

From Diversity to Inclusion: The Progression of Equality in Public Relations and Challenges for the Future

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FOREWORD

In 2009, the CIPR President-elect Paul Mylrea FCIPR approached a number of PR practitioners to participate in an initiative exploring the lack of diversity within the UK PR industry.

The Diversity Working Group (DWG), as it became known, would raise awareness of the value of diversity in public relations and identify the barriers facing PR practitioners.

It would report before the end of 2010 with key recommendations and actions for the PR industry, before being disbanded. However, five years later the Diversity Working Group is still here, working to improve diversity within the PR industry.

The five years of its existence have seen success and failure, as well as reasons for great optimism and frustration.

When the DWG was formed in 2009, the CIPR reported that the number of PR practitioners from non-white backgrounds was 7%. The figure now stands at 9%.

This report is not intended to support the continuing existence of the DWG. Its purpose is to assess the progress of the diversity mission over the last five years, and reveal what lessons can be learned for the future.

Through going out to practitioners and listening to their views, we can evidence that there has been a great change in attitude but we need to ensure that the DWG's effort is leading to tangible change. We must strive to improve the day-to-day reality for those working in public relations, but we can't do it alone.

Together, we need to build on the work of the last five years and ensure that 2020 sees a more open and inclusive PR industry, which reflects the society it seeks to engage.

Cornelius Alexander Found.Chart.PR FCIPR



EMBRACE DIVERSITY OR FAIL

Diversity – why care? Hasn't diversity been done to death in the media? Hasn't the PR industry 'done that' and moved on to the next hot topic?

Well the answer is no. In fact, diversity only continues to become more important and relevant as it increasingly drives societal change, becomes a factor in how we communicate, questions our concepts of community and challenges our professional sphere and practices. No longer 'just' an HR issue or an inconvenient stat in the annual report, diversity is finally on the agenda and it's here to stay.

As the world changes socially, economically, politically, demographically and technologically, new pressures and increased globalisation will mean that diversity is becoming a business imperative. Certainly those of us in the communications sector will need to address its many implications for our business. These changes will result in the need to target more diverse audiences, create trust with more varied and 'new' stakeholders, reach more diverse markets and increasingly work with diverse clients facing global business challenges – themselves all being influenced by diverse cultural and creative trends. All of which the PR industry will need to understand and deliver to maintain commercial advantage.

And of course, the media landscape has changed significantly too; becoming more diverse itself thereby supporting and at the same time, enabling change. From fragmented audiences, to multiple channels, to numerous ways to engage via technology, alongside smart targeting of diverse interests and on and off-line alignment. These diverse audiences are themselves part of a huge shift, from 'old school' demographics to interest driven communities – not defined or held back by geographies, age, money or the physical world – they represent new global audiences and influencers.

At the same time, many groups are making a strong and increasingly vocal call for fairness and equality. For example, women in business and the challenges they face has never been more in the spotlight, though with women still having to fight for equal pay it's clear we have a long way to go. The [CIPR's gender pay gap research](#) recently confirmed what many have known for some time. The 2015

research published in February highlighted that a clear pay inequality gap of £8,483 exists in favour of men, a figure that cannot be explained by any other factor such as length of service, seniority, parenthood, or a higher prevalence of part-time work amongst women.

And while women are at the vanguard of current discussions around corporate equality, diversity and fairness, global trends mean that the workplace is also undergoing an evolution from the monoculture of yesteryear to a new diverse reality. The future workplace will reflect the global movement of people, new societal trends, corporate market expansion, technological advances and new talent pools resulting in a truly new workforce. From multigenerational teams of gen-Xers, baby boomers and millennials; to more women in the workplace ([1 billion alone will enter the workforce from emerging markets by 2020](#)); to more home working and part-time roles enabled by flexible working; to seamless multi-market teams powered by new technology. Talent is changing. The needs of talent are changing. And despite this new workforce, as we in PR repeat our message about the fight for new talent and how lack of talent is our biggest business concern, we continue to hire 'people like us'. Our universities? Tick. Our favoured degrees? Tick. Our 'type'? Tick. Our accent? Tick? One of us? Tick.

We don't need 'people like us'. We need smart, creative and committed talent. We need folks who get social, fragmented media and new communities. We need to challenge the old ways of doing things. We need...diversity! Diversity to keep us creative and insightful via new input and ideas from a wide group of fresh minds and cultures. The [CIPR State of the Profession Survey 2014/15](#) refreshingly found two-thirds of PR Professionals agreed diverse teams produced better campaigns but the CIPR diversity monitoring stats are still a grim read. BAME professionals constitute just 9% of the public relations workforce. We are not challenging ourselves, or our industry. We must embrace diversity, support positive change and reap the benefits.

Of course, you could just embrace diversity as it's the right thing to do or because you want to be seen to do the right thing. Or you could wait until you fall foul of the legislation.

The Government has already announced plans to compel large organisations to publish information on employee salaries. The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal for any organisation to pay men and women unequally. Legislation will eventually force our industry to improve its attitude to all diversity issues, but in the meantime are you willing to risk negative feedback from your peers, clients or employees? Either way, it's your corporate reputation.

CASE STUDY 1 OGILVY PRIDE

1 Why you set up the network

We set up the network to help create a positive employment experience for our LGBT employees and promote an open, honest, supportive and inclusive workplace across Ogilvy PR. Ogilvy aims to recruit and retain a diverse group made up from the most talented people. If you are committed to fostering a creative workplace, the first thing you need to do is to embrace ideas and ways of thinking that are different to your own. This means embracing diversity and difference. Ogilvy Pride is just as important for the next phase of creativity within the marketing industry, and to ensure effective communications, as they are for good personnel relationships within our company.

2 What you had to do to get it up and running

We partnered with Stonewall, the UK LGBT rights charity, as a Global Diversity Champion. We are the first PR firm to become global diversity champions with Stonewall, and this relationship has helped us across our aims of becoming a diverse employer and employer of choice for the LGBT community, as well as providing valuable insights for the work that we do for our clients. In order to set up the network, we had support from our most senior leaders within the business to ensure that the message of LGBT inclusion was set from the top of the company. In April 2015, we hosted an industry event with Sir Martin Sorrell and Lord Browne, in which they discussed the book 'The Glass Closet' and the importance of authenticity in business to all employees and our clients.

3 How it's been received

The network has been championed as a best in class case study across the Ogilvy Group and wider WPP network to promote LGBT diversity. Ogilvy Pride was recognised by the Inclusive Networks Organisation as

a top 40 professional network, putting us alongside our clients such as BBC, IBM, Barclays and RBS in 2015. Ogilvy Pride is now being established in other markets across Ogilvy PR, such as Prague, Milan, Shanghai, Philippines, Hong Kong and Washington DC.

4 The impact it's had on the business and client work

Ogilvy Pride has impacted 3 key business functions – human resources, marketing and new business. Through promoting an inclusive and LGBT-friendly environment, Ogilvy Pride has fostered diverse talent at Ogilvy PR. Ogilvy Pride has generated thought leadership and inspired brands to take the steps to engage with issues of LGBT rights through their communications. And Ogilvy Pride has generated its own revenue stream, through being an LGBT insights specialist practice. Ogilvy Pride projects have included working with client Turner Broadcasting to promote the TV show RuPaul's Drag Race and LGBT rights charity Stonewall.

With the fragmentation of the media landscape, and the rise of niche targeted media outlets, a deep understanding and appreciation of diversity is now key to effective communications.

"Diversity and Inclusion is important to Ogilvy PR because it is the right thing to do. Period. It's right for our people, it's right for our clients and it's right for our business. If we are to engage consumers and influencers, we need to be more representative of the audiences our clients seek to reach. Creating a larger, more diverse Executive Committee for Ogilvy PR was a significant step forward for us in 2015 – more to follow in 2016."
Stuart Smith, Global CEO, Ogilvy PR

Website:

<https://ogilvy.co.uk/agencies/ogilvypride>

“Diversity and Inclusion is important to Ogilvy PR because it is the right thing to do. Period. It’s right for our people, it’s right for our clients and it’s right for our business.”

Stuart Smith, Global CEO, Ogilvy PR

THE RESEARCH

Lessons from professionals

The DWG wanted to learn about public relations professionals' experiences of diversity in the workplace. The group conducted two separate strands of qualitative research, designed to gather views on the current state of diversity and future challenges facing the profession. By seeking insight based on personal experiences, the project complimented existing quantitative research to reveal the true state of diversity in public relations.

Roundtables

In July 2015, the DWG hosted roundtable discussions in London and Leeds to gauge the attitudes of PR professionals towards different diversity issues impacting public relations. Each discussion lasted an hour and a half and took place under the Chatham House Rule to encourage participants to speak openly about their experiences. The London roundtable took place at the CIPR offices in Russell Square on Thursday 2 July and was attended by 15 public relations professionals. A further ten practitioners attended the Leeds roundtable, which was held at Leeds Beckett University on Tuesday 7 July. Participants comprised a mix of senior and junior public relations practitioners, with 60% of roundtable participants being female, 68% working in-house and 32% working in agencies.

Mobile research

The DWG then undertook an innovative approach to delve deeper into the views of practitioners on diversity in public relations. The mobile research project enlisted 11 participants who, between 20 July and 24 August, were sent notifications to their mobile devices prompting them to record video feedback on various issues impacting diversity in public relations. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences and share their views on gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and age.

64% of participants were female. Although many participants had worked in both agency and in-house environments, 73% worked for a range of large and small consultancies at the time of recording, whilst 27% said they currently worked in-house. The project was led by [Kiosk HQ](#), under the guidance of the DWG.

PR cannot afford to side-line older professionals

Participants spoke of their frustration with the PR industry's obsession with youth. Demanding hours, along with a fast day-to-day pace, mean our industry is often wrongfully regarded as a young person's profession. The result is that agency and in-house teams miss out on hiring older professionals. PR professionals revealed there needed to be a balance struck between celebrating young practitioners, whilst remaining mindful of older professionals.

"In my experience the best comms teams have been made up of a variety of people from diverse age groups where everyone can bring something different to the team." – Mark Burey

At the London roundtable, PR professionals stressed the importance of exercising caution when drafting job descriptions. Both HR and PR professionals need to be mindful of the language they use in job descriptions to ensure all job opportunities remain inclusive.

"On the ageism thing, I had coffee with a recruitment consultant who recruits at the highest level, and she said she's quite concerned about the level of ageism she's seeing, and she said it's the language she looks out for. They say 'I want someone dynamic', and what she says is 'You mean you want someone young, you want someone in their thirties.'" (London roundtable)

In Leeds, the enthusiastic pursuit of 'digital natives' emerged as an example of the way older practitioners can be left out in the cold. What's more, participants spoke of an anxiety of revealing O-Level qualifications, for fear of risking age discrimination.

“And certainly where age is concerned, there may be certain challenges. There’s social media, you need to be up on this, you’ve got to know about Facebook, you need to know about Twitter etc.” – so maybe, in an age-group where this is not something incredibly comfortable, maybe that’s causing a little bit of alienation there. We could be a bit more welcoming and encompassing for older people.” – Saadia Usmani MCIPR

“Something I found quite disturbing was when a friend of mine and colleague was trying to come back to work after giving birth. She’d been with the company for around six years and when she wanted to come back to work for three days a week, it turned out to be really difficult to do. The company was saying they couldn’t put her on any clients because the client expects you to be there five days a week.” – Anonymous

By ignoring older professionals, many of whom may have gained invaluable experience from other industries, we risk depriving ourselves of fresh insight at a time when industry convergence is at an all-time high. Participants unanimously agreed that addressing this cultural imbalance ought to be regarded as a priority for the PR industry.

It was felt that the lack of impetus to enact change was representative of the power imbalance that exists in public relations. Whilst women comprise two-thirds of the industry, the majority of senior management teams are still made up of men. In other words, despite being outnumbered, men hold the power in PR. Some of those who took part in the mobile research felt that this explained why there were so few women in senior management positions. An indirect consequence of this is that many women have left their companies to establish their own businesses and whilst participants acknowledged this as a positive, the widely held consensus was that more needed to be done to tackle the root causes of their disaffection.

“I think PR agencies, like the rest of the marketing industry, are obsessed with youth, both in terms of how they construct campaigns, and how they recruit. I think that it’s incredibly narrow-minded and that it sells themselves and their clients very short indeed...having a diverse age mix within an organisation, or within an agency is I think, extremely valuable. And an older perspective, will I think, in many circumstances add value to the performance of the agency.”
– Robert Metcalfe MCIPR

“The long hours, the macho full-on working culture – especially in PR agencies – I feel it hasn’t changed much over the years. Indeed, since the last recession it is probably getting worse. Yes, there are female friendly firms, but they are in the minority as most companies are directed by men. Unless they have children, few realise how tough the work-life balance is.”
– Robert Metcalfe MCIPR



Achieving gender parity is still proving an uphill struggle

Issues relating to maternity leave and return-to-work were repeatedly raised by both male and female research participants. There was a particularly strong sense of injustice amongst women who felt they had been punished professionally for deciding to start a family. Their frustration was amplified by the fact such an inflexible working culture presides in an industry almost two-thirds female.

The gender pay gap was another area of frustration for professionals. Mobile research participants bemoaned the lack of action by companies to redress the disparity. Some pointed to the fact that in many ways, equal gender pay is the simplest of all the diversity challenges the industry needs to overcome. All that’s required is for organisations to publish transparent pay grades for specific roles, and pay men and women equally.



“Postgraduate students that I’ve been teaching this semester are 90% non-European. I was shocked how many of them weren’t getting interviews when they used their original family names. I said, ‘Why don’t you try, as an experiment, changing your surname to an English name?’ All of them bar one got an interview.” (Leeds roundtable)

There was, however, a degree of cause for optimism. Many participants felt public relations was slowly adopting more flexible working structures and there were examples of organisations who had equal numbers of men and women in senior management positions.

“In my experience, quite a lot of it comes down to the company itself. I’ve worked for a couple of agencies where they’ve had women owners and they’ve been relatively fair agencies. Hotwire where I worked at had a 50-50 board and that’s certainly been an influence for us at Dynamo, and we have 50-50 on our leadership board as well”.
– Peter Bowles MCIPR

“As someone from a Polish background, I’ve been discriminated against many times – particularly during the recruitment process. I was also once taken off the account because, as my manager admitted to me later, the client I was working with didn’t like the fact I wasn’t British” – Magda Bulska

“The profession feels hideously white – the PRWeek Power Book is a sea of white faces.” – Peter Bowles MCIPR

Increasing ethnic diversity is a work in progress

Professionals expressed their frustration at the consistently feeble numbers of PR practitioners from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Mulling over figures that indicate only 9% of PR professionals are from BAME backgrounds, some participants attributed the cause of the issue to a lack of impetus for change and a satisfaction with the status quo, rather than overt discrimination. Yet other participants at the Leeds roundtable held stronger views.

Participants unanimously agreed that allowing the present state of affairs to remain was not an option. At the London roundtable it was mentioned that young professionals from BAME backgrounds felt pressurised to mould themselves into who they felt they ought to be, as opposed to allowing themselves to develop naturally. This can lead to those professionals feeling isolated, prompting them to question whether public relations was the right career choice. An absence of BAME role models and the dominance of white middle-class practitioners can strengthen feelings of isolation. This may go some way to explaining why so few BAME professionals hold senior management positions in public relations – retaining talent is as much an issue as obtaining it.

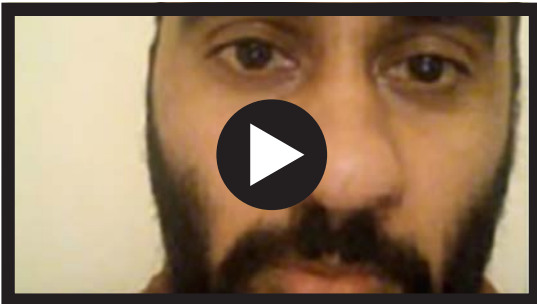
“I was the only black person in a company of 80.” – Joanne Murefu

On the issue of isolation, some participants felt PR agencies and in-house teams needed to think more carefully about how they present themselves.

“We don’t often think about the way we represent our own organisations and it often perturbs me when I see really well-meaning organisations tweeting team pictures or awards celebrations showing totally young, white groups of people... I think it promotes a certain image about that organisation that doesn’t necessarily seem to welcome those from diverse backgrounds.” – Mark Burey

In London, there was a feeling that a degree of progress on the issue had been made. Now more than ever, senior management teams were aware of the debate surrounding the lack of ethnic diversity in PR. Having raised awareness of the issue, the industry finds itself needing to convince the C-suite of the business benefits brought by ethnically diverse teams. Many participants felt that the narrative surrounding BAME professionals needed to shift away from ‘diversity’, towards talent acquisition. The public relations industry is overlooking a goldmine of talent that can help propel teams and agencies to new heights.

“We have to work with people from the earlier stage and reposition what it means to be a PR person and what a PR person should look like.” – Anonymous



Many participants pointed to a lack of visibility and understanding of PR amongst those from ethnically diverse backgrounds. There was a deep sense of frustration that industry bodies and agencies were not making conscious efforts to go out to diverse communities and schools where little is known about public relations.

“The reason why I feel a lot of other industries are making headway is because they’re acknowledging that, and they’re consciously setting up programmes and going out there to educate our children, and open up the doors for them. And show them that actually, you don’t have to be pigeon-holed into certain careers because that’s what your parents have told you, that that’s what your friends have told you.”
(London roundtable)

“If you come from a working class background and you tell your mum and dad that you want to go work in public relations, they go, “Why? Get a proper job.” (Leeds roundtable)

The Taylor Bennett Foundation, which provides public relations training and career support to ethnically diverse individuals interested in PR was widely praised by research participants. Two of the mobile research participants were Taylor Bennett graduates now employed by leading public relations organisations. The Foundation was praised for its efforts in sourcing talent from diverse communities but participants felt the industry as a whole needed to engage in similar initiatives. Secondary school outreach programmes were felt to be particularly crucial because school careers advisors often lack an understanding of public relations, leaving students with very little chance of considering PR as a career. Increasing public relations as a viable career path for students should therefore be a priority for the industry.

“I think it’s [ethnic diversity] still very much on the periphery. I work in housing, I work in an in-house team in housing and I guess I’ve seen in housing that communications type teams have diversified a little over the last few years, but not in senior positions.”
– Carli Harper-Penman MCIPR’

“As someone who’s been in the industry for a number of years, it’s rare that I meet someone like myself and even more rare that someone like me has been in the industry for such a long time, which is a rather sad indictment”
 – Mark Burey

“I can’t think of any role models with disabilities in the industries and I don’t think we offer any positive examples of disability in the work we do. As with BME, I think disabled people are often invisible... It doesn’t seem to occur, well actually we’re talking about almost 20% of the population, it’s important to have positive messages, positive representations in the media work and community engagement work we do, it’s just something that’s overlooked.”
 – Carli Harper-Penman MCIPR

“Disability is one of PR’s dirty secrets”
 Roundtable and mobile research participants were united in their condemnation of the way public relations has overlooked those with disabilities.

“I have to say PR has been pretty hopeless when it comes to disability.” – Carli Harper-Penman MCIPR



One mobile research participant felt that disabled people were side-lined from public relations because those with disabilities didn’t fit the pre-conceived, stereotypical image of a public relations team. It was argued that people with disabilities would find the typical public relations office an unfriendly and hostile environment.

Of all the diversity issues impacting public relations, our participants felt disability was the least spoken about. The impression was that public relations recruiters and organisations had largely ignored the issue of disabled people. Participants struggled to recollect having worked with any colleagues with visible disabilities, never mind any in senior management positions.

Others bemoaned the practical obstacles by exchanging stories of buildings and events not catering for those with disabilities. As with some of the other diversity issues impacting PR such as ethnicity, participants felt talent rather than tokenism needed to be prioritised as it is the businesses, as much as the candidates, that stand to benefit from embracing diversity.

From a communications perspective, some participants admitted they hadn’t given ample consideration to those living with disabilities until recently.

“I became aware of how I projected myself to people with disabilities because you immediately have to think about can I actually do this presentation about this particular subject, can I deliver this presentation to someone who’s deaf or blind? So that made me think, I need to know more about that. We have to be aware and more considerate of the needs of others.” – Saadia Usmani MCIPR

Organisations' capacity to manage staff living with mental illness was also flagged as a concern. As an unseen disability, mental health can be difficult for organisations to manage and participants felt further training was needed to equip line managers with the necessary skills required to meet this challenge.

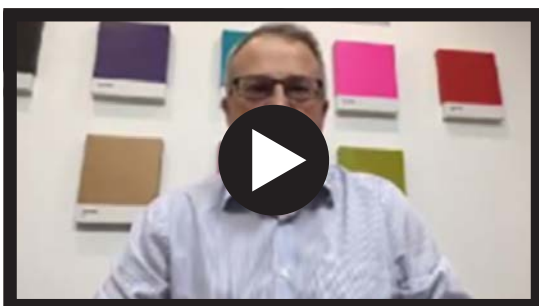
PR cannot be complacent about sexual diversity

There was a feeling that PR, as a modern, creative and progressive industry, does a relatively good job of embracing professionals of different sexual orientations. Participants generally felt public relations offered a discrimination-free environment. In this respect, there was a feeling that the industry was representative of the modern society it exists within. LGBT initiatives conducted by Ogilvy Pride and 3 Monkeys were commended for promoting inclusivity. Despite the optimism, there was an underlying concern that the industry can't become complacent in its attitudes towards the issue.

"I think overt sexual discrimination is usually challenged but we can still be quite heteronormative in the way we present things... I had mixed experiences of being 'out' in some places compared to others... I think it's easier to be 'out' if you're a man, than if you're a woman."

– Carli Harper-Penman MCIPR

Magda Bulska says although PR is generally regarded as a progressive industry in this respect, there will still be sections of the industry where non-heterosexual professionals may feel uncomfortable about being themselves. From the agency side, pressure from conservative clients operating in certain sectors can be one such example.



Future challenges

Participants painted a mixed picture of diversity in public relations. Whilst some progress has been made, for example the increasing numbers of organisations offering paid internships, roundtable and mobile research participants shared a frustrating sense of stagnation with regards to many of the key issues.

Some participants suggested diversity training should be offered to organisations. As well as equipping business leaders and line managers with practical advice, these courses could help people understand how and why diversity matters to their business.

One of the key takeaways from the research was that professionals from diverse backgrounds have the potential to strengthen the entire industry. Although the challenges of overcoming isolation and discrimination are evident, diverse professionals need to harness their differences as a means to set themselves apart from their peers. However, they can't do this in isolation and this is where inclusive leadership needs to play its part.

"I think that encouraging people to be themselves within your working environment lends itself to people being truly creative. And that is potentially of more benefit to aiding corporate organisations than anything else I think."
(London roundtable)

The flip side of this is that diverse professionals can be pigeon-holed. A common example of such practice is LGBT professionals being asked to work on Pride campaigns, or BAME employees being asked to become diversity champions. Participants told us the industry needs to assume a more mature approach to diversity. By creating a welcoming, inclusive working environment, public relations has the opportunity to bring out the very best in its workforce.

CASE STUDY 2 TAYLOR BENNETT FOUNDATION

The Taylor Bennett Foundation's award-winning work-based PR training programme exists to encourage black, Asian and ethnic minority graduates to pursue a career in communications.

Established by communications executive search firm Taylor Bennett in 2008, the Foundation seeks to address the need for greater diversity in the public relations industry.

With the support of leading communication companies, we run 10-week personal development training programmes that enable trainees to expand their knowledge and skillset, to begin building their personal professional networks, and to look for a first job in PR.

Trainees receive an allowance while taking part in the programme which covers their living and travel costs, and receive professional training in communication, the media and business.

Trainees also take part in practical assignments that improve and demonstrate PR skills, receive specialist careers advice as they begin their job search, and meet leading people in the PR and media industries.

In the last seven years more than 140 graduates have been through the programmes, 80% of whom have gone on to work in the PR and communications industry.

Website: <http://newsite.taylorbennettfoundation.org>

IS YOUR ORGANISATION FUTURE-PROOF?

Smart organisations are embracing diversity of talent and are creating inclusive working environments that support their employees. Five years on from the introduction of the Equality Act, which brought together a variety of anti-discrimination legislation, there is now a general consensus in the business community that organisations ignoring the business case on diversity and inclusion will ultimately be left behind.

The UK's leading business lobby group, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Trade Union Congress highlighted three of the main business drivers for embracing diversity and inclusion in a joint report on diversity, [Talent not Tokenism](#):

- 1 An increase in the levels of employee satisfaction. A more satisfied workforce stays with you longer and it is easier to recruit new members of staff to a happy ship. Your recruitment costs are reduced and your productivity levels go up.
- 2 You will gain a better understanding better of your customers and the diverse audiences they need to reach. With a diverse

and inclusive team you will be able to tap into cultural and socio-economic behaviours that will better inform your campaigns.

- 3 A strengthening of your ability to fill the skills gaps in areas where competition for talent is high; where there are not enough 'obvious candidates' for the positions you need to have filled.

Embracing diversity and inclusion will position your organisation as an employer of choice. Your employees are also your brand advocates, if you invest in your team, they will invest in your business and ultimately help you to future-proof your organisation.

What does best practice look like?

There are many examples of best practice on diversity and inclusion external to the PR industry, which we can learn from. [The Times 'Best Places to Work'](#), [Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index](#) and the [Working Families 'Top Employers for Working Families' awards](#) showcase some of the very best employer brands in the UK.

The employers that routinely rank highly on these indices are beacons and exemplars of best practice on diversity and inclusion, and have some shared characteristics:

- Senior sponsorship of diversity and inclusion
- An organisation-wide commitment to diversity and inclusion
- A diversity and inclusion champion at operational level
- Formal or informal internal staff networks for diverse groups
- Awareness training on diversity and inclusion such as unconscious bias
- Policies that support employees work-life balance and wellbeing

While the PR industry as a whole has been slow to embrace the business case on diversity and inclusion, there have been some notable early adopters. Agencies such as Ketchum, Edelman and Ogilvy have made a public commitment to diversity and inclusion and have been leading the charge to end the 'exclusive' and discriminatory practice of unpaid internships. The PRCA and PRWeek have also [published a list of agencies and in-house public relations teams](#) that have committed to pay interns at least the Minimum Wage. And, alongside the CIPR's Diversity Working Group, there are other industry groups such as Media Marketing Mums and Represent who come together to share best practice on diversity and inclusion in the wider communications industry.

Is your workforce fit for the future?

In the early stages of recovery, the economy is more dynamic and competitive than ever before. There is not only competition for business; there is a genuine competition for talent. Your workforce needs to be agile and you need to be responsive to their needs.

Much has been written about Generation Y, Millennials, but Generation Z is about to enter your workforce. These are young people born around the turn of the century who are starting to complete their education and look for employment.

Experts say that 'Gen Z' will change the shape of our workforce for good. Chloe Combi, author of the ground-breaking book *Generation Z: Their Voices, Their Lives* said: "One of the best aspects of this generation is the multiplicity of identities. They tend to be totally cool about homosexuality and mixed-race couples; transgender is something they're increasingly comfortable with.

They could become much more open-minded bosses who are less discriminatory in their hiring than generations past."

Over the next 5 years you will encounter Generation Z and your business needs to be prepared for the breath of fresh air they will bring with them. This generation will assume that men and women will be paid equally, that there needs to be a balance between work and leisure time – they know you can work from anywhere, so will not wish to be confined to the office for regular hours.

A drive for change will come from your newest recruits, and embracing diversity and inclusion today will help you to future proof your organisation.

A diversity and inclusion checklist

Here are some ways in which organisations are actively developing their approaches. Each organisation must develop its own actions to suit its unique situation. Remember also that both diversity and inclusion are necessary for success.

- We have a diversity and inclusion policy
- We monitor diversity in recruitment
- We ask our recruitment partners for diverse shortlists
- We strive for a diversity balance when we ask employees to join our recruitment/ interview panels
- We review our job specifications to ensure there are no hidden barriers
- We ensure our recruitment communications are accessible to everyone
- We offer to accommodate candidate access requirements during the recruitment process
- We accommodate the access requirements of our employees
- We have an equal pay policy and a clear pay scale
- We have a flexible working policy
- We have a shared parental leave policy
- We can report on the diversity of our staff team
- We support internal staff networks for inclusion groups
- We ensure our website is accessible to everyone and has an accessibility statement

“Our ambition in forming Represent – is that it will prompt more experienced people in our sector to take a proactive stance to diversity and help mentor and nurture young people from all backgrounds.”

Joanna Randall MCIPR,
Managing Director, purplefish

CASE STUDY 3 REPRESENT

1 Why was Represent set up?

Represent was formed in 2014 by Joanna Randall MCIPR and Liz Gadd. It was founded to combat the complete lack of diversity, equality and inclusion in the creative sector.

Collectively, Joanna and Liz have recruited for and worked in the creative sector for many years so have witnessed first-hand the woeful lack of diversity in the sector and the apathy displayed by many peers in making change. They identified that there was a lot to be done in raising awareness, but also that there was work that could be done in recruitment, education and training in relation to improving diversity and working towards a more inclusive sector.

2 What does it do?

Currently, Represent has launched an education project targeting secondary schools to raise awareness of careers and to promote aspiration. We also offer recruitment services for the creative sector and training for individuals as well as businesses which need help handling equalities matters or in raising their understanding of key issues such as unconscious bias. The education programme schools' initiative led to several work experience placements/internships for students across the city this summer.

Fatin Guled joined Represent in August this year after her A-levels and undertook a one month internship at purplefish. Her successful internship led to Fatin joining the Represent team as recruitment and project coordinator.

"I really enjoyed my time at purplefish. I was exposed to a completely new environment and gained loads of valuable skills. I couldn't have got that experience without Represent and I'm glad I've joined Represent so I can help others and raise awareness of the sector and the opportunities it offers."

– Fatin Guled

"Represent is an amazing thing to be a part of, leading the way in equality, diversity and inclusion in the creative sector. We've had a lot of support from other creative businesses in Bristol. Unfortunately, we've also found a lot of apathy still exists to being proactive about diversity and inclusion."

"Our ambition in forming Represent is that it will prompt more experienced people in our sector to take a proactive stance to diversity and help mentor and nurture young people from all backgrounds." – Joanna Randall MCIPR

Website: www.representnetwork.co.uk

THE FUTURE CHALLENGE

Diversity is tough. There are no 'quick fixes' or shortcuts. If we want to understand why it's so difficult we need look no further than what is happening on our own doorstep where crisis in one part of the world reveals just how difficult nations find it to accept those seeking a different kind of future and who want live in communities where they will be valued and included.

In business, the drivers for diversity are evident, yet no industry has managed to address all aspects of diversity entirely, and some have a very long way to go. As the DWG finalise this report, the Civil Service, UCAS and other public institutions have announced they will be moving to a system of 'name blind' applications and global tech companies have acknowledged the woeful absence of diversity in a rapidly growing workforce.

Progress is being made in PR as businesses start to understand the business imperative to be diverse as a sector and inclusive by nature. Diversity is not a badge to be picked up and worn on special occasions. It cannot be enough to address one aspect – gender pay equality without addressing pay inequality on the basis of age or race. We must change our expectations, not manage them. We should be working to do the same with our clients and colleagues.

Public relations is a vital business function. Getting diversity and inclusion right within our industry puts us ahead of our clients. It positions us as experts on communicating with diverse audiences. And, if we don't understand how to do that – or become skilled at delivering more inclusive campaigns then we have failed at our job.

PR leaders are ultimately responsible for driving industry change and there are plenty of resources available to help them achieve this. We need to approach diversity and inclusion strategically paying attention to all its aspects, but not all at once.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Look at the priorities for your business and focus on what affects those priorities first. It may be a particular demographic strand – gender, race, age, disability, social class, sexual orientation, mental health. Or it may be the need for a clear strategy first. Or it may be something else – whatever it is, there's advice available from the CIPR and other industry bodies, as well as from other sources outside the PR industry.

Our research shows that that the language we use needs to change and if we change how we talk about diversity and inclusion we can help our clients and organisations do the same. If a client makes a comment that you know to be problematic and which affects how you want to do business, you and your organisation need to know how you will respond. There is competitive advantage for those who embrace diversity and how you explain that irrespective of their concerns on a personal level is a good place to start your discussions internally. Equally, within your own organisation ask yourself how you will challenge the leadership in an organisation where 'inclusion' is treated as a flag to be waved one day and stuck in a drawer the next.

Diversity is the easy part, inclusion is the harder part and where the real value lies. So it's not about getting more ethnic minorities in, and then expecting them to behave like they're not from a different background. Or employing an older candidate for their experience, and then berating them for not being on WhatsApp.

If you have diversity but not inclusion, diverse people will be and feel undervalued and either leave or remain with talent suppressed in the lower echelons of your organisation.

The CIPR, as a professional body, can do much to facilitate discussions and celebrate the achievements of members advancing diversity through employment practices and the work they do for clients. There is a genuine opportunity for those who embrace diversity and inclusion – more talent, better rates of client and employee satisfaction, the opening of new and exciting relationships, and the inevitable reputational benefits that all the above bring.

Shortly before the DWG was established, a visiting PR executive from the United States public relations industry spoke at an IPR event, making the point that there were parts of the USA where a pitch from an all-white, all male team would be unthinkable. That is the endgame. When we no longer have a need for diversity working groups, initiatives or schemes to level out the playing field for everyone already in the profession and those aspiring to join us, we can be certain that diversity and inclusion have stuck once and for all.

CONTRIBUTORS



Cornelius Alexander Found.Chart.PR

FCIPR – Cornelius' first PR task was at New Scotland Yard dealing with the media, with a colleague, during the Poll Tax Riot and he was

hooked. From dealing with terrorist attacks to change management in Vancouver to putting together an online press office for then Mayor, Ken Livingstone, Cornelius has enjoyed PR becoming a CIPR Fellow and Chartered Practitioner along the way. His next venture is to launch (eventually), "PorthKornow – a communications consultancy.



Catherine Grinyer MCIPR

– Catherine is Director of Big Voice Communications, a specialist inclusive communications consultancy advising how to ensure your

communications reach the widest possible audience. Chair of CIPR's Diversity Working Group and a member of the PRCA's Diversity Network, Catherine was previously Director of Communications at Business Disability Forum for 7 years; leading an award-winning rebrand in 2012. Catherine has enjoyed a varied career covering all communications specialisms.



Harish Bhayani

– Harish is founder and Senior Partner at PRM Diversity Consultants and has been a member of the CIPR DWG since 2010. His job at PRM is to help clients

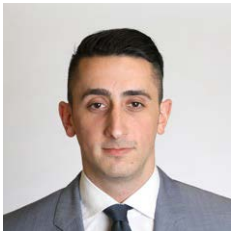
to understand in what ways diversity and inclusion is relevant for their business and how to embed it to deliver performance.



Alex Louis MCIPR

– Working across the public sector for over 23 years, Alex has led and managed communications in-house and via interim roles for organisations

in local government, education, housing, criminal justice, voluntary sector and the NHS. Alex is an associate director with Verve Communications a specialist agency working predominately with the public sector.



Koray Camgoz MCIPR

– Koray is a Public Relations and Policy Officer at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, where he has campaigned passionately on diversity issues

impacting the PR profession for almost two years. As a post-graduate communications specialist, his broader responsibilities at the CIPR involve working across paid, earned, shared and owned media channels to improve professional standards of practice in public relations.



Avril Lee MCIPR

– Avril has extensive experience in healthcare communications and senior management in both independent consultancies and global agency networks.

She has worked with leading companies on award winning campaigns in the UK and internationally. Having spent many years calling for more diversity in our industry, but still finding few people from diverse backgrounds, Avril is committed to the need for proactive action to deliver change.

APPENDIX

Timeline of diversity milestones for the DWG and the CIPR.

2010:

- CIPR Diversity Working Group (DWG) launches and is tasked with;
 - improving understanding of PR in communities in which it is not a visible career option
 - promoting a best practice approach to internships
 - encouraging a competency-based approach to recruitment
 - promoting a best practice approach to re-employment and return-to-work
 - tackling glass ceiling issues in public relations
- Dr Lee Edwards publishes study into BAME practitioners in PR

2012:

- DWG publish Internship and Work Placement Toolkit
- DWG develops strong ties with 30% Club, Taylor Bennett Foundation and build relationships with agencies including Edelman and Northern Lights
- CIPR co-publish Getting the Balance Right report with Hanson Search, exploring challenges facing working mothers

2013:

- DWG publish Future Perspectives research, exploring perceptions of public relations amongst young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds
- CIPR launch school outreach programme, under the guidance of DWG
- DWG co-publish careers guide with PRCA
- First DWG Equal Access Network event explores women in the boardroom

2014:

- CIPR State of the Profession 2013/14 highlights gender pay issue
- CIPR publish maternity membership package and return-to-work resources
- CIPR produce flexible working guidance for employers
- CIPR launch Diversity and Inclusion category at Excellence Awards
- CIPR and DWG internship survey reveals half of all interns are unpaid
- DWG host the Diversity and Inclusion Summit at the London College of Communication

2015:

- CIPR State of the Profession 2014/15 reveals true extent of the gender pay gap in public relations.
- CIPR announces 4 point plan to tackle gender pay gap
- CIPR and the Department for Work and Pensions co-publish Inclusive Communications guide
- CIPR and DWG support Department for Work and Pensions' Disability Confident campaign and host roundtable with Minister for Disabled People, Mark Harper MP
- CIPR work alongside Government Equalities Office to develop legislation that will require large organisations to publish information on employees salaries