

E X P E R T Q & A

Providing opportunities for DE&I at a local level empowers teams and allows them to effectively represent and serve the diverse markets they operate in, say Jan Wade and Charlotte Gilbert at Arrow Global



Empowering local teams to foster diversity and belonging

Q What does DE&I mean to you?

Jan Wade: Diversity, equity and inclusion holds significant importance for our business and reflects our values and operating model. Our business comprises 18 asset management and servicing platforms across Europe, each representing the diverse regions they operate in.

While we have a shared purpose and values, we also promote individuality and independence within the framework to best cater to local markets. Inclusion is a priority for us, and we foster an environment where everyone can actively participate and express their opinions.

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Our purpose and values are deeply embedded across our platform network, and equity plays a crucial role. We prioritise achieving the right outcomes for individuals, businesses, customers and clients. However, we acknowledge that what works in one market may not be the same in another. While we have a DE&I strategy, each platform implements its own approach based on the preferences, priorities and leadership within their respective regions.

It is crucial to emphasise the implementation of DE&I in practice rather

than relying solely on policies. DE&I needs to be integrated into the organisation, and success should be determined by both measurable metrics and the overall organisational culture.

Charlotte Gilbert: Achieving equity requires practical efforts to remove barriers as needed. We actively encourage collaboration, mobility and integration between businesses to empower individuals at a local level. This empowerment is crucial in enabling people to bring their authentic selves to work.

Q Do your DE&I initiatives really work?

JW: At the group level, we prioritise

three fundamental commitments: fostering an inclusive culture, developing inclusive leadership and nurturing diverse talent.

Regarding talent development, we have been actively refining our sourcing and internal promotion processes. We have taken significant measures to become a Disability Confident employer, provided unconscious bias training to managers, and implemented an applicant tracking system to assess the demographics of applicants. Additionally, we proudly support the 10,000 Black Interns programme and have successfully transitioned opportunities into permanent roles.

Ensuring a strong talent pipeline is paramount. In our collaboration with headhunters, we set targets for 50 percent female representation in both candidate longlists and shortlists. We have observed the positive impact of these targets on the quality and diversity of candidates we consider and appoint.

To cultivate an inclusive culture, we actively avoid the challenges of a top-down approach. We have established four employee network groups focused on LGBTQIA+, race and religion, neurodiversity, and age and gender. These groups have dedicated budgets and executive sponsorship, allowing them to shape the agenda and tailored approaches. It is pleasing to see these groups driving their own conversations and initiatives organically, rather than from HR or the executive team.

A targeted approach is essential. In addition to broader employee development initiatives, we have dedicated resources for coaching and sponsorship programmes. These efforts ensure that individuals receive opportunities and enable us to make progress in diversifying our leadership.

As the chief people officer, I am mindful that there is always more we can do. This year, we have initiated our first census to measure the demographics of our workforce across all platforms and we continue to measure how our people feel regularly.

Q What are the big challenges in meeting targets?

JW: Setting targets is a positive step, and we have established them for female representation throughout the organisation, including the executive committee and leadership positions across our local platforms. We have made considerable progress in these areas, but it is important to acknowledge that certain metrics are more challenging to measure.

While targets often focus on gender, we believe that DE&I encompasses many more characteristics. We are seeking to measure and drive improvements – appreciating that in some jurisdictions there are limitations in what data can be captured.

One of the challenges with targets is striking a balance between seeking the best individuals for roles and seeking to deliver against longer-term diversity targets.

As a growing organisation, we make every effort to consider diverse candidates for senior leadership positions. We consider the pipeline of talent and provide open opportunities for individuals to pursue their next roles. This includes appreciating that not everyone is pursuing career advancement, and building a robust pipeline takes time. Change naturally occurs gradually. We aim to develop talent internally – and we have fantastic people – but we also recognise the importance of considering building capability with external hires to add the necessary experience, knowledge and capabilities.

We have implemented practices that support hiring diverse candidates, including conducting work evaluations rather than interviews for individuals with neurodiversity. It has been great to see this being successful, particularly in the IT field. This approach allows us to hire individuals that may not perform well in traditional interviews. This innovative process has proven to be highly impactful.



CG: These initiatives contribute significantly to fostering an inclusive culture. Feedback consistently reveals that when employees feel valued, included and respected, their overall engagement and commitment to the company soar. This discretionary effort is

invaluable and sets high-performing businesses apart from their peers.

Q How do you engage with investors on DE&I?

CG: It is crucial to effectively communicate the actions we are implementing

and guide investors through our DE&I strategy. By being clear and comprehensive, we assure our investors that we are genuinely committed to this matter.

Regular and transparent reporting on DE&I progress is essential. We proactively communicate our initiatives and the progressive steps we are taking to our investors. We understand that we may not always be perfect, but demonstrating continuous progress is a clear indication that we are moving in the right direction.

Regarding ESG reporting, we are currently exploring various technologies to enhance and systematise the carbon metrics we provide to our investors, in addition to our DE&I efforts. The carbon and climate aspect is equally important, and we anticipate delivering transformative technologies and processes within the next 12-18 months.

It is important to recognise that not all investors have the same priorities. While many of our global investors have various different views around this subject matter, we have gradually seen consistent themes that resonate well with them, and no doubt expect that to continue and indeed evolve. We also need to navigate certain regulatory hurdles when it comes to the information we can report, but we are carefully assessing those to ensure consistent delivery of relevant information. Data plays a crucial role in all of this and must align with our objectives and goals.

Q How can you support a multigenerational workforce?

JW: One of the initiatives we launched during the covid-19 pandemic is called Arrow Everywhere, which focuses on supporting our colleagues with hybrid working practices.

As we navigated through the challenges of the pandemic, we made the decision to adopt hybrid working as an ongoing strategy. This decision was based on data-driven insights that assessed the varying work environments

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and role needs. The outcome was a well-defined strategy that allows individuals to work from both home and office, providing tangible benefits for our colleagues while still meeting the expectations of our clients and customers.

Like many organisations, the covid-19 experience prompted us to reflect on our values and fostered a greater level of trust among colleagues and teams working in different ways. Culturally, we treat our colleagues as capable adults and respect their professionalism with high levels of accountability and responsibility. We have an exceptional team, and our support enables them to perform at their best. While all companies adapted during covid-19, our conscious and sustained strategy is one aspect of how we support a multigenerational workforce with differing needs.

CG: Equally we recognise that different generations have varying preferences when it comes to communication methods. To address this, we are implementing a new communication strategy that caters to these preferences, whether it involves regular emails, in-person meetings, or other channels, for both investors and employees. Internally, we use a social platform that empowers all our employees to voice their opinions, build diverse networks and foster collaboration – like how many of us cultivate relationships in our personal lives.

Furthermore, we have introduced

mentorship and reverse mentorship programmes to encourage collaboration within and across offices and platforms. These initiatives foster knowledge exchange and promote a better understanding across generations.

Q How do you foster a sense of belonging?

CG: An essential aspect of fostering a sense of belonging is establishing clear expectations. By effectively communicating goals and expectations, we ensure that everyone understands and aligns with them, fostering a shared sense of purpose. Additionally, when leaders and managers lead by example, actively demonstrating inclusivity and empathy in their actions and decision-making, they set a model for the type of business we aspire to be. It is important to remember that this is an ongoing effort that requires continuous commitment.

JW: Our various communication channels facilitate two-way conversations throughout our operations. Whether it is through employee network groups, interactions with colleagues, or engagement with clients and customers, we prioritise open, candid dialogue. We have designated ‘Values Champions’ across the organisation, and our recognition programme is deeply connected to our values.

While we value group-wide communications, we also recognise the significance of local teams in fostering a strong sense of connection. We actively engage with these teams through diverse communication methods, such as storytelling and advocacy, to ensure a sense of direction and commitment to our overall strategy.

Ultimately, embracing DE&I is not only the socially responsible choice, but it also drives business success by generating stronger risk-adjusted returns for our investors. ■

Jan Wade is chief people officer and Charlotte Gilbert is group managing director, client and product solutions at Arrow Global