Data-Driven Strategies for Every Stage of Your DEI Journey

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With companies of all sizes increasingly embracing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion's (DEI) potential to attract top talent, strengthen business outcomes, and instill rigor in organizational processes, the demand for DEI practitioners is at an all-time high.

As the field of DEI grows, practitioners have more opportunity than ever to exert strategic influence within their organizations, but they're often missing a critical asset that their counterparts in leadership rely on extensively: actionable data.

Whether your company is just beginning its DEI journey, or it has a global DEI team that's been managing a program for decades, data should play a critical role.

Where Data Provides Empirical DEI Insights

Key inputs across the employee lifecycle, from attracting and selecting talent to developing and retaining your workforce.

Attract

Is your candidate pipeline diverse?

✓ Identify demographics: for example, race / ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, disability status.

✓ Analyze sources: for example, referrals, university programs, proactive recruiting sourcing, fellowship / mentorship programs, and applications via job boards or your careers page. Which sources are most diverse? From which sources do candidates most often progress to interviews?

Select

Is your hiring process equitable and inclusive?

✓ Evaluate how candidates move through the process, and examine whether there are differences between demographic groups at each stage.

✓ Assess the factors informing hiring outcomes: look at ratings candidates are assigned, written feedback, and rejection reasons.

Develop

Do people have similar opportunities to grow and advance?

✓ Identify job levels, tenure, and promotion history by demographic group.

✓ Evaluate performance ratings, written performance feedback, formal recognition, and compensation outcomes by demographic group.

Retain

Are you creating an inclusive culture that engages people from all backgrounds?

✓ Identify employee representation across levels and by department.

✓ Evaluate experiences of inclusion and belonging: look at org-wide surveys and use focus groups.

✓ Assess attrition rates by demographic group.

> Once you have the processes in place to begin gathering these inputs—a challenge in itself—how do you put the data to work? This quick guide looks at how companies with DEI programs at any stage of maturity can use data to assess the landscape, prioritize programs that will have the largest impact, align internal stakeholders, and track progress.

Building Your Strategy

Perhaps your company is still a startup, or it's just now beginning to formalize its approach to DEI. Oftentimes, there is a team of one, or DEI is being spear-headed by HR or a passionate employee.

The Challenge:

Where do we even start?

The Opportunity:

Your company has a clean slate! You can create a strategic program from the outset, with clear priorities, measurable milestones to goal yourself against, and processes designed to give you insights that will help you refine along the way.

Data's Biggest Role:

Creating the framework to gather data from the outset will lay a strong foundation for your program. Ensure you're collecting relevant data in your HR and Applicant Tracking Systems. For example, is your company collecting employee demographic data? Are you collecting demographic data of applicants? Are your processes for collecting and recording data points clean and consistent? Are you capturing outcomes like how candidates move through your hiring process, promotion rates, and attrition? From there, look at initial data to identify your actual gaps—for example, perhaps your biggest barrier to cultivating a more diverse workforce isn't actually your hiring process, it's your attrition rate among people from underrepresented groups—and prioritize initiatives that address those gaps.

In Action

A 75-person technology company wanted data to be the foundation of its DEI strategy. Paradigm partnered with the company to gather applicant and hiring data in its Applicant Tracking System, and to establish procedures for structured decision-making around key processes like interviewing, performance management, and promotions. As the company quickly scaled from 75 people to several hundred, it was able to identify where barriers to DEI were emerging in real time and quickly address them. The company has continued to grow and has been recognized for its innovative and impactful DEI programs.

Refining Your Strategy

After your DEI efforts have been formalized and efforts have been underway for months or years, you'll likely face growing pains. Your employees are eager to see progress and you want to know what's working, but you struggle to connect the necessary dots.

The Challenge:

Where do we go next? And how do we continue to drive org-wide commitment to DEI while energizing our people about our progress?

The Opportunity:

You have a number of programs in place, and you've already gained organizational buy-in for DEI efforts. Now, you can determine what's really working, and continually build on the progress you've already made.

Data's Biggest Role:

Use data to understand what's working—and where you still have gaps—to focus your efforts and potentially refine your priorities. Maybe you've invested in building out strong employee resource groups. Have you evaluated how those groups are impacting the employee experience or attrition? If you have and you've seen progress, that's great! Perhaps it's time to take a look at your hiring processes, or at pay equity. This is also a good time to explore how you're using data to frame progress and engage key stakeholders on what's next, whether that's your leadership team, all of your employees, or external audiences.

In Action

A 3,000-person company in the travel and hospitality space wanted to understand the impact of its existing DEI efforts. Paradigm partnered with the company to use data to identify which of its initiatives had been most successful and which were falling short, leading to a more focused and impactful strategy. Paradigm then worked closely with the company to ensure successful implementation of that strategy, meeting weekly to review data and evaluate progress on key efforts.

Scaling Your Strategy

If your company invested in DEI decades ago, or has offices spread around the world, you may have many advantages—a team of passionate DEI experts, greater access to resources, and lots of critical learnings from past efforts. You're in the enviable position of expanding your program—perhaps you're tailoring your DEI strategy to each region or rolling out highly customized initiatives by business unit—but need it to feel like a cohesive strategy, not a collection of disparate undertakings.

The Challenge:

You need to keep your team and leadership focused on top priorities while maintaining a comprehensive view of all your efforts.

The Opportunity:

You're embedding DEI into the DNA of your company, and are at the forefront of building an equitable, best-in-class culture.

Data's Biggest Role:

In addition to ongoing refinement, data is the key to alignment around a cohesive strategy for large companies with longstanding programs. Data should guide the priorities you're setting for the organization, giving your team guidance on what you want to accomplish while allowing them to determine which efforts will be most effective for the regions, organizations, or teams they support. Data also gives you the ability to quickly assess progress across multiple efforts and identify what's working well that may translate to other areas.

In Action

A Fortune 500 financial services company had invested in robust DEI initiatives for years, and wanted to understand how its efforts compared to peers. Paradigm gathered extensive data from the organization, benchmarked its efforts against similar multinational companies, and identified areas where the company was an industry leader and where there was opportunity for greater impact. Using data as the guide, Paradigm helped the company cohere various DEI efforts that existed across lines of business, ensuring that each was rolling up to a clearly identified need, and developed uniform metrics for measuring and reporting progress to executives.

Creating a DEI Strategy for You

Of course, every company's DEI journey is unique—there's no effective, one-size-fits-all approach, and you'll often find yourself in some of these stages multiple times! But all too often, when it comes to addressing a challenge or growing a program, DEI practitioners have been forced to look at what other companies have done, rather than assessing what's actually happening within their own organizations. By identifying and using the right data, you can not only tailor your strategy, you can clearly demonstrate the impact of your efforts.

OUR APPROACH

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Paradigm has worked with more than 300 companies to assess, design, refresh, and scale data-driven Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategies. Our Strategy & Insights team is comprised of data scientists, social psychologists, and organizational design experts who use quantitative data to assess *where* barriers exist, conduct qualitative research to uncover *why* they exist, then design tailored plans to achieve measurable impact. Our services include Comprehensive DEI Assessments, Hiring Assessments, Culture Assessments, Pay Equity Analyses, a range of proprietary Analytics services, and recommended strategies based on our findings.

For more information, reach out to contact@paradigmiq.com.