



Elevating D&I with tech: a CHRO's guide

How talent marketplaces can help organizations mitigate bias, foster diversity, and level the playing field.

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Megan Smith

Former Chief Technology Officer of the United States

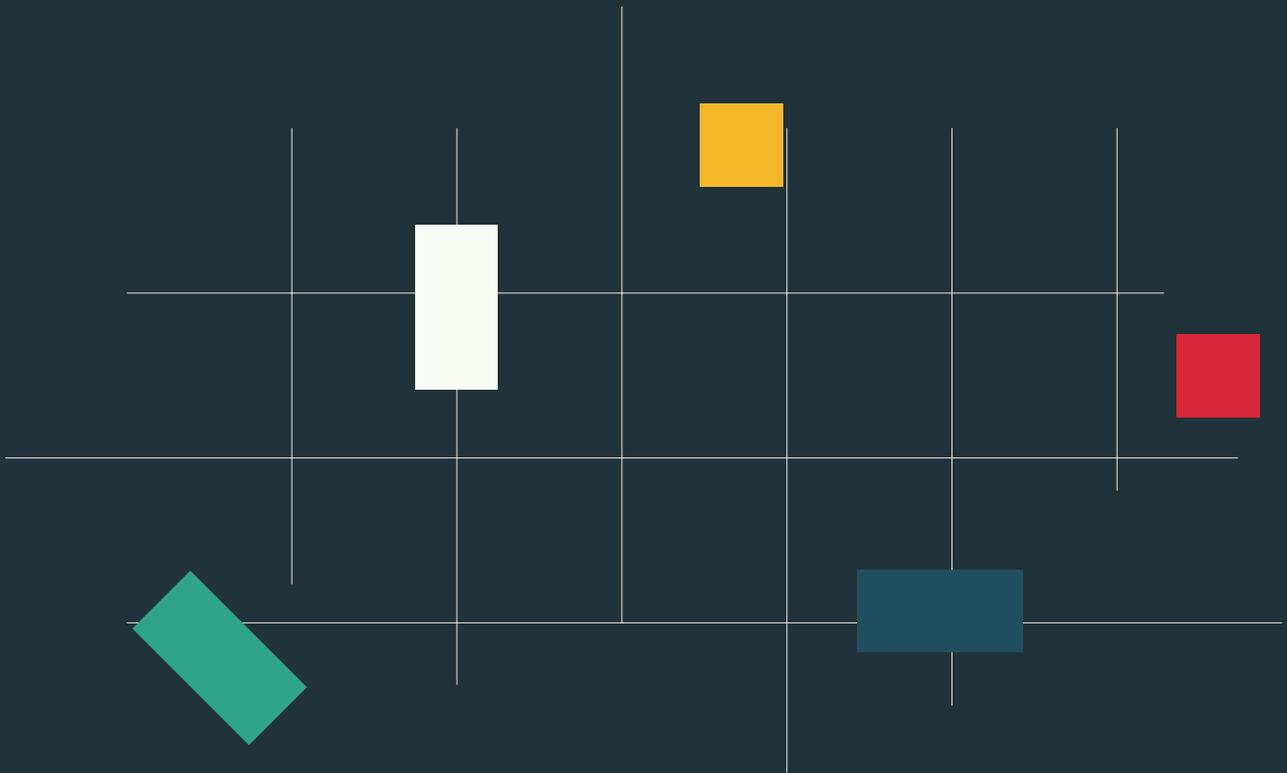
“Right now, as an industry, we’re working hard on understanding bias against minorities and women that has been with us throughout all of history and trying to—in our tech way—debug that.”

Today, most leaders recognize that diversity, equity, and inclusion (known interchangeably as D&I, DEI, and more recently DEIB—the B standing for Belonging)) is a mission-critical business function. Yet, some companies still view D&I as a single component of employee care programs, rather than a core function that must permeate every aspect of an organization and shape its goals and activities from the most strategic down to the most tactical.

In recent years, automation and technological innovation has transformed every aspect of business and management, and the D&I function is no exception.

Changing the way we think about talent and leveraging AI to mitigate bias can have radically positive impacts on D&I programs, but it requires a shift in perspective. This change will be crucial as businesses prepare to navigate a new world of work hallmarked by rising standards, unfamiliar challenges, and accelerated timelines.

Rethinking diversity and inclusion



By now, it's clear that diversity, equity, and inclusion are an important part of every business function. But to do D&I right, having a diverse workforce isn't enough—nor is it enough to tackle biases towards underrepresented groups. Without inclusion, diversity can result in a toxic culture. Some employees may perceive D&I efforts as tokenism, suggesting that your organization only hires people from underrepresented groups to prevent criticism. Your workforce will feel out of place and unsupported if your diversity efforts aren't paired with a focus on inclusivity.

True equity demands a change in something more fundamental. It touches on the way we think about what a workplace is and transforms every aspect of how a business functions.



Divkiran Kathuria
Director of Talent Mobility &
Talent Technology, Seagate

“I think that for every organization, D&I is not a question. It should just be done. And this is where I would say that the talent marketplaces are especially necessary.”

Many companies have by now made sure that their workforce is diverse by tuning up their hiring and candidate selection process, eliminating bias in the recruiting funnel, and building a team of different ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, and genders—but what happens to these candidates once they become employees? Does a company's culture change with them, treating them as equals in their ability to change their environment? Or do they begin work feeling like outsiders merely being accommodated by an already-established culture that wasn't formed with them in mind?

More often than not, the latter is the case—and this can have severe repercussions, both for individuals and for the company as a whole.

“I can get paid well to do something I enjoy and I'm surrounded by clever, funny, like-minded people. And for 45 or 50 hours every week, I feel isolated,” an anonymous UK employee wrote in *The Guardian*, highlighting what it feels like not to be included.

On top of the difficult emotional state this puts employees in, it also has a detrimental effect on their productivity and engagement. When a worker feels alone or excluded, their ability to relate to a wider team is significantly diminished, and long-term responsibilities become much more difficult to maintain. Ultimately, it's an unsustainable situation that hurts employees and employers alike.



Mislem Sabag
People Services Lead,
Walmart

“The Talent Marketplace is a golden opportunity to evolve talent practices. It helps us break bureaucracy and silos, as employees are applying for career experiences. It makes the process of applying more democratic, more self-service, and more agile.”

Meaningful D&I programs not only create more inclusive and engaging environments, they also boost collaboration within your company. The benefits of cultivating inclusivity and a sense of belonging touch every aspect of your business, from enhancing employee experience to driving better revenue performance.

“If you want to talk about the benefits of D&I, I think there is no end to it,” says Divkiran Kathuria, Director of Talent Mobility and Technology at Seagate. “There are so many use cases across the board; take the automobile industry, for instance. They did not know that seatbelts did not fit female drivers, simply because there were no women in the automobile industry at this point in time, especially in the design and testing phases.

“Another example is that a lot of high definition cameras cannot recognize and identify people with darker skin; that’s the result of a lack of diversity because if you’re testing and developing it with a diverse workforce, you’ll catch that error before you go to market. And this can have serious implications. So I think that for every organization, D&I is not a question. It should just be done. And that’s where I would say talent marketplaces are especially necessary.”

The diversity experience



As companies move towards flatter hierarchies and pixelated work architectures, traditional job definitions are beginning to break down. They're being replaced by more personalized, skill-oriented approaches, which allow talent to flow freely across the entire organization, thanks to the talent marketplace.



Watson Stewart
Head of Talent Solutions,
Standard Chartered

“The talent marketplace is an enormous opportunity for D&I. We’re creating an inclusive environment where we can get diversity of thoughts from a variety of different people, and introduce them into the projects we run.”

From a D&I standpoint, this is a huge opportunity for employees from underrepresented groups to be included, increase feelings of belonging, and realize their potential within the company. By providing them with full visibility into all the opportunities across an organization, platforms like the talent marketplace undercut significant hurdles that hinder traditional D&I approaches. But they do more than that.



Divkiran Kathuria
Director of Talent Mobility &
Talent Technology, Seagate

“If you visit some of your customers and look into their talent marketplace, and look at a few jobs listed as ‘remote,’ you’ll find that just looking at the pictures and the names that pop up is a diversity experience.”

“Humans are an experience-based species. Once you start getting more diverse people on the team, once you start meeting them, once you start working with them, you realize the potential, you realize their capabilities and what they’re bringing to the table. And if you haven’t seen a diverse workforce, it definitely shows people what they’re missing,” Kathuria explains.

Enabling human capability through AI



B is an inherent part of the human mentality, and uncovering, acknowledging, and addressing it is a constant effort. That's one of the reasons why D&I is such an important business function; if humans could simply stop being biased, we would—but addressing bias is an ongoing process, not an “over-and-done-with” problem.

The fact that bias is so inherent to human thinking also means that even the most well-meaning managers are fallible when it comes to opening up new opportunities for inclusivity. They might accidentally overlook relevant individuals, even in a diverse workforce. For underrepresented employees, that kind of oversight can make the work environment feel inaccessible.

So if the human element is the problem with bias, AI-based tools can be the solution. “Machine learning is objective, and it's way faster than human learning. So to detect bias and to completely eliminate it from humans is impossible,” says Divkiran Kathuria.

She goes on to summarize the role that AI has played in her organization's D&I strategy, noting, “Whatever training efforts we do, whatever D&I efforts we introduce, they will never be as effective. We are getting there, but we are still struggling with it. So to truly manifest that right talent at the right place, and to have the whole world as your talent pool, it's really important to shed that bias. And without augmented intelligence from these technologies, it'll be really slow because I don't think humans will ever be completely unbiased.”



Divkiran Kathuria

Director of Talent Mobility &
Talent Technology, Seagate

“If the “human element” is the problem with bias, AI-based tools just might be the solution.”

When used correctly, AI can create a truly inclusive, color- and gender-neutral work environment that allows individuals to flourish on the merit of their professional abilities alone. In fact, AI-based HR platforms can significantly raise the confidence and the level of trust employees have in their organizations by ensuring that everyone is being treated fairly,

providing an equal level of transparency into career development and growth opportunities.

It's not just employees who benefit. Talent marketplaces reveal qualified internal candidates that managers may have otherwise overlooked. As a result, platforms can uncover talent that was previously underutilized, enabling every workforce to achieve its full potential.

Still, AI is not without its own pitfalls when it comes to bias—which is why it's essential to implement systems strategically.

“I think at both Seagate and Schneider, we had the chance to nip it in the bud right from the start,” Kathuria explains. “When you set up the system for implementation, you just keep all of these parameters out. You can choose not to add the gender of your employees, or the race or nationality. I think for us, it was even challenging to decide whether we would keep the names and pictures. We ultimately chose to keep them, but I know organizations that have chosen otherwise.

“I think the second thing, which is what I really like about Gloat [and a few other similar products in the market], is that there's a bias detection mechanism—which is not very easy to do with humans, right? You can't really track all of their movements or who they are rejecting or who they are liking.

“We cannot really keep these tabs on humans, but with AI, you can pick up on trends like that. So if there is an IT department where the men are all being rejected by hiring managers, it's very easy to pick up on that trend based on data and mitigate it, thanks to dedicated technologies which detect the bias, introduce noise into that data pool, and then say, ‘Okay, let's start again, and see if we see more bias patterns.’”

More than identity politics



Enhancing diversity and inclusion means that critical perspectives from members of underrepresented groups get brought to the table. Organizations benefit from these unique vantage points, as well as the skills and expertise these employees have to offer.

These contributions make it easy to catch potential problems with a product or business approach early on, saving time, effort, and money. But when you let professional expertise serve as the only criteria to dictate how teams are formed, you're missing out on two important D&I factors: 1) diversity of backgrounds and 2) diversity of perspectives.

“One of our motivators for embracing the talent marketplace was raising the bar on talent and diversity, having employees act as owners, and much more in terms of empowerment and transparency.” –Daniel Dreyer, Senior Director of HR Operations, PepsiCo

Even within companies that prioritize D&I efforts, bias can still exist. As a result, entire teams or departments may be made of employees with very similar backgrounds and lived experiences. Until these groups are diversified, your teams and your products will be missing out on a broader set of opinions that could pave the way for game-changing innovations.



Divkiran Kathuria
Director of Talent Mobility &
Talent Technology, Seagate

"Even within companies with robust DEI programs, bias still exists, and can still be reflected in diversity within a given profession."

The most impactful D&I initiatives go one step further by bringing multiple perspectives into the conversation. It's not enough to have a diverse team of similarly-trained professionals; what your company truly needs are teams and processes informed by various vantage points. These highly diverse organizations will thrive in cross-functional collaboration, leading to a deeper understanding of all business functions and shattering silos.

At the heart of D&I lies the fact that employees are first and foremost people. And it's important to remember that people are dynamic, and

their personal and professional ambitions will continuously change over time. That dynamism is a major driving force behind career development—and when done right, it can be harnessed to enhance DEI efforts as well.

So when you're looking to diversify the professional and personal backgrounds on your teams, overlooking personal aspirations as an engine in that diversification process does more than just deprive your company of new perspectives and new opportunities—it's wasteful from an organizational standpoint as well.

“With talent marketplaces, the focus shifts to learning,” Kathutria explains. Today, if you're not an agile learner, if you don't have an intent to develop, you will not succeed. “Two or three years down the line, you will be obsolete—and the talent marketplace helps you put that in perspective and say ‘I know this but I want to learn something more.’ The same goes for hiring managers; it helps you see what the intent of the person is and whether they are from the same professional background or not, you can really focus on that intent and agility in learning.”

Want to build an inclusive workforce and create a lasting impact on your company's DEI? Tour our product.



About Gloat

Gloat's pioneering Talent Marketplace platform has been adopted by some of the world's largest and most innovative employers, including Unilever, Schneider Electric, Standard Chartered Bank, PepsiCo, Walmart, Nestlé, HSBC, and more. The Talent Marketplace empowers enterprises to democratize career development, unlock skills, and future-proof their workforces using a powerful, purpose-built AI and consumer-grade user experience. Founded in 2015, Gloat is headquartered in New York, with offices around the globe and a large R&D center in Tel Aviv, Israel.

For more information, visit www.gloat.com.