

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) in Recruitment and Retention of Public Relations Talent from Under-Represented Groups: A Study with the Arthur W. Page Society Members

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Abstract

Based on an online survey (n=82) and 17 in-depth interviews, the authors examined how the Arthur W. Page Society members define diversity and inclusion, their best diversity and inclusion management practices, in particular, the practices related to recruitment and retention of public relations talent from under-represented groups, how they evaluate their D&I initiatives, and what makes those best practices work. Implications for leadership and industrial practices were generated. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research were also discussed.

*Keywords:* diversity and inclusion, recruitment and retention of top talent, public relations, the Arthur W. Page Society

### **Introduction**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 36.5% of the U.S. population by 2020 will be comprised of Hispanics, African Americans, Asians and Native Americans (Hayes, 2013). Hispanics, African Americans, foreign-born individuals and people with disabilities also make up the four fastest growing groups in the U.S. workforce (Madera, 2013; Wyatt-Nichol & Antwi-Boasiako, 2012). To address the important issue of diversity and inclusion (D&I), Affirmative Action (AA) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs are generally in place in diverse organizations (Cox 2011; Jayne & Dipboye, 2004; Madera, 2013). Yet, scholars and professionals have called for more studies to examine real progress in cultivating a culture or climate of D&I for recruitment and retention of talent from under-represented groups (McKay & Avery, 2005). Moreover, diversity needs to be examined in a broader sense and beyond gender, race and ethnicity (Hazleton & Sha, 2012; Sha & Ford, 2007). More studies are needed to examine how organizations define D&I in recruitment and retention of talent, what diversity and inclusion goals they have set and how the goals and related activities or practices fit into the visions/missions of the organizations, what practices organizations implement to enhance D&I, and what makes best practices work.

This study engages some of these questions, looking at members of the Arthur W. Page Society, the authors conducted a quantitative survey with participating member's public relations leader, Chief Communication Officer (CCO) or Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), if it has one. Follow-up qualitative in-depth interviews were also conducted with selected Page members who have been effectively implementing their "best practices" activities/actions for D&I (i.e., their PR leaders, CCOs or CDOs).

### **Literature Review**

#### *Defining Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce*

The workforce in the 21st century is characterized by an increasing number of employees of women, minorities, different ethnic backgrounds and lifestyles (Langdon, McMenamin, & Krolak, 2002; Roberson, 2006). The majority of Fortune 1000 companies have implemented their workplace diversity initiatives and realized to what extent they can manage the diverse workforce effectively and efficiently is closely related to business outcomes that they can achieve (Daniels, 2001; Harvey, 1999; Kuczynski, 1999). Despite the different approaches organizations adopt to diversity management, many organizations focus on inclusion in their diversity programs, which is intended to remove barriers, motivate all employees to develop and use a full range of skills and competencies, encourage employee participation, boost employee morale, and facilitate community building within organizations (Mehta, 2000; Roberson, 2006; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000).

#### *Organizational Vision: Recruitment and Retention of Talent from Under-Represented Groups*

To ensure recruitment and retention of talent from under-represented groups, an organization must link D&I to its strategic plan (Brown, 2014; Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Poster, 2008; Wyatt-Nichol & Antwi-Boasiako, 2012). Many organizations have incorporated those initiatives into its long-term vision through (a) establishing recruitment and retention goals, (b) tracking workplace characteristics, (c) linking diversity to goals and objectives of its strategic plan (the eradication of discrimination, promotion of diversity at all levels, and opportunities for participation), (d) developing action plans, and (e) integrating diversity in leadership training programs (Wyatt-Nichol & Antwi-Boasiako, 2012, p. 754). It is pivotal for organizations to maintain an organizational environment or climate characterized by responsiveness to diverse voices of employees and inclusiveness of individual differences

(Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Poster, 2008). Institutionalizing D&I in recruitment and retention helps organizations gain competitive advantage (Lobel, 1999).

*Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives and Programs: Best Practices*

Given an increasing number of Hispanics, Blacks, foreign-born individuals, people with disabilities, and other under-represented groups in the U.S. workforce, organizations have adopted numerous best practices for D&I management (Madera, 2013). Diversity management programs mainly focus on recruiting and developing/retaining diverse employees (McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2008, 2009). Based on previous literature (Bielby, Krysan, & Herring, 2013, Dobbin, Kim & Kalev, 2011; Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012; Kulik & Roberson, 2008; McKay & Avery, 2005; Pendry, Driscoll, & Field, 2007; Richard, 2000; Soldan & Nankervis, 2014; Williams, Kilanski, & Muller, 2014; Wyatt-Nichol & Antwi-Boasiako, 2012), the key D&I management practices targeted at recruitment and retention included:

1. Affirmative Action (AA) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs in place, administered by leadership and focused on increasing diversity in all ranks of employment;
2. Using minority publications and websites for employee recruitment;
3. Other sources of recruitment include predominantly minority colleges and universities, regional or national meetings of minority professional organizations, and professional and popular media outlets that target to minority populations;
4. Using minority recruiters and recruitment materials that include diverse individuals;
5. Communicating the importance and value of diversity to all job applicants to cultivate a strong diversity climate among new hires;
6. Mentoring programs focused on developing women, ethnic minorities, and other under-represented employee groups;
7. Networking/affinity programs that connect employees who share a similar identity or cultural background, such as discussions and meetings to share information, and seek support and career advice;
8. Establishing a system (on-line, off-line, or both) that allows the management to assess employee knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA), and track employee development to ensure that job training has met development goals;
9. Educating and training employees regarding diversity; diversity training to implement and maintain a culture of D&I; examples include online modules, classroom-based training, videos, discussions, role-plays, simulations, and exercises; and training is necessary to raise awareness and develop their skills to work with diverse employees internally and diverse stakeholders externally;
10. Commitment from leadership to enforce diversity and inclusion policies; to provide supportive resources to increase the visibility of D&I initiatives in and outside of the organization, to include formal statements of diversity and inclusion in meetings, newsletters, and traditional and social media publications;
11. Dedicating a special council or committee to identify and remove barriers to diversity in both recruitment and retention;
12. Having a succession plan to ensure a qualified and diverse pool of executive candidates for the D&I office or committee;
13. Executive training for managers to administer a diversity program that minimizes discrimination in hiring and promotion;

14. Employee participation in diversity task forces and diversity boards to identify issues for both recruitment and retention and develop initiatives<sup>1</sup>.

*Evaluation of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives and Programs: What Works?*

D&I management is never an easy job. Even well-meaning and well-functioning organizations have had difficulties making it work (Soldan & Nankervis, 2014; McKay & Avery, 2005; Wyatt-Nichol & Antwi-Boasiako, 2012). Previous literature has suggested three important criteria for evaluation: (1) level of minority hiring rate, (2) retention, and (3) whether an organization remains an employer of choice for prospective job applicants (Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000; McKay & Avery, 2005; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). The success of diversity recruitment initiatives is based on the recruitment and retention of qualified minority applicants and the organization's reputation among students and young professionals on the job market (McKay & Avery, 2005).

Successful diversity and inclusion management programs should allow all employees to develop their full career potential by providing effective training and mentoring opportunities, social and professional support, continued education and advancement opportunities, and fair and supportive workplace policies that minimize any forms of discrimination and conflict (Cox, 2011; Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000; Jayne & Dipboye, 2004; Robinson & Dechant, 1997).

It is in light of studying the literature on D&I that the authors seek to engage the following:

*Research Questions*

Based on the above literature review, the authors propose the following research questions (RQs): RQ1: How do the Page Society members define diversity and inclusion within their units?

RQ2: What diversity and inclusion goals have the members set for their units?

RQ3: How do these goals and activities fit into the vision/mission of the wider organization?

RQ4: What actions are the Page Society members implementing to enhance D&I within their organizations, particularly in relationship to recruitment and retention of talent from under-represented groups?

RQ5: What resources are being dedicated to these activities?

RQ6: How are these activities being measured/evaluated for effectiveness?

RQ7: How effective have these activities been?

RQ8: What makes most effective activities work?

*Methods*

A quantitative survey is appropriate to document and benchmark the Page members' perceptions of D&I in relationship to recruitment and retention of under-represented public relations workforce in the U.S. (Dobbin et al., 2011). The survey focused on non-administrative staff/team members, which exclude individuals working as administrative assistants or other non-PR professional oriented positions. The goal of the survey was to understand diversity within the public relations/communications practitioners in the participant's organization/unit. The questionnaire included the following sections including (a) the explanations of key

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<sup>1</sup> The authors developed an organized list of D&I management practices (for recruitment, retention, or both) with representative examples selected from the literature.

terminologies (i.e., inclusiveness<sup>2</sup>, LGBTQ<sup>3</sup>, ethnic and racial minorities<sup>4</sup>, under-represented groups<sup>5</sup>), (b) demographics of unit & organization, especially the specific categories of “diversity and inclusion” activities/actions that members are currently regarding implementing, (c) measures of organizational diversity (definition of diversity in recruitment and retention of talent, importance of diversity in recruitment and retention of talent, diversity outcomes, diversity goals, tactics, initiatives, and strategies to achieve formal or informal diversity goals, and (d) measures of organizational inclusion. A qualitative method was also used for this study. In-depth interviews helped the research team to collect nuanced, detailed and descriptive data about the “best practices” activities/actions, understand how each member’s senior management team (e.g., CEOs, executive suite and business unit heads, the Board of Directors, etc.) integrates D&I for recruitment and retention of talent into their business strategy, how they evaluate the outcomes of their “best practices” activities/actions, and how they work to make those activities/actions most effective (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lindlof, 1991; Patton, 1990).

#### *Sampling and Data Collection*

The Arthur W. Page Society<sup>6</sup> members representing large U.S. corporations or major public relations agencies (approximately 400) were invited to participate in the survey launched after the Page Society’s spring conference. Data were collected between June and September 2015. The research team accomplished a final sample of 82 Page member organizations, achieving a response rate of approximately 20%. However, participants were given the option of skipping questions; therefore, some questions have fewer than 82 responses. One representative (public relations leader, CCO, or CDO) from each participating organization took part in an online survey. From this survey, qualitative interviews were conducted with organizations that reported being satisfied with their diversity and inclusion progress and initiatives in order to better understand their approach that reflects best practices and lessons for improving the status of D&I in the public relations industry. In total, the authors interviewed 17 selected members between August and November 2015. All participating members were recruited through a solicitation e-mail that explained the purpose of the research, the confidentiality measures that the study took, and the benefits and risks of their participation in the study. All interviews were recorded digitally and verbatim transcribed with the permission granted by the participants.

#### *Participant Profiles of Quantitative and Qualitative Research*

The 82 survey participating organizations consisted of 14 (17.7%) agencies or communications firms within a holding or parent company, and 7 (8.9%) independently-owned agencies or communications firms (not part of a holding company). , 1 construction company (1.3%), 7 finance/finance services (8.9%), 3 technology companies (3.8%), 9 manufacturing (durable goods and non-durable goods) companies (11.4%), 2 media, newspaper, publishing, broadcasting or related services (2.5%), 1 insurance company (1.3%), 1 telecommunications company (1.3%), 1 mining, oil or gas company (1.3%), 2 government organizations (2.5%), 6 health organizations (7.6%), 1 transportation company (1.3%), 1 utilities company (1.3%), 5

<sup>2</sup> “Inclusiveness is defined as an environment where all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization’s success.”

<sup>3</sup> “LGBTQ refers to individuals who consider themselves to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer.”

<sup>4</sup> “Ethnic and racial minorities refer to racial and ethnic minorities in the US (African American/Black, Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islanders, Native Alaskan, and Latino/Hispanic).”

<sup>5</sup> “Under-represented groups are defined by those demographics under-represented in each participating member organization as compared to the population of the communities where it operates.”

<sup>6</sup> The Arthur W. Page society has a total of 578 members (9% outside of the US; 10% retirees; 10% educators; duplicate companies)

wholesale/retail trade companies (6.3%), 18 others (22.8%), with 3 member organizations failing to report the genre of their main business. In the follow-up qualitative research, top public relations or communications leaders from 4 agencies within a holding or parent company, 1 independently-owned agency, and 12 US-based corporations participated in the in-depth interviews.

On average, there are 14,231 US-based employees in each member organization (SD = 52,869.45). The mean percentages of diverse groups on US communication non-administrative teams are as follows: males (29%), females (59%), US citizens (80%), non-US citizens (10%), Black/African Americans (5%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (6%), Native Americans/Alaskans/Hawaiians (.13%), White (68%), mixed race (3%), Latino (8%), non-Latino (62%), LGBTQ (4%), disabled .3%, over 55 years-old (8%), and veterans (2%). In FY14, 82.3% of the participating member organizations had searches for non-administrative employees. In total, 61 organizations (93.8%) had candidates from racial and/or ethnic minority groups in their candidate pool(s). Among them, 48 organizations (73.8%) hired a racial and/or ethnic minority for any of those positions in their unit.

A total of 80 organizations reported their satisfaction level with diversity: satisfied (n=11, 13.8%), somewhat satisfied (n=17, 21.3%), neutral/neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (n=8, 10.0%), somewhat dissatisfied (n=29, 36.3%), and dissatisfied (n=15, 18.8%). As for satisfaction with level of inclusivity, 77 organizations reported to be satisfied (n=30, 39.0%), somewhat satisfied (n= 24, 31.2%), neutral/neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (n=18, 23.4%), somewhat dissatisfied (n=4, 5.2%), and dissatisfied (n=1, 1.3%).

#### *Data Analysis*

Data from the online survey were analyzed by using SPSS. Each interview transcript was analyzed using the thematic analysis method (Boyatzis, 1998). The research team read the full verbatim transcripts and developed a coding sheet representing the themes and patterns that emerged from the collected data. Each theme and pattern and its representative quotes were further analyzed to answer the research questions.

### **Results**

#### *Definitions of Diversity and Inclusion*

Participating organizations do define diversity from a broad perspective: race (n=74, 9.2%), ethnicity (n=72, 87.8%), gender (n=72, 87.8%), disability (n=57, 69.5%), age (n=55, 67.1%), sexual orientation (n=52; 63.4%), veteran status (n=43, 52.4%), language (n=29, 35.4%) and religion (n=26, 31.7%), among others<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, the organizations regarded those aspects of diversity as important to them in recruiting and retaining talent: gender (n=64, 90.1%), race (n=63, 90%), ethnicity (n=58, 84.1%), language (n=55, 79.7%), age (n=54, 79.4%), veteran status (n=50, 73.5%), disability (n=43, 63.2%), sexual orientation (n=43, 63.2%), and religion (n=20, 29.4%). Participants also reported the following important<sup>8</sup> outcomes of D&I practices to their business: Recruit the best talent at all levels (n=79, 100.0%); retain the best talent at all levels (n=79, 100.0%); increase diversity of thought and decision-making in the organization (n=79, 100.0%); enhance employee relations (n=79, 100.0%); enhance employee development (n=78, 98.7%); address shifting demographics (n=77, 98.7%); demonstrate appreciation for culture and value differences (n=76, 97.4%); improve the corporate environment (n=76, 97.4%);

<sup>7</sup> Other definitions that participants shared include viewpoints, values, personalities, experiences, skill levels, perspectives, affinities, family statuses, geographical locations, socio/economic backgrounds, education and functional expertise, and different thinking.

<sup>8</sup> Ranging from “slightly important” to “very important”.

increased organizational competitiveness (n=74, 96.1%); act as an element of differentiation from competitors (n=73, 93.6%); create new business opportunities (n=73, 92.4%); enhance customer relations (n=72, 92.3%); enhance reputation and brand image (n=72, 92.3%); improved employee opinion surveys/diversity audits results (n=72, 91.1%); reduced costs associated with turnover, absenteeism and low productivity (n=72, 91.1%); improved financial bottom line (profits) (n=70, 90.9%); diversify client/customer base (n=69, 89.6%); enhance government relations (n=68, 87.2%); enhance community relations (n=67, 85.9%); enhance supplier relations (n=67, 85.9%); improved public image of the organization (n=67, 85.9%); increase sales/billings (n=67, 84.8%); and decrease in complaints and litigation (n=59, 75.6%).

*Diversity and Inclusion Goals*

Among the 78 participants who responded, 62.8% (n=49) reported that they have D&I goals. Examples include:

1. “Strive for a workforce that reflects the population of our home market as a minimum - and ultimately, reflects the population of our client base, which is national.”
2. “40% of job applicants interviewed must be diverse above the manager level.”
3. “Make sure final slates have at least two diverse candidates; improve diversity among management level employees; and achieve top scores for inclusion and diversity in employee engagement survey.”
4. “Drive employee engagement through improved Employee Network effectiveness; Elevate diversity brand awareness; Attract, develop and retain diverse talent; Enhance diversity training.”
5. “Our diversity mission: To champion an inclusive culture that embraces individual differences and unique needs while driving innovation; To leverage the diverse talent of our workforce to enhance business growth; To ensure our workforce is reflective of the global marketplace and the divergent populations we serve; To cultivate relationships with strategic business partners that will ensure our ability to access, attract, and retain a diverse workforce.”
6. “[Our agency’s] mission requires us to ensure we have a culture that enables us to create and sustain a new kind of network that mirrors and understands diverse communities and helps our clients communicate in more targeted ways. We must attract and retain a multicultural workforce and support new kinds of affiliations and alliances. Our goals are: Raising Awareness & Levels of Respect: internal and external efforts and behaviors that support creating, maintaining and celebrating a climate of inclusion. Effective Talent Management: strategic and targeted efforts to engage, attract, secure and retain the best most diverse talent in the marketplace across all levels. This applies to recruitment, talent development and training, and mentoring at all levels. Community Engagement: increased partnership and support of professional organizations, support for our employees’ interests and causes, and external efforts that support the communities in which we do business.”

Participants also rated the importance of key D&I tactics or initiatives to achieving their formal or informal diversity and inclusion goals (see Table 1):

*Table 1.* The Important of Tactics or Initiatives to Achieving D&I Goals

D&I Tactics or Initiatives	Slightly Important to Very Important
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Affirmative Action (AA) and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs in place	56 (74.6%)
Recruiting at predominantly minority colleges and universities	59 (80.7%)
Using minority recruiters	59 (80.8%)
Training for managers to minimize discrimination in hiring	68 (90.6%)
Providing funding support or time off with compensation for employees to participate in external networking / affinity/ resource programs that connect professionals who share a similar identity or cultural background, so they can share information, seek support and get career advice	59 (78.7%)
Obtaining diverse suppliers/vendors from under-represented groups	65 (85.4%)
Training designed to promote and support a culture of diversity and inclusion (examples include on-line modules, classroom-based training, videos, discussions, role-plays, simulations, exercises, etc.)	75 (96.2%)
Training to affect employee attitudes toward women	69 (89.7%)
Training to affect employee attitudes toward people from other under-represented groups	67 (87.0%)
Senior leaders committed to enforcing diversity and inclusion policies	75 (98.7%)
Formal statements of diversity and inclusion included in meetings, newsletters, and traditional and social media publications	71 (93.4%)
Practices administered by leadership and focused on increasing and maintaining diversity in all ranks of employment	69 (90.8%)
Recruiting at regional and national meetings of minority professional organizations	62 (83.8%)
Including minority individuals in photos, videos, or graphics in recruitment materials	64 (86.5%)
Raising entry level salaries for talent recruited from under-represented groups	32 (44.4%)
Establishing a system (on-line, off-line, or both) that allows management to assess employee knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA), and track employee development to ensure that job training has met development goals	63 (84.0%)
Dedicating a special council or committee to identify and remove barriers to diversity in retention and advancement	61 (80.2%)
Training to raise awareness about diversity issues and help employees work with others who are different from themselves	74 (96.2%)
Training to affect employee attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals	66 (85.8%)
Employee participation in task forces, work groups or boards to identify diversity and inclusion issues and develop initiatives	70 (92.1%)
Leaders visibly involved with diversity-related activities	73 (97.3%)
Using minority publications and websites for employee recruitment	57 (77.1%)
Using professional and general market media outlets that target to minority job applicants	62 (84.9%)
Communicating the importance and value of diversity and inclusion to all job applicants	69 (93.3%)

Networking /affinity/resource programs that connect employees who share a similar identity or cultural background, so they can share information, seek support and get career advice	70 (91.0%)
Mentoring programs focused on developing women, ethnic minorities, and employees from other underrepresented groups	73 (96.1%)
Having a succession plan to ensure a diverse pool of qualified candidates for executive positions	74 (97.3%)
Training to affect employee attitudes towards ethnic or racial minorities	72 (93.6%)
Training to affect employee attitudes toward individuals with disabilities	69 (89.7%)
Training for management to minimize discrimination in promotion	71 (94.7%)
Supportive resources provided to increase the visibility of diversity and inclusion initiatives inside and outside the organization	73 (96.1%)

*Mission Vision Character & Diversity and Inclusion Goal and Activities*

Among the participants who responded to the questions on D&I goals, measurement, and accountability, 74.4% (n=58) indicated that D&I goals and objectives fit very well or completely into their company’s overall vision/mission; 79.2% (n=61) reported that D&I goals and objectives fit very well or completely into the character of their company; 39.7% (n=31) claimed that they have integrated a comprehensive D&I strategy very well or completely well into their overall business strategy; 57.7% (n=45) said their senior leadership team placed a very high level of importance on D&I; 63.9% (n=46) reported that their CEO and other members of the C-suite placed a very high level of importance on diversity and inclusion. Nevertheless, 72.2% (n=52) do not have D&I goal achievements tied to their executive compensation; 85.5% (n=65) do not have D&I goal achievements tied to their leadership team’s compensation either.

*Diversity and Inclusion Actions, Tactics, Strategies, and Initiatives*

The survey participants also indicated whether they have implemented or are considering key diversity-related efforts. For more detailed information, see Table 2.

*Table 2. Diversity and Inclusion Actions, Tactics, Strategies, and Initiatives*

Diversity Activities	Implemented and satisfied with results	Implemented with unsatisfactory results or needs refinement	Currently planning	Unsure how to address	Not feasible	No interest	Would like assistance
mission/vision statement	38 (46.3%)	2 (2.4%)	10 (12.2%)	3 (3.7%)	2 (2.4%)	5 (6.1%)	0 (0.0%)
council or management team	35 (42.7%)	5 (6.1%)	8 (9.8%)	4 (4.9%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (12.2%)	1 (1.2%)
Measurable initiative	25 (30.5%)	8 (9.8%)	15 (18.3%)	6 (7.3%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (8.5%)	1 (1.2%)
Budget for initiative	25 (30.5%)	7 (8.5%)	11 (13.4%)	4 (4.9%)	2 (2.4%)	11 (13.4%)	0 (0.0%)
D&I director/champion	39 (47.6%)	2 (2.4%)	8 (9.8%)	1 (1.2%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (13.4%)	0 (0.0%)

D&I support staff	33 (40.2%)	5 (6.1%)	5 (6.1%)	3 (3.7%)	3 (3.7%)	11 (13.4%)	0 (0.0%)
D&I audit/assessment	28 (34.1%)	2 (2.4%)	11 (13.4%)	8 (9.8%)	2 (2.4%)	8 (9.8%)	2 (2.4%)
reporting strategy/system	25 (30.5%)	7 (8.5%)	10 (12.2%)	6 (7.3%)	1 (1.2%)	8 (9.8%)	2 (2.4%)
Minority university partnerships	25 (30.5%)	8 (9.8%)	9 (11.0%)	6 (7.3%)	2 (2.4%)	6 (7.3%)	2 (2.4%)
Mentoring program	32 (39.0%)	6 (7.3%)	10 (12.2%)	5 (6.1%)	1 (1.2%)	4 (4.9%)	2 (2.4%)
Internal minority networks/affinity groups	32 (39.0%)	9 (11.0%)	7 (8.5%)	6 (7.3%)	1 (1.2%)	5 (6.1%)	1 (1.2%)
Professional minority association partnerships	26 (31.7%)	8 (9.8%)	9 (11.0%)	7 (8.5%)	1 (1.2%)	9 (11.0%)	3 (3.7%)
Minority executive training program	10 (12.2%)	2 (2.4%)	12 (14.6%)	14 (17.1%)	5 (6.1%)	11 (13.4%)	3 (3.7%)
Employee diversity training programs	28 (34.1%)	6 (7.3%)	9 (11.0%)	6 (7.3%)	1 (1.2%)	7 (8.5%)	3 (3.7%)
Managerial training related to diversity	28 (34.1%)	5 (6.1%)	11 (13.4%)	6 (7.3%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (7.3%)	3 (3.7%)
Employee training on intercultural communication	25 (30.5%)	5 (6.1%)	8 (9.8%)	7 (8.5%)	2 (2.4%)	7 (8.5%)	3 (3.7%)
Seminars on diverse cultures	20 (24.4%)	6 (7.3%)	9 (11.0%)	8 (9.8%)	1 (1.2%)	12 (14.6%)	2 (2.4%)
Competency-based recruitment	37 (45.1%)	4 (4.9%)	6 (7.3%)	7 (8.5%)	1 (1.2%)	6 (7.3%)	0 (0.0%)
D&I compensation or incentives for managers	9 (11.0%)	2 (2.4%)	7 (8.5%)	17 (20.7%)	4 (4.9%)	19 (23.2%)	1 (1.2%)

Participants also listed key initiatives that make their most effective diversity-related activities work: “Active seeking of feedback from employees from under-represented groups about their experience here;” “reinforce our vision, mission and values;” “annual conference attended by CEO and top team;” “diversity council;” “periodic company newsletter article focused on topics of diversity and inclusion;” “giving diverse teams the processes and time to hit their stride;” “develop and maintain a diverse professional network, and let the network know when jobs become open;” “networking with influencers that can introduce us to qualified candidates;” “on an ongoing basis, overtly communicate the importance of D&I to culture of the team and the company;” “marketing strategy and approaches to incorporate various focus of diversity, including disability, age, family status, etc., in addition to the traditional race and gender focus;” among others.

*Resources Dedicated to Such D&I Efforts*

When asked about resources dedicated to their D&I efforts, our survey participants provided the following information:

*Table 3a. Resources Dedicated to Such D&I Efforts*

D&I Efforts	No resources	Budget	Dedicated Professional	Support/ Administrative Staff	Training Time	Other resources
Attracting/recruiting talent	7 (8.5%)	25 (30.5%)	31 (37.8%)	15 (18.3%)	15 (18.3%)	12 (14.6%)
Talent development	7 (8.5%)	26 (31.7%)	25 (30.5%)	16 (19.5%)	25 (30.5%)	9 (11.0%)
Pipeline and mobility	13 (15.9%)	17 (20.7%)	20 (24.4%)	14 (17.1%)	14 (17.1%)	12 (14.6%)
Middle management leadership	11 (13.4%)	19 (23.2%)	21 (25.6%)	13 (15.9%)	22 (26.8%)	10 (12.2%)
Workforce retention	13 (15.9%)	17 (20.7%)	25 (30.5%)	14 (17.1%)	17 (20.7%)	9 (11.0%)
Cultural appreciation	9 (11.0%)	21 (25.6%)	18 (22.0%)	8 (9.8%)	14 (17.1%)	18 (22.0%)
Gender diversity	15 (18.3%)	19 (23.2%)	19 (23.2%)	11 (13.4%)	15 (18.3%)	13 (15.9%)
Creating an inclusive work environment	5 (6.1%)	25 (30.5%)	25 (30.5%)	17 (20.7%)	30 (36.6%)	17 (20.7%)

*Table 3b. Resources Dedicated to Such D&I Efforts*

Resources	Completely insufficient	Somewhat insufficient	Minimally sufficient	Moderately sufficient	Completely sufficient
Budget	7 (11.5%)	6 (9.8%)	19 (31.1%)	18 (29.5%)	11 (18.0%)
Training time	4 (6.8%)	12 (20.3%)	13 (22.0%)	21 (35.6%)	9 (15.3%)
Dedicated professional	8 (13.3%)	7 (11.7%)	15 (25.0%)	14 (23.3%)	16 (26.7%)

Staff support	6 (10.5%)	7 (12.3%)	16 (28.1%)	14 (24.6%)	14 (24.6%)
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*Measurement of Effectiveness of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives*

About 47% of our participants (n=37) do not have a method for measuring the impact of diversity practices. In total, 65.8% (n=52) of the respondents do not conduct analysis to determine its return on investment for diversity practices. Approximately, 86.1% of the respondents (n=68) said that their diversity practices are slight or moderately effective in achieving results; only 7.6% (n=6) said their practices were very effective in achieving their D&I goals. In response to some statements racial and ethnic minorities say decrease their satisfaction with careers in public relations, our survey participants rated to what extent they believe the statements reflect what people feel and/or experiences at their company:

*Table 4. Measures of Organizational Inclusion*

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Racial/ethnic minorities are just as likely to be given mainstream/general market projects as they are to work on projects related to their personal racial/ethnic market/media.	4 (6.5%)	5 (8.1%)	9 (14.5%)	10 (16.1%)	34 (54.8%)
Minorities have to work harder than non-minority employees to advance.	36 (58.1%)	10 (16.1%)	7 (11.3%)	7 (11.3%)	2 (3.2%)
Racial/ethnic minorities are put on slow moving tracks in their jobs.	53 (85.5%)	4 (6.5%)	2 (3.2%)	3 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Racial/ethnic minorities are relegated to more superficial tasks.	53 (85.5%)	3 (4.8%)	5 (8.1%)	1 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)
Racial/ethnic minorities are often overlooked for promotion.	47 (75.8%)	8 (12.9%)	2 (3.2%)	5 (8.1%)	0 (0.0%)
Racial/ethnic minorities are not treated with genuine respect by their colleagues.	54 (87.1%)	4 (6.5%)	3 (4.8%)	1 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)

Social isolation is common among minorities.	36 (58.1%)	14 (22.6%)	6 (9.7%)	6 (9.7%)	0 (0.0%)
Racial/ethnic minorities are not able to influence decisions.	48 (78.7%)	9 (14.8%)	4 (6.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Racial/ethnic minorities are usually among the last to know about important changes.	54 (87.1%)	5 (8.1%)	3 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Racial/ethnic minorities are not usually invited to important meetings.	53 (85.5%)	3 (4.8%)	5 (8.1%)	1 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)
Employees from underrepresented groups are often invited to participate in meetings with management higher than their direct supervisors.	13 (21.0%)	4 (6.5%)	14 (22.6%)	10 (16.1%)	21 (33.9%)
Employees from underrepresented groups are not often invited to contribute their opinions during meetings with management higher than their direct supervisors.	44 (69.8%)	10 (15.9%)	4 (6.7%)	2 (3.2%)	3 (4.8%)
Racial/ethnic minorities frequently do not receive communications (e.g., memos, emails) from management higher than their direct supervisors.	51 (82.3%)	7 (11.3%)	3 (4.8%)	1 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)

*What Makes Page Members' Most Effective D&I-Related Activities Work?*

Our survey respondents identified two key factors that contribute to their most effective D&I-related activities: (1) leadership support and commitment and (2) dedicated effort focused on employee engagement. Senior leadership support is key to D&I success. When they have commitment from the top and at the senior leader level, they accomplish effective D&I-related initiatives. Additionally, ongoing, sustained, and dedicated communications initiatives to engage employees and external affiliates are critical too. Our respondents suggested that Page member organizations need to make sure that their employees “feel accepted for their talents, and not for their ‘diverse-ness’.” They need to be put on projects that have nothing to do with ethnicity. In many organizations, a D&I Council often plays an important role in communicating with and educating employees about D&I as part of their corporate culture and business imperative. It is also paramount for Page members to work with experts to identify the needs of the marketplace and address the challenges in finding, recruiting, developing, and retaining diverse talent for public relations industry.

**Findings from In-Depth Interviews**

Based on the proposed research questions, the authors sought to garner an understanding for the reported survey responses, through in-depth interviews. This section focuses on the findings following conversations from 17 survey participants. The selection was based on their demonstrations of good/excellent practices noted for (1) measuring the impact of diversity and inclusion practices, (2) analysis of the ROI, and (3) having predetermined diversity and inclusion goals and objectives. The findings are summarized under four main themes: diversity mandate; recruitment through institutional partnership; retention through reaffirmation and affinity group support; and assessment.

*Diversity Mandate*

A diversity mandate is defined as having an objective to reach a desired goal in regards to the workforce that supports and sustains one organization. Throughout our interviews, participants expressed that a quota did not define diversity, however conversations consistently illustrated that where there was no quota there was a problem with a constructive definition. More often than not, the term ‘people of color’ was used as a population of reference; whereas gender and LGBTQ resources were discussed to a lesser extent. People with disability proved a difficult population to conceptualize, for some, beyond the physical constraints of a job. Additionally, LGBTQ persons and persons with a non-physical disability would have to self-identify in order for the company to track that population. However, in defining diversity the traditional categories were consistently referenced. Several interviewees noted the relevance of diverse talent as a point of alignment for the organization noting that “if [our organizations] expect to be an engaged enterprise, to be successful with all stakeholders, or at least have relationships with all stakeholders, we have to look like the world that we operate in.”

Similarly, thinking about the population of an organization was likened to mirroring the population of the community. Several participants reaffirmed their organization’s population reflecting the world in some cases, or a defined industry population, or other identified surveyed population. In one case, a participant noted that because of the broad scope of diversity, it was important to speak to targets. She noted that diversity being a broad spectrum, requires a narrowed approach to get traction, and results in building one area of diversity, as opposed to engaging the whole spectrum. Overall, each respondent discussed their primary position and focuses with regards to engaging in a proactive sense diversity. Many of our respondents were in a position to talk not just about their department, but the company at large. Moreover, a personal

engagement and mission was also articulated, with participants eager to discuss what they say, and what they acted on for the advancement of diversity and inclusion within their ability.

#### *Recruitment Practices through Institutional Partnership*

In a bid to change the population landscape, recruitment practices are a priority focus. The issue, as articulated to us, is where to find talent. Senior level communication management depends heavily on recruiters to source a diverse talent pool, while some take matters into their own hands, establishing personal connections with different groups. One participant noted that where the need aroused and time was sensitive, they would provide talent acquisition and recruitment with internal support and direction for the recruitment of multi-culture candidates. Responses to recruitment vary, due to the nature and size of the organization as well as the position for which talent was being recruited. As the slate of interviewees was from various companies, some participants noted the difference between recruitment for the organization and for the communications department. However, talent acquisition was a challenge that some confronted through training. In one company, the change in dealing with recruiters, moving to quarterly meetings, conference calls, and webinars that highlight the importance of a diverse talent pool for their hiring process.

There are some specific targets that were highlighted as sources for talent. The authors note these institutional partnerships that enable organizations access to different potential candidates. At the entry level as well as for internships, several universities were mentioned, as well as the LAGRANT Foundation, and Black Millennials, as organizational sources for diverse talent at the entry level. For mid-level careers the following professional organizations were mentioned: the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Public Relations Society of America, the Association of Latino Professionals for America, the Black Public Relations Society, and Color Comm. Whereas for senior-level managers, the Public Relations Society of America and the Arthur Page Society were the only two named.

Recruitment requires an expansion of an insular network. Companies meet the target of a diverse pool through connecting in multifaceted ways. One participant explained connecting with sororities and fraternities as “you have some connection with a network of high performing, diverse candidates.”

#### *Retention through Reaffirmation and Affinity Groups Support*

For some organizations, inclusion is set as a core value, thus ensuring support for minority and under-represented employees. As an organizational goal, diversity and inclusion must be supported through internal initiatives, and reaffirmation of these goals can be exercised from a top-down model. One organization’s CEO reaffirmed his commitment to conversation and access through emails he calls “post-cards.” He noted that he continuously brings up diversity and inclusions issues. Generally internal communication channels like the post-cards have been recurring tools. Additionally, one senior level manager shared the goal of inclusion of people of color in management, noting that “every leader has a goal,” and her personal efforts of serving as a mentor/coach to individuals is about guidance for internal promotions. While some senior-level managers take on personal engagements, others champion organizational programs, groups, and initiatives. Employee resource groups enable internal connection and support for minority employees. They are “open and vital communication environment” which in some cases are “formal mechanisms ... [that] strengthen an employee’s experience within the company.” Senior-level managers also view this a strong “retention mechanism” as well as a way of reaffirming a diverse culture within the organization.

There are, however, some organizations that do not have formalized resource groups. Participants, who noted this, articulated a kind of grass-roots effort where employees organize affinity groups. In that organization, the support for these groups from higher-level management was noted as essential to the survival. Fundamental to success of reaffirmation and retention efforts is employee engagement and buy-in, into these initiatives.

In tandem with resources, training was highlighted as a relevant method of engagement. Participants hailed the relevance of discussion on inclusion, such as unconscious bias, seeing it “as a way of helping people see blind spots so they can broaden their perspectives.” Several organizations mentioned relationships with institutions contracted to “expose (the employees) to different types of diversity and inclusion training.” Training in this regard encompasses all levels of management, but their occurrences varied, with some being mandatory, others voluntary, and some occurring in-person, versus online. Training programs were also noted resources for internal growth and transition. One organization used external minority leadership programs, as well as women leadership programs, sponsoring women of color within their organization to get leadership and management training for potential advancement.

#### *Assessment*

Evaluation enables an organization to garner the effectiveness and success of initiatives. Several organizations, primarily the large corporations, were able to speak to assessment. One CCO noted that diversity is included in their annual reports, and this fell under the portfolio of the diversity leader of the company. While evaluation methodologies varied, the driving force included feedback, compliance and change. One such noted methodology was “exit interviews” as a basis for evaluation.

In contrast, organizational surveys and climate surveys were done to provide information about the diversity and inclusion within an organization. One organization, who used Gallup for logistics notes an annual accountability component from the reporting, which puts the evaluation into an action plan. This is an ongoing process, with surveying, in this case, conducted every two years. Another respondent said that it was difficult to assess effectiveness of some initiatives like training; as such they used participation as a measurement.

Evaluation also considers reporting as a method of garnering progress and feedback. Some organizations go as far as rewarding leadership and other employees. For leadership, added compensation may be attributed to diversity and inclusion progress within their function or department; whereas for employees, awards may be used as incentives.

#### **Discussion**

Consistent with previous literature (Hazleton & Sha, 2012; Jamieson & O’Mara, 1991; Sha & Ford, 2007; C. Thomas, 1994; R. Thomas, 1991, 1996), our participating Page member organizations define diversity in a broad sense, covering a wide range of aspects in diversity issues including race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, language, religion, viewpoint, value, personality, experience, skill level, perspective, affinity, family status, geographical location, socio/economic background, education and functional expertise, and different thinking. Nevertheless, as evident in both quantitative and qualitative data, the organizations talk more about race and ethnicity than gender, LGBTQ issues, disability, and other aspects of diversity and inclusion. They admit that diversity and inclusion in recruitment and retention of talent is critical at all organizational levels and report to have a considerable number of senior management who are US ethnic or racial minorities, managerial employees who are US ethnic or racial minorities, non-managerial non-administrative professional staff who are US ethnic or racial minorities, support/administrative staff who are US

ethnic or racial minorities, female senior management, female managerial employees, female non-managerial non-administrative professional staff, and female support/administrative staff. They affirm in both survey and interviews that their organization's population need to reflect the world, a defined industry population, or other identified surveyed population who is the target audience of their main business. Moreover, they have well acknowledged the close connection between their business success and the aspects of diversity as important to recruitment and retention of talent from under-represented groups. Although they all stress the importance of D&I management within their company, less than 40% of the member organizations are satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their level of diversity in recruitment and retention of public relations talent and approximately 70% of the respondents feel satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their level of inclusivity.

Almost 63% of the participating member organizations have established their D&I goals. As discussed in previous literature, our respondents highly value the D&I tactics or initiatives that previous literature (e.g., Bielby et al., 2013; Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012; Madera, 2013; Soldan & Nankervis, 2014; Williams et al., 2014; Wyatt-Nichol & Antwi-Boasiako, 2012) proposed and evaluated, and associate the successful implementation of the D&I tactics and initiatives with the achievement of D&I goals closely. The authors yielded similar findings in the in-depth interviews. Institutional partnership and affinity groups support in and outside of organizations have significantly contributed to their recruitment and retention of public relations talent from under-represented groups. In consistency with previous literature (Brown, 2014; Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Herdman & McMillan-Capehart, 2010; Joshi & Roh, 2013; Wyatt-Nichol & Antwi-Boasiako, 2012), many organizations believe that their D&I goals and objectives fit very well or completely into their company's overall vision/mission and the character of their company, and that they have integrated a comprehensive D&I strategy very well or completely well into their overall business strategy. As revealed in the interviewing data, this is a critical step toward organizations' effective D&I management. Based on both quantitative and qualitative data, the authors conclude that CEOs and other members of the C-suites placed highly value D&I management. Nevertheless, many of them do not have D&I goal achievements tied to their leadership team's compensation. Several "best practices" organizations share in the interviews that they accomplish a lot in their D&I initiatives once they build such ties, which sets a great example for our industry to follow. Budget, dedicated professionals, and support/administrative staff are three major sources of support/resources that the Page member organizations devote in their D&I effort. Most of them are satisfied with the amount of resources they have for now, but hope to receive more from their senior management. Leadership support and champion as well as employee engagement are two primary factors that make their most effective D&I activities work. Finally, as researchers and practitioners (e.g., Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000; McKay & Avery, 2005) suggested, assessment is the key. Not many member organizations conduct formal or informal evaluation of their D&I initiatives, but the "best practices" assessment methods shared in the interviews (e.g., feedback, compliance, change, exit interviews, etc.) are great exemplars for the industry to follow.

The authors conducted a case study with the Arthur W. Page Society. The authors hope they can continue their research endeavor with other professional associations in public relations industry to achieve a bigger sample size for both quantitative and qualitative research as well as a broader scope of our study. Despite the limitations of the study, the authors hope the findings provide the industry with some initial thinking materials to start with. The industrial implications

of the study for leadership and for recruitment and retention of public relations talent need to be further tested and refined in future research:

1. Define D&I in a broader sense and actually implement your D&I mandate in recruitment and retention practices.
2. Integrate D&I into your corporate strategic thinking and planning.
3. Leadership support and engagement is the KEY to success.
4. Acquire, retain, and develop D&I initiatives, tactics, and resources.
5. Strong enforcement: Tie D&I accomplishments with compensation for both leadership and rank-and-file employees.
6. Listen to employees' opinions. Think of the other side of the coin.
7. Assessment, assessment, and assessment.

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