Diversity as a driver of change
Welcome to this Proco Group report, ‘Diversity as a Driver for Change’, in which we are proud to share some of the latest thinking on the links between employing a diverse workforce and driving innovation and change in the supply chain.

We are delighted to be publishing this paper to coincide with International Women’s Day, which is a global celebration on which we are keen to have our voices heard at Proco Group. Last year we took the opportunity to reach out to scores of female supply chain leaders working in global corporations, and we were fascinated to hear their insights about the issues that they face—such as a lack of female role models in the industry, and even blatant discriminatory behaviour.

This year, the theme of International Women’s Day is #PressforProgress, and we are once again reaching out to our senior-level contacts around the world and asking them about the efforts they are making to foster innovation, to build diverse teams and to avoid the perils of groupthink—which is the tendency towards homogenous viewpoints. They have told us what has worked for them and where they still see challenges, all of which makes for some fascinating reading. You’ll find some instructive case studies, some first steps to driving diversity, and plenty of food for thought.

Introduction

There are sometimes challenges in identifying that talent, and in attracting, retaining, motivating and developing it, but the rewards on offer to those that get it right are endless. At its most basic level, we see every day how a diverse workforce itself attracts talent, and the power of building a brand in the recruitment market that is associated with diversity and inclusion.

At a time when fostering a culture of innovation in supply chain management is so critical to success, it is hard to deny that this industry needs to be looking at this research and taking it seriously.

In the decade since I launched Proco, it has become more and more apparent that the only way to truly future-proof your supply chain is to tap into the huge variety of talent available around the world and build a culture of diversity and inclusion. A commitment to diversity is a commitment to innovation—after all, as Ezra Pound, the great American poet, said at the start of the last century, ‘When two men in business always agree, one of them is unnecessary’. More than 100 years on, we’d rather he’d said people, rather than men, but his is nevertheless a powerful statement about the need for diverse teams if you want to drive change and come up with new ideas.

At Proco, we are passionate about diversity, and we are proud to work with some of the organisations at the very cutting edge of current thinking. Changing the face of your workforce cannot happen overnight, but building a business that will endure requires being flexible and smart enough to welcome the entire talent pool.

Changing the face of your workforce cannot happen overnight, but building a business that will endure requires being flexible and smart enough to welcome the entire talent pool.
Executive Summary

10 steps to driving diversity of thought in your business

01 Address unconscious bias
Consider training programmes to help managers identify their personal prejudices, and how to make sure those don’t impact their decision making.

02 Insist on diverse shortlists
If you’re not seeing a variety of candidates, you won’t build a diverse organisation. If the shortlist isn’t varied, maybe you need to look harder, and elsewhere.

03 Drive out bias in initial selection
Consider using name-blind CVs, and remove details such as name, age, gender and even academic institutions from applications in the initial screening process.

04 Consider diversity targets
“What gets measured, gets done” – just like all your other business strategies, make sure you know where you want to get to, and how you’re going to do it.

05 Measure what you have
You can’t make a change if you don’t know where you are to start with. Only 61% of the companies in our survey currently measure diversity in their employee population.

06 Build a culture of inclusion
Diversity can only make a business impact if everyone feels able to contribute and have their voices heard, and if everyone is equally valued and supported.

07 Nurture diverse talent
Identify your stars of the future and help them build their career within your organisation, supporting them if they face challenges.

08 Stretch the recruitment net farther and wider
Don’t look for a round peg to fill a round hole – look to different universities, industries or backgrounds and seek out transferrable skills.

09 Lead from the top
Management needs to lead by example and set the tone. Communicate the importance of diversity and inclusion, and communicate it often.

10 Put diversity and inclusion at the heart of your brand
Candidates want to work in businesses that prioritise what matters, and this matters. Be proud of what you’re doing, and share it.

Have you asked yourself.... the CEO checklist?

› How diverse is your business today?
Do your management teams look like your customer base, and what image are you presenting to the outside world?

› Are you listening to diverse voices?
Where do you get your ideas from? Who are the people that influence you most in your work and more generally? Do those people have the same backgrounds as you?

› What are your own prejudices?
We all have them, but have you challenged your unconscious bias, and made an effort to address it?

› How can you drive innovation?
Innovation comes from creativity and new ideas – do your teams really include people who think differently, and challenge the status quo?

› Are you taking the lead?
Do you have people on the board who are responsible for diversity and inclusion? Are you demonstrating to the business that this is important?
Methodology

In February 2018, we conducted a survey among our senior supply chain contacts around the world, asking them about their diversity and inclusion efforts, building diverse teams, and how they avoid the perils of groupthink.

In all, 1,120 supply chain professionals from 13 industry sectors across Europe, The Americas and Asia were surveyed. This report is based on the findings of that survey, as well as qualitative interviews with our senior clients.
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Respondents that would like their organisation to do more to address the lack of diversity in your organisation.

Respondents with official programmes in place to recruit a more diverse workforce.

Respondents with official programmes in place to develop a more diverse workforce.

Respondents with no official programmes in place to recruit, develop or retain a more diverse workforce.

Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

Which of the following is currently part of your organisation’s diversity and inclusion efforts?
Diversity and Inclusion

Top priorities for diversity and inclusion efforts:

**AMERICAS**
- Ensuring diversity in the workplace in general
- Ensuring diversity at all levels of management
- Developing a robust pipeline of high-potential diverse talent

**ASIA**
- Ensuring diversity in the workplace in general
- Retention and development of diverse talent
- Developing a robust pipeline of high-potential diverse talent

**EUROPE**
- Ensuring diversity at all levels of management
- Ensuring diversity in the workplace in general
- Retention and development of diverse talent

Respondents who agree that diversity is critical to driving innovation in business.

Respondents who agree that diverse teams deliver better outcomes.

Respondents who make efforts to avoid groupthink in their organisations.

Respondents who believe diversity programmes help attract talent.
Driving Innovation in the Supply Chain

People need to be encouraged to think outside the box and put forward those crazy ideas, because it’s too easy to get engaged in groupthink, and assume that things will be the same forever.

Michelle Brouhard, Partner - Yaupon Capital Management

Supply chain innovation is one of the great stories of the 21st century, as consumers have come to demand better products, produced more efficiently, at lower cost and delivered far more quickly.

In 2018, the companies that are leading the way are those that can meet this consumer demand most effectively, while also delivering accountability across the supply chain, whether that’s from farm to fork, or from mine to engagement-ring finger.

Innovation can greatly impact supply chain performance, as manufacturers strive to design products that are easier to produce, require fewer components and can be more efficiently assembled and repaired. Likewise, supply chain innovation can improve the quality of products and reduce costs, and can reduce its impact on the environment. By working with suppliers to drive innovation across the product life cycle, speed to market can be rapidly increased, efficiencies achieved, costs cut and profits thereby increased.

The innovation piece is simply no longer optional, according to many supply chain leaders, because there is so much price pressure and pressure to deliver in order to ensure products remain relevant in the marketplace.

In some areas, such as commodities, the real disruption is yet to come, but the importance of driving innovation is no less real. Michelle Brouhard is a Partner at Yaupon Capital Management, an energy asset manager investing in equities, derivatives and credit, based in New York.

She notes that energy and commodities have been identified as one of the last industry sectors to be disrupted by new technology, and says: “I work on the investment side of the business, and innovation in investment strategies is starting to become interesting. It started to happen in 2017 where we began to see people become more creative with their strategies, by trading crude differentials and creating a deeper US grade market. The real changes in investing in the energy space will come from the relationship between asset classes and trading equities and credit in the energy space with a commodity overlay.”

She adds, “There are still industry dinosaurs who haven’t yet adopted a creative way to approach the new dynamics in the energy space, and those are the ones who will be forced to change or exit. It will be the forward thinkers and thought leaders that will move this emerging industry forward.”

There is little debate that the businesses that will thrive will be those able to drive supply chain innovation by fostering a culture that breeds creativity. Brouhard previously worked at a hedge fund and she says that it was the most innovative culture she has ever seen: “The biggest way to encourage innovation is to listen to everybody’s thoughts, challenge each other and allow yourself to be challenged,” she says.
I think diversity of thought is critical – you need diverse thinking and diverse points of view to come up with innovative ideas. You’re not going to innovate by having the same way of thinking year-on-year, and that means more than just having a diverse workforce.

Meredith Brooks, Senior Director, Strategic Sourcing - Hasbro

“...I think diversity of thought is critical – you need diverse thinking and diverse points of view to come up with innovative ideas. You’re not going to innovate by having the same way of thinking year-on-year, and that means more than just having a diverse workforce, it is also about inclusion, having an engaging culture and comfortable environment so that everyone can share and express different points of view. It’s about bringing together different ways of working and different ways of thinking and looking at how you manage the extrovert and how you manage the introvert to make sure they are both comfortable contributing and challenging.”

In our survey of 1,120 supply chain executives around the world, more than 80% of our respondents agreed that diverse teams deliver better outcomes, and 90% of those based in Europe said that diversity is critical to driving innovation in a business.

Brooks believes that fostering innovation means looking at more than one dimension, by pulling together different functions and parts of the business; looking at the way things have always been done and seeking to challenge those; and sharing goals for supply chain innovation to encourage everyone to get involved.

She adds, “I think diversity of thought is critical – you need diverse thinking and diverse points of view to come up with innovative ideas. You’re not going to innovate by having the same way of thinking year-on-year, and that means more than just having a diverse workforce, it is also about inclusion, having an engaging culture and comfortable environment so that everyone can share and express different points of view. It’s about bringing together different ways of working and different ways of thinking and looking at how you manage the extrovert and how you manage the introvert to make sure they are both comfortable contributing and challenging.”

In PwC’s 2017 survey of chief executives around the world, nearly a quarter pointed to innovation as their top priority for the coming year, well ahead of things like competitiveness, human capital and technological capabilities. But, the firm said, hiring innovative people is not easy, and businesses instead need to focus on training their people to be adaptive, creative and critical thinkers.

Meredith Brooks is Senior Director, Strategic Sourcing at toyemaker Hasbro in Hong Kong. She says consumers are driving supply chain innovation and companies must respond: “Our consumers have new and changing expectations about where and how they buy products and how quickly products get delivered, so we need to be proactive to not only keep up, but also to stay ahead of what consumers are going to expect in future. We cannot be competitive if we continue with the same old supply chain – we have to look at the internal and external boundaries and barriers, and continuously strive to reduce the overall time to market.”

More than half of those interviewed in Asia and the Americas said they were making efforts to avoid groupthink in their organisations, recognising the value that comes from diversity of thought.
In our technical development team we have Thai, American and Danish cultures, and we also have different genders. That mix is really important when it comes to fuelling creativity, because viewpoints are shared and it’s about putting many different ideas on the table.

Patrick Bennett, Vice President of Technical Development and Research - Pandora

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Patrick Bennett is Vice President of Technical Development and Research at Pandora, the jewellery designer, manufacturer and retailer. The company is headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark, and manufactures in Thailand, where Bennett is based.

He says: “What’s interesting here is that innovation is fuelled by many sources and is absolutely crucial for our continued growth. In our technical development team we have Thai, American and Danish cultures, and we also have different genders. That mix is really important when it comes to fuelling creativity, because viewpoints are shared and it’s about putting many different ideas on the table.”

If innovation is critical to supply chain success, Beatrix Praeceptor believes passionately that diversity is just as important. She is Chief Procurement Officer at Mondi, a global packaging and paper group, and says: “Diversity in the broadest sense is a must in the supply chain, because if you take the basic key elements of supply chain management, they are all about making things work together by bringing the right people together and defining the right processes.”

She adds: “There is a lot of diversity in the supply chain already in terms of people, products, processes and cultures, so you need to reflect diversity in the teams that are dealing with that.”

That diversity goes beyond simply diversity of gender, race or ethnicity, and involves bringing in people with many different perspectives to challenge the status quo and take the supply chain on to the next level of thinking.

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Meredith Brooks, Senior Director Strategic Sourcing - Hasbro
Redefining Diversity

The definition of diversity is starting to change in 2018, as businesses move their efforts forward from focusing on the representation of women and minorities, towards focusing on building teams that encompass a diversity of thought.

Diversity of thought is important in growing companies, because it helps guard against groupthink—which is the tendency towards homogenous viewpoints—and frequently helps generate new ideas and insights. It also allows companies to more effectively identify the best people for any chosen task, based on many different variables, by recognising that no two individuals will approach something in the same way.

Beatrix Praeceptor, Chief Procurement Officer at Mondi Group, says: “Diversity to me is about cultural diversity, but it is also about typology—bringing together people with different approaches to communication or leadership. The easiest way to go for more diversity is to track males and females, but that’s the basic of Diversity, the ‘1.0’. Of course, within males and females you have a broad diversity of personalities and preferences, and making those work well together can be really powerful.”

Even so, there are still plenty of businesses that are not measuring diversity in their population, even at a basic Diversity 1.0 perspective. According to our survey, only 55% of respondents in Asia, and 64% of those in Europe and 65% in the Americas are working in companies that measure diversity in their employee populations. Two-thirds of respondents around the world said they would like their organisation to do more to address a lack of diversity within its ranks.

There is growing evidence of a real business case for building diverse teams within a corporation. In January 2018, management consulting firm McKinsey & Company published new research showing that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35% more likely to achieve financial returns above their national averages.

Kathy Mu is Global Supply Chain Director for Specialised Nutrition and Asia at FrieslandCampina, one of the world’s largest dairy cooperatives. She is based in Singapore, and says: “The most important thing is to fully understand your people, especially in supply chain, because no two supply chain leaders or people can be good at everything. Some are good at quality, some are good at planning, while others at procurement. So, when you form a team, you need to first understand the objective before selecting the right person to come up with the right team based on competencies.”

She adds: “I also look at the chemistry of the team—not just male and female, but also, do they know each other, will they have good chemistry based on my understanding of them. There is also the role they will play in the team—you need doers, decision-makers, communicators, promoters, and so on. My experience, especially for large and critical projects, is that you need all of those.”

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Beatrix Praeceptor, Chief Procurement Officer
Mondi Group
Kelly says the business is on a journey, focused on improving its diversity, though it is already recognised as a leading black employer in the US, and one of the best for female business leaders. He adds: “We aren’t doing this because it’s good from a branding perspective – that is not Thermo Fisher’s approach. We believe that, particularly for this business that is all about innovation, we know that diverse teams and workforces are able to achieve higher performance of output than those that are not.”

He talks about diversity and inclusion about being much more than gender or race. Kelly says: “It’s not all about the colour of people’s skin, or their religion. It’s much broader than that, things like supporting parents of children with autism, which puts enormous pressure on them if they are in jobs that require them to travel. It’s about bringing those conversations out, recognising their specific needs, and thinking what we can do to support them as an employer. For us, it’s about looking at diversity and inclusion in the broadest sense, and being able to ultimately have open and honest conversations.”

For others, diversity may mean bringing in people that have been educated in different schools, or have previously worked in different industries.

Cara Walker, Talent Acquisition Consultant - Cargill

The report, Delivering through diversity, concluded that the unequal performance of companies in the same industry and the same country implies that diversity is a competitive differentiator, shifting market share towards more diverse companies.

Another study published by Boston Consulting Group in April 2017 found a clear relationship between the diversity of companies’ management teams and the revenues they get from innovative products and services. By studying 171 German, Swiss and Austrian companies, the report – called The Mix That Matters: Innovation Through Diversity – found not only that management diversity leads to innovation, but also that the innovation boost isn’t limited to a single type of diversity: “The presence of managers who are female or from other countries, industries or companies can cause an increase in innovation,” the study said. It added that at companies with diverse management teams, openness to contributions from lower-level workers and an environment in which employees feel free to speak their minds are crucial to fostering innovation.

Neil Kelly is Director, Talent Acquisition EMEA & APAC, for Patheon, now part of Thermo Fisher Scientific, which is a global life sciences company that employs 70,000 people around the world and is present in every country.

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Diversity today can mean a lot of different things, but diversity of thought seems imperative to business growth, competitiveness and success.

In our survey, 108 US respondents told us that veteran status was part of their organisation’s diversity and inclusion efforts, for example, in Asia, 80 respondents were actively working to improve diversity around disability.

Cara Walker is a Talent Acquisition Consultant at Cargill, based in the UK. Cargill is the largest privately-held company in the US, and Walker says: “We really see that, for us, a diverse workforce leads to a successful business. We think it’s important that we have a group of people that demonstrates inclusion and diversity at all levels who come together to solve problems – that makes our business more creative and reflects the industries that we serve.”

She says the challenges in hiring a diverse workforce vary around the globe: “I was recruiting in the Nordics recently, where there is a different attitude to parenting and males take time off just as much as females. So, whereas elsewhere you often see gaps in women’s CVs, there we saw gaps in both male and female CVs where they had taken time out to raise children. We aren’t there yet in the UK.”

Catherine Jucker, Vice President Operations, Milk Europe at Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition, is based in the Netherlands. She says a key element of diversity for her is about bringing together teams of people who have worked in different parts of the world: “We are based in Europe but we supply customers and meet regulatory requirements around the world, so having people with a diverse profile is very powerful.

She adds: “There’s a difference between the emerged and the emerging world – a lot of things go faster in Asia for example, including market dynamics, regulations, and competition, than in Europe, where everything is more stable. There’s a real value in having a combination of people from Europe and Asia on a team. It allows us to be more agile and creative, and facilitates our connections with teams around the world.”

Diversity today can mean a lot of different things, but diversity of thought seems imperative to business growth, competitiveness and success.
Nurturing Diversity of Thought and Innovation

Only 30% of the respondents to our survey in Europe said that they had official programmes in place to recruit a more diverse workforce, with the same figure rising to 34% in Asia and 43% in the Americas.

In the next section of this report we deal with some of the recruitment challenges associated with building more diverse teams, but before moving to things like job descriptions and interview questions, the first thing companies need to do is work out the scale of the problem. That means tracking the current population of the business, and working out what you’d like to achieve. Only 30% of the respondents to our survey in Europe said that they had official programmes in place to recruit a more diverse workforce, with the same figure rising to 34% in Asia and 43% in the Americas. Only 30% globally had programmes aimed at developing a more diverse workforce, and in Europe only 16% were focused on retaining a more diverse employee group.

Overall, 25% of the companies surveyed in Europe told us they had no official programmes in place to recruit, retain or develop a more diverse workforce. And yet the argument goes that if businesses start to at least track diversity numbers, and set targets, they will at least build strategies and programmes to achieve those targets in the same way that they pursue other key performance indicators.

In February 2018, Lloyds Banking Group became the first FTSE 100 firm to set an ethnic diversity target, aiming to make sure 10% of its global workforce is from a black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) background, and 8% of its senior management, by 2020. Currently, 8.3% of the 70,000 people it employs are defined as BAME, and 5.3% of management.

When it announced the targets, the bank said ‘what gets measured, gets done’, and its ethnic targets follow a similar initiative with regard to gender, which it announced back in 2014 that it was aiming to have 40% of its 8,000 top jobs occupied by women by 2020. At the time, the figure stood at 27%, but the bank said it would like to reflect the diversity of its customers in the management of its group.

Lloyds based its targets on the make-up of its customer population, but a McKinsey & Company report from 2007, called Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver, suggested it takes 30% or more women at a senior level to make a difference, such that they move from being perceived as female directors, to simply being directors.
Joachim Hasenmaier is CEO at Boghringer Ingelheim, a German-headquartered global pharmaceutical business. He also believes in setting targets: “We have set ourselves targets on the percentage of positions we want to be filled by diverse candidates by 2025,” he says. “For any role that’s posted, we make it mandated that the list of candidates includes diverse candidates, which does create challenges for external recruiting, but we don’t just want the obvious candidates.”

He says he has not experienced internal resistance to the policy, because at the end of the day the jobs still always go to the best person: “Have I seen a position go to an inferior candidate, in terms of my confidence that that person will execute, just to make our diversity target? I would say no. In case of doubt, we go for the expertise and just see the diversity target as an ambition.”

Cara Walker at Cargill says her business demands 50/50 shortlists of male and female candidates for senior management roles: “Sometimes that does mean that we have to compromise on the skills and experience that we set out,” she says. “For example, if we have 10 candidates that we want to take forward, half of those are female, but not all of them will necessarily meet all the criteria. They might meet half the criteria, and we will support their application because there might be things we could do to support their development.

We acknowledge that sometimes there could be a good reason why they haven’t been able to have the full rounded set of experience.”

When it comes to nurturing diverse talent, more effort is often required from line managers. Clint Lewis is executive vice president and president of International Operations at Zoetis, where he says there is also a focus on gender diversity in the management team: “You don’t have to sell me on the benefits of diversity. When I took over my current role, a key opportunity for us was to improve the gender diversity of our general management pool. While we have a good base of existing general managers, the reality is that the current group and pipeline of future talent was disproportionately male.

“In order to address this opportunity,” he says, “we recognised that in developing our human capital strategy, we needed to approach it no different than developing a strategy for one of our products. If we want to take a product from point ‘A to B’, the first step is to establish a baseline. What’s our starting point from where we want to improve? What’s the gap between where we are and where we need to get to? And finally, what’s the specific strategy that we can put into place to best address this gap and deliver our desired results?”

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Joachim Hasenmaier is CEO at Boghringer Ingelheim, a German-headquartered global pharmaceutical business. He also believes in setting targets: “We have set ourselves targets on the percentage of positions we want to be filled by diverse candidates by 2025,” he says. “For any role that’s posted, we make it mandated that the list of candidates includes diverse candidates, which does create challenges for external recruiting, but we don’t just want the obvious candidates.”

He says he has not experienced internal resistance to the policy, because at the end of the day the jobs still always go to the best person: “Have I seen a position go to an inferior candidate, in terms of my confidence that that person will execute, just to make our diversity target? I would say no. In case of doubt, we go for the expertise and just see the diversity target as an ambition.”

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We acknowledge that sometimes there could be a good reason why they haven’t been able to have the full rounded set of experience.”

When it comes to nurturing diverse talent, more effort is often required from line managers. Clint Lewis is executive vice president and president of International Operations at Zoetis, where he says there is also a focus on gender diversity in the management team: “You don’t have to sell me on the benefits of diversity. When I took over my current role, a key opportunity for us was to improve the gender diversity of our general management pool. While we have a good base of existing general managers, the reality is that the current group and pipeline of future talent was disproportionately male.

“In order to address this opportunity,” he says, “we recognised that in developing our human capital strategy, we needed to approach it no different than developing a strategy for one of our products. If we want to take a product from point ‘A to B’, the first step is to establish a baseline. What’s our starting point from where we want to improve? What’s the gap between where we are and where we need to get to? And finally, what’s the specific strategy that we can put into place to best address this gap and deliver our desired results?”
Inclusivity is the key – making sure people feel like it’s a welcoming environment where they can add value and build their careers. Most people want a career path, so you need ingredients, such as mentoring, leadership models and the right culture, if you are going to build diversity.

Novera Khan, Chief Risk Officer
Uniper Global Commodities

To that end, Lewis says that he challenged each of his direct reports to put a clear plan in place to improve the representation of women leaders in the general management ranks. The best way to do that was to ensure that each opportunity to bring on a new general manager came with a robust and diverse slate of talent. This plan incorporated the need to identify a pool of high potential talent both internally in the organisation as well as externally in the marketplace. For internal colleagues, the identification of potential talent also needed to be accompanied with specific development plans to accelerate their experiences so as to increase their readiness.

For external candidates, Lewis encourages better networking and working with external recruiting partners to get early exposure to high potential – not just when a formal job is vacant but on an ongoing continuous basis whether a particular job is vacant or not.

Some organisations have put in place global sourcing teams focused specifically on diversity, with a brief to identify top talent for key positions across the globe, and to top up shortlists when they go into the market by putting forward the best internal female, black or other minority candidates.

At Thermo Fisher Scientific, Neil Kelly says: “You have to proactively manage diversity and put the right systems, investment and process behind it to be successful. Which starts from the sourcing of talent in the marketplace. Otherwise it will never be achieved, and you have to lead from the top. Once you get to a mature state, it becomes more natural and it becomes less about designing the right process for attraction and more about making small adjustments to really fine tune what you’re trying to do.”

Managing to support diversity requires building a culture of inclusion, and leading from the top to create a climate that encourages the correct behaviours.

Novera Khan is Chief Risk Officer at Uniper SE, and says: “Diversity continues to be a challenge, especially in our industry, across all levels, including the boardrooms. We are trying to break through that, so we can deploy role models at the leadership level to provide encouragement for more and more diversity.”

She adds, “Inclusivity is the key – making sure people feel like it’s a welcoming environment where they can add value and build their careers.

Most people want a career path, so you need ingredients, such as mentoring, leadership models and the right culture, if you are going to build diversity.”

Novera points out that many of the behaviours that underpin a culture of diversity and inclusion also underpin a culture of innovation.

Patrick Bennett at Pandora, adds: “It’s about fostering innovation in the workplace as an employer, and the environment you create. We look to make sure our company culture drives open sharing without boundaries and this enables good results, where people can feel comfortable to put forward their own ideas. We believe in a can-do attitude, where no project is too big.”

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Patrick Bennett, Vice President of Technical Development and Research - Pandora
Hiring a Diverse Workforce

We encourage them to move away from looking for just a round peg for a round hole, and to instead focus on transferable skills, and people with different industry or functional backgrounds, so they don’t limit innovation.

Krystle Edwards, Regional CEO, Proco Group - APAC

One of the first measures that all organisations can consider is moves to drive out bias in the initial candidate selection, where it can be prevalent and is often unconscious.

One of the biggest challenges when it comes to building a diverse employee population is how to incorporate diversity into your hiring practices. Well under half of the respondents to our survey worked in organisations that had in place official programmes to recruit a more diverse workforce, and yet there are steps that can be taken.

One of the first measures that all organisations can consider is moves to drive out bias in the initial candidate selection, where it can be prevalent and is often unconscious. First comes the job ad, where there are now computer tools that can scan specifications to flag up words – such as “competitive” and “drive” – that research suggests might put off female candidates. There are many ways in which the description of the person suitable for the job might be improved to make it appeal to a more diverse applicant list.

Then, once the applications begin to arrive, many organisations are now using ‘name blind’ application policies, whereby CVs are amended to black out certain details, such as name and gender, but also potentially academic institutions, in the initial screening process. This allows managers to assess people on their merits, rather than – likely unintentionally – making assumptions or choices based on initial bias.

One of the first measures that all organisations can consider is moves to drive out bias in the initial candidate selection, where it can be prevalent and is often unconscious.

Krystle Edwards is Regional CEO - APAC with Proco Global, responsible for our Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand offices. She says: “Recently we had a client in Thailand ask for photos of candidates, so that they didn’t have to ask some obvious questions, given the type of candidate they were apparently looking for. We said no to that, because it’s against our beliefs. Some of the companies out here need to be more aware of their unconscious, and in some cases conscious, bias and be more open minded.”

She says: “Age and gender are a big issue in Asia, and we often get feedback from clients saying that candidates they met with were too old. We also get clients asking for candidates of a specific religion or nationality. One of the challenges is that managers will look for an exact fit for the job, and they are very specific about what they want in terms of years of experience, industry background, and the role and remit that the person has had before.”

“Basically,” says Edwards, “they want people who are already doing the job, which makes it very difficult to attract candidates. We encourage them to move away from looking for just a round peg for a round hole, and to instead focus on transferable skills, and people with different industry or functional backgrounds, so they don’t limit innovation.”
One of the key things is to search for talent in different ways and from different channels, which means not always going to the same colleges and to your competitors for candidates. You might want to look to a different type of company, a different type of industry, to bring in that diversity of thought.

Meredith Brooks, Senior Director, Strategic Sourcing - Hasbro

While HR practices undoubtedly vary across regions, and even within markets, businesses should be mindful of pursuing consistency across their international human capital strategy.

It is not always easy. Lena Uetzmann is Director Quality/EHS at Novem Car Interior Design in Bavaria, Germany, and says that in that region it is extremely difficult to attract talent that is not white, male and from the area. Bavarian speakers speak with a strong dialect, which is difficult for people from other nationalities to understand, even if they speak German.

She says: “The problem is, the culture we have now is what people are used to. We probably need to change our behaviours, our ways of talking, and our ways of managing things, to make it more welcoming to others and more international.” She says the management team is not particularly conservative, and is not against hiring women at all, but adds: “This is something you can’t really change from the bottom. The change needs to come from the top, because that’s where the key decisions are made.”

Many organisations now offer unconscious bias training to managers, which can help them become aware of their own prejudices, however small, and how those might impact their everyday decision-making.

Some even use virtual reality headsets to put their male managers through an hour in the life of a female manager, for example, so that they can see some of the assumptions that are made for themselves.

Neil Kelly at Thermo Fisher says it is important to demand more and look harder when recruiting: “We always expect diverse shortlists where possible, however the most important driver is the right talent and we will never bias our judgement to meet a target, as we don’t believe that is a sustainable way to operate.”

There is, however, evidence from elsewhere that being proactive and asking more questions can lead employers towards initiatives that make them visible to more communities, faiths and religions.

Meredith Brooks at Hasbro adds: “One of the key things is to search for talent in different ways and from different channels, which means not always going to the same colleges and to your competitors for candidates. You might want to look to a different type of company, a different type of industry, to bring in that diversity of thought.”

Companies should not be afraid to demand more of their recruiters when reviewing recruitment and selection processes.

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Neil Kelly, Director - Talent Acquisition, EMEA & APAC, - Thermo Fisher Scientific

Some even use virtual reality headsets to put their male managers through an hour in the life of a female manager, for example, so that they can see some of the assumptions that are made for themselves.
The conversation around diversity and inclusion has increased considerably in the last year, and the issue has been elevated up candidate and corporate agendas. Businesses can certainly improve their attractiveness by improving their employer brands around this.

Peter Gay, Director, Proco Global – London

If diverse candidate lists are not forthcoming, it may be time to look at tapping different channels, or reassessing requirements.

Clint Lewis at Zoetis says: “My advice is that you have to be very discerning with your external recruiting partners about what you’re looking for, and hold them to account. Do not continue to work with a firm that is not providing a robust and diverse slate of candidates if that is your priority.”

In some industries the challenge is greater than in others. In commodities, for example, the majority of traders continue to be white and male, and the focus of the industry has been so heavily on performance that this has not necessarily been seen as an issue.

Ross Gregory is Director with Proco Commodities in New York and says: “A lot of these businesses are private businesses that are very successful, and they don’t need to share a lot of information. They don’t necessarily have strong succession plans in place, and they tend to focus their attentions on the rainmakers. But with the way technology is now changing the trading industry, people need to be more open-minded and innovative, and incorporating diversity into new business strategies make sense.”

He adds: “We are starting to see them looking at innovative new ways of bringing in talent, and they need to start with the leadership and drive diversity as a value through their organisations.”

Putting diversity and inclusion at the heart of your brand can make a big difference in the recruitment market. “Where you do see leadership teams in America that are diverse and promote a diverse workforce, that’s viewed very positively and certainly attracts people,” says Gregory, citing the example of Sheryl Sandberg, COO at Facebook and the founder of the Lean In Foundation supporting women in their career goals.

In our survey, four-fifths of respondents around the globe agreed that diversity programmes help attract talent. Peter Gay, Director with Proco Global in London, adds: “The conversation around diversity and inclusion has increased considerably in the last year, and the issue has been elevated up candidate and corporate agendas. Businesses can certainly improve their attractiveness by improving their employer brands around this. People want to talk about it, and if companies are creating a movement and being recognised for their efforts, it becomes an easy sell for people who want to know they are working for businesses that are focusing on the right things.”
About Proco Group

Proco Group is the only recruitment firm in the world dedicated to filling supply chain roles. Founded in 2008, we now operate across an integrated global network of 7 offices, with more than 100+ consultants delivering deep knowledge of our chosen markets, industries and geographies. All of our consultants are specialists, nurturing ever-expanding networks across the supply chain and offering clients unique and valuable perspectives.

We have always been focused on end-to-end supply chain management, covering Procurement, Manufacturing, Quality & Operational Excellence, Supply Chain and Trading. We work with current and emerging talent at every stage of their careers and in every part of the supply chain, helping individuals develop their potential and companies strengthen their supply chain functions.

After nearly a decade of steady and consistent growth, we now offer our services through brands – Proco Commodities and Proco Global. We work seamlessly across brands and offices because we believe in delivering rapid, high-quality work that challenges the market standard.

Our international team is made up over 18 different nationalities speaking 23 different languages, working together to achieve the same goal. Because we are specialists, and because we spend time getting to know our clients, candidates and colleagues, we can match the right people to the right roles, in the right companies around the world.

Proco Group operates in Brighton, Hong Kong, London, Mexico City, New York, Vancouver and Zug. We have sector specialists covering Automotive, Energy, Commodities, Process & Chemicals, Consumer Goods, Industrial Equipment, Food & Beverage, Life Sciences, Retail and Technology.

References


As a recruitment group that works exclusively with professionals across the supply chain, we see first-hand the growing importance of the supply chain function across all sectors around the world. The spotlight continues to be on securing the right talent to ensure organisations maintain their competitive advantage and deliver on their growth objectives.

Companies are looking for both leaders of today and the leaders of tomorrow - who can play a genuine strategic role to influence and co-ordinate the end-to-end supply chain process. Working with our integrated global research team, we can deliver the senior talent you need to fulfil business objectives in weeks not months.

**KEY CONTACTS**

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