The Ultimate Guide to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Your Salesforce Team

By Lee Durrant

Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion is a top priority for Salesforce employers today. The Black Lives Matter movement has been pivotal in highlighting the importance of creating a fair society and demonstrating how far away we are from this being a reality.

Despite a significant focus on diversity, equity and inclusion [DEI] from some tech organisations, a lot of work is still to be done.

Not enough companies are taking the necessary actions to champion true diversity and inclusion within their business. For example, A **McKinsey study** (November 2020) found that diverse team members have struggled the most during the ongoing pandemic – a lack of awareness around diversity, equity and inclusion issues are causing marginalised employees to feel isolated and unsupported.

The pandemic has challenged the nature of work, job roles, organisational culture, and business strategy, and from this shake-up, we can carve a new path towards increased success in DEI.

Of course, with Salesforce being such a wide-reaching ecosystem, DEI policies are currently working in these teams worldwide to varying degrees of success.

This report takes a deep dive into the enormity of the DEI conversation in Salesforce and remote working and offers help to businesses looking to become more diverse and inclusive.

Lee

How Can We Define Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?

Along with diversity and inclusion, the matter of equity is now often included in the conversation. 'Equity' meaning the validation of each individual, as opposed to when minorities are 'included' at a surface level, yet their voices are not listened to.

An initial problem arises when considering diversity, equity and inclusion because these terms are often interchangeable, they sometimes overlap, and they can mean different things to each individual.

To embed a workable DEI policy in your Salesforce team, you must be clear on what these terms represent, which means defining them.

"Diversity is being invited to the disco, and inclusion is being asked to dance."

The **above quote** from leading diversity expert Vernā Myers is a simple and effective way to explain diversity and inclusion. It is more than just a surface level of 'representation'; it also needs to include active participation.

'Diversity' means difference – and can be split into inherent diversity and acquired diversity. Inherent diversity relates to immutable traits such as race, age and gender, whereas acquired diversity results from characteristics such as background and political beliefs.

It is worth noting that the **Centre for Talent Innovation**, who coined these terms found that companies with high levels of both kinds of diversity were 45% more likely to have expanded their market share and 70% more likely to have captured a new market in the last 12 months.

Remember, DEI isn't about displaying the 'right' words and phrases on your vision and mission statement. Think about how you will bring your policy to life through daily actions and behaviours. For example:

- How will you embed your commitments in your culture?
- How will it link to your company values?
- What needs to happen for your policy to be reflected in your internal systems and processes?

This includes everything from recruiting, onboarding, performance management, career development programmes, succession planning, how individuals and team are managed, and how senior leads walk the talk.

At its core, your DEI policy should exist to create an environment where everyone is on the same level playing field, whether they are a Salesforce Administrator, Solutions Architect, Business Analyst or CEO.

"Diversity is being invited to the disco, and inclusion is being asked to dance."

And this doesn't just mean including pictures of everyone on your 'about us' website page; it is about cultivating an environment every day - where there is zero discrimination present in the business. Come to think of it, how often do you see even in small companies the 'meet the team 'page is essentially 'meet the leadership team'. This isn't exactly an example of 'equity'.

Successful DEI is when tasks are delegated, decisions made, individuals grow and develop, job opportunities are created and filled by the best, most suitable person because the company's culture, systems and processes fully embrace diversity, equity and inclusion.

That said, businesses that have focused on DEI in recent years might believe that they are operating inclusively, but there is often more to it than meets the eye.

It has been recently highlighted that there is work to be done at the top of Salesforce, Inc. in regards to diversity and inclusion. Former design research senior manager Cynthia Perry **recently resigned,** highlighting problems with 'microaggressions and inequality'. Salesforce, Inc. executive Niki Christoff separately commented on board room problems at the company, **stating,** *"given how few women and people of colour report directly to Marc, there's a disparate impact on those groups."*

All Salesforce teams are different, and some have been more successful at implementing inclusive practices than others. This report is focused on improving your DEI policy, no matter your starting point.

Consider the following; in your organisation, who is it that speaks first in company meetings?

If it always the most senior member, this is an example of dis-inclusivity hiding in plain sight.

Hierarchically speaking, if junior members of the team share ideas, how often are these ideas taken on board? Real inclusion is valuing every employee's voice, no matter their level of seniority or time with the business.

Remember that diversity should mean a 'diversity of thought' – it goes deeper than just employing people from different demographics and ethnicities.

Genuine diversity comes from a variety of ideas, beliefs and concepts.

It is essential to cultivate an environment where each team member understands that they are all responsible

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Legal Obligations for Employers

Each country has its diversity issues in the workplace, and various legislation aims to improve this; some do it better than others.

World-leading data and insights consultancy Kantar **launched the world's first Inclusion Index** in 2019, surveying over 18,000 people in 14 countries. They identified Canada and the USA as the most diverse and inclusive countries. However, none of the countries surveyed scored above 66% of the index, suggesting no countries perform exceptionally well.

The primary laws that exist to ensure equality in the workplace in the U.K. are:

- **The Equality Act** (2010), which prohibits discrimination due to age, gender, disability, race, religion and marital status;
- The Race Relations Act (2000), which, when introduced in 1965, banned racial discrimination in public places and made it a crime to promote hatred on the grounds of race.

As you can, these pieces of legislation have not been revisited for many years. While we wait for them to be updated, what can employers of Salesforce teams do to ensure they act in non-discriminatory ways?

It all comes down to businesses holding themselves accountable.

While these laws are in place to stop outright discrimination against anyone due to their race, age, physical capabilities, sexuality or gender, there is still a lot of unconscious bias within organisations. There is growing pressure for employers to take responsibility for writing their own rule book.

Age discrimination is also a legal matter, but it can also be present in attitudes rather than visible discrimination.

This kind of bias is so subtle and widespread; even the BBC failed on this issue. In 2011, Countryfile presenter Miriam O'Reilly **won a case against her former employer** after being dropped from her role in what has been identified as age discrimination. The BBC apologised, and senior members of staff who were responsible for the decision underwent additional training.

Some organisations can operate in a discriminatory way towards older employees and candidates, often unwittingly, and it can be more prevalent in newer industries such as tech.

Do your job descriptions or adverts use age-discriminatory words or phrases such as 'fresh talent' or 'up and coming'?

Age and experience are often intertwined, but they should not be viewed as a way of defining a person. Do you expect that someone older will have more in-depth knowledge? Or perhaps that they will be less up to date with technology? The ingrained ideas around age and the workplace run very deep – and recognising that these stereotypes are harmful is the first step to overcoming the issue.

The gender pay gap is also a legal matter which is shrouded in various levels of transparency.

While women's rights advocates continue to campaign for pay transparency, many organisations are still secretive with this information.

The gender **pay gap in the U.K. is closing** – down from 17.4% in 2019 to 15.5% in 2020.

However, the pay gap remained the largest in higher-paid roles, highlighting the inequality at top levels.

Currently, only companies with over 250 employees are legally obliged to publish their salary information. Is your company transparent with pay scales? An organisation cannot be considered truly diverse or inclusive if they hide behind this information.

Are Employers Doing All They Can?

In every business, visible and invisible structures, networks, beliefs, behaviours and opinions contribute to the overarching company culture.

No matter what size your company is, there needs to be a workable system in place and a management team who believe in the system and lead by example to allow real DEI to flourish.

However, even Salesforce employers with a commendable focus and systems for encouraging DEI can sometimes fall victim to broader infrastructure problems.

For example, for over a decade, the number of women in tech in the U.K. has hovered around the 17% mark. The **Guardian reported in 2020** that these unmoving figures are down to the 'male domination of the tech world' and that low numbers of women are taking STEM subjects at university; only 9% of female graduates in 2018 graduated in a STEM subject.

Although the tide is turning, there is still progress to be made for some sectors to become truly gender diverse.

As an employer, you can have a dedicated focus on improving DEI in your Salesforce team, and if you haven't already – now is the time to start.

Salesforce employers must encourage individuals to believe that they can fulfil their career goals.

Salesforce employers must encourage individuals to believe that they can fulfil their career goals and not be held back by labels. This means giving genuine, equal opportunities to all employees and candidates; it's about challenging stereotypes in yourself and those around you.

Businesses sometimes pick what makes the most sense to them. On the one hand, working on improving one section of DEI, then move on to the next seems a logical approach to take.

The downside of this approach means businesses only work on a small area of DEI at one time. The danger is that this is perceived as a box-ticking exercise instead of viewing it as a holistic challenge which results in shifting values, beliefs and ultimately behaviours.

So let's look at strategies you can implement to improve DEI in your Salesforce team to create this shift.

Effective Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategies to Implement Now

Until recently, DEI was sometimes viewed as a 'side project' or an optional extra that some organisations focused on to give them the edge in the employer branding stakes.

But now, as the public's appetite for equality grows thanks to widespread media and transparency movements, diversity and inclusion are something that employers can't ignore any longer.

In a recent **McKinsey report**, DEI was highlighted as playing a significant role in the economy's Covid recovery. The report states, "*companies pulling back on I&D now may be placing themselves at a disadvantage: they could not only face a backlash from customers and talent now but also, down the line, fail to better position themselves for growth and renewal.*"

So, how can employers do better?

1. Create a Culture of Respect

An employer may be legally above board in terms of discrimination, and yet there can still be a culture where there is a lack of respect between employees. This is toxic and can be harmful to the progression of DEI.

Think about:
- Do your management employ 'old school' work ethics, such as being overly harsh or critical in an effort to improve standards?
- Is bad language tolerated in your workplace?
- What well-known cliques operate in your company?
- How developed is your employee's emotional intelligence?

Creating a respectful culture is the first step to improving diversity and inclusion, as acceptance and tolerance, high emotional intelligence, kindness and consideration are all necessary for forward-thinking organisations.

Disrespectful behaviour should not be tolerated, and this message needs to come from the leadership team. Bullish tactics are not an acceptable part of the modern workplace and can lead to discriminatory territory.

2. Internal Training

Employers of Salesforce teams should also focus on training in areas where employees need help to create a level playing field in terms of skills and career progression.

Offering excellent training programmes to all employees is one of the best ways to support people with different skills and abilities.

Be aware that individuals from different backgrounds will have different skill sets – a robust training programme is vital for equality. For example, would you encourage the same development opportunities in the part-time mother as opposed to the new graduate?

3. External Consultancy and Training

If you are going to provide training focused on DEI in your organisation, external training is the way to go.

Being trained on these matters by an in-house manager or colleague will lessen the impact compared to an external expert.

This is because it is easier for an internal trainer to sell the company perspective, whereas an external trainer is impartial. They can come into an organisation as a fresh pair of eyes. They can make the call as to the best approach to highlight 'potential problems' they observe softly or be more provocative in their assessment and recommendations.

If you are commissioning a piece of training, it might not be possible to bring in an external trainer do deliver it. Your company vision might currently be too narrow for the training to have any kind of effect. There first needs to be an environment where employees fully understand the importance of DEI.

An external trainer must act as a consultancy first to check that the training is even possible, find the gaps, and then work out what this means in terms of training within the organisation.

An external trainer's impartial viewpoint is necessary for DEI training to have a resounding effect. Have you looked into providing DEI training in your organisation? There are various providers across the country; do your research and call in the experts to make a real impact.

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4. Genuinely Listen

In your company, would an idea or suggestion be treated with the same respect if it came from somebody at the bottom of the internal ecosystem instead of an executive? Treating employees inclusively means giving them a voice.

This means listening to everybody at all levels and making organisational changes based on your team's ideas. It might sound like a radical notion, but some employers do this to great effect.

Multinational **Virgin** is known for instigating debates among staff to drive innovation and create a better workplace. Ask yourself the following questions:

- When was the last time someone in an entry-level position was asked for their input on a significant decision?
- How did you demonstrate their opinion was valued?
- When did you last act on an idea put forward by a junior staff member or someone new to your business?

5. Fair Career Progression Structures

Do you have structures in place which allow people to progress no matter their Salesforce background?

With the self-learning aspect of the Salesforce ecosystem, someone with fewer years of experience might have an excellent skill set. It shouldn't matter how long someone has been in Salesforce – if they have the badges, that should be all that matters.

Offer the same development opportunities to everyone; don't be blinkered into thinking someone will do well over another based solely on their previous employment history and current skill set.

Offering different people the same opportunities is necessary, but as a leader, you need to go further than this. It is about recognising that some individuals who previously been discriminated against may not feel confident to put themselves forward. As a leader, you need to identify Salesforce talent and encourage and inspire people to move forward.

At the highest level of your career progression strategy, make sure your business's future succession plans also represent your DEI policy.

6. Appraisals

There are a few ways you can build D, E & I into your performance management - consider the following:

- Base performance on facts, always - sometimes factors such as gender or age can affect a manager's ability to be objective in performance reviews. Continually assess performance expectations, and analyse whether reviews are in-line with data rather than opinions.
- Use inclusive language – avoid using words or phrases which perpetuate stereotypes. For example, saying, *"I was surprised that you did so well on this project, I didn't expect that you would have such an interest in this topic" can limit employees'* beliefs that they can progress in areas they are not familiar with.
- Ask for feedback, and listen – ask your team *'what more could I be doing to help you be your authentic self at work'* and put into practice their suggestions.

Appraisals are often overlooked in terms of DEI, so it's a good idea to re-evaluate them through the DEI lens.

7. Accountability

Accountability is something that some Salesforce employers lack, which mean it is an area for improvement if your company wants to embrace DEI.

There needs to be a recognition among all employees, from the new starters to the CEO, that DEI is not isolated constructs but a core principle of your organisation.

Since many Salesforce employers have a remote-first set-up, it can be challenging to create a strong culture, leading to a lack of accountability.

It is easy in organisations where there is little to no real-life interactions or regular group meetings for people to adopt a mindset where DEI are matters for 'other people' to look out for.

It is essential to cultivate an environment where each team member understands that they are all responsible for embracing diversity and inclusion.

Challenge your own beliefs and discuss your decisions with colleagues – championing diversity and inclusion is about having conversations that others might find uncomfortable.

8. Marketing and Communications

Marketing, both internal and external, has a significant role to play in improving DEI.

There can be discrimination built into the language we use every day, and there are ways we can modify our language to make it more inclusive.

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For example, someone tells you a story about their lawyer; if you reply and assume that their lawyer is male, this is an example of the ingrained stereotypes we can challenge by changing our language.

Beth Dunn, **UX Operations Lead at HubSpot in a Medium article,** states, *"Try not to present the privileged, tech-savvy, wealthy, able-bodied, white, cis-gendered, anglo-centric male experience as 'standard' and everything else as 'other' or 'diverse.' Seek ways to place the 'other' in the centre of things instead."*

It's about challenging our own unconscious biases and striving to view the world through the eyes of those who carry less privilege. This is particularly important within Salesforce, as the industry tends to be male-dominated.

Many marketing images are still laden with white, male business-like figures. Think about the language changes you can make in your internal communications and everyday language, as well as external marketing material.

Often companies will arbitrarily include a woman or a person of colour into their images to appear more diverse; if you're trying to appear more diverse than you are, you are engaging in performative DEI.

How the Salesforce Ecosystem is Working on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Sometimes companies get it wrong.

With an increased focus on diversity in recent years, we have also seen a rise in performative DEI, appearing to be an inclusive employer on the surface and failing behind the scenes.

An example of this is when businesses go out of their way to create an inclusive hiring process and a diverse shortlist. They hire diverse employees but then fail to make them feel included. This happens when DEI strategies are not embedded and implemented within the business. It could also be because the strategy is too vague or even non-existent.

Employees are increasingly less tolerant of employers who don't deliver on matters of health and wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, and transparency.

Salesforce, Inc. was one of the companies that spoke in support of the BLM movement in the wake of George Floyd's killing in 2020. The company tweeted, *"Now more than ever, we must support one another as allies and speak up for justice and equality".*

In aiming to be as transparent as possible on diversity matters, since 2018, Salesforce, Inc. has published an annual diversity report. The **latest report** highlights employee gender representation, race and ethnicity representation, and areas of opportunity to improve these figures.

Finally, as Salesforce employers look to improve DEI, let's look at their recruitment providers' role.

The Implications for Your Recruitment Process

Improving DEI all starts with recruitment.

Evolving your recruitment strategy and processes is the easiest way to champion inclusion and make your workforce more diverse.

But as with the issue of performative diversity and inclusion, your hiring processes should not be made more diverse solely to look better to the outside world.

There needs to be a DEI support mechanism to assist employees during their onboarding and as they begin to build their new career.

Salesforce employers should not forget that recruitment is about finding the best person for the job and not hiring arbitrarily to fulfil quotas. Create an environment of inclusivity, and this will permeate through your hiring and the type of talent you will attract.

As long as the recruitment company you work with has a proper matrix that is non-biased, you are doing the right thing – how prominently is DEI featured in your current hiring process?

How often are you having conversations among the hiring department about how diversity, equity and inclusion can be incorporated into your hiring decisions?

Below are some of the first places to look to make your recruitment strategy more inclusive.

1. Use Inclusive Language in Your Job Descriptions

Audit your previous job descriptions and look at how you can make them more inclusive by changing the language. You might notice that the language you have used in the past was geared towards certain demographics – this can happen when you start the recruitment process with an idea of the 'type' of person you want already in mind.

Additionally, don't be afraid to mention that you welcome candidates from all different backgrounds.

2. Have Managers Complete Unconscious Bias Training

Unconscious bias can derail the recruitment process. Implement training for everyone involved in your recruitment processes on how to spot and eradicate unconscious bias to create a fairer system.

3. Use 'Blind' Recruitment in the Early stages

This means considering employees without being aware of personal details such as name, age, ethnicity, sexuality etc. Scrutinising candidates in this way creates an equal playing field, although it can be difficult to achieve in practice without the right recruitment and CV tools.

Finally

As an expert recruitment company, we can work with you on your current hiring process to advise on implementing excellent recruitment strategies.

Whichever way you want to improve your recruitment strategies and results this year, we can help. To find out more about our recruitment services, contact us today on 01322 272 532 or **contact us here.**

Thanks,

Lee

About Resource On Demand

Resource on Demand is Europe's first specialist Salesforce Recruitment Company.

We assist innovative and disruptive organisations to grow their Salesforce technology teams. In addition, we support companies to fill technology roles that span across Digital Marketing, Marketing Automation, Human Capital Management and the growing Salesforce.com suite of skills.

The team at Resource on Demand have access to an extensive database of key talent, registering over 8000 professionals each year.

To find out how we can support you with your Salesforce recruitment, call us on +44 (0) 1322 272 532

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Job Seeker

The consultants I have interacted with were very professional, efficient, well structured and friendly. I felt comfortable in working with them and I would highly recommend them and you as an agency for the future, for sure. Great team. Great work! Well done!

Digital Marketing Job Seeker

Ryan is a great professional who stayed in touch throughout the whole process. He was very responsive but also extremely knowledgable in the field that I'm working in and knew exactly what I was looking for. Ryan made good recommendations and it was always great to have a conversation with him. I couldn't ask for a greater professional than him.

Consultant seeking work

Resource On Demand is without doubt the best Salesforce recruiter in the industry. They have a unique personal approach to recruiting that is rare for recruiters in any sector, and unlike many recruiters they actually care about where people end up! As a previous user of their services from both sides, I can vouch for their integrity and determination to find the right role for the candidates and the right candidates for the company. Keep up the good work guys!

Global Salesforce.com Manager

We would highly recommend ROD as a recruiter for client side resource and we would certainly use this recruiter every time we need new Salesforce.com skills!

'Great team. Great work!'