

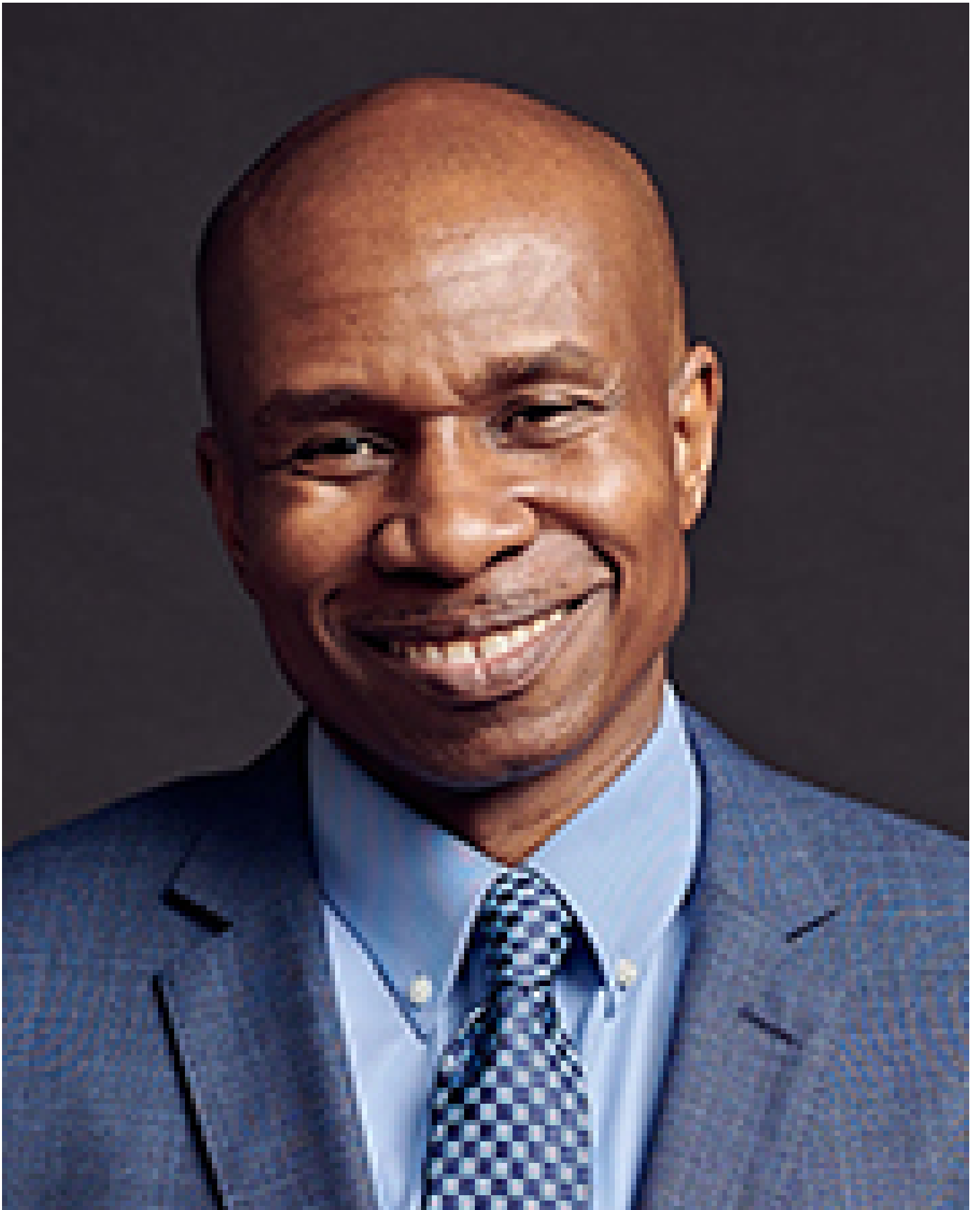


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Successfully cultivating an inclusive workplace culture for future talent in the title industry - by Damon Carter

October 22, 2021 - Spotlights



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By the year 2025, Millennials and Generation Z will make up almost 75% of the workforce. All companies, including various title companies, must take into consideration the emerging interests and expectations of this growing workforce population with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I). This generational demographic has set higher standards for corporate social responsibility and firmly believes that companies have an obligation to give back to the communities they serve by creating an inclusive work environment for everyone to equitably achieve success.

Key Components of an Inclusive Workplace Strategy

It is important for business leaders to set the expectation from the beginning that the DE&I program must be fully integrated into the organization's talent management program as soon as possible. Therefore, each key strategic HR area—recruitment, development, advancement, and retention—should include inclusive workplace practices that directly impact the overall employee experience. Failure to do so will limit the sustainability of the program and ultimately have an adverse impact on the retention of diverse talent. According to a research study, diverse talent is often assumed by other employees to have been hired for their sex or their skin color alone, not because they're qualified for their jobs—and that stigma even rubs off on the individuals themselves, so they either stop trying to get ahead or quit. Business leaders can help prevent this adverse impact from occurring by not maintaining separate and distinct employment activities for diverse talent. Instead, they must remain steadfast in their commitment to fully integrate inclusive workplace practices into each key component of the organization's talent management cycle.

Leaders must also be committed to establishing genuine connections, rooted in mutual respect and trust, with a segment of the employee population that has historically been made to feel ignored and disconnected. According to a recent Harvard Business Review article, "Learning about individuals' unique strengths and unique experiences, and showing recognition for these, is what leads employees to feel valued and respected. This is what enables going beyond surface-level inclusion in favor of real, individual-based inclusion. Inclusion efforts may be well meaning, but without a backbone of support and respect, they may seem less than genuine." Subsequently, business leaders will be able to collectively apply the various lessons learned from these personal interactions to effectively create a fair and equitable work environment for people of color and all other marginalized groups.

Start Your DE&I Journey T.O.D.A.Y.™

All business leaders need to determine how to best proceed with answering the call to effectively cultivate a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture in their own way. It starts by taking one deliberate step at a time towards building a dynamic workplace culture that consistently provides people of color, and all with fair, equitable, and just opportunities in each area of their own employee experience. There are several key leadership commitments that are integral to the development and implementation of any successful DE&I strategy, including:

Transparency: Be open and honest with all employees and the local community about the

organization's DE&I strategy, including opportunities for improvement and planned strategic actions to properly address them.

Ownership: Acknowledge that the current workplace culture is not where it needs to be with respect to DE&I and hold yourself accountable for being a part of the solution moving forward.

Dialogue: Consistently promote constructive discussions with all employees in order to clearly communicate the DE&I strategy, solicit their feedback, and provide regular updates regarding the organization's progress towards desired goals.

Accountability: Establish key performance indicators to regularly track progress against desired DE&I goals, provide regular updates to all internal and external constituents, and ensure appropriate measures are instituted to hold all technology leaders accountable for doing their part on a daily basis.

Yearning: Always demonstrate a strong commitment to getting better every day through your own personal growth and show a willingness to do the work required to make a difference in the lives of people of color, no matter how long it takes to do so.

Advice for all leaders in the Title Industry: Implementing a comprehensive workplace inclusion strategy requires both time and patience. Building and sustaining a successful DE&I program requires continuous commitment by all employees, where everyone plays a critical role in building an inclusive culture. For instance, creating forums for everyone to network and engage with one another will help employees realize that they often have more in common with others despite their individual differences with respect to race, gender, sexual orientation, or other prevailing dimensions of diversity. Essentially, the daily interactions between leadership and each of their respective employees will ultimately determine if the desired outcomes of the DE&I strategy are successfully met and sustained over time for the organization. In other words, leaders in the title industry must learn to truly value their own DE&I journey more than the desired destination.

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