LEADERSHIP IN DEI

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What makes Gallagher different in the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) space?

When we work with employers, we don't take a one-size-fits-all approach to diversity, equity and inclusion. Every organization is at a different point in their journey, so off-the-shelf handbooks can't provide tangible or sustainable results. When I start working with a client, I seek to understand what DEI means to their people. Then we can create a strategy to amplify that voice so that their messaging resonates with their team, stakeholders and business partners. It's also important to demonstrate accountability. We're not just coming up with hollow DEI commitment statements. We work with organizations to create meaningful, sustainable change in actions that permeate through everything they're doing.

Why should DEI be important to employers?

One reason is because employees are asking for it. There are global challenges with retention and turnover, and top talent is telling us, "We're no longer happy separating our work personas from our personal personas. We want to be seen, valued and acknowledged." Integrating DEI strategies into everything an organization does in an authentic and consistent manner embeds it into a firm's cultural DNA. It fosters a feeling of belonging, which plays a critical role in attracting and

retaining talent. DEI is also important to organizations' existing and potential clients. Increasingly organizations are being asked to demonstrate their commitment to DEI when bidding on proposals and new opportunities.

How does DEI build a better world one workplace at a time?

When employees feel included and have a sense of belonging, they show up with their whole selves. When we incorporate DEI into our clients' organizational strategies, I often recommend, "Think about yourself first. How do you feel when you're not included or don't belong?" Most people quickly realize that if employees do not feel seen, valued and acknowledged, they won't share their perspectives as freely or provide an alternative viewpoint because they won't feel like they're in a safe space.

In contrast, organizations that embrace DEI as a key part of their culture can foster an environment where employees feel safe to share opinions and perspectives, which in turn drives innovation and creativity. The result is a team of motivated people who are invested in what they're doing and want to see their company grow because they feel valued.

What can leaders do to help create change in their organizations?

Leaders can start by having challenging conversations. I often say, "If you're comfortable in every conversation, you're not doing it right." When you're willing to engage in uncomfortable conversations, people will be more willing to share their truths with you – even when those truths are difficult to hear. That's when companies start creating a culture of storytelling – where people tell their stories and learn from each other's. Meaningful connections grow organically out of that kind of culture, which helps drive employee and organizational well-being.

How can an organization start its DEI journey?

Figure out what diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging mean for your organization. Organizations can do this internally or supported by an external consultant who can showcase best practices. Next, set milestone markers to track your progress toward reaching your company's aspirational goals. Benchmarking helps organizations stay on track and correct course if needed. The key is consistency. DEI is an ongoing journey, and it takes time to create a meaningful impact.

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