



INSIGHT PAPER

# Top DEI and Talent Practices for 2024

Attitudes, Alliances, and Advances



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Attitudes, Alliances, and Advances

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# 2024's Top 10 DEI and Talent Practices

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## Attitudes, Alliances, and Advances

### **Innovation in Turbulent Times**

In 2024, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and talent leaders face unprecedented challenges—from expanding responsibilities and tightening budgets to the emergence of new legal and political risks. Despite these hurdles, they continue to innovate, navigate cultural crises, and develop new markets. Now more than ever, leading organizations are adapting cutting-edge tactics to fortify their positions, collaboratively developing an even more bulletproof case for DEI.

The shifting landscape calls for CDOs (Chief Diversity Officers) and CHROs (Chief Human Resource Officers) to reflect on the most impactful strategies for promoting workplace inclusion. Widespread reports of new imperatives to demonstrate value, scale impact, and redefine roles underscore the urgency of these discussions. This report distills Seramount's wealth of industry knowledge related to the mindsets and toolkits of the world's most accomplished DEI and talent leaders.

### **Breaking Boundaries**

The latest advancements in DEI and talent range widely—from the transformation of age-old tactics to the development of entirely new paradigms. Nevertheless, they share a common objective: a holistic approach shattering the boundaries that have traditionally defined corporate inclusion initiatives.

### **Holistic Inclusion**

1. Personal and Collective
2. Local and Global
3. Competitive and Collaborative

### **Focus Areas**

This report provides an actionable roadmap of the comprehensive DEI and talent approaches implemented by the year's leading organizations across three key focus areas: attitudes, alliances, and advances.

### **1: Attitudes**

To achieve their aspirations, today's most effective DEI and talent programs integrate seemingly overlapping—or even opposing—ideas of inclusion at the individual, team, and organizational levels. Best-in-class DEI and talent programs build on and extend these and other productive tensions between global and intersectional understandings of inclusion to maximize belonging.

### **2: Alliances**

In a growing trend, CDOs and CHROs are partnering more closely to harness the power of strategic coalition building. New industry partnerships, functional collaborations, and customer-aligned ERGs continue to reshape research, product development, talent lifecycle, and market opportunities.

### **3: Advances**

Efficient teams and business acumen are becoming increasingly indispensable tools for advancing DEI and talent influence. Competitions can also enhance reputational capital, as award-winning organizations improve recruitment and retention through objective assessments providing actionable roadmaps and visibility into diversity bottlenecks.



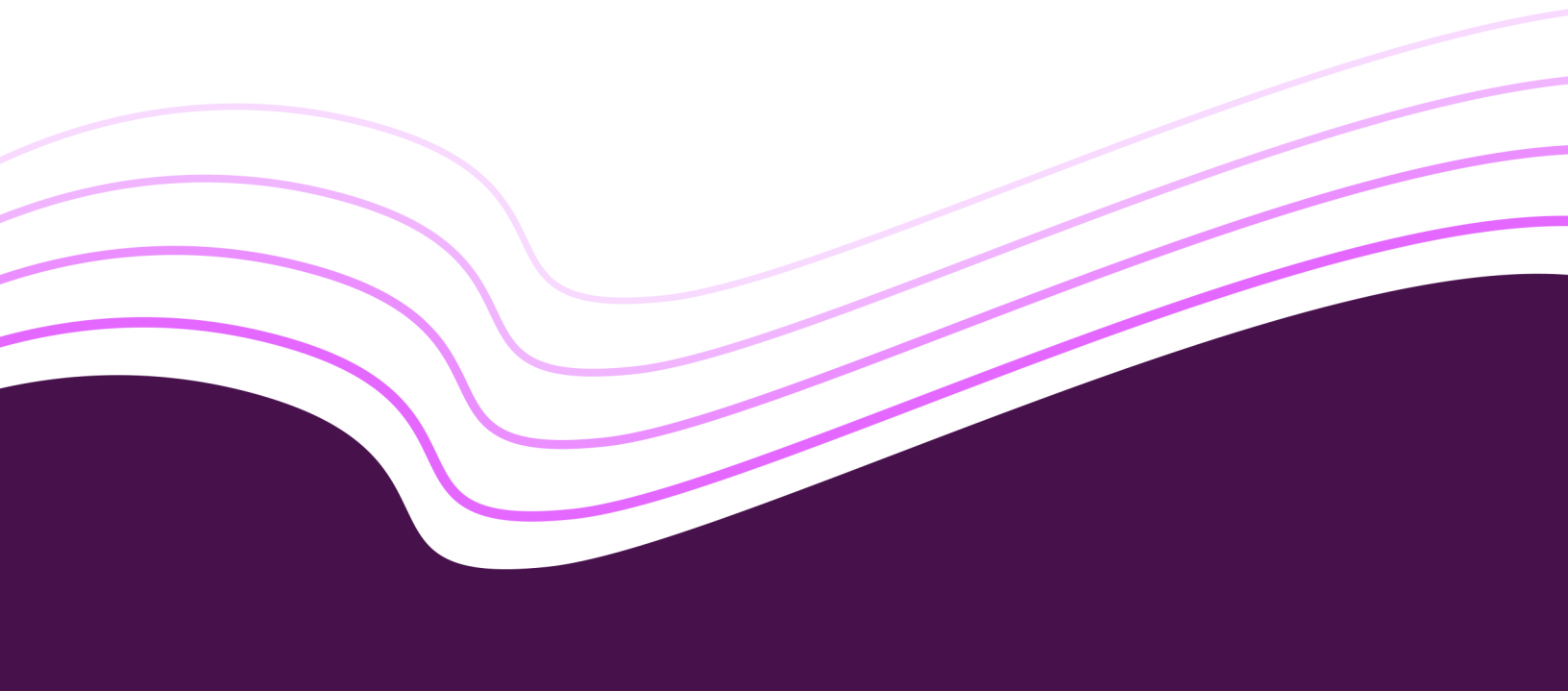
# Insightful Outlooks

Cutting-Edge Mindsets

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SECTION

1

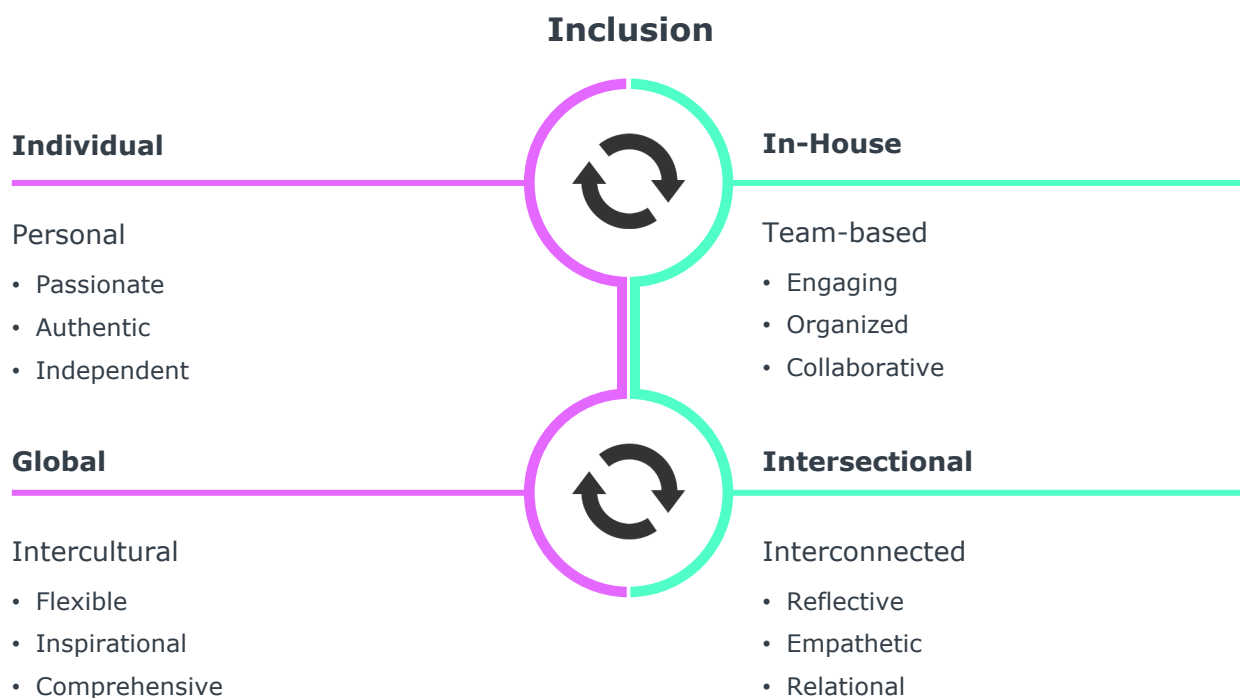


# Cutting-Edge Mindsets

## Transformative Attitudes

Most CDOs and CHROs are adept at making the case for the business value of DEI and the importance of embedding it across the entire organization. Most corporate diversity statements express a commitment to fostering an environment where employees can bring their authentic selves to work. What then distinguishes the mindsets and practices of the world’s most inclusive organizations?

Our research consistently shows that truly moving the needle requires a transformative culture shift integrating four distinct forms of inclusion: individual, in-house (team- and organization-based), global, and intersectional. Seramount surveys consistently demonstrate the value of this comprehensive approach to inclusion.



As DEI and talent programs are developed and advanced, interlocking mindsets are testing the boundaries of workplace inclusion, its scope and practice, and how it will be defined in the future.

The following section examines these overlapping approaches and their implementation by leading organizations. The remaining two sections explore how leaders are applying this holistic approach to forge new alliances, broaden their impact, and reimagine corporate leadership.

“

We don’t learn from sameness. We learn from difference.

**Gloria Steinem**  
Activist and Author

”

Source: Seramount interviews and analysis; Steinem, G. (2020), *I Know This to Be True: Gloria Steinem On Integrity, Empathy, & Authenticity*, Chronicle Books.

# Individual Inclusion

## Unleashing Inclusive Storytelling

Personal narratives breathe life into abstract DEI concepts, making the full lived experiences of employees visible. When deployed effectively, they transcend individual experience, serving as compelling evidence of an organization's commitment to transitioning from a onetime DEI training curriculum to an ongoing, iterative journey. By authentically engaging with personal anecdotes, leaders can nurture a culture of empathy, sensitivity, and cultural competency, dispelling skepticism tied to perceived performativity. These narratives act as bridges, creating space for shared understanding and the development of a new common language.

## DEI Storytelling: Best Practices



Segment DEI comms, curating tailored media content to connect with different demographics.



Create and implement inclusive language guides, including DEI glossaries of terms.<sup>1</sup>



Showcase case studies emerging leaders may encounter as they step into more senior roles.



Facilitate executive storytelling that demonstrates a personal commitment to inclusion.



Engage employees with bite-sized intros and invite them to delve deeper.



Organize DEI story-share events, gathering content for inclusive company narratives.



## Case Studies: Personalizing DEI

United Airlines and Disney have recently modernized the appearance standards for their uniformed, customer-facing staff, aiming for a more inclusive aesthetic enabling greater expression of individuality. Meanwhile, Microsoft has seen a substantial 270% uptick in voluntary DEI engagement following the introduction of a program requiring employees to select a personal DEI priority. Employees define their own success metrics, communicating their impact during performance review and development conversations.

# In-House Inclusion

## Building High-Performing Teams

In today's workplace, organizational performance is intrinsically tied to team performance. Major studies of high-performing teams have consistently showcased the critical influence of culture. Google's two-year study, known as Project Aristotle, is frequently cited for its finding that psychological safety is fundamental to team success. Yet its insights into the significance of well-defined roles, dependable cultures, and meaningful work are equally remarkable. New research from Seramount continues this conversation, underscoring the outsized impact of direct managers and colleagues working in close proximity on employee engagement and belonging.

## Inclusive Workplace Communities: Key Elements

1

### Local DEI Councils

At the local level, DEI councils reporting directly to their executive counterparts secure management buy-in.

2

### Inclusive Design

Accessible workplace communities, from inclusion cafes to DEI pods, foster creative and connectivity.

3

### Reciprocal Mentorship

Reverse mentoring and manager upskilling programs establish an integrated knowledge network.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Seramount's inclusive language guide, Keenan, D. (2023, November), "Inclusion Through Language: A Fluid Guide to Inclusive Language in the Workplace": <https://seramount.com/wp-content/uploads/private-proxy/49172>. Source: Cowling-Vega, J. (2023, May 10), "Three Ways the Travel and Tourism Industry Can Create a More Inclusive Experience"; Umoh, R. (2023, November 8), "Microsoft instructed all workers to set diversity goals; in performance reviews: Employees taking optional DEI courses increased by 270%," [fortune.com](https://fortune.com); Duhigg, C. (2016, February 16), "What Google Learned From Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team," [nytimes.com](https://nytimes.com); Sherbin, L., Rizzotti, M., and Forster, D. (2023, June 20), "5 Truths DEI and Talent Leaders Need to Know About Employee Engagement"; Seramount interviews and analysis.



# Global Inclusion

## Implementing a Comprehensive Vision

Achieving excellence in global inclusion involves adopting a highly consultative approach, continually collaborating with a worldwide committee of experts to balance a comprehensive worldview with a keen understanding of cultural and regional differences.

Global Centers of Excellence (COEs) play a vital role in crafting a versatile and agile approach, empowering regional leads by staying attuned to cultural nuances. Successful implementation involves aligning leaders across various business lines within a specific country to address shared concerns. It equally entails developing a comprehensive perspective capable of promoting inclusion across the entire organization.

## Case Study: Global Centers of Excellence

In more than 40 countries, Kellogg Company is “advancing a globally united Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) strategy,” says Walter Garcia, Director, ED&I. Garcia, based in the United States, leads the Global ED&I Center of Excellence (COE), partnering with four regional leads covering key global regions.



“Our ED&I strategy is a collaborative effort across the globe. Our Global Center of Excellence (COE) provides the broad vision for ED&I and works in partnership with the regional leads to better understand cultural nuances that resonate locally,” Garcia says. Within the COE, Garcia oversees three direct reports specializing in Operations, Learning, and Business Employee Resource Groups (BERGs): “They make sure we have efficiency and consistency across the regions for maximum impact.”

## Global Inclusion: Best Practices

- Facilitate DEI leadership visits to regional offices to deepen understanding of country-specific challenges.
- Update DEI training and communications programs to include a global perspective.
- Advocate for closed-captioning and translation at DEI events to enhance global inclusion.
- Create customized regional programming and content calendars.
- Expand self-identification programs globally.
- Develop recruitment partnerships with international universities to diversify the talent pipeline.
- Create digital workplace communities and mentoring programs connecting employees regardless of their location or role.
- Establish multinational Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) integrating international outlooks.
- Promote pay equity across similar roles and functions in different regions.
- Introduce refugee hiring and onboarding programs to attract new global talent.
- Develop global DEI calendars to raise awareness and promote cultural competency.
- Foster regional autonomy and accountability by collaborating with country heads of diversity.
- Emphasize the importance of having DEI leaders on the ground in all major business regions.

“Having a local DEI leader or champion is critical to local success. Support of the country head of diversity matters a great deal as well.”

*Barbara Frankel, Senior Director, Seramount*



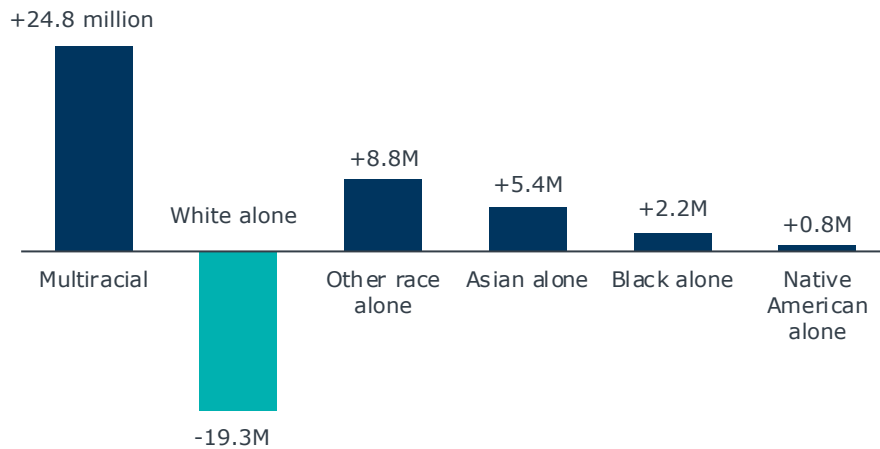
# Intersectional Horizons

## Navigating Interconnected Identities

Beyond addressing the individual, organizational, and global aspects of inclusion, it's equally imperative to integrate an intersectional approach capable of engaging identities and issues cutting across existing boundaries. As multicultural and multiracial identities become increasingly prevalent, this perspective will become even more crucial to effectively navigating inclusion and providing expert leadership guidance in the years ahead.

### More People Identify as Multiracial

US Census change 2010 to 2020



Source: US Census Bureau



"US Census data shows a 276% increase in people identifying as multiracial between 2010 and 2020. Additionally, there is some data to suggest that the younger generations of the workforce are less likely to align themselves to traditional identities....As one DEI leader put it, 'Which Employee Resource Group (ERG) does a Black, lesbian, disabled veteran join?'"

"Despite their positive intent, ERGs are, essentially, an exclusive idea. This can conflict with the current movement to promote inclusivity and intersectionality. Most organizations are tempering the exclusive aspects of their ERGs by opening them to all staff and creating forums, such as diversity councils, to look for opportunities across ERGs to promote inclusivity."

*ERGs at the Crossroads, Seramount*

### Fostering Intersectional Inclusion: Tactics

- Host Global Diversity Awareness Months featuring compelling intersectional learning and development programming.
- Advance allyship initiatives to foster intersectional awareness among all employees.
- Pair employees, irrespective of identity, with a manager from a historically excluded talent group for a set period.
- Develop inclusive ERG partnerships hosting intersectional sponsorship programs and leadership circles.
- Establish interfaith and intersectional ERGs to promote courageous conversations and develop understanding across affinity groups.
- Host global inclusion summits enabling all employees to form new intersectional connections.

Source: (2023, June), "ERGs at the Crossroads: Benefits, Boundaries, and Burnout," <https://seramount.com/resources/ergs-at-the-crossroads-benefits-boundaries-and-burnout>; Seramount interviews and analysis.



# Strategic Alliances

Essential Coalitions

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SECTION

2

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# Essential Coalitions

## Impactful Partnerships

In an ever-evolving DEI and talent landscape, maintaining a competitive advantage involves collaboration as much as competition. A new imperative has emerged to expand the work of inclusion beyond traditional organizational boundaries. This bridge-building approach aims to drive meaningful change through an array of inclusive knowledge-sharing practices, ranging from establishing new industry coalitions to empowering ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) to better understand customer needs.

Our surveys indicate that top-tier organizations are strategically deploying these new internal and external partnerships to enhance social proof, drive innovation, and develop new markets. The following section explores the intricacies of three coalitions that matter, highlighting the transformative potential they hold for organizations seeking to lead the way in 2024.

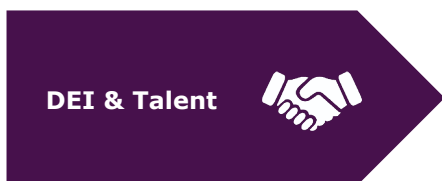
## Strategic Alliances

1



Collaborations between industry competitors have become a driving force for change. The growing willingness to pool resources and industry-specific expertise to address shared challenges has inspired a diverse array of inclusion initiatives encompassing upskilling programs, research collectives, and philanthropic endeavors.

2



The recognition that employee engagement and satisfaction are intimately linked to DEI priorities is steadily increasing. Capitalizing upon this trend, DEI and talent teams are forging new strategic alliances to confront growing talent lifecycle challenges, ranging from skills gaps and “rage applying” to “quiet quitting” and the “disengagement tax.”

3



ERGs embed inclusion into the broader company culture, fostering a customer-centric diversity perspective to advance engagement and belonging. Additionally, they drive multicultural marketing, propel revenue generation, facilitate knowledge sharing, and open new markets, building a more representative and welcoming experience for all.



“What can organizations do today in the face of a strained macro environment and limited resources? The imperative for change isn’t going away simply because budgets have shrunk....Complement your DEI team with external partners to meet your evolving needs. Effective DEI teams thrive on agility as they meet ever-changing business needs, priorities, and economics.”

*Dr. Erin L. Thomas, Head of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Upwork*

# Industry Collaborations

## Cultivating Inclusive Insights

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, surveyed organizations started envisioning new ways of partnering with industry competitors to tackle unprecedented inclusion challenges. This trend was also driven by a newfound awareness of the variations in DEI challenges and practices across industries. Capitalizing on their collective expertise in driving diverse thinking, organizations charted a new course, coming together to establish more effective, industry-specific DEI collaborations.

## Major Industry Coalition Models



### Research-Based

Today's CDOs and CHROs are building new industry coalitions to accelerate the pace of change across all aspects of research and development. New partnerships and programs in the health care sector, for example, are expanding the geographic reach of clinical trials to promote accessibility, ensure health equity, and better support underserved communities. These efforts involve creating collaborative spaces and facilitating data sharing between partners to expand collective impact and influence.



### Strategic

Investing in strategic leadership networks facilitates the adoption of industry-defining best practices. By working together to pinpoint where real change is occurring in their sector, DEI and talent leaders can collectively empower themselves with the evidence needed to advocate for sustained investment. Seramount's CDO Collaborative, for example, brings together DEI executives to forge alliances, share strategies and tactics, and develop thought leadership.



### Philanthropic

Industry leaders are also partnering to amplify their social impact. In the financial services sector, for instance, recent collaborations have centered on broadening access and developing complementary business resources for underrepresented entrepreneurs. DEI leaders are utilizing their combined research, learning, and advisory expertise to aid in the development of new products and services supporting the growth of diverse financial institutions and businesses.

## Knowledge Sharing: Best Practices

Build  
Knowledge  
Libraries

Establish  
Common Goals  
and Metrics

Found Centers  
of Excellence  
(COEs)

Develop  
Learning  
Communities

Advance Social  
Media and Web  
Presence



## Case Study: Alliance for Global Inclusion

The Alliance for Global Inclusion is a global network of DEI leaders and CEOs dedicated to amplifying and accelerating inclusive outcomes within the technology industry. The Alliance believes that tackling today's greatest DEI challenges requires a shared commitment to a global action plan. This vision of technology-driven progress aims to generate a positive impact and address shared challenges across coalition partners and their communities. To achieve this, the Alliance promotes best practices, champions collective improvement, and develops common goals and data.

Source: Seramount interviews and analysis; Jones, D. (2022, January 24), "The Alliance for Global Inclusion Is Helping Accelerate an Industry Transformation Through DEI Outcomes—Here's How."

# DEI and Talent Partnerships

## Building an Inclusive Talent Lifecycle

Against a backdrop of growing workforce instability, DEI and talent investments are being subjected to heightened scrutiny. Remarkably, roles are converging across functions in response to these unfolding developments: CHROs are being called upon to lead DEI teams, CDOs are transitioning into pivotal people leadership roles, and business executives are assuming DEI and talent responsibilities. Shining a spotlight on the influx of new leaders navigating novel responsibilities, recent research shows that 70 percent of CDOs are embarking on a new journey in leading a DEI function. The ensuing high turnover and burnout rates are ongoing challenges, reflected in the average CDO tenure of 30 months in the S&P 500.

Seramount data reveals a strong link between employee engagement, satisfaction, and DEI priorities, with an alarming 46% of employee turnover caused by an unhealthy company culture. To combat the “disengagement tax” during turbulent times, DEI and talent leaders are collaborating to foster an inclusive talent lifecycle.

## Evolving Functions and Futures

### DEI Strategy



I think the people agenda and certainly my role, which I don't think is unique to most major corporations...is our employees are looking to the C-suite for more of a voice of safety, predictability, inclusivity, authenticity....Gen Z in my judgment they want, they want authenticity....Companies that get their diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda right are going to connect more with their employees.

**Peter Fasolo, Ph.D**

Chief Human Resources Officer, Johnson & Johnson



### Talent Strategy



As we think about recruitment, as we think about advancement, as we think about learning and development, we shouldn't have...our policies and practices for recruitment and then some bolt on things that we do for diversity, we should have a policy and practice for recruitment that has an eye towards diversity, and so really integrating the things that we need to do from a DE&I perspective into all of our HR practices.

**Sandy Torchia**

Vice Chair, Talent and Culture, KPMG



### Gen Z's Rise: Elevating Purpose



**72%**

Estimated proportion of the global workforce by 2029

**49%**

Would take a 20% salary reduction to join a purpose-driven company

### Gen Z Perspectives: DEI Commitment



**19%**

Proportion of employees believing their organization's leadership is committed to DEI

**83%**

Percentage of job candidates who say that a company's commitment to DEI is important

Source: Bourne, A. (2023, 9 January), "The DEI Imperative: Minimizing Risk and Maximizing ROI in an Unpredictable Market"; Paikeday, T. S., Lim, S. and Flock, J. (2023, April 21), "A Global Look at the Chief Diversity Officer Landscape," russellreynolds.com; Frankel, B. and Waldron, M. (2022, May), "ESG and DEI: The New Indicator of Employee, Stakeholder Satisfaction," <https://seramount.com/resources/esg-and-dei-the-new-indicator-of-employee-stakeholder-satisfaction/>; "What workforce diversity means for Gen Z," monster.com; Seramount interviews and analysis.

# DEI and Talent Partnerships

## Advancing Inclusive Pathways

DEI and talent leaders are increasingly co-creating inclusive career pathways and advancement frameworks. Studied organizations are designing career management seminars to share best practices, with a focus on developing leadership skills, personal brand identity, and executive presence. They're also launching initiatives to enable all employees to schedule one-on-one meetings with a talent acquisition professional for career pathfinding and navigation. Additionally, industry leaders are empowering employees to proactively manage their careers by transparently defining and organizing positions, maintaining consistent job titles across the organization, and providing clear role descriptions and advancement requirements.

### DEI & Talent: Collaborative Action Items

- Create a comprehensive DEI risk mitigation strategy.
- Develop early career programs introducing historically excluded talent to alternative practice areas.
- Facilitate access of first-generation and underrepresented talent to senior leaders with speed networking and "ask a leader anything" events.
- Implement initiatives enabling employees to volunteer for objective, third-party talent assessments.
- Establish, analyze, and report on shared DEI dashboards and metrics.
- Cultivate trust and psychological safety in a divided workplace with employee listening sessions, translating employee sentiment into actionable insights.
- Conduct mission-oriented workshops and campaigns to reinforce core concepts and values.
- Enhance a sense of belonging by creating channels and environments for employees, managers, and leaders to engage in vulnerable, courageous conversations.
- Publicly commit to diversifying the talent pipeline, acknowledging shortcomings and advocating for necessary investments.
- Systemically measure and drive inclusion layer by layer, from individual teams to the board of directors.
- Draft a crisis communications framework outlining when and how the company will address social and cultural issues.

### The Future of Work: AI, DEI, and Talent

As AI (Artificial Intelligence) continues to reshape the future of work, DEI and talent teams are joining forces to craft a fresh employee value proposition. This vital work involves championing accessible re-skilling and upskilling, appreciating the value of diverse perspectives, and integrating inclusive recruitment strategies.

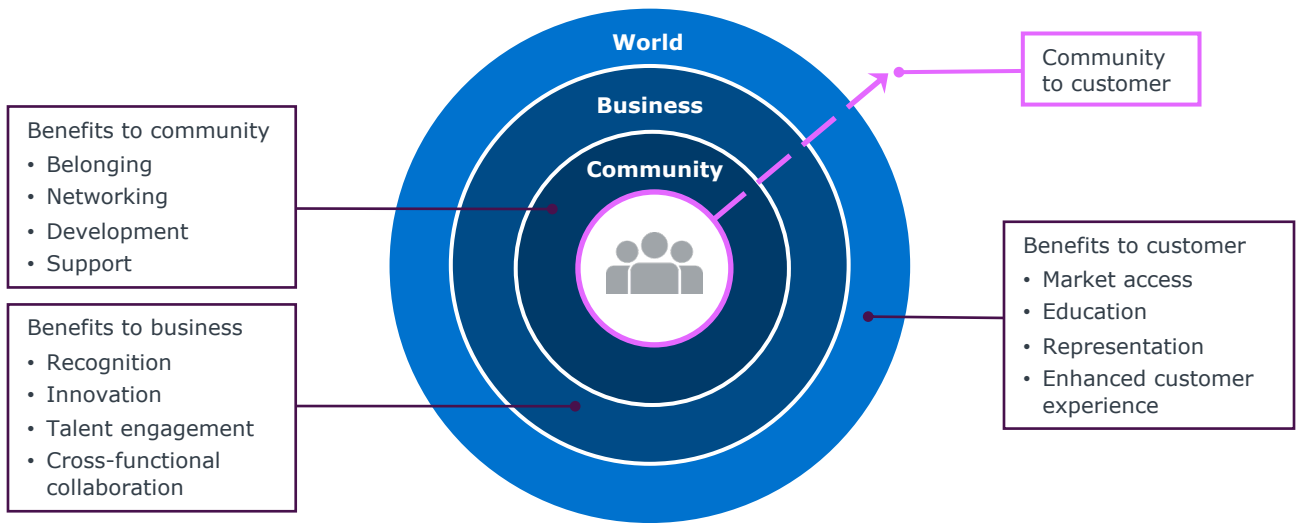
CHROs and CDOs are increasingly recognizing the urgent need to ensure that equity gaps in technological adoption today don't create an inequitable future of work tomorrow. If managed correctly, the imminent AI revolution presents a golden opportunity for DEI and talent leaders to secure a seat at the table with business and technology leaders, driving inclusive hiring, diversifying the AI pipeline, and ensuring historically excluded voices are represented in strategic discussions of automation, implementation, and AI guardrails.

# Customer-Centric ERGs and Councils

## Championing Customer Diversity

At their core, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) play a pivotal role in driving workforce inclusion through community support and development. Yet, the emergence of customer-centric ERGs represents a strategic evolution of their networking capabilities. Capitalizing on their connections within affiliated communities, ERGs are developing new multicultural marketing techniques integrating inclusion into the end-to-end customer experience.

## Impacting Diverse Communities



“Businesses increasingly turn to ERGs to support revenue generation through assistance in marketing to aligned communities...ERG members can help to develop and test new products, provide advice on and support to marketing and product launches, and help to guide and train staff in cultural competency.”

*ERGs at the Crossroads, Seramount*

## Customer Diversity and Creative Review Councils

Forward-thinking companies are increasingly incorporating a customer diversity lens into their overall business strategy. Customer Diversity and Community Councils have gained increased prominence for their role in nurturing customer engagement, reshaping go-to-market strategies, and developing inclusive customer education programs. Meanwhile, Creative Review Councils, composed of ERG members across all functions, provide expert advice with a focus on ensuring that every campaign includes representation from historically underrepresented communities.

### Case Study: American Airlines

American Airlines maintains a Community Council comprised of distinguished Black executives. The Council informs American’s work around customer experience and representation, providing “candid feedback” and thought leadership. These insights have already driven meaningful change at American, including increasing Black representation in in-flight entertainment, retaining a leading Black-owned ad agency, and introducing new menu items created by historically excluded talent.



Source: Seramount interviews and analysis; “ERGs at the Crossroads: Benefits, Boundaries, and Burnout”; American Airlines, “Progress on Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Journey,” aa.com.





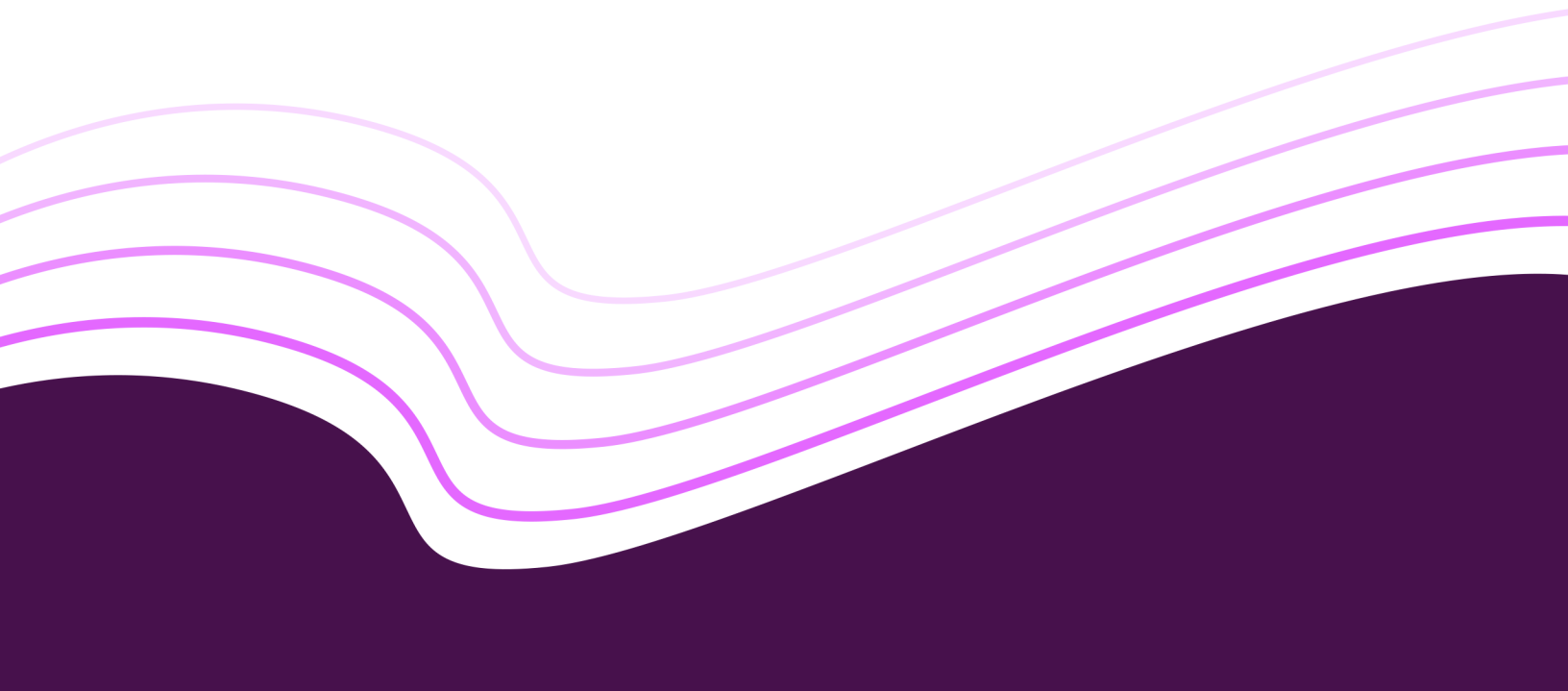
# Cultivating Influence

High-Impact Strategies

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SECTION

3



# High-Impact Strategies

## Collective Ownership

DEI and talent leaders are catalysts for change in nearly every organization. But they are held back by budget reductions, reporting hierarchies, and insufficient buy-in. To overcome these challenges, top-quartile organizations are embracing collective ownership models empowering CDOs and CHROs to align the roles and responsibilities of every employee with DEI and talent objectives.

This section outlines three key relationship-building strategies that DEI and talent organizations can execute to enhance their impact, reshape existing structures, and become an employer of choice. Our findings underscore that redefining the work of inclusion as a shared enterprise requires cultivating influence widely—whether recruiting internal DEI ambassadors or sharing insights with the wider world.

## Strategic Alliances

1

### Managing DEI as a Business



*Elevate every line of business*

1. Reposition DEI as integral to business leadership
2. Develop inclusion indices and KPIs
3. Build BRGs aligning DEI and business goals

2

### Leading with Lean Teams



*Build impactful "teams of one"*

1. Scale impact with DEI champions network
2. Promote collective ownership
3. Ensure equitable assignments

3

### Recognition and Assessment



*Engage in DEI calls to action and awards*

1. Introduce independent evaluations
2. Measure progress against benchmarks
3. Enhance reputation to attract top talent

## Awards and Advances

CDOs and CHROs can make an outsized impact by integrating inclusion into every organizational level and role. This evolving cultural mandate encompasses the creation of custom-made plans for individual units. Actively pursuing certifications and awards enriches these endeavors with comprehensive external feedback. Recognition from outside organizations in turn bolsters the company's reputation as an innovative workplace driving DEI outcomes.



*"When you're doing this work, everybody has to be involved....Opportunities to make a positive impact are not related to a specific role. DEI work is everywhere and in everything."*

*Renita Miller, Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, The Wharton School*

# Managing DEI as a Business

## Driving Inclusive Business Outcomes

Over the past half-decade, the business value of inclusion has been a point of constant discussion in industry research and practice. Despite this continuous conversation, the development of a new organizational structure for DEI has lagged. Forward-thinking DEI and talent leaders are now proactively engaging with business-facing teams, introducing new management structures, and creating tailored plans for each function. Running DEI like a business, they're driving measurable outcomes in the workplace and marketplace.

## Integrating DEI and Business Leadership

“Make yourself indispensable to inclusive leadership by creating innovative solutions to business concerns.”

The latest Edelman Trust Barometer report finds that business remains the only trusted institution in a polarized world. This emerging trend presents an unparalleled opportunity for DEI and talent leaders—who are at the forefront of fostering trust in the workplace—to redefine their roles as business leaders. To realize this objective, they are joining forces with business executives to showcase both the power of DEI to tackle critical business needs and the business benefits of a well-aligned social impact strategy.

## Establishing Inclusion Indices

“Measuring workplace inclusion generally, specifically, and swiftly is the key to transforming DEI success into business success.”

Surveyed organizations consistently aimed to transform DEI measurement into management in 2023. We saw a uniform rise in the adoption of equity and inclusion indices capturing data from people leaders across key employee experience focus areas. Measuring inclusive experience within individual business segments offers actionable insights, empowering leaders to proactively address challenges and support equitable outcomes for all. Our research also highlights the growing trend of automated data production facilitating on-demand updates for senior leaders. Another upward trend is the introduction of new metrics focused on neurodiverse, transgender, religious, and caregiver inclusion.

## Building Effective BRGs

“Effectively leveraged BRGs are an organization's secret weapon—its superpower.”

BRGs (Business Resource Groups) can align existing inclusion initiatives with internal and external business objectives such as increasing promotion rates or improving cultural competence about customers. To maximize performance, Seramont experts suggest developing a strategic playbook, engaging industry experts and allies, and implementing performance evaluation metrics for leaders. Equally crucial is the provision of sufficient resources and infrastructure, from survey tools for gathering feedback to design resources for the creation of professional business materials.

“How can leaders become more relevant to ever-changing business goals? By increasing outreach and connectivity to developing markets and advancing inclusive subject-matter knowledge and interest.”

*ERG Leadership Handbook, Seramont*

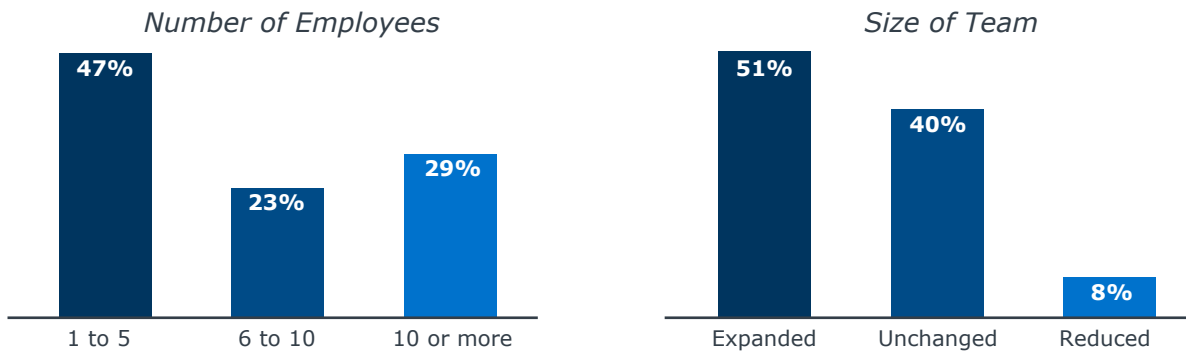
# Leading with Lean Teams

## DEI “Teams of One”

According to the 2023 Seramount Inclusion Index Survey, 47% of organizations with 500 or more employees had dedicated DEI teams consisting of five or fewer employees. An average employee headcount of 8,819 at these companies results in a DEI staff-to-employee ratio of between 1:1,764 to 1:8,819, akin to the ratio for a mayor of a small town.<sup>1</sup> Despite recent headlines about DEI headwinds, the number of large organizations reporting relatively small dedicated DEI teams notably declined 5% this past year, indicating that overall, the size of DEI teams is increasing. Nevertheless, significant work remains to be done when nearly half of surveyed organizations persist in maintaining DEI offices with comparatively few employees, with the average annual DEI expenditure per employee in even the world’s largest organizations at a mere \$44.

The data also highlights mounting pressures on the sector, evident in the rise of a “wait and see” attitude. A substantial 40% of studied organizations reported that their DEI team size remained unchanged year over year, an increase of 25% from 2022. Meanwhile, companies reporting an expansion in team size decreased from 72% in 2022 to 51% in 2023. This trend line underscores the critical importance of leading with lean teams.

## Employee Headcount and Changes in Size of Dedicated DEI Teams



Source: Seramount 2023 Inclusion Index Survey<sup>2</sup>

## Amplifying Impact with DEI Champions

Today’s CDOs and CHROs face a distinctive challenge: how to impact inclusion at scale. DEI champion networks help solve this problem by developing systems of shared ownership and accountability. DEI ambassadors provide leaders invaluable cultural intelligence, aiding in the resolution of systemic inclusion concerns such as bias mitigation, root cause analysis, and program engagement. A strong commitment to DEI knowledge-sharing creates a competitive advantage by fostering cross-functional connections. This bottom-up approach enables DEI “teams of one” to expand their influence, as executives increasingly see them as the connective tissue unifying the entire organization.

### Best Practices: Equitable Assignments

From EAP ambassadors equipped to recognize the signs of emotional distress to ESG education champions, the opportunities for scaling small teams are limitless. Regardless of the shape your champions network assumes, its effectiveness depends on the commitment and involvement of its members. Sustainability is achieved through equitable assignments, tapping into individuals with the passion, investment, bandwidth, and training to mentor their peers effectively.

- Develop highly engaging onboarding programs, newsletters, webinars, and intranet pages to expand reach.
- Provide robust support for DEI champions and ERG leaders, including access to research and advisory services.
- Create a centralized DEI resource hub offering champions access to ready-made content and resources.
- Establish recognition programs, based on nominations, to acknowledge inclusion champions for their efforts.
- Support participation in external conferences and networking events providing valuable insights to leaders.
- Ensure that members have dedicated time, meeting space, and technology to fulfill their responsibilities.

1) In [Seramount’s 2023 Inclusion Index](#), the median organization size in this group was 4,752.  
2) The remaining 1% of survey respondents who selected “no response” are not represented here.

Source: Bourne, A. (2023, 9 January), “The DEI Imperative: Minimizing Risk and Maximizing ROI in an Unpredictable Market”; 2022 and 2023 Seramount Inclusion Indices; Seramount interviews and analysis.

# Advancing Recognition and Assessment

## Inclusion Awards and Certifications

Actively participating in DEI competitions keeps organizations aligned with industry best practices, providing a holistic view of progress across all major aspects of workplace inclusion. Securing DEI awards and certifications strategically positions companies as preferred employers. Competition scorecards and results offer all participants an improvement roadmap, evaluating existing inclusion efforts, spotlighting successful tactics, and pinpointing problem areas to address.

### Benefits of Participating in Top-Tier Competitions

1

#### Social Proof

Success in major DEI competitions enhances reputation, serving as a valuable tool for recruitment and retention of top talent.

2

#### Assessment

In-depth data collection across key focus areas acts as an initial inclusion audit, followed by an impartial, third-party review of the organization's progress.

3

#### Trends

Informed by rigorous research, best-in-class competitions offer a real-time overview of the DEI landscape, with evaluation criteria covering top trends.

4

#### Benchmarking

Leading competitions offer comprehensive competitive intelligence, including scorecards and benchmarking to guide ongoing improvement efforts.

## Internal Campaigns and Challenges

From innovative self-ID campaigns incorporating gamified digital scorekeeping and raffles, to impactful calls to action crowdsourcing accessible and assistive technology ideas, in-house competitions can play a crucial role in advancing an organization's DEI outcomes. Awards honoring individuals can act as powerful reminders of a company's commitment to core principles, while competitions and challenges can provide dynamic avenues for sourcing new insights and driving inclusion forward.



"For the past 14 years that UBS has been named one of the 100 Best Companies for Working Parents, we have been honored to nominate a 'UBS Working Parent of the Year'—an exemplary working parent who not only excels and contributes as a leader in their respective team, but also balances family life. Honorees could be working parents who are great mentors, have made significant contributions to their community or company, or have overcome personal or professional obstacles."

*Seramount Interview, UBS*



"Award-winning DEI and talent organizations are consistently measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of their policies, and by doing so, they are taking initiative to build a culture of belonging."

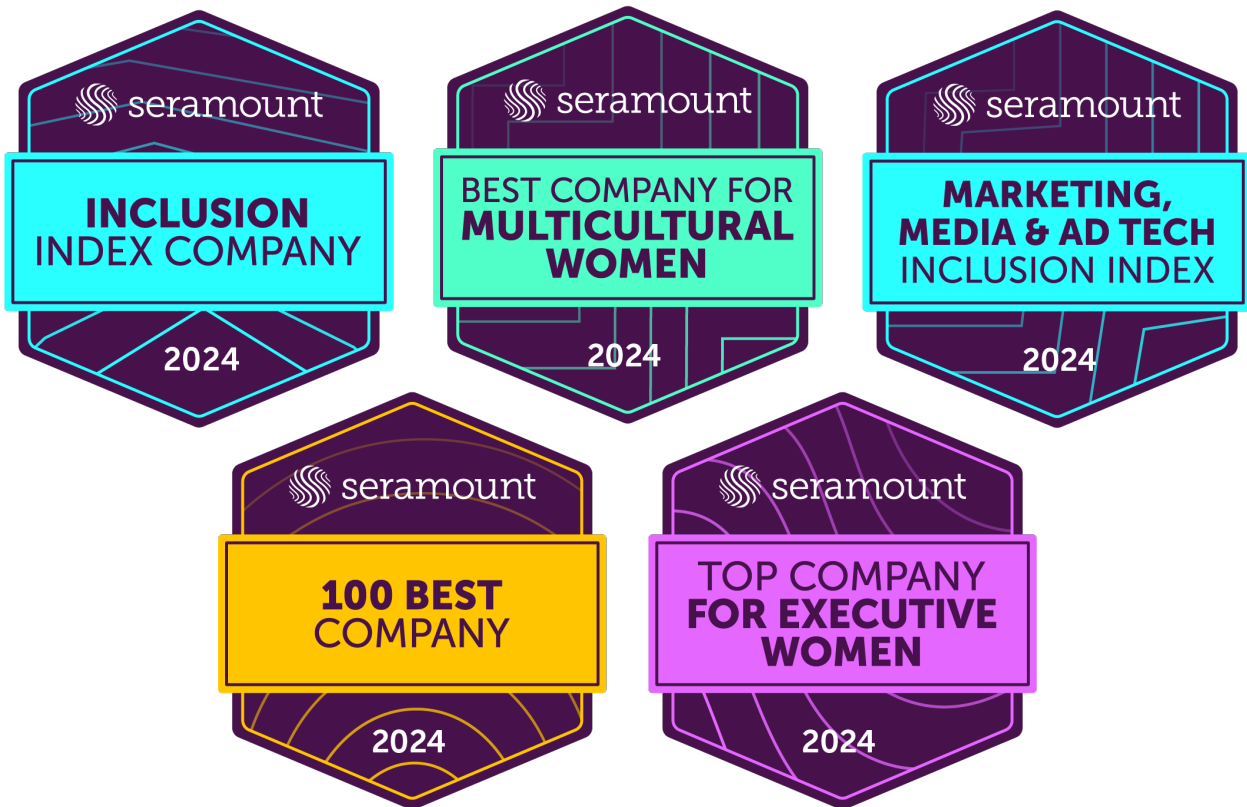
*Katie Oertli Mooney, Managing Director, Seramount*

# Advancing Recognition and Assessment

## Case Study: Seramount Best Companies Lists

Since 1986, Seramount has surveyed the world’s leading organizations committed to women’s advancement, diversity and inclusion, and family-friendly workplace culture. Seramount’s lists and indices set the standard for best practices around workplace policies, with rigorous measurement enabling the implementation of programs improving all aspects of corporate culture. Submission to Seramount’s lists and indices by way of the [Annual Application](#) is the first step a company can take to assess the state of its cultural landscape and the success of its inclusion efforts.

This year’s winners continued to raise the bar by providing inclusive benefits for families, including paid gender-neutral parental leave, subsidized childcare, bereavement leave following miscarriage, reimbursement for fertility expenses, and supplemental mental health benefits for all employees.



## Competitions and Awards: Best Practices

According to Seramount experts, the importance of participating in the right competitions cannot be overstated. Seramount runs research-based, holistic, and global competitions, highlighting the need to capture a 360-degree view of inclusion. Emphasizing the value of unbiased competitions—those free of pay-to-play dynamics—Seramount researchers have developed a suite of lists and indices with a proven history of excellence and a reliance on objective, quantitative data. For best results, they suggest applying consistently to systematically track the progress of company culture strategy year over year.

Source: [Seramount Best Companies lists](#); Seramount interviews and analysis.

# Integrating Inclusion

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## Aligning Approaches

This report has surveyed the multifaceted strategies and tactics that high-performing organizations are deploying today to adapt and retool their approaches in a shifting landscape. By aligning thoughtful individual, in-house, global, and intersectional approaches, CDOs, CHROs, and their champions are making a compelling case for a seat at the table. Now like never before, they are ensuring that the keys to unlocking DEI, talent, and business success are one and the same.

Our research shows that high-performing DEI and talent teams continue to break boundaries, forge new partnerships, and answer calls to action impacting the entire organization. These attitudes, alliances, and advances prompt a new question: How far will the boundaries of DEI and talent expand in the future?

## No Silver Bullet

By definition, a comprehensive inclusion strategy includes varied dimensions and trade-offs. While no one practice provides a silver bullet, implementing a holistic approach valuing diversity broadly and specifically provides a strategic roadmap to progress. To be sure, the path forward will vary based on industry, organizational size, stage of DEI maturity, and a myriad of other factors.

Ultimately, this approach provides a powerful framework for seamlessly integrating inclusion into the core fabric of the organization. Fully fostering such a forward-thinking culture, however, demands a reevaluation of entrenched workplace dichotomies, including competitive versus collaborative, small versus mighty, and individual versus collective.

## Sustaining Progress

Whether telling personal stories or forging strategic coalitions, the world's leading DEI and talent organizations invest in continuous improvement. Pushing new boundaries and integrating new perspectives, their agile methodologies showcase the advances that come from actively engaging the passions and interests of a workforce discovering strength in difference.

Looking ahead to the future of DEI and talent, Seramount's optimistic view of sustained progress is rooted in an enduring 40-year legacy dedicated to advancing inclusive workplaces for historically excluded talent.



"The best way to navigate volatility and make DEI integral to your organization is to weld DEI to the organization's core strategic goals and priorities. And CDOs and Talent leaders need to take credit for the changes they're making. Take ownership of DEI initiatives in the organization, and ensure your colleagues see the results. Don't be afraid to step in and make additional impact where you can....This is the way to ensure that DEI efforts thrive no matter which way the pendulum swings."

*Keeping DEI Strong in Volatile Times, Seramount*





# How Can Seramount Help?

**Our DEI Research Partnership Offers Evolving Research and Advisory Services to Support Rapidly Changing DEI Needs and Priorities**

1

## **CDO Collaborative**

Supporting CDOs in Their Role as Corporate Change Agents



2

## **Diversity Best Practices**

Increasing the Capacity and Impact of DEI Teams

### **Three Pillars of Service to Help DEI Leaders Effect Change**

#### **Rigorous Research with a Global Reach**

Deploying a Proven Research Methodology to Identify How CDOs at Any Company, Anywhere in the World Are Making Change Happen

- ✓ **Annual Research Initiative**
- ✓ **Resources to Educate Stakeholders and Accelerate Impact**
- ✓ **Custom Research to Answer Your Up-at-Night Questions**

#### **The Collective Experience of DEI Leaders at the Center**

DEI Leaders Guide and Shape Our Search for Breakthrough Ideas, Then Pressure-Test What We Find

- ✓ **CDO Roundtables and Experience Labs**
- ✓ **DEI Practitioner Roundtables and Hot-Topic Webinars**
- ✓ **Regular Convenings to Build Global DEI Leader Community**

#### **A Commitment to Applying Lessons Learned**

Supporting You in Getting Buy-In for Change and Customizing Implementation of Lessons Learned

- ✓ **Access to Expert Advisors to Increase Your Capacity**
- ✓ **Partner Intensives Bring Insights to Your Broader Team**
- ✓ **Proactive Planning to Drive Progress on Your Priorities**

▶ Learn more about how the DEI Research Partnership can propel your DEI strategy forward by scheduling a call with one of our experts.

[seramount.com/contact-us](https://seramount.com/contact-us)

We empower the world's  
most inclusive workplaces.

## Trusted Partner to Organizational Change Agents

### ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY

**Uncover the Real  
Levers to Unlock  
DEI Progress**

Unfiltered insight into the employee experience powered by innovative technology and over 40 years of DEI data and insights

### RESEARCH AND ADVISORY SERVICES

**Set Strong Foundations  
and Build Actionable  
Roadmaps**

Expert guidance rooted in research and benchmarking to support your strategic talent priorities

### LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

**Transform Your  
Culture by Enabling  
DEI at Scale**

Impactful workshops and events that build core leadership competencies at every level

We partner with **450+** corporations, government entities, and nonprofits **globally**.

We guide **~50% of the Fortune 100** and **~25% of the Fortune 500** on their DEI journey.

