



Driving DE&I with collaborative learning & development

WHITE PAPER


Diversity, equity and inclusion has never been more important to modern business. Not only are we able to share stories and experiences with unprecedented reach, but companies are realizing the business benefits of a more representative workforce. Even with a clear

incentive to implement comprehensive DE&I strategies, it can be challenging to create real, lasting change. Permanently shifting a company culture requires a thoughtful approach, one that addresses internal blind spots and targets any root causes of inequity. In practice, this often means bringing in a third-party partner who can holistically facilitate ongoing learning and development, working closely with leadership and staff to build a truly inclusive environment.

HSI Blue Ocean Brain is leading the way in helping organizations match their DE&I learning initiatives to their skills gaps and cultivate a specialized path forward that achieves lasting change. As a trusted partner and extension of their customers' HR, learning and development (L&D) and DE&I teams, HSI Blue Ocean Brain empowers companies to implement L&D programs that deliver lasting impact.

Why DE&I is a must-have

It has long been aspirational to operate an equal and inclusive workforce, but it is quickly becoming a requirement. This is due to larger cultural shifts that have enabled the workforce to become more connected than ever. Employees and managers can engage with other businesses and see how things are done elsewhere, which has created a collective standard of what true DE&I looks like in practice. It is easier for employees to share their experiences and call out bias and inequity when they see it because they have the larger community to support them. It is also easier to share examples of successful DE&I, giving companies a model to pursue.



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This transparency is a great motivator when an organization is doing a good job—but the stakes are equally high on the other end of the spectrum. Successful DE&I helps workers to feel engaged in the company’s broader mission and encourages them to contribute more, as they feel valued. Poor DE&I can lead to a disengaged workforce and employee churn, as these workers realize there are more inclusive and psychologically safe options in the market.

DE&I is therefore a valuable contributor to the bottom line. McKinsey’s report “[Diversity matters even more](#)” shows that a more diverse and representative workforce will outperform others, in terms of gender and ethnic diversity. These tangible gains, combined with employee satisfaction, make a compelling case for improved DE&I efforts in every organization.

Barriers to successful DE&I strategy

Understanding the value of good DE&I is not enough on its own. Many organizations are taking the initiative to rectify inequity in their workforce yet face consistent challenges when they attempt this internally, without external expert assistance. One key problem is that these issues often arise from blind spots and implicit bias, which are innately hard for a company to identify itself. If you do not know you are doing something wrong, how can you correct it? This is where an objective party can provide immediate impact by assessing the situation, identifying hidden problems and offering innovative solutions for improvement.

Another challenge is a lack of resources invested into the new DE&I strategy. It is common for companies to appoint a single leader to head up all DE&I initiatives—often in addition to their main role. This leaves the DE&I program under-resourced and unlikely to have much impact, as the leader has limited time and focus. These strategies need sufficient attention and budget if they are going to create meaningful change throughout the organization. Otherwise, even the limited allocation of resources will be wasted.

Finally, there is often a lack of strong commitment from senior leadership to fully integrate equity and inclusion into the company culture. Junior employees are likely the ones to raise DE&I issues, but companies need senior management to lead by example if they are going to achieve substantial adoption of new policies. There must be significant investment from the entire company so everyone has the bandwidth and approval to engage more deeply with the material. This holds particularly true for leadership, who, despite their demanding schedules, must showcase their dedication to their teams.

The HSI Blue Ocean Brain factor

Partnering with a DE&I collaborator like HSI Blue Ocean Brain enables organizations to benefit from an objective eye and industry expertise. Years of experience means they know how to build a DE&I learning curriculum that organically weaves into the company’s workflow, promoting employee adoption and a genuine culture shift. Specifically, there are a few key buckets that HSI Blue Ocean Brain focuses on:

Accessible microlearning content

While DE&I is incredibly important, it supplements employees’ daily responsibilities. Bite-sized learning enables employees to engage within their hectic work schedules, ensuring that everyone can participate and tailor the program to suit

their needs. HSI Blue Ocean Brain’s learning library focuses on microlearning—smaller, digestible segments of content that are easier to fit into a packed calendar. Microlearning improves knowledge retention and engagement, as employees are not overloaded with too much information at once.

The style of content also focuses on proactive steps. This helps workers to feel inspired, motivated and supported to make tangible change, rather than bogging them down in theory. Inequitable work environments are challenging for employees to navigate, so it is important to commit to organizational change. HSI Blue Ocean Brain’s content focuses on relevant skill-building and actions within the workplace to identify allyship opportunities, learn about different cultures and lived experiences, resolve conflict and create a safe environment for all employees. Additional resources are provided as optional supplements, allowing staff to engage at their preferred pace while meeting essential standards. This approach minimizes the risk of overwhelming employees while empowering those who seek deeper involvement and additional tools to advance DE&I efforts.

Sharing best practices

While each organization is different, there are often common challenges and successes that others would benefit from learning about in a safe environment. HSI Blue Ocean Brain brings clients together to share their perspectives in regular “Better with BOB” sessions. These gatherings provide useful opportunities for client stakeholders to connect and mutually support each other. These sessions also help to create a more reciprocal and sustainable space for future growth. After the Better with BOB meetings, the goal is for these relationships to continue and keep the conversation going long term.

Empowering management to lead

Company leadership must embody meaningful change so employees feel motivated and empowered to follow them. This is especially true if DE&I issues were raised by junior employees who had previously felt unsupported. By engaging management in DE&I strategy, changes in policy and decision-making can occur at every level of the business. However, people leaders need adequate training and support to handle these conversations with confidence and tact—which is exactly what HSI Blue Ocean Brain does.

Not every manager will be an expert in DE&I, and many of them might be coming to these conversations for the first time. This is why HSI Blue Ocean Brain focuses on empowering people leaders through ongoing learning that addresses topics such as how to engage directly with your team on sensitive issues and build empathy and psychological safety across teams. While employees benefit from engaging directly with HSI Blue Ocean Brain’s content, these lessons and supplemental resources also help fuel the valuable conversations that lead to true culture change.



HSI Blue Ocean Brain in action: AWS' global success

Organizations of all sizes can benefit from partnering with HSI Blue Ocean Brain for their DE&I initiatives, but AWS is a prime example of implementing change on an epic scale. As a global company with over 100,000 builders, AWS knew that shifting company culture would be a big project but an important one to keep everyone feeling valued and dedicated to creating a culture of inclusion. HSI Blue Ocean Brain made this mission more powerful and achievable for management by designing a learning series around 16 leadership principles for AWS builders to uphold, with a dedicated training program to equip them with the necessary tools. This gave leaders concrete steps toward the overarching goal of embedding DE&I into the fabric of AWS.

To promote engagement and create tangibility for builders across the company, AWS and

HSI Blue Ocean Brain launched an interactive system of levels to complete and points to earn, all associated with different pillars of DE&I education. This lets builders see their progress and share their achievements with their peers, promoting a deeper connection with the material. Throughout this journey, AWS leaders felt empowered to initiate discussions with their teams and effectively implement HSI Blue Ocean Brain's lessons into practice.

Finally, HSI Blue Ocean Brain and AWS created a shared language of inclusion, embodied in a special lesson around DE&I and culminating in an Inclusion Pledge for builders to sign. This pledge lets builders proudly demonstrate their involvement in making AWS a welcoming workplace. So far, more than 50,000 builders have taken part, illustrating the significant impact of embracing a comprehensive DE&I strategy—with invaluable support from a trusted partner like HSI Blue Ocean Brain.

Learn more about building a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion at www.blueoceanbrain.com.