



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) across the consumer value chain A North American perspective

Preface



The case for action

It is no secret that **consumers are becoming increasingly socially conscious**, and many expect brands and organizations they frequent to reflect their social values. The past few years have highlighted the importance of diversity and addressing systemic racism globally. Incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has become both a business and moral imperative, now more than ever.

However, **progress in implementing change within many organizations remains slow**. The consumer industry interacts with people daily. As one of the largest employers in North America, the consumer industry has both a business and moral obligation to address DEI within their organizations at all levels. **Consumers can vote with their buying power when brands and organizations do not meet their DEI obligations**. And to remain competitive, organizations should not only talk the talk but show commitment, progress and the impact of their DEI initiatives.

This report, the first in the series, provides practical, implementable recommendations for how consumer leaders can drive DEI initiatives within their organizations.

This report begins by setting the stage for the challenges facing the consumer industry today. This is followed by a discussion on the three spheres for Equity Activation that inform the priority focus areas to embed DEI across organizations. Layered throughout the discussion, are actionable solutions and case studies across the consumer industry.



A global conversation with local implications

DEI is not a one size fits all solution. While increasing representation and DEI is a priority for organizations all over the world, each region/country/community has its own nuances informed by history, culture, and local priorities.


This report kicks off a **global series** on DEI in the consumer industry. This first deep dive introduces DEI within the North American context, exploring DEI across the consumer value chain in Canada and the United States. Subsequent reports will dig deeper into various regions across the world—providing tailored and locally relevant recommendations to support consumer leaders across the globe.



The case for DEI
across the value chain

The customer base has evolved and continues to diversify

Consumer buying power is more diverse than ever and organizations that do not reflect the needs of their diverse customer base may lose increasing market share.



Over the past 30 years, **minority buying power in the United States has increased exponentially** (from US\$458 billion in 1990 to US\$3 trillion in 2020). Native American, Asian American, and Black consumers now account for **17.2% of the US’** total buying power (up from 10.6% in 1990).¹

Additionally, women and the LGBTQIA2S+ population continue to demonstrate increased consumer spending.



In 2019, women accounted for US\$6.3 trillion in the United States and US\$456.6 billion in Canada. At the same time, the gender pay gap continues to remain a growing issue globally, gender disparities remain, with many women still responsible for household spending.²

In 2018, the **estimated buying power of the LGBTQIA2S+ population in the United States was estimated at US\$1 trillion and US\$86 billion in Canada.**³

Adopting a systems-based view of DEI can allow organizations to assess and manage risk across the business. As organizations build their case for DEI, they should consider the importance of a comprehensive DEI approach to mitigate the reputational, operational and legal risks.



Reputational risk

Organizations face risks to reputation if practices are spotlighted that do not support or align to DEI values. A negative reputation can limit the attractiveness of the organization for potential employees who desire to work for organizations that align with their social priorities. It can also negatively influence consumer spending as consumers increasingly choose to support organizations that demonstrate diverse, equitable and inclusive values and social responsibility. Reputational risk errors can have long-term effects on operations.



Operational risk

Failure to address DEI concerns within organizations can result in increased or unexpected attrition as employees are increasingly seeking work environments that align with their beliefs. DEI concerns can range from an internally exclusive work culture to inequities in the organization’s supply chain or product. Poor retention can lead to operational risks that can potentially impact the organization’s ability to complete business.



Legal risk

Legal risk encompasses any reputational impact, operating or financial losses and issues affecting the organization’s ability to do business. With increasing regulations impacting DEI, it is imperative for organizations to understand any legal requirements they have, assess all potential risks, and put in place controls to manage different risks. Organizations are increasingly required to respond to updated legal requirements—controlling legal risks arising from operations is critical to maintaining a competitive advantage. Companies, boards, and general counsels run the risk of exposure to financial and reputational losses if legal risks develop.⁴

In addition to managing risk, addressing DEI can also help organizations accelerate their business objectives. Research shows that diverse organizations make better business decisions resulting in improved productivity and financial performance.

19%

Diverse companies have up to **19%** higher innovation revenues in terms of new products than non-diverse peers.⁵

S&P 500 companies that invest in diversity initiatives have generated a higher operating profit margin of **12%** than non-diverse peers.⁶

12%

50%

Organizations with inclusive policies that result in a greater sense of belongingness see a **50%** reduction in employee turnover and a 56% increase in job performance.⁷

As more organizations continue to prioritize DEI, transparency has become a business imperative to remain competitive.

Government agencies

Government agencies are increasingly making DEI a key factor in decision-making not only internally but also in procurement. In the United States, the push for equity in government has resulted in a national policy aimed at addressing systemic racism. Under this policy, all government agencies must review their policies and programs to identify and address areas of systemic bias.⁸ A key part of the equity agenda is a push to make federal procurement more diverse and inclusive. In Canada, the government's Public Services and Procurement department is modernizing procurement practices to reduce barriers to the participation of underrepresented groups in federal procurements. The department has implemented programs such as the Black Business Pilot and has set a target of at least 5% of federal contracts to be awarded to Indigenous businesses.⁹



New business partners

As more organizations make DEI a priority in business, transparency on DEI and progress made to address DEI issues will likely become a key factor in selecting new partners and building relationships. Many large organizations have put in place (or are creating) supplier diversity programs to prioritize diverse suppliers in procurement. Providers that do not prioritize diversity stand the risk of being left behind.



Employees

For younger job seekers, DEI in the workplace is often a determining factor influencing their employment decisions.¹⁰ Employees increasingly expect to see diverse leadership and teams, inclusive work environments and equitable opportunities for all. This has translated into additional transparency requirements, including advancing pay equity. In the United States, numerous jurisdictions have implemented equal pay laws that require employers to disclose salary ranges to applicants and/or employees under certain circumstances.



Customers

Many customers want to support and associate themselves with brands that prioritize DEI. Ninety-one percent of millennials and 90% of Gen Z are more likely to purchase from organizations that demonstrate how their products have strong social or environmental benefits.¹¹



DEI across the value chain

Conventional DEI advice focuses predominantly on the corporate employee experience—increasing recruitment and retention of diverse candidates. While this is integral to a successful DEI strategy, a **comprehensive evaluation of DEI across the full value chain provides a view of where additional change may be needed and what consumer organizations can put in place today** to create working environments where people thrive and find meaning in their work.

The consumer industry is highly varied in both products and production—consumer products can range from vehicles to beauty supplies to groceries. Correspondingly, each area of the consumer industry hosts its own unique supply chain, with varied combinations and types of manufacturers, distributors, and transportation. Despite this variance, **consumer-facing companies can all activate equity within and outside of their own organizations through examination of their three spheres of influence—Workforce, Marketplace, and Society.** Each sphere, in turn, includes multiple activators—key areas of activity and everyday choices—through which organizations can exert their influence to activate equity.¹²

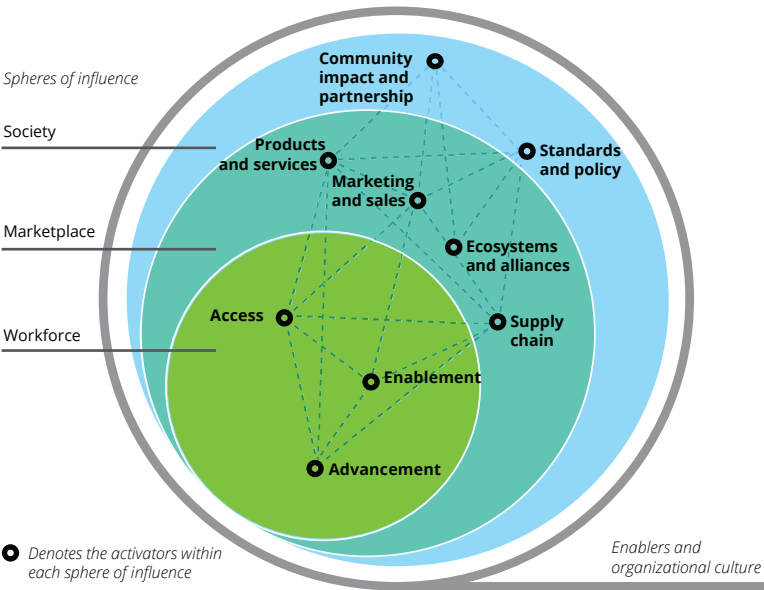
The Deloitte Equity Activation Model provides the structure for a nuanced review of DEI across the consumer value chain.

The **Workforce sphere highlights the need for organization introspection**—understanding the needs of employees on the shop floor, in the warehouses and distribution centers or on the road, in addition to corporate. As professionals enter the workforce, they are increasingly looking to their organizations to lead the way in internal and external DEI efforts. To remain an employer of choice, organizations should make strides in DEI as well as emphasize the individual's purpose in the organization and alignment with the greater vision of the company.

The **Marketplace sphere delves into the alliances and partners** that consumer organizations often work with. It informs the selection of new partners and the standards to which partners are held to account. By holding partners to a higher standard, consumer organizations can use their influence to advance DEI beyond their own workforce.

Finally, the **Society sphere assesses the true impact that consumer organizations have in the communities they operate in** - making DEI a priority that extends beyond the four walls of the organization. Consumer choices are becoming increasingly informed by consumers' moral alignment with organizations—failure to meet these expectations can cost organizations customers, market share, and reputational risk. With increasing consumer savviness around the impacts of organizational activities in communities and influences on policies and standards, organizations should reflect on their society-wide activities and whether those align with organizational values and mission statements.

The Deloitte Equity Activation Model



Workforce

Organizations committed to impactful DEI should be willing to challenge the status quo.

For many organizations, DEI initiatives tend to focus predominantly on the experiences of corporate employees, leaving out a large and significant part of the consumer industry working force—frontline employees. These employees often work directly with

customers daily and are the first and most impactful experience that a customer has with the organization. Improving their sense of belonging and purpose at the organization can also be key to ensuring long-term operational success and lower overall attrition.

The trickle-down model of organizational justice highlights that employees who have the perception of being treated fairly are more likely to echo similar values in customer service. This in turn improves the customer experience and increases the likelihood of customers reacting positively to both the employee and the organization.¹³


Additionally, racially and ethnically diverse people (41% of frontline employees) and women (72% of cashiers and 64% of customer service representatives) are overrepresented as frontline employees and underrepresented at a corporate level, showing a disconnect between corporate DEI culture and actual culture on the ground.¹⁴ It also highlights the lack of a

clear talent pipeline from the frontline workforce to the corporate workforce. **By emphasizing DEI on all levels of the organization and increasing the opportunities available to frontline workers, organizations could gain loyalty from both their workforce and customers.**



Women and minorities remain underrepresented in leadership positions across the consumer industry.



 **Women remain underrepresented at executive levels**
Despite **holding 74.8%** of office and clerical positions, women hold only **17.6%** of executive positions

Specific occupations in the automotive sector are more male-dominated



In Deloitte Canada's Women at the Wheel study¹⁶, nearly half of women surveyed said they would leave the automotive industry if they were to restart their career today, with a lack of diversity and inclusion among the top three reasons to leave.

Actions your organization can start today

Prioritize these initiatives to help address diversity in your workforce



Host listening sessions for on-the-ground employees to act on their specific needs

Expand conversations around equity by including on-the-ground employees to create working environments that welcome and include varying lifestyle needs, from physical accessibility to neurodiversity.

Make DEI a business issue

Include DEI goals into key performance indicators for leaders in the corporate head office as well as those leading customer/client facing employees. **Make DEI a core element of performance assessments and reviews of business performance** at all levels.

Address existing bias

Evaluate existing processes and practices for potential bias or exclusionary behavior (such as uniform or grooming policies that discriminate on gender, sex, race, religion or culture). Update existing policies as required to meet the needs of employees.

Embed DEI in the talent lifecycle

Start and end with DEI

Introduce accountability measures for leaders to action the insights gained from exit interviews. Leverage exit interviews to extract direct feedback on the team culture and experiences of employees. Provide leadership visibility on the interview findings.

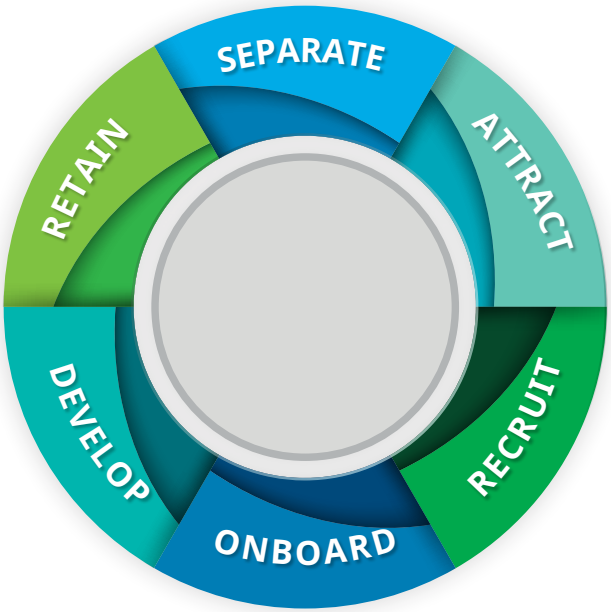
Remain competitive

Establish and communicate DEI as a key element of your corporate brand for prospective employees through transparent and accessible internal statistics and goals.

Case in point: Nike releases its internal diversity stats and ties executive compensation to its 2025 DEI targets, aligning financial incentives to ensure long-term progress.¹⁷

Foster internal opportunities

Provide clear development paths for all levels of the organization. Cultivate a working culture that enables on-the-ground employees to transition to leadership (or if desired, corporate) in order to increase diversity in leadership and improve retention. Develop mentorship and sponsorship programs that connect leaders/mentors across the vertical structure of the organization, including frontline employees. Identify 'drop-off' points for progression and develop policies to address (e.g., maternity leave policies).



Tailor the experience for each employee

Ask incoming employees what DEI in action looks like for them. Facilitate open forums for new employees during onboarding to share what matters to them and what they need in place for an inclusive work environment. Communicate the organization's DEI goals and priorities from the get-go and make it clear for new employees to see how they play a part in the broader strategy.

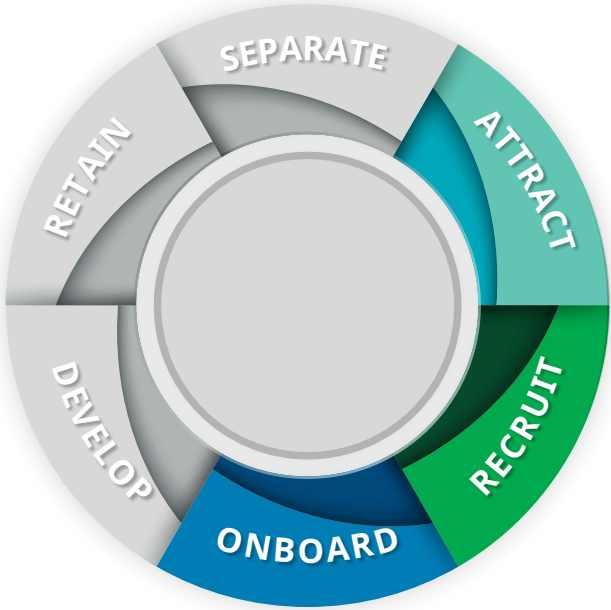
Innovate to hire diverse talent

Challenge existing orthodoxies about ideal employees (e.g., removing GPA requirements and questioning typical channels of recruitment). Recruit from 'non-traditional' sources such as local organizations working with underrepresented groups and communities that your organization serves. Increase equity-related programming in those communities, such as scholarship and mentorship programming.

DEI in action

Take a moment to reflect on the following question as it relates to your organization.

In which parts of the employee lifecycle could your organization improve its DEI efforts?



1

ATTRACT

Why is this important for my organization? Organizations can attract a greater diversity of candidates by creating a DEI-focused candidate talent experience, starting with the career site. Some steps may include being deliberate with imagery, using more transparent job postings, and tapping into novel candidate pipelines and job platforms.

2

RECRUIT

Why is this important for my organization? A thorough analysis of gaps in the recruitment process is essential to identify challenges with equitable hiring and to create systems of accountability in order to enact sustainable change. Some areas to evaluate are:

- Are your hiring practices unintentionally excluding applicants through unnecessary requirements for the role?
- Are you using a variety of communication channels to reach a diverse range of talent?
- Does your hiring team represent a multitude of diverse opinions? Are they trained to interview a diverse range of candidates properly?
- Are the benefits offered by the organization attractive to a wide range of candidates?

3

ONBOARD

Why is this important for my organization? Investing in mentorship and personal development early on demonstrates that DEI is a priority for your organization. Creating equitable and accessible onboarding processes can help retention efforts further down the line and promote an inclusive environment for all.

4

DEVELOP

Why is this important for my organization? As an organization, you may need to evaluate if there are enough opportunities for minorities to connect with leaders and engage in mentorship/sponsorship.

5

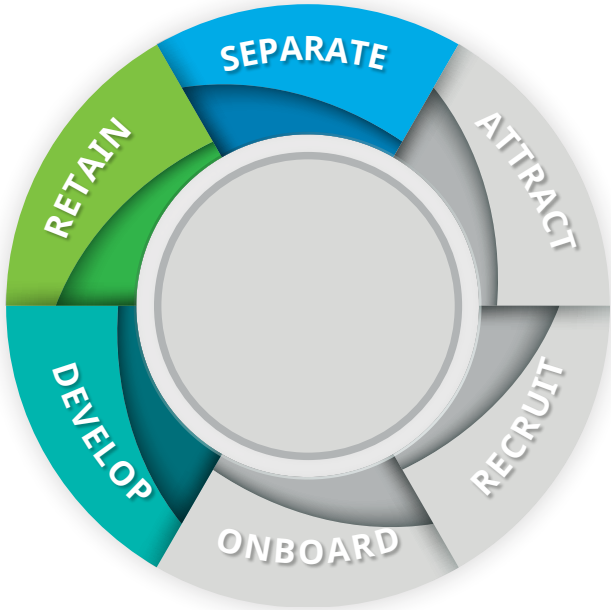
RETAIN

Why is this important for my organization? DEI initiatives should not just focus solely on full-time employees—efforts should extend to part-time, seasonal, and contracting employees as well. Acknowledge and understand that if there are embedded structural inequalities and biases in the employee lifecycle, not all employees, regardless of age, color, national origin, citizenship status, physical or mental disability, race, religion, creed, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, genetics, and marital status, will thrive. Retaining an employee is a result of several factors beyond compensation and benefits. Creating and maintaining an inclusive environment where diverse opinions, perspectives and ideas are valued is also critical.

6

SEPARATE

Why is this important for my organization? Much like onboarding, having an efficient offboarding process keeps your operation centered and organized toward the main goals of maintaining your brand, minimizing adverse impact to the operation, and recovering as quickly as possible. Evaluate the exit interview process and identify ways to make it more actionable by embedding questions related to DEI and microaggressions.



Marketplace

Organizations committed to impactful and sustainable DEI look beyond their own four walls and bring their entire ecosystem along the journey.

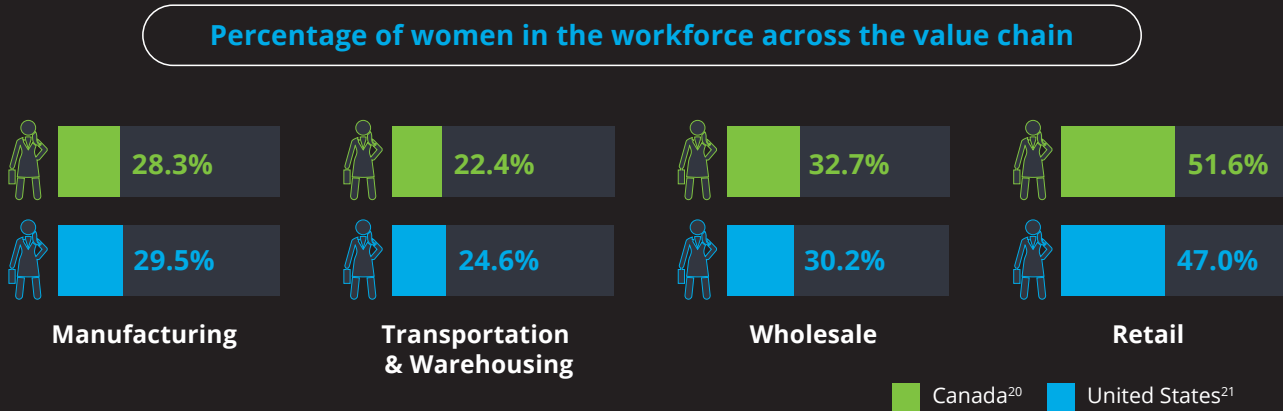
Over the past few years, DEI has become a major focus for organizations as consumers are becoming increasingly socially conscious. Many consumer organizations have begun defining DEI targets across their boards, management teams, and employee base. However, the reality is that a comprehensive evaluation of DEI within consumer organizations spans much beyond the workforce, but across the entire supply

chain. A supply chain is considered “diverse” when the manufacturer, supplier, and/or distributor is at least 51% owned and operated by an individual or group that is part of a traditionally unrepresented group.¹⁸ These could include small-business enterprises (SBEs), minority-owned enterprises (MBEs), women-owned enterprises (WBEs), or enterprises owned by disabled veterans or the LGBTQIA2S+ community.¹⁸

Prioritizing supplier diversity can help organizations develop a supply chain that is both resilient and efficient. It enables the organization to mitigate the risks associated with complete reliance on a smaller network of suppliers and provides an opportunity to assess and adjust to meet evolving customer values and needs.¹⁹



Gender diversity remains low in manufacturing and reaches equity in the customer-facing side of the value chain



There are several benefits of maintaining a diverse supply chain in the consumer industry

- 1 Increase in market opportunities**
Supplier diversity programs and related events offer networking opportunities and can lead to discoveries of new geographical markets and customer segments; clients tend to choose partners that are aligned with their own corporate values.
- 2 Reduction in cost and supply chain risk**
Not only does a diverse supply chain strengthen a company's brand image and goodwill, but it also has commercial advantages such as reducing risk and exposure, and increasing competition, agility and flexibility of suppliers.¹⁹ A larger and more diversified supply chain reduces the risk of supply failure, eliminates the reputational risk by expanding the size of the supplier community, and encourages healthy competition which can benefit product/service quality and potentially influence cost reduction.
- 3 Increase in innovation and flexibility**
Due to the smaller size of some diverse suppliers, a diversified supply chain may be more adept to incorporate any changes in the product and its delivery. Having a diverse supplier base which constantly innovates their processes can lead to the creation of new products, solutions and services.

Actions your organization can start today

Prioritize these three initiatives to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion across your ecosystem



Make supplier diversity a strategic priority

Regardless of where your organization is on their journey toward a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture, take a fresh look at your programs and practices, begin to identify where you need to take action, and develop an actionable roadmap to start. Invest your time and money. Review and renegotiate supplier contracts where required. Explore e-procurement platforms that have an existing marketplace full of diverse suppliers. Partner with

relevant councils and chambers of commerce. Integrate supplier diversity into the corporate strategy and develop a supplier diversity program.

Case in point: In 2022, Unilever committed a target of its global annual spend of around US\$2.3 billion, on diverse suppliers by 2025. They are aiming to educate and upskill suppliers' workforce and ensure living wages to all the employees of Tier 1 (T1) suppliers.²²

DEI in action

Adopt a data-driven approach and set meaningful goals

Identify and communicate concrete goals for your organization over a set period to hold you accountable. Embed in executive targets, set KPIs, and review frequently. Don't be afraid to ask members of your supply chain about their commitment to improving DEI within their own supply chain. Employ a third-party firm to validate supplier certifications and conduct audits of diversity spend and the economic impact of programs. It's about progress not perfection; show that you are on a journey.

Case in point: With a goal of driving DEI principles deeper into its supply chain, Kellogg North America has started partnering with TI suppliers to track Tier II spend, analyzing the spend of diverse suppliers who sell to their TI partners. Setting these goals and tracking DEI deeper into the supply chain allows Kellogg to have a broader positive economic impact within not only their consumers but also their communities.²³

Measure and report your success

Take the time to track the effectiveness of your efforts. Monitor metrics such as:

- Number of new diverse suppliers onboarded
- Percentage decrease of supplier turnover
- Savings realized from supplier diversity program
- Increase in internal customer satisfaction
- Number of jobs created and impact on local community

Publicizing your supplier diversity efforts will lead to an increased number of vendors not only learning from you, but also reaching out to partner with your organization. Transparency is key.

Case in point: Ford is known as having one of the oldest supplier diversity programs, that began in 1968. Ford has partnered with a dozen supplier certification organizations in the United States and Canada including the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) and Women Business Enterprises Canada (WBE Canada).²⁴

Take a moment to reflect on the following question as it relates to your organization.

How is DEI built into your vendor selection process?

1

My organization has a robust and effective supplier diversity program. We frequently conduct reviews of our current suppliers, and only seek out new suppliers that hold diverse supplier certifications.

2

My organization has transparency built into the DEI landscape with our current suppliers. We enquire about their diversity targets, but it is not a “must-have.”

3

My organization has not implemented any supplier diversity programs.

If you selected Option 1... Keep up the great work! You are on the right path to realizing the benefits of having a structured supplier diversity program in place. Don't forget to evaluate your supplier contracts on an annual basis (or more frequently) as certain organizations' priorities may have shifted, or there may be further opportunities to continue to expand your supplier base.

In addition to tracking your supplier diversity spend, you may want to start considering how your suppliers drive their own supplier diversity. Organizations in your position should prioritize partnering with local or industry-specific organizations to identify best practices they can implement today. And don't be afraid to publicize your DEI efforts!

If you selected Option 2... It is great that you have already started to think about embedding supplier diversity across your entire value chain, and it is important that you continue to strive for more. Work on setting DEI goals to hold your organization accountable, especially when it comes to seeking out new suppliers.

Embed DEI in your standard business practices; your entire organization should be committed to improving DEI standards across the supply chain, not just HR. Build connections across the industry to learn from best practices.

If you selected Option 3... The first step is always recognizing the problem and communicating that you are headed in the right direction. Regardless of where your organization is on their journey toward a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture, take a fresh look at your programs and practices, begin to identify where you need to take action, and develop an actionable roadmap to begin. Engaging in conversation with all members of your supply chain can help increase market opportunities and bring DEI traction across the industry. Don't be afraid to ask suppliers the following questions:

- What is your level of commitment to improving DEI within your own organization?
- How can that level of commitment be enhanced?
- Where are the roadblocks?



Society

Consumer organizations should understand that meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse customer base is crucial to growing market share and the bottom line.

Millennials and Gen Z now represent a larger part of the population and are the most diverse generational cohort in US history.²⁵ Many within this cohort view social responsibility as a core value for themselves and the organizations they align with—and this often impacts their shopping habits. Deloitte Global's State of the Consumer Tracker has highlighted the rise of the conscious shopper—consumers who increasingly make shopping decisions informed by the social responsibility and impact

that they (and the organizations they support) make.²⁶ Many customers are looking at the social conscience or purpose of the brands they interact with and rewarding those who meet their expectations; 87% of millennials and 95% of Gen Z expect organizations they shop with to care about and communicate their actions that support pertinent social issues (including their commitments and progress to DEI).¹¹ In this case, they are also more likely to punish brands they perceive to display less social conscience or purpose.

In a Deloitte survey of 11,500 global consumers, we found the youngest respondents (from 18 to 25 years old) took greater notice of inclusive advertising when making purchase decisions. Additionally, minorities were up to two-and-a-half times more likely to be aware of a brand prominently promoting diversity when making a purchasing decision.²⁷

The increased economic impact and power of minorities means that their priorities and needs should be addressed in marketing, advertising, and product selection.

A 2020 survey of 3,034 US shoppers and 1,703 retail employees concluded that consumers felt excluded before entering a store when marketing failed to include a diverse range of skin colors, body types and hair textures.²⁸ Ensuring diverse representation in marketing and advertising helps consumer organizations demonstrate that they understand and respond to the needs of their increasingly diverse customer base.



Growth in US buying power 2010–2020²⁹



US\$11.3 trillion to
US\$17.5 trillion



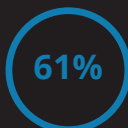
Asian
American



Latinx



Native
American



Black

Indigenous peoples and visible minorities have more spending power than ever yet continue to have negative shopping experiences.

Racial profiling

Thirty-five percent of Black Americans said in 2022 that they were treated unfairly in stores because of their race.³⁰ Racial profiling while shopping not only negatively impacts the shopping experience but can have dangerous consequences if amplified by violence or the use of excessive force.

Accessibility

Finding accessible retail features in physical locations remains a challenge for many. With the increase in online shopping, digital accessibility is a growing priority. Digital accessibility focuses on ensuring that IT systems are designed in such a way that they interact appropriately with assistive technologies such as screen readers, voice recognition software, and Braille keypads.

Actions your organization can start today

Prioritize these five initiatives to help understand and address systemic challenges facing the communities you operate in



Establish a community advisory council

DEI extends beyond the four walls of your organization. Engage with local communities to understand local priorities and needs and lean in to provide support where possible. Community advisory councils can help organizations leverage local experience and expertise to gain insights on race relations, perceptions of social equality and cultural beliefs.

Facilitate a two-way dialogue with customers

Create opportunities for customers to engage in conversation—what are their concerns, how can their experience be improved?

Case in point: Microsoft’s “We All Win” campaign recognized a dire need for adaptive gaming controllers and launched Microsoft’s Xbox Adaptive Controller to level the playing field for all users by including touchpads instead of buttons and bright colors for the visually impaired.³¹

Train frontline employees

Prioritize diversity training for frontline employees and equip them with the tools and resources to address bias and customer concerns to proactively improve the retail experience for all.

Monitor the risk

It is a business risk not to navigate the business through a DEI lens. Understand how a comprehensive DEI strategy and approach can effectively help you manage risk.

Embed DEI metrics while auditing your systems, procedures, policies, and processes to ensure a more wide-ranging understanding of how to manage risk. Depending on where and how the business operates, it can assess risk through a global lens or a hyperlocal lens.

Communicate your values

Adopt a shared-values approach that integrates social priorities at the core of the organization's business model. Openly communicate the values and purpose.

Case in point: Dove is a brand that has been focusing on diversity for many years with advertisements that always feature people of various ethnicities, shapes, and sizes. Specifically, their 2017 campaign featured women from different countries aged 11 to 71. Dove was successful in battling ageism and embracing a broader definition of beauty while avoiding digital enhancements to photos.³²

DEI in action

Take a moment to reflect on the following question as it relates to your organization.

How engaged is your organization with the needs and priorities of the communities they operate in?



If you selected Option 1... Keep it up: Your organization has understood the importance of community engagement, and it should continue to engage local community stakeholders to ensure that your organization's vision is understood, shared and supported in the community. Ensure you have robust processes and accountability systems to gather and integrate the feedback.

If you selected Option 2... A first step toward implementing the initiatives is to conduct a community consultation process. It can allow the organization to form relationships with community stakeholders and to leverage existing community assets and resources.

If you selected Option 3... Engaging communities not only benefits them; it can also improve your organization's decision-making, legitimacy and competitiveness by tapping into local knowledge, reducing conflict, boosting recruitment and preventing costly delays. This report has highlighted the criticality of engaging society as a whole—not only for the business but also for your customers and employees. Consider beginning with the following questions to understand community stakeholders and get to know their concerns.

- What are the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the communities you engage in?
- What are the social, economic and environmental challenges or priorities in this neighborhood?
- What is happening in terms of neighborhood improvement and real estate development?
- What is the backbone of community's economic development?
- What employment growth strategies are promoted in the community?

Conclusion

As DEI continues to be a major priority for consumers and employees alike, consumer organizations should quickly adapt to emerging and present demands to do better. By aligning organizational principles, priorities, and policies around advancing DEI in the workforce, marketplace, and society spheres, consumer organizations can address these concerns and become leaders in the DEI space.

Many consumer organizations have both a **business and a moral imperative** to go beyond the basics for advancing DEI: their market share and reputation depend on it. Organizations can begin by implementing a **clear vision and goals for a DEI strategy** that address not only their employees, but also their supply chain and society as a whole. Their strategies should include **high accountability and visible transparency** to help ensure sustained DEI progress and moral alignment with their consumers. By challenging the status quo and implementing tangible change now, **consumer organizations can lead the way for a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive future.**

Endnotes

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