



A regulator views diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI) as a pillar of trust

In any organization, a focus on diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI) is the right thing to do and makes business sense. Successful efforts can boost performance—and trust—among staff, the public, and other stakeholders.

At one regulator, all of that was at the forefront.

A Deloitte team was already working at an organizational level to develop and execute a DEI strategy with senior leadership. Now, the board needed to understand the basics of DEI, what it means in the context of trust, and how to turn the principles into action when it comes to governance.

This engagement had three goals:

- Provide training and awareness
- Help the board envision what success looks like around DEI
- Start the discussion to moving the DEI agenda forward at the board level

What can build or erode trust?

Along with DEI, we touched on three other drivers of trust: culture and purpose, workforce experience, and strategic governance.

Working with the board, we described how some of our own DEI experiences tied to trust and its four dimensions—physical, emotional, digital, and financial. Through our experiences, we were able to help the board find tangible ways to unlock the power of a trust perspective to their DEI discussion.

We also worked with the board to apply the trust lens to future strategic decisions. For instance, when building or renovating the office of the future (physical), is the space accessible and inclusive? In the age of remote working (digital), am I safe-guarding my employees' privacy and trust they are being productive at home? Around pay (financial), is compensation equitable? With performance evaluations (emotional), is there bias in the process?

In these and other DEI areas, the deliberations, actions, and results can either build or erode trust.

Deloitte also had the directors walk through what their responses would be to two major dilemmas.

- What would they do if the board itself was sued for not being diverse enough?
 - *We highlighted case studies that showed how different organizations handled similar situations.*
- Does the board feel prepared to report on key DEI metrics and what is their responsibility to do so in this respect?

- *This is a genuine and imminent question, as legislation set to pass later in 2021 will require provincial agencies (along with municipalities and incorporated firms) to provide such reporting.*

This exercise helped to get the board thinking about these critical challenges and tied seamlessly to the work our consulting team was performing on the ground with the regulator's senior leadership team.

Frameworks for decisions

The session kickstarted an important governance discussion on the role and their objective as a board. To aid them going forward, we provided them with an assortment of tools: Deloitte insights on [six signature traits of inclusive leadership](#), with specific guidance directed to boards as well as an inclusive governance starter list.

This gave the board a way to move the DEI agenda forward, strengthen their oversight role, and set the tone from the top. We broke it down into five areas the board needs to consider: strategy, talent, governance, integrity, and performance.

The work we did with this board is a very repeatable model and can include a deep dive on any of the 85 drivers of trust across our framework (DEI being just one of those drivers). Embedding a robust conversation about DEI in trust unlocked a much broader discussion on the organization's strategy and decision making process. ◉

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