



FROM MOMENT TO MOVEMENT

4 Ways Organizations Can Make
Impactful Change for Black History
Month and Beyond

February 1, 2021 kicked off the first day of Black History Month - a month that is meant to acknowledge and celebrate Black people's contributions to American history. It is the 45th nationally-recognized Black History Month in United States history, and though 1976 feels like a lifetime ago, and the world has evolved beyond recognition, not much has changed for Black Americans since President Ford declared Black History Month a national holiday. Black Americans still face significant discrimination based on their racial and ethnic identity, despite the perceived progress that has been made toward a more equitable future. Racial injustice, discrimination, and social attitudes continue to disadvantage Black people socially and economically.

In 2020, during the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter Movement, countless organizations pledged millions of dollars and vowed to address racial injustice through internal and external initiatives. However, finding ways to effectively combat centuries of injustice proved challenging for most organizations, due to the complexity of race and how it impacts every aspect of our society. As Black History Month comes to a close, it's critical that businesses take a more in-depth approach to understanding the drivers of racial inequity in order to enact meaningful change well beyond February.

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DIVERSITY

Shift mindset beyond the business case for Black employees and leadership

Embracing diversity is the right thing for organizations to do. In recent years, however, many organizations have tried to frame diversity solely as a business case. Although there are quantifiable reasons to embrace diversity that can be invaluable to organizations' bottom lines, a purely financial focus can lead to inauthenticity and ineffective diversity initiatives that harm the same communities that leadership hoped to attract, develop, and ultimately retain. Taking a people-first approach to all diversity initiatives is key to creating sustainable change for Black employees and their communities.

Pepsi is one such organization that has put the emphasis on their people and not just their bottom line. Pepsi's "People" initiative, part of their larger \$400M investment in tackling racial inequity, takes a people-first approach to racial equity. Their pledges include:

- Increasing their Black manager population by 30%
- Adding 100 Black associates to their executive ranks
- Expanding recruitment at HBCUs
- Implementing mandatory unconscious bias training
- Increasing partnerships with diverse organizations at core schools
- Developing inclusion training tools
- Pledging \$25M to establish scholarships for students transitioning from 2-year to 4-year programs





EQUITY

Reevaluate your hiring and pay practices to create transparency

Though many organizations advocate for equality and equal opportunity from an employee perspective, many organizations mistake equality for equity. At a high level, equality is a good thing. It ensures that everyone has the same resources and opportunities. However, equality only works if everyone starts on the same playing field from the beginning. Equity accounts for the different backgrounds and needs of different groups of people so that everyone can achieve success. If organizations take the time to frame their talent management processes and employee experience initiatives with equity, not just equality, at the forefront, they can begin to chip away at some of the drivers of racial inequity at work. Some of those drivers include (but are not limited to) pay disparities, health care coverage, succession planning, education and hiring requirements, blind applications, and many more.

“Commitment to becoming a truly anti-racist organization and delivering on a robust, long term agenda of diversity and inclusion goals...”



Peloton is a great example of an organization that championed equity over equality. **The Peloton Pledge** is focused on equity not just for their employees, but for their customers as well.

- Increase the hourly wages of their workforce
- Investing \$20M in learning and development programs with a dedicated focus on hourly employees
- Make product and content more accessible to underserved communities (via Digital and Connected Fitness platforms). In four years, the business aims to have at least 10% of classes streamed to and taken by members of these communities.
- Commitment to becoming a truly anti-racist organization and delivering on a robust, long term agenda of diversity + inclusion goals, beginning immediately with anti-racism learning opportunities at all levels of the company, a review and report of diversity data, a comprehensive inclusivity audit, and the implementation of bias-mitigating strategies in all key points of the employee lifecycle (hiring, reviews, promotion, and more).



Striking the balance between active listening and allyship



INCLUSION

Listen to Black employees and leaders, but do not burden them

Black History Month, and all months are great opportunities to acknowledge, celebrate, and learn from diverse consumers and employees. Making the effort to listen to and learn from employees can help uncover potential organizational blind spots, ways to engage with consumers more authentically, and to unlock new areas for innovation. While actively listening and engaging Black employees can create a more positive working environment, it's important not to place the full burden of diversity on their shoulders and act as allies to provide support.

[Salesforce](#) is an organization that has done an excellent job at striking the balance between active listening and allyship. In 2017, Salesforce employees, led by BOLDforce, their Black employee resource group, attended a MLKJ march in San Francisco where 100 primarily Black-identifying employees showed up. Two years later after prioritizing allyship and removing the burden of learning, sharing, and promoting diversity from Black employees, 1,200 Salesforce employees attended the MLKJ march. BOLDforce employees felt a deeper sense of belonging at work after seeing their colleagues show up as allies, which fosters a deeper sense of inclusion. Non-Black Salesforce employees taking responsibility for learning how to be an ally and support their Black coworkers created a safer, more inclusive workplace.





RESPONSIBILITY

Invest in Black led organizations within your communities and nationally

When developing racial justice initiatives, it is important to make sure they are created with corporate social responsibility (CSR) in mind. By approaching these initiatives through the lens of CSR, the actions your organization takes will have more positive and sustainable impacts on the communities you engage with. To make the greatest impact, supporting Black-owned organizations with your time, talent, or treasure, contracting Black-owned vendors or creative agencies, and aligning with community organizations dedicated to racial justice and racial equity work are all great ways to advance racial justice in a responsible way.



SUPPORTING

+



CONTRACTING

+

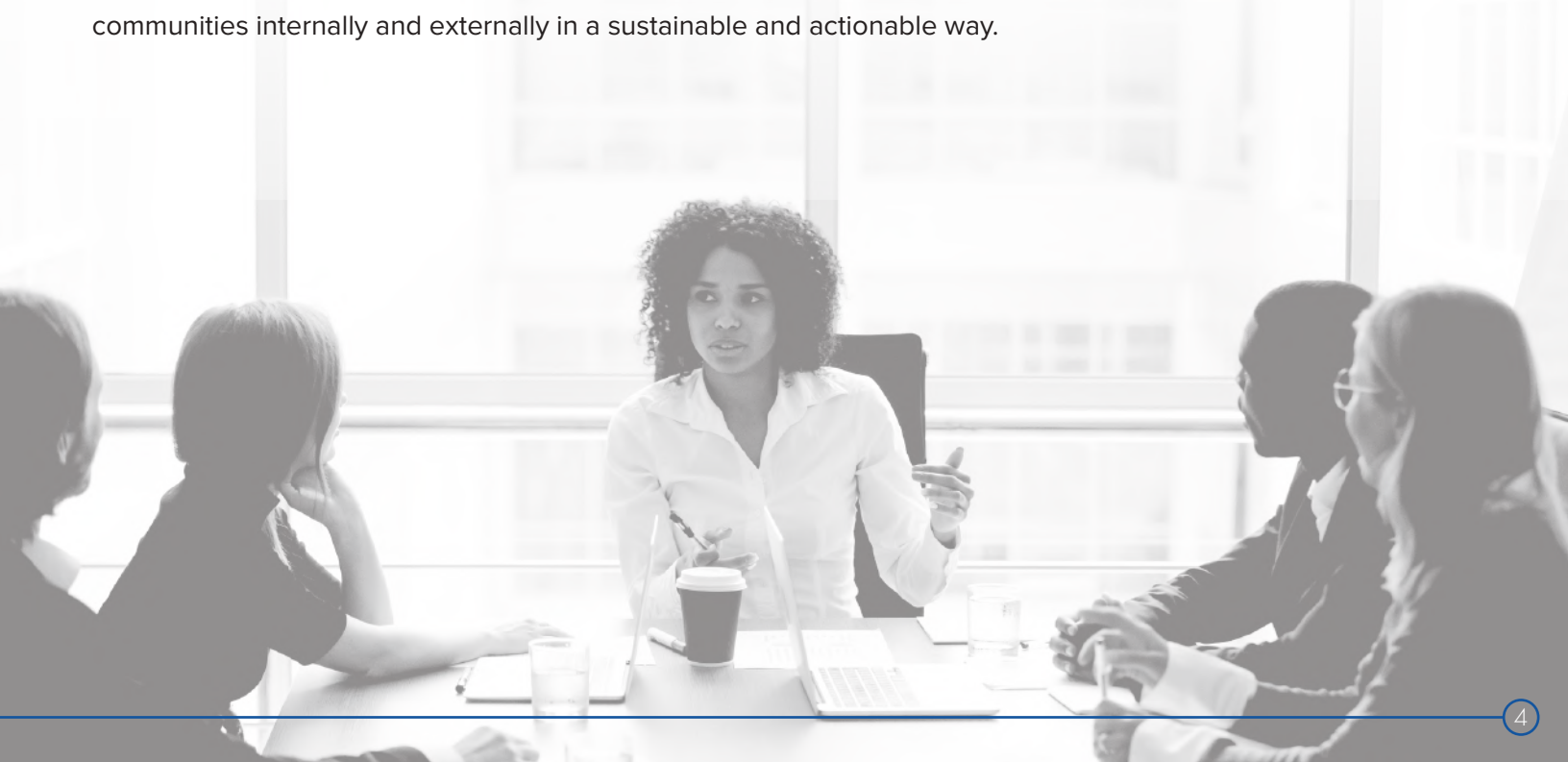


ALIGNING

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IMPACT

Target is a great example of an organization who balanced racial justice with corporate social responsibility. Their [REACH](#) (Racial Equity Action and Change) program focuses on advancing racial equity not only for their Black team members and guests, but in Black communities across the country, especially in their home city of Minneapolis. Their multi-faceted approach includes creating an inclusive environment for Black team members that includes recruiting initiatives, leadership development, and anti-racist training for all team members. They have also put a special emphasis on aligning their advertising, product lineup, and expertise with Black customers to create a welcoming experience. Lastly, they have worked with Black community leaders and policy makers to prioritize amplifying Black voices and social issues that affect Black people. By approaching racial justice and equity for all stakeholder groups, Target has continued to support the advancement of Black communities internally and externally in a sustainable and actionable way.



GOING FORWARD

Racial injustice, bias, and discrimination are pervasive issues that have inextricably crept into how we live and work. Adequately addressing these issues and their detrimental effects to your people and business will require dedicated strategies, initiatives, and resources far beyond a single month in the year. Businesses that are able to successfully demonstrate a steadfast and continuous commitment to racial justice are not only doing the right thing for their people, they're creating a foundation for innovation, collaboration, and growth for their business.

For more resources on how your organization can learn more about advancing racial justice and equity, visit corporateracialjustice.com.



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