



**Informing Progress** - Shaping the Future

## FOIL UPDATE 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022



### “Defining and delivering diversity & inclusion” - 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022

This event was hosted by the FOIL ESG (D&I) working group. The panel section was led by **Mark Huxley** (advisor to London FOIL and a member of the FOIL ESG (D&I) working group).

Those participating in the workshop included:

**Tom Seddon** of **Kysen**, FOIL’s PR agency

**Ashliegh Beaver**, Senior Associate with **Horwich Farrelly** and member of the FOIL ESG (D&I) working group.

**Ling Ong**, Partner **Weightmans** and Immediate Past President of London FOIL

**Holly Miles**, an Associate with **BLM** working on both her firm’s and FOIL’s D & I working groups.

**John Abramson**, General Counsel Europe for **Travelers**

**Gavin Coull**, Partner **Birketts LLP** and current President of London FOIL

**Madeleine Fox**, is part of the Legal and Regulatory Team at the **International Underwriting Association**

**Isabel Clarke**, representing the MGAA

**Seema Bains**, Partner **DWF** and leader of the firm’s global D & I strategy

**Deborah Finch**, Events Manager **IUA** and a member of the IUA HR committee, which looks at D & I issues.

**Alison Collier**, HR for **Altus**

**Toby Vallance**, Partner **DAC Beachcroft** and London FOIL Vice President.

**Ingrid Hobbs**, Partner **Kennedys**

**Jeremy Trott**, Claims Director **Ecclesiastical**

**Kaj Pankhania**, Senior Consultant, **DA Strategy**

Rather than interpret and paraphrase the discussion, we want to provide an accurate record of what was said. Why? Because much care is given to the language used and with such an expert panel, we want to ensure that precise language is represented here. We believe that this approach may help cut through much of the topic subjective jargon that is too often used.

#### Panel discussion

The session began with Mark Huxley briefly introducing what was a panel of speakers working on the frontline of D&I and who are facing the themes and topics being discussed every day. He opened by asking each of them to share their own views of D&I, those of the organisations they represent and some examples of current activities.

**[Monica Stancu](#)**, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Manager at **Lloyd's**.

Monica emphasised that for Lloyd's to lead the market in D & I matters, it has to ensure that its own house is in order. Some examples of its activity included public [commitments](#) in 2020 to support Black, Asian and ethnic minority colleagues (addressing ethnicity). Thereby ensuring that all her colleagues have the skills and therefore opportunities needed to advance their careers.

Donations have been made to charities aimed at supporting ethnic minority individuals. Lloyd's also formed a new partnership with Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO) London. Lloyd's offered various internships through this partnership.

As a 350+ year old institution, Lloyd's is reviewing its policies and historical artefacts to better understand and represent its history.

Lloyd's has looked extensively at its own gender balance statistics, policies and practices and reflected upon the results of a survey exploring the experiences of male and female colleagues. The results of this exercise have been used to produce an action plan around gender. There was similar activity around social mobility. Lloyd's put together a social mobility working group which includes colleagues from different functions as well as colleagues from a lower socio-economic background to make sure its social mobility action plan is fit for purpose.

Wrapping up, Monica spoke of the pride she and her colleagues at Lloyd's have in leading [Dive In](#) Festival, the global diversity and inclusion festival for insurance.

**[Veronica Heaven](#)**, **The Heaven Company**; a communications agency specialising in Corporate Responsibility (CR) and sustainability issues.

Veronica's company provides support for responsible business practices which she sees as covering all elements of the emerging ESG agendas, especially climate change and diversity, equity and inclusion. She opened her comments with a statement that in her opinion most companies are now looking at how they organise themselves from a D & I perspective.

She works with a wide range of organisations to address how best they can address D & I issues. This involves providing training in how to create the right culture within an organisation, improve awareness and address socio-economic inequality. Companies are encouraged to look at wider audiences and how doing so can bring benefits.

Speaking of a specific project she highlighted how the focus had moved the culture to a feeling of belonging. It looked at what made people feel disadvantaged, such as micro-aggression; common language used; a lack of involvement; and accessibility both physical and cultural. Building out from this example Veronica now believes that there is a much greater willingness to positively address issues of mental health and neurodiversity.

One key factor though is a need to recognise that we are all on a culture curve where different regions (e.g., Eastern Europe) have very different attitudes from those now prevailing in the UK. Companies must look at their cultures when considering where change is needed and not look for a one-size fits all solution.

**[Amanda Rosewarne](#)**, CEO and cofounder The Professional Development Foundation.

Amanda is an occupational psychologist, using those skills assisting people to develop themselves and similarly, guiding companies in how they can upskill people and continuously develop them in areas such as CPD and mandatory training.

It is Amanda's view that it is only recently that companies have moved the focus of training to embrace D & I. Her work considers how an organisation can best embed D & I within its training toolkit, both from a professional and a personal basis. D & I training involves looking at a person's behaviours; mindset and beliefs. How can these be most effectively changed?

Over individual organisations, Amanda also works with professional bodies, to look at how they design their CPD courses. This considers their overarching, life-long learning policies, either from a mandatory perspective or 'voluntary' modules. The intention is to expand these to include a meaningful understanding of D & I issues. This often involving digging down into what the culture has been.

**Mark Huxley** then asked the panel that with a recognition of a much great diversity awareness how we should best now advance the issue of inclusivity making everyone feel equally 'comfortable' within an organisation; with equal opportunity to progress; that they are sought out to progress; can see role models; and have access to mentors.

**Monica** commented first, referencing the collection of statistics and data to properly measure what we need to address.

The recruitment process ensures there is diversity in the workforce, but it is the people and performance teams that must consider what happens when people are inside the organisation. An analogy had been mentioned earlier in the session where the D & I process started with an individual being invited to a party (diversity) but the 'inclusion' was being asked to dance. Monica took this further and described 'belonging' as getting to choose the music.

D & I has many facets, including recruitment policy, how people are attracted to an organisation, its policies, its culture, but also how events are organised, websites, and marketing material. There must also be consideration of the day-to-day working of the organisation and how its products and services can be used by everybody.

Monica then described how measurement can be achieved in such a huge and diverse market as Lloyd's and how good behaviour could be encouraged directly and indirectly across the whole of the society.

She explained how setting an example was the first step, followed by providing support and resources where needed. Data is collated annually from various sectors within Lloyd's to provide a 'Culture Dashboard' on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. The results are then shared back and analysed to see how Lloyd's is performing.

**Veronica** picked-up the discussion, agreeing that when looking at 'representation', this covered website, communication and many other factors. Is the organisation really focused on a particular area, or is it more inclusive to encourage more people of different ages, ethnicities, disabilities, etc? Where is an organisation prepared to look when recruiting? Does it always use the same channels and the same models? Where is the new blood to come from, the new talent, the new ideas? Richness of talent provides different perspectives but also opens opportunities for organisations to have a deeper understanding of their potential customers. Diverse democracies are also important. All of this is dependent on having the right culture.

**Amanda** commented that measurement is probably the hardest thing to do. From a psychological perspective, statistics are very easy to manipulate. A company can claim to have a certain mix of X, Y and Z but that does not show what is happening under the surface. Measurement is better looked at as return on expectation from the employee/colleague point of view, rather than the return on investment from, for example, a change programme.

Culture is an invisible gel that holds a company together, but it is extraordinarily difficult to change a culture. It can be done but ultimately it is about cracking-down on behaviours. It is not just about people having opportunities but also appreciating where talent should be recognised and celebrated and spotting the 'toxic pockets' and changing those. It takes a very brave and open-minded leadership to identify how this can be measured and how scratching below the surface is going to be achieved.

### **Open session**

Reflecting on the panel session FOIL CEO **Laurence Besemer** opened this segment by commenting that, although it might take a bit of time, it is quite easy to build a team that looks diverse, but how do you make people *feel* included? The more diverse a team is, provided each member is given time to express their view, the team will probably make better decisions.

**John Abramson** agreed with the panel that culture was a key issue. He felt that many organisations had made changes to address D & I, particularly with regard to recruitment policies. However, what the delegate was finding was that people recruited through this wider process were leaving to move on to what they saw as better jobs. This has produced a clash between the D & I culture and the corporate ethos, so retention was the concern. He asked what is the next stage in the evolution?

**Veronica** responded by saying that (depending on the size of the organisation) individual talent should be spotted and provided with projects that keep them interested in the business, while providing benefit to it. This might also involve additional training which again keeps the individual engaged with the company.

**Amanda** added that to secure a talent pool the organisation needs to encourage people to tell stories and for us all to listen to them. This can be done through anonymous questionnaires, appraisals, off-the-cuff remarks, etc. By listening and understanding what is being said, the leaders can foster respect between different teams or individuals and create a unifying bond.

**Ingrid Hobbs** followed-up on the issue of the extent to which D & I is an issue when people leave an organisation. Alongside race and gender, age is currently one of the issues. She was in favour of forums where people were invited to discuss D & I, rather than assuming that the top-down driven culture was working. It needs to be bottom-up as well. Younger people view careers very differently from many of those older. If the younger person is not happy with something, they are much more likely to look for change. Keeping people starts with culture but it is about much more: energy, enthusiasm, optimism and a willingness to change. The leaders need to look beyond the 'safety line'. Holding talent post-pandemic has become harder, in part because the face-to-face element has reduced and the 'stickiness' between the organisation and the individual much reduced.

**Monica** added that people do not always leave bad organisations: it is bad managers and so investment in good line managers is important. Front-line managers need guidance, training and support.

Inclusion should recognise that people have different needs, and this should be taken into account by managers and also when measuring the data. Data is an organisation's friend, as it will tell it what is working and what is not working. This is both the diversity data: who is working in the organisation at what level; and the inclusion data: the engagement survey.

Culture is about the small things that happen every day and build the alliance: sending out the signals that make colleagues feel that they are welcome. This can include the dress code; rules allowing hair to be worn however the individual wishes; providing role models; highlighting the talent on show in the organisation; ensuring that somebody's name is pronounced correctly: the little details.

**Laurence** observed that the merry-go-round identified by John Abramson was complicated by the fact that while his company was very advanced in its approach to D & I, there are many companies that are far behind.

Laurence invited further discussion around multiple recruitment sources as opposed to the old-fashioned single avenue.

**Ingrid** responded that her firm is currently using a company that focuses on bringing people of colour into the workforce. That is producing a more diverse set of candidates than the firm might otherwise have experienced. The firm also uses its website and visits to schools to encourage interest from ethnic minority candidates.

While blind CVs are an option, the candidate is always seen in the end. They may produce a more diverse short-list but do not rule out bias at a later stage.

**Amanda** agreed that recruiting a diverse workforce is very difficult. The elephant in the room is the word 'racist'. Nobody wants to be known as a racist so it is difficult to discuss racism, e.g., by asking a colleague: 'do you think you might be racist?'

**Veronica** has a client in hospitality who states that they are open to everyone but closed to racism: a very blunt statement of their position. This reflects a new approach: the lifting of the lid on racism, but it does not

yet apply everywhere, with Eastern Europe again brought up as an example. The UK government is taking the lead on LGBT+ issues but other governments are not as advanced in their thinking.

Returning to the previous speaker's question, Veronica thought that what should be more common is the willingness to call out and challenge racist behaviour.

**Amanda** commented that racism is a two-way street. For example, in the current climate, middle-aged white males may feel marginalised, which is another form of racism.

**Gavin Coull** observed that one problem is being able to understand what the culture is. If someone has a child who is non-binary, what does that mean? Questions may need to be asked to find out the answers.

There are also mental health considerations. If such an issue (or indeed any other issue) is raised, the company needs to provide an adequate response, not just pay lip-service to its policy.

**Veronica** encouraged any organisation to follow her company in creating an understanding of mental health in the workplace and having openness in discussing it.

Following up on Amanda's question, **Laurence** suggested that sometimes it may be necessary to challenge (tactfully) someone about how they act or what they say may come across to others. The person may not view themselves as racist or prejudiced but may appear so.

**Veronica** added that her research had revealed the use of the word 'banter' to cover otherwise inappropriate words that cause offence to others.

**Ashliegh Beaver** suggested that some junior staff may feel less comfortable addressing similar issues to those discussed with those in senior positions. How can a company's culture develop to better accommodate and encourage open discussion?

**Mark Huxley** responded by saying that the company should empower, allow and encourage everyone in the organisation to bring up whatever concerns them and be listened to objectively ('Allyship').

**Amanda** views organisations as ships (of whatever size); having the right people on board; but occasionally docking to allow someone off.

She agreed that in the current workplace there are many different age bands with different opinions and beliefs. It is difficult for the younger members to call out the unacceptable behaviour of the older members. The ship needs to sail towards allyship.

Taking into account all the D & I issues, everyone needs to understand what the company is aiming to achieve, which is very difficult.

**Holly Miles** made the point that for the voices from below to reach those at the top, there had to be a culture of trust. Any form of policy will be ineffective if employees are not supported and do not have the means by which to challenge the behaviour of more senior people. It also needs to be seen that action will be taken.

**Monica** was of the view that the middle-aged white male is still present and can be important but, in her experience, did not always see this type of conversation as relevant to them. They are still often in senior roles and have the power, through various means, to change the culture. As such, they can be part of the solution.

**Seema Bains** has found that the language used is very important, with people being scared of saying the wrong thing: so, they say nothing. Equally important is listening. Training more senior members in these issues enables them better to understand any problems.

Creating a safe environment for discussion encourages healthy dialogue and enables participants to learn and better understand the issues. In time, this learning drives through the organisation.

**Laurence** introduced the concept that everyone is in a minority of one: we are all different in some way. This brings the focus on how that person behaves and creating an environment in which they can bring their

whole self. Can the link be made between accommodating this and an organisation making more money, i.e., if the D & I policy is right, the company should be more profitable and thus encourage companies to go down the right D & I routes?

**Amanda** agreed with that assessment. There is a risk though in trying to promote D & I policies solely as a means to greater profit.

**Holly** agreed that a more diverse working space leads to greater creativity and probably a more successful business.

**Veronica** was also of the view that everyone is unique and the issue is one of balance. The right mix of talent is required within a company that has the correct CSR policy and is thus more attractive. History shows that these companies are the most successful in the long term, e.g., Cadburys and John Lewis. While profit is important, so is making the business better.

## **Conclusion**

It seemed clear from what was said that diversity is now firmly on most of our corporate agendas.

The real challenge now is to shift thinking to achieve acceptance that being genuinely inclusive and building true equality is critical to success. A culture of openness and acceptance should be driven instinctively and with a fully directed purpose, rather than self-consciously.

It is here that there is an opportunity for material gains and establishment of a workplace that welcomes people from all backgrounds, ages and abilities, all working to a single democratic purpose.

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