Uncovering the Hidden Pieces of the D&I Puzzle

Action Guide

D&I leaders can help their organizations get in front of the next recession.

During downturns, most companies follow the last-in, first-out approach. They lay off recent hires, which usually erases progress made towards a more diverse employee population. What's more, organizations often overlook how frontline and historically disadvantaged groups are faring and fail to solicit their ideas. These are missed opportunities to thrive.

Here's how D&I leaders can help not only recession-proof their organization, but prepare it to grow when rivals are shrinking:

Double down on listening

Action Step: Regularly measure and monitor the experience of all employees, especially key groups, on their experiences of inclusivity, innovation, fairness and integrity.

Questions to Consider:

- What listening tools do you have in place now to measure employee experience? Examples might include surveys, town hall meetings, your company intranet, chat tools, or feedback forms.

- Do those tools enable you to specifically measure inclusivity, fairness and innovation opportunities? Can you cut the response data by demographic group?
  - ▸ It's especially important to be able to compare experiences across gender, race/ethnicity, age, those who identify as LGBTQIA+ or differently abled versus those that do not, and that of frontline employees.
  - ▸ If you're concerned about winning during and after a recession, our research has proven that the key groups you need to track are: hourly male workers, women, front-line workers, people of color, and long-tenured employees. (The longer-tenured, the more at risk they are.)
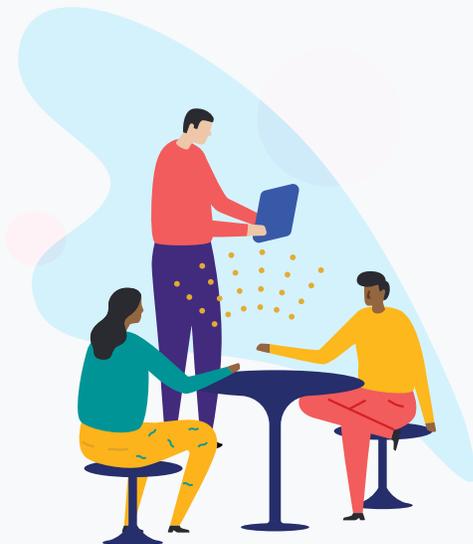
Get started:

- If you don't have a tool that enables you to reliably track this information, it's time to get one. The Trust Index™ survey is a research-backed, proven and easy way to find out what's really going on.

- Identify existing but underused feedback channels. The fastest way to get more input and engagement is to take visible action on ideas and issues that have already been shared. Consider appointing an organizational owner of feedback to help ensure great ideas aren't lost in the daily grind.

- To recession-proof your business, review all input and survey feedback from your key groups: hourly male workers, women, front-line workers, people of color, and long-tenured employees. Where experience isn't the same across groups, leadership needs to take action to try to address those gaps immediately. Which actions will obviously depend on the issues—the fastest way to solve the problem is often ask the people affected for their recommendations and ideas.

- Monitor progress with more listening. Once you've taken action, periodically send short "pulse" surveys and continue your listening on all channels to see if your initiatives are having the positive impact you were hoping for. If not, keep trying—you may need to try something new, do more or just give changes time to move through the organization.

 greatplacetowork.com

Action Step: Encourage and equip leaders at all levels to ask powerful questions to better understand these key groups' experiences and perspectives on the state of the business.

Questions to Consider:

- Does every single person at your organization have a shared understanding that every employee is important and should be treated with fairness and respect no matter who they are or what their role is?

- Are your leaders equipped to have constructive feedback discussions? Does every manager have a regular way to ask all employees (especially key groups) to share feedback about ways the business could be different or better?

Get started:

- If your managers don't feel comfortable or confident asking for and acting on feedback, consider supporting them with training and management support. Provide examples of powerful questions leaders can ask employees:

  - ▸ What is working? What are examples of where this is happening well?

  - ▸ Share the survey results with employees and ask: "The survey shows that the scores of [Group A] differ from [average experience at our organization OR Groups B, C, etc.] by [results]. Does this ring true to you? Is this surprising?"

  - ▸ How do you think your work experience differs from your peers?

  - ▸ How could any of the leaders here support you and your team better?

  - ▸ How can we make this a more emotionally and psychologically safe place for you personally?

  - ▸ What additional ideas for improvement would you recommend?

- Explain to every manager exactly how you expect them to share the great ideas they hear, take action to make them happen when possible, and raise up issues to senior leaders to get roadblocks removed. You may need to create new processes or communication channels to support these activities, or just explain the ones already in place.

No matter how you gather input, it's absolutely essential that you thank employees for sharing their candid insights and take action based on the feedback. Do something, even something small, to show that you heard and care about your employees' experience. (Asking and doing nothing is generally worse than never asking at all.)

D&I leaders can step in to preserve and build equity and inclusion during restructuring.

Leaders usually are looking to grow profits, not differences. But unconscious bias may color decisions around reorganizations and resulting job changes. Also, the lack of transparency that typically surrounds M&As and other restructuring may breed fairness concerns among groups that have been mistreated historically.

Bridge perspectives

Action Step: Encourage the executive team to include other stakeholders in restructuring decisions and to explore questions like, "How will this change be experienced by different employee groups?"

Questions to Consider:

- What unique insights and connections do you see in the organization that you feel others might not be exposed to? Which senior leaders might most benefit from a deeper understanding of these important issues or employee experience?

- Which groups are likely to be most affected by the restructuring? Does senior leadership have solid two-way communication channels with these groups or has everyone shut down under the stress of the upcoming changes?

Get started:

- Reach out and use the powerful relationships in the networks and ERGs you've built already. Engage your allies in affected groups and connect them with senior leaders. Creating opportunities for employees to provide input in decisions that affect them has a huge positive impact on employee experience and in the outcomes of business transformation.

- Tap into your ERG and informal groups to help get messages out about the restructuring. Any extra communication can go a long way to promoting transparency and building up a sense of safety as the company goes through changes. And remember to keep listening: these networks can act as reality check on whether employees believe they've been heard by leadership or whether decisions are being widely and clearly communicated.

greatplacetowork.com

D&I Leaders can lead the way in responding to decline-to-reveal signals.

Choosing "prefer not to respond" (PNTR) is a signal of fear in the workplace. Organizations can use this insight to tailor their strategies, find undiscovered pockets of strength, and monitor people's ability to bring their full selves to work.

Here's how D&I leaders can help organizations tune into these signals and take effective action:

Know your prefer not to respond rate

Action Step: Measure your baseline, and take action to find strengths, adjust your throttle or sound the alarm.

Questions to Consider:

- Does every single person at your organization have a clear, shared understanding that everyone is welcome to bring their whole selves to work and openly share what makes them unique?

- How strong is trust at your organization overall? What kind of employee experience scores do you see in your survey and feedback channels?

Get started:

- Take the Trust Index™ survey and evaluate how many employees select "prefer not to respond." It's important to look at these scores on the organizational level as well as by team/division and across demographic groups.

- If your score is 15% PNTR or higher, take action to learn more immediately. Consolidate feedback to find common themes and experiences, both within groups and across them. Leverage your relationships with individuals in affected groups to help create safe forums to learn more: small listening sessions, pulse surveys, and one on one interviews can all be helpful.

- Help safeguard participants by ensuring their feedback will be completely anonymized. Engaging an outside organization to run these focus groups or surveys can help tremendously by providing a neutral and unbiased process and point of view.

- Take action to address the issues you find on an organization-wide level. Seek out those in your organization who are doing well--if a business unit or location has less than 10% PNTR rate, they are a potential group that others can learn from and be inspired by.

greatplacetowork.com

Conclusion

D&I leaders are doing essential work that has a positive measurable impact on both people and business results. Great Place to Work is ready to support you and your organization as you build a great workplace for all and use D&I strategies to recession-proof and strengthen your business.

Want More?

Read the full report for more insights, data and action item suggestions.

GET MY COPY