

This guide is part of the Global Inclusion Week 2023 Toolkit

Global Inclusion Strategy

A foundational guide

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**Global
Inclusion Week**
2023 12 - 16 June

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Introduction

Global Inclusion Week will elevate the conversation on global inclusion, bringing Inclusioneers together to learn and share knowledge.

Many organisations now operate in a global environment or are seeking to expand internationally. This presents many challenges in relation to scale and complexity, but also opens up many opportunities in relation to creating and implementing inclusion strategies.

This guide will help to identify the challenges and the opportunities. It will also give practical tips, examples and useful resources which can lay the foundations for a strong Global Inclusion strategy.

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1. Definitions

It's important to be clear what we mean by global, and how that relates to global strategies and global inclusion requirements. Here are some definitions to help.

Understanding 'global'

While many organisations have been operating globally for decades, terms are often used interchangeably without too much thought. For this document, we are following the following application of word¹ :

- “International” has a smaller scope encompassing only two or more countries.
- “Global” is a word that is used to refer to issues and concerns of the entire world.

Throughout this guide, we will be using the term 'global' as opposed to 'international'. This is because, even though an organisation may be 'international' as opposed to 'global', we see inclusion as a global issue that impacts everyone around the globe.

Global Inclusion is about how organisations provide inclusive environments where their workforce can flourish, regardless of where they are from. It is also about acknowledging the interconnected nature of the world we live in, where events like pandemics and conflicts have an impact on people and organisations worldwide, and where an organisation's commitment to inclusion and diversity will have an impact on their brand not only at a regional or local level, but also at a global level.

¹ Difference Between Global and International | Difference Between <http://www.differencebetween.net/language/words-language/difference-between-global-and-international/#ixzz7PZpegm3T>

The Global Inclusion mindset

While it may feel that inclusion and diversity as a practice has grown due to social and political events mainly in Europe and North America, it is essential that we expand our view beyond the Western world to address the needs of the global employee workforce. As the experiences of different cultures around the world become more visible, many global organisations now wish to create an inclusion and diversity strategy that resonates and works around the world, wherever they operate.

As the first step for any Global I&D strategy, consider having a mindset that is prepared to define or redefine what the words ‘inclusion’ and ‘diversity’ mean to a wider global audience (and that goes beyond Europe and North America). Different levels of understanding and education in this area in many countries may be the biggest barrier to creating an inclusive global organisation.

A helpful way to think about it is that diversity, from an organisational perspective, tends to be more about policies, processes, and compliance, particularly in the area of representation. Inclusion represents a more nuanced understanding of relational issues and how people engage with each other and in groups. Inclusion is much more focused on shifting mindsets and understanding that people want to be respected and valued for being their authentic selves, whilst at the same time helping them feel a sense of belonging.

Harvard Professor Borys Groysberg said: ‘Diversity is counting the numbers, inclusion is making the numbers count’.

In a global context, starting a conversation with inclusion first, as opposed to diversity, can be very effective. BCW, a global communications company, has approached their global strategy in this way. They have also created their own acronym that is used all around the world – IDEA, standing for **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accountability**. Carol Watson (Chief Inclusion Officer) said ‘I wanted to make sure we had a term and a concept that invited everyone to the conversation’.²

A typical misconception in the Global Inclusion strategy space is that due to the lack of legal protection in many countries, it is impossible to fully deliver on a global strategy.

However, this document highlights some useful examples where organisations do deliver global strategies and lay a powerful role in creating positive change.

² Carol Watson, What is IDEA https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RbzfG1lwVA (BCW, April 5, 2022)

2. Benefits

Many studies report on the general, social and commercial benefits of inclusion and diversity for organisations. These include greater financial returns, more innovation and creativity, higher employee engagement and other positive employee and organisational markers.

The rollout of a Global I&D strategy can benefit an organisation in potentially unexpected ways, including:

- It can help create an organisational design that is more effective and/or efficient.
- It can be a guiding light or ‘North Star’ if there is an organisational change or change transformation taking place.
- It provides an opportunity for internal and external marketing: improving current and future employee experience as well as attitudes to an organisation.
- By embracing inclusion globally, employees are more likely to stay if they feel they have mobility options that are safe and inclusive.
- A global organisation can eventually become an agent for change in society and a beacon for other companies to do the same.

3. Challenges and opportunities

The inclusion and diversity conversation in the West is often reflective of voices from North America and Europe, which makes it challenging for I&D initiatives to be replicated by every country across the globe. This means that multinationals have the challenge of staying tuned to I&D values from around the world whilst needing to acknowledge differences in local cultural contexts.

These perceived challenges can also be opportunities. It is also helpful to remember that any global organisation by its very nature is multicultural and therefore there is an opportunity to leverage the positive aspects of its global personality at the outset.

The following table outlines the key challenges and resulting opportunities:

Perceived challenges	Potential opportunities
Local laws vary greatly and can impact issues around employment such as paid maternity or paternity, harassment in the workplace, discrimination, or equal compensation.	<p>A global organisation can create internal standards or norms that can provide a safe space for employees from particular groups.</p> <p>As an example, some employee benefits can often remain global, and still be relevant locally even when it is not the expected norm in certain countries (for example partner health insurance, benefits for LGBTQ+ employees).</p> <p>Some organisations may call this set of standards a 'Code of Conduct' and others a softer 'Inclusive Standards' or similar equivalent.</p>

<p>Safety is likely to be a key consideration for some employees as it relates to any mobility programme in a multinational organisation.</p>	<p>Countries with stronger legislation in areas affecting employment³ (as highlighted above) can be leveraged as safer places for employees and places in which to launch new operations, offices or businesses.</p>
<p>The ‘Great Resignation’ is now a global movement.⁴ Wellbeing has become even more important and local/in-country employment is increasing so overseas postings are shorter and cover a wider variety of destinations.</p>	<p>Changes in mobility and postings at a company area provide the opportunity to review existing processes on welcoming overseas employees and see whether they can be future proofed to be more inclusive.</p>
<p>People are still criminalised and subject to the death penalty in many countries for their identity (for example, over 71 jurisdictions criminalise private, consensual, same-sex sexual activity. 11 jurisdictions in which the death penalty is imposed or at least a possibility for private, consensual same-sex sexual activity.)⁵</p>	<p>Companies can take a public stance on issues which can make an impact. For example, in 2012 Barclays took a public stance, lobbying against the Ugandan bill to make homosexuality punishable by death and the bill passed with the death penalty provision removed.⁶</p> <p>A clear policy to help individuals opt-out of unsafe opportunities without penalty is key.</p>
<p>There will be great variation across markets in understanding the benefits of a good inclusion & diversity strategy or practice.</p>	<p>Continuous training and education around the world are important. Where possible, find examples that are ‘closer to home’ culturally or geographically.</p>

3 Nataly Kelly, Implementing Inclusive Policies Across a Global Organization (Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, March 2, 2021)

4 <https://www.hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/is-the-great-resignation-becoming-global>

5 <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/lgbt-the-law/map-of-criminalisation/>

6 Art Kleiner, Kenji Yoshino, Pro-LGBT Companies in Anti-LGBT Countries (Strategy + Business, August 2, 2016)

<p>There will be many countries where there is little to no dedicated resource that can focus on inclusion & diversity (and possibly no HR resource either).</p>	<p>Consider a mentor, buddy-system or coaching approach to alleviate the burden on workloads.</p>
<p>Dimensions and characteristics of diversity will be different in every country (and there may be some very specific to local culture). In addition, where there is less ethnic diversity there is a common misconception that I&D practices are less relevant.</p>	<p>Drive local leadership accountability by being open to understanding locally specific challenges which may vary greatly from perceived global challenges. Understand what constitutes 'minority' or 'marginalised' groups in each location and draw from local demographic data to build your business case.</p>
<p>If an organisation has huge scale and a complex structure this can be a barrier to setting and achieving I&D key performance indicators (KPIs).</p>	<p>Take the time to understand where the power and decision-making sits around the world to help solidify points of accountability.</p> <p>Engage global stakeholders in the decision-making process so that your KPIs feel relevant and authentic.</p> <p>Understand what elements you can control and where you can lead the way, even when other regions are lagging.</p>

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- Key elements of building a strategy
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- Case studies

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