

Demonstrate Visible DEI Leadership

Brief Summary

In order to make real progress toward DEI goals, it is essential that leaders visibly demonstrate commitment to DEI not only through their **words**, but also their **actions** and **priorities**. **Middle managers** with competing priorities deliver based on what is recognized, rewarded, and role-modeled - not on what aligns with corporate messaging.

While many D&I initiatives begin at a grassroots level among employees, organizational impact is often elusive without leadership engagement and commitment. People from underrepresented groups can't change the dynamics of the workplace themselves. It requires intentional and coordinated effort and **it needs to be led from the top**.

Another component of DEI leadership is the **power of representation**: whether employees see people "like them" among the leaders. Diversity in senior leadership helps people in the organization envision their potential trajectories, feel supported, be able to fully contribute and feel free to be themselves.

Challenge

Intent is not enough; commitment to action creates impact. **Research** shows that while 68% of businesses had company-wide diversity as a priority in their DEI strategy, only 25% had **leadership diversity** as a priority. Another **study** reveals executives vocally support DEI efforts externally but almost 80% of them privately say these efforts are overblown.

Leaders need to **mind (and measure) the gap** when it comes to the real impact of their commitment. **Research** has previously found that leaders were nearly twice as likely as their employees to perceive they were creating empowering environments.

Recommendation

Leaders need to **"walk the talk"**. They should reflect individually and collectively on their **leader-ship shadow**. This is a way to better align their **words, actions** and **priorities** to build the DEI capability and commitment of the organization. When middle managers know that the leadership commitment is authentic, change happens.

Proposed Actions

Ways leaders can show visible commitment to DEI include:

1. Invest time to **grow personal competencies** in DEI.
2. Make time and room in your schedule to actively support the achievement of DEI goals become.
3. Allocate financial resources to DEI infrastructure and DEI initiatives; do not expect volunteers to lead the work.
4. Advocate for better data practices to measure DEI gaps, report transparently, and hold the organization accountable for progress.
5. Become an **ally** and/or sponsor to ensure that underrepresented talent has access to informal networks.
6. **Listen** to experiences of others with openness to be changed by what you hear and to act differently.



About the Author

Betsy Bagley is Pulsely's Co-Founder and DEI Director.

Valued Guidance

To Read



Fortune: [Advancing workplace diversity: Insights and tips from modern leaders](#)

Forbes: [DEI Is Not An Initiative; It Is A Reflection Of Your Leadership](#)

HBR: [The Key to Inclusive Leadership](#)

BuiltIn: [6 Actions Executives Must Take to Improve DEI in the Workplace](#)

To Watch / Listen



Miss Representation: [The Representation Project](#)

To Learn / Study



ASCE: [Leadership & Engagement](#)

Deloitte: [The six signature traits of inclusive leadership](#)

Catalyst: [MARC](#)