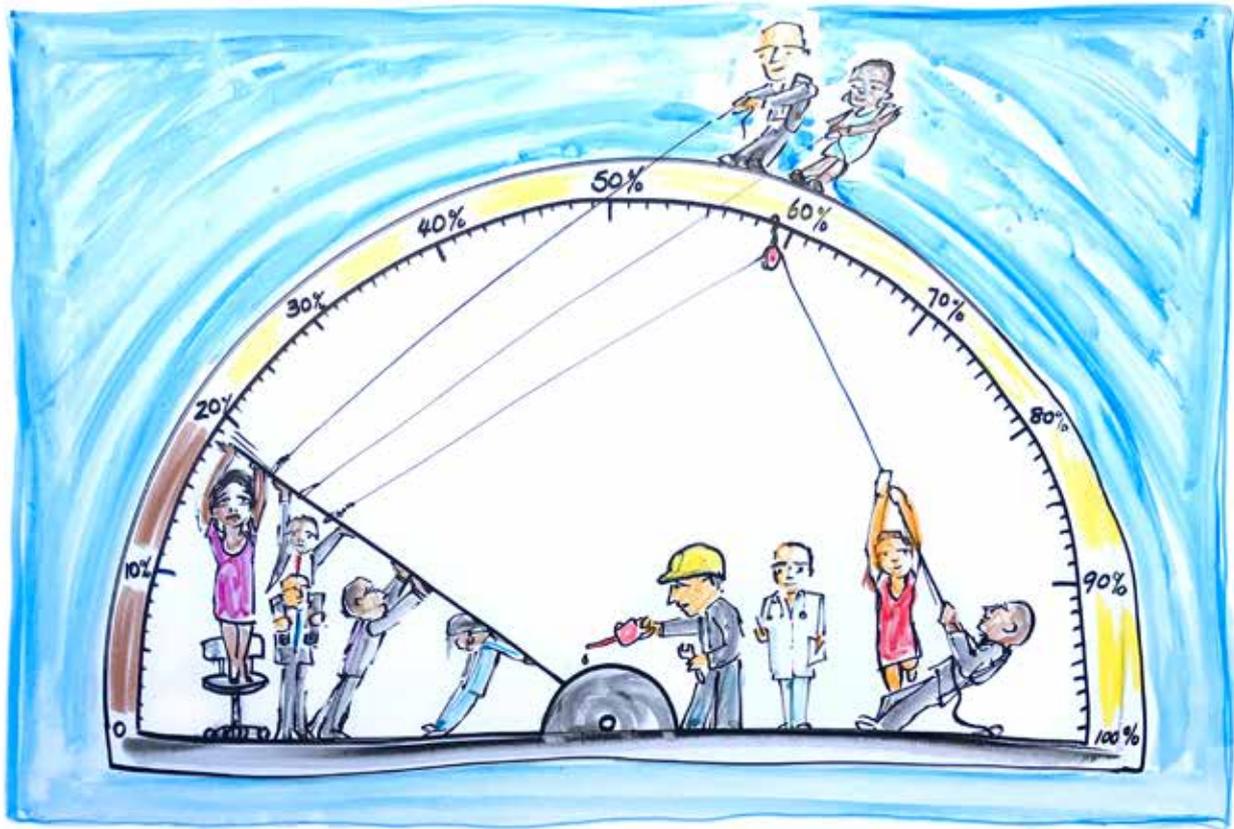# THE MIDDLE

PROGRESSING
BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC
TALENT IN THE WORKPLACE
THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ACTION

BLACK BRITISH
BUSINESS AWARDS

Key Partner

enpower

Contents

Founders' foreword

We are hardworking professional women of African and Caribbean heritage. On paper, it would seem that we enjoyed quintessentially privileged upbringings. Far from it. The truth is that our parents were not wealthy. However, they had at least two secret weapons: very big dreams (expectations!) for us, and a specific intention to do whatever was necessary to give us a range of experiences that would broaden our horizons and result in greater opportunity. As a result, the two of us have lived full, fun and productive lives, including within, and advising some of, the world's leading corporations – milestones that we hope our parents are proud of.

This report was commissioned by us for the benefit of The Black British Business Awards (BBBAwards) community of sponsors and supporters. The BBBAwards is a voluntary passion project for us. From the beginning, we said that the BBBAwards would be more than just a ceremony. Our ambition was for it to become a powerful change agent for the wider BAME talent agenda, by creating a hub where businesses share ideas and take away concrete actions to create working environments for all talent to succeed. We are doing exactly that.

What on earth are we trying to do here …?

At the BBBAwards ceremony in 2015, we highlighted that ethnic minorities generally do not reach senior executive ranks within businesses operating in the UK. It is unacceptable and cause for concern and action that, in 2017, in the City of London, for example, the ethnic minority population is close to 50% and yet representation in senior management and the boardroom is generally in the low single percentiles. This makes no sense for all the commercial and societal reasons set out very clearly and strongly in the Parker Review, McGregor Smith Review, McKinsey's Diversity Matters Report, CMI/BAM Delivering Diversity Report and other recent studies referred to in this report. *If we are all agreed that diversity matters for franchise, talent attraction and commercial reasons, why is it that most organisations have no coherent strategy or sufficient internal human and capital resources committed to ensuring fairer representation of ethnic talent at the top?*

Adopting an evidence-based approach …

We acknowledge without reservation the valuable intelligence of the studies referred to above. As ethnic minority individuals who have navigated the ranks of a few corporations, including on top talent programmes, and based on anecdotal evidence with many businesses in the last four years since the launch of the BBBAwards, we know that recruitment of ethnic minority talent was not necessarily the biggest issue. *The crux of the matter appears to be failure to retain and promote ethnic minority professionals from middle management to senior executive roles. We thought that it was essential to add to the existing body of research by conducting an independent examination of this specific issue in the talent pipeline. We cannot begin to talk about the boardroom if we do not fix 'the middle'.*

We are very clear that we need an evidenced-based approach to devising strategies that will work for equitable outcomes for ethnic minority talent. In rudimentary terms, therefore, we wanted to lift the bonnet of this machine, examine the constituent parts of it, and begin to figure out what could be done today, tomorrow, next week, next month and next year – to create an environment where all the parts work in sync and optimally for best performance and outcomes. In September 2016, we launched our research using technology creatively to ensure we captured as many perspectives as we could. What this meant was having full, frank and, at times, uncomfortable discussions with key stakeholders such as employee resource groups/ networks, HR directors, diversity and inclusion practitioners, executive sponsors – a substantial number of whom are white majority colleagues.

We did not know what to expect, but we knew that we needed a rigorous and systematic approach that could withstand scrutiny, and so we sought the advice of our good friend Dr Doyin Atewologun, one of the foremost experts on organisational development, inclusion, intersectionality, identities and leadership in the UK, and began to formulate a plan. We owe a debt of gratitude to her, Sheekha Rajani and Diane Greenidge who have joined us on an unremunerated basis, and on top of their day jobs, to design, facilitate, project manage and deliver this report, and to Fatima Tresh for her immense dedication as our research assistant.

We were heartened by the unprecedented response. Representatives from 30 significant corporate companies and regulators joined us to undertake a

deep dive review of their implementation of initiatives for the progression of BAME talent. The conversations generated hundreds of threads of conversations, both online and in person.

Inconvenient truths …

Having concluded the research, we challenged ourselves to come up with our key observations. Our thoughts are as follows:

1.   All the stakeholders we engaged with have a clear intention to improve the current position within their own organisations, but feel hamstrung by the discomfort of discussing race in the work place and lack of availability of data to help them to determine strategic priorities for targeted initiatives.

2.   The discomfort of discussing race in the workplace causes avoidance to a point of stifling, if not preventing, progress. For example, it inhibits HR from performing their role of challenging unfair informal practices relating to work allocation, unconscious bias, and questionable outcomes in recruitment and promotions discussions. Walking the tightrope is a challenge we have faced, even in producing this report, for fear of causing offence or being misunderstood.

3.   Poignantly, most organisations have a stated objective to achieve better outcomes for black, Asian and other minority ethnic (BAME) retention and progression, but most do not have a coherent or effective strategy or resources dedicated to the cause, hence the failure to achieve better representation at the top of the house.

4.   Alarmingly, the strongest BAME advocacy group in most companies is the employee resource group or affinity networks that consist largely of hard-working volunteers, but who tend not to have the mandate, delegated authority or access to budget or strategic decision-makers to influence strategy and cause systemic change. If all of the BAME talent is in the junior ranks of the business, then why not create a seat for them at the top table to stimulate diversity of thought?

5. Where are the captains of industry and white allies? We know there are some in the closet, but few are publicly speaking about this subject. All of the stakeholders have identified that because there are no (or very few) BAME voices in senior management teams, the BAME agenda does not get sufficient airtime or resource. We know from the huge success of the 30% Club, OUTstanding, Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and everywoman Awards that it takes the visibility of industry leaders, FTSE and equivalent Chairs and CEOs to overturn the status quo.

6. What gets measured gets done. Why do so few companies have aspirational targets for BAME talent progression? If we are comfortable with targets for every other key performance indicator for business objectives, why not for the measurement of BAME progression if we are serious?

7. The various stakeholders in any one company see BAME talent issues from very different perspectives. They are sometimes working against each other and, in fact, at times undermining each other. Companies should consider creating task forces where the key stakeholders sit at the same table and agree the strategy, which is then shared with the organisation.

What are we asking you to do with this report …?

In this flagship report, we expose the stark imbalances being faced by ethnic minority employees in businesses operating in the UK. The research process, and its results, are intended to guide and support a holistic review of corporate culture and the development of strategies to support organisations in their commitment to a diverse workforce. We hope that this report helps company Chairs, CEOs and HR Directors to at least do the following:

❏ Comprehend some of the issues from the various stakeholder perspectives.

❏ Identify the practices that must be stopped in order to avoid exacerbating the issues and curb reinforcement of barriers for BAME talent progression.

❏ Take note of our initial strategic recommendations for cultural and organisational change projects to accelerate ethnic minority talent.

The zeitgeist …

Britain is redefining its relationship with the international community and seeking trading opportunities globally. It has the acute challenge of attracting and deepening relationships with the best talent from far and wide. Also, given the backdrop of growing nationalist sentiment, populism and challenging identity politics, future and existing talent seeks concrete reassurance that the business they are engaging with is an employer of choice.

The BBBAwards and our key partner in this research, EMpower, are rising to that challenge. We are building upon a history of achievement, focusing on measurable change. We ask all of the participants in this research to join us to effect systemic change and sustained impact. Together we can demonstrate that British-based businesses can be a force for equity and for good.

Yours most sincerely,

Sophie Chandauka and Melanie Eusebe
Co-founders of The Black British Business Awards

Key partner's foreword

We are delighted to collaborate with the Black British Business Awards on this important report, which is the culmination of an extensive study exploring the different views and approaches that can impact ethnic minority inclusion, retention and progression.

The research has revealed the need for greater transparency, collaboration and cohesion between Executive Sponsors, network leads, HR and D&I professionals. We know that if we kickstart effective and meaningful conversations between these key stakeholders, ethnic minority employees will enjoy better career progression conversations and access to more opportunities – plus of course an ethnically inclusive working environment.

Until now, progress has been slow in this area. To move forward, organisations need to radically re-think their policies, cultures and approach. And this is where EMpower and the BBBAwards can help. The primary objective of our offerings is to work with businesses to drive meaningful, sustainable change for ethnic minority inclusion.

Our research provides tangible steps to help organisations support, retain and progress ethnic minority talent by unlocking the language of race, using data effectively to measure progress and fostering culturally inclusive working environments.

We would like everyone reading this report to reflect on where their organisation stands with regard to ethnic minority inclusion, and feel empowered to drive change. We each need to take responsibility for highlighting gaps, speaking out and taking action. By having the right conversations with the right people we all have the power to effect change and improve the career trajectories of the ethnic minority talent of tomorrow.

Suki Sandhu
Founder and CEO, EMPower

Executive summary

Diversity is a stated strategic priority of most significant businesses operating in the United Kingdom (UK). One report estimates that if black, Asian and other minority ethnic (BAME) talent is fully optimised through all career levels, the UK economy could receive a massive £24 billion boost[1]. A McKinsey study entitled 'Diversity Matters' reported that ethnically diverse companies are 35% more likely to out-perform the national industry median[2]. Thus, targeted action to address mid-level BAME advancement can release a significant burst of talent and energy into the UK economy. Increased diversity offers a boost to team effectiveness and innovation. And, last but not least, optimising the talent and opportunities of BAME groups, as with all historically and systemically disadvantaged groups, is the ethical thing to do.

And yet, BAME individuals are under-represented at all levels of UK organisations, with representation decreasing in inverse proportion to seniority. BAME individuals represent 22.3% of undergraduate students in the UK[3]. Yet their employment outcomes, as early as six months after graduation, already show a lag in comparison with their white peers[4]. Further, BAME employees represent only some 10% of entry-level positions in both the private and public sector. This figure drops substantially for senior-level leadership roles: in 2014 BAME employees represented only 5% of senior-level positions[5]. Thus, unequal outcomes continue to shape the UK workforce, beginning with early career roles and compounding as individuals advance to senior leadership.

In the context of a stated commitment to diversity, why have organisations not made more progress? What is the problem that we need to solve in order to increase the representation of BAME talent in senior ranks?

This report, commissioned by the Black British Business Awards, generates new insights garnered directly from stakeholders within large private sector organisations operating in the UK, and offers practical and nuanced recommendations to companies seeking to advance the BAME agenda. Unique to this report is the spotlight on what we call 'the middle'. Recent government and industry initiatives have focused on increasing BAME representation at the extremes of the career spectrum, highlighting graduate recruitment rates at one end, and corporate board make-up at the other. The UK government's 'BME 2020' policy, published in 2016, targets black and minority ethnic representation in domains including apprenticeships, university places and start-ups as well as across the armed forces and police services. At the very top of organisations, Sir John Parker's review[6] targets the

under-representation of BAME directors on FTSE 100 boards, and advocates the transformation of 'mono-cultural' corporate boards by including at least one director of colour by 2021.

For the purposes of this study, we define the middle as including experienced professionals who have line management and/or project leadership responsibility but who do not yet report directly to a member of the c-suite or executive committee of their organisation.

Two further unique features define this report. It focuses on the lived experience of employees in businesses operating in the UK. And it sources the views of four key stakeholder groups:

■ **Executive sponsors**

■ **Human resource directors (HR Directors)**

■ **Network leads**

■ **Diversity and inclusion practitioners (D&I Practitioners)**

The report surfaces the differences in views and experiences of these stakeholders, yielding insights which help organisational leadership to drive more strategic interaction with those stakeholders.

Importantly, the report offers recommendations generated in response to the research results. Many of these recommendations answer the question of 'what can I do differently tomorrow?', and some recommendations will take a little more time and planning to implement.

Chapter 1 looks at why businesses operating in the UK have not made greater progress. The report reflects the stakeholders' perspectives[8] on the issues occupying organisations such that they are held back from effectively speeding up the progression of middle-level BAME talent.

❏ Data is viewed as a lens through which organisations can take a hard look at where they are today, and it helps them to set themselves meaningful goals and track progress effectively. However, organisations report that they don't collect ethnicity-related data consistently, and when they do they don't share it widely. This chapter argues for the need to capture useful employment data consistently. We suggest that this is a two-way responsibility: BAME stakeholder groups need to do the work of gathering information and ensuring it reaches decision-makers, and decision-makers

can do more to ensure they get the information they need. However, useful as information is, its lack in no way stops organisations from driving a BAME advancement programme.

❏ Winning the attention and commitment of senior company leadership is a critical step towards catalysing and sustaining programmatic intervention in the BAME advancement agenda. The prevalent disconnect between the four stakeholder groups, as well as that between those groups and senior executives, can be overcome through strong leadership and co-ordination. We suggest greater ownership by senior executives, who remain accountable even when delegating authority. We also suggest greater ownership by BAME talent, who may not have significant positional authority but do have the opportunity to 'lean in' and be more proactive and resilient. We also suggest that as the ultimate owners of the BAME talent agenda, senior leaders might consider sourcing support, such as coaching or reverse mentoring, to help them deal with the unfamiliarity, and possible discomfort, of leading a BAME agenda.

❏ Organisations are often engaging with parallel social agendas, and stakeholders believe that limited resource and attention for tackling inequality have resulted in the BAME agenda being edged out. Stakeholders say organisations find gender and sexual orientation agendas 'easier' to manage than the BAME agenda, which is perceived to be more complex. Yet the notion that there is a finite amount of attention and resource to go around, and that there simply isn't enough of it to address all equity issues, is unhelpful. It casts social agendas as competitors. We suggest that instead of asking, 'which of the parallel social agendas will we prioritise?' organisations instead ask themselves, 'how can our organisations release talent across and within diverse groups?' What this requires is a far more integrated approach at the top.

❏ There is significant BAME under-representation at senior levels of the organisations surveyed. This under-representation bears testimony to the slow progress of the BAME agenda, and it also contributes to it because there are too few BAME role models. We see significant pressure on BAME employees to champion the BAME agenda, and yet some have no wish to do so. For organisations with poor representation of BAME employees at middle and senior management levels, it is the executive team, and the company structures which carry formal accountability for BAME

advancement, who bear primary responsibility for driving forward the
agenda – and not BAME individuals.

Chapter 2 asks what the key levers for change are in an organisation wishing
to drive a BAME advancement agenda. Stakeholders' feedback is grouped into
four themes: how we talk about race, the impact of insider/outsider dynamics
on career advancement, the 'informalisation' of formal processes, and the
question of targets.

❏ Can organisations address race or ethnicity effectively without talking
about it? Research respondents find that both BAME and non-BAME
employees struggle to talk freely about race, but say that we need to find
ways to lift the weight of 'taboo' and facilitate meaningful conversation.
As employees practise navigating the complexities of discussing race
and ethnicity, they may become more adept at it and begin to fashion a
common language that is transparent, honest and respectful.

❏ The report also highlights the power of a political organisational culture.
Politics are endemic to organisational life. However, alliances can play out
such that being part of the 'in group' is likely to be a leg up the promotional
ladder, and being part of the 'out group' is likely to be an obstacle to
advancement. We report distinctions between a focus on a 'culture gap'
that requires being 'bridged', versus a focus on diversity as a rich resource
to be tapped. The report recommends that leaders rethink the idea of
'cultural fit', often used in both recruitment and advancement, to check
it is fit for purpose. The report further recommends that organisations
evaluate both their formal policies and their informal practices – 'the way
we do things around here' – in order to determine which behaviours might
negatively impact on BAME talent progression and in order to make the
changes needed to optimise diversity at higher organisational levels.

❏ The report demonstrates that formal business practices do not necessarily
remain free from the subjective biases and preconceptions of those who
implement them. Formal processes, such as allocating stretch assignments
and conducting performance appraisals and talent identification, can
become 'informalised' in their implementation. Because bias is particularly
prominent in how we develop and apply selection and promotion criteria,
we recommend that organisations consider carefully the best place to
assign decision-making for promotion, and put checks and balances
in place to ensure that promotions are aligned with both reasonable

business requirements and the BAME advancement agenda. Ongoing training of employees, and in particular managers and leaders, can help to surface unconscious bias and minimise its effects.

❏ Great anxiety about setting BAME representation targets emerged from the research process. The report recommends that organisations adopt targets as a component of comprehensive change strategies. Targets do not in and of themselves create value. What they do is state what goal an organisation is willing to put its hand up for, and what the organisation is willing to be measured by. Issuing targets gives a clear message to stakeholder groups both within and outside of organisations.

Chapter 3 puts the spotlight on two key themes emerging from the first two chapters. The first is that there is poor strategic alignment between the four stakeholder groups that are the subject of this research, and inadequate co-ordination between them. The second is that there is insufficient clarity as to who is accountable for delivery of the BAME advancement agenda, and what each stakeholder group specifically takes accountability for. The chapter examines more closely the views and experience of HR Directors, Network Leads, D&I Practitioners and Executive Sponsors in relation to these themes.

This chapter notes that clarity, or its absence, comes from the top, and recommends that leaders provide a clear 'why' and a framework for action which clarifies the stakeholders' roles and what they are expected to deliver. This framework for action would recognise that a holistic, system-wide approach to culture change is required for sustainable impact. It is also recommended that stakeholders and network groups take responsibility for ensuring coherence amongst themselves. As a practical step, it is recommended that stakeholders within each organisation establish a cross-functional forum. The role of the forum is to facilitate coherent planning and execution, and to take as its deliberate and measurable goal the delivery of far greater qualitative and quantitative impact on the BAME advancement agenda than has been seen to date.

Key challenges

Overwhelmingly, our respondents identified that diversity is a strategic priority in their organisations. Yet, BAME individuals are still under-represented at all levels of organisations, with representation decreasing in inverse proportion to seniority. In the context of a stated commitment to diversity, we must wonder why organisations in the UK have not made more progress. What exactly is the problem that we need to solve in order to increase the representation of BAME talent through the middle and ultimately into senior ranks?

In this chapter we reflect on the key challenges to be addressed as identified by HR Directors, Network Leads, Executive Sponsors and Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Practitioners. Their feedback is organised into four major themes:

❏ Improving data capture and transparency.

❏ Persuading senior leaders to believe and act.

❏ Prioritising BAME alongside other diversity strands.

❏ Including BAME voices in leadership spaces.

Improving data capture and transparency

Stakeholders agree that relevant baseline data is important both in order to measure progress against a starting point, and to construct a change agenda for greatest and lasting impact. It makes sense too that corporate boards would expect business cases or explanations for interventions to be strengthened by supporting data. This might include the need for comparative data pre- and post-intervention to demonstrate the return on an investment of time, money and focus. Although this sounds self-evident, stakeholder feedback suggests that accessing and providing such information is far from simple.

The stakeholder groups reported on three sets of issues to be resolved:

❏ The extent to which data can be, and is, collected.

❏ The extent to which data which has been collected is reported to leadership forums.

❏ The extent to which findings from data are acted upon.

Points to ponder

We like, we trust and we are more influenced by people who are similar to us. However, stakeholder groups often operate across demographically different fault lines: HR professionals are often white women, Network Leads comprise mostly lower-grade BAME employees and the Executive Sponsors are often senior white men. Despite these constituencies ostensibly tackling common issues, it may be difficult for trust to develop easily between them; trust needs to be deliberately cultivated.

An encouraging 64% of respondents' companies have means by which they attempt to capture information about the ethnic backgrounds of individuals in their companies. However, only 20% of total respondents publicly disclose the information regarding the number of individuals of BAME background in their business and 59% of total respondents say they either do not use or rarely use the data to inform their initiatives regarding employees. This suggests that information collected is not readily accessed and/or used.

'Data is super-secretive.'
Network Lead

'We struggled to get data.'
Network Lead

If 64% of companies surveyed collect information, that leaves over a third who do not. All the stakeholder groups identified hurdles to information-gathering, and the perspectives of the groups differ markedly:

❏ HR Directors surveyed said that legal and budgetary constraints inhibit them from collecting data.

❏ Network Leads said they are told that HR do not see data collection as a requirement.

❏ D&I Practitioners said that information they have is often incomplete or out of date, and thus not fit for purpose.

❏ Executive Sponsors say that BAME employees do not always wish to disclose their ethnic heritage, and so the response rate for self-identification is often low.

On this last point, Executive Sponsors pointed out that trust is a core issue affecting disclosure.

'How do we get people to disclose, and how do we work with these issues around disclosure? How do we create confidence and trust in the system, in how they will use our data?'
Executive Sponsor

Points to ponder

Data is not a silver bullet. Useful as information on organisational trends is, its lack in no way stops leaders from driving a BAME advancement programme. A wider set of evidence can be used to enhance decision-making, and the identification and implementation of targeted actions and initiatives. Evidence encompasses many different types of information (beyond company statistics) that can help leaders to identify and understand both the issues of under-representation, exclusion, bias and inclusion and possible solutions in order to make better-informed decisions about the design of initiatives. For more information, see page 72 for an overview of an evidence-based approach to diversity and inclusion.

Network Leads, D&I Practitioners and HR Directors express greater concern about sharing information than about gathering it. These stakeholders report that companies may withhold information out of concern that the statistics do not show their organisations in a positive light.

> *'When we have collected the data, we have had stories of HR actually blocking access to this data due to fears and uncertainties about what is going to happen.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

> *'There are some organisations that feel uncomfortable about circulating statistics to do with ethnicity, sharing the numbers with the networks, and using the data to develop programmes.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

> *'We did not share all of the stats at every single level. There were some stats about which we just felt, "This is not going to work for us".'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

Information on BAME talent and progression does not appear to flow upwards very well.

We asked HR Directors and D&I Practitioners how often their company board and executive committee receive management information about the progression of BAME talent in their organisations. Only 4.3% of HR and D&I respondents answered 'always', and 23.9% responded 'often'. It is striking that 42% of HR Directors and 27% of D&I Practitioners did not answer this question concerning management information, suggesting that they may not know or may be unwilling to disclose the extent to which they share information with their senior leadership. This also raises the question of whether senior leaders either do not notice that they are not receiving information about the progression of BAME talent, or do not insist upon better reporting.

Also connected to the flow of information at senior level, we asked Executive Sponsors how often HR engages them on strategic opportunities for strengthening the BAME pipeline. An equal percentage answered 'frequently' (37.5%) and 'infrequently' (37.5%), with the remaining 25% silent or at either

end of the spectrum. The difference in responses is interesting, but more important is that the responses point to inadequate collaboration between these two key stakeholder groups. This is something that is easy to put right.

Even in cases where information has been collected, and has been shared within the organisation, there remains a concern that it is not well used for the purpose of driving strategies for, and measuring, BAME advancement. Stakeholders' views on why this is the case vary significantly. HR Directors report that the information gathered is not very reliable, partly because disclosure rates by employees are low. Despite this, most HR Directors also say that their organisations regularly use BAME data to proactively engage with BAME employees for targeted initiatives.

By contrast, Network Leads say they simply don't have or receive official information, and also that their organisations do not generally use whatever BAME information is available to support initiatives. D&I Practitioners report a different issue, which is that they lack the institutional buy-in and, sometimes, the skills to convert the data they receive into actionable strategies.

Summary

The stakeholders maintain that hard data is an important means to understand the 'as is' situation, to craft meaningful interventions based on lived experience of the various stakeholders, and to measure progress towards the desired 'to be'.
However:
- ❏ **Some 36% of survey respondents belong to organisations that do not collect information on the ethnic backgrounds of their employees.**
- ❏ **There is a concern expressed mainly by HR Directors that information gathered is incomplete and therefore unreliable, given that BAME employees sometimes prefer not to disclose some personal information.**
- ❏ **HR Directors and D&I Practitioners said organisations sometimes withhold information, even from BAME employee resource groups, as they are anxious about revealing, and therefore making public, trends that they view as negative. Network Leads expressed frustration about this.**
- ❏ **There is inadequate upward flow of information to decision-makers on boards and executive committees.**

> ### Recommendations
>
> ❏ **It is within organisations' capability, and perfectly lawful, to gather meaningful data about the ethnic profile of their employees from entry to board level, to share it responsibly in aggregated form with key influencers internally, and to leverage it for the purpose of correcting the imbalance between BAME and non-BAME advancement.**
> ❏ **Leaders and influencers within companies should demand and receive information which helps them support and direct the agenda of ethnic diversity and inclusiveness. HR Directors, Executive Sponsors, Network Leads and D&I Practitioners should convene a task force to specify, design, collect, analyse and leverage information which helps them deliver their accountability in relation to the BAME agenda, and helps them communicate upwards effectively to company leadership. Meaningful information could therefore be seen as a reflexive accountability.**

Persuading senior leaders to believe and act

Leadership support is critical to driving the BAME agenda through organisations. There are of course many UK business leaders who have led excellent diversity and inclusion programmes, as the case studies at the end of this report show. But our research findings demonstrate that far greater support for the BAME business case is needed from the leadership of UK organisations.

Executive Sponsors, who hold the most senior positions of our participant groups, said senior leadership 'buy-in' is critical to catalyse and sustain the BAME agenda.

> *'I think you have to work with the top. If you have not got the buy-in of your executive board and senior management, it is incredibly difficult to do anything. If you have that, everything is rewarded in that context and you get it right.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

For senior leaders, buying into a BAME advancement agenda may be not only a matter of will, but a matter of introspection and self-development.

> *'How do we get our leaders comfortable with their own self-awareness around these issues, and how do we get them comfortable with having some difficult conversations?'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

HR Directors, Executive Sponsors and Network Leads say that convincing leaders across the business to actively invest in BAME career advancement can be difficult and requires energy.

> *'Trying to get your operations directors of the region or your middle management to buy into it is difficult.'*
> **Network Lead**

> *'One of our Executive Sponsors for BAME has got the leaders together to start exploring in a very sensitive way as to why there is resistance.'*
> **HR Director**

Interestingly, the stakeholder groups each have different opinions about where the problems lie. The gulf between views could be an impediment to effective collaboration.

Network Leads have undefined or limited formal authority and usually limited access to senior leadership. For this reason, they often feel unable to effectively or strategically influence leaders or the agenda within their organisations. Although they theoretically have other influential stakeholders to represent their interests, Network Leads see HR Directors as barriers to change as opposed to strategic allies in the BAME talent agenda. They see HR as reticent to tackle issues regarding ethnicity in the workplace. They also expressed concern as to HR's ability to effectively communicate or represent the interests of BAME talent with senior leaders.

> *'I feel like this is a difficult message to deliver in our organisations. My HR business partner is not going to do it.'*
> **Network Lead**

Points to ponder

In advocating leadership 'buy in', it is important to note that on the one hand, there is a tendency to reject or over-scrutinise information that does not fit with our personal experiences, while on the other hand there is a failure to challenge information that does correspond with our beliefs. Lived experiences and statistics regarding 'the other' or 'the unknown' are often subject to a defensive reaction. To learn and progress, organisational leaders need to be mindful of this risk and approach new, alternative evidence with openness and curiosity.

'I find if I go through HR, and then through our diversity champion, it gets watered down and the champion does not know what is going on.'
Network Lead

HR Directors expressed concern about senior leaders within their organisations who resist change. Some used the term 'resistor to change' to describe someone who has the power to generate change, specifically with regard to the BAME agenda, but who fails to do so.

'We've been having a conversation around how we convince our greatest resistors to change.'
HR Director

In contrast, D&I Practitioners did not articulate the same level of frustration as the other stakeholder groups. However, they did acknowledge how inaction from leadership creates boundaries for goal-setting.

'We are struggling to get an aspirational statement from our leadership on what it is that they are trying to achieve.'
D&I Practitioner

Summary

Winning the attention and commitment of senior company leadership in the BAME advancement agenda is a critical step towards galvanising and sustaining programmatic interventions. Each of the four stakeholder groups approached leadership buy-in differently; the absence of a common approach and of cross-stakeholder co-ordination between them will not help to drive the agenda.

❏ **Executive Sponsors emphasised the need for buy-in from the board and senior management.**

❏ **HR Directors focused on change management and how to manage resistance within senior ranks.**

❏ **Network Leads reported difficulty in collaborating with HR and in influencing leadership, which may be a consequence of their lack of delegated authority.**

<table>
<tr><td>

Points to ponder

Research shows that anxiety is often at the heart of group conflict, and that conversations about social identities are anxiety-inducing. Change is experienced as threatening, and so resistance is both understandable and normal. As stakeholder groups grapple with both ignorance and vulnerability, creating psychologically safe spaces is important so that anxiety and resistance are an aid and not a hindrance to successful implementation of organisational change.[2]

</td><td>

Recommendations

❑ One senior leader in the executive committee could be responsible for chairing a task force to ensure regular meetings and greater coherence and co-ordination of the various stakeholder groups.

❑ HR Directors can help to unify different stakeholder groups by facilitating organisation-wide coherent goals and strategies.

❑ Senior leaders should not delegate their commitment to BAME talent advancement to stakeholders within their organisations. They can delegate authority, but they cannot delegate accountability.

❑ Given the absence or low representation of BAME talent within senior ranks, organisations should capitalise upon and properly define the role of BAME employee resource groups, providing them with greater delegated authority and a seat at key forums.

❑ BAME talent that is struggling with limited positional authority could 'lean in' and be more proactive, resilient and effective by contributing to the efforts of their organisations either individually or through employee resource groups.

❑ As the ultimate owners of the BAME talent agenda, senior leaders could usefully receive support through executive coaching or reverse mentoring, specifically to help manage any personal anxiety they may feel in relation to leading on BAME programmes.

</td></tr>
</table>

Prioritising BAME alongside other diversity strands

Just under two thirds (63%) of participating Executive Sponsors said their organisations had introduced initiatives aimed directly at addressing the progression of BAME talent. HR Directors and D&I Practitioners had a more modest assessment. Less than 50% of D&I Practitioners reported that their organisations had introduced such initiatives.

According to the research participants, the relatively limited percentage of organisations investing in BAME programmes, whatever that true percentage is, arises not because there is a generalised lack of commitment to social programmes, but because there are multiple causes and initiatives competing for attention and resources.

Points to ponder

Including BAME voices in senior spaces raises the question of what an 'acceptable' BAME leader looks like. Stereotypes about leaders affect different ethnic groups differently. Some voices in senior spaces are more readily dismissed. Black men report having to tone down their impact in leadership positions, while research shows that those who have a 'baby face' can more easily get past the aggressive, hyper-masculinised stereotype that attaches to black men. In contrast, black women, who are often stereotyped as 'having attitude', may be permitted to assert as much dominance as white male counterparts without significant backlash.[3]

'Conversations about LGBT and gender are definitely all around us.'
Network Lead

The concern is that gender and LGBTQ initiatives, such as increasing female representation, are undertaken at the expense of a focus on the representation of ethnic minorities. Network Leads, HR Directors and Executive Sponsors all suggest that gender and LGBTQ programmes have somehow edged out BAME issues.

'There is a really heavy focus on gender and that has taken up a lot of time and attention, I think sometimes at the expense of other diverse groups.'
HR Director

'We've recently been forced to focus on gender diversity because of the external pressures on that at the moment, which we're very, very keen to make sure doesn't derail us from what we're trying to do across other diversity strands.'
HR Director

'They have looked at the data and it is very bad. They recognise that they have focused heavily on gender, and ethnicity has been ignored for years.'
Network Lead

'The vision and strategy for a lot of large organisations, certainly in the law firm space, tends to be gender, sexual orientation, social mobility and disability.'
Executive Sponsor

It is notable that stakeholder groups sometimes perceive gender and LGBTQ issues as easier to deal with than ethnic ones.

'They all have targets around diversity, as we know, where they have to demonstrate progress. Maybe they will take the easy ones like gender and LGBT, perhaps because there are gender targets or there is a bit more comfort talking about LGBT.'
Network Lead

What makes gender and LGBTQ 'the easy ones', and why is the BAME agenda seen as more complex?

> *'BAME is the one that we have got to tackle and see how we do this, because it has an extra level of complexity. It brings in religion, culture and all these other things that have been put into the same box.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

An additional issue raised by D&I Practitioners and Executive Sponsors is that ethnicity issues get absorbed and obfuscated by social mobility issues.

> *'Social mobility is the way that I can paint with the broadest brush and make sure that across the board I will be able to get the most amount of talent from different representative groups.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

Executive Sponsors voiced concern that conflating the BAME progression agenda with a broader social mobility agenda misinterprets the issues for BAME employees, and clouds the BAME challenge. They characterised social mobility as a distraction from the conversation about the barriers facing BAME middle managers.

> *'The social mobility piece then segues off into BAME, which is a gross misrepresentation of the issue.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

> *'My children are black. They are not underprivileged. They do not need a leg-up in terms of social or commercial awareness, so where do they sit?'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

Summary

All stakeholders report that organisations are dealing with multiple social and talent agendas. Their analysis is that BAME can be edged out by these factors:

❏ There is limited resource and attention for issues of inequality and redress in the workplace, and the focus on gender and LGBTQ means there is less focus on BAME.

❏ Organisations appear to find it easier to tackle gender and LGBTQ issues compared to BAME issues. BAME issues are seen as involving greater complexity, and they generate greater discomfort.

❏ Some respondents say that social mobility is conflated with the BAME agenda, and that this conflation is inappropriate and clouds the BAME issues instead of advancing them.

Recommendations

The notion that there is a finite amount of attention and resource to go around, and that there simply isn't enough of it to address all equity issues, is not helpful. It casts these various agendas as competitors.

It is suggested that instead of asking, 'which of the parallel social agendas will we prioritise?' organisations instead ask themselves, 'how can our organisation release talent across and within diverse groups?' What this requires is a far more cohesive approach at the top. As recommended earlier in this chapter, BAME stakeholders need to work in a more joined-up manner.

In addition, organisations need to ensure that their executive leaders, who have an organisation-wide view and remit, co-ordinate effectively with stakeholders managing BAME advancement and other programmes in gender and LGBTQ, in order to deliver sustained and strategic interventions.

Including BAME voices in leadership spaces

We asked HR Directors and D&I Practitioners about the extent to which BAME employees are represented in management levels of their organisations. More than 70% of our respondents are employed by organisations that operate primarily in London, and in London, working-age BAME individuals make up 38% of the population[1]. We might therefore have expected respondents' figures to reflect roughly the demographic of the city. Instead, the figures are disproportionately low:

❏ 25% of HR Directors and 36% of D&I Practitioners reported that they have no BAME employees at all on their main board.

❏ 100% of HR Directors and D&I Practitioners reported that BAME employees represent less than 11% of senior executive or leadership teams.

❏ 100% of HR Directors and D&I Practitioners reported that BAME employees represent less than 20% of middle managers.

D&I Practitioners and Executive Sponsors suggested that the under-representation of BAME employees in positions of influence was both a problem in itself, and an obstacle to moving forward the BAME advancement agenda. Their view was that BAME employees in positions of influence could become advocates for change, and would have the influence and budgets to back up their advocacy. Senior BAME employees would also act as role models to more junior employees.

> *'What I really want to see is getting people into the power roles. If you want to move this agenda, it is where the money is, the budget, power, influence.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

> *'You are looking up and there is no-one there that you can identify with.'*
> **Network Lead**

Why are BAME employees so poorly represented at senior level? Network Leads and HR Directors were concerned that this was at least partly a consequence of a lack of representation at lower levels of the organisation.

> *'I had a discussion with the former Director-General. I said to him, "Why are there not more BMEs at executive level?" He said that there was nobody to choose from at the level below.'*
> **Network Lead**

If this perception is true, attention is needed in recruitment and talent development at lower levels of the organisation, in order to create a pipeline of BAME talent.

As several respondents pointed out, those BAME individuals who rise to leadership or management may not choose to become champions of the BAME cause.

> *'Black and ethnic minority leaders are so busy with their careers that when they get to this position of role models and power, they do not give their time.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

> *'I have a few people that are really good role models and when I try and get them to talk, they will say the usual stuff, but they not really passionate about it, whereas in the LGBT space people are so passionate about it. BAME managers will forget that bit of their personality.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

The important question raised by respondents is whether BAME leaders are somehow obligated, or should be expected, to represent the BAME agenda.

> *'I think part of the issue is not every black and Asian person wants to be a champion for their rights'.*
> **HR Director**

> *'We've seen a real resistance of the very minority of the senior level that are BAME to be role models and to be more active in their role.'*
> **HR Director**

Executive Sponsors, HR Directors and D&I Practitioners all referred to the significant pressure on the most senior, visible BAME employees to be advocates for the BAME agenda. HR Directors said many organisations assume that it is the responsibility of BAME employees to drive BAME progression. For this reason, companies would reduce their commitment if they saw BAME employees not driving the agenda. This additional burden was recognised by Executive Sponsors.

> *'I think it is a big hindrance that we are constantly looking to this minority of the minority and putting even more pressure on them to make a difference, when in fact they received no benefit from those before them. The difference needs to come from somewhere else.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

> *'There is pressure on BAME managers. The generic white male does not have to advance a white male cause. That is where we want to get to.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

D&I Practitioners agreed with Executive Sponsors' assessment, and added that the pressure to feel like a worthy advocate leads to the lower retention rates for BAME employees.

> *'The reason why women and black people quit, or bail out, however you want to phrase it, is the pressure. Once you are there, you feel you have to work twice as hard. You have to perform better than everyone else.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

Network Leads did not raise as a concern the pressure on BAME employees to be advocates for the BAME agenda. Network Leads, and their colleagues in the networks, are likely to be BAME individuals who are comfortable being advocates, so it is possible they may not perceive BAME employees who do not want to represent their minority group as a barrier to the BAME agenda.

Summary

There is a distinction between employees in leadership and management positions being from BAME groups, and their being advocates of a BAME agenda.

There is significant BAME under-representation at management, senior executive and board levels of the organisations surveyed. This under-representation is relative to the demographics of London, where most of the individuals and companies participating in this research are based. Under-representation both demonstrates the lack of progress in implementing a BAME progression agenda, and holds the BAME agenda back because of the lack of role models and BAME stakeholders with adequate delegated authority.

There is significant pressure on BAME employees who progress to leadership positions to become champions of the BAME agenda. While some may choose to do so, others may not. There are questions as to whether membership of a BAME group confers a responsibility to work for the BAME cause. Even if it did, our respondents question whether organisations can justifiably take their foot off the BAME pedal if their own BAME success stories don't take up the cause. The suggestion is that it is the organisation that owns the responsibility for change.

Recommendations

The responsibility of BAME individuals, like non-BAME individuals, is primarily to deliver their jobs. For organisations with poor representation of BAME employees at middle and senior management levels, it is the executive team, and related company structures which carry formal accountability for BAME advancement, who are responsible for driving forward the agenda – and not BAME individuals. It is of course desirable to have the support of BAME employees, but this does not equate to their being accountable. For companies seeking guidelines on how to make the change, Chapter 2 provides useful insights.
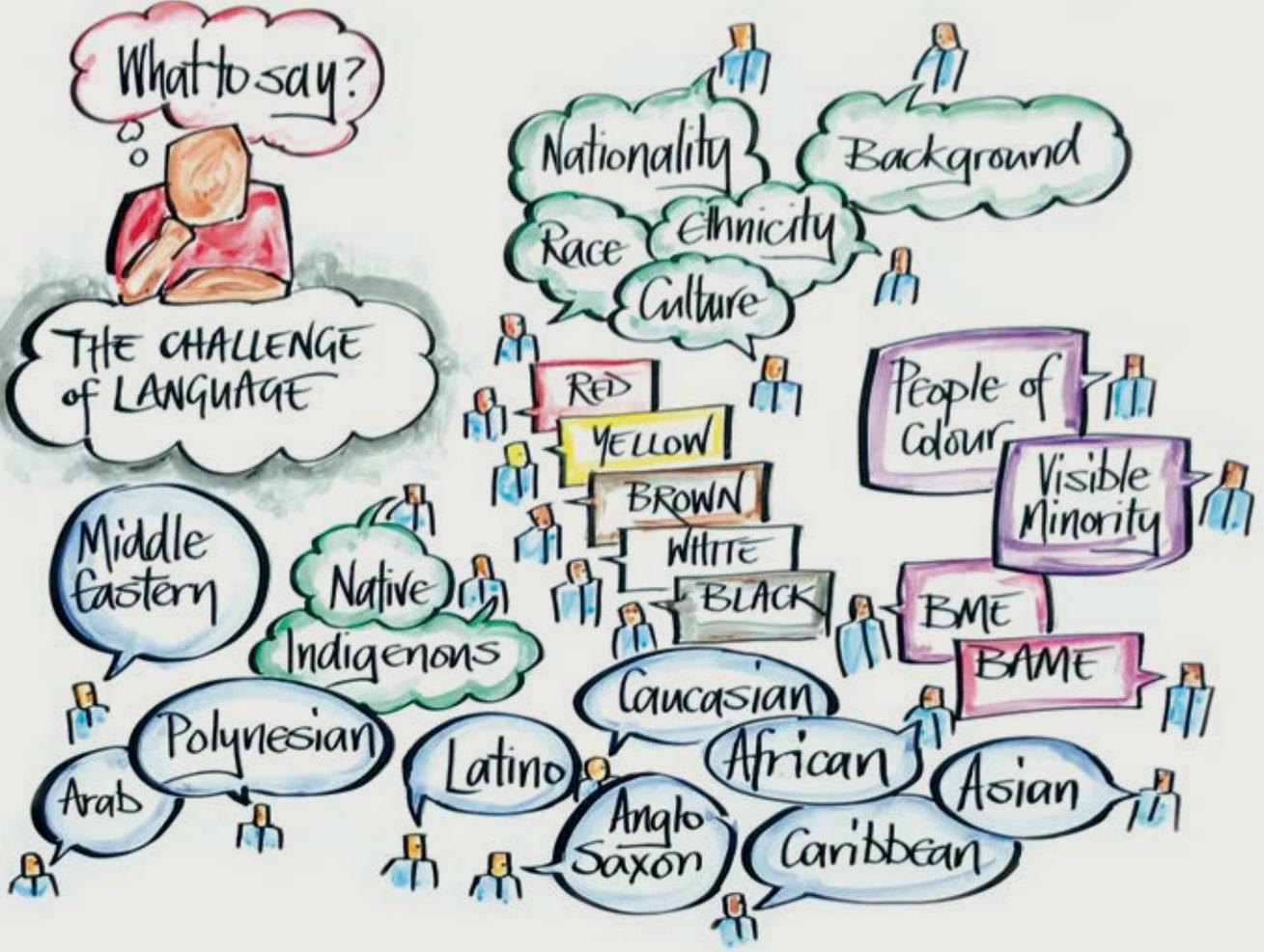
Levers for change

What are the key levers for change in an organisation wishing to drive a BAME advancement agenda? Our research highlighted a range of responses from which four themes emerged:

❏ How we talk about 'race'

❏ How insider/outsider dynamics impact career advancement

❏ The informalisation of formal processes

❏ The question of targets

Running through these themes was the significance of organisational culture. For the purposes of this report, the term 'culture' refers to everyday practices, behaviours and discourse within employer organisations that impact on how BAME employees experience their work environment and how they advance within it. Organisational culture is owned by organisations and their leadership, particularly by what leaders do and what they tolerate.

How we talk about 'race'

Can organisations address race or ethnicity effectively without talking about it?

Respondents' feedback suggests that there is significant discomfort around talking about race and ethnicity. Network Leads, D&I Practitioners and Executive Sponsors spoke of a feeling that race is a 'taboo' topic, or that employees feel they are 'stepping on eggshells' when attempting to address it. Network Leads pointed out that both BAME and non-BAME groups experience discomfort with talking about race, and that BAME employees are concerned about making non-BAME colleagues uncomfortable by raising the topic.

D&I Practitioners in particular spent more time talking about language and terminology than any other topic. In contrast, HR Directors were the only stakeholder group to never raise the issue of discomfort around the language of ethnicity.

D&I Practitioners said employees are uncertain as to what, or who, the term 'BAME' encompasses.

'What would they start with? Would they count Polish people, Far East people or those from South East Asia? What are we talking about here?'
D&I Practitioner

One suggestion is that finding a common language is important to open up the conversation.

'We are not going to be able to have conversations inside our organisations unless we have a common terminology.'
Executive Sponsor

It was suggested that a way to open up the conversation is for employee resource groups to lead the way.

'The reason they are uncomfortable is because we are uncomfortable talking about it. So we need to start having those conversations.'
Network Lead

Several respondents spoke about BAME individuals being reluctant to talk about race.

'We are so worried about saying "black". Why?'
Network Lead

Executive Sponsors made the point that it takes confidence to raise the issue of ethnicity, and that there is an additional burden of expectation on BAME employees to introduce the topic.

'Not every person who is of BAME background will have that level of confidence.'
Executive Sponsor

BAME employees may prefer not to categorise themselves through a description based on race.

'One person said to me, "I do not like using 'black'. I do not like to label myself."'
Network Lead

'We're all individuals, so we can categorise ourselves, and some people do. But some people resist categorisation and say, "I'm just who I am, take me as I am."'
HR Director

'People in the United States accept "black" as a term. Over here that is not true. Even black people do not like to use the word.'
Executive Sponsor

The impact of this discomfort and uncertainty, according to the respondents, is that organisations avoid conversations about race.

'We are not talking about it because everyone is either fearful or uncomfortable about it.'
Network Lead

'There are too many sensitivities wrapped up in it. People do not know the language.'
D&I Practitioner

The concepts of colour-blindness and inclusivity, according to several respondents, can have the effect of undermining the very agendas they might hope to serve.

Colour-blindness is a concept or ideology that attempts to overcome prejudice and discrimination by ignoring race or ethnicity or by giving it no weight. In a colour-blind environment, decisions on an individual's career progression would be seen as being irrespective of his or her race. All stakeholder groups in this study agreed that colour-blindness has a negative effect on BAME progression. Network Leads, followed by Executive Sponsors, spent most time on this topic compared to other topics. For those employees who wish to be identified and acknowledged as being from a minority background, colour-blindness effaces that identity.

Points to ponder

When interacting with people who are different, it is not uncommon to feel anxious about using the 'right' words or even to fear being accused of bias or prejudice. When we fear being judged, we are more likely to hold back and maintain physical distance. This behaviour in turn tarnishes the quality of communication and the sense of trust between people. Anxiety about being unfairly accused of bias is highest for people who want to be thought of as not prejudiced. Political correctness on all sides leads to identity abrasions.[1] Identity abrasions 'cause people to burrow into their own camps, attend only to information that confirms their positions, and demonise the other side'. This has costs for both individuals and organisations. Race and ethnicity are social constructs – this means that we, together, give these terms meaning, significance and power. Since they are social constructs, organisational leaders and change-makers can alter perceptions and discourse around race within the organisational culture.

> *'In the office I am just see-through. I do not have a colour.'*
> **Network Lead**

Colour-blindness treats employees as individuals disconnected from an ethnic group. In so doing it can obfuscate the systemic barriers which BAME women and men have to navigate. Colour-blindness can therefore become an impediment to attempts by groups to identify as minorities and campaign for their interests.

> *'There was a huge resistance to the idea of forming small interest groups because we are about the individual and happiness.'*
> **Network Lead**

Organisations may be invested in the idea of being colour-blind, and attach their brand identity to it. The activities of interest groups within those organisations therefore challenge the very identity and positioning of the company.

> *'The problem was that the brand is an inclusive brand. They do not like the idea of having even networks.'*
> **Network Lead**

D&I Practitioners raised the point that colour-blindness can become an excuse to avoid critical conversations about race and how it manifests in BAME representation in the workplace. HR Directors pointed out that overlooking racial differences would not serve BAME employees who rely on active involvement from senior managers to deliberately pursue the progression of BAME talent.

> *'Sometimes it's almost like a bit of gender blindness or ethnicity blindness might occur, and all of a sudden the focus on promotion, retention and representation either stagnates or perhaps even goes backwards.'*
> **HR Director**

D&I Practitioners were concerned that a focus on inclusiveness would, like colour-blindness, undermine the cause of BAME advancement. Inclusive terminology creates a sometimes false impression that organisations are at a

mature phase of dealing with the issues they refer to. Umbrella terms such as 'BAME' itself, or 'multi-cultural', fail to acknowledge the specific identities and challenges of groups falling within those broad definitions.

'An organisation said, "Wait a minute, we have a multi-cultural network, but there is a black issue, so how are we going to deal with the black problem?"'
D&I Practitioner

D&I Practitioners said that building inclusive networks makes it more complex to address the unique issues of specific ethnic minority groups.

'By trying to be inclusive, we muddy things as well.'
D&I Practitioner

Executive Sponsors were concerned that grouping ethnic minorities under an inclusive umbrella could prevent organisations from tackling the specific social stereotypes attaching to different ethnic groups. Because stereotyping differs, responses may need to differ too.

'There are some stereotypes around Asians and blacks. That Asians work hard and work steady, whether it be north Asian or south Asian, where in terms of black identity across the planet, across the five continents, the stereotype is always about how black individuals don't contribute enough to the economy.'
Executive Sponsor

Points to ponder

Talking about 'race' is complicated. And to fully understand race and ethnicity we also need to consider other identities. We often categorise separately 'women', 'LGBTQ' people and 'BAME' employees, despite the fact that we all belong to a gender, sexual orientation and ethnic group. 'Intersectionality' acknowledges that we all belong to multiple groups, even if these social identities are not explicitly recognised. Examples of 'unnamed' identities could be white and non-disabled. It is important for business leaders and other stakeholders to consider intersections in order to engage fully with BAME issues. Individuals would not be simply BAME or non-BAME; they may be heterosexual Muslim women or gay black men, for example. Intersectionality makes race more complicated, but it provides greater accuracy about the lived experience of BAME talent in organisations.

Summary

Network leads, Executive Sponsors and D&I Practitioners agree that opening up the debate about race will facilitate greater understanding and the deliberate pursuit of the BAME agenda, whereas avoiding explicit discussion about race can undermine that agenda. A common language, or discourse, is currently missing and would be helpful. All three groups discussed extensively the discomfort experienced by BAME and non-BAME employees in addressing issues of race and ethnicity, while HR Directors did not raise the issue.

There are BAME individuals who do not self-identify as such and wish to be seen and judged as individuals; and there are those who seek to be acknowledged as belonging to a group. This is a matter of personal choice.

Colour-blindness treats each employee as an individual disconnected from a social group, and in so doing it can obfuscate the historical and systemic barriers faced by BAME employees.

Inclusive terminology, including 'BAME' and 'multi-cultural', can paper over the differences within those inclusive groups and does not acknowledge the distinct stereotyping and prejudice faced by different minorities, or the unique identities and issues of each ethnic minority.

Recommendations

Organisations will struggle to resolve issues stifling the advancement of BAME talent if they are unwilling to talk about race. It is recommended that executive teams consider the pros and correct for the cons of whatever approach or nomenclature is adopted: colour-blindness, inclusivity, multi-culturalism and other strategic and values-based choices which impact directly or indirectly on BAME advancement.

It is recommended that discussion and debate are welcomed within organisations, and that the weight of 'taboo' is lifted from issues of ethnicity and race. As employees practise navigating the complexities of discussing race and ethnicity, they may become more adept at it and begin to fashion a common language that is transparent, honest and respectful.

How insider/outsider dynamics impact career advancement

The weight that decision-makers give to employees being 'one of us', or to 'cultural fit', particularly as a criterion for promotion, can function as a significant impediment to BAME employees' career progression.

HR Directors prioritised as a main point of concern the idea of a culture gap between a dominant, normative 'white' culture within organisations, and a non-dominant, possibly marginalised, BAME culture. HR Directors were concerned that organisational leadership interprets this difference as 'mismatch'.

> *'For so long, we have created these rather monolithic cultures and ways of thinking and standard processes, but actually everybody's different.'*
> **HR Director**

Both HR Directors and D&I Practitioners identified diversity of culture less as a problem to be solved and more as a resource to be drawn on, emphasising the advantages that cultural diversity brings to organisations.

> *'There's actually quite a well-worn business and commercial argument for diversity inclusion at a very top level.'*
> **HR Director**

Despite this, BAME employees' experience is frequently that diversity is not, in fact, welcomed.

> *'The majority culture does not recognise certain traits as being valuable. I am classified as having issues because I pointed something out.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

The lived experience of BAME employees as reported through this study confirms a frequent sense of otherness and exclusion. Executive Sponsors spoke extensively of the barriers to BAME individuals being accepted as 'in-group'.

> *'In particular, race is an area where those differences can be very acute. The difference between how you feel if you are in a white male insider group, compared to how you feel if you in the outside group, such as if you are black or from a different ethnic minority, is quite huge.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

> *'When you are a small group in a majority environment, it can be a little isolating in some ways.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

Network Leads and D&I Practitioners highlighted that the power of a political organisational culture, which operates through networks and personal

affiliations, is particularly excluding for BAME employees who do not come from the dominant culture or move freely within it. Politics are endemic to organisational life. However, where networks are built on familiarity and shared identity, BAME talent is frequently outside of those networks, with the result that BAME talent and capability remains clouded and unrecognised, to the detriment of both BAME talent and the employer. Our respondents were of the view that informal affiliations not only indirectly, but directly and visibly, impede BAME individuals' prospects for advancement.

> *'If you are not part of the football team that plays every Wednesday you probably will not get the promotion, basically.'*
> **Network Lead**

> *'That is where the in-group comes in. "Are you in the group? You are high potential."'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

While HR Directors acknowledged that a political working environment impacted negatively on BAME progression, they did not discuss or explore the issues extensively. HR Directors have the responsibility for driving formal and fair processes, and it is possible they are unaware of, or unwilling to confront, the extent to which those formal processes might be impacted by the power of personal and culturally-shaped views and affiliations.

In the context of cultural pressure, BAME employees will frequently do their best to fit in. However, the attempt to fit in is not always easy.

> *'It is quite difficult, for example, if you are a Muslim and you do not go out drinking.'*
> **Network Lead**

Fitting in can also come at some personal cost.

> *'When you talk to people from a cultural diversity network they say, "We have to dampen down parts of who we are to fit in at work."'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

Points to ponder

Insider/outsider dynamics can occur across any social identity category. Outsiders are likely to have a heightened awareness of their disadvantaged status. However, insiders often do not notice how everyday, 'normal' workplace practices enable positive perceptions of their performance. 'In group' success is often attributed to personal competence and 'out group' success often attributed to luck. For these reasons, shifting organisational culture requires a holistic and systemic approach rather than a focus on individual examples of success or failure.

Some respondents began to point to solutions. Executive Sponsors spoke of developing a more inclusive organisational culture.

> *'There is something about giving people a sense of belonging.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

Network Leads said that the processes for the advancement of talent need to be powerful enough to supersede informal cultural affiliation.

> *'People manoeuvre outside of the formal processes, and that is why you need a top talent programme.'*
> **Network Lead**

Summary

HR Directors often see the value and richness of diversity, but are conscious that there may be a gulf between a normative, white organisational culture and the cultures of BAME groups. Both HR Directors and D&I Practitioners suggest that diversity is a resource to tap more than it is a problem to solve. Executive Sponsors are sensitive to the lived experience of BAME employees within the normative culture as being potentially isolating.

Executive Sponsors and Network Leads focused on the power of a political organisational culture, in which being part of the 'in group' is likely to offer a leg up the promotional ladder, and being part of the 'out group' is likely to be an obstacle to advancement. HR Directors did not explore this issue, perhaps because their accountability includes ensuring that formal processes are not coloured by politics.

Network Leads and D&I Practitioners said many BAME individuals try to adjust their styles to fit the norms, but this is not simple and may come at some personal cost.

Executive Sponsors focused on the need for more accepting and inclusive organisational cultures. Network Leads spoke of the need for impeccable talent programmes which reduce opportunities for cultural bias.

Recommendations

The executive leadership of organisations should assess their organisational culture in a clear-sighted way, evaluating not only formal policies but also informal practices – 'the way we do things around here' – in order to detect where practices might negatively impact on BAME talent progression and in order to make the changes needed to optimise diversity at higher organisational levels. Implementing culture change requires organisations to be clear about their vision, communicate expected behaviours and be open to ideas and debate.

Organisations need to carefully consider their notions of 'cultural fit' to ensure that such concepts do not have the unintended consequence of excluding BAME employees from opportunities for advancement.

The onus is on organisations to ensure that advancement decisions are taken on formal grounds and are not subject to informal political affiliations. One easy step is to require managers to justify, and take accountability for, their advancement decisions.

The informalisation of formal processes

Stakeholders voiced their concern that formal structures and processes sometimes become subject to decision-making which is subjective or 'off the record'. The concern is that when formal processes become governed by personal decision-making, a frequent consequence is that it occurs at the cost of BAME advancement. This concern was touched on in the previous section on insider/outsider dynamics.

This section focuses on the allocation of stretch opportunities and the use of appraisals.

Allocation of stretch opportunities

Managers allocate work assignments which meet the manager's needs, but also provide employees with the opportunity to demonstrate their talent and show their readiness and desire for advancement. Receiving such an assignment can be a significant opportunity for an employee to gain visibility and to progress.

> *'The people who succeed, particularly at this level from manager to more senior roles, are the people who get the sexy work.'*
> **HR Director**

Executive Sponsors echoed the importance of these work assignments.

> *'We have a programme looking at the allocation of opportunity because, in a consulting business, that is so key: the idea of who gets the stretch opportunities and who gets the really good jobs that help you to progress through the organisation.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

D&I Practitioners expressed concern that stretch work allocations are not recognised as part of the formal procedures of an organisation. They are essentially off the record. As such, there is no system of accountability. The result is that these work allocations are vulnerable to being wittingly or unwittingly subjective and even political in nature.

> *'We have identified work allocation as the key area we have to look at.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

> *'It is because of those micro-decisions about who gets the visibility work.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

HR Directors, D&I Practitioners and Executive Sponsors all perceived work allocation practices as being key barriers to the visibility of high-potential BAME employees, and to their progression.

The use of appraisals

Network Leads, D&I Practitioners and Executive Sponsors expressed the concern that appraisals, while being built into the formal workings of organisations, are in practice sometimes conducted in ways that are informal and subjective.

Points to ponder

We know that bias manifests particularly in how organisations develop and apply selection and promotion criteria, and that this tends to benefit the dominant group within a narrative of merit. 'The paradox of meritocracy holds that when an organisational culture actively promotes meritocracy, decision-makers in that organisation may ironically show greater bias in favour of the dominant group. In other words, if managers believe that the way people in the organisation are selected and promoted is meritocratic, their decisions about the careers of others are *more* biased and *less* based on merit.'[2]

'They gave us a page that has about 70 words that are adjectives. It includes words like "quarrelsome". I am a bit concerned. Where you came from and how you studied English as a language changes what that word means.'
Network Lead

D&I Practitioners pointed out that appraisers may make assumptions about performance which do not take account of cultural differences.

'We tend to look at what their performance levels are, but also what their drive is, which is a really dangerous thing to think about. There could be cultural reasons why people are seen to not have the drive.'
D&I Practitioner

Executive Sponsors emphasised that unconscious bias may influence appraisals. They focused on the importance of surfacing and addressing unconscious biases. Executive Sponsors noted that managers who are unable or unwilling to own their biases are more likely to misjudge the performance and potential of their BAME reports. They suggested that dealing with unconscious bias is sometimes a seasonal affair, arising at appraisal time and going underground at other times of the year, whereas consistency of approach would yield a more sustained positive result.

'One of the issues that we face is the idea that unconscious bias peaks at different times of the year. It becomes a big focus when you are doing assessments of people or half-year or annual promotions, all that sort of stuff, and it becomes unconscious again in the intervening period.'
Executive Sponsor

Network Leads had a different concern, which is that the appraisal system is sometimes divorced from the process of identifying talent. In this case, while appraisal is formalised, talent identification remains a subjective judgement call. Network Leads believed this could impact negatively on BAME advancement.

'There is a system called "appraisals" and another called "talent criteria for promotion".'
Network Lead

> *'It is interesting to talk about appraisals, because we do them quite religiously, but nothing happens.'*
> **Network Lead**

Summary

Stakeholders noted that formal business practices do not necessarily remain free from the subjective biases and preconceptions of those who implement them. Formal processes such as the allocation of stretch assignments and the conducting of performance appraisals and talent identification, are or become 'informalised' in their implementation.

HR Directors, D&I Practitioners and Executive Sponsors acknowledged that stretch assignments are an important opportunity for people to demonstrate their talent and value. But the allocation of such assignments is left to the judgement of managers, who usually are not held to account for their choices. Stakeholders believe the outcome is often the exclusion of BAME talent, who then miss out on the opportunity to prove their capabilities and potential for advancement.

D&I Practitioners, Executive Sponsors and Network Leads believe that appraisals, by their nature, rely upon personal judgement, and as such are open to unconscious bias which tends to prejudice BAME employees in particular.

Recommendations

Organisations who commit themselves to BAME progression are encouraged to consider the best place to assign decision-making for promotion, and to put checks and balances in place to ensure that promotions are aligned with both reasonable business requirements and BAME advancement.

Organisations should practise the fair distribution of high-visibility work and stretch assignments. Managers should be held accountable for how they allocate such work.

Ongoing training for all employees, and in particular managers and leaders, is needed to surface and manage unconscious bias that can impact on work allocation, appraisals and promotions.

The question of targets

Are targets a useful or recommended tool to hasten the progression of BAME talent beyond the middle? This question elicited the greatest divergence of response to our survey. Some of this divergence was driven by different analyses of where the problem lies, but most by varying views on targets themselves.

❏ Only 5% of D&I Practitioners and HR Directors reported that proportionate representation goals, or company-defined targets for promotion, would work comfortably in their organisation's culture.

❏ The majority (56%) of Executive Sponsors were unsure as to whether introducing a goal of proportionate representation would work comfortably in their organisation's culture.

❏ 25% of Executive Sponsors reported that company-defined targets for promotion would not work comfortably within their culture, whereas 19% believed that company-defined targets would be workable.

There were different analyses of what is driving under-representation of BAME employees at higher levels of companies. Some saw it is an issue of retention, and others as an issue of promotion. Pursuing promotion targets in a context where retention is the challenge might be a mismatch of problem and solution, so it is important to understand which problem we are aiming to solve. Opinions on this diverge, and the problem could be both.

Our online survey findings showed that while Network Leads reported that BAME employees progress at the same rate as their white peers, a high proportion of Executive Sponsors and D&I Practitioners reported the opposite: that BAME employees do not progress at the same rate as their white peers. The focus groups unpacked these findings to provide reasons for these differences. An apparent reason for the difference is that Network Leads believe that there is a challenge with retention of BAME employees once they are promoted into more senior roles, and that this is a significant driver of under-representation in middle and senior levels. Compared to other stakeholder groups, Network Leads are more likely to hear informal stories of frustration and disengagement from colleagues.

> *'I interview people quite regularly. They get to a certain level and just get fed up of trying.'*
> **Network Lead**

In contrast, D&I Practitioners, Executive Sponsors and HR Directors described the problem in the middle as being the result of slower rates of BAME progression, of BAME employees receiving fewer promotion opportunities even when promotion-ready, as well as lower retention rates of BAME employees.

> *'We do not know what it is, but there is clearly something happening in the middle that means we are not seeing ethnic minority talent progress at the rate that they ought to.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

Executive Sponsors agreed that there is a progression issue that persists despite several BAME-focused interventions.

> *'We are ticking the boxes on attraction, ticking the boxes on engagement and the scores are closing, inclusiveness is happening, but we not moving enough people through, and we have to look at it.'*
> **Executive Sponsor**

HR Directors highlighted the relative lack of advancement of BAME employees ahead of issues of retention or general progression. HR Directors reported that they frequently encounter management decisions not to promote BAME employees who have performed well enough to warrant promotion, and that they challenge those decisions.

> *'We look at who is not on the radar but who in theory is eligible for promotion. They are at a certain level, they've got a certain sized job, they've been in their current grade for so many years – we focus on the diverse individuals that are eligible for promotion but are not being chosen.'*
> **HR Director**

Where the BAME progression issue is indeed about progression rather than retention, stakeholders debated whether attitudes or behaviours were the

most strategic starting point for leveraging change. Targets are seen by our respondents to aim more directly at behaviour change than at attitude change. Some argued that it is more important to focus on implementing strategies that will shift attitudes, and thereafter implement a target strategy that will be supported by a more conducive environment. However, some HR Directors acknowledged that targets could create a step-change that will impact on attitudes.

> *'Some people argue targets and quotas are the way to go and flip the dial, and maybe once you've flipped the dial you can kind of work back from it.'*
> **HR Director**

At the same time, HR Directors expressed a concern that implementing targets in a context of organisations lacking clarity about their approach to BAME advancement will result in a push for numbers that is not supported by deeper and more meaningful change in the cultural fabric of those organisations.

> *'I'm just worried that when we have a target it looks like we're complying, but actually there are lots of unpleasant and undesirable behaviours going on behind that, and maybe not the results we're looking for.'*
> **HR Director**

> *'The fear culture that most organisations have, that most people experience, is driven by targets: "You will make the numbers or else."'*
> **HR Director**

Do these objections by HR Directors stand up to the scrutiny of other stakeholders in the research group? D&I Practitioners agreed with HR Directors that initiatives to support attitudinal change offer something more enduring than chasing targets. They also felt that the target strategy fails to acknowledge the long-term, systemic work that has been painstakingly implemented.

'I found it problematic in the way that it was saying, "All the work that you have been doing is wrong. You should really have defined quotas and set everyone these targets."'
D&I Practitioner

'Are they just a tick box exercise?'
D&I Practitioner

Executive Sponsors were more supportive of targets than other stakeholders. They said that targets provide a clear goal for companies to achieve.

'We had targets because otherwise you do not have something to aim for.'
Executive Sponsor

Some Executive Sponsors and HR Directors suggested that targets provide best and most sustainable results when used within a broader and more comprehensive strategy, rather than as a solo tactic. Their approach was not to choose between tactics but to combine tactics for greatest impact.

'For me it is recognising you need a multi-pronged strategy for this.'
Executive Sponsor

'If the target is not seen as part of a wider process you're going to have to repeat it and repeat it, because the target won't be sustained.'
HR Director

Executive Sponsors made the point that for multi-national companies, targets should be set nationally rather than globally in order to ensure that UK representation is measured separately.

'Black and ethnic minority senior roles in the US are skewing the numbers in the UK. If you give a target to my boss, she has a black senior leadership team in the United States but it is very small in the UK. Being quite clear about UK versus US would be important for us.'
Executive Sponsor

Points to ponder

The gender agenda provides ample evidence for the effectiveness of targets. Targets stand as clear goals. They facilitate a disciplined approach to change, provide interim milestones, measure small wins along a longer road, create a sense of urgency and are effective when underpinned by robust metrics that enable organisations to locate obstacles.[3] Committing to clear, challenging targets and monitoring progress against those targets is an extremely effective way of stimulating performance and getting results.[4]

Summary

Network Leads are more likely to ascribe the slow rate of BAME career progression to poor retention of BAME employees. Because they see the issue as retention rather than advancement, advancement targets were not considered to be a meaningful tool – they solve a different problem.

However, Executive Sponsors, HR Directors and D&I Practitioners all agree that BAME employees progress at a slower rate than their counterparts, that they receive fewer promotion opportunities even when ready for promotion, and that there is a further factor of low retention rates for BAME employees.

HR Directors were for the most part not supportive of implementing BAME advancement targets. They saw targets as being consonant with a culture of fear. They were also concerned that targets might create a mask of compliance while hiding less visible undesirable behaviours. D&I Practitioners were sensitive to the idea that implementing targets would constitute an implied criticism that their efforts to date have not achieved the required outcomes. They were also more supportive of initiatives aimed at attitudinal change, rather than the pursuit of targets.

Executive Sponsors offered clearest support for targets. They explained that the value of targets is that they create a goal organisations can aim for.

Both Executive Sponsors and some HR Directors said that targets can, and ideally should, co-exist with attitudinal initiatives as part of a broader BAME strategy. In this notion 'and' replaces 'or'.

Recommendations

Organisations should adopt targets as an integral component of comprehensive strategies to hasten the advancement of BAME talent within organisations. Targets do not in and of themselves create value. What they do is state what goal an organisation is willing to put its hand up for, and what the organisation is willing to be measured by. Setting targets gives a clear message to stakeholder groups both within and outside of organisations.

The role of executive teams is to approve targets, ensure there are plans in place to meet them and report on the achievement or otherwise of those targets. Executive Sponsors, HR Directors, D&I Practitioners and employee resource groups would be expected to align their efforts clearly with achievement of the targets. The discussions around what targets to set, the means required to achieve them and the monitoring mechanisms to measure

progress are all important engagements which help organisations make practical their commitment to BAME advancement. The targets provide clarity to organisational stakeholders on where to focus their efforts and clarity on what they are accountable for.

Any possible unintended negative consequences of working to targets should be identified at planning stage and mitigation plans put in place.

Alignment and accountability

Two important messages that emerge from Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 are:

❏ There is poor strategic alignment between the four stakeholder groups that are the subject of this research. There is also relatively poor, and sometimes an apparent absence of, co-ordination of efforts between them.

❏ There is a lack of clarity, at least from the four stakeholder groups interviewed, as to who is accountable for delivery of the BAME advancement agenda, and what each stakeholder group specifically takes accountability for.

Where the four stakeholder groups are not co-ordinated their efforts are dissipated, whereas those efforts could be mutually strengthened by co-ordination. And if accountability is unclear or unassigned, it makes follow-through at best weak.

It seems clear that a great deal more could be achieved if the BAME agenda were more clearly articulated and shared, if accountability at all levels were clear and delivered, and if all stakeholder groups worked in conscious concert with one another.

The first place to begin aligning is with the 'why' of BAME advancement. The 'why' will usually emerge from the strategic work of executive teams, but it should be reflected and communicated by internal stakeholder groups. When asked to explain their organisations' rationale for promoting the BAME diversity agenda, survey respondents had some differing views.

❏ 'Ethics, promoting the agenda because it is the right thing to do': A relatively consistent 58% of HR Directors, 55% of D&I Practitioners and 53% of Network Leads agreed that this was their organisation's motivation.

❏ 'Reflect the customers that organisations serve': A less consistent 82% of D&I Practitioners, 58% of HR Directors and 53% of Network Leads said that this was their organisation's rationale.

❏ 'Clear strategic priority emerging from the executive committee': 73% of D&I Practitioners strongly agreed that this was the case.

There are likely to be several reasons why organisations promote a BAME advancement agenda, not one, and several important ones are not reflected in this list. What is important is that within organisations there is clarity as to

what the overarching purposes are, as this clarity creates a foundation for alignment of initiatives and priorities.

Emerging from the survey, roundtable discussions and cue card exercises was the stakeholder groups' own take on the level of cohesion and co-operation between them. While none of the stakeholder groups reported high levels of co-ordination, each group assessed the effectiveness of co-operation quite differently.

❑ In response to whether the stakeholder groups use their networks as close relationship partners to drive the BAME agenda, only 8% of HR Directors reported that this happens 'all the time', 25% of HR Directors answered 'to some significant extent', and a further 25% answered 'somewhat'.

❑ In contrast, 27% of D&I Practitioners responded that they use their networks as close relationship partners 'all the time', 9% answered 'to some significant extent' and 9% said 'somewhat'.

❑ Network Leads were asked if the BAME networks collaborate with HR to enhance BAME retention and promotion. Some 18% of Network Leads answered the question with 'all the time', 6% chose 'to some significant extent', 35% said 'somewhat' and 6% selected 'not at all'.

❑ Executive Sponsors diverged significantly on the extent to which they thought their HR Director used their networks as close relationship partners, with 50% responding that this occurs frequently or very much, and 31% saying that this occurs infrequently or not at all.

❑ Executive Sponsors also differed on the extent to which the HR function works with them to promote opportunities to strengthen the BAME pipeline, with 44% responding that this occurs 'frequently' or 'very much', and a further 44% saying that this occurs 'infrequently' or 'not at all'.

The differences in response are unexpected given that the groups are describing their relationships with one another, and so a reasonable level of congruence would be expected.

Focus on Human Resources

Whereas most of the stakeholders identified a disconnect among the different stakeholder groups driving BAME advancement, Human Resources was consistently picked out as the greatest source of the problem and Network Leads were HR's most frequent accuser. Network Leads said the disconnect between HR and other stakeholders constituted a significant obstacle that was slowing the momentum of BAME initiatives. Executive Sponsors and D&I Practitioners also said there was a disconnect between their BAME activities and HR, as well as between HR and other stakeholders.

'I am not blaming anybody here, but those are huge disconnects between what HR and D&I are doing compared to what Exco want.'
Network Lead

'There is a conflict between HR and some of the Network Leads, and conflict between HR and some of the D&I leads, who are technical subject matter experts.'
Executive Sponsor

'What happens with the D&I and HR experience at these organisations? Why is it that it is disconnected?'
D&I Practitioner

Human Resources would be expected to be an important partner to all stakeholders in the BAME advancement agenda, so the pattern of disaffection which runs through much of the stakeholder feedback presents an opportunity for introspection and recalibration.

Focus on Network Leads

Our research revealed that Network Leads see themselves as having minimal delegated authority or influence to move the BAME agenda forward. They emphasised their reliance on HR Directors and D&I Practitioners to drive the agenda, gain access to senior leaders and hold managers to account.

> *'Who is responsible? I cannot rock up to our head of (business function) and get into their diary and start talking about this and this. However, head of (business function) will be assigned an HR business partner, who is there to influence that business.'*
> **Network Lead**

D&I Practitioners agree that Network Leads do not have real delegated authority in relation to the BAME agenda. For that reason, they feel it is inappropriate for D&I to rely on Network Leads.

> *'You do not want to weigh the networks with solving a problem they have absolutely no power or influence to solve.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

Some D&I Practitioners remained concerned that Network Leads get distracted from their core role.

> *'Their role is to educate people. Sometimes I find that they get stuck on the numbers, and then they do not actually do anything.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

Focus on Executive Sponsors

We asked Executive Sponsors to identify what they perceive to be their key responsibilities in relation to the BAME agenda. Their responses included:

❏ Advocacy, such as building employee support networks, mentoring and identifying role models.

❏ Sharpening the thinking of key stakeholders, including ongoing engagement with management and HR.

❏ Culture change, such as promoting inclusiveness and increasing cultural awareness.

❏ Increasing the representation of BAME employees via recruitment, pipeline development, talent programmes and promotion.

Executive Sponsors did not rate themselves very highly on the progress they have made in delivering in these areas. Their average self-rating was distributed equally between 'very little' and 'very much' progress.

Driving accountability

As has emerged elsewhere in this report, stakeholders report that greater accountability is required in order to support the BAME agenda.

> *'I do think one of the biggest reasons that we are not closing the gap is that there is just no accountability.'*
> **D&I Practitioner**

> *'Who checks the checker and ensures that the system is not biased?'*
> **Network Lead**

As respondents spoke, they highlighted different areas where accountability is lacking. D&I Practitioners said that holding decision-makers to account for their decisions would focus their minds on acting fairly and defensibly.

'If someone audited areas where there are disproportionately low numbers of BAME candidates, it should flag something and people should explain why that is occurring.'
Network Lead

'Start to challenge them seriously on those performance reviews: "Tell me why you have put so-and-so in high potential?" That is what we have got to do.'
D&I Practitioner

'By asking them questions that they can't answer, which are, "We notice so-and-so could have been promoted this year. For you, why is this person not on the radar?" And then the way they answer those questions sometimes is, "Well, they are not quite ready". "Why are they not quite ready? What is it they need?"'
HR Director

HR Directors made the indispensable point that accountability for the success of the BAME agenda lies first with organisational leadership.

'As a black African woman, I can't stand for this agenda and then be left alone if there's no momentum or absolute commitment from the remainder of the leadership team to be accountable.'
HR Director

Summary

There is a lack of coherence and co-ordination between different stakeholder groups charged with advancing the BAME agenda. This is recognised by the stakeholder groups themselves. However, the variation in the ratings that each group gave when assessing the level of co-ordination between them is markedly different. This lack of cohesion may help to explain why the BAME advancement agenda has not progressed further.

Alignment and co-ordination between the stakeholder groups would multiply energy and optimise efforts.

At the same time, there is an apparent dearth of accountability. If no one is 'checking the checker', as one Network Lead put it, it means that managers are not being held to account for decisions affecting BAME representation and advancement. Policies and programmes which do not manifest in the actions and decisions of decision-makers, and which do not result in decision-makers being required to explain their decisions satisfactorily, run the risk of remaining ideas and dreams rather than programmes.

Recommendations

Organisational leadership can delegate authority, but not accountability. It is recommended that leaders take stock in the light of issues raised in this report, and ensure they provide the necessary clarity and leadership to the organisation as a whole and to each stakeholder group or individual charged with responsibility for delivering an aspect of the BAME advancement agenda. A clear 'why' and a framework for action will help stakeholders co-ordinate effectively.

Stakeholder groups should own some responsibility for co-ordinating effectively with one another. This should be seen as part of their mandate – in other words, their mandate is not about delivering their discrete piece of the BAME agenda, but rather delivering their contribution as a critical piece of a coherent puzzle that matches the picture drawn by the leadership. As a practical step, it is recommended that stakeholders establish a forum which facilitates coherent planning and execution. Such a forum has the job of not adding to the time spent on BAME progression, but reducing overall time by cutting duplication and waste from the activities of the stakeholder groups.

Accountability is a facet of organisational culture. A culture of accountability, with specific application within the BAME agenda, is driven by actively holding people to account. Organisational leadership can contribute to a culture of accountability by holding themselves and one another to account specifically in relation to delivering the BAME advancement agenda. Accountability mechanisms should be implemented in activities sensitive to the BAME advancement agenda, such as performance appraisals, talent identification and promotion.

Summary of stakeholder perspectives

The table below summarises the most pertinent findings from the research regarding:

❏ The value each stakeholder group contributes to the BAME talent agenda.
❏ The concerns that impede them from making the greatest progress.
❏ Perceptions the other stakeholders have of them.
❏ Recommendations for collaborative action for each stakeholder group.

Stakeholder	Key value as a stakeholder	Key perceived concerns impeding progress	
D&I Practitioners	❏ D&I Practitioners recognise when and how focus on BAME progression may be explicitly or subconsciously diluted by parallel organisational agendas, such as social mobility initiatives. ❏ D&I Practitioners can shift the organisational narrative from cultural diversity and representation as a 'problem to solve', to a 'resource that is under-utilised'.	❏ Available data is inadequate because it is outdated, partial or ambiguous. ❏ Insufficient organisational capability and will to convert insights from data into practical interventions. ❏ The low representation of senior BAME colleagues to advocate with them.	
Executive Sponsors	❏ Executive Sponsors recognise the subtle but significant actions that can catapult BAME talent into senior leadership. One such example would be the fair allocation of stretch assignments that increase visibility. ❏ Executive Sponsors can position the case for targets, and an implementation strategy to achieve them, in a manner that is aligned to their organisation's context.	❏ Senior leaders who resist inclusive culture change and do not prioritise BAME talent progression. ❏ The low numbers of senior BAME colleagues to advocate alongside Executive Sponsors.	
HR Directors	❏ HR Directors recognise that progressing BAME talent is the responsibility of the wider organisation, and not solely that of senior BAME individuals. ❏ HR Directors can shift the organisational narrative from cultural diversity and under-representation as a 'problem to solve', to a 'resource that is under-utilised'.	❏ Legal and budgetary hurdles to collecting comprehensive quantitative data on BAME progression in organisations. ❏ Senior leaders who resist inclusive culture change. ❏ Competing attention from parallel organisational interests such as women's and LGBTQ equality.	
Network Leads	❏ Network Leads are often members of the BAME community and can advocate authentically. ❏ Network Leads In their voluntary capacities, bring passion and commitment to their support of BAME progression. ❏ Network Leads directly experience the processes that adversely affect BAME talent progression, such as the disconnect between feedback, appraisal and promotion.	❏ Restricted view of the organisational context due to limited access to data. ❏ Limited access to senior decision-makers. ❏ D&I/HR's reticence to fully advocate on the networks' behalf to senior decision-makers. ❏ D&I/HR's dilution of difficult messages to senior decision-makers.	
Senior business leaders (usually members of the c-suite, executive or operating committee of the company)	❏ Organisational leaders develop and drive a strategy of inclusive culture change and collaborative action to progress BAME talent through their organisation.	Senior business leaders did not constitute one of the stakeholder groups participating in this research, thus some cells in this table are blank. However, the significance of their roles in progressing BAME talent was a clear theme raised by the participant stakeholders. Thus, we include senior business leaders here as a key stakeholder group necessary to drive collaborative action to progress BAME talent and implement culture change.	

	Criticisms as perceived by other stakeholders	Recommended immediate collaborative action
	❏ Withhold data from other stakeholder groups out of fear of showing their organisation in a bad light. ❏ Shy away from holding leaders to account, despite their access to leaders. ❏ Insufficient consideration of the implications of intersectionality for the workforce.	❏ Use the best available data, including qualitative, lived experience data, to develop compelling business cases and to make better-informed decisions about what will work in your context. (See page 72 for more information on evidence-based D&I.) ❏ Work with internal stakeholders and external advisors to design targeted action to advance BAME progression beyond middle management. Action should be sensitive to the diversity under the BAME umbrella, including gender and cultural group differences.
	❏ Defer accountability to senior BAME colleagues to champion BAME talent progression. ❏ Give space to 'acceptable' or 'assimilated' senior BAME colleagues rather than more vocal critics who may have tougher messages to convey.	❏ Lead on advocating senior BAME progression and inclusive culture change in your organisation, whether or not senior BAME colleagues do this too. ❏ Advocate for greater investment in BAME talent initiatives. ❏ Initiate more formal, rather than informal, public discussions around the business about BAME talent progression.
	❏ Abdicate responsibility for leading collaborative stakeholder action to progress BAME talent. ❏ Take the path of least resistance by focusing on the most visibly supported, widely accepted diversity strands while avoiding substantive discussion of race. ❏ Prioritise longer-term but harder-to-achieve outcomes, such as attitude change, over immediate decisive action, such as setting targets.	❏ Review the composition of the HR team and ensure senior BAME voices are represented at the table. ❏ Mobilise an internal multi-stakeholder task force to articulate the purpose of, and strategy for, BAME talent progression, including data collection and monitoring. ❏ Review which formal leadership and talent assessment systems are 'informalised' in practice to the detriment of BAME talent. An example could be how stretch assignments are allocated.
	❏ Lack a 'strategic approach' in their advocacy efforts. ❏ Poor access to data is used as an excuse for lack of action, progress or impact. ❏ Overlook the weight of BAME colleagues' lived experiences as data to be used to advocate for BAME talent progression.	❏ In the absence of quantitative data, initial action could include shining a spotlight on the everyday experiences of BAME employees in the organisation. ❏ Gather and examine the experiences of the network members as a basis for creative solutions. ❏ Strategically align the networks' priorities with the corporate agenda. ❏ Offer guidance to stakeholders on enhancing the everyday experiences of BAME employees. For example, help develop guidelines on how to talk about 'race', and thereby increase the skill and confidence of white and BAME colleagues.
	❏ Prefer quantitative data to support stakeholder claims about BAME progression, rather than valuing lived experiences of BAME employees as data. ❏ Abdicate responsibility for BAME progression and talent optimisation strategies to others with less power and influence in the organisation. ❏ Fail to retain accountability when delegating responsibility for BAME talent progression to others.	❏ Role model inclusive culture change by publicly advocating for equal outcomes on multiple organisational measures. ❏ Demand both qualitative and quantitative data in regards to BAME talent progression through the organisation. ❏ Hold hiring managers and supervisors responsible for the attraction, retention and progression of BAME talent, proactively challenging unsatisfactory results and concerning trends. ❏ Introduce Key Performance Indicators for BAME talent progression. ❏ Champion an evidence-based approach to make better-informed decisions about what will work in your context. An evidence-based approach requires analysing different types of information, including but not limited to company statistics, in order to understand the issues deeply and implement effective solutions. (See page 72 for more information on evidence-based D&I.)

Tackling self-identification

Increasing diversity declaration rates at Nationwide Building Society

In April 2015 Nationwide Building Society's diversity declaration rate across all monitored protected characteristics was just over 26%. Numerous previous attempts to encourage declaration, via online self-service upload to the HR data management system, had not resulted in any significant uplift.

In early May 2015 ethnicity classifications were brought into line with the census categories and a 'prefer not to say' (PNTS) option was added to the online system.

Working in collaboration with other departments, HR launched a Diversity Declaration Rate Campaign in early May. This ran through to October 2015. The team set itself a stretch target of a 90% declaration rate across all categories.

By the end of October 2015, the diversity declarations rate had risen to 90%. By February 2016, it had increased slightly to 91%.

A year later, by the end of January 2017, NBS reached an all time high of 97% diversity declaration rate across the board with ethnicity highest at over 97% and disability lowest at 93%. Sexual orientation and faith/ belief were both 96%. This has since dropped a little and now remains steadily around 94% across all strands (Sept 2017). Ethnicity remains highest at 97%.

The PNTS option was used by some employees, but not by nearly as many as might have been expected given the previous low declaration rates.

Throughout the campaign, the three key messages were:

❏ Tell people why the company wants the data. We explained the benefits to them as individual employees and to the organisation as an employer.

❏ Remind people that declarations are confidential. We clarified how the data would be protected.

❏ Reassure people that they do not have to declare a personal characteristic if they do not wish to, as there was now a *'prefer not to say'* option. It remained a requirement that they complete the whole online declaration one way or another.

Nationwide Building Society implemented a phased campaign to improve declaration rates.

Stage 1: The first stage was a major and broad-reaching communication campaign to all employees via numerous channels including Employee Network Groups. Results were sent to all Group and (then) Divisional Directors via HR Business Partners on a weekly basis, to encourage further efforts locally where numbers were not shifting or, conversely, to communicate positive results where increases were apparent.

Stage 2: When the Society had achieved a certain level and had made good inroads (at around 50– 60%) but had begun to plateau, individual employees who had not completed their online declaration were targeted. We sent them e-mails reminding them of the three messages above, and asking them to update their records. This immediately resulted in a significant uplift of almost 10%.

Stage 3: Next we sent individual e-mails to targeted employees who had begun but not completed their records. This resulted in an encouraging uplift of around 6–7%.

Stage 4: We continued to send targeted e-mails weekly to individuals who had not completed. Once Nationwide achieved a 90% declaration rate, the Society agreed to send a maintenance reminder e-mail to any stragglers and to capture new starters' information on a monthly basis. This continues at the time of writing.

Gathering data through focus groups

Empowering our people: Research into the factors contributing to the under-representation of BAME people at manager and above at PwC

Context

Background

Please provide a short summary describing why this project/initiative came about? What was the situation/ challenge that required change? What was the overall goal and what trends/ data, supported the decision?

At PwC we have made a public and internal commitment to improve the diversity of our workforce and build a culture of inclusion that empowers all our people.

However, despite the progress made in recent years, our workforce does not yet reflect the society that we work in and our current progress is not keeping pace with our ambition.

Our goal is to achieve our gender and BAME grade pool targets by 2020, which will signal our progress to building an inclusive culture.

Thirty-nine per cent of our people at entry level (September 2016 student recruitment intake) are from a BAME background, and our representation decreases through the levels with 6% at partner level. Our data tells us that as an organisation we struggle to engage with, progress and retain our BAME employees, particularly at manager and above. We decided to conduct a series of focus groups to understand the factors underlying this data.

Objectives

Describe the specific objectives and any metrics and KPIs you planned to use to monitor/measure progress and achievements.

The focus groups were aimed at giving us an in-depth understanding into the aspects of our culture that contribute to the under-representation of BAME people at manager level and above within PwC. This will lead to recommendations for targeted action, in particular to accelerate the progression of our BAME people.

Implementation

Please describe how implementation progressed, including details such as which parts of the business/organisation were engaged (e.g. stakeholders), how long it took, any adjustments to the plan, and reasons for them.

We developed an approach and methodology to conduct a series of focus groups across our four client-facing lines of service and in all our regions. This was presented to and approved by leadership at the Talent & Diversity Council. We subsequently worked with line of service/regional leadership to cascade and implement the focus groups within their business areas.

Our data showed that the two populations most at risk of not progressing and of leaving PwC were our senior associate and manager grades. Therefore, BAME and non-BAME senior associates and managers were personally invited by their Business Unit/Regional Leader to share their experience and thoughts. Participants were selected by the D&I team using self-disclosed ethnicity data

to reduce the risk of bias, and to ensure a good range of representation from across the business.

Each one and a half hour session was facilitated by a member of the D&I team, following a consistent design and using the same methodology. The focus groups were designed to enquire into the lived everyday experiences of participants. We also wanted to differentiate between the PwC experience and the BAME experience, which the control (non-BAME) group helps us to do.

Outcomes

We concluded the focus groups in early August after having conducted 30 in total. The focus groups have provided us with incredibly rich qualitative data which we are in the process of nalysing. We will be cascading our findings and recommended actions across the firm, starting with leadership from the end of September 2017.

The intended impact of the focus groups is to accelerate the progression of our BAME talent, measured by achieving our BAME grade pool targets by 2020.

What this means in practice is action plans owned and delivered by the lines of service, which will support the development and progression of our BAME people, and impact our top three D&I priorities:

(i)   Our leaders set the tone from the top.

(ii)   We have visibility of diverse role models in leadership positions.

(iii)   We give our minorities equal opportunities to progress their careers.

In terms of initial early impact, the focus groups were positively received by participants, and in some instances resulted in facilitators receiving notes of thanks for providing the opportunity to be part of the conversation and to share their experiences. The focus group process has also enabled more open conversations with our leaders, which is starting to create increased

ownership and accountability for achieving our targets and for building an inclusive culture where all our people can thrive.

Summary

Please summarise key lessons learned and any recommendations, next steps or follow-up actions.

It is too early in the process to be able to comment on lessons.

Leadership and authenticity

Accenture's 'Exploring authentic African Caribbean leadership' programme

Context

This programme was designed specifically to support and expedite career progression of Accenture's black executives in response to under-representation at senior levels. 'Exploring Authentic African Caribbean Leadership' is a two-day course for African Caribbean senior managers and managers focusing on expanding key skills required for a successful career at Accenture, leadership exposure, and the development of individual action plans to drive career development. The course focuses on how to navigate a career at Accenture, while understanding how the cultural impact of background and experiences shape individual journeys, and how understanding key success drivers can positively impact that journey.

Course objectives are:

Explore the concept of authentic leadership and begin to define your leadership style.

Develop awareness of the role, if any, ethnicity plays in our leadership style, capability and attitudes.

Build a solid network of colleagues and leadership support for mentoring, sponsorship and career progression.

Strengthen understanding of your Personal Brand.

Reinforce our leadership's commitment to our African Caribbean diverse population.

Topics discussed include:

Leading Inclusion and Diversity, Bringing Your Whole Self to Work, Authentic Leadership, Strategies of Effective Leaders, Understanding Your Strengths in Leadership

Implementation

Please describe how implementation progressed, including details such as which parts of the business/organisation were engaged (e.g. stakeholders), how long it took, any adjustments to the plan, and reasons for them.

It was imperative we had leadership engagement, commitment and role models. The stakeholders who were part of the design process and acted as Accelerate faculty included the UKI CEO, UK Board Members, Global I&D Lead (who reports into HR, then on to our Global CEO), and our African Caribbean ERG Executive Sponsors.

We explored the influence of race on one's career so leadership and participants collaborated to influence change. We used classroom training, networking events and intimate dinners to facilitate difficult conversations, discuss barriers and build strong relationships to support advocacy.

The programme took around six months to design and we refined the agenda in collaboration with our Global I&D Team and local African Caribbean ERG to ensure we were pushing boundaries whilst maintaining participant engagement.

Outcomes

Impact

What were the outcomes? How did the outcomes measure up against the objectives (including any short-term, long-term, qualitative or quantitative outcomes)?

NB. If this is an early stage project, please mention evidence/progress to date relative to the intended impact, and what else is to be achieved.

The course has started the process of ensuring the pipeline of senior managers and managers has been equipped with:

1. Leadership connections.

2. A support network.

3. Clear view on how to ensure sponsorship and mentorship.

4. Being a role model and being authentic.

5. The importance of inclusion.

Seventy-five executives have been directly trained, coached and sponsored by our most senior black and non-black leaders.

The feedback score for was 4.8/5 – 'An engaging programme which has helped set me up for future success by helping me identify coaches, mentors and sponsorship for promotion. Leaders from diverse backgrounds are visible and celebrated.'

We have seen advocacy and successful role transitions from leadership connections. Course alumni profiles have been raised through acting as faculty on subsequent courses and alumni have received internal and external Accenture awards for their contribution.

Summary

Please summarise key lessons learned and any recommendations, next steps or follow-up actions.

As a result of the success of EAACL, we created a workshop called 'Future Leaders' so as to extend the opportunity to black employees at junior levels to support the pipeline for senior management.

In addition, our global and local I&D team and our African Caribbean network (AACN) co-designed our ongoing 'Accelerate' programme – a sustainable series of development, self-reflection, reverse mentoring, sponsorship and relationship-building interventions to progress our black employees with a focus on managers and senior managers.

Accelerate is in the format of a 12-month plan with monthly virtual or face-to-face sessions for UK black employees with leaders, and quarterly themes aligned with our performance management cycle to support advocacy and promotion preparation.

The feedback we have had from this course has shown that it is an effective and highly appreciated investment by Accenture to develop our pipeline of black talent and build leadership sponsorship and support.

Co-creating new narratives

Bloomberg's inclusion dialogues

Context

Prompted by a call to action by the McGregor-Smith and Lord Parker reviews, we began to explore how we could boost our agenda on ethnicity while increasing the inclusion of our ethnic minority staff. Acknowledging that ethnicity is an emotive topic, the EMEA Diversity Council, which is made up of senior leaders from across our businesses, challenged our ethnic minority staff to come up with a creative approach to begin a less stifled, more authentic conversation to increase awareness of ethnic diversity and stimulate action from our broader leadership on this agenda.

As a Council we knew we wanted to couch a conversation within an honest dialogue. There was no room for political correctness, which we believe suppresses 'real' conversation. And so we developed the Inclusion Dialogues. As is clear from their very name, what we were attempting to create was a safe space where everyone's opinions could be heard, debated and challenged without judgement.

The first Inclusion Dialogue – The Race to Action – took place in June 2017 and we chose this topic as the unprecedented political events being played out on the world stage demanded we address this internally.

The objective of the Inclusion Dialogues is to raise awareness and provide a safe place to ask questions and be curious, while building confidence and competence in overcoming some of the challenges we have in talking about race and ethnicity.

In addition, we wanted to engage leaders across the organisation, and to get their input and commitment to design and drive the agenda on ethnicity forward.

The Race to Action Inclusion Dialogue took several months to design and was project-managed by a subset of leaders from our EMEA Diversity Council, supported by the Diversity team in the region. The dialogue consisted of 10 roundtable conversations for senior leaders on the topic of race and ethnicity.

The dialogue began with a panel of client speakers along with Sandra Kerr as the expert from Business in the Communities Race campaign, who discussed

best practices, lessons learnt, research and data as a precursor to the roundtable discussions.

Each discussion had a Diversity Council member in attendance to help facilitate the conversation alongside members of our Black and Pan-Asian Communities (employee networks) to share their lived experience. After 45 minutes of panel discussion we allowed another 45 minutes of table discussion to explore opportunities and challenges, with a request to conclude discussions with suggested next steps.

Outcomes

Impact

What were the outcomes? How did the outcomes measure up against the objectives (including any short-term, long-term, qualitative or quantitative outcomes)?

NB. If this is an early stage project, please mention evidence/progress to date relative to the intended impact, and what else is to be achieved.

Our goal was to begin to build confidence and competence in overcoming the challenge of talking about ethnicity and race, in addition to providing managers with a new narrative which they could share with their teams as a catalyst to a wider conversation across the office.

At the end of the Dialogue we invited leaders to continue to progress the debate by forming a Race to Action community aligned to the EMEA Diversity Council to continue the dialogue on a larger scale. This Race to Action community consists of 12 leaders from across the businesses who have met several times and are supporting the launch of a piece of research we commissioned. This research, scheduled to complete in October 2017, aims to provide insights into the lived experience and perspectives of ethnic minority employees in our London office, while exploring the perspectives of employees outside of this cohort on the agenda. It is hoped that this rich data will inform and shore up our strategy on race and ethnicity and provide a more targeted roadmap for a successful outcome.

Summary

Please summarise key lessons learned and any recommendations, next steps or follow-up actions.

While this activity is progressing, the topic of race and ethnicity remains highly charged. What we have learnt is that you can take some of the emotion out of the conversation by creating non-judgmental conditions. We did that by saying from the start that everyone's experience and opinion adds to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities and is therefore welcomed. We realised that we need to focus on the I in D&I, and not only the D, if we are to to engender the conditions for co-creating a new narrative on race and identity. Co-creation is vital if we are to move this agenda forward.

An evidence-based approach to diversity and inclusion: responding to the reviews

Doyin Atewologun, Tinu Cornish and Rob Briner

About the authors: Doyin Atewologun is a chartered and registered organisational psychologist, and a lecturer in organisational leadership and learning at the School of Business and Management at Queen Mary University of London. Rob Briner is professor of organisational psychology at Queen Mary University of London and also scientific director of the Centre for Evidence-Based Management. Tinu Cornish is a chartered and registered occupational psychologist with more than 30 years' experience and a senior training and learning adviser for the Equality Challenge Unit.

Gender and ethnic diversity in UK organisations has recently been subjected to significant public scrutiny. The Hampton-Alexander Review *Improving Gender Balance in FTSE Leadership* and the McGregor-Smith Review *Race in the Workplace* have placed renewed and increased emphasis on issues of diversity in organisations.

According to McGregor-Smith, 'The time for talking is over. Now is the time to act.' As convenors of the British Psychological Society's Diversity and Inclusion at Work group, we couldn't agree more. Yet important questions remain about which actions governments and organisations should take to most effectively deal with diversity challenges. Limited progress in this field is probably not due to a lack of commitment – the UK Government and organisations already make considerable investments into diversity initiatives. Rather, poor progress is, in our view, a consequence of the limited attention paid to the *evidence* for the effectiveness of diversity initiatives when making decisions about which actions to take.

The McGregor Smith Review acknowledges that 'there is limited academic evidence on what employer practices and policies work best in improving progression of BME individuals at work.' Globally, we have a poor track record of examining the evidence for the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives. A review by two North American academics, Ellen Foster Curtis and Janice Dreachslin, similarly concluded that 'the measurable effectiveness, per se, of specific diversity interventions that are undertaken to improve organisational performance has not been well researched in the laboratory, classroom, or field'.

It is difficult to make progress where we don't know how effective or otherwise our proposed solutions are. It is even more challenging in a field such as diversity and inclusion (D&I) in which the moral case for diversity can lead to an urge to just do *something* no matter how ineffectual it may be. Our approach to D&I in the workplace needs to adopt a new approach that helps us ensure that initiatives inspired by the various calls to action are likely to be effective. Evidence-based diversity and inclusion management is just such an approach.

What is evidence-based D&I management?

Evidence-based D&I management involves the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of four sources of information to design more effective D&I initiatives (see www.cebma.org for information about evidence-based

management more generally). Conscientious means making an effort and being careful in the collection and use of evidence. Explicit means the evidence or information is written down or communicated in ways that are transparent and open so that it can be properly assessed. Judicious refers to making judgements about the quality or trustworthiness of the evidence so that more weight is given to the best quality evidence rather than all or any evidence.

Evidence means the many different types of information that can help us to identify and understand both the 'issues' of under-representation, exclusion, bias and inclusion *and* possible solutions in order to make better-informed decisions about the design of initiatives. Four sources of evidence are relevant to evidence-based D&I management:

❑ Scientific findings from the behavioural sciences and HR literature.

❑ HR and D&I Practitioners' professional expertise.

❑ The values, concerns and experience of stakeholders such as employee resource groups/networks, line managers, Executive Sponsors, Diversity Champions, minority ethnic colleagues, white majority colleagues, customers and clients.

❑ The organisation: Data or other information available from or collected by the organisation such as headcount, recruitment and promotion data and employee surveys.

Of course, D&I Practitioners already use evidence in their work. If, for example, a large organisation wants to increase the proportion of black, Asian and other minority ethnic (BAME) senior managers, the first thing they often do in our experience is commission internal research on the perceived career barriers reported by their own minority ethnic staff. Such evidence can be useful but so too can examining the scientific evidence for what is known more generally about the factors that may influence low BAME representation in management. Scientific evidence is often neglected; as is the value of using evidence to as precisely as possible understand the problem *before* using evidence to identify possible actions that may help solve the problem.

Evidence-based D&I management in practice: First, understand the problem

It is important from an evidence-based practice perspective to analyse evidence for the problem *first* and only then consider evidence for possible solutions. Evidence-based practice can also help avoid the adoption of 'fads and fashions' (for example, setting up a faith-based network simply 'because we don't have one'). Instead, we encourage HR professionals to follow the steps below in conducting evidence-based D&I practice: first for the diversity problem/opportunity and, only when and if this is well understood, then for the possible solutions.

1. Ask: A precise, specific and answerable question about the problem/ opportunity *and* solution that will help identify relevant evidence.
2. Acquire: Search for and obtain relevant evidence from each source.
3. Appraise: Judge the quality of trustworthiness of each piece of evidence.
4. Aggregate: Pull the evidence together to summarise and draw conclusions about the answer to the question.
5. Apply: Apply the answer in your situation or context to first understand and then address the problem.
6. Assess: Assess and evaluate the impact of your intervention.

Returning to the example mentioned above, if an organisation felt there was a 'problem' of low BAME representation in senior management, these are the sorts of questions it would be useful to ask to help identify relevant evidence at steps 1 and 2 to better understand the problem:

❏ What do organisational data tell us about the nature of the low BAME representation problem? What are the numbers or percentages? Are there any trends or changes over time? Are there patterns relating to particular parts of the organisation or roles or functions? What are BAME employee percentages at different levels?

❏ What do the results of scientific studies tell us about the causes of low representation? Are these causes amenable to intervention and change?

❏ Based on our experiences and expertise, what do we think is the nature of the problem of low representation and what are the effects of low representation?

❏ Do stakeholders have views about the possible nature of the problem of low BAME representation?

Overcoming the problem of 'solutioneering' in D&I management

A further advantage of adopting an evidence-based approach is that it helps practitioners avoid the problem of 'solutioneering' – defining the issue as the absence of a particular solution (for example, 'the problem is that we do not have a mentoring programme') rather than what the actual problem may be (BAME staff are not getting promoted at the same rate as white staff).

Reports such as the McGregor Smith Review can sometimes act as a driver for solutioneering because they contain blanket recommendations such as, in this case, providing unconscious bias training for all employees. Although the Review recommends that unconscious bias training is tailored for specific roles, this advice in itself is unlikely to be enough to ensure training is designed to achieve desired outcomes.

There are three main reasons for this: First, training on its own is unlikely to bring about behavioural change. Other supports need to be put in place once the participant returns to the workplace to help the transfer of training. Second, the evidence for what works to reduce unconscious bias is drawn mainly from laboratory studies and has yet to be tested adequately in the field. A review conducted for the Equalities Challenge Unit concluded that evaluations of the impact of such programmes are sparse. Last and perhaps most importantly, unconscious bias may be only one of many factors that is preventing change. Other factors include conscious biases as well as structural and process issues. In other words, however much awareness individuals develop about their own unconscious biases, and however willing they are to behave differently, if there are no interventions in place to tackle these other factors then outcomes for BAME staff are unlikely to change simply by making all employees undertake unconscious bias training.

To take just one example – unconscious bias by selectors is often cited as the reason for the under-representation of BAME employees in managerial roles. While it may play a role, it is not the only factor or even necessarily an

important factor. To make a real improvement to the recruitment of BAME candidates some of the 'big four' accountancy/consultancy firms decided to drop the requirement to have a 2:1 degree for entry to their graduate management programmes. This requirement was having an adverse impact on BAME candidates who may have performed less well in their degrees because of discrimination in their undergraduate programmes. Before embarking on unconscious bias training, organisations need to identify and understand exactly what the problems are and which particular factors are acting to keep inequalities in place. With this understanding they will then be in a better place to design initiatives which have a real chance of being effective.

Build on your existing frameworks

Whilst on the face of it this approach may seem challenging or complex, it is important to bear in mind that D&I Practitioners already use evidence and existing approaches can be developed and strengthened. In particular, by including scientific evidence and paying more attention to the *quality* of evidence from all sources, we can move much closer to evidence-based D&I management. It is also important to view this not as a one-off activity, but rather as the development of practitioner skills and organisational resources which with time will improve our capacity and speed for engaging in evidence-based D&I.

Promoting equity for BAME people at work is complex and there is no shortage of advocated interventions. However, we encourage HR and D&I Practitioners who are eager and willing to heed McGregor Smith's call to action to avoid the pressure to be seen just to be doing something. Instead, try being conscientious, explicit and judicious in the use of the four sources of information described in order to identify D&I problems and design effective D&I initiatives. If we don't adopt an evidence-based approach to D&I management, we risk becoming part of the problem in that our diversity initiatives will remain largely symbolic and we will continue to fail to address real problems or bring about meaningful and sustainable change.

Important terminology

Action research	A research methodology often used in real rather than experimental situations. It is characterised by being participatory or collaborative in nature; a process of enquiry that includes both researchers and practitioners.
Advocates	Those who publicly support, defend or speak in favour of an individual, policy or cause.
Ally/allies	This term is used in the context of this report to describe someone who is supportive of BAME people. It encompasses white allies as well as those within the BAME grouping who support one another, for example, an Asian person who is an ally to a black person.
BAME	This is an umbrella term used in the UK which refers to non-white individuals or groups. It is an acronym of the words 'black, Asian and minority ethnic', also sometimes written out as 'black, Asian and *other* minority ethnic'.
Blue chip organisations	Though the term is founded in the stock market and historically was used to represent high-quality, high-priced, stable stocks, it is used in this report to represent recognised large national and international firms. This includes companies listed on the FTSE 100 index and other indices.
Colour-blindness	Refers to intentionally overlooking or disregarding racial or ethnic differences in order not to be seen as racist or discriminatory. Also referred to as racial colour-blindness.
Cue cards	Cue cards are used to elicit written responses or feedback that might not be shared in broader group discussions, either because of time constraints or because of other sensitivities.
Cultural awareness	Awareness and understanding of differences, similarities and sensitivities in cultural attitudes, beliefs, values, and perceptions between groups of people.
Culture gap	A culture gap, or cultural mismatch, describes the incompatibilities between an individual's cultural norms and behaviours and the norms and behaviours required and expected of that individual in order for them to integrate and be successful in an organisation.
Diversity and inclusion	Abbreviated to D&I. In the context of this report, the diversity and inclusion practice or function of an organisation aims to achieve the goals of promoting and improving diversity and equality amongst the workforce, and ensuring an inclusive workplace.
D&I Practitioners	The diversity and inclusion practitioners represent the specialist roles responsible for the D&I function. Usually, but not exclusively, they sit within the human resources function.

Data	A set of values or information in raw form. Data can be qualitative or quantitative and can be interpreted or processed to infer observations and statistics.
Employee Networks	Employee Networks are also known as employee resource groups (ERGs) or business resource groups. These are employee-led groups which have the support of their organisation and are usually aimed at fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace, in alignment with organisational values. They are usually run on a voluntary basis and rely on discretionary effort.
Executive Sponsors	The Executive Sponsor is a senior individual within the organisation who advises, guides, supports and advocates for the interests of the Employee Network or ERG. The seniority of Executive Sponsors varies across organisations, but it is widely recommended that Executive Sponsors hold visible, influential roles at a decision-making level. They will have a strong interest in enabling the success of ERGs.
KPIs	This is an abbreviation for key performance indicators. These are measurable values that enable organisations to evaluate their performance against objectives or targets.
Hierarchical organisations	These are organisations structured as pyramids in which higher levels are accorded greater power and influence than lower ones. In the chain of command, it is common for communication to be largely limited to peers, an immediate superior and immediate subordinates.
High-visibility work	Refers to work that is somewhat outside of or beyond the everyday work of employees, so is sometimes referred to as 'stretch', and is deemed by senior managers to be important and significant. Successful delivery is likely to attract recognition for the individuals executing the assignment.
HR Directors	The Human Resource Directors represent the leadership of the HR function within their organisation. Those involved in this study also have the overarching responsibility for the equality, diversity and inclusion function.
Minority group	A sub-group of people differentiated from a larger group or social majority. Often used to describe those of a particular race, ethnicity, culture or other protected group.
Network Leads	Representatives who have the role of the chair or co-chair of their BAME Employee Resource Group.
Organisational culture	The shared assumptions, values, beliefs and written and unwritten rules that shape how an organisation operates.

Political working environment	The type of environment or atmosphere created by the politics of an organisation or part of an organisation. In a less constructive political working environment, co-workers may use strategies to gain advantage over others or to achieve personal objectives.
Protected group	A group that identifies with or is identified by a particular (protected) characteristic and which may campaign for equality based on that characteristic. Protected characteristics have a specific meaning in the UK as defined in the Equality Act 2010.
Qualitative data	A form of information that cannot be expressed in numerical form. It tends to describe rather than measure certain characteristics, attributes or properties and, for that reason, is sometimes referred to as categorical data.
Quantitative data	Information produced in numerical form that can be manipulated or transformed through the use of statistics.
Social mobility	The movement of individuals or groups between social strata due to changes in their wealth or social status. Social mobility issues are sometimes conflated with ethnicity issues due to the disproportionate representation of ethnic minorities in socially and economically disadvantaged positions.
Societal stereotypes	Generalised judgements or beliefs – which can be positive, negative or neutral – that are widely held within a particular society about a sub-group.
The middle	In the context of this report, the middle refers to experienced professionals who have line management and/or project leadership responsibility but who do not yet report directly to a member of the c-suite or executive committee of their organisation.
Unconscious bias	Unconscious bias occurs when people form judgements based on deeply ingrained attitudes of which they are partly or wholly unconscious. These attitudes or beliefs are shaped by education, cultural background, personal experience, social norms, gender and ethnicity.
Unconscious bias training	Training that is designed to help people become aware of their own and others' unconscious bias, as well as how to minimise its effects.
Workplace politics	Also known as office politics or organisational politics, workplace politics represents informal or unofficial strategies and tactics used to influence decisions, outcomes or power dynamics for individual or collective gain.

Research methodology

Action research

We used an Action Research approach to source the rich responses and feedback presented in this report. 'Action Research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview… It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities[1].'

Participants

Fifty-six participants took part in this research, of whom 43% were male and 57% female. Asian participants made up 14% of the participants, black participants made up 39% and white participants 47%. Participants were all employed by national or international organisations operating in the UK. All research participants were selected as members of one of four stakeholder groups. The groups were: Human Resource Directors, who represented 21% of participants; Network Leads, who represented 30% of participants; Diversity and Inclusion Practitioners, who represented 20% of participants; and Executive Sponsors, who represented 29% of participants. All participants completed all stages of the research process.

Human Resources Director were included because of their unique access to all stakeholders in the diversity landscape. Network Leads often have an unfiltered version of lived experience from the grassroots, and have the ear of at least one senior Executive Sponsor in the organisation. As leaders of an employee resource group, Network Leads usually have a relationship with HR and D&I too. In short, they know the real deal and can act as advocates even if they are volunteers and not employed to do so. Diversity and Inclusion practitioners are a group whose primary responsibility is to monitor and address the issues relating to organisational diversity. Executive Sponsors provide the senior-level perspective on BAME progression.

Research process

The research was conducted in three stages. Stage one of the data collection was an online survey which was sent to participants and combined quantitative and qualitative research methodology. Stage two gathered information via focus groups conducted in roundtable discussions. In stage three participants completed cue cards which generated additional information not gathered in the first two stages. Stages two and three used qualitative research techniques:

Stage one

The online survey requested demographic information about the participants and their organisations. It also asked for information about the practices, attitudes and behaviours of the organisations represented, specifically in relation to the BAME agenda.

Survey questions were customised for each of the four stakeholder groups in order to ensure participants received only those questions that were relevant to them. This was helpful in making the process more efficient. Notwithstanding this, survey questions were kept as consistent as possible across the groups.

Stage two

Four focus-group discussions were held, one for each stakeholder group. Focus group sizes ranged from 11 to 17 participants. The discussions were semi-structured to direct discussion towards the points of interest for the research purpose. However, participants were able to discuss freely for the majority of the duration.

Stage three

Cue cards were used as a follow-up data-collection technique, and were distributed immediately after each focus group session. The cue card technique was conducted anonymously, and enabled participants to provide feedback free of social desirability influences. A social desirability influence can occur when participants tailor their responses to ameliorate a fear of being judged by others because of opinions, behaviours or attitudes expressed publicly.

Data analysis

Online survey data

The survey data were analysed using SPSS statistical analysis package. Chi square frequency analysis (including Fisher's exact test adjustment for small sample size) was used where yes/no responses were provided, and this statistical technique allowed for direct comparison between groups in response to specific questions.

The survey data were also analysed for information on how much each group endorsed or rejected specific statements regarding practices and initiatives relating to ethnic minorities, and this is reported via percentages throughout the survey.

Focus group and cue card data

The qualitative data (focus groups and cue cards) were analysed using grounded theory analysis in NVivo qualitative data analysis package to identify key themes. A content analysis was conducted in order to identify the most frequently discussed topics in both the focus groups and the cue card data.

The Black British Business Awards Research Team

Dr Doyin Atewologun

Research Lead for the BBBAwards
Lecturer in Organisational Leadership and Learning, School of Business and Management,
Queen Mary University of London

Doyin is a Chartered Organisational Psychologist and Research Lead for the BBBAwards. She is one of the foremost experts on leadership, inclusion, identities and intersectionality in the UK, and has worked with many of the FTSE 100 companies, the UK civil service and UN agencies. Doyin's research has gained several international awards. She is a faculty member of Queen Mary University of London's School of Business and Management and Visiting Fellow at Cranfield School of Management, UK, Lagos Business School, Nigeria and the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa. Doyin is the lead researcher on Sir John Parker's review into diversity on FTSE 100 boards as commissioned by the then Secretary of State for Business. She is also Deputy Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion at Work Group of the British Psychological Society. Prior to her academic career, Doyin worked as Lead Consultant in OPP Ltd, a pan-Europe business psychology consultancy, specialising in assessment and recruitment, talent development, coaching and team building.

Sophie Chandauka

BBBAwards Co-Founder and Chair of Judging Panel
Executive Director, EMEA Chief Administrative Officer, Legal and Compliance Division,
Morgan Stanley

Sophie is an Executive Director and CAO of Morgan Stanley's Legal and Compliance Division in EMEA. She was previously the Head of Group Treasury (Legal) at Virgin Money leading execution of corporate finance deals in excess of £13-billion in five years. A former Senior Associate at global firm Baker McKenzie, she advised clients such as NIKE and The Body Shop. She has served on the boards of Sentebale and Protimos. Sentebale was founded by Prince Harry to support children affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa. Protimos supports development lawyers in Africa. She is an advisor to The Rhodes Incubator and the BAME/Multicultural chapter of The Network of Networks (TNON). A Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow and co-founder of the Black British Business Awards, she is a recipient of many industry awards and has featured as one

of the top 100 most influential BAME business leaders in several publications, including the *Financial Times*, *Sunday Times* and *The Power List*. Sophie is Co-Chair of Morgan Stanley's African and Caribbean Business Alliance and a member of the Executive Leadership Council (ELC) – the pre-eminent membership organisation committed to increasing the number of black executives in c-suites and corporate boards of global enterprises.

Melanie Eusebe

Chair and Co-Founder of the Black British Business Awards
Executive Producer, Women of the World Festival, Southbank Centre

Melanie is a strategist with over 20 years' experience as a Management Consultant for IBM and EY, with a career that spans five continents, working with some of the world's biggest brands. Melanie and her work have featured on media outlets around the world, including the *BBC*, *CBC*, *Global News*, *Sky News*, *Management Today*, *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian*. Melanie dedicates part of her time to being a professor, teaching courses in both Business Strategy and Leadership and Management in universities in both the UK and USA. Alongside being the Chair and Co-Founder of the Black British Business Awards, Melanie is also a champion of the arts and is the Executive Producer for the Women of the World (WoW) Festival, a global gender equality festival occurring in 45 cities and on five continents with over two million attendees around the world. Recently recognised by the Queen for her efforts, Melanie has been profiled as one of the most influential women in business and the creative industries in the UK.

Diane Greenidge

Founder and Chair, The Network of Networks
Diversity and Inclusion Consultant

Diane is founder of the BAME/Multicultural chapter of The Network of Networks (TNON) which, since 2011, has promoted excellence in practice for leaders of in-house employee networks and resource groups. She is dedicated to encouraging emergent leaders in approximately 50 major London-based organisations to drive change, achieve their networks' goals, contribute to

their organisations' objectives and navigate their careers. Diane's broader experience spans senior roles in the financial services and technology sectors. She was formerly the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Europe at BNY Mellon where her remit grew to include responsibilities related to diversity and inclusion and employee engagement, which led to her current role. She now helps organisations and individuals to realise the potential and opportunities arising from having a diverse workforce and inclusive culture by delivering research projects, implementing change programmes and providing mentoring.

Sheekha Rajani

Diversity and Inclusion Consultant for the BBBAwards
Director and Co-Founder, Inclusive Intelligence
Senior Manager, Diversity and Inclusion, PwC

Sheekha is a highly experienced diversity and inclusion (D&I) specialist, and has worked with a variety of organisations in developing inclusive workplaces. Sheekha's focus is on partnering with her clients to maximise the business value of D&I and positively impact culture change. Examples range from developing strategies and plans to drive diversity, inclusion and flexible working through recruitment; delivering training and workshops on diversity and inclusive leadership topics; through to conducting D&I audits of HR processes to diagnose strengths and priority areas for improvement. Her recent clients include Bank of England, Citi, KPMG, PA Consulting, Rolls Royce and Vodafone. Prior to launching her consultancy practice, Sheekha held global D&I positions at HSBC and BAE Systems, where her main priority was to grow diverse talent pipelines to leadership positions. Sheekha is on assignment with PwC until February 2018, where she is helping to evolve the BAME diversity strategy to drive achievement of externally published ethnicity targets.

Fatima Tresh

Research Assistant for the BBBAwards
PhD Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Group Processes
Assistant Lecturer, School of Psychology, University of Kent

Fatima is a PhD researcher at the Centre for the Study of Group Processes in the School of Psychology, University of Kent. Fatima's research, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, examines biases against minority groups in evaluations of leadership potential, and solutions for increasing the rate at which minorities are identified as high-potential. Fatima is an Assistant Lecturer in Statistics and Methodology for the Masters programmes in Psychology at the University of Kent. She also has a wide range of research experience examining organisational behaviour, including (un)ethical leadership, identity and leadership, political behaviour and colleague conflict.

Notes

Executive summary

1 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-in-the-workplace-the-mcgregor-smith-review 2 Hunt, Layton and Prince: Diversity Matters Report, McKinsey & Company, 2015

3 https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/students-2015-16/introduction

4 https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/publications/working-papers/iser/2016-02.pdf

5 https://www.bitc.org.uk/node/320455

6 http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/A_Report_into_the_Ethnic_Diversity_of_UK_Boards/$FILE/Beyond%20One%20by%2021%20PDF%20Report.pdf

7 Cary Block and Debra Noumair (2017) in *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*.

8 To maintain our participants' anonymity, we have only included role information when reporting quotes.

Chapter 1: Key challenges

1 https://race.bitc.org.uk/research-insight/factsheet/Londonlabourmarket

2 See Caryn Block and Debra Noumair (2017). *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*. DOI: https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.qmul.ac.uk/10.1177/0021886317703250

3 See Doyin Atewologun 'Intersectionality Theory and Practice' in *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Business and Management* (forthcoming).

Chapter 2: Levers for change

1 Robin Ely, Debra Meyerson & Martin Davidson (2006). *Harvard Business Review*

2 C.J. Vinkenburg (2017). In the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886317703292

3 The Cranfield Female FTSE report (2016)

4 Edwin Locke & Gary Latham (2006). In 'Current directions in psychological science'.

Research methodology

1 Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. London: Sage Publications.

Acknowledgements

Authors
Dr Doyin Atewologun
Sophia T. Chandauka
Melanie Eusebe
Diane Greenidge
Sheekha Rajani
Fatima Tresh

Editor
Orenna Krut

Artwork
Jennifer La Trobe
Tim Casswell
creativeconnection.co.uk

Social media
Kelly Simpson
MySocialMedia PA

Operations
Sheila Gbolonyo
Dawn White

Photography
Steve Dunlop
www.stevedunlop.com

Videography
Naked Noise
www.nakednoise.co.uk

BBBA

**BLACK BRITISH
BUSINESS** AWARDS

The Black British Business Awards (BBBAwards)
celebrate the often unsung contributions of
exceptional professionals and entrepreneurs of
black heritage in businesses operating in Great
Britain. They focus on commercial excellence
and business impact, and have been endorsed
by Prime Minister May, Prime Minister Cameron,
Secretaries of State for Business, the Mayor of
the City of London and other prominent public
and private sector leaders. The BBBAwards are
the only premier awards programme of their
kind in Great Britain, and enjoy the support of
over 20 significant multinational corporations.

Visit www.thebbbawards.com
Email research@thebbbawards.com
Twitter @theBBBAwards
#themiddleresearch
#TheBBBAwards