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HOW COMPANIES ARE EVOLVING BEYOND DEI

In today's volatile geopolitical climate, companies are rethinking their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies. Political changes—particularly in the U.S.—have led to legal challenges and public scrutiny, prompting some organizations to scale back or reframe their DEI efforts. Yet, many are adapting rather than retreating. They are shifting toward data-driven, intersectional, and globally nuanced approaches that embed inclusion into broader business strategy. This report explores how companies are evolving DEI to remain effective and resilient in a time of increasing complexity and polarization.



ABOUT US

At The Inclusion Foundation we pride ourselves on our high-quality ongoing partnership with our clients. We work with those who truly want to advance their DEI strategy, and our certification process is honest and not purely rubber-stamping. We are highly selective in who we work with, which means that our clients can trust us to provide them with the best possible guidance and support.

Choose The Inclusion Foundation for a truly transformative DEI experience. Together, we can make a difference and create a more inclusive world.

55+
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

ISO 30415
DE&I ACCREDITED PROFFESSIONALS

9.5
NPS RECOMMENDATION SCORE

NEW NAMING, NEW FRAMING, NEW FOCUS

This shift is not about stepping away from equity—it's about adapting to ensure progress continues in a sustainable, strategic way. From rebranding initiatives to emphasize culture or leadership, to reframing language around belonging, well-being, or inclusive growth, companies are finding new ways to align their efforts with changing expectations. In this section, we highlight how various organizations are renaming, reframing, and refocusing their inclusion work to stay both impactful and resilient.



1.Two-Tier Approach

Some organizations are adopting a two-tier strategy—running a global inclusion framework alongside a distinct U.S.-specific approach. This allows them to uphold core values globally while navigating the unique legal and political climate in the United States. The global strategy remains consistent with long-term equity goals, while the U.S. approach may involve adjustments in language, compliance focus, or program delivery. This parallel structure ensures continued progress without compromising local responsiveness.

2. Moderate Approach (Global vs. Local)

In this model, companies tailor their DEI efforts by geography, aligning strategies with local cultural contexts, regulatory environments, and stakeholder expectations. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model, they take a nuanced, adaptive stance—prioritizing flexibility and impact. This approach enables organizations to remain globally coherent while being locally relevant, strengthening trust and engagement across regions.

3. The Costco Approach

Some companies, like Costco, have chosen to subtly rebrand their DEI efforts—emphasizing themes like "People and Communities" while keeping their initiatives largely intact. Far from retreating, these organizations are doubling down on inclusion, using new language to enhance understanding and reduce external friction. Internally, the focus on DEI is stronger than ever, with clear evidence of business benefits such as improved retention, customer loyalty, and performance.

4. No Change At All Approach

A number of global companies with U.S. operations have chosen to maintain their current course, seeing no need to alter their DEI strategies. These organizations emphasize consistency and neutrality, focusing on their global commitments without drawing attention to political shifts. For them, stability and clarity are key, and continuing on their path reflects confidence in their long-term vision and values.

NEW NAMING, NEW FRAMING, NEW FOCUS



COMPANY	NEW FOCUS AREAS
Costco	*People & Communities*
Novartis	*Promoting Inclusion, Building Belonging*
PepsiCo	*People | Business | Community* *Inclusion as business enabler and social connector*
Kohl`s	*People | Customers | Society* *Focus on interconnected impact*
Apple	*Inclusion that reflects the world around us*
AstraZeneca	*Inclusion | Belonging | Impact* *Commitment to: Health Equity, Clinical Trial Diversity, Supplier Diversity*
Oracle	*Culture & Inclusion as central narrative*
Pfizer	*Merit-based DEI* *Inclusive Supplier Strategy* *Opportunities for All*
Johnson & Johnson	*Inclusion | Innovation | Diversity | Equity* *Focus: Equitable talent & business processes*
JP Morgan	*Diversity | Opportunity | Inclusion* *"Opportunity for All" as a recurring theme*

KEY RISK MITIGATION CONSIDERATIONS

AVOIDING THE 3 PS

Preferences: Avoid programs granting explicit advantages to specific groups based on protected characteristics.

Protected Groups: Do not focus solely on groups defined by protected characteristics (race, sex, religion, national origin, etc.).

Palpable Benefits: Refrain from offering tangible career or employment advantages based on protected characteristics.

LIFTING VS LEVELING

Lifting: Focuses on creating advantages or benefits for specific underrepresented groups to address historical inequalities. This approach may face scrutiny from executive orders targeting "illegal DEI practices".

Leveling: Emphasizes creating equal opportunities for all employees by addressing systemic barriers. This approach is generally less risky as it does not target specific groups for preferential treatment.

KEY GUIDANCE

Anti-Inclusion Shareholder Resolutions: Only about 2% of anti-inclusion shareholder resolutions pass, indicating most remain supportive of well-designed initiatives

Legal Challenges: Executive orders may be challenged for being unconstitutionally vague, censoring organizational speech, conflicting with First Amendment rights, discriminating against marginalized groups, and undermining congressional authority.

Risks of Pausing Inclusion Work: Halting inclusion efforts can lead to internal and reputational risks, impacting employee morale and brand image.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Focus on Business Outcomes: Emphasize inclusion as a tool for improving innovation and productivity.

Metrics-Driven Approach: Organizations are providing consolidated data at global level without giving the US breakdown.

Employee Resource Groups: Reframe these groups as professional development networks to reduce controversy.

Geographic consideration:
Global companies are separating the US from the rest of the global strategy (e.g. global programs /quotas not applicable in the US):

BELONGING STRATEGY 2025+

People First: Building a Culture of Belonging, Wellbeing & Impact



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

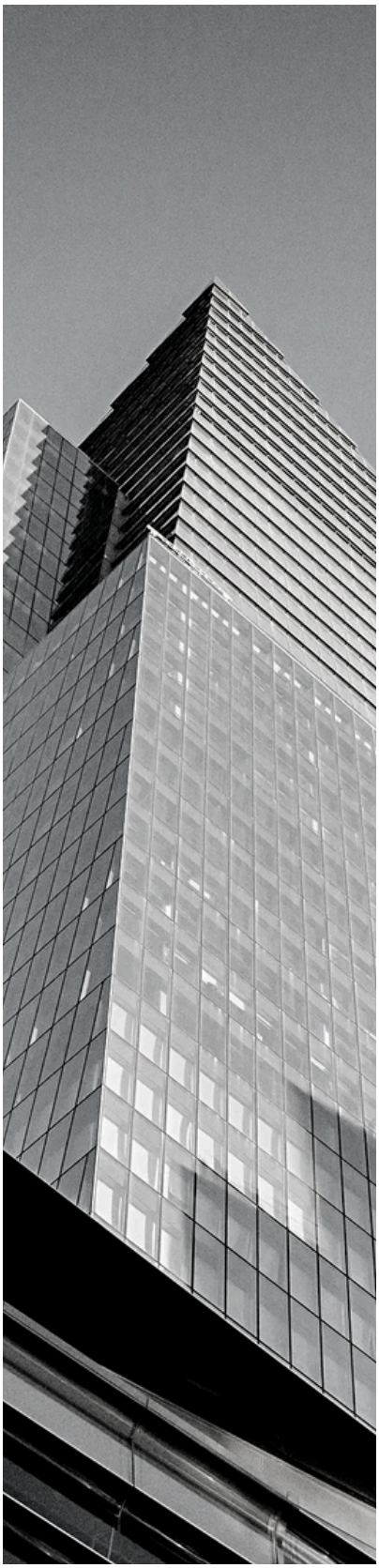
Foster a Culture of Belonging
Every employee feels respected, valued, and confident contributing authentically.

Create Inclusive Ecosystems
Equitable access to opportunities for all — across teams, partners, and communities.

Embed Wellbeing as a Core Value
Recognize that psychological safety and employee care are pillars of performance.

Drive Business Results through Culture
A strong sense of belonging fuels collaboration, creativity, and accountability.

BELONGING STRATEGY 2025+



THREE PILLARS OF ACTION:

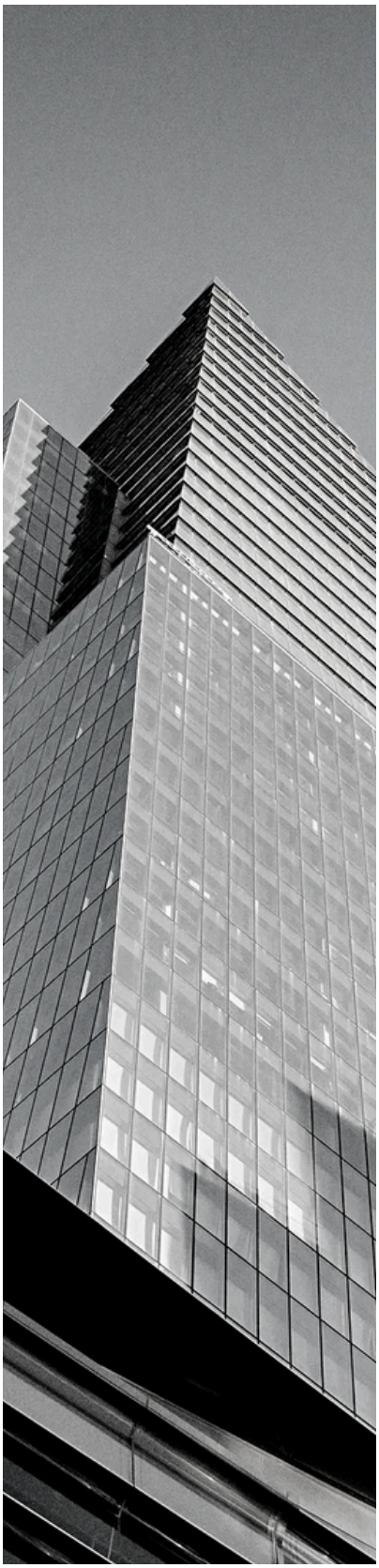
PEOPLE

"Belonging begins within"

Initiatives & Actions:

- Belonging Barometer: Quarterly feedback loops measuring inclusion sentiment, team trust, and wellbeing confidence.
- Belonging Circles: Facilitated peer groups creating space for dialogue, connection, and community.
- Inclusive Onboarding: Centered on values, purpose, and connection — supported by internal mentors and storytelling.
- Manager Playbook: Practical tools for leading inclusive meetings, fostering collaboration, and navigating hybrid teams fairly.
- Wellbeing Embedded:
  - Mental health champions & early support networks
  - Optional “focus hours” and recharge rituals
  - Healthier digital habits & boundary-setting initiatives

BELONGING STRATEGY 2025+



THREE PILLARS OF ACTION:

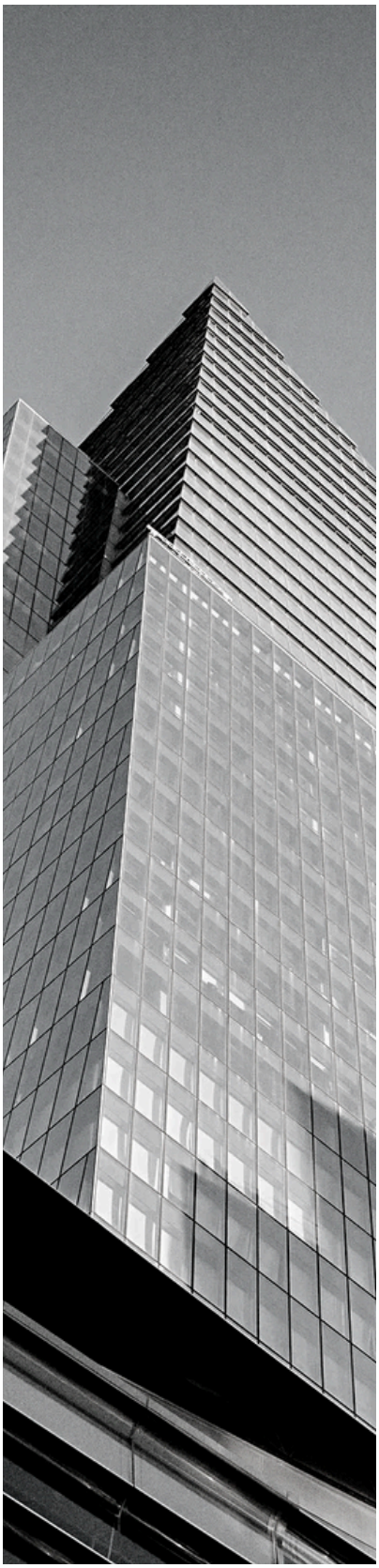
PARTNERS (SUPPLIERS, TALENT ECOSYSTEM, STARTUPS)

"Inclusive business is good business"

Initiatives & Actions:

- Collaborative Supplier Program: Prioritize transparency, innovation, and shared values in sourcing.
- Capability Partnerships: Offer access to learning, co-branding, and thought leadership events.
- Opportunity Programs: Partner with schools, universities, and career platforms to attract a wide range of future talent.
- Shared Principles Charter: Commit to fairness, wellbeing, and transparency across all collaborations.

BELONGING STRATEGY 2025+



THREE PILLARS OF ACTION:

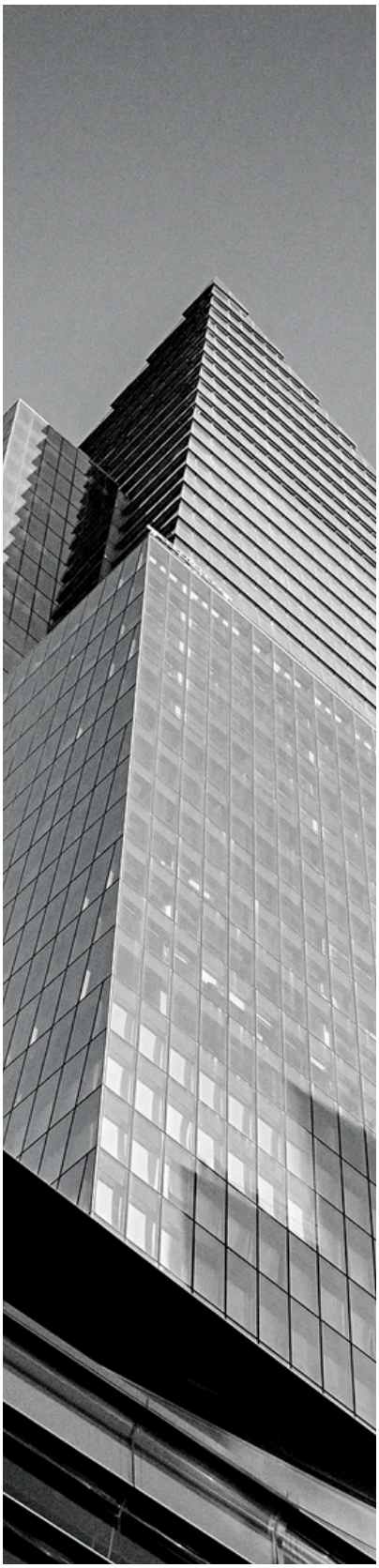
SOCIETY (COMMUNITY, BRAND, ECOSYSTEM IMPACT)

"Belonging beyond the building"

Initiatives & Actions:

- Community Connection Labs: Organize local gatherings to foster dialogue and cross-generational understanding.
- Employee-Led Storytelling: Celebrate stories of growth, resilience, and purpose from employees and communities.
- Belonging & Wellbeing Report: Annual publication highlighting progress, learnings, and social engagement efforts.

BELONGING STRATEGY 2025+



CROSS CUTTING ENABLERS

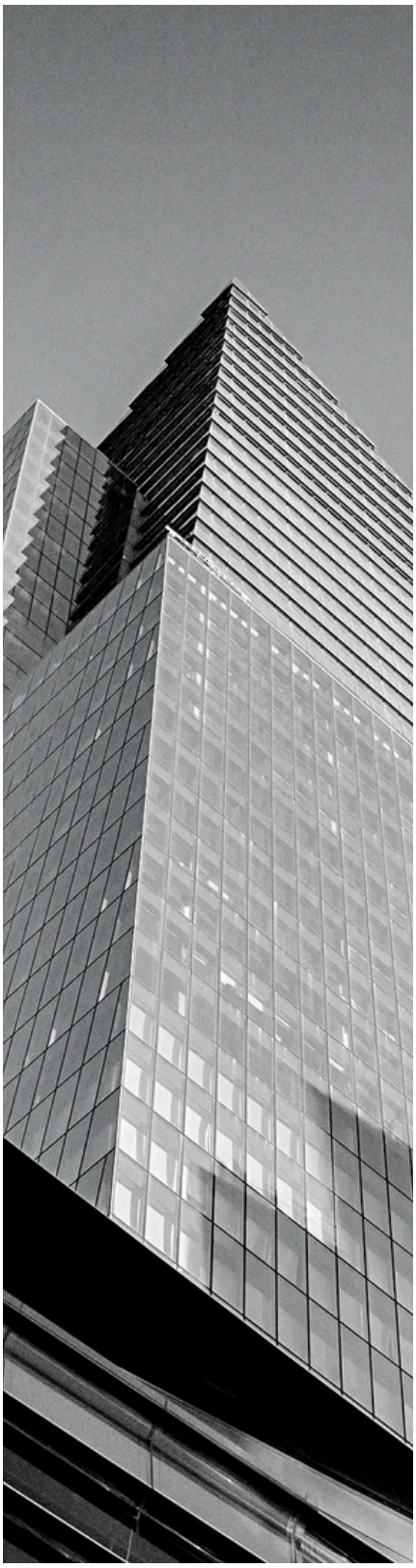
LEADERSHIP & CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Leadership Immersion Journey: Equip senior leaders with tools to lead inclusive, high-trust, and values-aligned teams.
Cultural Accountability: Link leadership behaviors to engagement and retention scores.
Executive Listening Routines: Create space for feedback through team visits and skip-level roundtables.
Visible Sponsorship: Engaged Leadership at Executive level

COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

Belonging Brand Framework: Use human-first language, inclusive visuals, and lived experience in storytelling.
Quarterly "People & Culture Brief": Provide transparency on priorities, progress, and employee-led initiatives.
Campaigns That Resonate:
"I Belong When..."
"Wellbeing Starts With Us"
"Moments That Matter"

BELONGING STRATEGY 2025+

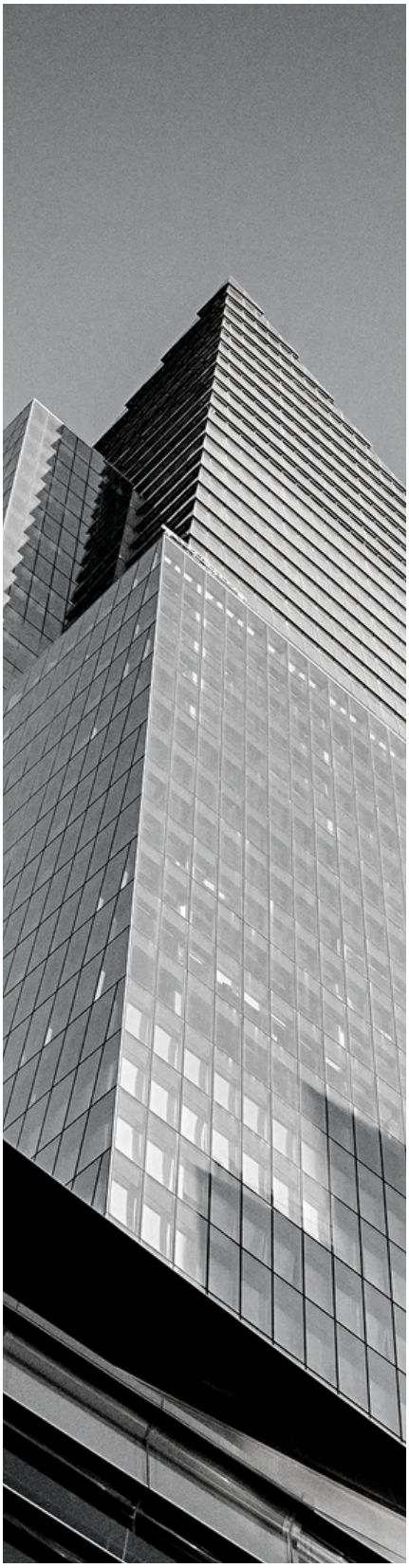


MEASUREMENTS

To track meaningful progress in evolving inclusion efforts, organizations are shifting toward more focused, actionable metrics. The following measurement areas reflect both internal culture and external impact, enabling companies to assess what matters most—from how employees feel and grow, to how leaders engage and partnerships align. These example metrics are designed to provide a balanced view of inclusion that supports transparency, accountability, and sustained progress.

Focus Area	Example Metrics
Employee Belonging	Belonging Sentiment Score, Retention, Confidence
Wellbeing	Wellbeing Confidence Index, Pulse Survey Usage
Opportunity Equity	Access to Development & Mentoring by Business Unit
Leadership Engagement	Immersion Completion Rate, Communication Reach
External Partnerships	Shared Principles Adoption, Event Participation

BELONGING STRATEGY 2025+



ONE-YEAR ROADMAP EXAMPLE

A phased approach helps organizations build inclusion in a way that is intentional, sustainable, and aligned with business priorities. This example roadmap outlines a quarterly progression—from establishing a strong foundation to embedding inclusion into systems and culture. Each phase is anchored by clear milestones that support engagement, integration, and long-term impact across the organization.

Quarter	Key Focus	Milestones
Q2	Foundation & Engagement	Launch Barometer, Leadership Immersion, First Circles
Q3	Activation & Integration	Manager Playbook, Onboarding Upgrade, Partner Charter Launch
Q4	Storytelling & Community	External Labs, Employee Spotlights, Report Draft
Q1/2026	Institutionalization	Embed KPIs, Align Performance Reviews, Feedback Integration



THANK YOU

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