

# Stories From the Trenches: Global Diversity at Work

There are many facets of global diversity that can bring value to a business. But successful companies have diversity leadership, a commitment to inclusion and a desire to improve both individuals and their organizations. *By Neal Goodman*

**M**any diversity executives recognize that the next frontier for diversity and inclusion is in leveraging global diversity for their organizations.

Global diversity is a multifaceted strategic lever with which major organizations can achieve their global ambitions. The following vignettes illustrate how some of today's top diversity practitioners have brought value to their companies on a global scale.

#### **Merck: Building a Global Diversity Infrastructure**

Dottie Brienza, chief diversity officer and executive talent development leader for pharmaceutical company Merck & Co., has been with the company for roughly one year. She joined the organization after leading talent management at Hilton Worldwide and holding numerous HR leadership roles at Johnson & Johnson. Brienza is one of a relatively small group of senior leaders who have dual responsibilities for executive talent and diversity. This strategically intertwines diversity and inclusion with all factors that affect Merck's workforce, and goes beyond talent development to include diversity's effect on marketing, teams, drug development and innovation.

Core drivers at Merck are its nine global employee business resource groups, or EBRGs, each with an executive committee sponsor, a senior business leader adviser and an EBRG leader who has a two-year tenure with 50 percent of his or her work in a line role and 50 percent dedicated to EBRG responsibilities.

The EBRGs often support company activities. For instance, the African-American EBRG helped in a consumer research study on sun exposure and the skin-care needs of the African-American community. Insights from this research affected Merck's approach to communicating to African-Americans about skin care and sun exposure.

Merck also established the Merck for Mothers Global Giving Program, a corporate grants program through which its global offices can support eligible nonprofit organizations working to improve maternal health and reduce maternal mortality. The program is supporting more than 20 projects in 18 countries, including the U.S. Several EBRGs volunteer in this global initiative.



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The Richard T. Clark Fellowship Program at Merck allows an employee to take a six-month unpaid leave to work with a nongovernmental organization in a developing country. Volunteers work on topics ranging from supply chain and distribution to finance and community health care. The benefit for Merck is in workforce development. Most volunteers come back more enthusiastic about their work and with innovative ideas about how to help the company better understand conditions on the ground in diverse and developing markets.

Merck is rolling out a global initiative to train all vice presidents and above on unconscious bias. This will help to build leader capability in talent management and cultural competence, and ensure better hiring, promotion, development and other talent decisions, as well as promote inclusion across the organization.

#### At GE, Global Collaboration Leads to Success

Deborah Elam, president of the GE Foundation and chief diversity officer at General Electric Co., began her career at the company 26 years ago as an HR intern and has held a variety of HR positions across numerous GE businesses prior to her current role leading GE's diversity and inclusion office. Elam has held this position for 10 years, and in 2006 she became a corporate officer.

One of the key elements of GE's diversity work today is to ensure it is relevant in the larger context of globalization. The company has more than 300,000 employees and operates in more than 160 countries. With more than 60 percent of the company's revenue outside the United States, the diversity team needed to ensure its work reflected that growth, so GE began to connect its affinity networks to global initiatives. For example, its African American Forum helps to drive company growth in Africa, and its Asian-Pacific American Forum does the same in China and India, as does the Hispanic Forum in Latin America. Elam said the diversity team believes that when one person grows and improves, they all do, and that's not limited to one geography. What's applicable in the U.S. diversity experience is customized and localized in other regions.

Each affinity network establishes a focus that makes sense for it and the region or regions with which it is connected, such as talent development. For example, in 2012, at a meeting with about 1,200 members in attendance, GE's African American Forum set up a booth for members who might be interested in learning about the types of international assignments available in various African countries.

More than 400 employees signed up. "We were thrilled with the interest and the results," Elam said. "When employees take assignments like these, they help connect colleagues in the region globally, they bring best practices from other parts of the world and in the end they help GE be successful in many different ways. We will certainly use this as a best practice and continue to find ways to support GE's strategic initiatives."

#### Inclusion, the Foundation of Business at Cargill

Raymond Hall, global director of inclusion and diversity at agricultural company Cargill, brings many years of international expertise to his position, which he took over in May 2012. Since he joined the company, he has worked to create a culture of inclusion, and the company's new strategy is a deliberate attempt to have all employees across the globe understand the role they play in creating that culture and in contributing to the company's competitive advantage. "In today's marketplace, we must be fast and agile, and in order to do this we must leverage the diversity of thought that we have across the organization on a global level," Hall said.

To help Cargill succeed, Hall created multiple avenues to initiate change and measure progress:

- There is greater emphasis on employee engagement — employees are asked if their opinions are being requested and considered.
- Leaders and managers are assessed on whether they model inclusive behaviors.
- When it comes to safety, the focus on inclusion means there

are different people at the table and that leaders directly acknowledge employees' views regarding risk on the job.

The global inclusion and diversity team has four regional leaders who focus on the specific, local inclusion and diversity needs of businesses in each region. Hall said they have been instrumental in helping senior leadership understand local and country-specific needs, such as the need for a 10 percent representation of people with disabilities in the workforce in Latin America.

Leadership buy-in is also critical. Under Hall's direction, the Cargill diversity council was created, chaired by CEO Greg Page and made up of senior leaders in the organization who also work with the company's employee resource groups, or ERGs, to have a strategic impact.

Cargill has seven ERGs, three of which are positioned to have global reach: the Ebony Council, Women's Network and Disability AWAREness Council. Each ERG is expected to support the organization's strategic business needs. For example, the Ebony Council helped contribute a recruitment strategy to attract African-Americans to Cargill in the U.S.

All facets of the organization now focus on inclusion in how they operate and plan strategy. For Cargill to be a partner of choice to its customers and operate in a changing global market, inclusion and diversity play a critical role in building future talent pipelines.



Ingersoll Rand's global women's leadership program provides high-potential women with mentors, seminars and the opportunity to work on business problems and present to senior leaders.

#### **Ingersoll Rand: Promoting Global Inclusion and Respect**

Nereida "Neddy" Perez, vice president of global diversity and inclusion at industrial company Ingersoll Rand, faced her first cross-cultural crisis while working for UPS, when as an HR supervisor she was sent to Mexico to resolve a labor strike based on religious differences. When she persuaded the head-

quarters to change the policy and accommodate the employees, she was on her way to becoming a global diversity leader.

At nearly 150-year-old Ingersoll Rand, diversity and inclusion is one of three core global business strategies. The initiative began with the commitment of the CEO and chairman to create a function to focus on diversity and inclusion and make it part of the business strategy. Business sectors and divisions all have scorecards with built-in objectives related to diversity. To be certain there would be global implantation of this initiative, Ingersoll Rand's regional diversity councils were established in Europe, Latin America, China, India and North America. The head of each council is a senior sector president or leader who serves on the Global Enterprise Diversity Council. This approach ensures cross-collaboration and support for strategies globally.

One of the most successful initiatives is a global women's leadership program, which provides a cohort of high-potential women with mentors, tailored seminars and the opportunity to work on actual business problems and present recommendations to senior executives. In its first year in 2012, all the women who participated were retained, and 69 percent received promotions, including the first female executive leadership team member in Europe. The key to success is the focus on development, mentoring partnerships and high-profile business cases. For example, one cohort is working on cases that affect branding, IT and logistics.

#### **Mercer: Leading With Cross-Cultural Competence**

Tyronne Stoudemire, principal and senior diversity consultant at consulting firm Mercer, joined the organization in January after more than 20 years of leadership experience in other organizations. In a short time working with the president of Mercer's talent business, Orlando Ashford, Stoudemire has brought about a major change of direction at the company focused on the need to build cross-cultural competence in its leadership. This change includes a diversity council chaired by CEO Julio Portalatin, and composed of senior executives who each have a goal to sponsor an ERG. Stoudemire said the goal is to embed diversity and inclusion into business imperatives so the workforce can better serve global clientele, stakeholders and colleagues.

The initiative includes a half-day to full-day workshop on cross-cultural competence that uses an assessment from which participants learn about themselves and the degree to which they have cross-cultural perspective. This is followed by a coaching session focused on participants' degree of cross-cultural understanding. A series of films, books, conferences and other activities are then assigned to participants for practice and to help sustain their cross-cultural competence. For example, they may be asked to sponsor an ERG

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of a group different from their own cultural background.

The goal of enhancing leadership capabilities is to allow participants to see the world from not only their own perspective, but also the perspectives of others. This will enhance communications and lead to more trust, collaboration and innovation across the organization, which will influence others to contribute to long-lasting, sustainable results.

The cross-cultural competency program is being rolled out internationally wherever Mercer has a presence. Stoudemire said his goal is to use Mercer as an internal client and use its success as a case study to help its clients as well.

**Lockheed Martin: From Diversity to Sustainability**

Kimberly Admire, vice president of diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity programs at aerospace company Lockheed Martin Corp. has held senior HR positions for more than 15 years in several of the company's businesses. Three years ago, she was offered her current role and became a trusted partner for approximately 116,000 employees in more than 70 countries.

Lockheed Martin launched its first executive diversity council more than a decade ago and expanded to supporting international diversity councils several years later, with a key location in the U.K. This past year, the corporation transitioned to a corporate sustainability council, whose focus includes diversity, innovation and the environment. This broader responsibility is expected to place diversity and inclusion in a more strategic role in the company, which earlier this year launched Lockheed Martin International to deliver a holistic, one-company approach to understand and deliver solutions to its customers' technology challenges.

As part of its global diversity focus, Lockheed Martin also launched a leadership program focused on engagement and respect. There has been a great deal of learning from its operations in the U.K., including an increased awareness of how diversity and inclusion are perceived in other countries and how the language of inclusion needs to be adapted to each country.

While all of these diversity executives give extensive credit to the vision and support of their CEOs and the hard work and creativity and innovations coming from their business resource groups, none of these successes would have been accomplished if it were not for these D&I leaders. The march toward globalization continues, and organizations that fail to include all employees from every country where they operate in their D&I initiatives will lose the battle to their competitors who understand and value global diversity. «

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