

Senior Leadership Commitment

»» For diversity staff, diversity council members, employee-resource-group leaders and HR/communications staff

Visible Support

Top leadership's consistently making a very personal and visible statement of support for diversity and inclusion is paramount in the success of diversity-management initiatives in an organization. Without clear and consistent messaging from the CEO and senior leadership, staff at all levels will consider diversity and inclusion a nice, soft addition instead of an imperative for future success.

For example, [Christi Shaw](#), U.S. Country Head and President of [Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation](#), No. 1 on the Top 50, stated this in a DiversityInc interview:

"Good or bad, I have a reputation as being someone who is always willing to challenge the status quo and I expect others to do so too ... From the first day I joined Novartis, when recruiting for open positions, I would say to hiring managers, 'Show me your diverse slate.' And I would ask, 'Who else have you considered?'"

That messaging starts with the corporate website. A clear and prominent quote from the CEO, directly linking diversity and inclusion to business goals, is very important. It's also necessary for both the CEO and senior leaders to frequently integrate diversity messaging into regular business communications, including the relevance of [employee resource groups](#) and of [mentoring and sponsorship](#). Other best practices for CEO/leadership commitment used by almost all of the DiversityInc Top 50 companies include:

- **Meeting frequently with employee resource groups:** The best practice for this is small-group meetings with employee-resource-group leaders so that frank discussions of impediments to retention and talent development can occur, as well as giving employee-resource-group leaders the opportunity to offer innovative solutions for marketplace and workplace growth. The exposure of employee-resource-group leaders to senior management has bidirectional impact: The employee-resource-group leaders gain practice in dealing with top executives and the senior leaders often recognize talent they can nurture. Ninety-two percent of the CEOs and senior leaders at DiversityInc Top 50 companies have regular meetings with resource-group leaders, more than double the percentage in 2005. And all of the CEOs in the Top 10 meet regularly with resource-group leaders.
- **Joining the board of a multicultural nonprofit:** We see an increasing percentage of both CEOs and senior executives taking on leadership roles at multicultural nonprofits, especially those in which they are not personally a member of the targeted demographic. The learning experience for the corporate executive is dramatic and the relationship-building with the nonprofit and the community often leads to increased [recruitment](#), [retention](#) and customer relations.

?? Guided Questions for Staff

»» How diversity-supportive is your website?

Is your CEO's message on the homepage? Are there images/videos of different people, including people with disabilities and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people? Is the diversity section easy to find and regularly updated?

»» If your employee resource groups meet with the CEO and senior leadership, what kind of preparation do group leaders receive from diversity-and-inclusion staff?

Do you present the group's strategic goals and milestones for success? Who funds your groups and how involved are the senior leaders?

»» How do the rank-and-file employees perceive your CEO's and senior leadership's commitment to diversity and inclusion?

What could be done to bolster the sense that diversity helps the business?