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Why you should look closely at your potential employer's approach to diversity, equity and inclusion

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Diversity, equity and inclusion are being spoken about more and more – but how do we make sure that these aren't just buzzwords, and that workplaces are making tangible progress in this important area?

When it comes to something as important and business critical as DEI, good intentions are no substitute for effective action. That's why at Ogier we stay focussed on the objective of becoming measurably more inclusive and more representative of the communities we're part of – and we're open about where we need to do better in this area.

A genuine commitment from your workplace to diversity, equity and inclusion means a better culture for every employee, no matter their background. It shows that your employer understands that people are at the heart of their success, and that they are treated accordingly.

When you're job hunting, some questions you might want to ask your potential employer include how they're making sure DEI is informing fundamental business decisions, and whether those who have the most power and influence in the organisation are leading from the front on this issue.

These are questions that we ask ourselves a lot at Ogier. Together with over 50 DEI leaders across the business, we've worked hard to make DEI as central to who we are and what we do as any other core business strategy. We won't always get it right and there's more work to be done, but we've built a strong foundation, from having our global managing partner as the sponsor of our DEI initiative, to being the first law firm to voluntarily publish our gender pay gap data across all our global jurisdictions. We'd love for you to join us in this work.

Chris Jones, practice partner and jurisdictional DEI lead in Guernsey

Having joined the profession over twenty five years ago, I have seen the steady progress that has been made with DEI in the workplace. However, that perspective also allows me to see the areas where we still have vital work to do to acknowledge the different experiences of people in the workplace and the exclusion of a huge amount of talent. We all have a responsibility for fixing inequalities in the workplace, and to be an ally; it's the right thing to do.

In addition, effective DEI covers a broad range of areas that affect many job seekers, including lesser publicised considerations such as socio-economic or educational opportunity. Being treated fairly and respectfully gives everyone in the workplace equal access to opportunities and resources to be able to contribute and progress fully.

A diverse and genuinely inclusive workplace, with a set of behaviours to support it, creates a friendlier and easier place to work by building awareness to foster empathy. This in turn allows everyone to feel welcomed and comfortable, and to find their place within the organisation. It is easier to be motivated, committed and productive when you work in that environment. As a leader of the business, I see this as crucial to getting the best out of every team.

It is important to dig deeper into the tangible steps organisations are taking on DEI. Symbolic participation is easy; sponsoring an event or including inclusive messages in branding, for example. But actual participation is much more challenging and involves real investment in time, effort and money. These are the things that should be explored.

The organisations that get this right create an environment where the underrepresented feel comfortable to speak about their experiences, and have their perspective on belonging in the workplace listened to.

Sandie Lyne, partner and jurisdictional DEI lead in Guernsey

It's important to me that businesses reflect and understand the communities in which they exist and that there's equal access and opportunities available to people no matter their background.

Having role models who look and sound like you enables more people to have the confidence to aspire to leadership positions. It also means that there are a greater range of events and networking opportunities available to suit everyone's tastes.

A firm that values DEI is going to be a firm that prioritises the wellbeing and development of its employees, which means a positive workplace culture. As a bonus, prioritising the wellbeing of employees tends to have a positive impact on a firm's bottom line too!

Accountability of a firm's leadership is critical, where senior management is actually prepared to be remunerated and judged on DEI as a key performance criteria. It's also important for firms to be open and honest about where they are failing and where there's more work to do.

Kevin Grové, managing associate and DEI leader in Jersey

As a white male I think it's important to be an ally and champion DEI to the extent that I can. It's not just the right thing to do morally, but data has also proven that it makes business sense. I do believe that having people in decision-making roles that come from diverse backgrounds and champion inclusivity is fundamental to the success of a business, as it ensures that important decisions are informed by people who have a wider range of experiences and different ways of thinking. We have a poor track record with DEI in the legal industry and if I can help change that I'd like to.

We work in a team environment with people from various backgrounds and as we take successful steps to improve our DEI this trend will grow. Knowing that the firm's leadership is committed to DEI means that I'm more confident that the members of our team are happy and comfortable in bringing their best selves to work. For me that increases productivity and helps foster a more positive culture. I have also seen a very positive response from our clients, and being able to engage with them on DEI is not only refreshing but helps build stronger relationships.

Most businesses will be participating in the DEI conversation in one form or another. In my view, the ones to look out for are those that are taking positive steps to address DEI. Are they publishing pay gap reports, do they have transparent remuneration policies, what is their track record in promoting employees from previously marginalised groups, and how do they respond to being critiqued on their DEI outcomes? These can be key distinguishing features.

Natalia Fortuna, associate and DEI leader in Jersey

A commitment to DEI demonstrates a commitment to progress and sustainability. I think that businesses that structure their hiring and talent development practices with a focus on diversity introduce the potential for a broader range of perspectives among their workforce; by promoting an inclusive working environment, employees are more likely to share their ideas. I think that this combination provides businesses with the tools to tackle new problems more effectively and survive the demands of continuously developing markets.

As an employee, it is crucial to feel that the skills and experiences that you bring with you into a new role are valued. An employer that places importance on DEI recognises that differences in the abilities and backgrounds of their employees are a strength to their business.

I am involved in several corporate social responsibility projects which are led with a DEI focus. The aim of these initiatives is centred on social mobility and improving access to careers for Jersey's next generation. I think that looking at CSR through a DEI lens can help businesses to identify how to best use the resources available to them to make the most effective and sustainable impact on their local communities.

I think that it is important for businesses to not only make an effort to identify issues relating to DEI, for example through reports, surveys, and questionnaires, but to also take active steps towards progress in the sphere of DEI both internally and in their local communities.

Sophie Halsey, Diversity and Inclusion adviser in Jersey

DEI allows me to engage more with the world around me, understand how I might be a better ally, and contribute towards greater change and understanding within the workplace.

It's important to find a firm that aligns with your values and where you can bring your true self to work. A firm with a focused and positive DEI culture brings many benefits not only to the firm itself, but to you individually, by providing an environment you can confidently flourish in.

The resource Ogier is putting behind our DEI commitment is only growing and I am proud I can be a part of that in my role and as an individual. For me, my colleagues are my clients, so our DEI commitment makes me keen and empowered to support them and continually drive Ogier on its DEI journey.

Every firm's DEI journey will be different due to size, locality, global reach and available resources. Some are real leaders in putting that talk into action, but it's not always the larger firms or the ones shouting about it the most that are making positive contributions. Ask the firms you are interested in what their commitment to DEI is, where are they on their DEI journey, and what they have achieved to date. Is this firm truly exemplifying positive actions and commitments that you would be happy to get behind?

Find out more about opportunities with us at www.ogier.com/careers.

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