

CORPORATE LEARNING WEEK 2020 Q&A SERIES

BUILDING INCLUSIVE LEADERS BY EMBRACING DIVERSITY



AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH:

Tivonnia Harvey

AVP, CLO
Merck

INTRODUCTION

We've read time and time again that there's a lack of diversity that spans from the board room to even televised award shows. And while D&I is becoming more common in conversation, there's much more work to be done.

Cue the opportunity for learning and development professionals.

As corporate trainers, it's essential to ensure that employees at every level are competent and confident in their roles, with the ability to excel. It not only takes an investment but a focus on inclusion—one that Merck has seen with eyes wide open.

Merck believes in the power of investing in its people—so much so that they've developed programs within their overall key talent portfolio focused on women and diverse leadership.

Tivonnia “T.J.” Harvey, AVP, CLO at Merck has helped to be an architect of these strong teams by driving results and turning strategy into execution through a culture of inclusion.

I sat down with TJ at IQPC's CLO Exchange as she shared how Merck is strengthening their pipeline of ethnically diverse leadership talent and supporting the advancement of women into leadership roles.



MERCK

Q: TELL US ABOUT THE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AT MERCK AND HOW IT WAS FORMED.

A: The Women's Leadership Program (WLP) is a global, nomination program that aims to help women get to the "next level" by teaching them additional skills and knowledge to grow and improve leadership capacity, increasing their ability to manage gender differences and any subtle "micro-inequities" that may exist in the culture.

The WLP positions us to create a pipeline of high potential mid-manager talent, increasing retention of these women and creating more opportunities for their advancement.

It sharpens leadership skills, builds self-awareness, provides organizational navigation skills, increases exposure to senior leaders and creates a sense of community for high potential women.

We started this journey in 2011 by defining our direction, aligning our strategy and talent with the business.

We also wanted to be clear about what we valued in our leaders and how we could help them get to that next level.

Then in 2012, we went through an eight-month journey, partnering with an all-women's undergrad institute in the Boston area—Simmons University.

Together, we conducted research around women's issues, further identifying how to create this journey for women leaders to go through.

First, women would participate in a 360-review to understand what their leadership style was; then we'd partner them with an executive coach as a role model for support.

Another element to this journey was focused around networking, allowing women to think strategically how they were going to map out their networking opportunities within the organization.

Then they would work with managers/coaches on a developmental plan and personal branding.

More recently, in 2019, we launched a few new parts to the program: We noticed a challenge for new mothers who had to travel extensively for work and knew the criticality of milk for their newborns, so we added a breast milk shipping benefit that would allow mothers to send breast milk home on the company's dime.



Q: HOW IS THE DIVERSE LEADER PROGRAM DIFFERENT FROM THE WLP?

A: The Diverse Leader Program began a few years later in 2017 and is offered in the U.S. only. It is also a nomination program but is more of an innovative, interactive journey designed to create a safe place for senior leadership to hone their leadership proficiency while investigating the similarities and differences of leaders from other racial/ethnic groups.

There is one cohort a year of 25 people from across the enterprise that lasts eight months, with four touch points.

First is the orientation to get them (and their managers) acclimated.

Then they go through two “residential,” which are three to four days long, exploring what it means to be a “Leader of Color” within the company.

At this point, they go through a 360-review as well, but they’re still wondering why they’re there. Sometimes the participants don’t always identify with “Leaders of Color” so there’s some dialogue that occurs.

We take them through the “PINS” process which represents presence, influence, networking and sponsorship. We do a cultural dig to see what biases exist across the company, what ethnicities face and they see/uncover those that are both intentional and non-intentional .



By the time the second residential comes around, the group has developed a trust and a close bond. This is where they begin to explore their personal leadership style in an experiential way with horses, using innovative technology to fine tune their presentation styles.

Q: WHAT RESULTS HAVE YOU SEEN FROM THESE PROGRAMS?

A: For the WLP, we learned that participants were gaining experiences and capabilities in other areas, not just for a quick movement up. We think it's helping with longevity as participants saw their career as more of a jungle gym instead of a ladder.

We hope to expand globally with a more omni-channel approach and introduce emerging topics like gender equity with new partners this year.

Regarding the DLP, we saw a number of promotions in both of our first two cohorts and were pleased to see the cohorts creating alumni groups to continue the conversations through monthly lunch meetings.

Q: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR OTHER COMPANIES TRYING TO INCORPORATE D&I PROGRAMS?

A: First and foremost, you need to have executive sponsorship where leaders can speak raw and vulnerably about challenges. Every organization has a different journey and you need to be sensitive to the current culture of the organization.

Next, be clear about your outcomes. How are you going to measure your results? Will you apply advanced analytics? No matter what, it needs to have a business impact that gets continually refreshed.

Finally, you need to determine how to get the majority involved. Bring them into the conversation, incorporate intersectionality and embrace your male allies!

In order to make changes within the organization and get movement, you can't do it alone. You have to bring in the people that are in the majority.

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