

Executive Summary

Leading Through Backlash: Navigating the DEI Landscape Now

From leveraging data, outcomes, and allies to own the story to reframing the conversation to increase leadership investment and buy-in, this research explores how today's DEI and talent leaders can propel organizations forward by countering the narrative, creating space for good-faith questions, and navigating evolving DEI definitions.

Breaking Through: Key Challenges and Opportunities

- ▶ **Understanding Resistance:** Reducing concerns about DEI now requires recognizing root causes and unlocking opportunities for productive conversations, targeted programs, and broader engagement.
- ▶ **Reframing the Narrative:** Moving beyond misconceptions and emphasizing DEI's true purpose is business critical in the current climate: fostering a culture of inclusion, understanding, support, and equitable outcomes for all ultimately leads to enhanced engagement, increased innovation, and overall organizational success.

Building Stronger, More Resilient DEI Programs: A Strategic Roadmap

- ▶ **Leadership:** Inclusive leaders build cultural competencies, promote a sense of belonging, and empower allies.
- ▶ **Data-Driven Approach:** Leverage data to combat misinformation and demonstrate the positive impact of DEI efforts.
- ▶ **Addressing Concerns:** Acknowledge anxieties and focus on informed solutions with empathy.
- ▶ **Moving Beyond Labels:** Foster a culture of inclusion, where all employees can engage and thrive.
- ▶ **Empowering Advocacy:** Empower everyone, including leaders, allies, and employees, to advocate for workplace inclusion.

Beyond Backlash: Toward Proactive Progress

- ▶ **Shifting the Narrative:** Frame DEI in terms of tangible business benefits such as improved market access, increased market share, or enhanced product or service quality.
- ▶ **Building a Stronger Foundation:** Integrate DEI across the organization, address technological bias, and cultivate inclusive work environments.
- ▶ **Staying the Course:** Commit to sustained efforts, transparency, and communication to navigate tomorrow's challenges and achieve lasting progress.
- ▶ **Turning the Tide:** Recognize the urgency of supporting DEI, addressing societal inequities, and creating an inclusive future for all.
- ▶ **Going on the Offensive:** Proactively shape the narrative, promote the value of DEI initiatives, and develop action-oriented solutions.

Moving On: The Future of DEI

By reframing the narrative, taking concrete actions, and adopting a comprehensive, proactive approach to DEI, organizations can build forward momentum, creating truly inclusive workplaces benefiting both business and society.