

**How to build an  
equality,  
diversity and  
inclusion  
strategy for  
long-term  
success**



# Building long-term success

In this in-depth exploration of the topic of equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I), we aim to equip those in the HR, talent acquisition and workforce management arenas with the insight they need to design and drive successful ED&I strategies.

Developing an ED&I strategy in an uncertain business environment is a challenge. As experts in delivering ED&I, Guidant Global analyses the best practice approaches, focusing on:

- The many facets of ED&I
- The key to a successful ED&I strategy: Trust
- Getting it right
- The Guidant approach: Introducing INfluence
- The future

## Equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) has certainly been a hot topic in the HR field of late.

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Shocking world events have triggered developments in the world of work to better embrace diversity and attract wider talent (though there is, of course, always room for improvement). But ED&I has been widely accepted as a key attribute of a successful business.

Indeed, there's been a wealth of research reports showing why equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is so important. And unconscious biases are now widely recognised as a trait that we all have. But recognising that it exists is the first step in helping address the ED&I agenda.

This has, in part, led to more forward-thinking employers investing in the development of inclusive workplaces which naturally result in more diverse

workforces. And the benefits have been widely documented.

In fact, McKinsey launched its latest inclusion and diversity (I&D) report, the third in a series of research showing the business case for diversity. And according to the '*Diversity wins*' paper, the corporate value of these initiatives is greater than ever:

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***“The business case for inclusion and diversity (I&D) is stronger than ever. For diverse companies, the likelihood of outperforming industry peers on profitability has increased over time, while the penalties are getting steeper for those lacking diversity.”***

*'Diversity wins'* report, McKinsey

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## McKinsey research revealed some highly interesting trends:

- There is a **48% performance differential** between the most and least gender-diverse companies
- In the case of ethnic and cultural diversity, companies in the top quartile of diverse leaders outperformed those in the fourth by **36% in terms of profitability**
- There continues to be a **higher likelihood of outperformance** difference with ethnicity than with gender diversity

This is just one recent example of data that shows why implementing an efficient equality, diversity and inclusion strategy is so important. But in these uncertain and constantly evolving times, knowing how to get ED&I right and ensure its future fit is a challenge.

In this in-depth exploration of the topic, we aim to equip those in the HR, talent acquisition and [workforce management](#) arenas with the insight they need to design and drive successful equality, diversity and inclusion strategies to ensure long-term success.



A photograph of three diverse women in a meeting. The woman in the foreground, wearing a black turtleneck sweater, is pointing at a whiteboard with a yellow sticky note. Behind her, a woman in a red turtleneck sweater and glasses is holding a blue marker. To the right, a woman in a grey sweater is holding a white marker and a clipboard. The background is a blurred office setting with a whiteboard.

## The many facets of ED&I

Before we go into our best practice advice for successful ED&I initiatives, it's important to begin with a look at the many levels of diverse talent.

# Key considerations

- When many businesses look at building a diverse workforce there are common characteristics or demographics that are considered
- The more widely recognised 'areas' or 'projected characteristics' already make executive discussions but there are many more strands to diversity that need consideration
- A truly inclusive workplace isn't one that focuses on a particular segment, but rather creates a work environment that welcomes and nurtures all talent

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When many businesses look at building a diverse workforce there are common characteristics or demographics that are considered.

The more widely recognised 'areas' or 'projected characteristics' - age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity - already make executive discussions. **But there are so many more strands to diversity:**

- **Disability inclusion**

According to the ONS, the unemployment rate for disabled people was 6.5% in April-June 2020. This compared to an unemployment rate of

3.5% for people who are not disabled, a gap that Guidant Global hopes to continue to help close.

We are the only recruitment provider to achieve the UK Government's Disability Confident Employer Scheme, level 3 status as a [Disability Confident Leader](#) and to have supported many of our suppliers to achieve level 2 status.

- **Ex-offenders**

In the UK, roughly 11 million people have a criminal conviction. This shows that a large portion of society is vulnerable to unfair recruitment practices. In partnership with social enterprise Offploy, we are signed up to Business in the Community's (BITC) ['Ban the Box'](#) scheme, to ensure that those with criminal convictions have a fair chance to compete for jobs at Guidant Global.





- **Social mobility**

This segment often gets overlooked, and the impact of this is certainly being noted. In fact, in 2019, the Social Mobility Commission reported that over the previous five years, social mobility in the UK had virtually stagnated and may have even regressed.

- **Neurodiversity**

According to [recent estimates](#), around 15% of the UK population are neurodiverse. That means a significant proportion of the workforce also fall into

this category.

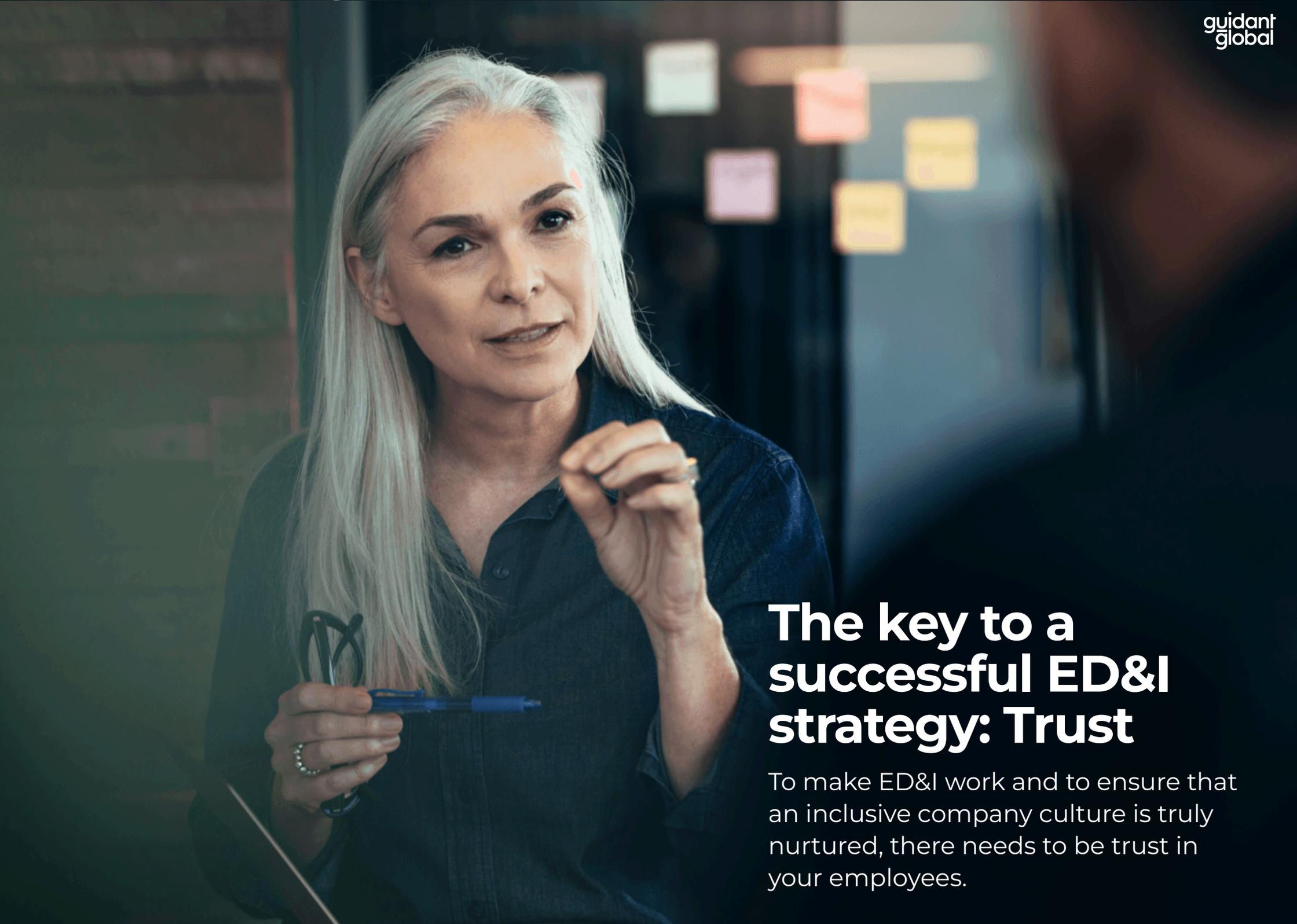
While there's been an encouraging move towards better inclusion initiatives to support neurodiverse talent, creating an environment that is appropriate and appealing for this audience remains a challenge for those businesses that are yet to fully understand and appreciate the adjustments that are needed.

- **And much more!**

**A truly inclusive workplace isn't one that focuses on a particular segment, but rather creates a work environment that welcomes and nurtures *all* talent.**

**One where employees feel valued and empowered by equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives.**

**But how can you achieve this in your firm?**



## **The key to a successful ED&I strategy: Trust**

To make ED&I work and to ensure that an inclusive company culture is truly nurtured, there needs to be trust in your employees.

# Key considerations

- In both our experience and documented research, trust is the key trait of an inclusive leader
  - A company's culture – and in turn, its ability to be diverse and inclusive – is driven by the talent the business engages
- Senior leaders need to create an inclusive environment and to do this, they need to trust their staff to drive ED&I themselves

**As experts in delivering equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives across many disadvantaged groups, Guidant Global has experience in driving ED&I in the recruitment industry and our business.**

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From our own experience we know that one of the biggest success factors in achieving this is trust.

Indeed, diversity and inclusion specialist, the Clear Company, outlined in its '[Guide to flexible working](#)' at the beginning of lockdown that trust is a key trait of an inclusive leader. The presenteeism culture that has long existed in too many workplaces has certainly been removed for many, and we'll only continue to see this shift as remote working remains in place.

But to make it work and to ensure that an inclusive company culture is truly nurtured, there needs to be trust in your



employees.

It's important to add that this extends to the equality, diversity and inclusion strategy that's built for your business as well. As seasoned talent experts know, you can't simply force a business culture on your [workforce](#) and assume everyone will fall in line.

A company's culture – and in turn, its ability to be diverse and inclusive – is driven by the talent the business engages. And it needs to be defined by them, not by the executive team.

Senior leaders need to create an inclusive environment and to do this, they need to trust their staff to drive ED&I themselves.



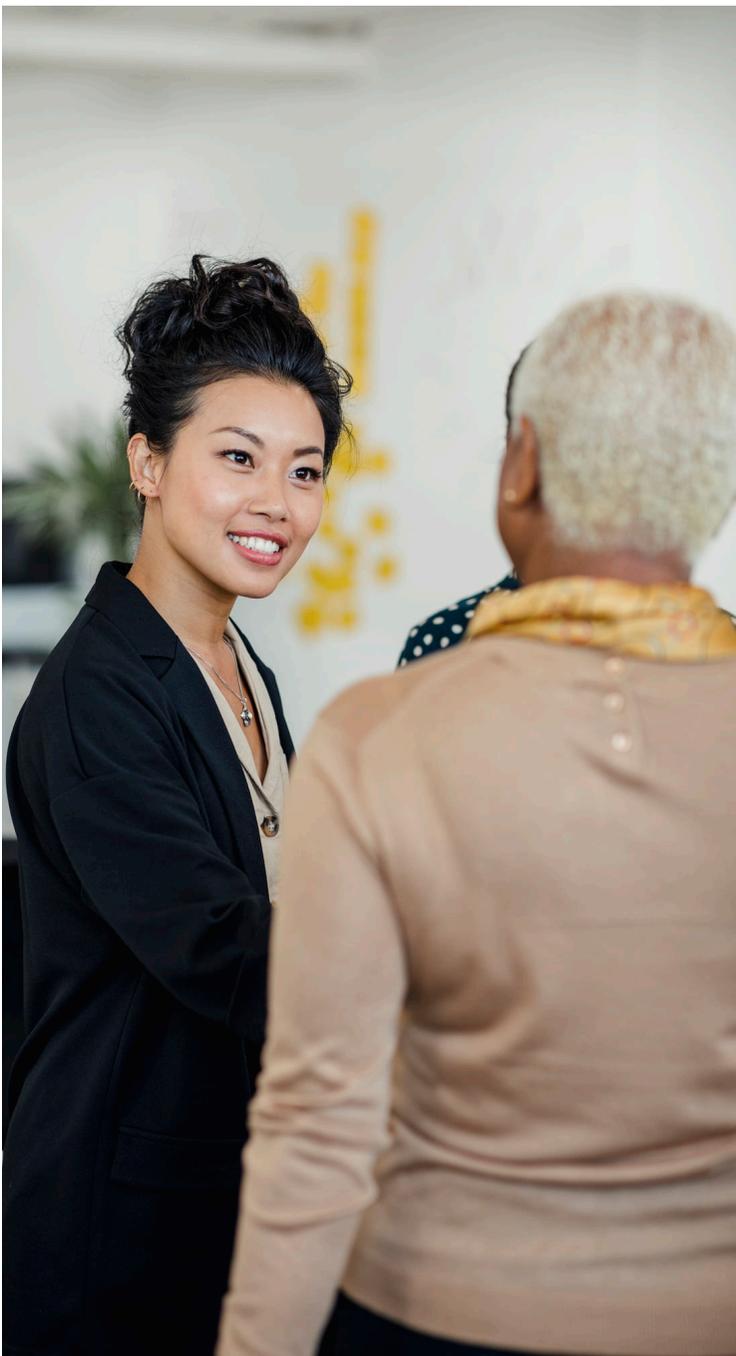
## Getting it right

Beyond the need for trust, there are many other ways that those involved in talent acquisition and management can create a meaningful ED&I strategy.

# Key considerations

In order to create a meaningful ED&I strategy, the key points talent acquisition and management should consider are:

- Involving managers from the start
  - Making it natural
  - Keeping it consistent
  - Passion is a key driver



Beyond the need for trust, there are many other ways that those involved in talent acquisition and management can create a meaningful equality, diversity and inclusion strategy:

- **Involve managers from the start**

If you're to get buy-in from the whole company, ED&I needs to be welcomed and adopted at the top and filtered down to the business, from the CEO to the most junior employee.

By involving managers from the start, it is much easier to get their support for any initiative.

- **Make it natural**

As mentioned above, truly inclusive cultures can't be designed, they evolve. Forcing views and initiatives on the workforce won't have the desired impact.

- **Consistency is needed**

While ED&I is constantly evolving as the world of work shifts and adapts, consistency in terms of the message and stance of the business is needed.

The communication to the entire workplace – whether that's permanent, temporary, contingent or external – needs to be aligned to avoid conflicting messages.

- **Passion is a key driver**

Diversity and inclusion efforts will be wasted if they are not driven by those who are truly passionate about the subject. It's important to add that this doesn't have to be someone at management level or in the talent team.

Instead, look at the resources in your business and identify who has a personal desire to create an inclusive workplace.

## The Guidant approach: Introducing INfluence

Our INfluence initiative was designed to allow our employees to upskill each other and deliver the knowledge, tools, and opportunities to enable everyone to build confidence in every area of ED&I.

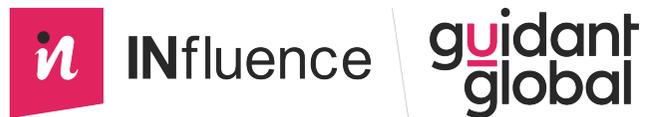
# Key takeaways

- INfluence began with our employees telling us what they wanted from the initiative and is run by our INfluence ambassadors who each represent and support a key area within ED&I
- Each team of ambassadors is self-sufficient – they have their own agenda that they drive, with support and trust from our leadership team
- The initiative is part of our company DNA and has proven to work well for our people – we won the ‘Diversity & inclusion’ award at the 2020 TIARA Talent Solutions Awards

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate how the above advice can work for a business is to outline how it worked for Guidant Global. ED&I has always been a key part of our business objectives but back in 2017 we took part in a client's Inclusion Week event that inspired us to do more.



Each team of ambassadors is self-sufficient. They have their own agenda that they drive. Together, they share their knowledge, research and experience to guide and develop their peers. We have a collaborative platform that allows groups to share webinars, run interviews and post information to engage the entire business and encourage a two-way dialogue.

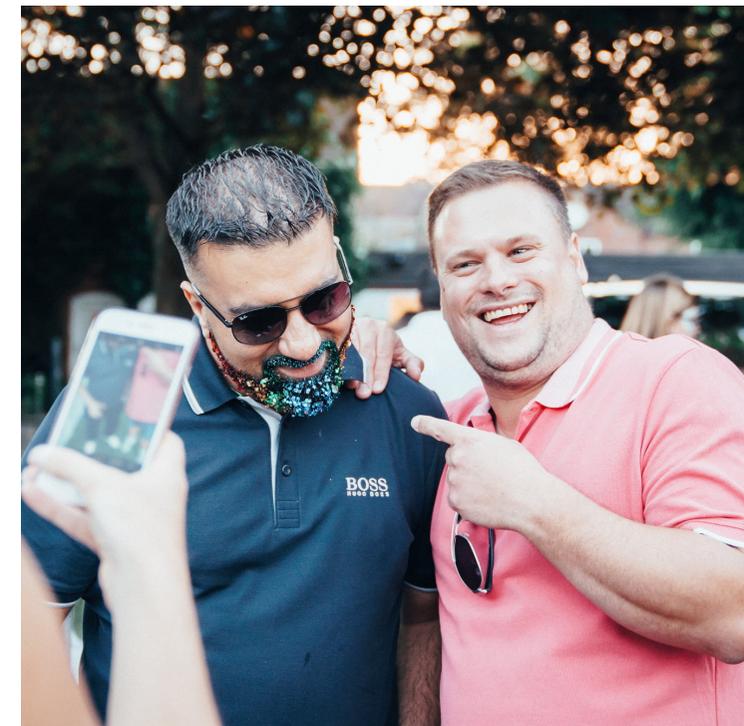


We set up an internal taskforce to plan and launch our own internal inclusion initiative, **INfluence**.

This initiative was designed to allow our employees to upskill each other and deliver the knowledge, tools, and opportunities to enable everyone to build confidence in every area of diversity and inclusion.

INfluence was set up based on the insights from our teams. It began with our employees telling us what they wanted from the initiative and we survey staff (anonymously) each year to identify any areas of ED&I that our people want to know more about.

In the spirit of having a workforce-driven diversity and inclusion strategy, we invited all of our employees to become an INfluence ambassador to represent and support one of the key areas of diversity and inclusion.



As Nicky Hale, Head of Talent Engagement at Guidant Global explained, INfluence has had a real impact on our business:



***“We take a people-first approach as a business, so it made complete sense that we empower our people to lead the company’s diversity and inclusion initiatives.*”**

***INfluence is about educating ourselves, each other and the business. As the initiative grew, we recognised that we needed wider involvement beyond the talent team and it was evident that those who were passionate about D&I would have the motivation and desire to really make it work. That’s why we identified ambassadors across the business – and the globe – to drive and own INfluence.”***

***What was particularly interesting as we developed INfluence was the wealth of knowledge that already existed in our business. As we called for ambassadors, we found more and more people who had experience or a personal interest in supporting under-represented groups that we wouldn’t have known of without INfluence.”***

Nicky Hale, Head of Talent Engagement - Guidant Global

## **This initiative really works.**

Not only have we received positive feedback from across the business, but we also won the ‘Diversity & inclusion’ award at the 2020 TIARA Talent Solutions Awards in September 2020.

INfluence is now part of our DNA as a company, and our diverse teams are proud to be involved in it. And it works for our clients too.

By developing our people, they are in a better position to pass this knowledge and experience on to the clients (employers themselves) Guidant Global work with.

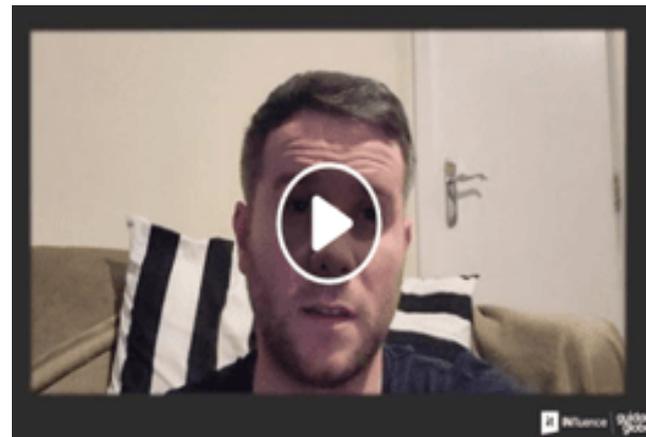
# Using our INfluence



#TeamGuidant participating at the Superhero Series Tri – the UK's only disability sports series

## Ramadan information, advice & guidance

Ramadan information and advice guide for line managers



National Coming-Out Day – [#TeamGuidant's coming-out stories](#)

## National Inclusion Week 2020, What it means to me as a wheelchair user

By Stephen Salmon

National Inclusion Week, the opportunity to inspire a greater commitment to inclusion in workplaces around the world.

I want to start by highlighting that far more of my experiences as a wheelchair user are positive. Most day's I don't even have to consider myself disabled. That may seem a bit of a strange thing for a wheelchair user to say so let me offer some context.

My physical impairment is paralysis, the result of an illness in my mid-twenties but on a regular day there are only two occasions when this causes me any real difficulty. Once at the start of the day when getting out of bed and then again at the end when getting back in, for all that goes on in between I have what I need to adapt and go about my 'normal'.

Handrails, transfer boards and most importantly my wheelchair, which I've named 'The Equaliser', allow me to negotiate and negate the effects of my paralysis - but they can't impact on all the challenges that myself and other disabled people face.

I use the term 'Disabled Person' rather than 'Person with a Disability' based on the Social Model of Disability and it's my belief that wider adoption of this model in both workplaces and society will improve the lives and prospects of Disabled people.



'The Equaliser'

Powered by the Impellam Group

## National Inclusion Week: What it means to me as a wheelchair user



Summer 2019 'Bring your kids to work' day, ran by our INfluence working parents ambassador group

## The future

While ED&I has certainly moved up the corporate agenda recently, the business environment we find ourselves working in now could see it continue to change rapidly in the near future.



# Key considerations

- On a positive note, the pandemic has created a level of equality that has long been battled for by some audiences
- However, with budgets tightening given the current economic climate, ED&I resources could be impacted
- It's crucial that employers keep diversity on the executive agenda - letting it drop off the priority list is detrimental in both the short and long-term
- With the makeup of the workforce changing, future-proofing your ED&I strategy to cover all areas of your workforce is now vital for your competitive stance

**While equality, diversity and inclusion has certainly moved up the corporate agenda recently, the business environment we find ourselves working in now could see ED&I continue to change rapidly in the near future.**

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On a positive note, businesses are embracing remote workforces like never before, creating a level of equality that has long been battled for by some audiences. With travel requirements and geographical borders now irrelevant for many in a remote working environment, it will be interesting to see how the disabled community will benefit, having always required a degree of flexibility from employers for remote work environments. It is also encouraging to see mental health becoming a much greater consideration by employers.



However, the economic climate does present some concern. With cost-cutting a priority for many businesses and budgets tightening, ED&I could be impacted.

It's crucial that employers keep diversity on the executive agenda. In the short term, letting inclusion drop off the priority list could impact productivity among existing teams. In the longer term, it's

likely to impact your employer brand.

People will remember how your business handled this crisis.

If your company is to be in the best position to compete for top talent in the future, its actions on D&I now need to be strategic (note that this doesn't have to be costly, though).

In fact, McKinsey's '[Diversity wins](#)' report, echoed this sentiment:

“**Some of the companies we have spoken to are viewing I&D as a “luxury we cannot afford” during the crisis. We believe that these companies risk tarnishing their license to operate in the long term and could lose out on very real opportunities to innovate their business model and strengthen their business recovery.**”

'[Diversity wins](#)' report, McKinsey

And with the makeup of the workforce changing – with a greater reliance on contingent and external talent, as well as an increasing use of service providers – future proofing your equality, diversity and inclusion strategy to cover all areas of your workforce is now vital for your competitive stance.

**To find out more about our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, [click here](#).**



Thank you for reading

# How to build an equality, diversity and inclusion strategy for long-term success

