coaching interventions. Through advanced analytics, AI tools can detect patterns of behavior that may indicate declining performance, engagement, or job satisfaction. By flagging these issues early, managers and HR professionals can intervene before they escalate, providing timely coaching and support to help employees get back on track.

Retorio GmbH is an AI coaching platform developed in Germany and is a good example of the sophistication that AI coaching platforms are achieving. The people at Retorio come from 15 nations and are scientists, psychologists, and business executives. Companies using the platform include Teva, Daimler Truck, and Vodafone.



The software platform can analyze verbal, vocal, and visual cues and offers data-driven recommendations. HR and other leaders provide input that generates coaching content. AI technologies include AI coaching generators, simulators, and libraries. Retorio uses reasoning models so users get textual explanations for results, along with graphs and charts. Importantly, Retorio does not learn from client data to avoid bias. Instead, it uses datasets that have representative behaviors and perceptions from diverse people.

Data-Driven Insights and Decision-Making

The ability of AI to generate actionable insights is another major advantage for HR coaching. AI can analyze data from multiple sources—such as employee surveys, social interactions, and collaboration tools—to identify trends and correlations that might otherwise be overlooked. These insights can inform strategic decisions regarding workforce planning, leadership development, and succession planning.

For example, AI tools can help identify high-potential employees by analyzing their performance data and behavioral patterns. By leveraging predictive analytics, HR teams can make evidence-based decisions on promotions, training programs, and leadership assignments. AI-driven sentiment analysis can assess the overall mood and morale of teams, allowing managers to fine-tune their coaching approaches and foster a more positive work environment.

The Hype vs. Reality of AI in HR Coaching

Despite the considerable promise of AI, it is important to separate hype from reality. Many organizations are eager to adopt AI solutions but may underestimate the complexity of successful implementation. AI systems require large amounts of high-quality data to deliver accurate and meaningful insights. Without robust data management practices, the outputs generated by AI tools can be flawed or biased, potentially leading to misguided coaching strategies.

Another common misconception is that AI can replace human coaches entirely. AI can augment and enhance coaching efforts but lacks the empathy, intuition, and nuanced understanding human coaches bring. Effective coaching often involves addressing emotional and psychological factors influencing behavior—areas where AI falls short. Therefore, a balanced approach that integrates AI with human expertise is essential.

Risks and Ethical Considerations

The growing use of AI in coaching also raises important ethical and privacy concerns. One of the primary risks is the potential for bias in AI algorithms. If the data used to train AI models reflects existing biases in the workplace, the resulting recommendations and decisions can perpetuate those biases. For instance, an AI system that evaluates leadership potential based on historical data may favor certain demographic groups over others if past promotion practices were biased.

AI can analyze data from multiple sources—such as employee surveys, social interactions, and collaboration tools—to identify trends and correlations that might otherwise be overlooked.

Organizations must prioritize transparency and fairness in their AI systems to mitigate this risk. This includes conducting regular audits to identify and address biases and ensuring AI tools are designed with diverse and representative data sets. Additionally, HR professionals must be vigilant in interpreting AI-generated insights, applying human judgment to contextualize recommendations, and avoiding unintended consequences.

Privacy is another critical concern with AI in coaching. The collection and analysis of employee data must be handled with care to protect individual privacy rights. Employees should be informed what data is collected, how it will be used, and the safeguards for their information. Clear policies and robust data security protocols are essential to maintaining trust and compliance with legal regulations.

The Future of AI in HR Coaching

The future of AI in HR coaching holds exciting possibilities. Advances in emotion recognition technology and sentiment analysis are likely to revolutionize coaching by enhancing the emotional intelligence of AI-powered coaching tools. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) could also revolutionize coaching by creating immersive training environments that simulate real-world scenarios. These innovations have the potential to further personalize and enrich the coaching experience.

Still, as AI continues to evolve, HR leaders must strike a balance between embracing innovation and upholding ethical standards. A responsible approach to AI adoption involves continuous learning, collaboration, and adaptability. Collaboration between HR, data scientists, and AI specialists is also crucial. By working together, these teams can design AI systems that align with organizational values and goals while ensuring that the technology supports, rather than undermines, human-centric coaching principles.





TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE THROUGH ACCESSIBILITY

All employees should have access to the resources and work environment that supports their highest performance. Accessibility in the workplace considers everything from hallway width to technology tools.

-BY JEREMIAH PRINCE

Accessibility in the workplace is a choice and a responsibility. It is essential to create an inclusive and equitable environment for all employees, ensuring that everyone, regardless of physical ability, sensory impairments, cognitive differences, or other barriers, can interact with the workplace environment to support their ability to deliver quality work. Organizations prioritizing accessibility demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility, employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and compliance with legal standards. They implement best practices to support employees with special needs, which includes physical and technology accessibility.

Accessibility: The Foundation of Inclusiveness

Accessibility is more than just a legal obligation; it is a foundational element of an inclusive workplace that enhances the employee experience for a diverse audience. The world is home to over a billion people with disabilities, representing a significant portion of the global population. Ignoring this demographic marginalizes a considerable number of potential employees and limits a business's market reach and ability to innovate.

Of course, it takes more than recruiting people with disabilities to achieve workforce inclusiveness. The people hired must have access to the physical spaces, work tools, and resources that enable them to utilize their talents fully. Retaining persons with disabilities is just as important as hiring them, so organizations should evaluate the state of their workplace accessibility to determine what needs improvement. This continuous process

is a necessity and source of motivation for businesses striving for inclusivity.

In many countries, accessibility is protected under laws and regulations. In the United States, for example, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires businesses to provide accommodations that ensure access for people with disabilities. Similarly, the European Union's Web Accessibility Directive mandates that all websites, apps, and other digital services be accessible to all users, including employees. Failure to comply with these laws can result in legal penalties, damage to a company's reputation, and financial loss. However, accessibility is not just about avoiding legal consequences. Inclusive businesses create positive experiences that make people feel valued, respected, and understood, and it is not just people with disabilities who benefit. Treating people with dignity and respect creates a culture that benefits all employees.

Best Practices for Accessibility in the Workplace

The principles of accessibility are equity, inclusivity, adaptability, and simplicity. Accessibility encompasses equal opportunity, alternatives, and reduced complexity. The four main areas are physical, communication, technology, and feedback.

Training all employees is essential to ensure they know the accessibility options available and understand the importance of inclusivity. Training should cover recognizing the different types of disabilities and appropriate communication practices, using assistive technologies and accommodating service animals, and understanding the legal requirements for accessibility. As

the University of Windsor in Canada says, a lack of knowledge is a barrier to accessibility. Creating inclusive workplaces involves transparent dialogue and listening to the experiences and needs of people with disabilities. Businesses should provide accessible feedback channels for employee suggestions and complaints and act on feedback to continuously improve accessibility.

Physical accessibility for employees means physical locations should accommodate people with mobility challenges. Points to consider include providing ramps or elevators along stairs, offering accessible restrooms, installing handrails and clear signage that can include braille, and ensuring doorways are wide enough for wheelchairs. Additionally, seating arrangements, like meeting rooms, should include accessible seating areas, and desks or counters should be designed at heights suitable for all employees.

Employees with special needs need clear and inclusive communication. This requires careful planning to ensure a coordinated and consistent strategy is employed. For example, providing multiple contact methods, like phone, email, chat, and text, is essential. Materials prepared for employees should be available in alternative formats, including large print, braille, and electronic text. It is crucial to ensure communication options are compatible with assistive technologies, like hearing aids.

Technology Innovations Increase Inclusiveness

Technology plays an increasing role in creating accessible workplaces. Websites and online platforms should comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), including screen reader compatibility standards, text alternatives for images, and keyboard navigation. In the European Union, the European Accessibility Act (EAA) mentioned earlier has a compliance deadline of June 28, 2025. The EAA requires all businesses to ensure their products and services are accessible to people with disabilities, including websites, apps, physical services like transportation, and online banking.

Technology continues provide opportunities for engaging people with disabilities. For instance, Microsoft and Headway representatives spoke with Robin Christopherson at AbilityNet about how AI can increase accessibility for people with disabilities. One way is through AI-generated captions and transcripts, which can provide on-demand access to meetings for employees who have a hearing disability and can also assist people with auditory processing delays. These AI tools can significantly enhance the accessibility of digital content. Numerous assistive tools

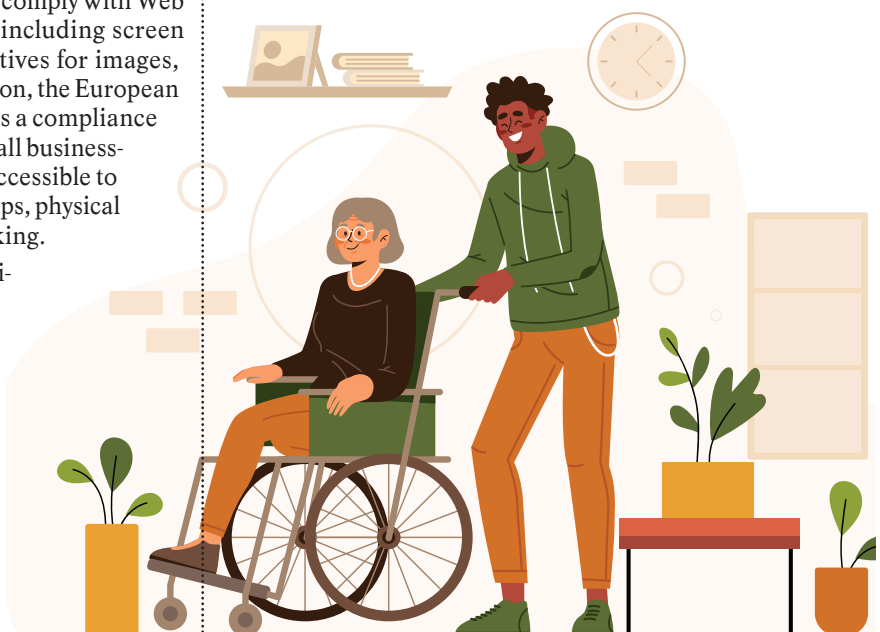
can enable different types of disabilities, i.e., haptic feedback devices that translate visual information into tactile feedback to support visually impaired workers in navigating spaces.

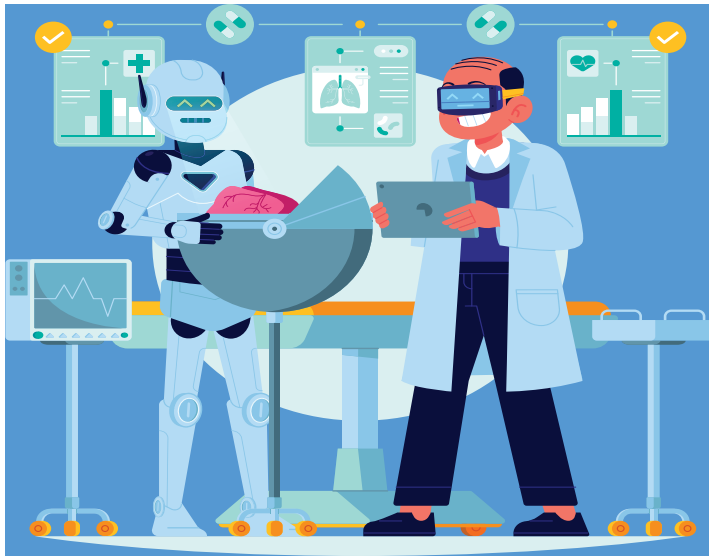
AI applied to voice assistance tools increases their intelligence, so step-by-step instructions are unnecessary. The employee describes a task, and the tool identifies the necessary steps. Virtual Reality simulates real-world environments to train workers with disabilities safely and provide immersive experiences for skill-building. Remote collaboration tools with accessibility features offer live captioning, sign language support, and keyboard navigation. Smart adjustable desks automatically adjust height and angles for accessibility. There are many other technologies available that support people with disabilities. These technologies continue to evolve, driven by AI, IoT, and user-centric design advancements, making workplaces more inclusive and efficient for people with disabilities.

Accessibility is more than just a legal obligation; it is a foundational element of an inclusive workplace that enhances the employee experience for a diverse audience.

Accessibility and Inclusiveness Go Hand-In-Hand

Accessibility in the workplace is a vital component of inclusive business practices. It reflects a commitment to equality, enhances employee experiences, and provides tangible business benefits. By adopting accessible design principles, leveraging technology, training employees, and incorporating employee feedback, businesses can create welcoming environments that serve the needs of all individuals. Accessibility is not just a matter of compliance but a pathway to workplace inclusiveness, innovation, and positive social impact.





CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES REVOLUTIONIZING HEALTHCARE AT EVERY LEVEL

Out of the ashes of the pandemic rises the phoenix of opportunities in employee health and well-being programs. Diverse suppliers can utilize big data and data analytics to develop optimal programs and offerings and manage costs.

- BY MALIBU KOTHARI

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have already transformed the healthcare industry in many ways, and their potential is far from fully realized. These technologies, with their advancements in predictive analytics, personalized medicine, and automation of administrative tasks, are integral to enhancing patient outcomes, optimizing operational efficiency, and driving innovations in treatment methodologies. It is not surprising, therefore, that they are being leveraged across many facets of healthcare, addressing long-standing challenges and improving clinical and non-clinical operations. The potential of these technologies is cause for optimism about the future of healthcare, as the opportunities to transform the healthcare system are endless.

Enhancing Healthcare with Predictive Analytics

Predictive analytics has emerged as one of the most powerful applications of AI and ML in healthcare. Machine learning algorithms can identify patterns that help predict disease onset, patient deterioration, and hospital readmission risks by analyzing vast amounts of patient data, and hospitals and healthcare providers are using AI-driven predictive models to anticipate complications before they occur. For example, ML algorithms process electronic health records (EHRs) to detect early warning signs of sepsis, a life-threatening condition, allowing for early intervention and improved survival rates. Similarly, predictive analytics is being applied to chronic disease management, where AI can identify patients at higher risk of conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and kidney failure, enabling timely preventive measures.

In oncology, AI-powered predictive models are being used to assess cancer risk by analyzing genetic information, medical imaging, and patient history. Radiology and pathology departments have adopted deep learning models to enhance the accuracy of cancer detection in medical imaging, reducing diagnostic errors. AI-powered imaging systems can detect minute abnormalities in scans that might be overlooked by human radiologists, leading to early diagnosis and more effective treatment plans. Additionally, AI models are being integrated into predictive analytics platforms to anticipate the likelihood of cancer recurrence, helping oncologists tailor long-term care strategies for patients.

Furthermore, AI is playing a crucial role in precision oncology, where treatment regimens are tailored based on an individual's genetic profile and tumor characteristics. AI-driven biomarker discovery enables oncologists to identify specific genetic mutations driving cancer progression, allowing for targeted therapies that improve patient survival rates. Machine learning models are also being used to predict treatment responses, helping oncologists select the most effective chemotherapy or immunotherapy options for each patient. This level of personalization ensures better treatment outcomes while minimizing unnecessary side effects.

Personalizing Healthcare

Beyond predictive analytics, AI and ML are transforming personalized healthcare by facilitating the development of customized treatment plans tailored to individual patients. Traditional medicine follows a one-size-fits-all approach, whereas AI-driven personalized medicine leverages genetic, environmental, and lifestyle data to create tailored interventions. This creates a more inclusive healthcare system. By analyzing genomic data, AI algorithms can predict a patient's response to specific drugs, allowing healthcare providers to prescribe the most effective medications with minimal side effects. This approach, known as pharmacogenomics, has proven especially beneficial in fields such as oncology, psychiatry, and cardiology, where drug efficacy varies significantly among individuals.



AI and ML are also transforming the administrative side of healthcare, streamlining operations, reducing costs, and improving overall efficiency.

AI-driven personalized medicine is also making strides in rare disease diagnosis and treatment. Many rare diseases are challenging to diagnose, due to their complex genetic basis and limited patient populations, but AI models trained on extensive genomic datasets can recognize genetic mutations associated with rare diseases, expediting diagnosis and improving patient outcomes. Today, pharmaceutical companies are utilizing AI to accelerate drug discovery and development, reducing the time and cost of bringing new therapies to market. AI-powered drug discovery platforms analyze molecular structures and predict their potential efficacy in treating various diseases, leading to the development of novel therapeutics.

AI robotics is another developing area. The robots can help surgeons with physically difficult or challenging procedures that conventional surgery techniques cannot handle well. They may assist with geriatric care and perform duties in hazardous situations, such as contaminated or emergency events. However, although there are numerous potentially advantageous uses for AI robots in healthcare, there are concerns about the cost of acquiring and managing robots, which could drive up healthcare costs.

Transforming Administration in Healthcare

AI and ML are also transforming the administrative side of healthcare, streamlining operations, reducing costs, and improving overall efficiency. One of the most significant applications is the automation of medical documentation. AI-powered natural language processing (NLP) systems are being used to transcribe and summarize physician-patient interactions, reducing the administrative burden on healthcare providers. These systems integrate seamlessly with EHRs, automatically updating patient records and allowing doctors to focus more on patient care rather than paperwork. AI-driven voice recognition tools are being employed to assist clinicians in dictating notes, ensuring accurate and comprehensive documentation.

Appointment scheduling and patient triage have also been enhanced through AI automation. Intelligent chatbots and virtual assistants are being used to manage patient inquiries, book appointments, and provide preliminary assessments based on symptoms. These AI-driven solutions help reduce wait times, optimize appointment scheduling, and ensure patients receive timely medical attention. Additionally, AI algorithms analyze historical patient data to predict no-show rates, allowing healthcare facilities to adjust scheduling strategies to minimize disruptions.

Medical billing and coding have traditionally been time-consuming and error-prone tasks, but AI-driven automation is improving these processes. Machine learning models are being utilized to identify billing errors, detect fraudulent claims, and ensure accurate reimbursement for healthcare providers. AI-powered medical coding software automatically assigns appropriate billing codes based on clinical documentation,

reducing the administrative workload for medical coders and improving compliance with regulatory standards.

Another area where AI is making a significant impact is in hospital resource management. AI algorithms are being used to predict patient admission rates, optimize bed allocation, and improve staff scheduling. By analyzing historical patient flow data, machine learning models can anticipate surges in hospital admissions, allowing healthcare facilities to allocate resources efficiently. AI-driven predictive models are also being employed to forecast inventory needs, ensuring that hospitals have adequate supplies of medications, medical devices, and other essential resources.

Going Remote

AI-powered remote patient monitoring gained prominence in 2024, particularly with the increasing adoption of wearable health devices. These devices collect real-time patient data, such as heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen levels, which AI algorithms analyze to detect anomalies. Remote monitoring allows for early detection of health issues, reducing hospitalizations and enabling proactive interventions. Patients with chronic conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension, benefit from AI-driven monitoring systems that provide personalized recommendations and alerts based on their health data.

Telemedicine platforms have also integrated AI-driven diagnostic tools to enhance virtual consultations. AI-powered symptom checkers analyze patient-reported symptoms and medical history to generate preliminary diagnoses, assisting physicians in making informed decisions. Additionally, AI-powered chatbots provide patients with reliable health information and self-care recommendations, reducing the strain on healthcare providers. These tools improve the accuracy of virtual consultations, ensuring that patients receive appropriate care without unnecessary in-person visits.

Utilizing Technologies for Precise Healthcare

Ethical considerations and data security remain crucial aspects of AI implementation in healthcare, and with the increasing reliance on AI-driven systems, ensuring patient data privacy and security is paramount. AI models must comply with regulatory standards such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) to protect sensitive medical information. Bias in AI algorithms is another challenge that must be addressed, as disparities in training data can lead to biased predictions and affect healthcare outcomes. If bias in algorithms is eliminated, AI and ML can play significant roles in increasing inclusiveness in the healthcare system and addressing the healthcare needs of diverse groups of people. Advanced technologies are already changing the delivery of healthcare and streamlining healthcare systems, and this is only the beginning stage of incorporating these technologies.

Canada's Collaborative Innovation Culture:

The Widespread Benefits Beyond Geeks



Open source communities, collaborative platforms, and crowdsourcing are unlocking key quality of life benefits for society as a whole.

- BY DANIEL PEREZ

Who benefits most when the geeks of the world build something cool? It's easy to think that the key beneficiaries would be other geeks or a limited set of "in the know" developers. However, the reality is that what happens deep in the code has a way of trickling up and out to society as a whole.

In Canada, this impact is particularly powerful. As a country, there's a rich culture of collaboration and sharing. Couple that culture with open source tools and platforms, and the world has a recipe for short-term and long-term life improvement.

Lighting the fires of open source entrepreneurship

As a country, Canada has made the governmental decision to endorse open resources as a matter of policy. Through the Open Source Exchange, citizens can see how federal, provincial, mu-

nicipal, and aboriginal administrations are using open standards, open source software, open data, open information, and open dialogue to create a transparent and accountable "open" government.

Why does this matter? According to a 2023 study published in Research Policy that explored the relationship between open source software (OSS) participation and entrepreneurship, what Canada is doing is a driving force in developing a robust entrepreneurial culture. The study found that countries with high OSS participation rates had high levels of entrepreneurship, but more importantly, generated higher-quality types of entrepreneurship.

This certainly corresponds with Canada's tech reputation and the quality of the software companies and entrepreneurs within its borders. OSS participation is complementary to a country's other resources, like a bright and friendly population. Plus, as the study notes, the more enthusiastically a

CANADA'S OSS COMMITMENT IS ALSO DRIVING PROGRESS IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

country endorses OSS, the more it expands into mission- and globally-oriented projects, something else being seen in Canada right now.

Using OSS to Drive Healthcare Advancements

One example of how this is expanding outward can be found in the healthcare sector. In Canada, open-source initiatives are revolutionizing patient care and medical research. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has been at the forefront of promoting collaborative platforms that bring together researchers, healthcare providers, and patients.

Why does this matter? An open resources approach leads to faster development of medical technologies and more patient-centric care models. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadian researchers were rapidly sharing data and collaborating on open-source projects to develop vaccines and treatments. This collaborative effort accelerated the response to the crisis and set a new standard for how medical research can be conducted in the future.

Given the high costs of research and the affordability crisis facing healthcare providers and consumers in Canada, this kind of breakthrough is vitally important. Millions of Canadians from all walks of life could potentially save money on care and receive better and faster cures for their ailments as a result of this “geek work” being done.

Using OSS Participation to Improve Sustainability

Canada's OSS commitment is also driving progress in environmental sustainability. Crowdsourcing initiatives like iNaturalist Canada are engaging citizens in biodiversity conservation efforts.

Launched in 2015, the iNaturalist app allows regular Canadians to become biodiversity documenters. The original goal of the program – to track 50,000 species by 2020 – has dramatically expanded. Citizen journalists and snappers have now uploaded more than 13 million images of wildlife, fauna, and landscape. In fact, more than 600 publications use the global iNaturalist data for research sourcing and as a means of expanding beyond what small teams of scientists would ever be able to do.

By allowing anyone with a smartphone to contribute to scientific data collection, projects like this advance research and foster a deeper connection between Canadians and their natural environment. It also helps build a sense of community around caring for the environment and protecting rare wildlife and fauna, far beyond what lectures or other non-participatory measures would provide.

Using OSS to Empower Communities Through Civic Tech

The rise of so-called “civic tech” in Canada is another prime example of how collaborative innovation is benefiting communities directly. Cities like Toronto and Vancouver are using crowdsourcing platforms to gather public input on urban development projects.

This approach leads to more inclusive urban planning and fosters a sense of ownership and engagement among residents. These civic tech initiatives address a wide range of urban challenges, from improving public transportation to enhancing green spaces. They also allow more traditionally excluded voices to chime in and contribute in ways that wouldn't be possible without the level playing field of crowdsourcing. By leveraging the collective intelligence of their citizens, Canadian cities are creating more livable, sustainable, and responsive urban environments.

Using OSS Tools for Education and Skill Development

Canada's collaborative innovation culture is also transforming education. Open educational resources (OER) are making high-quality learning materials freely available to students across the country. This reduces the financial burden on students and allows for more customized and up-to-date curricula.

Even better? The emphasis on open-source principles in Canadian universities creates a self-reinforcing element for the next generation of innovators. Canadians build openly and share openly – that's the standard and norm. So, students are learning technical skills and the value of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and community-driven development, beliefs they can take with them to their first (or next) start up venture.

Closing Thoughts

Canada's approach to collaborative innovation serves as a model for how open-source communities, collaborative platforms, and crowdsourcing can drive societal progress. By fostering a culture of openness and collaboration, Canada as a country gets to enhance its innovation ecosystem. This in turn contributes to global knowledge and development.

As the country continues with this policy, the challenge will be to continue expanding these collaborative approaches to address even more complex societal challenges. However, with its strong foundation in open innovation, Canada is well-positioned to lead the way in creating a more connected, sustainable, and innovative future for all.

Breaking Barriers with Inclusive Hiring Practices Across Asia

Asian companies are adopting diverse hiring strategies and leading the charge in global diversity efforts. Their initiatives are resonating around the world, contributing to the creation of a more equitable society.

- BY JILL MOTLEY



Asia continues to emerge as a global hub for business innovation and economic growth, a trend set to continue. With increasing globalization, the need for inclusive and diverse workplaces is more critical than ever. Many companies across Asia are embracing diversity in their recruitment processes, ensuring fair representation of underrepresented groups. These companies are leading the way in fostering diversity and creating equitable opportunities for all, demonstrating the many areas in the recruitment process where bias and discrimination can be eliminated.

From Blind Hiring to AI Recruiting Tools

In Asian businesses in many countries, underrepresented groups commonly include women, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and migrant workers. There have been particular concerns around gender inequality in leadership positions, espe-

cially in countries like Japan and South Korea, where women are significantly underrepresented in senior roles. However, progress is being made, and changes to recruitment and hiring practices play a crucial role. Different strategies are used with the same goal: to increase underrepresented groups in the workforce and management.

Several Asian companies are using blind hiring techniques to eliminate unconscious bias. This method removes identifiable information—such as names, gender, age, and educational background—from job applications during initial screening. For example, the Japanese technology company Rakuten has adopted blind hiring for some positions to promote fair evaluations based on skills and experience.

The Indian company Infosys has over 300,000 employees working in more than 50 countries. The company is dedicated to ensuring bias and discrimination are not elements of its recruitment, hiring practices, or workplace. One success strategy the company used was revising job descriptions to incorporate inclusive lan-



IN ASIAN BUSINESSES IN MANY COUNTRIES, UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS COMMONLY INCLUDE WOMEN, ETHNIC MINORITIES, LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, AND MIGRANT WORKERS.

guage that appeals to a broad labor market. All employment decisions are based on merit and business needs and must adhere to a policy of no discrimination or harassment of any employee. That policy applies to all personnel actions, including recruitment, hiring, placement, promotion, transfer, compensation, and so on.

Another strategy for recruiting and hiring qualified members of underrepresented groups is using structured interviews. For example, at Samsung, a South Korean firm, every candidate is asked the same questions, reducing bias and subjectivity in evaluations. The company uses a standardized test to measure candidate aptitude and potential instead of relying only on work experience or education.

Singtel, a Singapore-based telecommunications company, works with disability organizations to create accessible job opportunities and tailor recruitment to accommodate candidates with disabilities. The company was one of eight companies that founded the SBNoD (Singapore Business Network on Disability) to advance employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Singtel has also worked with The Valuable 500 to leverage its resources to increase disability inclusion locally and globally. The Valuable 500 is a global business partnership of 500 companies collaborating to end disability exclusion. Some of the recruitment and hiring practices that the two companies implemented were the elimination of barriers like mandatory driving licenses and traditional educational requirements.

Unsurprisingly, technology is playing a significant role in promoting inclusive hiring practices among Asian companies. Companies like Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) in India are investing in AI-driven recruitment tools that analyze candidates' skills without being influenced by demographic factors. These tools are instrumental in standardizing hiring decisions and minimizing human bias. Multinational firms such as HSBC Asia use data analytics to track diversity metrics throughout their recruitment pipelines, identifying gaps and implementing corrective strategies by continuously monitoring representation at each stage.

Partnering with universities is an important strategy for promoting increased representation of underrepresented groups in particular disciplines, creating a pool of job candidates. For example, Huawei collaborates with universities across Asia to promote STEM careers among women and minority students, providing scholarships and mentorship opportunities. Toyota in Japan offers vocational training programs aimed at underrepresented groups, providing technical skills and on-the-job training to prepare candidates for long-term careers in the industry. Toyota is a global company and offers vocational training opportunities around the world. A good example is the Toyota Kenya Academy in Africa, which offers technical and entrepre-

neurship training to develop service and machinery technicians. The Academy has trained over 7,000 youth, women, and refugees.

Many Asian companies have established diversity councils to oversee recruitment and workforce policies. These councils are a clear demonstration of the companies' commitment to ensuring that diversity goals are integrated into overall business strategies. They aim to recruit, hire, and retain persons in underrepresented groups, with a growing focus on the inclusion of women, people with different sexual identities, and disabilities.

Beyond Diversity Programs

BCG surveyed 6,000 employees in six countries in Southeast Asia. The results showed progress in implementing diversity programs for women, LGBTQ+, and ethnicity. Southeast Asia is a heterogeneous region with more than 1,500 ethnic groups and many people have intersectional identities. Overall, diversity programs increased from 36% to 43% between 2020 and 2023. Despite the progress, there is more work to be done. For example, programs for women have been highly effective, but 72% said they still face obstacles at work because of their gender.

The message is that establishing systems and processes for getting diverse people onboard and developing diversity programs are only part of the effort needed to achieve diversity and inclusion. Programs should be supplemented with efforts to create an inclusive culture supported by an equitable talent management system. It is the only way to take diversity and inclusion to the next level.



TOGETHER APART: MASTERING REMOTE TEAM BUILDING AND COLLABORATION

Building successful remote teams requires an intentional approach to engaging employees. They should feel a connection as team members while meeting performance expectations.

- BY SHARON ROSS



Building cohesive and engaged remote teams presents unique challenges for HR professionals and managers, given the physical distance and lack of daily in-person interactions. Organizational leaders want to foster collaboration, productivity, and a strong sense of belonging. HR strategies must be intentional, innovative, and adaptable to the evolving nature of virtual work environments. They include using tech-based communication tools, establishing employee communication responsibilities and accountability, using manager check-ins, and holding virtual team-building opportunities and learning workshops.

Establish a Communication Foundation

One of the foundational steps in creating an engaged remote team is setting clear communication protocols. Effective communication is the backbone of any successful team, but it is particularly vital for remote teams where misunderstandings can quickly arise due to the lack of non-verbal cues. Companies should combine synchronous and asynchronous communication tools to accommodate different working hours and time zones.

Tools like Slack, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom allow for real-time conversations and video meetings, while platforms such as Trello, Asana, or Notion support employee collaboration during projects and tracking tasks asynchronously. Encouraging the use of shared calendars and scheduling tools also enhances transparency and helps team members coordinate effectively. Making it easy for employees to communicate is essential to remote team building, and HR professionals and managers play a crucial role in ensuring this.

Setting expectations for responsiveness and communication etiquette is critical. Managers should clearly outline how quickly team members are expected to respond to messages, which platforms to use for different communication types, and when to schedule meetings. This framework reduces the risk of missed messages and minimizes disruptions during focused work periods.

Building trust within remote teams requires deliberate actions to bridge the gap created by physical distance. Managers can set the tone by being open about company goals, challenges, and decisions. Providing regular updates through virtual town halls, newsletters, or video messages keeps everyone informed and aligned with the organization's vision. Trust is further cultivated by recognizing and celebrating achieve-

ments, no matter how small. Public acknowledgments during meetings or on internal communication channels foster a culture of appreciation and motivation, making team members feel valued.

Regular one-on-one check-ins between managers and employees are essential for building rapport and addressing individual concerns. These meetings should go beyond work-related discussions to include career aspirations, and well-being. Managers can create a supportive environment that promotes engagement and loyalty by showing genuine interest in employees' lives and professional growth.

Managing remote teams takes intentional, well-planned effort from team leaders. Some remote teams underperform due to a lack of management attention. It should never be an "out of sight, out of mind" leadership style. Team leaders play a crucial role in setting the tone for remote teams, and their active involvement is key to the team's success.

Fostering a Sense of Community Among Remote Team Members

People who work onsite enjoy laughing together, meeting in break rooms, and participating in office events like birthday

celebrations. These events are taken for granted for the most part, but they are part of the organization's culture and community. If there is any doubt of their importance, consider how an employee feels when excluded.

Fostering a sense of community within the remote team is vital. Virtual team-building activities combat feelings of isolation. The key to successful virtual team-building lies in creativity and inclusivity. Activities should cater to diverse interests and be designed to accommodate different time zones. Virtual coffee breaks, trivia contests, or online escape rooms provide casual interactions and fun opportunities.

Tools like Miro for collaborative brainstorming, Kahoot! for quizzes and trivia games, and Mentimeter for interactive presentations are popular choices in Europe. Other platforms, such as Gather Town, where teams can create virtual office spaces for spontaneous interactions, and Donut, which integrates with Slack to facilitate random coffee meetups, are also widely used.

Another effective team-building strategy is hosting virtual workshops or learning sessions where team members can share expertise or learn new skills together. This enhances professional development and builds camaraderie as employees collaborate in a non-work-related context. Book clubs, cooking challenges, or fitness sessions led by team members are additional ways to foster engagement and showcase individual talents. Managers play a crucial role in supporting these initiatives by providing resources or organizing structured events, and their active participation is encouraged.

Creating a sense of belonging and inclusion requires thoughtful cultural initiatives. Remote teams often comprise members from diverse backgrounds, so celebrating cultural holidays and traditions can bring people together. Organizing virtual events around international holidays, sharing cultural recipes, or hosting storytelling sessions about different customs promotes cultural awareness

and strengthens bonds. It is important to incorporate inclusive language and practices in all forms of communication to further reinforce a culture of belonging in remote teams.

The Many Elements of Employee Wellness and Productivity

A strong emphasis on employee well-being is another crucial component of cohesive remote teams. Remote work can blur personal and professional life boundaries, leading to burnout and decreased engagement. HR policies should encourage work-life balance by promoting flexible working hours and discouraging after-hours communication. Offering wellness resources, such as virtual meditation sessions, access to mental health counselors, or fitness challenges, supports employees' overall health. Regularly soliciting feedback through anonymous surveys helps identify areas where well-being initiatives can be improved.

Training and development opportunities are equally important in remote work settings. Employees who feel that their organization invests in their growth are more likely to remain engaged and committed. Online learning platforms, virtual mentorship programs, and career development webinars provide avenues for continuous learning. Leaders should also provide training on effective remote work practices, including time management, digital collaboration, and maintaining work-life balance.

Equipping employees with the right technology is foundational to productivity and satisfaction. Technical issues can be a significant source of frustration, so providing reliable hardware, software, and IT support is essential. Department managers should conduct regular assessments to ensure employees have the necessary tools and offer stipends for home office setups when feasible. Training sessions on using collaboration tools effectively further empower teams to maximize productivity.

Performance management in remote environments requires a shift from traditional methods focused on hours worked to outcome-based evaluations. This transition has been difficult for some business leaders who have utilized traditional performance management systems. Ensuring all leaders managing remote teams embrace and understand outcome-based evaluation processes is important. Setting clear, measurable goals aligned with organizational priorities enables employees to understand their contributions and focus on results. Regular performance reviews should emphasize constructive feedback and opportunities for improvement. Using data analytics to track performance metrics can provide valuable insights into productivity trends and areas for growth.

Finally, continuous improvement and adaptability are essential for long-term success. Remote work dynamics constantly evolve, and leadership strategies must be flexible to meet changing needs. Regularly reviewing policies, seeking employee input, and staying informed about industry best practices ensure that organizations remain agile and responsive. Creating forums where employees can share ideas and experiences promotes innovation and a collective sense of ownership.

Taking a Holistic Approach

Building cohesive and engaged remote teams requires a holistic approach, prioritizing clear communication, trust, team-building, inclusion, well-being, professional growth, and adaptability. The one thing leaders should not do is make the mistake of thinking it is business as usual for the remote team members and failing to develop and implement targeted strategies. By implementing thoughtful strategies and leveraging technology, organizations can create a thriving remote work culture.



HR POLICIES SHOULD ENCOURAGE WORK-LIFE BALANCE BY PROMOTING FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS AND DISCOURAGING AFTER-HOURS COMMUNICATION.



NAVIGATING THE BALANCE BETWEEN VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL LEADERSHIP ACROSS LEVELS

Savvy leaders need vertical and horizontal leadership skills to be most effective in the modern business environment. The challenge is finding the right balance between legacy leadership skills based on control and a new skill set based on guiding and collaborating for success.

- BY DAVE DESOUZA

Today, successful organizations have a vertical and horizontal alignment. The traditional vertical alignment uses top-down leadership, establishing strategic goals and exerting control through decisions following a chain of command. It mainly relies on the command-and-control leadership style. Leading horizontally focuses on cross-functional, cross-initiative, or cross-multiple-organization collaboration. It is a people-focused leadership style that supports a more innovative organizational culture.

Both vertical and horizontal leadership are needed because there is a time for innovation and a time for control. Balancing leadership styles to achieve strategic priorities is not always easy. Too much collaboration that never leads to a decision or accountability is as ineffective as too much control that stifles collaboration. Mastering vertical and horizontal leadership balance requires learning new skills and recognizing and avoiding the classic traps that derail leadership success.

Vertical vs. Horizontal Leadership

Vertical leadership is a traditional approach where a leader controls subordinates. The organization's senior leaders set

strategic priorities translated into functional and departmental goals. Leaders in a hierarchical structure implement strategies to meet goals for their particular unit or team. There is a clear chain of command and limited input from employees. Team members are given specific job responsibilities with rules and procedures. The focus is on compliance.

There are variations of vertical leadership. The strict command-and-control leadership style does not work well in most organizations today because employees want a voice and the ability to input ideas. So vertical leadership has adapted by giving employees some ownership and accountability for their work and opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. However, the organization's vertical alignment compartmentalizes employee groups. Leaders only manage their particular function, unit, or department. Business areas remain siloed.

A horizontally aligned organization ensures that the various functions or units work together to achieve goals under managers skilled in collaboration and empowering employees. Finance works with sales, marketing with customer services, etc. One organization works with another. Initiatives cross functions and organizations. Leadership is skilled in leading multiple teams, initiatives, and organizations.

Horizontal leadership is all about empowerment. It breaks down silos, allowing leaders to cultivate strong relationships across organizational boundaries. It promotes group synergy, enhances collaboration, and empowers cross-functional teams. This leadership style encourages employees to have a voice in decision-making, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability.

Leaders are encouraged to develop their strengths and understand themselves better because leading horizontally requires being people-centric and able to encourage creative ideas, innovation, and personal accountability among team members. Instead of controlling employees, the leader uses techniques like check-ins, creating a continuous learning culture. Learning is not confined to specific training sessions but is integrated into the daily work and interactions of the team. It involves regular feedback, reflection on successes and failures, and a commitment to ongoing improvement. Leveraging failure and challenges as opportunities for improvement is a key aspect of this culture.

The horizontal leadership style uses initiatives and projects to build cross-functional teams but does utilize some vertical leadership skills, like establishing goals, KPIs, deadlines, and evaluations. Sometimes, leading vertically is necessary, even in a horizontally aligned organization. It is not a one-or-the-other scenario, and understanding how to move the organization toward horizontal alignment and balance vertical and horizontal leadership skills is necessary for success.

Moving From Vertical to Horizontal Leadership

Leadership style balance is addressed in Chris Fussell's book *One Mission: How Leaders Build a Team of Teams*. He proposes five ways to move an organization from a hierarchical to a horizontally aligned organization.

The first recommendation is to involve employees in decision-making and gathering input and feedback. This gives them a sense of ownership in their work. The second recommendation is to empower lower-level employees to make decisions within their expertise. Third, he recommends creating a workplace culture that is open and transparent, encouraging employees to share their ideas, feedback, and innovations. Leaders can do regular check-ins, hold feedback sessions, and utilize various communication technologies today. Fourth, offer employees development opportunities, and finally, recognize and reward employees.

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These are essential requirements for successfully managing the balance needed to use vertical-horizontal leadership skills. The organization should be supportive, developing the appropriate culture that supports cross-initiatives, cross-teams, and cross-organizational projects.

Avoiding the Risks

When striving to use vertical and horizontal leadership skills, there are some common traps. One is overextending oneself. Getting pulled in different directions is common, so prioritizing high-level activities and delegating operational tasks is an important skill. Associated with this risk is the risk of experiencing burnout. Maintaining boundaries for personal well-being is important. Another risk is losing focus because initiatives are pulling the leader in different directions. The typical end result is some critical tasks do not get completed. It is important to create a decision-making framework for identifying critical focus areas to stay on track.

There is the trap of siloing initiatives, a term that describes isolating or compartmentalizing different projects or initiatives. This is often done to make the workload more manageable.

However, this defeats the purpose of leading horizontally, which is about promoting cross-functional collaboration. Identifying areas where initiatives can support one another and establishing ways to make it happen is a key practice in a horizontally aligned business.

Leaders who want to move towards the horizontal leadership style also need to ensure they have developed the appropriate communication skills, such as coaching, transparency, and collaborative communication. These skills are developed over time, so the first step is developing a consistent awareness that a new leadership style is needed. It is easy to fall back into the familiar style of leading vertically.

Learning to Excel

It is not easy to change leadership styles to fit changes in organizational structures, especially communication structures. High-performance leaders excel by integrating vertical leadership (hierarchical authority) with horizontal leadership (cross-functional collaboration), ensuring alignment of people, processes, and goals. Balancing strategic priorities with a commitment to effective delegation and relationship-building can drive momentum across diverse initiatives while avoiding common pitfalls.



NAVIGATING ONLINE SAFETY IN A WORLD OF CYBERBULLYING

Shifts in the digital world mean workers and families must adapt to stay safe (and sane) online. For 2025, there are three major adaptations that need to happen fast. - BY **DAVE DESOUZA**

As online guardrails are rolled back, companies and individuals are seeing a resurgence of online safety and cyberbullying issues. In the recent past, some of these issues could be raised with fact-checkers and nominated online safety guardians. Unfortunately, as social media platforms like Facebook and X eliminate third-party fact-checkers in favor of unfiltered speech, and Canada faces a leadership crisis at the top of government, the burden of staying safe and protecting others increasingly rests with individuals and internal corporate safety departments.

What's the best path forward? There are three major behavioral and operational adaptations that need to happen as quickly as possible. If they can be swiftly implemented, companies and individuals should be able to protect themselves against the worst of online harassment and safety issues. It won't be a perfect solution, but as the

Internet moves more toward Wild West status, it's a way of fighting back against the chaos, risk, and mental angst of the digital universe.

Designate Trusted Spaces But Be Aware Of Their Limitations

Online spaces, ideally, would be welcoming, collaborative environments of information sharing and engaging discussion. This is true of the broader web but also of internal messaging boards and forums, where employees may feel especially shocked to experience the negativity, trolling, and harassment that reflects the worst bits of the Internet.

The potential for poor online experience – even on internal company channels or through work emails – is why companies can designate trusted spaces for staff but must also have a clear system in place for dealing with inappropriate or unacceptable behavior.

Upfront, this means creating shared standards for how co-workers are expected to treat one another and ensuring that each member of the organization is aware of these standards. This is especially important when the standards go above and beyond the bare minimums Canadian law requires.

Backing up the standards must be a clear system for reporting harassment, hacking, or bullying and a clear set of consequences. According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), being able to report incidents and feeling confident some action will be taken to mitigate the situation is an ideal outcome for workers experiencing bullying or online harassment. It may seem beyond basic to rational people that threatening or slur-filled emails and chat messages do indeed merit disciplinary actions, but there are still people out there who seem surprised that they can't say anything to anyone at any time and get away with it.

Be Intentional About Online Time

A second behavioral step that can be taken is to be more intentional about online time. Just as the tactic of using the WAIT

(Why Am I Talking?) question works to keep offline conversations balanced, applying WAIT (Why Am I Typing?) to online time can also help prevent individuals from finding their lives consumed by unwanted online experiences.

Particularly for organizations that have multiple internal message boards or intranet systems, it can be helpful to train employees on the responsible and appropriate use of those tools. Yes, it's fun to use company chats to share memes, chitchat with co-workers, and share personal stories. However, where there are opportunities to be misunderstood, have things taken out of context, or cross personal boundaries, those things become less "fun" and more grounds for a personnel conversation.

So, encourage team members to keep work conversations focused on work and work only. This can also provide a useful time to create healthy organizational boundaries around online vs. offline hours for the organization as a whole, which can help prevent the kinds of burnout, anxiety, and stress that give rise to harassment and bullying incidents in the first place. When team members are rested, they tend to give each other more patience and grace in interactions, helping the whole organization function more smoothly.

Revisit Multi-Factor Authentication

Along with training internal teams and setting internal standards, both companies and individuals will want to review their protections against the outside world. Hacking incidents are on the rise. In fact, as of 2024, cybercrime is a \$9.5 trillion USD industry, a sum that is nearly 5x bigger than the entire GDP of Canada.

Passwords alone no longer adequately shield people and systems from hackers. Instead, multi-factor authentication systems create a higher barrier. While some workers choose to disable these systems on frequently used tools, the small inconvenience of the additional step can be the difference between securely accessing online tools and having one's account hacked and used to distribute x-rated materials or the kinds of online comments that get one canceled out of polite society. Given the low cost of use

and the high ROI in hack prevention, all systems and tools that offer the option to turn on multi-factor authentication should make that choice immediately.

Final Thoughts: Is Less Actually More?

The mental health impact of online harassment, hacking, and cyberbullying is massive among Canadian workers. While shifting conversations to more trusted spaces, being more intentional about online time and online sharing, and leaning on multi-factor authentication tools can help, the pendulum of online interactions is moving more "Wild West" at the moment. Companies and individuals alike need to be vigilant and ready to respond promptly when incidents occur.

It may also be time to decide if less online use is more impactful than a perpetually online life. Social media platforms and other online algorithms nudge us all to be available and responding 24/7 to digital stimuli and online situations. However, that may not ultimately be the best path forward for anyone's mental health. So, as 2025 unfolds, workplaces and individuals may find the most benefit in face-to-face communications, in-person meetings, written notes, and even phone calls. The reminder that behind the screens are real humans may make us all collectively kinder and more mindful, providing a fresh layer of protection and security against the cyberbully world at large.



HACKING INCIDENTS ARE ON THE RISE. IN FACT, AS OF 2024, CYBERCRIME IS A \$9.5 TRILLION USD INDUSTRY, A SUM THAT IS NEARLY 5X BIGGER THAN THE ENTIRE GDP OF CANADA.



BRIDGES ACROSS BORDERS: THE POWER AND IMPACT OF DIASPORA COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE

The diaspora community in Europe is a dynamic presence that influences everything from politics to cultural understanding. The vibrant community makes important contributions to Europe's success on all levels.

- BY DAVE DESOUZA

Diaspora communities in Europe have significantly shaped the continent's trade, culture, and diplomatic relations. Their experiences and contributions demonstrate the powerful influence of migration on host societies and the global exchange of ideas and resources. Diasporas have contributed to scientific research, global trade, cultural exchanges, and government policies.

Europe hosts many diaspora communities, with estimates suggesting that over 90 historical cultural groups contribute to a diverse "mosaic of identities" across the continent. The diasporas are resources with people connecting two countries – a country in Europe and their country of origin or roots. Though diasporas have been contributing to the success of European countries, there are ongoing efforts to better leverage their unique contributions through effective cooperation.



Trade and Entrepreneurship for Economic Growth

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a diaspora as "migrants or descendants of migrants whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic, have been shaped by their migration experience and background. They maintain links with their homelands and each other based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country." The links maintained between their European and origin countries enable the communities to act as key intermediaries in trade networks, facilitating commerce that benefits both countries. The networks extend across geographical areas and play a crucial role in the transfer of information, knowledge, and resources.

Diaspora community members are a significant income source to many low-income countries through financial remittances. By doing so, they are supporting community development, education, and healthcare. They contribute to the transfer of knowledge between the host and origin countries. Financial remittances support economic growth, job creation, education, and infrastructure development. What does Europe get from these actions? New markets are developed, innovations are shared, and new perspectives are shared. Migrants also close some of the labor market gaps in their host countries.

Many diaspora members establish small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that contribute significantly to local economies in host countries. For example, Turkish and Middle Eastern diaspora communities

in Germany have been instrumental in expanding retail and hospitality sectors. Chinese, Indian, and African diasporas have helped introduce niche products and markets, such as spices, textiles, and technology, enhancing European trade diversity. Diaspora communities contribute to economic growth in their countries of origin through remittances. This financial inflow supports family members and fosters development projects, creating transnational economic ties.

Diplomatic Contributions

Diaspora communities influence their host country's foreign policies. One example is the Swedish government's decision to apply for NATO membership. A study of the events found that the Kurdish diaspora played a significant role.

Accounting for 1% of Sweden's population, Kurdish diaspora members are heavily involved in politics, with some in prominent political party positions. The diaspora has formed numerous diaspora associations and organizations. During the Swedish NATO process, the Kurdish diaspora used its influence and political positions to delay the ratification of the NATO membership application by mobilizing its community members and aligning with Swedish political parties opposed to NATO membership. The goal was to gain support for the Kurds in northern Syria. One strategy the Kurdish diaspora used was to focus on addressing universal principles like freedom of speech, the rule of law, and the freedom of association, which are core Swedish society principles, enabling the diaspora members to gain more influence through the alignment of principles.

It is not just political influence diaspora members wield. They have influenced legislation to combat discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, or origin and government policies concerning religious holidays and practices. Over the years, the diaspora has also influenced legislation on trade with their country of origin.

Diaspora communities serve as informal ambassadors, bridging cultural and political gaps between countries of origin and residence. They promote cultural diplomacy through festivals, cultural centers, and educational exchanges. For example, African and Caribbean communities in the UK have strengthened ties between Britain and Commonwealth countries. Diaspora groups often advocate for policies that enhance relations between their host countries and homelands.

Enriching Cultures

The cultural impact of diaspora communities on Europe is profound, enriching social life and broadening cultural horizons. Diverse culinary traditions from diaspora communities, such as South Asian cuisine in the UK and North African dishes in France, have become integral to European food culture. Diasporic artists, writers, and musicians have contributed significantly to the cultural landscape. Notable examples include Salman Rushdie, a British-Indian author, and diverse musical influences in urban European music scenes, such as Afrobeat and reggaeton. The presence of diaspora communities has stimulated discussions about identity, integration, and multiculturalism. This has influenced policies and public attitudes toward inclusivity and diversity.

Science and Innovation

The scientific and research diasporas bridge different governments and research institutions in the UK. In this case, the diaspora are EU

scientists. They became a diaspora when the UK exited the EU, creating new challenges in sustaining the research.

The EU diaspora catalyzes connections between British and European institutions to enhance scientific relations. However, the diaspora has influenced much more. The networks have provided advice on the UK immigration system changes, monitored the Brexit impact on their communities, prepared webinars on the cross-cultural differences, collaborated on research policy reports, and collaborated with embassies to hold events focused on the role of researchers in the EU-UK society, highlighting the relevance of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A Dynamic Presence

Each diaspora has influenced European life in so many ways. Active members are involved in politics, lobbying, cultural events, the workforce, scientific research, diplomacy and more. While diaspora communities make substantial contributions, they also face challenges such as discrimination, integration difficulties, and political marginalization. However, their dynamic presence continues to offer opportunities for fostering greater international understanding, economic innovation, and cultural exchange. European societies embracing and integrating these diverse influences benefit from a more prosperous and interconnected future.

EUROPE HOSTS MANY DIASPORA COMMUNITIES, WITH ESTIMATES SUGGESTING THAT OVER 90 HISTORICAL CULTURAL GROUPS CONTRIBUTE TO A DIVERSE "MOSAIC OF IDENTITIES" ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

MOVING THROUGH OPPORTUNITIES WITH TALENT MOBILITY

A talent mobility program gives employees opportunities to grow as much as they want in their careers. The strategy benefits employees and employers by cultivating employee skills and competencies domestically and internationally.

BY KAREN WHITE



In today's dynamic business environment, organizations are constantly navigating rapidly evolving market demands, technological advancements, and shifting workforce expectations. In this context, talent mobility has emerged as a strategic workforce management and development approach. This practice of helping employees grow within an organization by transitioning between roles, teams, or departments domestically or internationally is a key to continuous career development and aligning individual aspirations with the company's evolving needs. By embracing this model, employees and employers can create a win-win strategy for sustainable organizational growth.

Cultivating Talent

Talent mobility is built on the foundation of several key principles. One is providing internal career growth opportunities and encouraging employees to pursue new roles within the same organization rather than seeking advancement externally. Another is cross-functional learning, where employees develop diverse skill sets by working across different teams and departments. Agility and flexibility are also critical, promoting a culture where employees and teams can adapt to new challenges and market conditions.

The focus on employee-centered development empowers individuals to take charge of their career paths with the support of organizational resources. This strategy fits the needs of younger employees who want to work for companies that support their career aspirations and offer interesting challenges. By implementing these principles, organizations can foster an environment where talent is continuously cultivated and retained.

In large companies, talent rotations are structured programs where young professionals move across different departments and locations, gaining exposure with the goal of developing a broader skillset and understanding of the business. Talent rotations are a key component of talent mobility programs, allowing employees to gain diverse experiences and skills. Employees can also specialize in a specific field of interest in many programs. The rotations can be domestic or international, and many programs include both. This develops an understanding of how to do business in different cultures.

For example, the European Talent Program at Riva Group, a steel products manufacturer, is a 10-month program. Trainees rotate across different European locations to work on projects in various departments, fostering cross-functional knowledge and a global perspective. The on-the-job learning program develops talent and future leaders.

Large multinational corporations like Siemens and Bosch have also implemented internal rotations. The Siemens Graduate Program is a 24-month program that allows participants to do three assignments, one of them abroad at one of the company's 190 locations. Currently, people from 15 nationalities are participating. On the other hand, the Bosch Junior Managers Program allows employees, particularly recent graduates, to rotate through different functions and locations within the company, gaining experience in



Talent rotations are a key component of talent mobility programs, allowing employees to gain diverse experiences and skills.

various roles and developing their skills across different business areas, with one international rotation included. This program is designed to prepare individuals for future leadership positions within Bosch.

Programs like these allow employees to work on different product lines across different stages of product development or specialize in a specific area while gaining a broader view of the company's operations. Smaller companies might offer rotational opportunities within their core business functions to help employees develop leadership potential and identify career paths within the organization.

Talent mobility programs do not apply only to new hires. Qualified current employees can participate. For example, at Bunzl Continental Europe, the company offers internal mobility and mentoring as a way to retain younger employees and to increase female representation in leadership roles. Indeed, the LinkedIn Future of Recruiting study found that internal mobility programs increase employee retention as employees remain with their employers nearly twice as long if the employer is committed to internal hiring.

Win-Win Strategy

Talent mobility offers numerous benefits for employees. Talent mobility can also lead to a more skilled and adaptable workforce, better employee engagement, and a stronger company culture. It enhances career growth by empowering individuals to diversify their skills and broaden their expertise. Instead of being confined to a single career path, employees can explore different roles that match their evolving interests and abilities. For instance, a marketing professional might transition into a product management role, leveraging creative skills while learning about product development.

This model also promotes skill development and versatility. Moving across different functions exposes employees to varied challenges and learning opportunities, enhancing their adaptability and resilience—traits highly valued in today's job market. Employees gain

a more holistic understanding of the business, increasing their strategic thinking and problem-solving capabilities. The opportunity to develop a broader professional network is another advantage. Working in different roles, departments, domestic locations, and countries expand employees' internal connections. A wider network fosters collaboration, better communication, and the sharing of best practices across teams, ultimately leading to more effective work outcomes.

Talent mobility increases engagement and motivation. Providing pathways for internal growth demonstrates an organization's commitment to employee development. This increases job satisfaction as employees feel valued and see a clear trajectory for advancement. Collaborating with employees to create tailored paths allows regular career discussions and goal adjustments. Management support and cultural alignment are crucial, as leaders and managers are pivotal in encouraging mobility. Advocating for cross-functional moves and fostering a culture where mobility is seen as a strength rather than a disruption is vital.

Doing It the Right Way

Organizations need deliberate strategies and supportive infrastructure to realize the full benefits of talent mobility. Despite its many advantages, talent mobility does come with challenges. Common barriers to successful programs include the possibility of resistance from some managers reluctant to lose top performers, limited visibility into opportunities, and insufficient training resources being committed to development.

Addressing managerial resistance involves incentivizing leaders to support mobility by linking it to performance metrics and organizational goals. Recognizing and rewarding those who promote internal growth can shift perspectives. Transparent internal job posting systems ensure employees have access to information about available roles. A transparent job board promotes fairness and equal opportunity. Increasing opportunity visibility requires investing in technology platforms that allow employees to explore available roles. Artificial intelligence-driven tools can even suggest positions based on skills and career preferences.

Changing with the Evolving Talent Landscape

As remote work, hybrid models, and globalization reshape the workforce, talent mobility will become increasingly important. Organizations that embrace this concept will be better positioned to attract and retain high-performing employees, drive innovation, and adapt to change. Employees, in turn, will benefit from dynamic and fulfilling careers. In this evolving landscape, talent mobility is not merely a strategy but a fundamental component of a resilient and future-ready workforce.

Talent mobility creates a symbiotic relationship between employees and employers, fostering growth, adaptability, and long-term success. Organizations can thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy by promoting continuous learning, flexibility, and internal opportunities.

THE RISE OF PROCUREMENT 4.0: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY

The procurement profession is embracing technologies that align with Industry 4.0. These technologies are revolutionizing risk management, procurement processes, and the ability to identify opportunities in the supply chain.

BY CECIL PARANG

Procurement has been one of the last functions to experience tech-based changes, yet now it is focused on the best strategies for integrating tech into sourcing, purchasing, supplier relationship building, and supply chain management. Success relies on incorporating the increasing sophistication of technology, like data analytics based on real-time data, supplier risk monitoring, and artificial intelligence (AI) to support decision-making.

Procurement 4.0, the totality of these technologies, is here as businesses implement higher-level technologies. In the networked, global supply chain, procurement is a strategic imperative driving business growth. However, a successful evolution from its traditional cost-saving focus to a focus on delivering full value depends on organizations investing in the technologies and people skills to develop a culture of innovation and collaboration.

Changing Perspectives

Most procurement functions today use technologies they have implemented by attaching new programs to legacy systems. Throw that concept



out when discussing Procurement 4.0. To appreciate the full value integrated advanced procurement technologies can bring requires a shift in perspective. Today, modern procurement teams leverage real-time insights, predictive analytics, automation, and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance efficiency and drive strategic outcomes.

Traditionally, procurement's primary role was to acquire goods and services at the lowest possible cost. Organizations viewed procurement as a back-office function, with success measured by the ability to negotiate discounts and minimize expenses. Procurement professionals relied heavily on manual processes, spreadsheets, and static reports, often limiting their ability to respond dynamically to market changes.

While this approach did provide short-term financial benefits, it often came at the expense of long-term value. A narrow focus on cost reduction sometimes led to compromises in quality, supplier relationships, and sustainability. Over time, businesses realized procurement could play a more strategic role in achieving organizational objectives, but it needed the support of technologies to enable the expanded role and contribute to decision-making. Procurement needed the ability to manage complex supplier networks, navigate geopolitical risks, ensure compliance with diverse regulations, enforce ethical and sustainable practices, streamline operations to move professionals into strategic roles and identify and foster strategic suppliers. It needed all types of real-time data, data analytics, and predictive analytics.

Procurement 4.0 Arrives

Procurement 4.0, the integration of advanced digital technologies into procurement processes, is fundamentally driven by data. Real-time insights empower procurement teams to monitor market trends, track supplier performance, and make informed decisions swiftly. For instance, a sudden surge in commodity prices can be swiftly identified and addressed, minimizing financial impact. The integration of procurement data with other business systems enhances the value of data analytics, improving cost management, supplier negotiations, risk identification, and opportunities for business growth.

Predictive analytics takes this a step further by leveraging historical data and machine learning algorithms to forecast future scenarios. Procurement teams can anticipate risks, such as supplier insolvencies or logistical disruptions, and develop proactive mitigation strategies. By leveraging these capabilities, organizations can transition from reactive procurement to a more strategic, foresight-driven approach. This shift reduces costs and enhances resilience and agility in an increasingly volatile business environment.

Procurement teams can now focus on strategic responsibilities by being freed from tasks like purchase order creation, invoice processing, and supplier onboarding. For example, chatbots can check the status of purchase orders, and technology can detect fraud. Procurement professionals can focus on building collaborative relationships with suppliers to foster innovation and drive mutual growth. Sourcing and procurement work together to identify and engage suppliers who align with the organization's long-term objectives, like expansion into new markets, sustainability, and innovation in products or services. The procurement team is also freed up to implement and manage risk mitigation strategies to ensure supply chain resilience in the face of sudden disruptions from natural or political events or changing consumer requirements.

Welcoming AI with Human Oversight into Procurement

AI is the most recent critical technology impacting Procurement 4.0. AI excels in processing large volumes of data, identifying patterns, and providing actionable insights, making it an invaluable tool for analyzing supplier performance data, including delivery times, quality metrics, and pricing trends, to provide objective assessments and identify areas for improvement. AI-powered tools can categorize and analyze spending data to uncover savings opportunities, detect anomalies, and optimize procurement strategies. However, AI takes supply chain management to a new level with its ability to enhance risk forecasting. AI can predict potential risks by monitoring external factors such as economic indicators, political developments, and natural disasters and help procurement teams prepare accordingly.

While AI offers significant advantages, human oversight remains essential. Procurement professionals bring critical skills such as judgment, creativity, and relationship management that machines cannot replicate. For example, negotiating a complex contract or navigating cultural nuances in supplier interactions requires emotional intelligence and strategic thinking. AI may support and enhance decision-making but should not replace human decision-making. The historical data fed into or accessed by AI continues to contain various biases and errors, and the sources of data influence results. The optimal approach is collaborative, where AI provides data-driven rec-

ommendations, and humans make final decisions based on their expertise and broad understanding of the context.

Success Depends on People Skills

Procurement's journey from a cost-saving focus to a strategic business enabler reflects the broader transformation of business operations in the digital age. By embracing advanced technologies and prioritizing strategic goals, procurement teams can optimize costs and contribute to innovation, resilience, and long-term success.

When moving towards becoming Procurement 4.0, it is essential to remember that procurement professionals need skills development to fully leverage the technologies for the business's good. There is also a need to develop a culture that embraces advanced technologies, innovation, and new procurement processes. In Procurement 4.0, there is more information sharing and cross-functional collaboration. Procurement personnel need digital capabilities and new people skills as they work with business functions to benefit from being a Procurement 4.0 organization.



Procurement teams can anticipate risks, such as supplier insolvencies or logistical disruptions, and develop proactive mitigation strategies.



Quinoa and Potatoes

EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH INDIGENOUS FOODS

Indigenous foods are rooted in the natural environment and societal traditions. Modern society is reexamining Indigenous foods and methods of growing and preparing food in response to a need to increase nutrition and respond to climate change.

- BY PAMELA GRANT



Potjiekos



Ham

Indigenous foods are a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, geography, and history. These foods, often grown, harvested, and prepared using methods passed down through generations, are cultural treasures. They bind people together, creating and sustaining communities. The differences in indigenous foods across continents highlight the diverse ecosystems and unique cultural adaptations that have shaped human civilization across regions such as North America, South America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

North America: Corn, Beans, and Squash

Known as the “Three Sisters,” corn, beans, and squash were staple crops for many Indigenous peoples in North America, including the Iroquois and Hopi. These crops were cultivated using a symbiotic planting method, reflecting an intricate understanding of agricultural sustainability. The staple crops provide a balance of proteins, carbohydrates, and essential amino acids. In addition to these staples, Indigenous peoples relied on game such as bison, deer, and turkey and foraged foods like berries and nuts.

However, each region has different foods. Some of the regional variations include the use of maple syrup as a natural sweetener in the Northeast, hand-harvested Anishinaabe Manoomin (wild rice) in the north-central region, candy roaster squash in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, cholla cactus flower buds in desert communities, and wild chiltepin pepper along the U.S.-Mexican border.

South America: Quinoa and Potatoes

The Andean region is the birthplace of quinoa and potatoes, both cultivated by the Inca civilization. These nutrient-rich foods thrive in the high-altitude conditions of the Andes. Cassava is another staple, particularly in the Amazon basin, where Indigenous peoples also use plantains and tropical fruits such as açaí. Other cultural foods include ceviche, corn, beans, and dishes like tamales, churipú (spice beef and vegetable stew), and mole (dark red or brown sauce).

The culinary traditions of South American Indigenous communities are characterized by the use of clay ovens and earth pits for cooking.

Africa: Millet, Sorghum, and Yams

Africa’s diverse climates have given rise to a variety of indigenous foods. In the Sahel and savanna regions, millet and sorghum are vital crops, often used to make porridge or flatbreads. Yams and plantains are staples in tropical areas, frequently roasted, boiled, or pounded into fufu.

Foraging traditions remain strong with wild greens, baobab fruit, and honey playing important roles. Cooking methods often involve steaming, grilling, and slow cooking in clay pots. For example, Potjiekos is a stew prepared outdoors in a round pot. Researchers reviewed indigenous food crops in Africa for more sustainable and healthy foods. Over 90% of traditional food crops originated in Africa or were ancient introductions.

Asia: Rice and Spices

It is estimated that two-thirds of the 300 million Indigenous in the world live in Asia. Their foods reflect their location. For example, in Southeast Asia, sticky rice and fish sauce are cornerstones of many Indigenous diets, while barley and yak dairy products provide sustenance in the Himalayan regions. Indigenous communities in India, such as the Adivasis, rely on millet, lentils, and wild tubers. The use of spices is another hallmark of Indigenous Asian foods, with turmeric, ginger, and cardamom frequently used for both flavor and medicinal purposes.

Despite the diversity of specific Indigenous foods, the traditional Asian diet passed down from generations of Indigenous has a base of healthy whole grains with leafy green vegetables and soybeans, meat or fish, and many different spices and herbs. As a food expert describes it, “Even on quick examination we discover the eight flavors that Chinese cooks must balance; the five flavors blended in Thai cooking; the deft use of aromatics in Indian cooking; the balance of cooked, uncooked and barely cooked foods in Japanese cuisine; the nuoc mam fish sauce in Vietnam; and stunning adaptations of these in Hong Kong.”

Oceania: Taro and Seafood

In Oceania, indigenous foods are tied to the sea and tropical landscapes. Taro, a starchy root crop, is a staple across many Pacific islands and is often prepared as poi or roasted. Breadfruit, coconuts, and bananas are also central to diets. Fishing traditions are deeply ingrained, with Indigenous communities relying on methods such as spearfishing and netting to



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catch fish, shellfish, and seaweed. Cooking techniques like underground ovens (umu or lovo) are widely practiced.

Interestingly, Pacific Islanders consumed many of the same traditional foods, like taro, ham, cassava, breadfruit, arrowroot, and others. However, different societies ranked foods differently based on a preference for a crop. For example, Hawai'i ranked poi made from fermented taro first and breadfruit and sweet potato second. Pohnpei ranked yams first and breadfruit and taro second.

Traditional Aboriginal food in Australia includes foods like bush tomato, lemon myrtle, kangaroo, macadamia nuts, desert saltbush, native fruit finger lime, and bush honey. New Zealand Indigenous, like the Māori, make seafood central to their diet, like Bluff Oysters and crayfish. Manuka tree wood chips are used to flavor smoked foods. Foraged foods that were part of the original Indigenous diet, with many still consumed, included palms, fruit and seeds, sweet potatoes, and yams.

Shared Themes and Distinctions

Despite their diversity, indigenous foods share several common themes: a reliance on locally available resources, sustainable harvesting practices, and deep cultural significance. Many cuisines also emphasize communal preparation and consumption, reflecting the social fabric of these communities. This fosters a sense of togetherness and community.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) names five things Indigenous food systems have in common. One, Indigenous change their diet according to what is in season. Second, they combine food production with food generation, like growing multiple crops in a field and harvesting only as needed. Third, Indigenous food production spans large areas through hunting and gathering with food preparation and consumption in one place. Fourth, they manage localities and activities in the same food system. Fifth, Indigenous believe humans are the stewards of their environment. Food systems include spirituality.

Traditional agricultural practices are better adapted to climate change, says the FAO. Indigenous have adapted to extreme environments, like the Andes or dry Kenyan grasslands. Also, as the previous descriptions demonstrate, the Indigenous rely heavily on a small set of staple crops to meet dietary needs and provide 50% of dietary energy needs. The crops the world's Indigenous grow are the ones that have adapted and are more resistant to flooding, drought, altitude, and other extreme conditions. Indigenous territories account for approximately 28% of the global land surface but host 80% of the planet's diversity. Preserving biodiversity is crucial for food nutrition and security.

Indigenous Food Cultures Shine a Light on Sustainability

The globalization of agriculture and the marginalization of Indigenous communities threatens the survival of indigenous food traditions. However, there is growing interest in revitalizing these traditions as part of broader efforts to promote sustainability, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. Organizations and movements are working to document traditional recipes, support Indigenous farmers, and integrate indigenous foods into contemporary cuisine. By celebrating and preserving these traditions, people worldwide can gain valuable insights into sustainable living and cultural diversity, ensuring these culinary legacies endure for generations to come.



ACCELERATING AIR TRAVEL WITH EXPRESS PROGRAMS: BENEFICIAL FOR SOME, BUT NOT FOR EVERYONE

Domestic and global air travel has consistently grown for two decades. Express travel programs strive to expedite airport screening but do not benefit all travelers.

BY PAMELA GRANT

The number of air travelers has steadily risen for two decades. Coupled with increased security procedures, check-in lines can be time-consuming, and the check-in procedures are bothersome. Some people even consider them too intrusive despite the goal of providing passenger safety. So, express programs were created. It is fair to assume that any program called “express” or “precheck” would benefit every traveler, but it is not that simple. Airport precheck express programs, such as TSA PreCheck, Global Entry, CLEAR, and Nexus, are designed to streamline the domestic and global travelers’ security and customs process. However, like any program, there are advantages and disadvantages. These programs have annual fees, so you want to ensure the benefits apply to your typical travel plans.

A Choice of Programs for Frequent Travelers

Four major express travel programs aim to streamline and fast-track the security check-in process for global travelers. They offer some relief from the time-consuming standard processes of removing shoes, verifying identity, or completing various paperwork requirements at border entries. The overall goal is the same, but the programs have different targets.

TSA PreCheck

The TSA PreCheck is the most popular screening program, with over 15 million members. It lets travelers go through special TSA PreCheck security lines faster than the regular ones. The program allows for expedited security at over 200 U.S. airports and 80 airlines. Being in the program helps global travelers by speeding up flight boarding in the U.S. to a foreign country. In addition to faster lines, members can go through security without taking out electronics and toiletries and do not have to remove shoes, jewelry, and belts. The current cost is \$78 for five years.

The main drawback to the TSA PreCheck program is that applying requires an in-person appointment at an enrollment center. It can take weeks or months to get an appointment and then approval.

Global Entry

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) agency runs the Global Entry program. This program includes TSA PreCheck and lets travelers skip long lines at customs entry points when returning to the U.S. You can use a self-serve kiosk. Since it includes TSA PreCheck, you can use it at over 200 U.S. airports. It also includes Guam, Puerto Rico, Saipan, major Canadian airports, and a few international airports, including Dublin and Grand Bahamas. The cost is \$100 for five years.

The CPB also manages the SENTRI program. It allows expedited clearance for pre-approved travelers entering the U.S. from Mexico or Canada. Global Entry kiosks are available for convenient access by air and Nexus lanes for land entry from Canada.

Clear

A private company offers the Clear program. It lets you go to the head of the security line or the TSA Pre-Check line at the airport after scanning your eyes and fingerprints at a Clear kiosk. The drawback is that you must still undergo the regular security screening process of removing your shoes, belt, liquids, and laptop. Clear kiosks are available in fewer airports. Clear Sports includes some stadiums for sports fans and concert attendees. Clear costs \$189 per year. Joining the program does not require a face-to-face meeting at an enrollment center.

Nexus

Nexus is designed for people who regularly travel between the U.S. and Canada. You apply online using the Trusted Travelers Program. It makes it easier to cross the border, whether traveling by air, land, or sea. The border crossings have dedicated processing lanes, and airports have Nexus kiosks. Nexus members can also use the Global Entry kiosks. The cost is \$50 for five years.

Not for Everyone

The express programs are popular, but not everyone needs to join. They are primarily geared toward frequent travelers. Faster security checks can save a lot of time, give you control over the embar-

assment of removing clothing and items you are carrying, and remove some of the uncertainty every traveler faces about timing.

However, there are disadvantages, too. People who travel infrequently may not want to pay the enrollment fees. Though they are not high-cost programs, there is no reason to add another expense to your trip if you do not use the program often. Another important consideration is the airlines you travel with and the airports you use. Express travel program kiosks are not at every airport, but you can research the airports included online. The Global Entry PreCheck program is so popular because it is available at over 200 airports and includes the TSA PreCheck.

Travelers concerned with protecting their privacy may not want to undergo a background check. Some people have concerns about whether their personal information is safe from hackers. The program checks for criminal history and disqualifies people for select criminal offenses. Applicants are fingerprinted and face-scanned and must provide proof of identity and U.S. citizenship.

Also, being in a program does not mean you will always get through security quicker. Sometimes, the precheck security lines are as long as the regular lines. Plus, airport security staff have the right to decide whether you get a precheck. There have been cases in which travelers were denied for some reason.

Looking into the Future of Travel

Technology will play a significant role in the future of travel convenience. For example, there will be enhanced use of contactless check-ins, digital passports, and AI-powered customer service for personalized assistance. Travel itself will evolve significantly, shaped by technology, sustainability, and changing consumer preferences.

Precheck programs will evolve as well. Hopefully, they will become more suitable for all travelers, and the use of technology will make them more affordable and secure. In this way, even infrequent travelers and those who wish to protect their privacy will be able to speed through hectic airports easily, unlocking more of the joys of travel at a minimal cost.

Four major express travel programs aim to streamline and fast-track the security check-in process for global travelers.



NATIONAL SOCIETY OF BLACK ENGINEERS CELEBRATES MILESTONE 50TH ANNIVERSARY DURING 2025 ANNUAL CONVENTION

ALEXANDRIA, VA

The National Society of Black Engineers, one of the largest student-governed organizations based in the U.S., is excited to announce its 2025 Annual Convention ("NSBE 2025"). Taking place from March 5–9 at Chicago's McCormick Place, North America's top convention center, NSBE's largest convening is centered on the theme "Inspire! Excel! Impact!" this year, which reflects the organization's mission "to increase the number of culturally responsible Black engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally and positively impact the community."



The 2025 Annual Convention is a four-day event with an anticipated 400-plus Career Fair exhibitors and more than 20,000 attendees participating in scores of activities, including the Opening, General and Closing Sessions. During the Annual Convention, the Society conducts organizational business, elects national and regional leaders, holds technical, scientific and math competitions and provides professional and personal development, networking and celebratory activities.

EY AND MICROSOFT EXPAND SOCIAL IMPACT COLLABORATION TO EQUIP THE NEXT GENERATION WITH AI SKILLS

LONDON, GB

The EY organization and Microsoft have launched the AI Skills Passport (AISP), a free online program designed to help students aged 16 and older understand and apply AI technologies across various industries and careers. This initiative is part of their broader social impact collaboration, aiming to equip young people and underserved communities with the AI skills needed to succeed in today's job market. With demand for AI expertise rising by 2,000% according to Randstad research, a recent EY and TeachAI survey found that only 15% of Gen Z feel adequately prepared for AI's impact. AISP seeks to close this gap by upskilling one million individuals with essential AI knowledge.

The 10-hour course, available on web and mobile platforms, covers AI fundamentals, ethical considerations, and applications in business, sustainability, and technology. Participants receive an EY and Microsoft certificate of completion, enhancing their resumes and unlocking additional learning and job opportunities. AISP has already launched in 18 coun-

tries, including the U.S., U.K., India, and Australia, with plans to expand to more regions and five languages by 2025. This initiative builds on EY and Microsoft's long-standing partnership to empower job seekers and entrepreneurs, advancing EY Ripples' goal of impacting one billion lives by 2030.



PPG, PPG FOUNDATION INVESTED \$18.4 MILLION IN COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE IN 2024



PITTSBURGH, PA

PPG and the PPG Foundation announced an investment of \$18.4 million worldwide in 2024, marking an increase of \$900,000 over 2023. This funding supported over 400 community partners and programs that focus on advancing education, promoting sustainability, and encouraging employee volunteerism. "We're focused on creating brighter communities, inspiring the future workforce, and applying our employees' talents in ways that create tangible impacts," said Malesia Dunn, executive director of the PPG Foundation and corporate global social responsibility.

The 2024 community engagement highlights include \$11.5 million invested to build the next generation of STEM leaders, with partnerships such as the National Museum of Science and Technology Leonardo da Vinci in Milan and the Foundation for Environmental Education. Additionally, \$1.2 million was directed toward environmental sustainability education as part of PPG's \$5 million commitment by 2030. The company also invested in future skilled worker training, including a \$2 million commitment to programs like Bidwell Training Center's Chemical Laboratory Technician program and WorldSkills Lyon 2024. PPG also contributed \$6.4 million to community sustainability and disaster relief, and completed 58 COLORFUL COMMUNITIES® projects in 2024, benefiting over 10.2 million people across 27 countries.

Creating People Strategy for the Future of Work



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DTE

STRONG CHAINS HAVE DIVERSE LINKS

We believe supply chains should be as diverse as the customers they serve. That's why we have a DTE Supplier Diversity team that seeks out local and diverse suppliers. We believe in helping our state and our customers by choosing businesses that support their communities. In 2023, DTE spent \$988 million with diverse suppliers which went toward creating jobs in local and diverse communities. Because a supply chain shouldn't just support its customers; it should also represent and connect them.