radley yeldar.

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Demystifying

D&I

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A practical guide to being **Inclusive By Design** in the wilds of modern communications

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Radley Yeldar
2020

Diversity and inclusion is critical to building belief in our changing world...

In the span of a few years, diversity and inclusion has shifted from a 'progressive corporate initiative' to a business-critical topic. Widespread discussion, attention and controversy surrounding D&I-related subjects, such as gender and racial equality, disability and the LGBTQ+ community have dominated the body politic in a way that far transcends the HR department.

D&I is growing in importance because it impacts virtually everyone, but each issue has its own individual communications considerations, nuances and pitfalls. Businesses face unprecedented pressure to not only adapt to the growing audience needs, but to do it in a way that does justice to an ever-shifting communications landscape. Businesses who choose to ignore D&I will not only seem outdated, but evidence shows they will lose out – with employees, consumers and investors. It's something every business needs to embrace in order to remain relevant and survive.

Employees want it...

57%

57% of people think their company should be **doing more** to increase diversity[1]

....consumers care about it...

65%

65% of consumers think diversity in **advertising** is important[2]

....and investors can't ignore it...

2.3x

2.3x **higher cash flow** per employee for companies that are inclusive[3]

[1]Glassdoor | [2]Adobe | [3]Deloitte

...but getting it right is easier said than done.

Although expectations are growing for businesses to report on, act on and advocate for D&I subjects, there's very little practical advice on how to do it.

There's no rule book for how to meet the growing demand for businesses to reflect the diversity of their audiences and paint a picture of an inclusive organisation.

Though the appetite for powerful D&I communications is high, clear guidelines on how to get them right just don't exist.

Most businesses are simply stabbing in the dark when it comes to communicating about these sensitive and nuanced topics – with results that are mediocre, at best.

We know from experience that businesses are struggling with this. As the agency that's creating a world that believes in business, our clients are increasingly asking for help communicating about D&I. Most know that D&I is something they need to address. But they often hold contrasting, conflicting views on how to go about doing it.

We get it. It's easier said than done, so this report is designed to be a practical guide to communicating about these complex topics, whether through a gender pay report, a recruitment campaign, a social media content strategy or any other form of communications.

Read on to learn about the perils of D&I communications, why it's so hard and, importantly, how to re-tool your communications to be **inclusive by design**.

D&I isn't just the 'right' thing to do...

If you ask any modern business leader why it's important to get D&I right, they'll probably tell you 'it's just the right thing to do.' And, of course, it is. There are obvious synergies between ethical business practices and diversity and inclusion strategies. But when organisations get D&I right, there are also massive business opportunities. Whether it's by capitalising on diverse worker skill sets, appealing to new markets or painting a picture of a modern, sustainable business to investors, developing and communicating a sound D&I strategy can have huge financial benefits.

Maltesers' Paralympics ad, for example, smashed targets and was their most successful campaign in a decade. They doubled their 4% sales growth target while the campaign was on air. YouTube views broke the two million-views barrier within the first 24 hours, more than doubling their one million-views target, and at 20%, brand affinity was also double the target[1].

"The business case for diversity is simple: if we want to deliver value for our clients, we need diverse talent, views and thinking that reflects the society in which we work."

Laura Hinton, PwC UK

[1]Campaign

There are clear **financial benefits** to D&I.

In the last 2 years, **socially responsible investment** (SRI) grew globally by 34% to...[1]

£30.7 trillion.

173%

In the UK alone, the national SRI is expected to grow by 173% to reach £48 billion.[2]

[1] Bloomberg | [2] Triodos Bank

And there are real consequences if you get it wrong.

Getting D&I wrong can damage your relationship with key stakeholders, investors, employees, consumers – and can negatively impact your bottom line.

D&I done badly isn't just embarrassing, it's detrimental to your business. Poorly-considered communications have the potential to cause serious offence. They can generate media backlash and have a real, long-lasting impact on business. Brands that make the wrong comment or misrepresent people in today's climate will undoubtedly suffer consequences, as will any agencies involved. Recently, the purported anti-LGBTQ+ stance of one global company was leaked. Its long-term agency partner resigned the account.

Furthermore, increased regulation means that now, good D&I comms aren't just a 'nice to have', but a legal requirement. All UK businesses with over 250 employees must report annually on their gender pay gap or face unlimited fines by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Despite these high stakes, unfortunately the way D&I is actually visualised and communicated leaves a lot to be desired.

We've all seen the classic D&I clichés...

We've identified the top six D&I clichés…

D&I communications are littered with clichés and bad design. In 2018, we released Creative Justice 4 D&I, a report in which we identified six of the most prevalent visual clichés in the D&I space.

2019 was a watershed year for increasing awareness of the plight of many minority and marginalised groups. As the world becomes more 'woke', you'd think these clichés would be falling out of fashion. Unfortunately, we noticed the opposite was happening – the more mainstream D&I has become, the more clichés have started popping up.

1 Colour me inclusive.
Strange and incessant use of multicolours, regardless of topic.

2 Diversitrees.
Repeated use of roots and branches to symbolise diversity.

3 Hands out and hanging high fives.
Widespread use of rogue hands.

4 Draw me diverse.
Attempting to speak to everyone by illustrating them. All of them.

5 Sticks together and profile pics.
Ambiguous outline and stick figures.

6 Heterogeneously happy at work.
Tired use of stock imagery showing box-ticking line-ups of employees.

Clearly, businesses still struggle to communicate their D&I perspective, despite its increased importance. **But why is it so hard?** We launched a robust investigation to crack the problem – and provide much-needed practical guidance.

What we've done

6

months of **research**

100

of the world's **most valuable brands** analysed (Forbes)

10

D&I **experts** and business communicators interviewed

What we've found

3

key **reasons** D&I communications go wrong

1

killer phrase to sum up the problem

What we've developed

10

best practice **design principles** for expressing D&I

3

creative **thought-starters** to put the principles in action

We spoke to ten experts in D&I and corporate communications from a range of sectors and backgrounds to understand why D&I is so hard to communicate and visualise.

Brenda Milis
Principal of Creative Services
& Visual Trends, Adobe
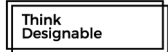
Jennifer Smith
Head of Inclusion, BFI

Eoin McLoughlin
Creative Director,
4Creative (Channel 4)

Liz Burton
EMEA D&I Executive
Director, Morgan Stanley

Madeleine Porter
Head of Internal
Communications,
GVC Group

Marianne Waite
Inclusive Brand Strategist
and UK Government
Disability Champion
for Brand and Design

Natalie Sigona
Head of Diversity
& Inclusion,
BAE Systems

Leila Siddiqi
Head of Diversity, IPA

Leading UK transport authority

Annique Simpson
Internal Communications
Consultant, Freelance

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We analysed the Forbes 100 Most Valuable Brands to get a sense of just how many big players are committing these cliché crimes.

While there were a few bright spots, our findings confirmed what we suspected. As far as bad D&I communications go, these clichés are just the tip of the iceberg…

It's a jungle out there

radley yeldar.

89%

89% actively communicate*
about their D&I efforts

...but 47%

nearly half (47%) are using
D&I communications clichés**
when they do

*include D&I on their dot com
**based on our six top D&I visual clichés

Within the 100, clichés are rampant

91%

have D&I 'taglines'...

50%

...half of which (50%) literally use the words 'diverse' or 'diversity'

42%

42% of photography is basic stock imagery

28%

nearly a third (28%) use multicolours to communicate D&I

29%

nearly a third (29%) are using stick figure drawings

Unrealistic workplace imagery is commonplace

79%

a whopping 79 of the 100 feature stock imagery of employees 'heterogeneously happy at work'

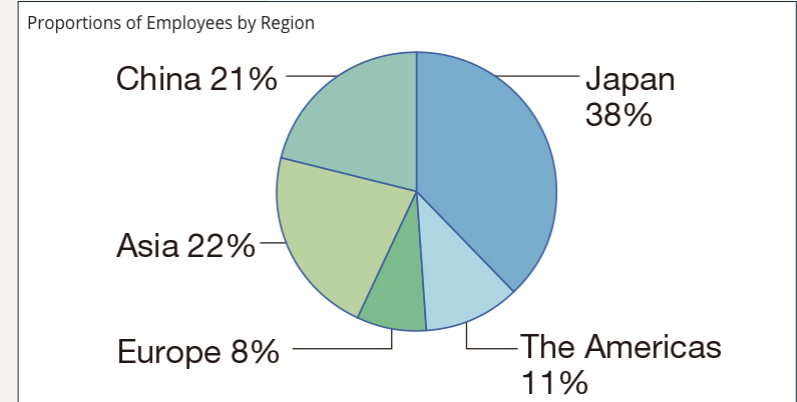# And almost no one is properly visualising D&I data

64%

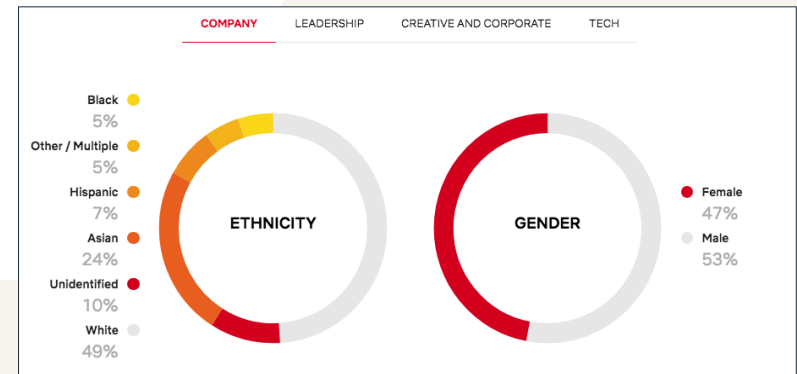64 of the 100 aren't using any kind of chart or graphs to explain their data or aren't using any data at all

75%

three quarters (75%) of those that do are just using basic pie charts

Proportions of Employees by Region

China 21%
Japan 38%
Asia 22%
Europe 8%
The Americas 11%

Our Diverse U.S. Population

U.S. Employee Diversity in 2017

EEO Category	White	Black/African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Total
Exec/Sr Lvl Officials & Mgrs	84.3%	3.0%	4.3%	7.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.7%	1.8%
1st/Mid-Lvl Officials & Mgrs	62.4%	8.0%	9.8%	17.8%	0.2%	0.3%	1.4%	21.3%
Professionals	58.1%	10.5%	9.2%	19.9%	0.2%	0.2%	1.9%	26.7%
All other	42.3%	17.5%	28.4%	8.3%	0.4%	0.4%	2.7%	50.3%
Total	51.6%	13.4%	18.9%	13.4%	0.3%	0.3%	2.2%	

COMPANY   LEADERSHIP   CREATIVE AND CORPORATE   TECH

Black 5%
Other / Multiple 5%
Hispanic 7%
Asian 24%
Unidentified 10%
White 49%

ETHNICITY

GENDER

Female 47%
Male 53%

Some brands are doing it brilliantly...

The good

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Brands leading the way

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Microsoft, Netflix, Fenty Beauty, Bonobos, Nike

Some businesses out there are doing truly great creative work to properly raise awareness of D&I issues and tell meaningful stories about their work. But, the vast majority of these examples are in the consumer brand space. There are very few exceptions or examples of strong B2B and/or corporate D&I communications. What's more, there are many less visible D&I issues – such as neuodiversity and disability – that just aren't getting the quality communications they deserve.

GLOW

More room. More stories. More voices.

Netflix's 'Make Room' ad beautifully demonstrates its vision of creating an inclusive environment for people's diverse stories – both in front of and behind the camera, while incorporating a subtle nod to its content.

When everybody plays, we all win
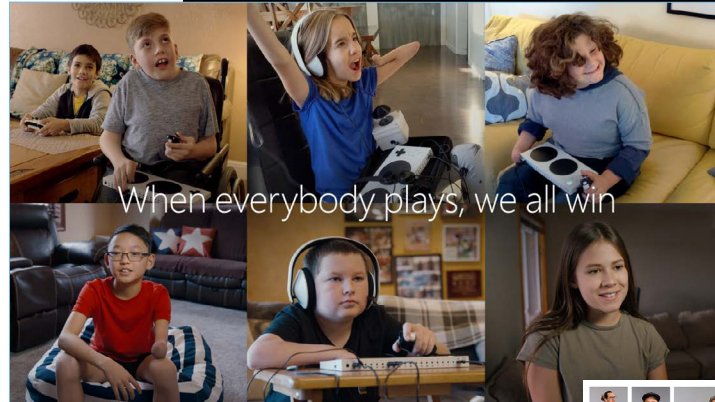
Microsoft

Microsoft's adaptive Xbox controller proves that a market leader can successfully integrate inclusive design and accessibility into products, both functionally and financially.

F E N T Y   B E A U T Y
BY RIHANNA

Rihanna's inclusive cosmetics line Fenty Beauty hit $100 million in sales within 40 days of launching. 'The Fenty effect' is a term now used to describe the knock-on effect in forcing the wider industry to develop inclusive ranges too.

Nike's 'Dream Crazier' encourages women to chase their dreams even if it means pushing against boundaries.

HOWEVER YOU FIT BONOBOS FITS YOU

As modern masculinity continues to evolve, Bonobos' 'However you fit' campaign reflects and embraces the breadth of diversity in men's identities and styles.

If they think your dreams are crazy, show them what crazy dreams can do.

Just do it.

Leadership in B2B

Accenture

One B2B brand bucking the trend of bad corporate D&I comms is Accenture. Not only does it tastefully visualise various D&I topics, but it also clearly demonstrates the business case for it, delivering both visual and strategic justice through the Accenture brand ethos.

50/50 GENDER-BALANCE BY 2025

accenture >

WHEN SHE RISES, WE ALL RISE.

Getting to Equal 2018: Creating a culture where everyone thrives

EQUALITY DRIVES INNOVATION

Our diversity helps us bring unique perspectives and skills to the table. And our culture ensures we can all leverage these unique contributions to the benefit of our clients and our communities.

Learn more at **accenture.com/inclusionanddiversity**.

By Ellyn Shook and Julie Sweet

BY THE TIME THEY REACH 30, MEN ARE...

8% More likely to have become managers

22% More likely to have reached senior manager
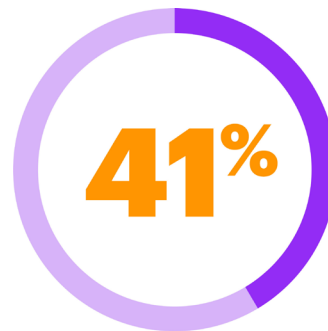
41%
41% of our global workforce are women
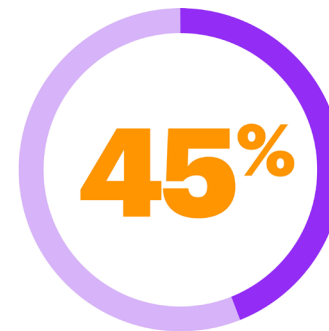
45%
45% of our new hires are women

WHEN GENDER EQUALITY IS THE GOAL, WE ALL RISE.

But the way most brands communicate diversity and inclusion is just...bad.

The bad

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Clichés are everywhere

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Rainbows, diverse team leaps, poor pie charts, mixed metaphors and hands, hands, hands.

This collection of bad examples proves that even the biggest names can get it wrong. Regardless of channel, audience, sector or objective, uninspiring, meaningless language and visuals run rampant in the D&I communications of even the world's top companies.
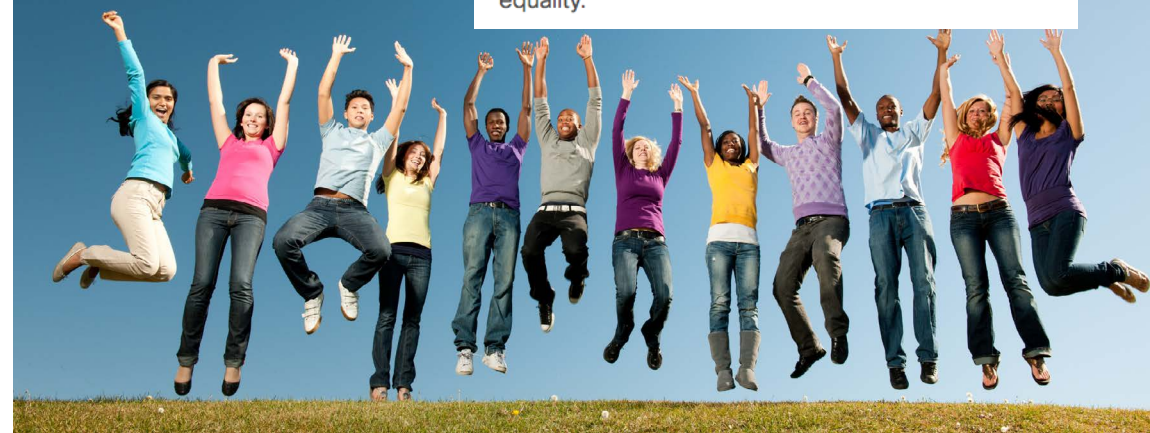

Global Gender Breakdown

Female
25%

Male
75%

Female   Male
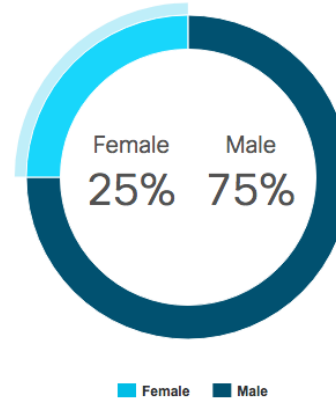
A more diverse workforce

Take a stand for Social Justice

Benefiting everyone starts with fairness and equality.

And some of what we found was just downright awful.

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Bad creative = big consequences

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Public backlash, damaged sales and lawsuits.

Some brands are really trying to get it right…but missing the mark – badly. And it's in this space that real backlash, damage to reputation and a complete lack of belief in business can all become the consequences of poor D&I communications.

Fashion Fail

An online fashion retailer made more than a fashion faux pas in a classic case of jumping on the D&I bandwagon. The brand started a sub-brand for plus-sized customers – with a separate Instagram account. The new account was a real step-change from their usual posts, which typically featured only slim models. But instead of conveying inclusivity, this segregated approach further isolated plus-sized customers. And the online backlash was immediate and widespread. The retailer apologised publicly for what it eventually called "a serious error of judgment", by which time many customers had already said they would never shop there again.

Braille misappropriation

A recent campaign touting the hidden talents of those with sight impairments was creatively celebrated and won several design awards for its use of braille as a visual language – only to face serious backlash when it was found that blind people couldn't actually read the poorly-applied braille characters.

Pink for girls, blue for boys.

A brewing company tried hard but missed the mark by attempting to highlight gender discrimination and the gender pay gap with pink-labelled beer targeted at women. Intended to be subtle and ironic, it instead rubbed consumers the wrong way and was deemed to have reinforced negative stereotypes, backfiring so badly that it ended in a gender discrimination-based lawsuit from a male customer (who won the case).

When it comes to communicating D&I, right now the good examples are outnumbered by the bad – and, increasingly, the bad are being joined by the downright offensive.

It's a turbulent landscape. Get it right, and you could be the new sheriff in town. Ignore it and you'll be left in the dust. Get it wrong, and you could land yourself in a social media shoot out with your reputation at stake. Unavoidable. Increasingly essential. Yet hard to nail.

What is making D&I so difficult?

"D&I is like the Wild West of the communications world."

D&I is supposed to be for everyone.
But it can feel really alienating in practice.

This is because…

It's **complex**.
It's **multi-dimensional**.
It requires a **collective effort**.
It's hard to **visualise**.
And it isn't yet **the norm**.

1. No one really knows what they're doing.

If you're reading this, chances are you already recognise that D&I is necessary. But the hardest part of working towards it is taking that first step. Many businesses have never had to invest much effort or pay much attention to D&I previously – and now they're scrambling to keep up and get it right.

But it's hard to know where to begin. Those with a real need to consider and talk about D&I are often the least equipped to do it. This is exacerbated by limited resources, gaps in knowledge, and a widespread lack of practical guidance. With these conditions, it's easy to understand why so many struggle when starting out on their D&I journey.

So, keep your eyes on the prize, don't get disheartened if you're not where you want to be right now, and remember that D&I is a journey which will be well worth it in the end for your audiences and your business. You'll find it will get easier along the way.

"We're still in the early stages. Something that's quite challenging is making sure our communications reflect diverse audiences when, actually, we're not where we want to be yet."

Madeleine Porter, GVC Group

2. No one fully understands where D&I fits.

When it comes to business impact, something's not clicking. Some businesses are still under the (wrong) impression that it's a culture issue only relevant to certain departments or on certain days of the year. Too often, it's put in an HR silo or addressed haphazardly by one-off campaigns. Even with the best intentions, this segregated approach all but guarantees lacklustre results.

Successful D&I work requires buy-in from leaders across the organisation. It's directly linked to innovation and a better bottom line, and needs to be treated like the vital business ingredient it is.

A recent study found that companies with more diverse management teams have 19% higher revenue due to innovation[1]. When employees feel their organisation is "committed to and supportive of diversity", their ability to innovate increases by 83%[2]. Organisations with inclusive cultures are twice as likely to meet or exceed financial targets, and 8x more likely to achieve better business outcomes[3].

"Very often, people just push D&I into an HR box. HR is an important part of the conversation, but D&I is a senior leadership issue."

Leila Siddiqi, IPA

[1] BCG | [2] Deloitte | [3] Deloitte

3. And it's intimidating. Which makes the problem worse.

And, lastly, the pressure is so great to get it right that it's stopping some dead in their tracks.

Fear ends up paralysing these businesses. Or, even worse, making them so self-conscious that failure is inevitable, no matter how hard they try. But that doesn't mean that the potential for failure should scare off brands from approaching D&I at all.

Despite the intense debate sparked by Gillette's controversial "The Best Men Can Be" ad when it launched in early 2019, it's apparently helped return the brand to growth in the U.S. – the number of consumers who believe Gillette shares their values increased from 42% before the campaign to more than 70% after[1]. And in the UK, 7% of the nation named Gillette as their first choice for future health and beauty purchases – the highest in five months[2]. A week after the advert was aired in January, a third (33%) of UK consumers who would consider buying Gillette selected the brand as their first choice, up 13 points from the month prior[3].

"People are quite afraid of getting it wrong, accidentally using the wrong language, or causing offence, so it can be something that very quickly becomes too scripted and inauthentic."

Madeleine Porter, GVC Group

[1]Marketing Week | [2]Independent | [3]YouGov

————

We've coined a new term to describe the trap many brands fall into when trying to communicate about D&I.

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Self-fulfilling faux pas
(noun)

Modern communications phenomenon whereby the communicator tries so hard to avoid controversial or offensive statements that they inadvertently end up communicating in the exact tone-deaf and/or offensive manner they were striving to avoid.

Modern D&I communications are full of self-fulfilling faux pas. There's no rule book. **So we made one.**

But first – what actually is 'D&I'?

No clear or consistent definition

Trying to understand how diversity and inclusion should be expressed through creative communications starts with understanding the meaning behind the words themselves. The problem is, there is no consistent definition of 'diversity' or 'inclusion' – let alone the term 'diversity and inclusion' as a collective. Perhaps this is why there is still some opaqueness about expressing them creatively.

Diversity[1] *(noun)*

— The state or fact of being diverse; difference; unlikeness; diversity of opinion
— Variety; multiformity
— The inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, colour, religion, socioeconomic stratum, sexual orientation, etc.
— A point of difference

Diversity[2] *(noun)*

— The state of being diverse
— A range of different things

Diversity[3] *(noun)*

"Diversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. In a nutshell, it's about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education and national origin. Each individual in an organization brings with them a diverse set of perspectives, work and life experiences, as well as religious and cultural differences."

Inclusion[4] *(noun)*

— *The act of including*
— *The state of being included*
— *Something that is included*
— *Biology. A body suspended in the cytoplasm, as a granule*
— *Mineralogy. A solid body or a body of gas or liquid enclosed within the mass of a mineral*

Inclusion[5] *(noun)*

— *The action or state of including or being included within a group or structure*
— *A person or thing that is included within the whole*

Inclusion[6] *(noun)*

"Inclusion is an organizational effort and practices in which different groups or individuals having different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and welcomed, and equally treated…Inclusion is a sense of belonging. Inclusive cultures make people feel respected and valued for who they are as an individual or group."

[1] Dictionary.com | [2] Lexico.com | [3] Global Diversity Practice | [4] Dictionary.com | [5] Lexico.com | [6] Global Diversity Practice

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It might seem difficult and complex. But, put simply, diversity and inclusion is about reflecting and connecting with your audiences. That's what all good communications do.

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With this in mind, how do you avoid the offensive and bad… **and get to the good?**

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Based on our research, we've generated some guidance on how to get D&I right. These practical steps are intended to help your brand avoid missing the mark or messing up, from your visuals and language to your channels and content, here are ten principles for how to be Inclusive by Design.

Principle 1

Move away from **multicolours**.

Don't try to represent a range of D&I topics with a range of colours.

Why?

When expressing D&I topics, it's tempting to jump straight to visualising a personal perspective on 'diversity'. Often this ends up highlighting differences, rather than building a feeling of inclusivity. It also leads to the most overused trope when it comes to D&I – multicolours.

This tired metaphor hardly ever looks visually impactful, genuine or aligned with the rest of the brand. It can leave communications lacking meaning and credibility. And it is often used in a way that doesn't relate to the topic or subject being talked about. This is particularly problematic when you consider that the rainbow is the official emblem of the LGBTQ+ community. Yet it's frequently used as a 'catch all' for other areas of D&I communications. This does a disservice to both the LGBTQ+ community and all other topics lumped in with it.

How?

– Think about the audience. Start with your brand colour palette and go from there. D&I comms shouldn't feel 'off-brand'. This is the best way to look and sound authentic and sincere.

– Carefully consider how you're using (or over-using) colours. Overtly colourful, rainbow-centric illustrations, photographic treatments, iconography or text is clichéd and paints a lazy picture of the people you're trying to represent, or to whom you want to appeal.

– Tasteful application of the rainbow for LGBTQ+ specific communications is a valid exception here, but use it sparingly and with caution. Is there a more compelling, inventive solution for engaging this community, without 'rainbow washing'?

"Diversity is not itself an image type – diversity is working with people of all types so it's representative throughout."

Brenda Milis, Adobe

Principle 2

Show **real** people and places.

Show real people whenever and wherever possible.

Why?

Countless communications are disconnected from how people want to be spoken to and represented, which can make D&I feel distant and hard to engage with. Without encouraging input, you run the risk of being out of touch and – at worst – totally missing the mark. Messages can end up feeling forced, unnatural and disconnected from reality as a result.

Seeking input from those you're trying to represent, and engaging with and depicting real people and places (your employees, target audiences and wider communities) will contribute to building authenticity, which is so essential in getting D&I right.

How?

– Consider photographing, illustrating or otherwise depicting your own employees, customers or stakeholders in your D&I communications.

– Avoid staged, unnatural or smiling photos of colleagues together. Consider how you might create imagery that shows your people and culture in a way that feels natural.

– Use real stories about your employees', customers' or stakeholders' experiences, told in their own words.

– Show people and places that your audience can relate to. Make sure that any analogies or visuals are right for your brand and your audience.

– Ask people how they would like to be represented, rather than speaking or deciding for them.

– Be really careful with stock imagery and footage – it's overused in the D&I space, sometimes even by competing brands.

"We're getting real people to talk about it, people actually on the programme to say, 'That's how I felt too, but now I've learnt this…'. Real experiences of real people."

Madeleine Porter, GVC Group

Principle 3

If you don't have suitable images, **don't use imagery.**

Don't misrepresent people.
It can be as damaging as excluding them.

Why?

Often, organisations will use images of people they believe represent diversity, using a person of colour or someone with a visible disability to talk about D&I. This effectively reduces people to props, whether or not they are relevant to the real issue being communicated.

To add true value to the overall message, imagery should paint an accurate picture of the people being addressed, not just highlight what might make them different from one another. Photography done well can be powerful, but make sure any images you're using are appropriate and relevant to the topic being discussed. It can be really hard to find great imagery if you don't have the budget, time or resources to shoot it professionally. But that doesn't mean you can't effectively visualise your message.

How?

– Consider diversity in front of and behind the camera lens. Broadening your sources to build your creative library can help capture modern, real-world perspectives and reduce the risk of relying on damaging or irrelevant imagery.

– Think about diversity beyond how people look. Design with inclusion in mind – don't highlight people's differences in order to make your organisation seem 'diverse.' Instead try tastefully highlighting other aspects of diversity, unrelated to appearance.

– If you're trying to 'show diversity' in imagery or films about your employees, tread carefully. Make sure the subjects are an authentic reflection of your organisation today.

– Still can't find the right imagery? Consider using a graphic treatment or clever typography over predictable or meaningless visuals. Sometimes letting words speak for themselves can be so much more powerful.

"I'd rather have not enough [visual] content than have content that isn't authentic and up to contemporary expectations."

Brenda Milis, Adobe

Principle 4

Avoid **ambiguity.**

Make clear what you're actually trying to say, or the point you're trying to illustrate.

Why?

D&I communications often use generic, ambiguous faux-inspirational statements, like being 'better together.' But without specificity, even well-intentioned statements and aspirations lose meaning and lack impact. The need to avoid ambiguity is as important in messaging as it is in imagery; broad, lofty statements won't land. And neither will generic, irrelevant images that don't reflect what you're trying to say.

Avoiding vagueness will help you clearly communicate the complex topics around D&I, and help you better engage with the audiences you're trying to reach.

How?

– Make sure any images you use directly relate to the topic you're discussing.

– Use real, purposeful, direct language, rather than vague aspirational statements.

– Showcase specific activities and initiatives undertaken by your organisation, referencing actual results and reactions.

– Set and communicate clear objectives and a plan for how you're going to achieve them.

"In [any] organisation, it is so important to have a really clear common goal and vision, driven by leadership and objectives."
Natalie Sigona, BAE Systems

"It's about deeply understanding your culture, the drivers, and the business needs – then identifying specificities in your diversity and inclusion strategy, having a plan and executing it as professionally as you would a safety strategy."
Leading UK transport authority

Principle 5

Embrace data.
All of it.

Visualise your data to tell a story about your journey, even if you're not yet where you want to be.

Why?

Many organisations feel ashamed of their numbers because they're not where they should or want to be. But sweeping them under the rug won't help you stay on track towards reaching those goals.

Data visualisation is a powerful tool that can be used to bring your progress to life and show where you want to be, by when, and how you'll get there.

Don't have the right data? Start collecting it. Sharing this data is a way to invite people to join you on your D&I journey. Don't be afraid to share more than what's mandated and bring it to life in a way that tells the bigger story beyond the numbers.

How?

– Don't default to boring tables and pie charts. Data can be dynamic, personalised, and can cut through the noise when given context and presented in the right way.

– Own where you are. Everyone starts somewhere and transparency around your data can only be a good thing in the long run.

– If you really want to engage people, explore ways to visualise your data and use it to tell the story of your progress and your goals. Doing this is much more compelling for people to engage with.

– Take your data out of your report and share it with a wider audience. Hone in on key insights, develop a creative analogy and share it in a way that regular people can understand.

"We have an opportunity to hold the mirror up and help tell a story through data…It allows us to identify areas we need to work on. By being able to tell a story through numbers, you have the ability to say it's not an isolated case, it's an organic trajectory of change."
Jennifer Smith, BFI

"Using measurements and monitoring diversity data is the absolute starting point for any D&I conversation, because unless you have data, you don't have a baseline to measure yourself, and you don't know where you are."
Leila Siddiqi, IPA

Principle 6

Don't overcomplicate.

Don't try to tackle every issue or topic at once.

——

Why?

D&I is broad and complex, so trying to capture every aspect of it in one go is virtually impossible.

Loads of messages at once can feel like you're trying too hard to check off everything on a tick list without considering the issues in the true depth they deserve. By using too many images or busy imagery with loads of different people all crowded in together, you can make communications hard to decipher and overwhelming.

It'll make your life easier and your audiences more likely to engage if you tackle topics individually – particularly for those with neurodiverse conditions.

How?

– Rather than addressing multiple D&I priorities all at once, make it clear that whichever topic you're discussing is part of a bigger conversation around D&I.

– Give each topic and story the space and attention it deserves.

– Avoid overcrowding communications visually with loads of different images, colours or themes that aspire in vain to address every issue.

– Don't feel rushed to cover everything in one poster, one webpage, one film or even one campaign. It's better to communicate a single chapter well than to tell a bad overall story.

"With the intersectional point of view in mind, we set drivers in place to focus, and not do everything at the same time."

Leila Siddiqi, IPA

Principle 7

Get moving.

Be prepared to evolve – your visual approach should be as dynamic as D&I is.

Why?

The conversation around D&I is moving fast and people often don't realise how quickly things change. This can lead people to default to outdated perceptions or rely on terminology or imagery that is no longer appropriate.

Keeping your finger on the pulse of what's happening in the wider D&I space will keep you tuned in to the conversation and shield you from offensive and potentially costly mistakes. And designing your D&I comms in a dynamic way that reflects this changing landscape will help you not just keep up, but stay ahead of the game.

How?

– Think about making your D&I comms dynamic. Moving image and animations can add to this sense of momentum around D&I.

– Consider using dynamic data visualisation that can be updated and monitored on a regular basis to keep a record of how your business is improving.

– Keep an eye on the media for current trends, inside and outside your industry. It's the best place to see which brands are getting it right or not – and when the public doesn't like something, they make it very clear on social media. Learn from others' mistakes to avoid making them yourself.

– Use open-source content, allowing the real people you're trying to reach educate and inform you and your communications.

"[D&I] constantly evolves because the cultural conversation constantly changes. What's considered normal changes every year… and therefore the tone with which you talk about it needs to change."

Eoin Mclaughlin, 4Creative

"Listen to the experiences of employees and consumers; never assume what will work for someone. Invest in research and insight because that's where you find innovation opportunities."

Marianne Waite, Think Designable

Principle 8

Make it **accessible.**

Make sure **all** of your intended audiences can access your comms.

Why?

There are many creative and interesting D&I campaigns exploring specific inclusion topics that end up being inaccessible to a large chunk of their audience because they haven't been designed with user experience in mind. In some cases – such as the campaign to raise awareness of visual impairment that couldn't be read by people with visual impairment – the fallout from such errors is financially and reputationally costly.

There's no use creating a sexy piece of design work if your target audience can't see, hear, experience or understand it.

How?

– Consider accessible design both on- and offline. Make sure your fonts and colours are accessible and easy to read, particularly for people with learning difficulties or visual impairments.

– If your audience includes people with visual impairments, or is neurodiverse, consider how they might experience your comms and the medium you choose. Start with the audience experience in mind when selecting visuals, audio footage, fonts or even media itself, so that those who see, hear, learn, and interpret information differently can easily understand your message.

– Make sure the reading level of your content is suitable for the full range of reading abilities within your intended audience. Above all, your written content must resonate and speak to ALL people, which means using simple, clear language free of colloquialisms or overwrought phrases.

"It's not just about diversity, it's about inclusion and exclusion. Every time you communicate to one group of people, you have to let people know what's available for the rest, because otherwise it can leave everybody thinking, 'What about me?"

Liz Burton, Morgan Stanley

Principle 9

If you're going to do it, **do it.**

9

Don't tiptoe around tricky issues.
Address them head on.

Why?

Some people seem afraid of getting creative or really getting under the skin of D&I. It's the self-fulfilling faux pas problem we discussed earlier – where people are so concerned about getting it wrong, they end up getting it wrong. People avoid discussing certain issues, representing certain people, asking for real opinions, discussing facts or revealing the truth of where they currently are with D&I. But if you're going to do it, do it!

The only way to change minds and engage your audiences is by being true to your organisation, its nature, tone and values – and being honest about where you are on your D&I journey. Tackle big, bold topics head on, and show that you believe in making the world a more inclusive place.

How?

– Don't be boring. D&I is full of hugely interesting topics, and the landscape is changing all the time. Lead with bold thoughts and striking images that represent the gravitas of the topics you're talking about.

– Don't shy away from humour. Tastefully done, it can be a real equaliser. But if it's provocative, make sure you're punching up vs. punching down.

– Be bold with language. Linguistic reappropriation, done right, can be an effective way to empower marginalised groups.

– Be honest and own your f*ck ups. We all have to start somewhere. The more upfront and honest you are about what you're trying to do, the more likely people will get behind it.

"You have to talk from positivity and be open to feedback, not worry about whether you're going to say something wrong. People are open to hearing, 'We are not perfect, but we want to make things better.' We just need to be brave."

Liz Burton, Morgan Stanley

"Own up to your mistakes, apologise, be honest about it, show that you have learned from mistakes and work in partnerships to address it. Speak about it publicly and be willing to share your learnings."

Jennifer Smith, BFI

Principle 10

Just make it **normal.** Because it is.

Principle 10 | Just make it normal. Because it is.

radley yeldar.

53

Don't confuse diverse with different.

Why?

It's easy to get swept away with highlighting D&I, but this can mean we start to see people only for their points of difference. This singles them out as outsiders when we are all just regular humans.

While there are occasions when it's necessary to address the different experiences of certain groups and communities, the overall objective of inclusion is to make it clear that difference is normal and part of everyday life.

How?

– Don't single people out to talk about the factors that make them different. Instead, focus on building communications and connections that are open and relevant to all.

– Your intentions and commitments to becoming a more inclusive and diverse organisation shouldn't only be found on the one page devoted to D&I. Be consistent in how you talk about D&I across your entire business.

– Consider applying these D&I principles in other areas of your comms. D&I is not something to just be talked about in one area to show you're 'doing it'. To make it an innate feature of your business, it has to be built into every aspect of it.

"Champion diverse voices talking about all kinds of issues within the business. Rather than waiting until Ramadan to have a colleague speak at your board meeting about it, think about where else you can include voices of people across the business on topics that have nothing to do with their points of difference."

Annique Simpson, Internal communications consultant

10 practical principles
for being Inclusive By Design

Ultimately, D&I is an incredibly intangible thing to express. It goes without saying that these principles aren't an exhaustive list or a complete play-by-play. But they are a good practical starting point for any organisation in any industry to start telling their D&I story.

"It's really about designing with exceptional insight and understanding which audiences you are excluding, then using that insight to solve for one and innovate for the many."

Marianne Waite
Think Designable

1 Move away from multicolours.

2 Show real people and places.

3 If you don't have suitable images, don't use imagery.

4 Avoid ambiguity.

5 Use your data – all of it.

6 Don't overcomplicate.

7 Get moving.

8 Make it accessible.

9 If you're going to do it, do it.

10 Just make it normal. Because it is.

# What do these principles look like in action?

Pie charts are going stale.

There are countless ways to display data, with charts and graphs often the most comprehensive means of visualising numbers, trends and progress. They deal solely in fact, and the viewer is often left to interpret the information presented.

But while the data itself could reveal something fascinating, if it's presented in a dull or predictable format, fewer people are likely to engage with it.

Q1

14 %

86 %

Q2

16 %

84 %

● Male

● Female

Q3

20 %

80 %

Q4

41 %

59 %
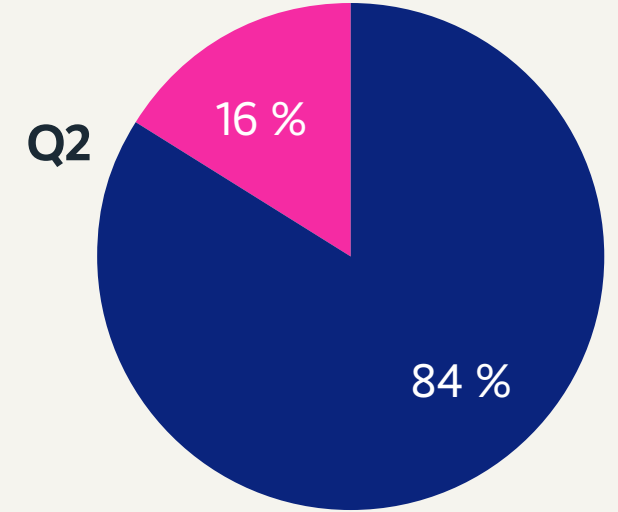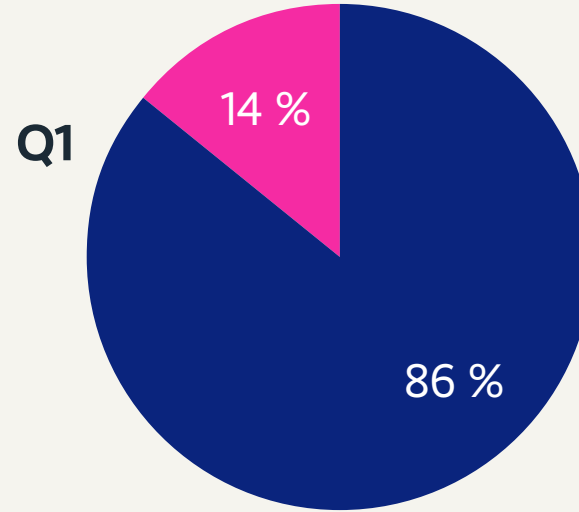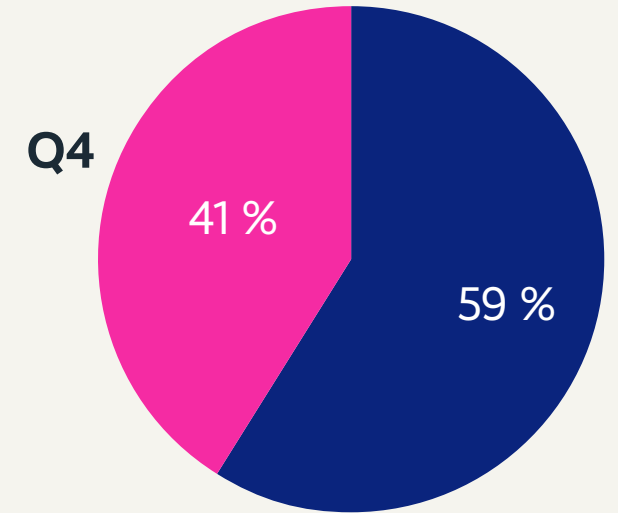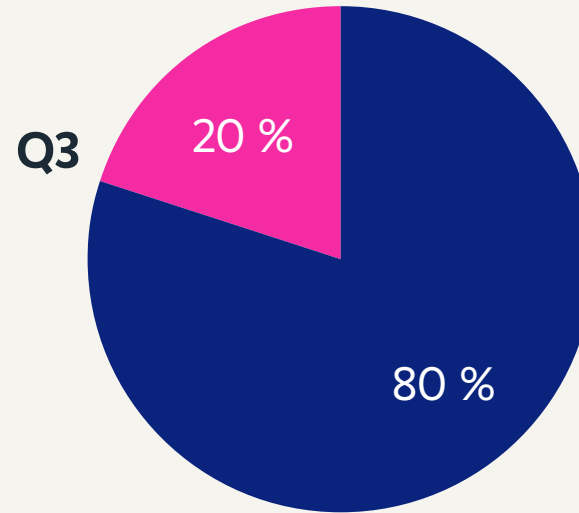
Pie charts are going stale. Tell a story behind the numbers.

While the humble pie chart serves its purpose, being more creative with your data presentation can make the difference between people engaging with its contents (and what it means) and not.

Including an illustrative data visualisation that tells a story will make the information more appealing – and by creatively summarising what the figures are saying, rather than relying on your audience to decipher dry, complex charts, you show that you care about the data you're sharing, and make it accessible.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADDRESSING OUR GENDER PAY DISCREPANCY

Our gender pay gap is shrinking. But there's work still to do.

Despite progress since 2017, women are still under-represented at the top end of our pay scale. Women either aren't reaching the top pay bracket, or they're taking longer to get there. We're taking steps to ensure our female employees close the gap over the next few years.

Gia dolupta temqui volorerum volorenunt at volut ad qua suntur omnimag natusam dit quate quam aut et illuptas dolugbs em cus

Officil lacerrum lam eil imendis ad ullit, intur, omnimi, ceichi eost a faceperor as aut hicationet volendae eum enbus ductrithum foccus vent andae quiducit et et ipsape eos in cowris rporehem quia vereheris sit es eum rere perferenit.

Gia dolupta temqui volorerunt at volut ad qua quam, omnimag natusam dit quote quam aut et illuptas doluptia am cus et officil.

Gender pay statistics per quartile 2017–2021

- WOMEN
- WOMEN (PROJECTED)
- MEN
- MEN (PROJECTED)

HIGHER
MIDDLE
MID – HIGH
LOW – MID

What's getting in the way? And what can we do about it?

Remove roadblocks
We're examining the reasons why people might not want to apply to work for us, and will address them individually to ensure we are seen as a caring and appealing employer.

Training in progress
We'll continue to offer great learning and development opportunities to all staff, and ensure all staff complete our unconscious bias training

Family first
Brilliant women turn down jobs with us, telling us that working here isn't is with family commit looking at how we balancing home easier for pare

Transpare
We're c
about t
board
w

Stop chasing rainbows.

In trying to show how diverse and inclusive they are, companies can lean heavily on annual occasions, like Pride, using them to broadcast that they are open and accepting to everyone.

But unless inclusion is evident in the day-to-day of your corporate identity and culture, piggy-backing an awareness day or rainbow-washing your logo for one week a year will have exactly the opposite effect to the one intended.

LGBT people: "it'd be nice if people could stop abusing us when we hold hands in public, we could teach LGBT lessons in schools and if the BBC could stop debating our existence on live air that'd be grea-

Capitalism: "what we're really sensing here is you want your own sandwich"

they should do the whole acronym and add pineapple, quinoa, icecream and shape it like a plus

10:10 AM · May 3, 2019 · Twitter for Android

Avoid clichés

Stop chasing rainbows.
Stand out by blending in.

Inclusion isn't a themed doughnut or a [Trump t-shirt bearing a rainbow flag](#). The audiences you're talking to want to be seen and spoken to every day, not just that one day a year. Of course, celebrate Pride and other days of awareness and significance – they're a vital part of your employees' and customers' lives. But your organisation's support of particular communities needs to be evergreen for it to be authentic.

Rather than just dialling up your D&I content around particular dates, just make it an everyday element of your communications. Not with a fanfare, but through normalisation – because diversity is normal life.

Ruffle some feathers

—
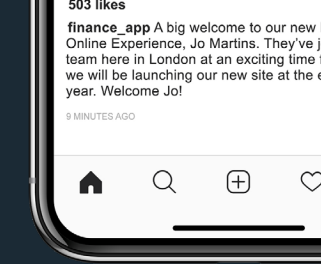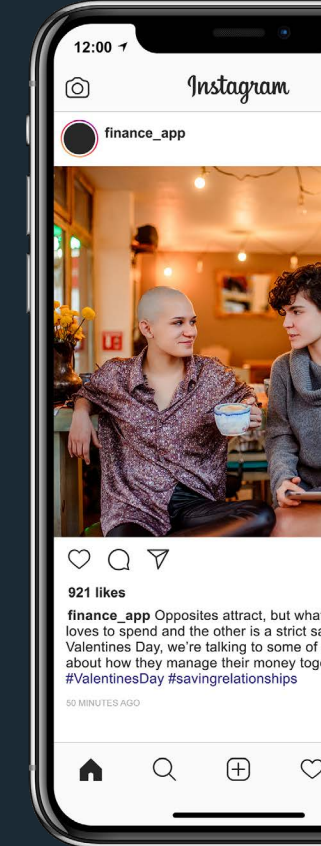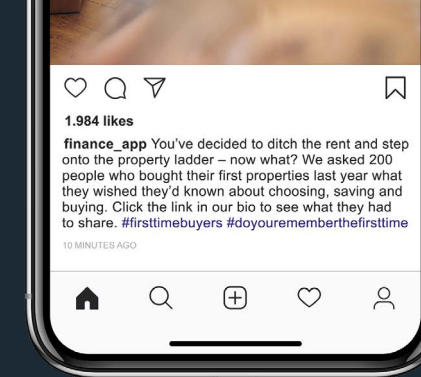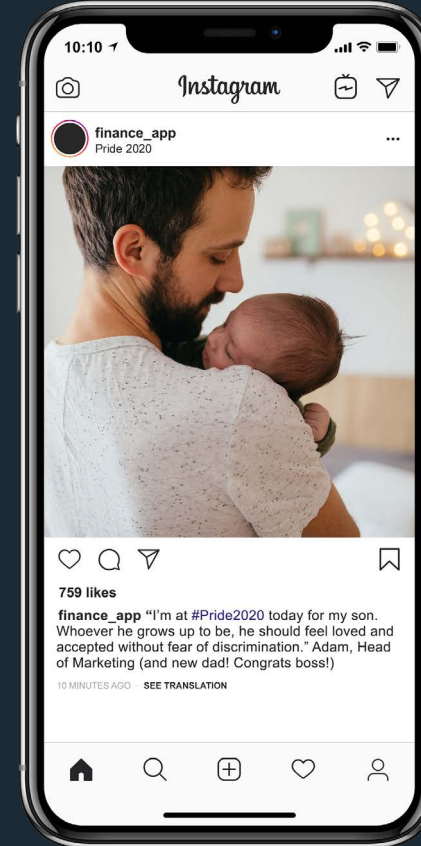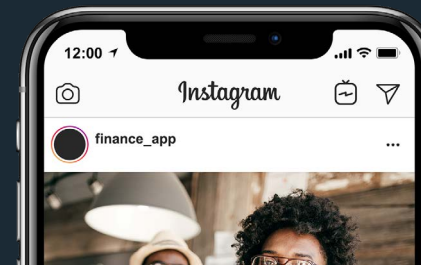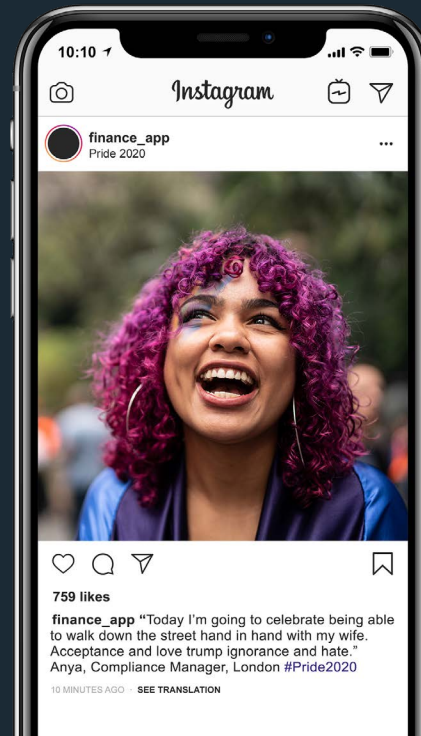
Pictures don't always tell a thousand words.

—

Whether you use photography or illustration, it's a challenge to find or create naturalistic imagery to support diversity communications. Show too many people and you'll be accused of trying too hard. But show just one or two, and maybe you're not trying hard enough – plus your chosen employees feel like the poster children for diversity at your company. If you choose standard stock imagery, it's assumed that you're hiding something by not showing your own employees. If you go for illustration, don't overcomplicate it by depicting too many people – but don't oversimplify, either.

It's a potential minefield. But authenticity is the key to being taken seriously.

Pictures don't always tell a thousand words.
And words can pack a punch...

If time, budget or buy-in stand in the way of setting up a photoshoot, and you're nervous of falling into the stock image trap, consider how else you might creatively provoke discussion of D&I. Have the confidence to embrace typography, and don't be afraid to inform your messaging with real-world experiences from your workforce or audiences – if you can't represent your audiences visually, explore how you might otherwise represent their concerns, experiences and suggestions. Maybe ask questions to ensure your communications are well-founded in the first place, and encourage the action that your people want to see. And get feedback after campaigns have run so you can learn from the reaction and uptake.

#03

"Are you *sure* you're British?"

#01

"But where are you *really* from?"

We love learning more about each other. But some questions, however well-intentioned, can be tricky. The right ones can break down walls. But the wrong ones can build them in a heartbeat.

We asked you if you'd ever been asked a question that offended, diminished, or just plain annoyed you. **Your answers were eye-opening.** So we're using what you've told us to make sure that when we get to know each other, we think more carefully about the questions we ask.

#gettingtoknowyou

#02

"How is your *English* so good?"

We love learning more about each other. But some questions, however well-intentioned, can be tricky. The right ones can break down walls. But the wrong ones can build them in a heartbeat.

We asked you if you'd ever been asked a question that offended, diminished, or just plain annoyed you. **Your answers were eye-opening.** So we're using what you've told us to make sure that when we get to know each other, we think more carefully about the questions we ask.

#gettingtoknowyou

...but only if they're somewhere people can see them.

Yes, it's true your staff will notice a poster tacked to the back of the toilet door – there's nothing like a captive audience. But relegating important messages to this unglamorous location risks undermining them.

Consider bold, more widely noticeable placement of D&I messaging. This speaks to your company's determination to improve and hold itself to account.

Some of our clients fear that having messages like this on show in more public arenas will be seen by staff and customers alike as confessing to having a bias problem. But actually, it could work in your favour to be open and honest about your attempts to address diversity issues.

_____

We know that communicating this stuff can be tricky.
We'd love to help you.

_____

Give us a call if...

You need to diversify your talent pool.

You need to report on your gender pay gap.

You want a campaign highlighting your D&I work.

You want to reach overlooked audiences.

You want to showcase your D&I journey to investors.

You want to raise awareness of an unsung D&I issue.

_____

We're Radley Yeldar, and we're experts at helping businesses communicate their D&I issues.

_____

We cover every topic...	**...every audience...**	**...and every channel and tactic**
Gender	Employees	Campaigns
Disability	Citizens	Reports
Neurodiversity	Consumers	Films
LGBTQ+	Customers	Website
Mental health	Governments	Brand identity
Ethnicity	Stakeholders	Sustainability strategy

We're the agency that...

...challenged

the invalid opinions that hold back persons with disabilities from the world of work for the **International Labour Organization**.
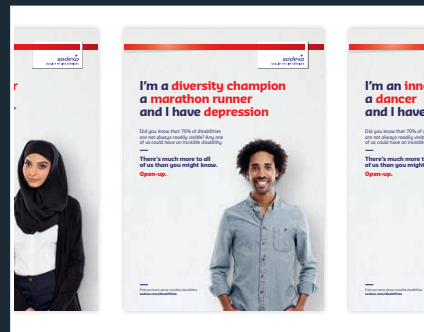

...encouraged

BP's people to think of inclusion as being about more than just stereotypes, and to make real changes for their future.

...built

a more inclusive Sodexo, helping their employees better understand their commitment to the brand promise, 'quality of life for all'.

...helped

Kaspersky inspire Gen-Z to wear their insecurities and struggles with mental health on their sleeves.

...united

LVMH's global workforce by engaging them in creating of a new set of organisational behaviours.

Check out our D&I hub to learn more.

——

Our methodology explained

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The statistics

We analysed the Forbes 2018 Most Valuable Brands during March and April 2019. We used the 2018 list as the 2019 list had not been released at the time of our analysis.

We examined the websites of each brand on the list, specifically looking for references to diversity and inclusion. In some cases, where the brand didn't include a specific D&I section, we looked to the parent brand and/or corporate sites. While we performed a thorough search of these sites, it was not exhaustive. In instances where we couldn't find D&I details, it's our belief that it would be very difficult and unlikely that key audiences would be able to find them, so we didn't include these brands in our secondary analysis.

For those with D&I communications, we assessed whether or not each brand was deploying content that fit one of the six clichés outlined on page 9 of this report. We used our discretion to determine whether or not these clichés were present. 'Committing clichés' includes brands that were somewhat or completely committing clichés.

For the good, bad and offensive examples, in some cases we drew inspiration from brands outside the Forbes Most Valuable Brands list where an example was particularly relevant. These examples were not included in the statistical analysis.

The interviews

We spoke with a series of communications and diversity & inclusion experts from April to July 2019. We asked them a series of questions to better understand different perspectives on the communications challenges surrounding diversity and inclusion. In some cases, speakers chose to remain anonymous.

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radley yeldar.

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Thank you

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