Diversity & Inclusion
FORUM & AWARDS 2017
SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

A panel of industry professionals, guided by one of the country’s leading experts on diversity, examined best practices in the field. For a recap of the highlights see pages 16 – 18.

More than 200 guests attended the Diversity & Inclusion forum and awards event. See event photos page 24.

Four winning companies received special recognition for their successful programs. Profiles of these outstanding companies are featured on pages 19 – 23.
Letter From the Publisher

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IS ALL ABOUT THE QUEST FOR TALENT

Some folks say the world is going to hell in a handbasket, and you have to admit, they have some evidence. But for those of us who have been in the American workplace for a few decades now, we know that the world actually is getting better, in some respects. Corporate offices are — compared to the 1980s, when I got started — mostly free of the boozing, smoking and wildly inappropriate cussing and joking that were commonplace back then (or maybe that’s just how newsrooms were).

The world we work in is not a more civil place than it used to be, but the workplace is, and that’s a good thing.

The other improvement I see falls into what we broadly refer to as diversity and inclusion.

This is a big topic, one loaded with cosmic and moral considerations. But for me, diversity as a business practice is really about one thing: talent.

No matter your industry or your company size, your success depends in large part on the ability to spot, recruit, nurture and keep talent.

The topic of diversity and inclusion, then, is really about business people making sure that nothing in their worldviews or their experiences, or maybe their lack of experience, causes them to have a blind spot and overlook or turn away talent. That’s easier said than done, and even if achieved, there’s a long way between that and actually achieving best practices.

But don’t lose sight of the big picture. The big picture is talent. You want it. Your competitors want it at least as much as you do. So you’d better care about diversity and inclusion and best practices.

It was our pleasure this month to host our second annual Diversity & Inclusion conference. Our panelists delved deeply and expertly into the topic, and the business people in the audience engaged with excellent questions. You can see a recap of that panel discussion in this recap.

This year, we added awards to recognize the best of the best when it comes to putting diversity and inclusion into practice. You can read about the winners in these pages also.

Many thanks to our sponsors, who made this event and this recap possible: Title sponsors Wells Fargo; gold sponsors Balfour Beatty Construction and Moss Adams LLP; and associate sponsors Athena San Diego and the San Diego County Bar Association. Also, a big thank you to Steven Jones of Jones & Associates, who moderated the panel.

May you finish the year strong when it comes to seeing — and winning — the talent your company needs to succeed. I hope these pages prove helpful to your efforts.

 Examining the Business Case for Diversity and Inclusion

The San Diego Business Journal recently hosted a well-timed forum on diversity and inclusion that addressed the rewards and challenges for today’s businesses in creating cultures that encourage collaboration and equity. Moderated by diversity expert Steven Jones, with a panel of professionals in the field, the event also honored four San Diego companies for their creation of innovative diversity and inclusion programs. Excerpts follow.

**Moderator Steven Jones**: Many of us view diversity as a problem to solve, as opposed to viewing diversity as a strength to leverage. When we leverage diversity as a strength, it says that it is a competency and a conversation that everyone should be able to engage in competently in order to leverage the diversity of the talent that is available.

Our conversation now becomes important because the hate that we saw in Charlottesville is directly connected to the hate that we saw in Charlottesville is directly connected to the hate that we saw in Charlottesville. They saw co-workers. They saw jurors. They looked at the pictures of tiki torches, and yet are still expected to have the skills across our beliefs to create work environments where agreement is not the currency for inclusion; where thinking like me is not the currency for whether you can do your best work, where the highest-ranking person’s voice is not the only one that is the driver for innovation.

*I heard somebody say once that diversity is about counting heads — inclusion is about making heads count.*

To be human is to be biased. Our work is to say, how do we create best practices within our organizations where people can do their best, where we can engage in communities, where we can give procurement opportunities to diverse communities, and where we can practice tracking the impact of unconscious biases in our decisions? We do that by looking at unintended patterns in our decisions, to further explore some of these best practices. When we get a diverse slate, there are some of these forms of unconscious bias. One is called similar-to-me bias. Another is called in-group bias. A third that we oftentimes use is that word called “fit.” Now when we think about diversity and inclusion, it is important to talk about what is our area of growth. We talk about diversity of thought, but then we measure race and gender. So we’re saying one thing but we are measuring something else.

We say that 90 percent of who I am you cannot see, yet we make 90 percent of our judgments based on the 10 percent that we do see. I heard somebody say once that diversity is about counting heads — inclusion is about making heads count.

**Strengths and Weaknesses Patty Juarez**: I believe our company is committed to diversity and inclusion and advancing the conversations.

I think that the reason things are working, and we’re making progress, is we have metrics that have real teeth in them. We hold our leaders accountable for progress. We have them report to us what they’ve done, what they are doing, what their progress is from period to period. We measure. We put it in their objectives, and when it comes to rewarding people with financial rewards, we take that into account as well. We are making progress.

Cheryl K. Goodman: Thirty years ago a group of eight women got together. These women...
Recognizing and celebrating diversity

Businesses achieve the greatest success when they integrate diverse skills, talents, and experiences. Diversity and inclusion is a core value at Wells Fargo, and we are proud to have been named #9 within the 2017 DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity.

**Wells Fargo is pleased to serve as the title sponsor for the San Diego Business Journal 2017 Diversity & Inclusion Forum and Awards.** We congratulate this year’s finalist companies for their selection based on exceptional commitments to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

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Diversity:

from page 16

were scientists and technologists. Athena has now grown to nearly 1,000
members, 46 partner companies, and what we do as a company is support each other. And so that is our strength, each other. Our weakness is we are a San Diego group, and we would love to go into Baja, up to L.A. We just opened an office in Carlsbad. We want to reach more.

Gerardo Godinez: One of our strengths centers on gender diversity. About 10 years ago we really started focusing on that issue so females/women began moving up the ranks of partnership. It has gone through several iterations of the question. We measure ourselves when NECT or any other group in town that is doing. And specifically are you winning business because of diversity and inclusion? I think that is a very compelling bottom line business case.

Metrics and data are important; but how many of you know what your clients want when you are pursuing business?

So it is doing good business, but doing it in a way that is also good for business.

Godinez: Public accounting is a very competitive market for talent. It is an industry that has higher turnover. As partners we have scorecards where we are measured on different factors. And if you can’t say here is the pipeline of people that either you’ve made partner, that’s right behind you ready to make partner, and step right in as you kind of go off into the sunset, that’s a very big problem.

If you look at our client base, a big part has operations internationally, and their employees are diverse — clients who have big centers of production throughout Latin America or China. I need to make sure I have people that can relate and can communicate.

Importance of Metrics

Juez: For our company we have an enterprise level diversity and inclusion council and each line of business across the various business lines and territory lines have regional and sometimes national councils. The councils work very collaboratively. We have four areas that we all agree are the key areas for us to work on, and then the work of those councils revolves around those areas.

The objectives of your company should be very clear to all the business lines and very transparent so that everybody works collaboratively.

Cavalli: You have your metrics. What is the strategy to boost this? One strategy is to partner with someone like Athena. There is a perception, “Oh, yes, women issues. I want to be inclusive.” You guys are always harassed.” And really the response that I would love to hear is that we are leaders. We just happen to be women.

Cavalli: Metrics for diversity and inclusion in your organizations? Most do not have them. So I would say just get started, and it is an interactive process, and most Fortune 500 companies have adopted best practices. Get started and know it is a journey. It is not a destination, and you are going to keep learning along the way.

But if you never get started, then that gap gets bigger and bigger, and then going back to the business case, you are getting behind your competitors. Start small, but start measuring, start knowing where you are, bench line data. It is important.

Generational Differences

Godinez: I think when we think about diversity and inclusion, which is something we also factor in, how do we engage people from right out of college all the way to partner to make sure we get the benefit of that experience and eagerness and ambition that comes with those differences in the generations.

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Goodman: The millennial category. We support those rising managers and what we find is the optimism, I’m so optimistic about the state of the nation with some of these millennials coming in because they have discussed and engaged more often than our seasoned members about their unconscious bias. They are more open.

CEO Engagement

Cavalli: One of the most visible things that our COO and president do, rolling up their sleeves and with great joy, is bringing in young students from underrepresented communities in Los Angeles. They come and spend the day with us.

We engage with the students and parents, not just build the schools. We also have a quarterly breakfast. Everyone, all levels of the organization, senior management, the secretaries at the various locations, it doesn’t matter what your position may be in the organization, all coming together, and I give an update under the direction of the executive leadership.

So everybody in the company understands what we’re doing in the area of diversity and inclusion through communication.

So the CEOs have to talk that talk and walk the walk. Also they have to support financially the investment that needs to be made, whether it’s training or investing in the communities we serve.

And so that is crucial in terms of the dollars that are needed to really move the needle. Personal commitment and accountability is essential.

Recruitment

Goodman: On the board level, it is a well-known fact that board diversity is a real issue for public companies. And there appears to be the token woman on some of these companies. It is a real challenge. Athena responds to that problem by being a hub where those opportunities to find the talent are accessible.

On the board level, it is a well-known fact that board diversity is a real issue for public companies.

Cavalli: What are you doing before you need that candidate? By the time you need that candidate, it is too late. So what are your practices of what you are doing for recruitment?

You can do campus recruiting specifically targeted with campuses where high diversity levels exist. Again, you are being strategic. You are still hiring the most qualified candidates, but you are going to a more diverse candidate pool.

Godinez: When we go out and recruit on campuses, we have a lot of different programs that we bring students on from a very early stage in their freshman year, sophomore year, and get to know the people, understand their backgrounds. That’s where you’re really going to get a perspective about what they might be able to bring that’s different and that they can uniquely contribute to that region or to that office as opposed to just the fact they are Hispanic or Asian.

We really try to create situations where we are engaging on a personal level with recruiting.
Company Builds Diversity in Local Construction Industry

Black IPO Inc.

Since 2000, Black IPO Inc. has provided project management support in the construction industry for clients, major corporate partners, general contractors and state and federal agencies. The scope of construction and engineering project contracts totals more than $1 billion and includes infrastructure upgrades to expansion and renovation of onsite facilities as well as community outreach programs.

Under founder and CEO Wendell Stemley, the company has provided career opportunities and mentorship for its staff and partners. For more than 20 years he has served as a passionate advocate for the advancement of minority-owned, women-owned, and veteran-owned businesses. He has given testimony and comment on Capitol Hill, to Bloomberg News, the Small Business Administration, and the Department of Transportation. He currently is president of the National Association of Minority Contractors. He has been an NAMC member for more than 20 years and was inducted into the association’s Hall of Fame in 2014.

The company’s diversity and inclusion programs support employee development to broaden pools of prospective candidates for key positions, a buddy mentoring system to help new employees learn intricate details of procedures, job tasks, and responsibilities, and participation in the Construction Management School of Turner Construction and at the Black Contractors Association.

As a result, 55 percent of management positions are held by minority and/or women including CFO, business unit managers and senior project managers. Out of 55 employees, 60 percent are women or minority employees.

Employee retention rate is 95 percent. Two employees have gone on to own their own firms. Since 2016, the firm has helped place 50 minority, women and veteran employees with local contractors. Black IPO maintains active partnerships with San Diego Workforce Partnership, San Diego Metro Region Career Center, and Youth Build.

Black IPO also financially supports National Association of Minority Contractors, Ronald McDonald House Charities of San Diego, Youth Build San Diego & National, Food for the Poor - Fresh Water Pump Program. The organization also is involved with the NAMC Student Chapter that assists minority students studying in the fields of construction management, engineering, and design.

“We were founded on diversity so that’s been the cornerstone of the company, of the business. That’s our marketing, that’s our calling card.

We try to get other companies to understand, diversity shouldn’t just be an add-on. If you make it a primary part of their business then a lot of owners want to have that diversity included in their project and undertakings. If you bring that to them, then it’s part of the fiber of the company.”

Wendell Stemley
CEO
Black IPO Inc.

NO PROJECT TOO LARGE OR TOO SMALL FOR INCLUSION

Sure, construction is steel-toe boots and hard hats, but it’s also innovation, community engagement, technology, and supplier diversity. Diverse employees and trade partners drive success at Balfour Beatty every day, and we are spreading the word to others. Where will your talent take you?

www.balfourbeattyus.com

Balfour Beatty
County’s Ambitious Plan Has Thousands of Touch Points

For the second largest employer in the region, making a commitment to diversity and inclusion is a tremendous undertaking. The County of San Diego has dedicated resources at almost every level to ensure it happens.

In November 2015, the county adopted a five-year Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion (D&I). Under the guidance of Helen Robbins-Meyer, the chief administrative officer, the county created a formalized organizational structure that includes an executive council. It created a D&I webpage, informational videos, posters, banners, promotional materials, a new logo and branding. More than 2,000 employees attended D&I presentations.

The D&I resource team assigned 110 inclusion champions throughout county departments. Human Resources offered core diversity classes in which 6,664 employees received more than 15,679 training hours. Three educational classes were designed to increase awareness of inclusion for those with disabilities.

Employees are given opportunities for advancement on several levels. Since 2012, the county has offered a formal Mentor Partnership Program. On average, employees attend 38 hours of training per fiscal year. The county also established and maintains agreements with eight diverse learning institutions that provide discounts to employees.

The Veteran Outreach Program was established to recruit from the veteran community. In 2015, county employees launched VALOR, an Employee Resource Group for veterans whose mission is to drive and support organization and individual growth.

To ensure that the county’s employee population mirrors the demographics of the population, a process was developed to compare the diversity employment in specific classifications to the current census information.

The county expanded its recruiting efforts to include a larger list of diverse publications and social media platforms, community events and job fairs.

The county’s Health and Human Services Agency analyzed customer data to ensure staff are trained to provide culturally competent customer service.

Numerous outreach programs have resulted from the county’s diversity and inclusion initiative. For example: voting videos have been produced in Spanish, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Chinese through the Registrar of Voters and the county library hosted DMV workshops in Spanish and Arabic to help the community prepare for driver’s license exams.

Karen Harris
Staff Development Coordinator
Human Resources, The Knowledge Center
County of San Diego

“There would be no progress without us coming together.”

Karen Harris
Staff Development Coordinator
Human Resources, The Knowledge Center
County of San Diego

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Welcome to San Diego, where the sun rises on endless opportunity. Here, our size, culture, and full spectrum of accounting, consulting, and wealth management services reflect the needs and nature of diverse clients in the global market. As you explore your next opportunity, we invite you to discover how Moss Adams is helping companies thrive.

RISE WITH THE WEST.
Firm Takes Global Approach to Solving Sustainability Issues

Verdani Partners draws inspiration from the word “verdant” which means sustainable and “verde” or green in Portuguese, which is founder Daniele Horton’s native language.

From its inception, the full-service sustainability consulting firm has built a culture of diversity and inclusion. With more than 18 years of experience, the company is dedicated to empowering organizations with cost-effective strategies to create sustainable buildings and communities.

Verdani is a minority woman-owned small business with 13 full-time employees and four part-time contractors. Of the full-time employees, 69 percent meet the definition for minority status. Three of the four leadership roles are held by women.

Verdani’s Horton has created and maintained a diverse work environment. The Carlsbad-based company embraces a global perspective. Eight languages (in addition to English) are spoken in the office including Hindi, Mandarin, Portuguese, Armenian, Russian, Japanese, Spanish, and Hebrew. This inclusive approach allows the organization to employ the top talent, take advantage of differing views, and share in the richness of each other’s cultures and experiences.

The company supports work visas and provides legal assistance and resources for current and potential employees to obtain and maintain them. Verdani employees mentor those with English as a second language and help them refine their English skills to prepare them for client-facing roles.

The company has flexible work schedules and allows staff to work remotely, which helps parents to continue to work while raising families.

Verdani also provides funds for employees to speak at conferences in their home countries.

As a team-building activity, employees attend marches in support of science, women, immigrants, and the environment. In addition, employees volunteer to make green improvements to local schools and put together care packages for women’s shelters. Employees are also encouraged to support national events such as International Women’s Day and A Day without Immigrants.

Many team activities are focused on sharing and learning about the various cultures represented in the office. The company celebrates a variety of religious and cultural holidays including Easter, the Indian Holi Festival, St. Patrick’s Day, Brazilian Carnival, Chinese New Year, and Christmas.

The company has created a nonprofit arm called VIBE to focus on global collaboration on sustainability and corporate social responsibility. VIBE is developing a forum for global discussions and is developing a tool to identify climate risks worldwide.

Both Verdani and VIBE advertise services globally, especially in developing nations such as China, Brazil, and India where the company is looking to open future offices.

Verdani Partners

“It’s always important that we have a very diverse group within our company. We have been working very hard to accomplish that, and it takes a long time to do that. It takes a concerted effort to reach out to certain groups so that we are well represented within our organization.”

Daniele Horton
President / Founder
Verdani Partners

Bob Thompson, Fotowerks

Kelly Hagarty, Daniele Horton and Cayla Curtis, all with winning company Verdani Partners

The San Diego County Bar Association is proud to champion diversity and inclusion efforts in our community.

Thank you to the employers who participated in our Diversity Fellowship Program this year:

Andrews Lagasse Branch & Bell LLP
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Semaphore
Shustak Reynolds & Partners
Seng Electronics
Wilson Turner Kosmo

For more information or to participate in the future, please visit www.sdcbabar.org/diversity.
Naval Coating Inc.

Perhaps no one personifies Naval Coating Inc.’s diversity program as much as Maintenance Manager Janetta “Doc” Scates, a former Army combat medic. She is one of the prominent faces of the new culture for a company that for many years has been focused on shipyard operations.

The fresh points of view and new skills that NCI now brings onboard through prioritizing the hiring and promotion of disenfranchised groups is enabling the company to think bigger and expand into new lines of operations. For example, the company is now applying new technologically advanced protective coatings and is working on commercial, industrial and state/local government projects.

CEO Alan Lerchbacker, a disabled veteran and disadvantaged business owner himself, is passionately committed to NCI’s diversity program. He says it is based on merit and providing a clear path for growth and advancement for all based on their abilities, accountability, and willingness to work for it.

NCI has maintained a workforce that is 73 percent Hispanic. Women and Hispanics hold 30 percent of top executive positions, 50 percent of managerial positions, and 85 percent of field supervisory positions.

NCI supports veterans in the workforce to leverage their military experience to better support the company’s primary customer — the U.S. Navy. Veterans also improve internal processes based on the leadership, self-discipline and accountability that the military trains for.

For its recruitment program, NCI has ongoing relationships with outside agencies such as veteran transition programs REBOOT and Zero Eight Hundred, along with CA EDD, San Diego Workforce Partnership, Able/Disabled Advocacy, and the Port of San Diego Ship Repair Association.

The language barrier is often a hurdle for those with English as a second language. NCI offers bilingual training programs to help ensure that all workers have equal opportunity for advancement and has spearheaded efforts with industry training organizations to provide translators and exams in both English and Spanish.

Since 2016 the company has: hired seven protected veterans; promoted three women to managerial positions in quality assurance, maintenance and inventory control, and business development.; participated in six mock interview sessions at veteran outreach events; received certification as a California Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise; and is submitting applications for SBA 8(a) disadvantaged Business and HUB Zone certification.

NCI cites its regimented apprenticeship and Craft Work On-The-Job (OJT) programs as keys in their diversity accomplishments.

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Experience How Everything We Do Has A Single Focus - Your Success
The San Diego Business Journal was host to a forum and awards presentation on diversity and inclusion on Wednesday, August 16, at the Hyatt Regency La Jolla at Aventine. Experts fielded a range of questions and outlined best practices to begin and sustain an inclusive and vibrant company culture. Sponsors for the event included title sponsor Wells Fargo, gold sponsors Balfour Beatty and Moss Adams LLP, and in association with Athena San Diego and the San Diego County Bar Association.

Photos by Bob Thompson, Fotowerks. Additional photos from the event are at the following link: http://fotowerkssd.smugmug.com.
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