



ARCTIC SHORES

D&I drive

**Restating the
business case for
diversity and
inclusion**

green  park

“Data is powerful, because you need to know where you are, but it doesn’t show everything. You also need a narrative to explain the ‘why?’, which needs to involve colleagues from across the business.”

Zaheer Ahmad MBE, Head of Strategic Delivery – Diversity and Inclusiveness, EY (U&I)

Through the D&I lens

Is diversity simply a ‘nice to have’ when business is going well? Our panel discussed how diversity and inclusion can drive business success, and is especially important in times of crisis, and their tips for ensuring it is embedded in your strategy.

A recent [Resourcing Priorities Report](#) by TALiNT Partners looking into employers’ focuses in light of COVID-19 raised a concerning issue; diversity and inclusion (D&I) may still be important, but it’s not currently seen as urgent. There is a risk, therefore, that progress in this area may stall, or even reverse in the coming months, echoing what happened during the 2008-10 financial crisis.

To find out more about why this may be, and how companies can ensure D&I isn’t a simply a tick box exercise, TALiNT Partners invited Jo Heath, partner, head of consulting practice – D&I, culture and ethics at Green Park; Alastair Frater, UK general manager at Arctic Shores; Sarah Gregory, partner, head of diversity and inclusion at Baker McKenzie; and Zaheer Ahmad MBE, head of strategic delivery – diversity and inclusiveness at EY (U&I), to share their learnings and advice for our in-house audience in a recent webinar.

MEASURING THE DATA

You can’t change what you don’t measure. Any team or company looking to make the business case for D&I, especially now, needs to ensure it is supported by data. “You need to be enhancing and re-socialising the business case for D&I,” explains Jo Heath. “Data is very important; it gets the attention of senior leaders,” agrees

Sarah Gregory, “but also, don’t underestimate the power of your clients and customers – are they demanding D&I change from you?”

Businesses need to be continually collecting, analysing and sharing data to promote where progress is being made, and where it’s still needed. Only by showing where you’ve come from can you set realistic targets and highlight that progress is being made.

For EY, however, data is only half the story. “Data is powerful, because you need to know where you are,” says Zaheer Ahmad, “but it doesn’t show everything. You also need a narrative to explain the ‘why?’, which needs to involve colleagues from across the business.”

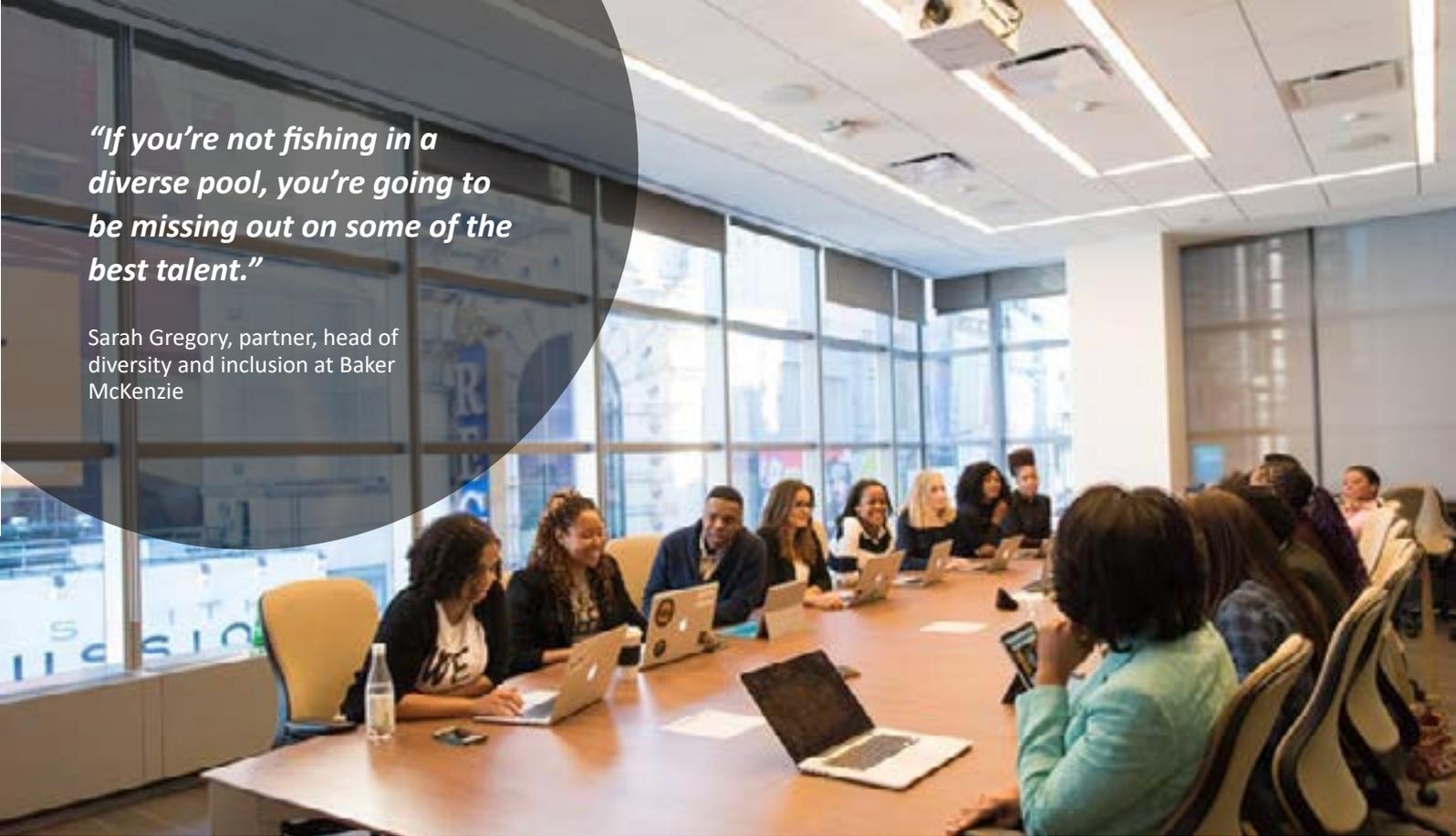
OPPORTUNITY IN CRISIS?

The COVID-19 crisis has affected all diversity strands in recent months, however for some groups there has been a greater impact; both Jo Heath and Sarah Gregory highlighted the disproportionate impact on senior women, with many working mothers now also having to both lead teams and manage the majority of the childcare.

Jo Heath also reflected on the recent, and potential future, stating an observed increase in harassment of Chinese people as a result of the

“If you’re not fishing in a diverse pool, you’re going to be missing out on some of the best talent.”

Sarah Gregory, partner, head of diversity and inclusion at Baker McKenzie



virus. She also warned that a D&I lens must be applied when making business decisions related to redundancies and furloughing decisions. Dependant upon what part of the business is being restructured, businesses need to ensure that BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) employees are not disproportionately affected.

With regards to those with physical or mental ill health conditions, there has of course been an acknowledged affect – with many people feeling restricted and isolated. Some have seen their treatment disrupted or felt the effects of being in a shielding category, however, it is not all bad news; for some disabled workers the recent move to remote working has highlighted that in many cases remote working is perfectly feasible. Therefore, it is entirely reasonable that this becomes a normal way of working and employers now need to be considering how to ensure this works long-term.

HUMANS VS TECH

One of the key debates during the session was around unconscious bias training, and agreement was that, in isolation, it simply doesn’t work. “Unconscious bias training, for the most part, is useless,” shares Alastair Frater. Zaheer Ahmad agrees that there’s no proof it supports improved diverse and inclusive hiring.

Instead, companies should be relying more heavily on technology in the early stages of the recruitment process. “When humans get involved, that’s when there’s an increase in bias,” explains Alastair Frater. “We should be deploying tech to remove the human from the

process as much as possible. Humans are vital for the end decision, but let tech do the heavy lifting.”

The question, however, still remains, ‘does bias exist in the tech itself?’, a point Zaheer Ahmad raised. And as Jo Heath questioned, “By utilising too much tech in the early stages, are we simply pushing the issue down the line?” And while unconscious bias training may not work on its own, it may help to raise awareness if discussed at the point key group decisions are being taken. “A focus on the importance of conscious decision making helps people identify their own biases or those of others,” said Sarah Gregory.

A more effective solution involves making cultural intelligence and inclusive leadership a core competency and specifically, there is a need to review bias based behaviours and processes. Reviewing core employee experience processes such as hiring, succession planning, promotion and reward. In turn, this then needs to be a measurable part of a leader’s performance review.

KEEPING TEAMS CONNECTED

Despite businesses and employees adapting to remote working within an extremely short space of time, companies need to be cautious about making quick decisions around making this a long-term change.

“Junior people need to be around others to learn,” stresses Sarah Gregory, “You need to go out to your people and hear what they want.” “People want flexibility, not just remote working,

TALiNT Benchmark Programme 2020

The TALiNT Benchmark Programme is the UK's most rigorous and relevant talent acquisition benchmarking programme and is a vital tool for HR Directors and Heads of Talent Acquisition.

It helps you understand how key areas of your recruitment and talent acquisition activities compare within your specific market and against a named cohort of competitors and contemporaries.

What do I get?

- ✓ Analysis of your performance across key areas of your Talent Acquisition function
- ✓ Bespoke report to highlight areas of strength and areas of development
- ✓ Actionable insight you can use in presentations or to support your future business plans & strategy
- ✓ Tailored recommendations for further relevant resources
- ✓ Aggregated report that summarises results across teams
- ✓ Sector comparison and ranking





“We should be deploying tech to remove the human from the process as much as possible. Humans are vital for the end decision, but let tech do the heavy lifting.”

Alastair Frater, UK General Manager, Arctic Shores

so you need to be strategic in your approach,” adds Jo Heath.

Another key consideration has to be access to the right working environment. “Not everyone has the means to set up a home office and we shouldn’t assume they have the technology to do so either,” says Zaheer Ahmad.

Apparently, 20% of people do not have access to a smartphone and it’s a reasonable assumption that a substantial majority of these will be in protected groups. And as Alistair Frater highlights, “Most of us don’t want our home and work lives to be completely merged all the time.”

MAKING THE RIGHT DECISIONS

Particularly in times of crisis, it can be important, even imperative, to make quick decisions, but often these won’t serve to promote diversity and inclusion. “We have to make sure we’re not reverting to type and simply working with the same few people when companies have to get things done quickly,” says Jo Heath.

Businesses need to ensure that D&I is part of an integrated, rather than standalone, approach. And where D&I operates as a ‘standalone’

function it becomes a more obvious target for budget cuts.

As Jo Heath stresses, diversity and inclusion needs to be seen as a strength, which will allow your business to bounce back from this crisis quicker. And as Sarah Gregory warns, “If you’re not fishing in a diverse pool, you’re going to be missing out on some of the best talent.” What greater argument could you need to invest in D&I, particularly when this crisis could see more talent than before looking for new roles?

While the road to a diverse and inclusive company may not be easy, by baking it into your culture, continually communicating it internally, with clients, and candidates, your business will reap the rewards: greater innovation, increased productivity, better financial returns and stronger more sustainable organisation. Who wouldn’t want that?

“We have to make sure we’re not reverting to type and simply working with the same few people when companies have to get things done quickly.”

Jo Heath, partner, head of consulting practice – D&I, culture and ethics at Green Park



ARCTIC SHORES