

# Executive Summary

The Executive Playbook for Expanding the Impact of DEI

The [recent rise in anti-DEI rhetoric](#) has many concerned about the future of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). False and inaccurate narratives about DEI efforts are on the rise, ongoing legal challenges and skepticism about existing frameworks are making headlines, and companies are rethinking their DEI and talent strategies.

## Expanding DEI Horizons for Impact

Yet in the wake of rising political polarization, ongoing global conflicts, and increasing customer and talent diversity, the scope of the work is constantly being expanded. The key challenge DEI and talent executives are facing today is how to expand their impact and reframe the conversation. While an internal talent-facing approach to DEI emphasizing inclusive workplace communities and culture will always remain business-critical, reframing the conversation today involves adopting a new, more expansive perspective on DEI work, roles, and outcomes.

## Thinking Bigger About DEI: From Workplace to Marketplace

Thinking bigger about DEI now involves a “virtuous cycle” aligning workplace and marketplace approaches to inclusion and employee and customer experiences. Making the case for a holistic practice that’s broad rather than narrow means making DEI applicable to every role, stakeholder, and aspect of the business—from customers and suppliers to products and designs.

## Key Challenges

A recent [Pew poll](#) reveals a majority of employees expressly value DEI initiatives. At the same time, Seramount’s 17 May 2024 [executive discussion](#) with 93 DEI and talent leaders found that more than half of surveyed organizations (53%) have either recently updated or are in the process of updating DEI terminology, with an additional 18% considering such changes. For those evolving, 37% cite customers or employees as the impetus, surpassing even legal considerations (36%) or CEO (23%) or board (5%) directives.

The challenge for DEI and talent leaders today lies in effectively and accurately defining, communicating, and broadcasting the value of DEI and its broader impact in an age of misinformation. Toward that end, this research focuses on five key strategies for impact, the basis for a comprehensive DEI strategy aligning inclusive workplace and marketplace outcomes.

## 5 Ways to Expand the Impact of DEI Now

- ▶ **Customer-Centric DEI**—Engaging the Customer of the Future
- ▶ **Inclusive Marketing and Design**—Attracting New Audiences
- ▶ **Inclusive Products and Services**—Building a Broader Customer Base
- ▶ **Supplier Diversity**—Inclusive Marketplaces and Business Innovation
- ▶ **Building an Inclusive Organization**—C-Suite Engagement

Besides benefiting the business, developing a comprehensive strategy across these five key areas of concern empowers a wider community to embrace the true value of DEI.