



Brandon Hall Group™



DEI as a Business Imperative

Driving Success in the Age of Innovation

STRATEGY BRIEF 2024

DEI as a Business Imperative: Driving Success in the Age of Innovation was a webinar sponsored by EI Powered by MPS and hosted by Brandon Hall Group™. The session featured three strong voices including Kelly Lake, Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer with EI Powered by MPS, Hanif Fazal, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of the Center for Equity and Inclusion, and Merlin Pope, President of Pope Consulting. The webinar was hosted by Matt Pittman, Principal Analyst with Brandon Hall Group™. The panelists shared their insights on the current state of DEI, overcoming resistance, implementing the right approach, and the role of DEI in learning strategy.

Current State

As the global workforce becomes increasingly diverse, with Gen Z projected to represent nearly 40% of workers in the coming years, creating an inclusive culture where all employees feel supported is critical for business success. Many organizations are investing heavily in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, with spending projected to reach \$15 billion by 2026.

However, to maximize the business impact of these efforts, organizations must take a strategic, comprehensive approach that goes beyond one-time training to embed DEI into the company culture.

Poll results from a recent webinar with Brandon Hall Group™ and EI Powered by MPS show that organizations are focusing more efforts on increasing the use of data analytics to understand the impact of a healthy DEI culture on business outcomes (35%) and building targeted development for underrepresented groups (31%).

These results line up with findings from Brandon Hall Group's *HCM Outlook 2024 Study*

Level of Investment Planned in 2024 (Moderate and Heavy Investment)

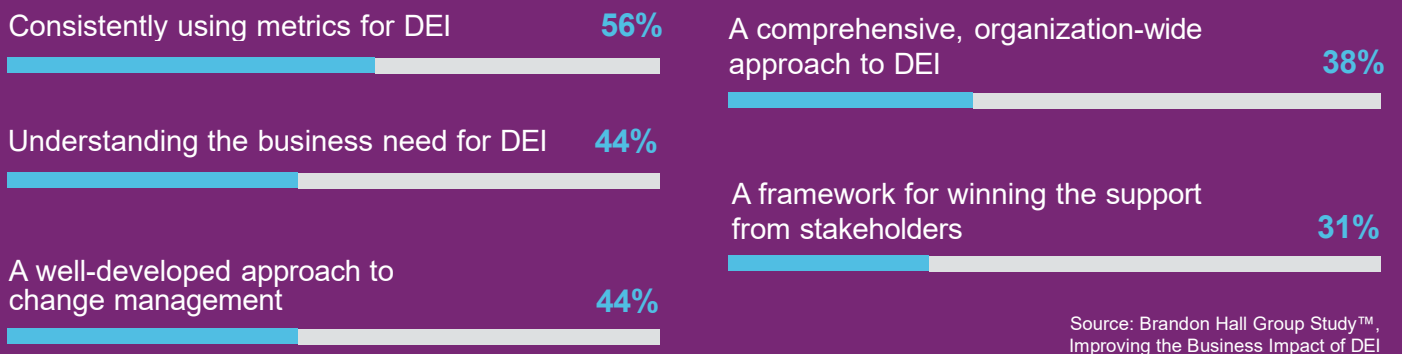


Source: Brandon Hall Group™ Study, HCM Outlook 2024

Complications

Implementing effective DEI strategies can be challenging for several reasons. DEI awareness and priorities vary widely based on individual experiences, background, and geographic location. A one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient. Many leaders lack a personalized, business-relevant understanding of DEI and view it as a standalone tool rather than an ongoing process. There is often a lack of accountability and clear definitions around DEI responsibilities for leaders and managers. Relying solely on data analytics to measure DEI impact has limitations, as key demographic data may be unavailable in certain regions.

High Need for Improvement in DEI Approaches



Source: Brandon Hall Group Study™, Improving the Business Impact of DEI

Implications

Without a strategic, tailored approach to DEI, organizations risk:

- ◆ Failing to create an environment where all employees feel included and able to bring their full selves to work, impacting engagement and retention.
- ◆ Missing out on the business benefits of diversity, which include increased innovation, better decision-making, and stronger financial performance.
- ◆ Having siloed, ineffective DEI initiatives that fail to create long-term organizational change.

The question is then, how can organizations improve the business impact of DEI by creating a culture of inclusion and equity?

Brandon Hall Group™ POV

1

DEI is an Ongoing Process

The panelists in the webinar emphasized the necessity of continuous learning in the realm of DEI. Kelly Lake suggested that DEI shouldn't be seen as a one-time initiative but an ongoing process requiring constant adaptation and learning. "DEI awareness exists on a spectrum and is largely informed by our personal experiences and background," Merlin Pope added, highlighting the need for ongoing learning to cater to this spectrum of awareness.

Hanif Fazal emphasized the role of leaders in driving DEI initiatives and the need for them to understand DEI as an ongoing process. "Leaders, really I think, underestimate how nervous people are to make mistakes, to speak their truth, even responsibly," he said. "And thinking about what does it mean to create learning spaces." He also noted that leaders must build the capacity to articulate their commitment to DEI and operationalize it within their role.

EI Powered by MPS is particularly skilled at helping organizations level up their ability to create effective, personalized and meaningful learning initiatives. Kelly Lake also shared, "There are ways to invoke engagement for the learner, so they're more actively involved with what they're doing. How are we demonstrating that? How are we demonstrating cognitive retention with different groups?"

Some of the approaches mentioned:

- ◆ Learning built into the flow of work, such as realistic scenario-based exercises that can be completed in just a few minutes.
- ◆ Gamification of short impactful lessons that enable learners to be in a safe environment, demonstrating different techniques, and then being able to work more strategically for the outcomes that are coming.
- ◆ Interactive videos, even AI-based videos, or being able to see realistic immediate responses to learning in the need of the specific moment.
- ◆ Microlearning is an area to look at. Ensuring that content is focused and short helps maximize retention.
- ◆ Social learning can be an effective medium. Learners are more likely to engage with content that comes recommended by a co-worker they know and trust than one that is assigned to them in some faceless way.

2

Tailored, Localized DEI Strategies are Crucial for Global Organizations

When it comes to implementing DEI strategies in global organizations, the panelists agreed on the importance of a tailored, localized approach. Hanif Fazal highlighted that even within a country like the United States, DEI issues can vary significantly based on the region. He advocated for a core set of DEI principles that are universally applicable, but also allow for customization based on the specific needs of each location.

Kelly Lake said one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work for DEI, and it's essential to have a plan that's "localized from a cultural perspective." She also mentioned the importance of ensuring the plan evolves with business changes, reviewing it regularly, and making it a "living document."

Merlin Pope added that creating localized strategies increases accountability and ownership.

3

Leveraging Data Analytics is Crucial When Measuring the Impact of DEI

The panelists discussed the growing role of data analytics in understanding and measuring the impact of DEI on business outcomes. Kelly Lake brought up the growing global spend on DEI initiatives and stressed the importance of data in validating these efforts. She mentioned several AI tools that are now available to measure and track DEI initiatives and help gather crucial data for total engagement.

However, Hanif Fazal cautioned against solely relying on data, especially in regions where certain demographic information can't be gathered for various reasons. He pointed out the need to supplement data with other methods such as focus groups to capture diverse experiences. "It's really important for organizations to begin to think about DEI as an ongoing process — one that continues to help organizations iterate and evolve," he said

Key Takeaways

To maximize the business benefits of DEI, the panelists recommend that organizations consider taking the following actions:

- 1** Develop localized DEI strategies aligned with a universal set of principles. Allow regional customization based on differing cultural norms and priorities.
- 2** Position DEI as an ongoing learning process, not a one-time event. Create psychologically safe spaces for open dialogue.
- 3** Build the capacity of leaders and middle managers to integrate DEI into their roles. Provide personalized training journeys and establish clear accountability frameworks.
- 4** Use a balance of data analytics and qualitative feedback (e.g., focus groups) to holistically understand and measure DEI impact over time.
- 5** Implement targeted development programs for underrepresented employee groups based on their unique challenges and needs.
- 6** Communicate a compelling vision for DEI that resonates with stakeholders and connects to business priorities so that it regularly reinforces the “why.”
- 7** Model inclusive leadership behaviors from the top and recognize managers and employees who exemplify DEI values.

By taking a comprehensive, strategic approach to DEI focused on culture change, continuous learning, and leadership accountability, organizations can create inclusive environments that engage all employees and drive sustainable business success. The key is viewing DEI not as a standalone initiative, but as an essential lens applied to every aspect of the employee experience.

To learn more, you can view a recording of the session here:

[DEI as a Business Imperative: Driving Success in the Age of Innovation](#)

To explore the many ways EI Powered by MPS can support your organization’s DEI strategy, be sure to reach out to them here:

www.eidesign.net/contact-us

Authors and Contributors



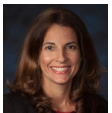
Matt Pittman (matt.pittman@brandonhall.com) co-wrote this report. Matt brings nearly 30 years of experience developing people and teams in a variety of settings and organizations. As an HR Practitioner, he has sat in nearly every HR seat. A significant part of those roles involved building out functions in organizations and driving large-scale change efforts. As a Principal Analyst at Brandon Hall Group™, Matt leverages this in-depth experience and expertise to provide clients and providers with breakthrough insights and ideas to drive their business forward.



Michael Rochelle (michael.rochelle@brandonhall.com) contributed to this report. He is Chief Strategy Officer and Principal Analyst at Brandon Hall Group™. Michael leads a wide range of advisory support and strategic engagements for Fortune 1000 and small- to medium-sized organizations as well as leading and emerging solution providers across the HCM industry. Michael has more than 30 years' experience in HR, IT, sales, marketing, business development, and strategic and financial planning in Fortune 500 and venture-backed start-up organizations.



Mike Cooke (mike.cooke@brandonhall.com) is CEO and Principal Analyst at Brandon Hall Group™. Mike has more than 20 years' experience in human capital management and the research, software and technology industries. Before running Brandon Hall Group™, Mike was co-founder of AC Growth, a research and consulting firm, and VP and General Manager of Field Operations at Bersin & Associates, a global analyst and consulting services firm in all areas of HCM.



Rachel Cooke (rachel.cooke@brandonhall.com) the Chief Operating Officer and Principal Analyst at Brandon Hall Group™, a leading research and advisory firm in Human Capital Management (HCM). With 20 years of experience in the HCM research industry, Rachel plays a pivotal role in driving the company's business operations. As the COO, Rachel oversees client and member advisory services, design strategies, annual awards programs, conferences, and project management functions.



Kelly Lake is the Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer at EI. As a respected thought leader in the learning and performance industry, she brings 30 years of global experience in learning and performance strategy, Workforce Enablement, Learning and Performance Ecosystems, global performance transformation, immersive learning, and performance innovation. She has a successful track record of creating learning strategies and maximizing ROI for Fortune 1000 companies resulting in performance and business optimization to enhance client and organizational business success.



Hanif Fazal brings an extensive track record spanning two decades in guiding equity and inclusion processes within corporate, governmental, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors. In his capacity as Co-Founder and Managing Partner of the Center for Equity and Inclusion, Hanif has been instrumental in driving transformative change. He has led organizations nationwide in the integration of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion principles into their organizational values, culture, and operational frameworks.



Merlin Pope III is the President of Pope Consulting. His upbringing was steeped in discussions around diversity and inclusion, thanks to his parents, Merlin Jr. and Patricia, trailblazers in the DEI realm. These early conversations laid the foundation that would later guide his career path. Merlin spent 15 years gaining invaluable insights in corporate America, equipping him with the perspective and experience necessary to make a meaningful impact in the field. Merlin now collaborates closely with clients to elevate their organizational cultures through DEI strategies that not only address immediate needs but also pave the way for long-term, sustainable inclusion across the organization.

About EI Powered by MPS

EI Powered by MPS is an emotionally intelligent learning experience design company that partners with customers in their Digital Transformation journey. They have over three decades of experience in designing Learning and Performance Support solutions that drive performance gain and maximize training ROI and ROE.



They deliver high-impact learning solutions that:

- 1 Drive deeper and more meaningful learner engagement.
- 2 Enable effective upskilling and improve employee performance.
- 3 Create a high ROI for the business and organization.

From strategy to development to delivery to measurement, they work with their customers to ensure training investments deliver business results.



<https://eidesign.net>

sales@eidesign.net

About Brandon Hall Group™

With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 30 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group™ is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

Professional Certifications

Self-paced certification programs. Virtual group sessions for companies. In-person conferences and summits.

Excellence Awards

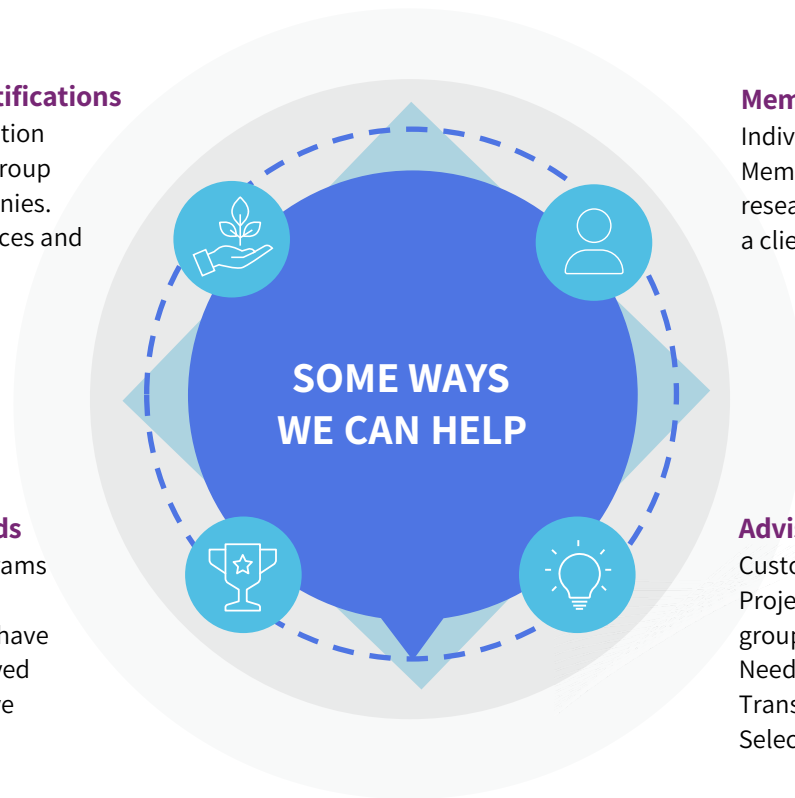
Three annual programs recognize the best organizations that have successfully deployed programs to achieve

Membership

Individual and Enterprise Membership Options: Includes research assets, advisory support, a client success plan and more.

Advisory Offerings

Custom Research Projects, including surveys, focus group interviews and Organization Needs Assessment for Transformation, Technology Selection and Strategy.



ENTERPRISE EXCELLENCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Recognizes the best HCM programs that transform their organization and achieves breakthrough results. This designation is a step above the HCM Excellence Awards® which focuses on one program within a company. Enterprise Excellence is a hybrid of award winners who are also members.

SMARTCHOICE® PREFERRED PROVIDER PROGRAM

Uniquely places HCM service and technology companies at the top of organizations' consideration list of vendors. It adds an unmatched level of credibility based on BHG's thirty-plus years of experience in evaluating and selecting the best solution providers for leading organizations around the world.

AGENCY! BY BRANDON HALL GROUP™

Provides comprehensive marketing solutions for human capital management solution providers. We offer strategic services to establish a strong foundation for your marketing efforts.