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EVENTS TOGETHER

THIS IS US 2020

ADVANCING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

WHITEPAPER

FINDINGS AND IDEAS FROM THE VIRTUAL 2020 CONFERENCE
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Welcome

Welcome to the This Is Us Conference 2020 Whitepaper, a document where we explore the learnings and information that we took from the event. This Is Us 2020 was held virtually on the 20th and 21st of October. As the conference was virtual, due to Covid-19 restrictions, we were able to invite a number of speakers and delegates who would not have otherwise been able to attend the conference, so it really was a positive all round. For example, the event attracted delegates from the UK all the way to Europe, Pakistan, USA and Australia!

The two-day event explored a huge range of topics relating to diversity and inclusion in the workplace for Women, BAME, and LGBTQ+ people. This report aims to set out just some of what we took away from the conference, with the hope that readers can learn from it and be proactive in advancing the diversity and inclusion conversation in their own workplaces.

A Special Thanks From Meena

"I'm Meena Chander. Proud founder of Events Together Ltd and a graduate in MSc Event Management. It was a pleasure to put on This Is Us Conference for the third year running. While the event was virtual, and a little different from what everyone is used to, it was wonderful to have everyone come together to discuss the important topic of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The two days of the conference were really insightful and I hope that everyone who attended found it to be worthwhile. We couldn't have done it without each of our amazing speakers. So, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a huge thanks to all of them for taking part, sharing their skills and knowledge, and helping to make the conference worthwhile. This Whitepaper is a collective recognition of their insights which I hope you will find useful as a reader. "

LGBTQ+ PROGRAMME
Introduction

The LGBTQ+ programme was held on the first day of This Is Us Conference 2020, and was chaired by Jacqui Gavin, who is the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Adviser with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue service. At the start of the session, she made some moving points about the last twelve months specifically and what it has meant for LGBTQ+ people.

It's undeniable that the last twelve months have been some of the most challenging in a very long time. Covid has driven a huge wedge between communities and led to an increase in mental health issues which have affected LGBTQ+ communities. Furthermore, there is what Jacqui described as the 'rise of the voice of hate'. This essentially means that there has been a rise in hate towards LGBTQ+ people from all angles, wherever they go.

The fact that the conference exists is testament, however, to the increase in attention towards the discrimination that LGBTQ+ people face in accessing their basic human rights. But, there are still many challenges left to tackle. Today, more than ever, we must stand together to break down these barriers. We must continue the conversations around diversity and inclusion, and continue to aim for a society where LGBTQ+ people are not treated as second class citizens.

This idea of standing up and working together is one that continues throughout the LGBTQ+ programme of the conference, as well as in the BAME and Women's programmes. Without further ado, we will now share the insights that the speakers had to contribute on this very important topic.

The Role Of The Trade Union

The first session of the day was held by Quinn Roache, LGBT and Disability Equality Officer at TUC. The presentation focused on research Quinn conducted into LGBTQ+ sexual harassment in the workplace. The research arose from a 2016 report into the sexual harassment of women at work, which left LGBTQ+ people out of the equation. Furthermore, a 2017 report called The Cost of Being Out At Work noticed a consistent theme of LGBTQ+ people talking about homophobia and transphobia that wasn't just bullying. It was sexual harassment.

But what exactly is sexual harassment? The legal definition in the Equality Act 2010 says it is 'conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.' When given this definition, only 1% of people will say it has happened to them. But, we know that this is incorrect. The key findings of Quinn's report were that at least 7 out of 10 LGBTQ+ people have experienced sexual harassment at work.

So, how did he reach these conclusions? Well, the report polled on 13 different behaviours, including everything from unwelcome verbal sexual advances and unwanted questions or comments about your sex life, to behaviours that are criminal offences such as unwanted touching, sexual assult, and rape. 10 of the behaviours are polled on the below graph, where you can see the huge and concerning extent of the issue:
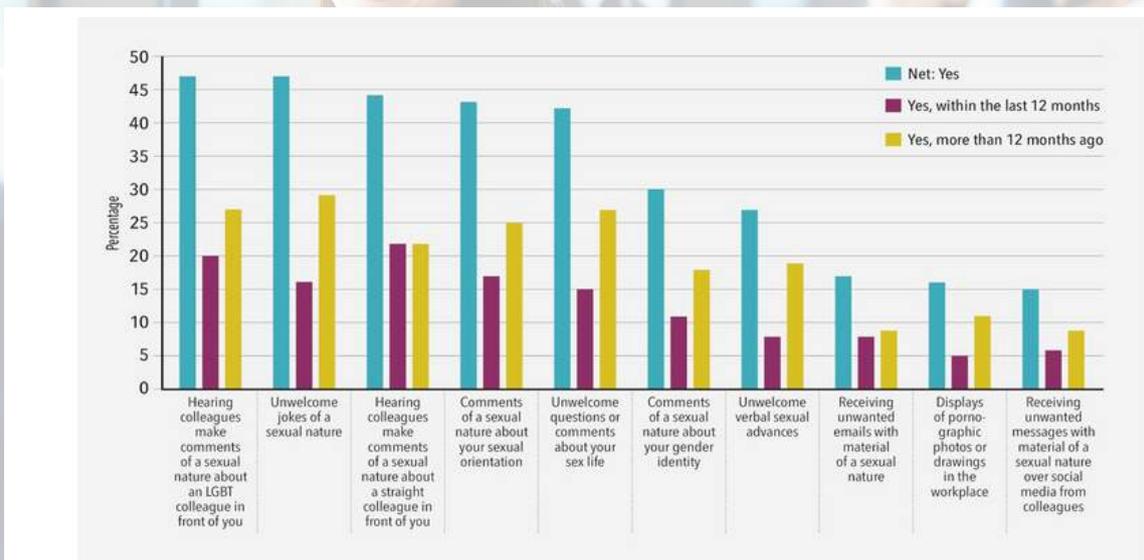
The remaining three behaviours were polled separately, so that the experiences of LGBTQ+ men and women could be looked at separately and not combined as they are above. The most shocking finding that this graph portrays is that 1 in 8 LGBT women have been seriously sexually assaulted or raped at work:
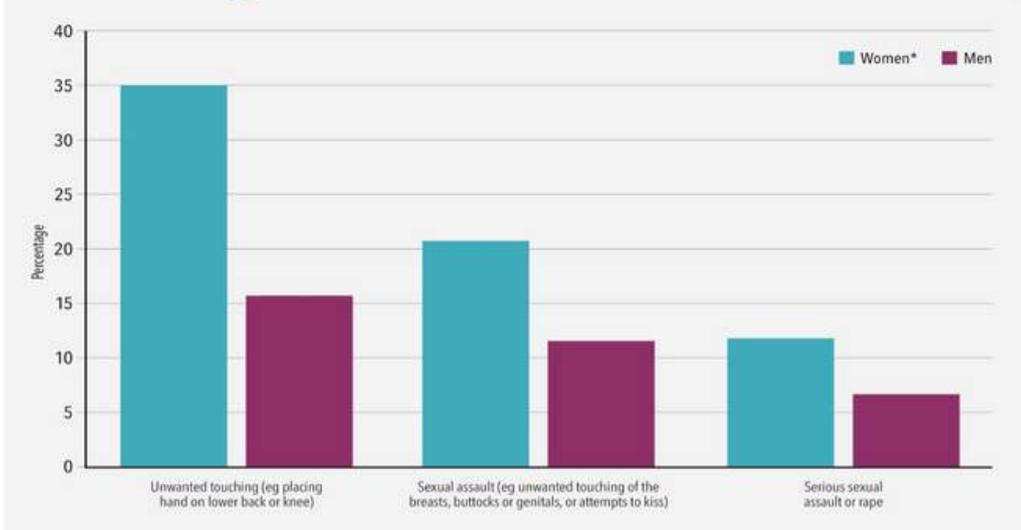
It was also interesting to note that both trans and BAME LGBTQ+ women received a higher level of harassment than white women. And, while BAME and white LGBTQ+ men receive similar levels of some forms of harassment, it was BAME men who were more likely to be shown pornographic imagery and also face unwanted sexual advances. Furthermore disabled LGBTQ+ women were around twice as likely to report unwanted touching or sexual assault, and 6 times as likely to report rape than non-disabled LGBTQ+ women. For disabled LGBTQ+ men, they also reported more incidences of all three of these behaviours than non-disabled LGBTQ+ men.

So, it is clear that there is a huge problem here. But who is perpetrating this sexual harassment or assault? According to the below graph, the vast majority (around 70%) is carried out by a colleague. Around 1 in 8 incidences is carried out by a manager, and 1 in 5 by a third party such as a customer, client, patient, or contractor.

Who?
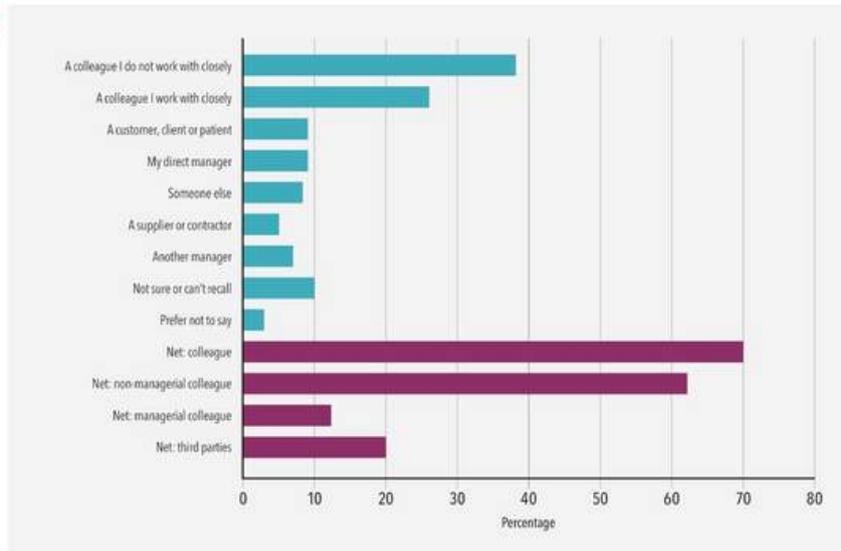
The report also looked into where these incidents were taking place. The majority, as expected, happened on work premises. But a sig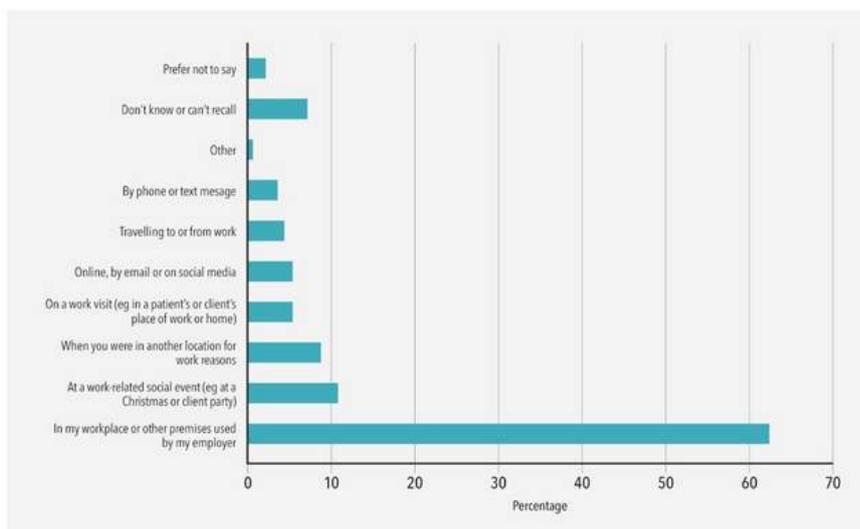nificant minority also took place at a work related social event such as a Christmas party, which often involved alcohol.

Where?

A really shocking finding of the report was that 66% of LGBTQ+ people did not report their harassment to their employer. This was for a variety of reasons, but 25% said it was because they did not want to out themselves as LGBTQ+ at work. Gay men especially were the least likely group to report, with many citing that it was because they didn't want to damage their working relationships. And, the fact that some people who did report their harassment said that doing so did in fact damage their relationships shows that these fears are not unfounded.

But what can we do about this big and important issue? Well, the report made several recommendations to the government and other groups. To start, the government needs to legally introduce a mandatory duty for employers to protect workers from all forms of harassment at work, but especialy sexual harassment. Having said this, employers themselves must not wait for the law to chance to take a preventative approach. They can do this in a number of ways. For example, they need to implement effective policies and procedures; make sure everyone is aware of those policies and their contents; regularly evaluate the policies; give all workers the opportunity to raise issues with them; provide appropriate training that goes beyond just making people aware of the issue; assessing risks relating to harassment; and a good anti-harassment policy.

Key Findings
- The sexual harassment of LGBTQ+ people in the workplace is a big issue, with 7 in 10 LGBTQ+ people having had experienced it
- The sexual harassment can range from unwanted comments to illegal behaviours such as sexual assault and rape
- BAME, trans, and disabled LGBTQ+ people are even more disproportionately affected than white, cisgender, and non-disabled LGBTQ+ people
- 66% of LGBTQ+ people do not report harassment in the workplace to their employer
- There are steps that can be taken to combat this, for example the government needs to introduce a legal duty for employers to protect workers from harassment at work. Employers themselves must take a preventative approach even before this is mandatory.

Preventing Trans Discrimination At Work

This session was run by Katie Neeves, who is a Trans Ambassador with Cool2bTrans. The session started with Katie's personal story. She was generally happy as a boy during childhood, but felt the need to cross dress and would wear her sister's clothes whenever she could. This continued into her 20s. She set up a successful photography business, got married for the first time, and embraced the fact that she was a cross-dresser, but never thought that she would want to transition. Katie had gender dysphoria, which can vary in intensity and can increase over time, which is what happened to her in 2017, shortly after she married for the second time. She came to several conclusions about her gender identity, firstly that she was gender fluid, but it was not until early 2018 after a session with a clairvoyant that she came to the conclusion that she was a trans woman, and she wanted to transition.

In April 2018, she made a video where she announced her transition publically, and the messages of support began to flood in. From there, she was asked to appear in various media, and her role as a Trans Ambassador snowballed from there. She has now been living full-time as a female for over 2 years. Although she looks different, she is still the same person on the inside, though far happier than she was. Fear often stops people from doing what they should, but Katie's story is testament that the reality is often a lot easier than you feared! People tend to regret the things they did not do rather than the things they did do, so accept the fear and go for it anyway, whether it is in your career or personal life!

Katie's story is definitely inspiring, and her work as a Trans Ambassador is important for raising awareness of issues affecting trans people, including in the workplace. But why is trans awareness needed in the workplace? There are some shocking statistics that tell us exactly why. For example, 80% of trans people have experienced transphobia in the workplace, and 1 in 8 were physically attacked by colleagues or customers in 2017. Furthermore, 1 in 3 employers wouldn't hire a trans person, even though it is a protected characteristic by law, showing that there is a big problem with acceptance.

Katie suggests that the key to acceptance is education. After all, people tend to fear things that they don't know much about. And, the more acceptance that there is, the easier it is for other trans people to admit that they are trans and start transitioning. There are many positive reasons to hire trans people and be an accepting and inclusive employer. For example, LGBTQ+ employees are 32% more productive when they are happy being out at work. What employer wouldn't want to encourage that?

So, what can employers do to become more trans inclusive, and encourage other employees to be the same? There are so many steps that can be taken! Firstly, it's important to be proactive rather than reactive. Don't wait for someone to come out as trans to have a policy in place, have it already prepared so that everyone is comfortable with the processes. It's also a good idea to make these policies public, so that trans people know that you are an inclusive employer, and will feel more confident and comfortable applying and working with you. Awareness training is also important. And, it shouldn't just be a tick-box exercise. Instead, it should be mandatory training that everyone has to complete, so that you reach the people that really need the education. In fact, it is better to have education and discussion about LGBTQ+ issues as part of mainstream events, as this tends to increase attendance and get the message out to more people. Finally, it is important for the directors of a company to take ownership of becoming more trans inclusive. If it comes from the top, the whole organisation is more likely to take it seriously, which is the ultimate aim of any diversity and inclusion initiative.

Key findings

- Katie's story is testament to the fact that we should not be afraid to take the path that will make us happiest. When trans people transition, they are still the same person on the inside. Their outside appearance just better reflects this
- Trans awareness is needed in the workplace because a shocking 80% of trans people have experienced transphobia at work
- Education is the key to acceptance. Employers should be accepting because LGBTQ+ people who are happily out at work are nearly a third more productive
- Employers should take a proactive approach and have policies in place to support trans people in the workplace, even if nobody there is currently out
- Trans awareness shouldn't take the form of a tick-box exercise, it should be woven into the fabric of the organisation

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Panel Discussion: Inclusive Language

This panel, led by Jacqui Gavin, consisted of James Sutton, Senior Manager, Digital Content & Campaigns, EMEA at Herbalife Nutrition; Saski, LGBT+ Inclusion Consultant, Presenter and Speaker; TJ Richards, PMO & Stakeholder Outreach Manager / National Co Chair at Embrace Network at Santander; Katie Neeves; and Quinn Roache, both of whom we heard from previously. The panel centred around suggestions about the current use of language and what organisations can do to encourage the correct use of language from an LGBTQ+ perspective.

So, firstly, how do we approach people to be in promotional materials, without them feeling as though they are only being approached because of their diverse characteristics? It's vital that we praise them for their skills and who they are as a person above anything else. After all, these are the reasons you should be choosing someone, not just their diverse characteristics. But, if someone feels valued and represented in their workplace anyway, they should be more than willing to show off the diversity that an organisation has. Sadly, diversity and inclusion isn't something that every organisation has, so it's good to shout about the ones that do and show off what good places they are to work at.

However, there will always be smaller, quieter voices that perhaps don't put themselves forward, despite their skills and talents. How do we encourage them to stick their head above the parapet and share their experiences? TJ made the point that everyone has been a small voice at some point in their journey. The more people are able to be themselves without fear of judgement, the more people will want to speak up, so fostering a general culture of diversity and inclusion is important. Mentoring can also help to bring people out of their shells and share experiences across the board, so everyone can learn from each other. However, one of the major complaints that Quinn hears is that organisations are pushing themselves forward as diverse and inclusive, when in practice, they aren't. So, we need to be aware of getting it wrong and ensure that everyone's voice is truly heard.

But to get diversity and inclusion into a workplace, diverse candidates need to be recruited first! So, how can we integrate diversity and inclusion into a job description? It's important that job descriptions do express when an organisation is diverse and supportive. This makes many LGBTQ+ candidates feel relieved when they are job searching, and helps them to see it as a place where they would be accepted and want to work. In job descriptions, it's important to make sure that we aren't gearing them towards a specific type of person. Gendered words should not be used. Job descriptions should just talk about what a job entails, and not try to draw in a person fit. There are plenty of other ways to help recruit diverse candidates, too. For

example, advertising in diverse groups, and using positive action to draw these candidates in. This could involve getting people in the organisation to talk to these candidates about the role in a way that is bespoke to them. Furthermore, having a visible policy so that everyone can see what you're doing to attempt to recruit diversity is also important.

Clearly, there are many steps that can be taken to try and recruit diverse talent. But how do you make them feel as though your organisation is a place where they would want to work? It's important to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation. This can be done through embedding programmes and training into the organisation that aren't just one-offs or tick box exercises. Organisations need to show what they are doing every day in the diversity and inclusion space, and what impact that is making. All of this will help to attract diverse talent, and make them feel valued and included when they work at an organisation.

Another issue can be people who believe that they are trying to be diverse. They may make comments such as, 'we hire the best person for the job, regardless of their diversity characteristics'. What can be done to counteract this? Obviously, it is okay to hire the best person for the job. We just need to make sure that we are pulling them from a diverse pool of candidates, and that diverse talent has a chance to be considered. They may feel as though they are doing the work by putting the adverts out there and getting candidates in for an interview. But, we need to look at what language is being used on those adverts? Where is the job being advertised? Are they using contacts to recommend people? This often leads to less diversity as people hire 'in their image'. Yes you may have a list of people coming in to be considered, but does that list represent the diversity you need to hire? Don't forget to look at and develop internal LGBTQ+ candidates that are already in your organisation, too, to progress them in their careers.

The language used on job adverts is important, but what about the language used elsewhere, too? What about adding pronouns onto professional material such as on LinkedIn profiles or email signatures? Essentially, this is a really good practice. It shows that you care about pronouns and would respect a trans on non-binary person's pronouns. After all, sharing pronouns isn't just for trans people to do, it's for everyone! Including pronouns on email signatures, in meetings, and the like, shows that you make an effort to be inclusive in your day-to-day working life.

But what about organisations that say they are inclusive, how can we be sure? Many organisations have incidences of transphobia or homophobia, and this isn't necessarily representative of the organisation as a whole. We need to look at their processes and what they are actually doing about these incidents to come to a conclusion. We can't be afraid of holding

organisations accountable for their actions, and demanding that they be more inclusive. There are different pieces of legislation that cover different groups, so some are more protected than others. We need to push for a uniform law to protect all marginalised groups to the same extent. Overall, it is clear that there is still lots more work to be done in this space, but by working together to foster more inclusive language at work, we can help LGBTQ+ feel accepted, included, and not judged in the workplace.

Key findings
- If someone feels valued and accepted in an organisation, they will likely be more than happy to show off where they work
- Making sure that everyone's voice is heard, and they have the chance to speak up if they want to, is key to ensuring that an organisation is diverse and inclusive
- Job descriptions should express that a workplace is diverse and inclusive, should avoid gendered language, and be advertised in diverse spaces in order to attract a diverse pool of candidates
- A culture of diversity and inclusion can be fostered in an organisation by embedding training and education initiatives that aren't just tick-box exercises. This will also help recruit diverse talent
- It is good practice for everyone to display their pronouns in a professional capacity, such as on email signatures and on LinkedIn. It helps you to be more inclusive and show that you are accepting of trans people in your daily life
- We must hold organisations accountable for their actions and demand that they change after incidences of transphobia or homophobia

Networks and Alliances: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

This session was hosted by James Sutton, Senior Manager, Digital Content & Campaigns, EMEA at Herbalife Nutrition. The session looked at networks and alliances in the workplace and how employees and employers can work together to help get them off the ground. James attended the inaugural This Is Us Conference in 2018 and was able to take away key learnings from the conference about how to set up an Employee Resource Group and returned in 2020 to share his journey with new delegates.

Firstly, what is a network or workplace community? Employee network groups are an essential part of creating inclusive workplaces. They allow employees to support their peers and find community at work, they raise awareness of the importance of inclusion among colleagues, and they can be a critical friend to the organisation to push it to do the best it can to create an inclusive environment. They're really important and great things to have, why why should we have them? Well, they promote diversity, provide peer-to-peer support, build communication channels in the workplace, promote career progression, improve products and services, help with accountability and safeguarding, improve talent through recruitment, and they can be a friend to the organisation. As you can see, there are so many benefits for both the employer and employee. However, they're especially important for minority groups at work, such as the LGBTQ+ community, because they provide them with a safe space. In a world where more than one third of LGBTQ+ staff have hidden or disguised that fact that they are LGBTQ+ at work because they are afraid of discrimination, networks and groups can really help them feel included and supported at work.

So, it's clear that these groups are important, but how can both employees and employers play a part in getting them off the ground? Employees can take first steps including speaking to a colleague for help, assessing what networks already exist in their organisation, speaking to HR or a manager if they feel comfortable, and doing plenty of work on Google! Often, there's not a huge amount of support available in the workplace for those that want to set up networks. This is where employers can make a difference. To help employees set up networks, they should assign resources, time and budget, create open and safe spaces where employees can be themselves, give the networks exposure and support, and identify allies for the network. A poll in the session asked the audience what they would struggle most with when getting started with a workplace community or network, and here are the results:

What would you struggle most with when getting started?

EMPLOYEE Speak to friends/colleagues to help
30.8%

EMPLOYEE Asses what other networks exist
0%

EMPLOYEE Speak to HR or manager
23.1%

EMPLOYEE Google it
0%

EMPLOYER Assign resource, time and budget
30.8%

EMPLOYER Create an open but safe space
7.7%

EMPLOYER Exposure and support
0%

EMPLOYER Identify ally's
7.7%

As you can see, most employees said that they would struggle the most with speaking to someone, be it a colleague or HR. This shows the true importance of having an open and supportive culture in the workplace, so that people feel that they can confidently approach others for help in any situation, not just when setting up a network.

So, after the first steps have been completed, what can employees and employers do to lay down the foundations for their network? To get their networks off the ground, employees can consult other colleagues on what they want, create an operation structure to ensure the smooth running of the group, as well as clarifying its aims and objectives. Essentially, they need to go out and speak to people in the organisation about the network and find out what the people want and are interested in. However, some employees may not be confident doing this. This reiterates the importance of the employers offering a safe space where employees feel comfortable approaching them for help. The employer can also help get the network up and running by

providing an HR ally and liaison, helping to solidify the network's structure and voice, allowing employee time for the network, and providing funding. Groups are always more successful when they have the backing of the organisation, so it's important for the two to work together for the best outcome.

Whatever the group is in support of, allies and sponsors in the organisation are key. If you don't have the employer of leadership support, it can be hard to get the network or group off the ground. It is perhaps most important to find senior management sponsorship. James recommends having these conversations early on to reduce the chance of difficulty down the line. In the next poll, the audience were asked whether they thought they would have to put across a business case to get the funding they would need for their network. As you can see, more people said yes than no. Unless diversity and inclusion is ingrained in the company culture, most people do unfortunately still have to put forward a business case for why having networks is important. This is something that we can all work together to improve.

Would you need to create a business case?

○ Yes	66.7%
○ No	33.3%

So, what comes next for the network or group? Well, it needs to recruit and grow membership and allies! This will increase its ability to make change in the organisation. After all, employee networks are run by employees, for employees. So the larger the membership, the wider the impact it can have on the organisation. This impact can either be direct, through peer-to-peer support, or indirect, by helping to create a more inclusive environment. The network can find a larger membership through communicating with the organisation wherever possible, engaging with allies, holding events and educational sessions, ensuring that the network is inclusive, looking at their internal physical and digital branding, cross-strand networking with other networks, and being consistent.

In fact, it is subtle internal branding that can make some of the widest impact on the organisation as a whole. Subtle branding such as rainbow lanyards and pins can help LGBTQ+ people feel more comfortable with the organisation, especially new hires and those coming in

for interviews. It's also important to take time over the network's voice, language, and how it will communicate. This can be done by consulting with allies and making sure the voice is correct before the group puts itself out there, in order to not alienate anybody from it. And, when people feel more comfortable in an organisation because of the inclusivity that networks foster, safeguarding issues can arise. So, it's important to make sure that HR is prepared. There is often a spike in the reporting of issues such as harassment, because people feel more empowered to speak out. And, if you are running a network, make sure that you have a personal support plan, so you do have support if other employees come to talk to you about safeguarding issues and difficult topics.

Overall, inclusive networks, groups, and alliances in the workplace are a really positive thing that can bring about real change. Employers and employees need to work together to help make them a success, and help the organisations become more supportive and inclusive for everyone.

Key findings

- Employee network groups, set up by employees for employees, are vital for increasing inclusion in the workplace
- Both employees and the employer have a part to play in setting up these groups and getting them off the ground
- Employers should aim to create a safe space, where employees are not afraid of asking for support in the setting up or running of their networks. They are always more successful when they have the backing of the organisation.
- Allies and sponsors in senior management are key to help the networks thrive and secure funding
- Networks and wider organisations should consider subtle internal branding such as rainbow lanyards, to show others, especially visitors such as interviewees, that they are inclusive and supportive
- If you are running a network, you should have a personal support plan in place to be there for you if difficult issues arise

Unconference

The unconference was run by the chair of the session, Jacqui Gavin. It involved the audience being split into two groups to discuss whatever they think is most important in the LGBTQ+ diversity and inclusion space. They were asked the question, what is driving you as a diversity professional, activist, HR professional and so on, that you feel is important to get right at the moment?

The idea of vulnerability came up across both of the groups. At the moment, we are simply unsure of what the world looks like, where it is going, and where the LGBTQ+ inclusion agenda fits into that. So, it's important for everyone to be vulnerable and know that it is okay to be struggling, and to share your feelings with others. It just makes you human! Everyone should be unafraid to bring their whole selves to work, whatever this may be. And for employers, it is important to assess people by how well they can do their job, and not by who they are. After all, this has no effect on their ability to perform in the workplace, unless diversity and inclusion is not considered!

Furthermore, the groups discussed the idea of 'tick-boxing' when it comes to diversity and inclusion. Many organisations fly the flag for LGBTQ+ inclusion, but in reality they don't really do anything to advance the agenda. They may have a short even once a year and think that they have ticked the box, but in reality they are not even scratching the surface. The delegates agreed that it is better for organisations to hold their hands up and say that they need to work on their diversity and inclusion policies, rather than pretend that they are doing what they can.

Overall, this session gave everyone a good opportunity to voice their thoughts, concerns, and ideas around diversity and inclusion for LGBTQ+ people. The main consensus was that everyone should go out there and do what they can. After all, we need to all work together to build things up so that diversity and inclusion is a top priority in the workplace.

Key findings
- It is important to be vulnerable. We are only human and should be unafraid to bring our whole selves to work, whatever that might look like for us
- Employers must assess people on how well they can perform their jobs and not by their diverse characteristics
- Organisations having just one event per year and calling themselves is just a tick-box exercise. It is better for them to hold their hands up and say they need to work on diversity and inclusion, rather than saying they are diverse because of one event

Finding Identity At The Intersection of Diversity

This session was hosted by Nic Jennings, a Marketing and D&I Consultant. It focused on his personal story and the wider learnings he has taken from it. Nic is of mixed heritage, and identifies as Brown, Black, and white. His mother's side of the family are apartheid survivors in South Africa. His childhood was characterised by bulling because he is multiracial and gay. Nic felt as though he didn't belong anywhere because he didn't see people like him represented in the media. As a result, he was desperate for acceptance and felt lonely.

In adulthood, things improved for Nic. He travelled a lot, met inspiring people, changed careers, and lived in London and Los Angeles. All of this was a journey to self-acceptance and self-discovery. When the shooting of Breonna Taylor and the Black Lives Matter marches happened across the world, Nic identified with this struggle. It was not until a friend pointed out that they thought Nic's struggles could not be on par with a Black person's that he realised that the way he saw himself was not how others saw him. Growing up with a multicultural mother and a majority of BAME friends and family, he automatically considered himself as a Brown POC. However, the general public don't see that, they see a white person. It further dawned on him that there are a number of ways in which he cannot relate to Black and Brown people, mainly due to his skin colour.

This led Nic on to the point of assumptions. Harmful assumptions are shaped by conscious and unconscious bias, in and out of the workplace. As humans, we are obsessed with stories and understanding, so we use our own values, fear and experiences to make up stories that fit into our neat frame of reference. So, we need to create an environment for authentic communication and vulnerability to counteract this and prevent harmful assumptions. From being vulnerable, we can help others be more vulnerable too. And, vulnerability helps us get insight into new experiences and ways of thinking. The below slide shows the power of vulnerability according to author and lecturer Brene Brown:

The Power of Vulnerability

According to Brene Brown

1. Vulnerability: the willingness to show up and be seen, despite uncertain outcomes.

2. Trust: the courage to trust others and the integrity to be worthy of trust from others.

3. Rising skills: the resilience to get back up when you fail.

4. Clarity of values: the thing that reminds you why you tried in the first place.

But what does insight provide us with? Well, insight gives us the ability to see other people as they truly are in the world. We can relate to them while opening up and sharing our own experiences and journeys. Insight also gives us the power to make informed and empowered decisions about how we engage with other people. And, this ultimately leads us to validation. But what does this mean? Essentially, validation involves acknowledging the struggles, experiences, and journeys of the people around us. It is letting them know that we see, hear, and accept them. When we feel validated, we are empowered to be more ourselves, precisely because we feel seen and heard. Validation brings us together, which means greater cohesion, trust, and integrity- which are all vital things to have in the workplace!

With all of this comes progress. But what does progress look like in the workplace? It means an environment where everyone feels seen, heard, respected, and understood. And, organisations will have transparent and intelligent policies to guide recruitment and diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, diversity and inclusion are central to the company culture, so people are educated about the reality, history, and challenges that minorities face. Companies will be supportive and will get behind initiatives that actually amplify minority voices. Finally, minorities are fairly represented at all levels, including on the board.

This session provided a great end to the talks, showing us what a truly progressive and inclusive employer can look like, and what we have to go through to help them get there. It shows that, while there is still plenty of work to be done, all is not lost, and we can help foster more diverse and inclusive workplaces by accepting and validating those around us.

Key findings
- Harmful assumptions are shaped by both conscious and unconscious bias. To counteract this, we need to create an environment where open communication and vulnerability is encouraged
- Vulnerability helps us gain insight into others' experiences, which can help us to make informed and empowered decisions on how we interact with others
- This can help us and other feel validated, which brings us together and improves trust and cohesion
- All of this should lead to progress. This is an environment where everyone is seen, heard, and respected, and diversity and inclusion is central to the company culture

Summing Up The LGBTQ+ Programme

The range of speakers and the knowledge that they had to share was truly excellent on the LGBTQ+ programme. Quinn looked at the sexual harassment of LGBTQ+ people in the workplace and what needs to be done about it. Katie shared her personal story, and why trans awareness in the workplace is so important. The panel discussed inclusive language and how we can recruit more diverse candidates. Then, James looked at inclusive and supportive networks and how employees and employers can work together to make them happen. The Unconference provided a great opportunity to discuss topics that the audience wished to bring up and, finally, Nic's talk provided great insight into how we can progress diversity and inclusion in the workplace by challenging our assumptions.

While all the talks were undoubtedly different, there were some themes and topics that appeared more than once. Firstly, the idea that diversity and inclusion should not be a 'tick box' exercise, such as an event that an organisation hosts just to say that they are diverse and inclusive. Instead, it should be woven into the very fabric of an organisation and everything that it does. Secondly, the idea of vulnerability. We must all be unafraid to be vulnerable in the workplace and share our concerns and experiences, in order to better connect with each other and advance diversity and inclusion as a result. It is precisely this notion of working together that has the most power to bring about change.

BAME PROGRAMME
Introduction

This Is Us Conference, held in October, coincided with Black History Month. As the BAME programme leader, Gamiel Yafai, the Managing Director of Diversity Marketplace, mentioned, it is a shame that we have to have these dedicated conversations around Black history. Black history should be everyday. However, these conversations must also expand beyond Black history to encompass everyone that is part of a minority. Unfortunately, barriers in the workplace exist for all minorities, and this is something that needs to change.

In this programme, we explored a range of issues that affect all BAME people in the workplace. From how we can encourage BAME apprenticeships to smashing the glass ceiling for ethnic minorities, plenty was covered on a whole range of topics! We'll be sharing the findings from the speakers and the wider conference here. Some really important points were raised, so keep on reading to discover more.

Panel Discussion: BAME Apprenticeships

In our first panel discussion, we were joined by Isa Mutlib and Sharon Blyfield. Isa is the CEO of BAME Apprenticeship Alliance and founder of diversity tech platform The Apprenticeship Hack, while Sharon is the HR Business Partner for Coca Cola European Partners. The session covered a lot of interesting topics to do with diverse apprenticeships, as well as touching on social mobility and the role apprenticeships can play in this.

Sharon mentioned that any organisation needs to have inclusion and diversity at their heart if they want to be the best they possibly can be. But why put inclusion first? Well, while you can bring a diverse team into your organisation, they will not stay unless it is truly inclusive and welcoming to them. You need to have both inclusion and diversity to be successful as a business.

This led into Isa's next point, about why the apprenticeship route is a good opportunity for employers to boost diversity. Organisations need to be representative of the people they serve. Diversity is an important part of this, of course. But how do apprenticeships help them achieve this aim? Apprenticeships are accessible to every single individual, no matter their level of education or social background. As a result, employers can access the best talent in communities that they may not usually tap into. For example, in economically deprived areas, people have the skills that organisations need. But these skills perhaps don't come from attaining high levels of education, like their 'typical' employee may have. So, Apprenticeships give these people the opportunity to bring their unique skill set to an organisation, and benefit from it themselves, too. And, it's important to bear in mind that diversity doesn't just mean ethnic diversity, it's also diversity of thought, mindset, life experiences, creativity, and so on. It really is something vital to have.

People from more economically deprived backgrounds may fall into patterns such as carrying weapons, because it gives them the security they need to love in their environment However, offering them apprenticeships gives them a different path to achieving security. And then, in turn, they can become role models in their community, showing that a different path can be taken to success. As such, apprenticeships offer social mobility to BAME people from more deprived backgrounds, which benefits everyone from the individual and their community to the wider organisation.

Tying in nicely with this is the idea of organisations partnering up to deliver the best results when it comes to diversity and inclusion. An organisation like Coca Cola, whose reason for being is soft drinks, should work with an organisation whose reason for being is social mobility.

It's partnerships like these that drive the best results and help organisations reach communities that they may not have tapped into previously with their apprenticeship programmes.

To finish the panel, Isa summed up that the aim of apprenticeships should be to enable those who haven't previously had access to quality programmes to gain access to them and thrive in the workplace where they may not have had the opportunity to before. Furthermore, accountability is needed from organisations, to actually prove their commitment for increasing diversity and inclusion in the workplace. This involves looking at things internally before taking them externally, including looking at the barriers to people moving up in an organisation and taking positive actions to rectify this, so that an organisation is inclusive as well as diverse.

To sum up the panel and our learnings from it, diversity and inclusion is everyone's responsibility, whether this is the government, employers, or the individual. We all have a role to play. Diversity and inclusion drives business and productivity, so it's an essential to have. And, those skills that employers need are out there, we just have to find a way to include them- of which apprenticeships are one way to do just that.

Key findings
- Inclusion and diversity are needed for an organisation to be successful. You can't have one without the other
- Apprenticeships are accessible to everyone, regardless of education level. So, employers can access the best talent in communities they have not recruited from before. These people will have skills that employers need but don't necessarily come from their 'typical' employees.
- Offering apprenticeships gives people a path to success and security, so they can become role models in their communities for what that can look like. Apprenticeships give BAME people in deprived communities the opportunity for social mobility.
- Organisations should partner up with others whose reason for being is social mobility to bring about the best change.
- Organisations must be accountable for bringing about change in the diversity and inclusion space, and actually practice what they preach.

Cultural Awareness/ Stereotypes and Unconscious Bias

The second session was on the topic of cultural awareness/ stereotypes and unconscious bias, hosted by Sara Chandran. Sara is the founder of Fresh and Fearless, a diversity consultancy which helps organisations shift mindsets about ourselves and others, to grow together and create a more inclusive workplace. The session covered a variety of topics, ranging from identity to how to challenge unconscious bias.

Identity

So, what is the concept of identity? It is personal to us all and comes from a combination of factors such as how we're brought up, the things we consume, our surroundings, and even the experiences of others. Sara described it as our own personal culture. When it comes to describing our own identities, people from marginalised groups tend to lead with that when they introduce themselves. This is something that people from the dominant culture don't tend to do. For example, when introducing themselves, white people rarely lead with the fact that 'I am a white person'. This led on to the topic of race and ethnicity and how they are often used interchangeably but are in fact two very different things. A race is a group of people who share physical characteristics, while ethnicity is broader and includes people who share a background such as a country or culture. In fact, race is technically a concept that was made up by anthropologists, but it has contributed largely to the imbalances of diversity and inclusion that we see today.

Culture and cultural awareness

So, how does our understanding of race and ethnicity contribute to the idea of culture and cultural awareness? In essence, cultural awareness is being open minded about the practices, beliefs, and values of people who are different from us. For example, they may be from different counties, have had different upbringings, and so on.

In the workplace, leaders should be culturally sensitive. But why is this? It is so that everyone can be included and feel that they can come to work as their true selves. With more and more people working from home in 2020, this is especially important. The unique situation that we find ourselves in gives us the opportunity to encourage people from all over the world to come together and be themselves, whereas before we may have been more limited by location. We must recognise that our values are not universal, and we cannot expect the whole world to be just like us.

But how can we foster culturally aware workplaces? Firstly, it's important for everyone to have sensitivity and understanding about the different cultures they may encounter at work. That way, the workplace becomes a judgement-free zone and we can begin to create stronger and longer lasting relationships with each other. Continued education is also important. For example, having different people educate each other about different cultures and views that exist in the workplace will bring to life how diverse that organisation is and give everyone a better understanding of who they are working with. If we do not make the effort to educate ourselves, we can become close-minded and only see our own way of living, and become resistant to accepting that there are other ways to be. This is why education is so important.

Stereotypes and Microaggressions

What is a stereotype? In essence, it is a fixed image or idea about people based on their identity. It's important not to make assumptions about others and their cultures. After all, just because someone looks different doesn't mean that they will have a different culture from you!

Next, what are microaggressions? They are small ways in which people are made to feel different or like 'outsiders', based on stereotypes about their identities. While they may be small, they happen so frequently that they can be extremely damaging to people's mental health and wellbeing. Sara shared with the group a range of statements that can be microaggressions, such as 'you're being too sensitive'. This is a way to gaslight people into feeling as though they are wrong, especially as it usually happens when they are standing up for something that they believe in. On the whole, the group agreed that the situations are microaggressions, which you can see in the table below. However, it is easy for something that is meant as a compliment to become a microaggression. This reiterates how important it is to be culturally aware and sensitive to others.

Statement	Did the group think it was a microaggression?
You're so articulate	Yes, as it infers the expectation that they would not be articulate
Aren't you hot under that?	Yes, nobody should comment on what anyone else is wearing
You're being too sensitive	Yes, see above
I only believe in one race, the human race	Yes, this is ignoring our differences which should be welcomed and celebrated
I'm not even going to try and pronounce your name	Yes, it is rude and disrespectful. All they have to do is ask how it is pronounced

The idea of cultural appropriation also stems from this. Sara asked the question, is it stealing from another culture, or just appreciating it? She gave the example of Kim Kardashian with her hair in cornrows. When BAME people in the workplace wear cornrows, they are more likely to be told that their hair is 'unprofessional,' but when Kim wears them, she is celebrated for being edgy and cool. This is cultural appropriation, as cornrows are only seen as acceptable on a white woman like Kim who uses them as a fashion statement.

So, how can we help ourselves overcome this?
There are several steps that we as individuals can take to minimize our own, and other people's incidences of stereotypes and microaggressions. It starts with understanding our own biases, being open to ideas and criticism, and continually standing up against biases, discrimination, and inequality.

Did you know that our brains take in around 11 million pieces of information per second, but we can only consciously process around 40 pieces of that? This means that we constantly have to take shortcuts and live around 95% of our lives on 'autopilot', which is driven by the unconscious brain. This essentially means that we give up the power to see the world for how it really is, and create our own version of reality.

As part of the presentation, Sara read the audience a short story, then asked us to imagine certain things about the characters such as what gender they were or how they looked. There was certain information she left out of the story, but our brains made shortcuts to fill it in and imagine the characters. This is an example of unconscious bias in action. For example, most people imagined the woman in the story's partner to be male, even though their gender wasn't

specified. But what is the relevance of this? Well, if we can make these assumptions about people in a story, we can also make them about people and situations in the workplace!

How do we tackle this unconscious bias? Firstly, we must expose ourselves to different people and situations, and constantly educate ourselves as much as we can. Also, when making big decisions, it's important to step out of autopilot and make sure that we are present in the moment. We shouldn't rely on having just a little information about a situation. It's okay to keep asking for more. Furthermore, when we act differently because someone has called us out on our unconscious biases, it's important to reward ourselves. This will start the process of requiring our brains towards more conscious thinking, and we will start to think more positively towards different groups of people. See the slide below for more information about tackling unconscious bias:

Overall, taking time and intention when we're doing something we're not used to, or making big decisions, helps us to interpret the information in the way it needs to be interpreted, rather than making decisions based on bias. This is how we can all do our part to help eliminate stereotypes and unconscious bias in the workplace, and become more culturally aware.

Key findings

- Everyone in the workplace must be culturally sensitive to ensure that everyone feels included and can come to work as their true selves
- Continued education is important to make sure that everyone is aware of different cultures and how we can be accepting of them
- Stereotypes and microaggressions may be small but they can be damaging to mental and physical health. We must do all that we can to counteract them
- Our brains spend around 95% of the time on 'autopilot', driven by the unconscious brain. This essentially means that we are creating our own version of reality based on our experiences alone
- As a result, our brains make 'shortcuts' which translate into assumptions about people which can be harmful
- To tackle this unconscious bias, we must expose ourselves to different situations and people. We must step out of autopilot when making big decisions and take the time to consider everything, not just assume
- Stepping out of autopilot allows us to interpret information in the way that it actually needs to be interpreted, helping us to eliminate stereotypes and unconscious bias, and become more culturally aware

Recruitment and Retention: C-Level Positions

The third session was led by Jo Heath, who is a Partner and Head of Diversity, Inclusion, Culture, and Ethics Practice at Green Park. Her session focussed on the findings from Green Park's report, 'The Colour of Power,' launched exclusively with Sky News.

What does BAME truly mean? Within the BAME umbrella, it's important to remember that there are different groups and they are not one and the same. And, while there are a lot of commonalities between them, there are also a variety of differences in the challenges that they face. For example, when we report on diversity and inclusion in the workplace, we tend to report on 'BAME' diversity. However, this isn't necessarily a true indicator of how diverse an organisation is, due to the wide variety of groups that may fall under the BAME label. For example, an organisation may have a certain percentage of Black people, but no Asian people. Using the BAME umbrella, it may look diverse, but in reality, it is not as diverse as it should be with people from different ethnicities. So, it is important to encourage organisations to understand the importance of detailed analysis when it comes to diversity. We need to treat the B A and E of BAME as separate entities, as they are.

The 'Colour of Power' report uncovered some fairly shocking findings about diversity composition in powerful positions in the UK. Only 4.3% of these positions were filled by BAME, and there was only an increase of 11 people over the course of 3 years. Furthermore, 41% of the departments analysed had no BAME representations at all, and only 10 roles were filled by BAME women. Visiting the Colour of Power website will visually show you just how much diversity is lacking. For example, in the below screenshot, you can see that all Supreme Court Judges are white, and there is a similar story across all of the departments looked at in the report. So, how can we work to rectify this, for C level positions, and any leadership positions in general?
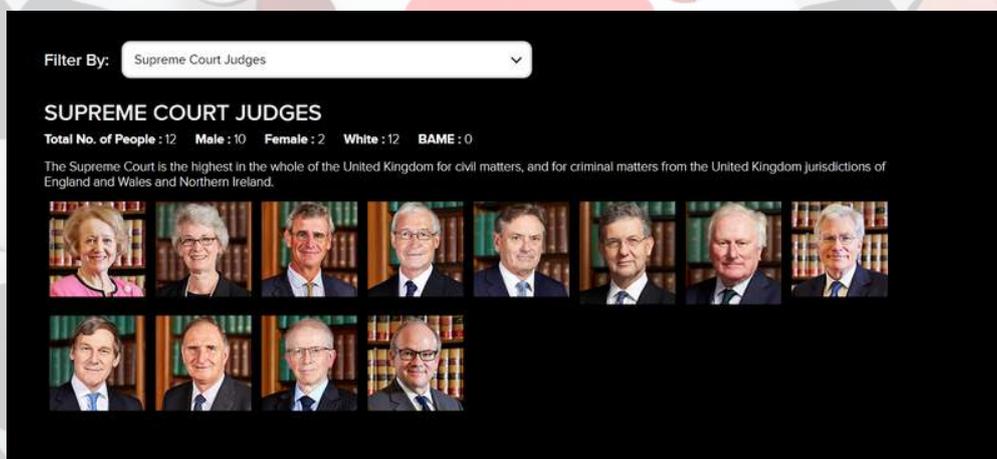
Often, there is a misconception that BAME talent just doesn't exist. Obviously, this is absolutely not true. There are just challenges when it comes to attracting and retaining BAME talent, often because of issues in the organisations themselves. For example, there are often biases in operational processes from job descriptions to the final selection, and objective criteria that is meant to be applied is not always used correctly. A point in case is that organisations often attract a high level of BAME applicants. These applicants just aren't making it through to selection and we need to understand why.

But why does it matter? Well, the fight for the best talent for leadership positions is fierce. And, individuals are looking for organisations with diversity. BAME applicants want to understand that it is an organisation that they will feel safe and supported in joining. So, if organisations want to win the fight for talent, they need to show that they are diverse and inclusive. Part of this is pushing away the idea of cultural fit. Instead, organisations can look at cultural add. This means looking at what this candidate can add to the organisation, rather than just looking for candidates that will 'fit in'. Cultural intelligence in all leaders, not just BAME ones, is also important. This links to cultural awareness and essentially means that we need to take a look at how we connect with difference and address our biases.

So, what can businesses do?
It's important to work on enhancing leadership capability for everyone who is a leader in any capacity, not just at the top. Everyone can do their bit in an organisation by influencing others by making the conversation about race a continuous dialogue, and calling out and reporting all instances of racism, big or small. It's important to be a role model, whatever your role in an organisation may be, and hold everyone accountable. We must address the underrepresentation of diversity, and support diverse talent to address barriers in the workplace and help them succeed. This can be done through sponsorship and mentoring programmes to help everyone involved build new skills, perspectives, and insights, alongside allyship and advocating for underrepresented colleagues to take on high visibility. All of this will build the cultural intelligence that leaders need to foster inclusive workplaces.

Key findings
- Within the BAME umbrella, there are multiple groups of people. It's important to consider them and their issues separately
- In the UK, positions of power in the workplace are rarely filled by BAME people. In the Colour of Power report, of the positions surveyed, only 4.3% were filled by BAME people
- Organisations often face challenges in recruiting BAME talent because of their own processes that may be geared away from them

- If organisations want to win the fight for talent, they need to show that they are truly diverse and inclusive
- Organisations should look at cultural add over cultural fit. What can this person add to the organisation that others perhaps could not?
- Everyone can do their bit to address the lack of diversity and inclusion in organisations by keeping the conversation going
- Organisations can also attract more diverse talent through sponsorship and mentoring, allyship, and advocating for underrepresented colleagues, which all help build cultural intelligence

Ethnic Entrepreneurship Reconsidered

In this session, we heard from Kiran Kaur, researcher and lecturer at De Montfort University, about the topic of Ethnic Entrepreneurship, in the past, present, and future. But what is Ethnic Entrepreneurship? In short, it is businesses that are owned and staffed by ethnic minorities. Typically, they operated in co-ethnic areas, selling co-ethnic services to a co-ethnic clientele. However, this definition is evolving, which we will look at in more detail below.

Ethnic Entrepreneurship in the past
Typically, first generation immigrants were pulled into owning their own businesses because they had experience in doing so in their home countries. Kiran gave the example of Indian immigrants who had owned agricultural businesses in India. Once in the UK, they started setting up Indian restaurants because they missed the food that they produced in India, and having their heritage with them in a new environment was important.However, they were also pushed out of 'regular' employment and into self-employment. This was because of a number of disadvantages such as racism and gender discrimination, their education not being seen as good as British education, language barriers, and their immigration status.

The present
In the present day, we are now a few generations along from these initial immigrants. As a result, ethnic entrepreneurship is changing, as the second or third generation no longer have some of the push factors and disadvantages that previous generations had. For example, they will have a British education, English will be their first language, and they will be British citizens. So, it could be guessed that ethnic entrepreneurship is declining, and more ethnic minorities are entering traditional employment.

However, Kiran's research from 2014 showed that it is actually increasing! But why are ethnic minorities still opting for ethnic entrepreneurship? There are a number of pull factors, for example carrying on a family legacy, or the preservation of their culture. Here, it breaks out of the traditional definition as more and more minority-owned businesses are either supplying their services (such as a restaurant) to non-ethnic communities, or they are branching out into non co-ethnic services, such as IT, transport, and so on. There are also some push factors, namely the fact that there are still disadvantages for minorities in the workplace, especially in areas like recruitment and pay. In a poll conducted during the session, everyone said that they believed labour market disadvantages either did, or possibly, exist for ethnic minorities, even if they are not first-generation immigrants.

Does labour market disadvantages still exist for ethnic minorities?

- Yes — 80%
- No — 0%
- Maybe — 20%
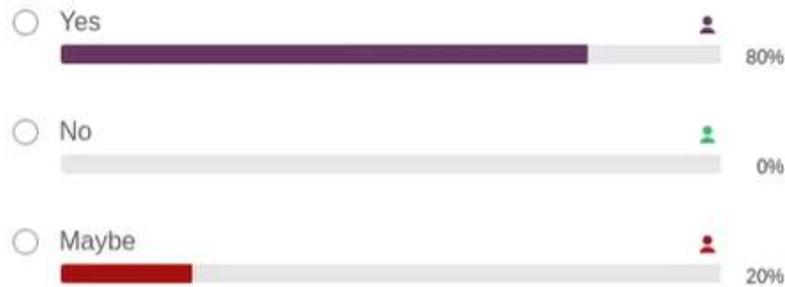
What does the future hold for ethnic minorities?

Obviously, nobody can predict the future, but there are a few suggestions of what can be done in the future to make the workplace a better place to be for ethnic minorities. Interestingly, the 'new' first generation immigrants, from Eastern Europe, are facing many of the same barriers that first generation Indian immigrants faced, suggesting that it is a cycle that may keep on repeating itself unless something changes to make the workplace more inclusive. Furthermore, it's clear that there is still a lack of ethnic minority representation in leadership positions. The 'glass ceiling' of achievement still seems to firmly exist. So, what can we as individuals do to help lift these barriers in the workplace for everyone, and break the glass ceiling? Well, it's not just down to employers to do it for us. We can advocate for it ourselves, to, using this plan of action:

- Start recommending cultural diversity training in your workplace. Keep bringing it up with senior members of staff if it isn't happening.
- Enroll your workplace on a leadership development programme. This will help current employees develop their skills, and could even be used to help develop the skills of new talent, such as people leaving university that have an education but not necessarily the skills they need to become leaders.
- Networking is vital. Speak to people from everywhere, not just your industry or location. You may be able to find a mentor that can help you progress your career.
- Learn from previous generations and don't be afraid to set up your own business- if they could do it, so can you!
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, be confident and empowered to go and break the glass ceiling and achieve everything that you can!

Key findings:

- First generation Indian immigrants were both pushed and pulled into ethnic entrepreneurship due to a variety of factors such as experience owning businesses in their home country, education, racism, and language barriers
- Second generation and younger immigrants do not have as many of these barriers (though some still exist), however the rate of ethnic entrepreneurship is rising
- In the present day, ethnic businesses have moved away from just selling ethnic services to the ethnic community. They now operate in all kinds of sectors and serve multiple communities at once
- There are still certain barriers in the workplace for ethnic minorities, which do still contribute to the level of ethnic entrepreneurship
- There is a lack of ethnic minorities in leadership positions. The glass ceiling of achievement still firmly exists
- Individuals must advocate for more diversity and inclusion, and can use the action plan outlined above to do so

Summing Up The BAME Programme

We heard from such a great range of speakers who all covered some important topics. Sharon and Isa looked at how apprenticeships can impact positively on the diversity of an organisation. Sara looked at how cultural awareness can impact on our unintentional biases and preferences. Then, Jo spoke about the importance of cultural fit in order to recruit more diversity in C-Level positions, and organisations as a whole. Finally, Kiran looked at how ethnic minorities can challenge the status quo, both in organisations and with their own businesses. And, we can be the change we need in society and organisations when it comes to diversity and breaking the glass ceiling.

Overall, a strong theme of culture was present throughout the programme. The main takeaway is that cultural awareness from individuals can help make organisations more diverse and inclusive as a whole. Organisations and individuals must work together to ensure inclusivity for BAME people; it shouldn't be left up to just one or the other. We all have the power to make small and large changes that can affect diversity for the better, and we should all be looking at what these are and how to implement them in our day-to-day lives and wider organisations.

WOMEN'S PROGRAMME
Introduction

This session was chaired by Meena Chander, CEO and founder of Events Together who curated the conference. This session welcomed a variety of speakers to share their knowledge and take part in a panel discussion, all about women in the workplace. Women still face many barriers at work, but there are steps that can be taken to remove these barriers and help women thrive at work. From menopause to impostor syndrome, women are affected by a whole range of issues that may affect them at work. So, what can be done about all of these barriers? That was discussed in the Women's Programme which we will talk about below!

Menopause In The Workplace

This session was hosted by Jane Dowling, founder of Meno & Me and a clinical exercise practitioner. She's passionate about menopause because she herself suffers badly, and she has also worked with many women suffering from various effects over her years in the industry. It's important that both individuals and organisations understand more about menopause. We are living longer and will spend around 30% of our lives in menopause, which just goes to highlight the importance of understanding!

What is menopause?

In short, menopause is the decreasing of the hormones estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone. Some women do not experience symptoms, but around 70% do, according to a study from CiPD. There are around 35 possible symptoms, and they encompass a whole range from anxiety to heart disease and osteoporosis. It's not all about hot flushes! However, many women don't know that their symptoms are menopause related, which is why it's important for everyone, both the individual women and their workplaces, to get a better understanding. But why is menopause such a hot topic in the modern world? Well, in the 1900s, women only lived to 53 on average, so did not experience many years of menopause. However, we're now living far longer and so have to live with menopause for longer, too. The below slide represent just a few of the physical and emotional symptoms that women may experience during the menopause:

What do workplaces need to do?

If both individual women and their wider organisations have a better understanding of menopause, it can have many benefits! These include a more positive working environment, the saving of financial losses through absenteeism, and even the prevention of litigation or tribunal hearings! Currently there is no legislation that relates specifically to menopause, but both the Equality Act 2010 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 detail that reasonable adjustments must be made for women who are experiencing symptoms of menopause, to improve their experience at work.

So, how can organisations make these reasonable adjustments? Firstly, it's about small steps, and making sure the conversation is open for anyone to talk freely and comfortably about the subject of menopause. The end goal is to have a happy workforce, which will benefit the organisation and its employees. This comes from an understanding in the whole workforce about menopause, its effects, and the adjustments that can be made to make those suffering with symptoms more comfortable at work. Employers must remember to keep an open mind and not make assumptions about how or when a person may be suffering. They can do this by treating everyone as an individual, and understanding that symptoms may fluctuate so it's important to regularly check in on how someone is feeling and if the adjustments are working for them.

But what sort of adjustments can be made? In a study from Women In Sport about the core values of women suffering from menopause, feeling good was at the very top:

Core values that are important to women during menopause (in press):

1. Feeling good
2. Looking good
3. Nurturing friends and family
4. Having fun
5. Achieving goals
6. Developing skills

See womeninsport.org for more information Study Nov 18

So, it's clearly important to make adjustments that help women to feel good at work! These adjustments can be physical, such as offering a fan, or involve changes to their working environment such as a flexible working schedule or a different uniform. Overall, it's vitally important to listen to each woman as an individual and learn about what their differing needs may be. In this session, Jane detailed two case studies of women that she has worked with, and what their employers did to make reasonable adjustments to make them more comfortable and as a result excel at work. Take a look at them here:

meno&me

Case study 1

Miss T

Medical Sonographer – NHS hospital
Physical symptoms > 15
Physiological symptoms > 10
BRCA Gene
High risk of breast cancer
30 days sick in the last 6 months due to menopause

Solutions

Chat with HR
Change of uniform colour
Flexible working – starting later
Less physical role
Medical intervention referred to oncologist with low dose of HRT intervention

Outcome

Still symptomatic but managing symptoms better and able to work full time with less sick days
Regular breast and cervical screening

Case study 2

Miss N

Uniform Police Officer
Physical symptoms < 5
Psychological symptoms > 5
Recorded non specific sick days 10 in last 3 months

Solutions

Extra uniform
Different shift patterns
Fitness test to be done separately to younger male officers
Low dose of anti-depressant to help with anxiety, flushes and sleep

Outcome

Much happier at work and recorded sick days 2 in last 6 months

As you can see from both of the case studies, the reasonable adjustments that were made at work for these women led to great outcomes. They both felt a lot happier at work and also had far less sick days. This has benefits for the women themselves and the organisations. So, to sum up, we are all living longer and so women are in the workplace for longer than ever before. As a result, they may suffer from menopause symptoms at work. It is clear that understanding the menopause and making adjustments so women suffering with symptoms can be happier at work has plenty of benefits. It should be something that every organisation makes an effort to understand and implement in order to have a happier, more inclusive workforce.

Key findings
- We are living longer, and so can expect to spend around 30% of our lives experiencing menopause. Around 70% of people experience symptoms in some form. There are around 35 possible symptoms that can be attributed to menopause.
- If individual women and their employers have a better understanding of the menopause, there can be many benefits in the workplace including a more positive working environment and saving costs associated with absenteeism
- The Equality Act 2010 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 detail that reasonable adjustments must be made for women who are experiencing symptoms of menopause, to improve their experience at work
- Adjustments can be physical eg offering a fan, or involve changes to the working environment such as offering flexible working
- It's vital to listen to each woman as an individual to find out what they need, and regularly check in as symptoms can fluctuate
- The case studies show what a big difference making reasonable adjustments can make, as both women were happier at work and also took far less time off sick

Impostor Syndrome

This session was led by Ian Washington-Smith, Director of Shinesmith Academy. The Academy aims to teach people about the effects of the mind in a practical way, so that they can understand how to manage it. This links in well with the topic of the session, Impostor Syndrome.

Now, what is impostor syndrome exactly? Well, the definition is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their skills, talents or accomplishments and has a persistent internalised fear of being exposed as a 'fraud'. It is really common, even though people often feel as though they are alone in suffering from it. In fact, a poll of the audience suggested that around 90% felt that they had suffered from it, showing that it's a really common problem for women (and men!) in the workplace:

Another poll asked the audience whether they thought impostor syndrome was linked to stress or anxiety. Again, around 90% of the audience said that they thought it was, and they were indeed correct, which is what this session focused on!

In this context, stress is the perception of a threat or danger in your environment, not what actually happens to you. In this case, there is something in the environment that doesn't meet your expectations, rather than a traditional 'threat'. The third poll of the session asked the audience whether they thought impostor syndrome is triggered by situations, or what we come to believe of them. Around 85% said that they thought it is triggered by the situations themselves. But is this correct? Probably not!

Is imposter Syndrome triggered by situations or what you have come to believe about them?

○ Yes	85.7%
○ No	0%
○ Not sure	14.3%
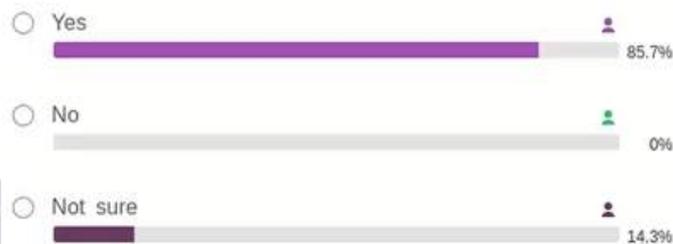
The key to unlocking your true potential and overcoming impostor syndrome is understanding how the mind works, and how we can use this knowledge to overcome our fears. However, it seems that few people receive training about how the mind works in the way. The final poll of the session showed that 50% of the audience had received no practical instruction or education on the mind at all. This shows that there is a severe lack of knowledge in this area, so it's no surprise that impostor syndrome is so prevalent!

How many of you have been given practical instruction or education on the mind that is more than mindfulness or relaxation and breathing on that allows you to manage, minimise or remove the unhelpful symptoms or conditions it creates?

○ Yes	37.5%
○ No	50%
○ Some mindfulness and relaxation only	12.5%
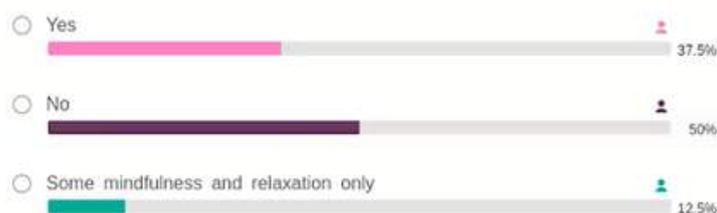
But what do we need to know about the mind in order to overcome impostor syndrome? Well, it's important to know that there are two parts of the mind: the Rational and the Conditioned. It's the Conditioned part of our mind that is making decisions about situations for us, a long time before we are actually in those situations. Essentially, this part of the brain is responsible for the habits of thinking about ourselves that we then come to see as a part of ourselves. Here, the more we tell ourselves that we have impostor syndrome, the more it actually becomes a reality! So, we need to recognise what it is about certain situations that triggers our impostor syndrome, in order to be able to tackle them.

This all comes down to fear. There are two types: perceived and real. But, both have the same physical reaction. So, even if the fear is 'perceived' and so not actually there, the feeling is real, and so you believe your thinking to be true. So, we need to change our ways of thinking around these situations to overcome impostor syndrome. When someone has impostor syndrome, they will have absolutist thinking. This causes a stress reaction that then triggers impostor syndrome. For example, 'the people in this meeting absolutely must accept me'. However, when you are indifferent, or accept that they may feel this way (preferential thinking), your stress response, and therefore impostor syndrome, will not be triggered.

But how do we move to this way of thinking? The answer is, practice makes perfect! All of us have neural pathways that are formed on the basis of well-practiced thinking and behaviour, So, it takes practice to 'rewire' these pathways and adapt to ways of preferential thinking in situations that may trigger impostor syndrome. In short, believing is perceiving. You don't become a fraud by walking into a meeting, you just believe that you do. The mind has the ability to distort things. In a real fight or flight situation, it's beneficial to focus on the negatives as this helps us to escape alive. However, in perceived fear situations, we don't realise that our mind is doing the same thing despite the real threat not being present, so we truly believe what it is telling us. So, we must understand and challenge what our mind says in the ways Ian has set out in order to overcome impostor syndrome. We just must start believing in ourselves, questioning what our mind is telling us, and practice, in order to 'rewire' our brains!

Key Findings:
- Impostor Syndrome is a psychological pattern in which an individual will doubt their skills, talents or accomplishments and has a persistent internalised fear of being exposed as a 'fraud'
- Impostor Syndrome arises from a perceived threat in the environment, which leads to fear, even if the threat is not 'real'. To overcome this, we need to change our ways of thinking
- It takes practice to 'rewire' our neural pathways to adapt to ways of preferential thinking in situations that may trigger Impostor Syndrome. To do this, we need to understand and challenge what our mind says, by believing in ourselves and questioning what our mind is telling us

Panel Discussion: Women's Mentoring Programmes

This panel discussion involved Leah Freeland from Shinesmith as the panel chair, Sue Willis, Director of Simplification at Santander, David Savage, Founder of Tech Talks, Louise Robinson, Head of Santander Breakthrough, Beenish Saeed, Founder of Like Minded Females Network Toronto, and Meena Chander, Founder of Events Together and This Is Us Conference. Many interesting points about women's mentoring programmes, and women in the workplace, were discussed.

So, what role does mentoring have to promote female success at work? Louise mentioned that there are still many barriers to female success, such as the lack of relatable role models and limited access to networks, sponsorship, and mentoring support to gain valuable advice. We need to think of mentoring as a catalyst that has the power to accelerate a chain reaction in someone to affect change and progress their activity, without changing their individuality. Mentoring can help equip women with the skills and confidence to move forward at work. There's the example of Victoria Green, a designer who, after mentoring and building her business, would describe herself as an entrepreneur and businesswoman. She now mentors people herself, showing how mentoring really can make a difference by creating a continued cycle.

When it comes to women's mentoring programmes, we might automatically think of woman to woman mentoring. But what about male/ female mentoring? What are the advantages of these? David gave his own example. He reached out through his podcast to ask women about their male/ female mentoring experiences and the benefits they brought them. They came back saying that men had a different perspective on the world, and it was beneficial to learn skills from them. For example, men are more likely to challenge viewpoints in meetings whereas women are more likely to just accept them. Challenging is a great skill to learn that can come from male/ female mentoring programmes. However, these programmes also benefit the men, too! They can learn more about what it's like to be a woman in the workplace. As a result of this, they can act as an ally for women in the workplace. Many industries, such as technology, are male-dominated, so it's important for women to have male advocates! Overall, it is clear that male/female mentoring programmes are mutually beneficial for everyone involved.

Mentoring programmes are great, but what barriers exist in the workplace that also need to be overcome? Beenish put forward a variety of barriers. Firstly, there is the limitation to flexible working arrangements. Women may need these for many reasons, but often are not taken as

seriously if they request them. There's also the issue of the gender pay gap and unequal pay, so more pay transparency is needed to combat this. Furthermore, there is a lack of sponsorship for women at work. This involves someone 'higher-up' at an organisation vouching for a woman's work, offering them up for bigger and better assignments and increasing their visibility at work. There are lots of mentoring programmes available for women, but not enough sponsorship exists, so it's important for people, especially men, to think about who they could 'sponsor' and push forward at work. Finally, there is the inclusion and emotional tax that women pay to feel included. This can be financial or cognitive, and involves everything from a woman's clothes to her accent that she may modify to feel like she is being taken seriously. All these barriers need to be addressed, and mentoring programmes can aid in this.

But what else is needed to help the imbalance of women at work, particularly in senior leadership positions? Sue suggests that it is education on a variety of levels. Firstly, women must educate themselves about themselves! What do they want out of their careers and how can they get there? Understanding yourself and your own challenges as a woman in the workplace is the first step. Then, who do you educate others on what it is like to be a woman at work? There are a number of ways, including simply reaching out, talking to people, and sharing knowledge, experiences, and insight. It doesn't have to be formal, but this is a type of mentorship in itself! And finally, there is external education. This can involve looking at the sort of networks that are out there and getting involved! Especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, we all need to be learning new skills and sharing them with each other, and this is a great way to do just that.

Being aware of yourself and the barriers to success is all well and good, but there are issues such as impostor syndrome, that was previously discussed, that may present a barrier to this. So, how can mentors raise awareness of triggers such as this in their mentees? Meena suggests that it's all down to forming a personal relationship between mentor and mentee. This way, the mentor will know if their mentee is having an off day, and what should raise alarm bells. What might suggest that they are suffering from Impostor Syndrome? What might have triggered this for them? However, it's also for mentees to know that their mentor will not hold all the answers straight away! In fact, a good mentor will encourage their mentees to think for themselves and come up with their own solutions. It is up to them to run their business or forge their career, after all.

But aside from the mentors themselves, what responsibility do others have in promoting female equality and representation in the workplace? David suggests that it is down to the people who do have that representation in the workplace, such as men, to champion women, open doors for them, and give them a platform. And for women themselves, there are so many

platforms out there for women in the workplace, it's important to get involved in them and bring them together.

Previously, we spoke about women in C-level positions and above, but what about advancing female leadership at middle management level? Beenish put forward that there are two issues here. Firstly, women who want to get into management but are facing barriers, and secondly, those who are in middle management positions but are stuck and not advancing beyond them. There are then two things that can be done about this, sponsorship and culture. Is there anyone championing them behind closed doors? If not, there should be, as this can make a big difference. In terms of culture, this is also important. Are there any further development opportunities for women? Is an effort being made to remove biases? What about continued education to help women learn more skills and progress their careers? It's also important that any education programmes are focussed on the individual woman's goals and what they want to achieve. There is no one size fits all approach when it comes to advancing female leadership.

Leah then invited the speakers to offer one piece of advice for women in business today. Louise said that women should not be afraid to say yes to things such as networking or a mentoring scheme to support their own learning. And, she urged women to share their story once they have found what works for them, as this will help with the lack of role models, too. Meena then pointed out that it all comes back to diversity of thought, too. If everyone at the top is the same, then diversity of thought doesn't exist, so we all have a responsibility to champion women in the workplace.

The final part of the panel asked the speakers to talk about what true diversity and inclusion in the workplace looks like in 2020. Sue offered that it's like being invited to the party and being able to eat your own food. So often, organisations have diversity, so they're inviting people to the party, but they are not focused on their individual needs. This is what we need to focus on in the coming years, to ensure that women in the workplace are supported to be who they are and advance their careers to reach their full potential.

Key findings:
- There are still many barriers to female success in the workplace. Mentoring can help equip women with the skills and knowledge they need to overcome these. These barriers include things such as the limitations to flexible working, the gender pay gap, and the lack of sponsorship available for women
- Male/ female mentoring has many benefits for both parties, such as learning skills like challenging people for the women, and understanding more about what it is like to be a woman in the workplace for the men

- It's important for everyone who does have a platform at work, especially men, to think about those women that they can 'push forward,' champion, and act as a sponsor for in the workplace
- Women shouldn't be afraid to find what works for them, and then share their experiences, to help contribute to the lack of role models in the workplace
- Currently, organisations have diversity, but they are not focusing on individual needs, which must be a focus in the future

Millennials and Gen Z

This session was hosted by Sonya Barlow, the founder of Like Minded Females. Did you know that 50% of the workforce will be a millennial by the end of 2020? So, it's clear that their needs and wants need to be taken seriously in the workplace. Sonya decided to start Like Minded Females out of a sense of frustration. Working in the tech industry, she lacked a sense of community and connecting with those who liked the same, 'millennial' things as her. LMF is a place for women to come together and talk about life, careers, and progression with those who are like-minded! They're a global non-profit organisation with over 30,000 followers worldwide. Their mission is to enable, empower, and educate women in marginalised groups into business entrepreneurship.

It's Gen Z and Millenials who are going into the workplace lacking confidence. They feel like they don't know how to progress, make change and create impact. However, when you Google the word Millennials, some negative stereotypes come up, which you can see below:

It's clear that there is a stigma attached to the conversation around millennials. For example, many millennials have argued for flexible working and working from home, but companies were resistant to implementing it. Then, when Covid hit, everyone immediately switched to working from home, showing the millennial's concerns were valid and should have been taken more seriously.

So, what do millennials and Gen Z actually want in the workplace? There are several myths about millennials in the workplace outlined below, along with what millennials can do to combat these myths. This should help organisations understand this generation more clearly.

After all, there are 'problems' with every generation. We just need to know how to deal with them to get a positive outcome!

Myths

@LMFnetwork @sonyabarlowuk

"THEY'RE ENTITLED."

We learn faster than baby boomers and want to progress in the same pace

What can we millennials do?
Discuss key decisions and ask senior colleagues to look over your work as most people get flattered when asked for advice.

"THEY WANT A TROPHY FOR SHOWING UP."

We are just accustomed to fast and frequent feedback

What can we millennials do?
"I'd love to meet with you each week to discuss my performance, so I can make sure I'm meeting your expectations."

"THEY'RE SIDETRACKED BY TECHNOLOGY."

We are the first digital natives and so tech helps us to learn faster, do our job better

What we can millennials do?
"I just read a great article BBC tweeted about one of our competitors."

"THEY'RE JOB HOPPERS."

We work hard, learn faster and want to get promoted - Moving is the only way to do that

What can we millennials do?
Discuss career progression more openly with employers a and recruiters. Focus on why the move makes sense given your career goals versus slamming your current employer.

What particularly sticks out about millennials is the fact that they are the first generation of 'digital natives' who were born into the world of tech. Instead of seeing this as a negative, employers should be working to ensure that they can utilise these skills and thrive, to the benefit of millennials and the organisations that they work for. It's all about being more open minded about the skills millennials bring to the table that perhaps previous generations can't. For example, many businesses are now thriving or starting on technology, especially because of Covid, and millennials can be very useful in this area.

So, what do they want and what do they currently have that employers can utilise?

Did you know that around 47% of millennials have a side hustle or more than one income stream? They clearly have strong entrepreneurial skills that companies should capitalise on by placing millennials in the best roles to be more productive in this sense. Millennials also want work life balance. Work isn't seen as their main and only priority, and their mental health is important to them. They aren't afraid to leave a workplace that isn't offering them what they want or need, so workplaces must learn to adapt and be open to new ways of working and thinking. Overall, they're looking for opportunities, especially those that align with their 'hustle' spirit. They have all the skills they need to be able to multitask, be connected and entrepreneurial, which are all highly important skills to have in the workplace.

But how can employers win them over? It's true that millennials are the most likely to switch jobs. To retain millennial employees, organisations need to make their jobs worthwhile and offer perks that they are actually looking for, such as career progression and mentoring. Furthermore, 6 in 10 millennials are open to new opportunities at any given time. So, employers need to adapt to this new culture. Instead of missing out on great talent, they could consider contractual or part time roles, which is also cheaper for companies too! And, millennials want to be healthy and have a purposeful life, so it's important to make an organisation meaningful and fulfilling to work for. This includes being fully behind initiatives that support sustainability, inclusivity, and diversity, as these are all things that millennials are looking for. The below slides include plenty of strategies for working with millennials and attracting them to organisations:

@LMFnetwork @sonyabarlowuk

How to win with Millennials (at work)

STRATEGIES

MILLENNIALS ARE THE MOST LIKELY GENERATION TO SWITCH JOBS

- Make jobs feel more worthwhile
- Offer perks which aren't just free gadgets and sleeping pods
- Opportunity for advancement, professional development, and mentoring go a long way towards employee satisfaction

SIX IN 10 MILLENNIALS ARE OPEN TO NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES

With the majority now passive candidates/looking for their next move
- Employers need to understand and adapt to this culture rather than miss out on great talent
- Consider contractual roles and part time work opportunities

MILLENNIALS ARE SIDE TRACKERS AND THE LEAST ENGAGED

"Millennials want to be healthy, but they also want a purposeful life"
- Active community and social ties, and financial stability
- Make your company meaningful and fulfilling to work for

MAKE A DEAL

Millennials ultimately want to know what's in it for them and have power in making key decisions
- Stay transparent, honest
- Provide them with the tools to choose their next option

GET SOCIAL

Over 90% of the UK population are online, with majority now on Instagram, Twitter and Linkedin
- Make content relevant, relate-able and educational
- Millennials are keen to progress

MULTI CHANNEL COMMUNCATION

Compared to Gen X. millennials surf through multi sources
- Create consistent and personalised messaging

Ultimately, millennials are looking for flexibility, progression, fulfilment and meaning in their workplaces. And, if employers can offer this, there are plenty of benefits for them, including a 17% increase in profits and a 23% increase in productivity when diversifying their teams. But, this isn't just about age, but gender and ethnicity too! So, it's clear that this is a conversation that we need to have if we want to meet the needs of half of the workforce, many of whom may be BAME or LGBTQ+ people, too. Workplaces need to adapt to the changing culture, working lifestyle and flexibility of millennials and Gen Z if they want to be truly inclusive.

Key findings

- 50% of the workplace will be a millennial by the end of 2020, so it is vital that their needs are taken into consideration in the workplace
- There is a stigma attached to the conversation around millennials, mainly that they are lazy and entitled. In reality, there are 'problems' with every generation. We just need to learn how to understand and overcome these
- Millennials are the first generation of 'digital natives' who have grown up around technology. This, and the unique skills it brings, should be embraced by employers
- Millennials have a strong entrepreneurial spirit. They want a good work-life balance, and they're unafraid to leave workplaces that aren't offering them what they need and are the most likely group to switch jobs
- To retain millennial employees, organisations need to offer perks that they are actually interested in such as flexibility, progression, fulfilment, and meaning in their workplaces
- If employers can offer this, there are plenty of benefits such as a 17% increase in profits and a 23% increase in productivity when diversifying their teams

Summing Up The Women's Programme

In this session we heard from a variety of unique perspectives about women in the workplace and how we can support them as well as becoming more diverse and inclusive. Jane looked at menopause and how we should all increase our understanding of it to support women at work. Ian discussed Impostor syndrome and how we can overcome it by changing the way that we think about and perceive situations. The panel discussed women's mentoring and the huge benefits this can have for women and their employers. And finally, Sonya introduced us to what employers can do to accommodate millennials in the workplace, given that they will soon make up half of the workforce!

Overall, it is clear that women in the workplace need support from employers and colleagues in order to have the best experience at work to the benefit of themselves and their organisations. Working together was a strong theme throughout the conference, and this session just goes to highlight it further. If we all work together to champion each other and diversity and inclusion at work, we can progress as individuals and organisations towards a better, future.

THIS IS US CONFERENCE 2020: CONCLUSION

As a whole, this virtual conference explored some very important topics and issues that are prevalent in the workplace today. These issues are not only affecting women, BAME, and LGBTQ+ people, but everyone in the workplace as a whole. While every speaker had something different and insightful to share, there were some themes that kept appearing again and again. Most noticeable perhaps, was the fact that it is not the responsibility of one sole spokesperson to act as a champion for diversity and inclusion in an organisation. Instead, we must all work together to bring about change. This includes those with diverse characteristics, those who do not have diverse characteristics who can act as allies and champions, and the organisation itself. If we all allow ourselves to be vulnerable and open up about the challenges we face, the workplace will be a far more open and accepting place to be. Then, we can build upon this accepting culture to forge true diversity and inclusion in the workplace, for everyone, no matter who they may be.

Hopefully, learning about the findings of the conferences has reiterated the vital importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace for you and your organisation. It must be stressed that it shouldn't be an afterthought, and organisations should weave the diversity and inclusion conversation into the fabric of their day-to-day operations. If you would like to learn more about creating a tailored diversity and inclusion programme for your next event, to share the importance of this topic with your wider workforce, please get in touch with Events Together, who would be delighted to help bring your event to life and give it a great purpose! You can reach them on create@events-together.co.uk and on their website, events-together.co.uk
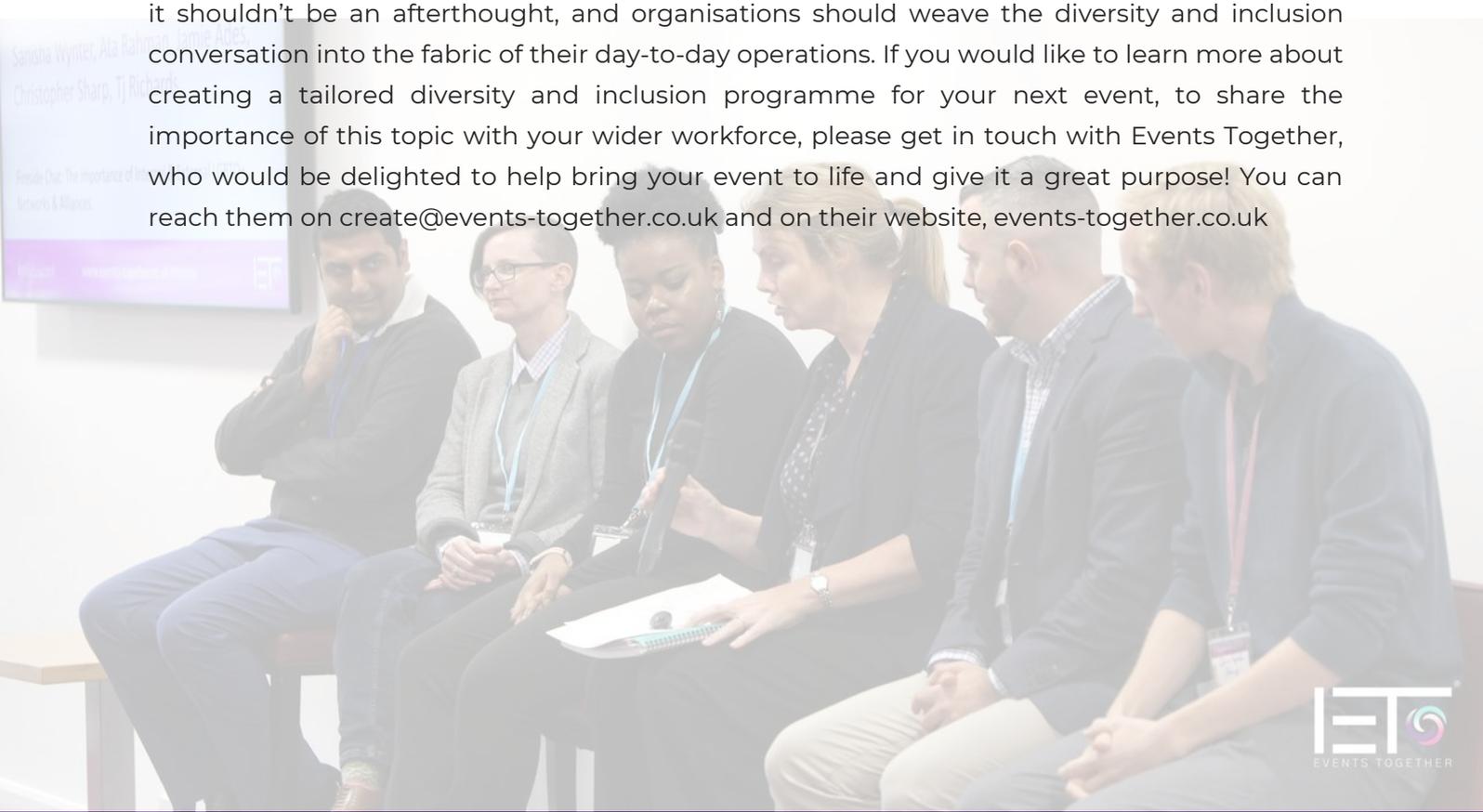
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