

Showcasing the value of diversity innovation

Tuesday 29 November 2022 | 1.00 - 2.00pm GMT

In this session our panel shared their experience as colleagues and clients who have contributed to the success of three Baker McKenzie Inclusion & Diversity initiatives. They provided insight into why each programme was developed, what benefits have been realised, and highlighted the wider impact of innovative programmes with individuals at the centre;

- **Return-ity:** Supporting our people and clients as they return from parental leave
- **Talent Incubator:** Collaborating with clients to build skills for junior ethnically diverse talent
- **Mentoring Circles:** Supporting our talent across social mobility, ethnicity and gender

Isn't it time we acknowledged our humanity?

Throughout the discussion our panel explored how we can be more human in our interactions with others - giving of our time, expertise, understanding and empathy.

The usual expectation for new mothers is they will return to work refreshed and ready to be exactly as they were before their maternity leave. However the reality is far different. The value of a programme such as Return-ity is that it creates a new way to support women returning to the work place, in ways that complement their personal lives, such as networking with your baby in tow instead of a glass of wine after hours.

Through the pandemic we saw the practicalities of life presenting and merging in our working day. Now in a post pandemic world, continuing our professional interactions with the same humanity and empathy is key to ensuring we recognise and respect all our people. Leadership plays a significant role in creating a transparent culture and ending secret parenting at work. When a significant proportion of working age adults are parents, openly establishing boundaries for bed time or homework enables stronger and deeper relationships with internal and external clients. Initiatives such as Return-ity allow both clients and service providers to see things from the other side, to become better allies and to understand the pressure, expectations and drivers as well as learning and practising new skills.

Policy v Culture

Employee policies are an excellent place to start when creating an inclusive and diverse culture. They enable employees to understand what they can expect from their employers and empower them to exercise those rights. However, this in itself is not creating equal opportunities or equal access across global jurisdictions. In the UK and Europe, employees benefit from a range of enhanced policies that many in other global locations do not, therefore we need to see policies as a gateway. Culture needs to deliver on those policies

with focused intention, understanding and true support. Culture can ease the transition significantly by acknowledging parts of someone's life. For example after the implementation of enhanced maternity policies, organisations can focus on creating training for line managers to improve the back to work transition, invest in coaches and mentors to support with confidence, planning, and lastly work closely with the team to leverage and reintroduce returners to key clients.

Where policies and processes really drive change is when we set targets, measures and link actions to remuneration. Many organisations have Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in their strategy, ESG statements and company values. However, some also create an environment where people feel incentivised to meet those objectives, with bonuses based on DEI contributions. Other ways to drive DEI culture is by setting up employee resource groups (ERGs), ensuring diverse panels for recruiting and establishing leaderships councils.

Is it my place?

Senior individuals play a crucial role in mentoring - in developing talent and investing in their people. Being a mentor can be equally if not more valuable to the mentor as the mentee. Through programmes like the Talent Incubator or Mentoring Circles, mentors are provided with a reciprocal opportunity to grow and learn from those at different stages of life, with different experiences and expectations.

As allies from the dominant demographic group, it can feel awkward to engage and participate in events and conversations where experiences are not shared. However understanding the power of an ally can help to address some of the insecurities and 'imposter' feelings and create safe, open and inclusive environments where we all learn to advocate for each other, listen and accept that we are always learning and acknowledge our humanity.

#WeAreNotNeutral

Chaired by:



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Our Panel:



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