



MARLIN
HR SERVICES



Diversity and Inclusion in 2024

CONTENTS

01 Introduction

01 Predictions for 2024

03 Audit Your Current Practices

05 Inclusion Strategies

07 Conclusion

1. Introduction

As we enter 2024, diversity and inclusion remain central to organisational success. Global events have elevated employers' role in driving equity, while data shows inclusive cultures directly impact innovation and financial performance. This makes robust diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategies essential.

However, real change requires moving beyond good intentions to lasting transformation based on in-depth understanding of workforces. This white paper predicts 2024's trends shaping D&I and provides actionable advice on auditing and evolving your organisation's practices. We have worked extensively with companies across sectors to advance their inclusion strategies.

2. Predictions for 2024

a. Economic Factors Drive Social Advocacy

The economic and political uncertainty globally has focused workforces more intensely on employers taking a stand on societal issues. Job seekers now actively choose organisations demonstrating meaningful D&I commitment and initiatives that address socio-economic barriers around accessibility and inclusion.

For example, EY's Belonging Barometer shows 73% of Generation Z and 68% of Millennials now factor D&I stance into job selection. Younger demographics expect visible, authentic allyship from employers regarding equity issues within and outside the workplace. Surveys indicate they will leave companies failing to meet their standards within 18 months.

Tech leaders neglecting to address recent high-profile mass layoffs' diversity impacts face consequence from environmentally and socially aware talent pools. However, those who responsibly restructure will likely recover employer brand faster through transparency, particularly focusing on reskilling displaced minority employees.

For instance, a company that talks about how redeploying automation capabilities has created more roles for visually impaired people will build a credible reputation for inclusion despite the necessity of layoffs.

b. Technology Presents Promise and Perils

Continued technology advances present opportunities to mitigate unconscious biases but also risk exacerbating equity gaps. AI hiring tools can expand candidate pools through removing biased language but require rigorous auditing given their own algorithmic prejudices.

2. Predictions for 2024

One trend to watch is using generative AI to create more inclusive job postings by removing terminology that discourages diverse applicants. However, the same technology could reinforce historical biases if the underlying training data incorporates stereotypical associations. While this algorithms arms race evolves, proactive human oversight is imperative.

While dedicated D&I roles are on the rise to spearhead transformation, retention issues persist when professionals perceive a lack of sponsorship to drive genuine culture change. Disillusioned employees notice when inclusion gets deprioritised, or leaders pay it lip service without empowering mid-level allies.

Many resign from companies after 18 months struggling to gain traction alone and move to organisations demonstrating willingness to resource D&I properly, for instance by appointing departmental change advocates to address business-specific inclusion gaps.

Well-designed flexible working models can foster inclusion, but inflexible return-to-office mandates risk leaving some feeling unheard and trigger quiet quitting. Successful leaders will adapt policies based on regular employee check-ins while upskilling middle managers on leading hybrid teams.

EY's 2023 research found 37% of respondents favour hybrid arrangements allowing 2-3 remote days per week. Younger generations especially value location flexibility, so forcing entirely on-site presence ignores their priorities around health, family, and work-life balance needs, diminishing their sense of belonging within teams. This manifests in higher churn.



2. Predictions for 2024

c. Distributed Models Test Inclusive Leadership

With middle managers tasked with buffering disjointed directives from above and frontline pressures below, it becomes critical to develop their cultural aptitude, change leadership capability and emotional intelligence. They need to nurture inclusive team cultures amidst dispersed operating models and uncertainty. Many crave support in spotlighting tensions while keeping staff motivation and trust high through ongoing disruption.

Regular training provision, clear escalation pathways and safe spaces to discuss complex issues enable this vital management echelon to thrive despite unrelenting volatility. Recognising their influence and cultivating skills ensures they support, not hinder, inclusion across organisations.



3. Audit Your Current Practices

Conducting robust D&I audits establishes the foundations for meeting these challenges. Audits evaluate workforce demographics, policies, processes, and culture objectively. This highlights specific, targeted areas for improvement when shaping D&I strategy over the next 3-5 years in line with corporate vision.

For example, audits assess end-to-end recruitment and talent development procedures to gauge the efficacy of current structures to ensure equitable access and opportunities across all demographics, functions, and locations.

Reviewing performance management and compensation systems helps unpack whether systemic biases exist that subtly disadvantage minority employees through below-average scoring or lower salary increases compounding over time.

3. Audit Your Current Practices

a. Assessing Underrepresentation

Regular diversity census snapshots determine where the demographics of the organisation fall short of reflecting the demographics of the community. They reveal barriers to hiring or retention across various stages of employee lifecycles, enabling early intervention through granular variability tracking against benchmarks.

b. Uncovering Engagement Barriers

Participation metrics audits in employee networks, aliases or mentoring programmes reveal engagement levels and sense of belonging among different cohorts. Anonymous experience surveys gauging psychological safety for underrepresented groups to contribute viewpoints freely offer another vital diagnostic.

c. Establishing Safe Spaces for Open Dialogue

Marlin HR consultants utilise tailored diagnostics and one-on-one staff consultations to synthesise insights illuminating inclusion blind spots. Confidential interviews establish open channels for gathering unfiltered employee perspectives on resonant or sensitive topics.

For instance, our consultants directly ask participants questions like "Do you feel able to express your authentic self without inhibition or fear daily?" to evaluate trust and safety aspects within the workplace that no survey can capture. We promise anonymity, so staff can comfortably communicate about subtle yet pernicious issues that often evade detection through formal processes.

d. Balancing Quick Wins with Stretch Goals

Our subsequent recommendations balance quick wins to maintain momentum with stretch goals to keep strategic alignment intact across iterative planning cycles geared towards maximising leadership alignment for a more equitable culture.

We help clients emphasise the underlying behaviours that reinforce inclusion daily, like active listening and empathy, then build differentiated strategies targeting the highest priorities for each function, location, and audience segment relevant to our clients over the course of engagements spanning 18-24 months on average for embedded progress monitoring.

3. Audit Your Current Practices

For example, one best practice is facilitating reciprocal mentorship circles between senior management and members of various minority communities. This establishes consistent opportunities for candid perspective-sharing in both directions, broadening mindsets while forging mutual understanding and psychological safety.

If your 2024 strategic plans seek outside expertise to validate internal gaps or uncover previously hidden obstacles, Marlin HR delivers comprehensive diversity audits complemented by our extensive accredited inclusion training catalogue. Contact our team to start building bespoke, long-term D&I capabilities tailored for your organisation today.



4. Inclusion Strategies

a. Anchor Strategy with Cross-Functional Accountability

Beyond auditing, sustaining 2024's increased D&I expectations requires rigorous yet agile strategic planning even amidst competing internal priorities. Cross-functional stakeholder input is critical to ensure broad accountability while still designating formal C-suite ownership of the D&I mandate to drive enterprise alignment.

For instance, besides the VP of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, ensure HR, internal communications, procurement, customer service and other business unit heads actively participate in steering overall strategy. Each working group focuses on addressing function-specific gaps uncovered through audits.

4. Inclusion Strategies

b. Regular Pulse Checks

Regularly collecting both qualitative sentiments and quantitative representation data through monthly pulse surveys and always-on digital feedback loops better informs trajectory mapping to meet incremental and stretch milestones.

We advise concentrated SMART goal setting on 1-3 focus areas annually, determined by current programme maturity level and internal diagnostics across locations. This targeted continuous improvement approach cumulatively builds inclusion whilst avoiding initiative overload.

Too often, grand visions flounder when leaders launch them without considering whether environments genuinely allow diverse voices to thrive safely. Closing this gap requires first fostering psychological safety through consistent listening via regular check-ins, self-moderated circles and casual engagement opportunities that reveal when interventions become misaligned with reality.

For instance, consider supplementing sparse annual engagement surveys with informal monthly anonymous polls or small group discussions. This faster feedback enables leaders to address issues before they escalate, while keeping strategic priorities dynamically aligned to internal climate shifts.

c. Evolve Recruitment to Attract More Diverse Talent

Matching recruitment marketing overtures to the values emerging generations prioritise boosts access to untapped talent pools. Look beyond conventional technical qualifications towards transferable strengths and non-traditional backgrounds reflecting community realities.

For example, spotlighting collaboration with non-profits on social justice or environment sustainability when engaging with candidates signals authentic commitment to their priorities around ethics. Combine updated selective branding with unbiased assessments to propel inclusion forward.

While thorough transformation seems overwhelming initially, a methodical, employee-focused strategic approach grounded in frequently refreshed data lays the path for long-term, self-sustaining positive change. Contact us to begin your continuous improvement journey in 2024.

5. Conclusion

As specialist D&I consultants immersed in leading equitable programmes ourselves, Marlin HR is committed to advancing workplace equality through action, not just aspirations. We firmly believe consistent, courageous partnerships between ambitious leaders, dedicated HR professionals and passionate advocates across all industries can dismantle barriers to collectively manifest the change we wish to see in society.

With tailored auditing shedding light on current gaps, and collaborative strategy-setting determining actionable objectives, 2024 brings fresh opportunities to build diverse workforces as the norm, not the exception - just like the communities we serve. We stand ready to guide you towards becoming industry exemplars the world can be proud of.

Get in touch

70 Colombo Street
London, England
SE1 8EE

+44 (0) 2045824355
hello@marlinhrservices.com