



Why Diversity & Inclusion Matter for Results

Q&A with LaShana Jackson, Aon's Global Head of Talent Management & Inclusion



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"A company's talent strategy is an underlying enabler for driving business results. Diversity and inclusion is a big part of that strategy because when you bring different perspectives and capabilities to the table, you're going to deliver better results for your clients than if you create an echo-chamber of sameness."

LaShana Jackson, Aon's Global Head of Talent Management & Inclusion, shares how organizations can align D&I initiatives to their overall business objectives.

What is your role & how long have you been with Aon?

I lead talent management globally for the firm. Talent management includes performance management, engagement, careers, learning and development, diversity and inclusion, and talent acquisition.

I've been with Aon for 15 years. I came in to Aon through what was then called our Early Career Development Program. I rotated into different roles and business units before coming into HR. Since I joined the HR function, I have held a number of positions including roles in Diversity & Inclusion, HR Advising, and HR Strategy.

What does diversity & inclusion mean to you on a personal level?

Personally, I am a mother of three and two of my children have special needs. I'm also a woman of color. My husband was raised in a Muslim household and we both have grandparents who immigrated to the U.S. We are a cross-section of a number of points of what you would consider diversity.

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you on a personal level? (continued)

My husband is also an artist, so we do a lot of work in the community around under-represented communities and access to the arts. That work is really important to us in terms of taking that personal passion and translating it into how we can impact others outside of our everyday work.

I love that diversity and inclusion can bring something to your life that can enrich it and bring you different perspectives and thoughts that you wouldn't have on your own. Think of what we miss when we close ourselves off from something new or different.

Why is diversity and inclusion so important in the business world?

First and foremost, a number of studies have shown that having more diverse teams and an inclusive culture that activates and leverages all of that diversity leads to better results. Organizations with higher diverse representation on the board and in their executive teams have been shown to outperform and innovate more than those that don't.

When you have different perspectives and capabilities, you're going to get different results than if you create an echo-chamber of sameness. However, if you can't harness those differences by creating an environment where individuals can bring their full selves to work, then you don't foster the kind of engagement you need to outperform and grow.

At Aon, our colleagues are key to delivering for our clients. If we want to compete in a global marketplace, we need the best talent. That talent may be in our industry but as we look to grow, we need to also identify talent that we aren't accessing today. The best way to do that is to open the door as wide as possible. The more I have to choose from, obviously, I'm going to get a better team. It can also provide a better idea of what I need or might be missing versus always searching for what I already have.

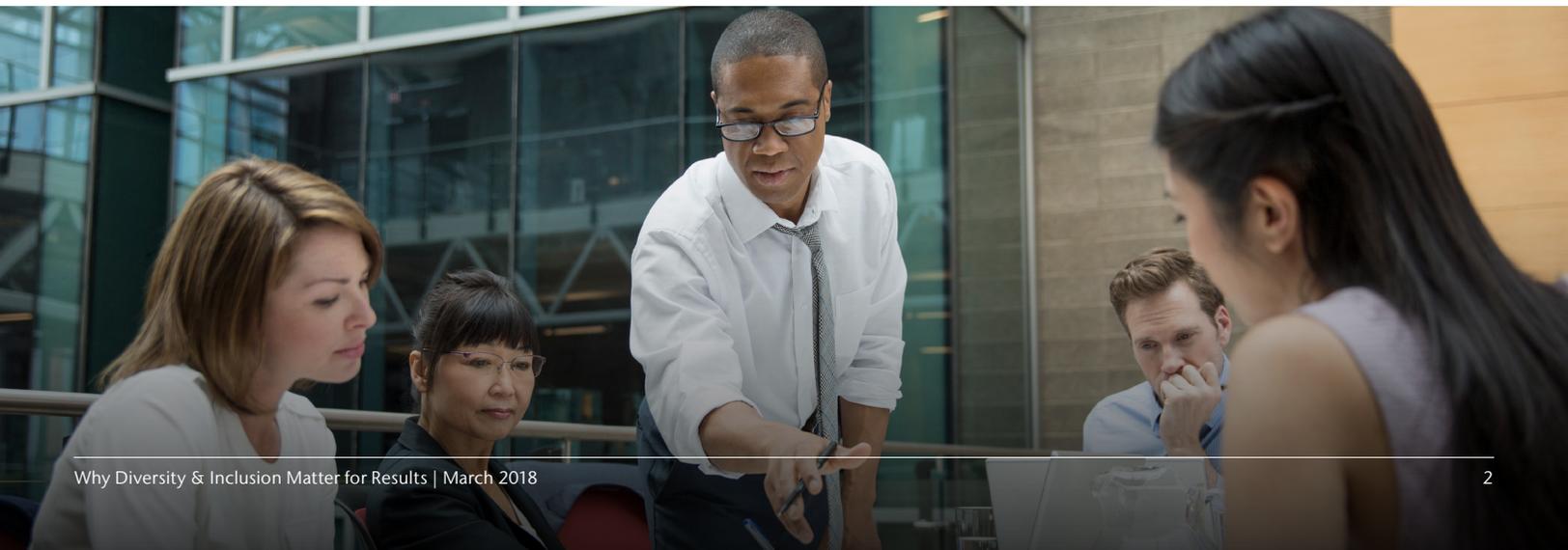
How do you think diversity ties into a company's business objectives? Are there tangible ways that an organization can approach D&I and bring it back to a company's mission or objective?

Every company does planning where they are thinking about 'Where are we trying to go? How are we going to grow? How are we going to deliver better results?'

A company's talent strategy is an underlying enabler. Having the right talent in the right place – fully equipped and engaged to deliver and drive results – that's really what we're talking about. Part of an enabling talent strategy is having a diverse team and being inclusive.

Gregory Case, our CEO, always talks about levels of impact and how we can have an impact on clients, colleagues, and our shareholders, but also on our communities. Our talent strategy and delivering results through a diverse lens creates value for our clients, our colleagues, and shareholders.

Then there's that final part around community, which says if we are going to engage in the community and have an impact, are we applying our diversity lens? What organizations do we pick to support or to buy from? How are we helping diverse communities? We're trying to embed diversity and inclusion in every aspect of what we do and where we can have impact as a firm.



Once you determine that your organization's people strategy will be grounded in diversity and inclusion, how do you then make sure that you're working toward executing that strategy?

Think about diversity being more about representation and inclusion is about the culture that values and leverages that diversity. From a diversity perspective, we are looking at what we are capable of in terms of our diverse representation. We support that through focused recruiting efforts to help identify and build the pipeline of diverse talent in our industry and beyond. We are also working with our managers to understand where they might bring unconscious bias to hiring or promotion decisions so that we can better convert our internal and external diverse pipeline into leadership roles at Aon.

That's where you see companies like Aon focused on sponsorship. We're asking our leaders to diversify their internal and external networks so that they can meet talented people and sponsor them to higher levels of leadership.

Then there's the inclusion side, which is more about a culture. How do we ensure we have an inclusive culture and build that into our training, performance management, and talent development? Rather than saying that a person is different and doesn't fit, it's more about that person is different, so how do I leverage and harness all of their capabilities?

We have training for managers and colleagues to help them develop the skills to navigate differences. We also have worked with our Aon Talent, Rewards & Performance group to embed inclusion in our annual engagement survey. As a part of our engagement survey we ask colleagues if they feel included and if their manager is an inclusive leader. We use the results to inform our strategy and to also coach managers on how they can improve engagement through inclusion.

How is Aon approaching D&I?

We're shifting from the more programmatic approach to embedding diversity inclusion in everything we do. What we're really driving at Aon is the perspective of not thinking of diversity and inclusion as something separate, but as an integrated part of everything that we do. For example, we took time to articulate to our HR team how diversity and inclusion is a part of all of their roles, not just my Talent Management team. Similarly, there is a role HR plays but the true impact will come from our people managers seeing diversity and inclusion as a part of their role as well.

We will continue to maintain programs like our Business Resource Group and Diversity Councils because they are important to help connect colleagues to the diversity strategy and help drive a culture of inclusion. But to fully realize the opportunity we see before us, we are setting goals, driving accountability and better arming our leaders and managers so that they can foster the power of inclusion every day.

Last year, Aon set goals for gender diversity globally and for people of color in the U.S. While we've made progress, we plan to accelerate our progress over the next three years by striving to achieve these goals and continuing to embed inclusion and diversity into everything we do.

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About Aon

Aon plc (NYSE:AON) is a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions. Our 50,000 colleagues in 120 countries empower results for clients by using proprietary data and analytics to deliver insights that reduce volatility and improve performance.

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