



FEATURING  
**FORRESTER®**

# How to Build a Culture of Inclusion & Belonging



A Q&A with Jonathan Roberts, Future of  
Work Analyst at Forrester Research

**BrightPlan®**



BrightPlan recently hosted a webinar with guest speaker Jonathan Roberts of Forrester. We are continuing the conversation with a Q&A on building a culture of inclusion and belonging, and the importance of employee well-being, total rewards and financial wellness in the future of work.

We found that while most organizations prioritize employee well-being and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, it is not uncommon for companies to treat the two as separate initiatives. But the fact of the matter is, you can't have an engaged workforce without prioritizing wellness, and you can't have a wellness culture if you don't foster diversity and inclusion.

## QUESTION 01



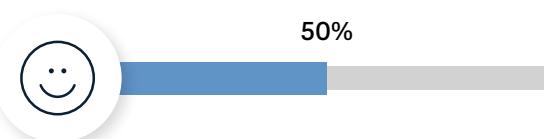
# What is DE&I and why is it important, especially in today's work environment?

DE&I is the acronym for diversity, equity, and inclusion. **Diversity** is the representation of all inherent characteristics of a particular workforce. These can be ability, age, gender, race, sexual orientation, or gender identity but can also be characteristics like education, language, geographic location, or processing style. **Equity** is the continuous practice of promoting justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and allocation of resources by organizations. **Inclusion** is about creating spaces where people can feel comfortable and safe being

76% of job seekers highly value diversity when choosing an employer<sup>1</sup>

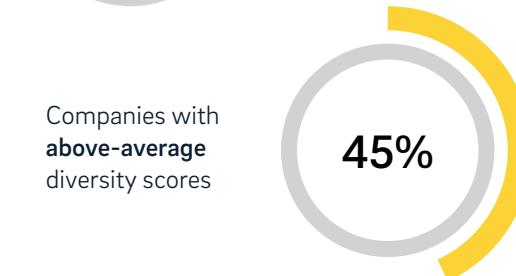
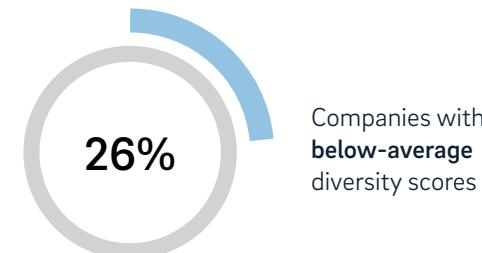


Belonging is associated with more than a 50% reduction in turnover risk<sup>2</sup>



themselves at work. The combination of these ideas points us to the concept of belonging. **Belonging** is the sense of feeling safe, accepted, valued, and part of the team. The ability for organizations to create a sense of belonging is an integral part of the future of work, as is calling on our workforces to be more creative, adaptive, and resilient than ever before. Environments that promote belonging typically see better results, are exposed to more and better talent, maintain a stronger brand, and experience lower attrition. They also often see higher levels of engagement across their workforces.

## AVERAGE INNOVATION REVENUE REPORTED<sup>3</sup>

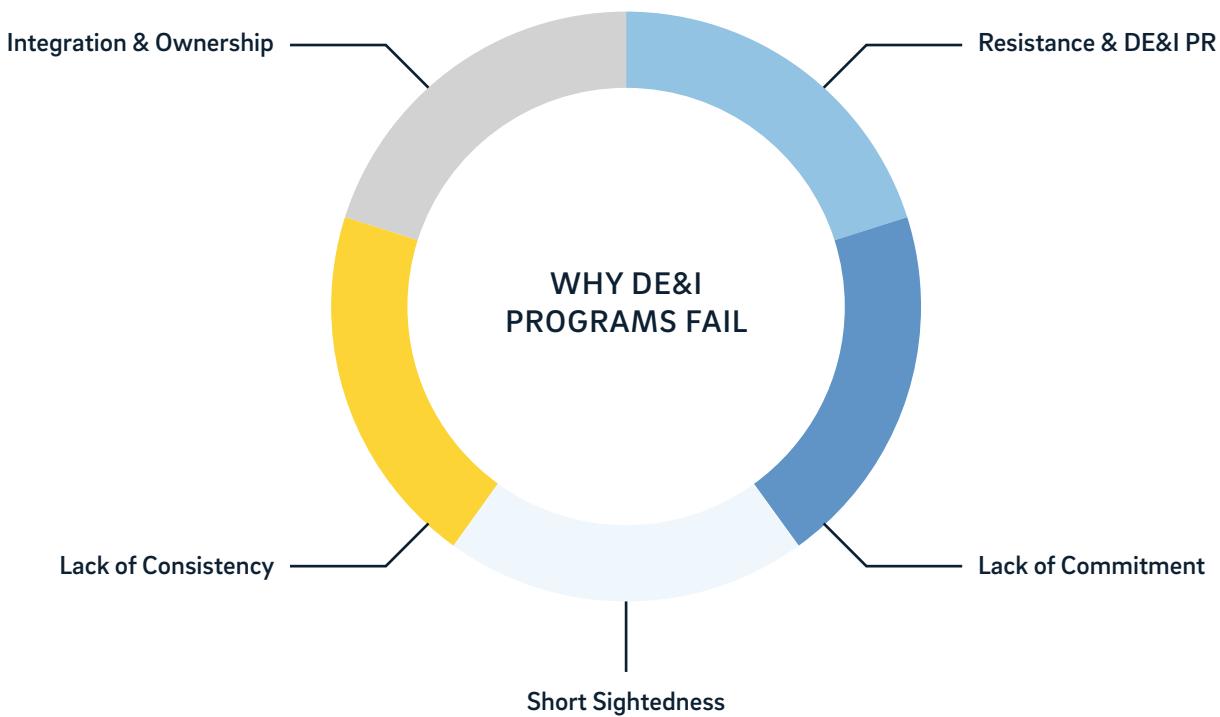


## QUESTION 02



# What are some common reasons why DE&I programs fail and how can employers avoid these pitfalls?

Many times, DE&I programs fail because they are treated like a multi-year project as opposed to a commitment within business and workforce operations. When DE&I is misplaced in that way, we tend to see a lack of integration, gaps in commitment amongst leadership and managers, mixed messaging, and overall skepticism about the authenticity of the work. **Organizations MUST discover, align, and campaign around their “why”:** Why a particular organization wants to undergo this work is just as important as how it approaches it. The reason for the pursuit will inform everything that the organization does and signal the depth of commitment for the workforce.



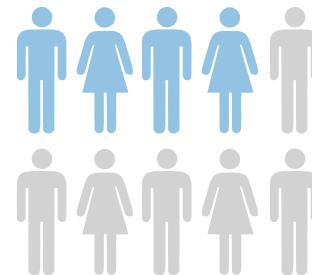
## QUESTION 03



# What are some ways organizations can help employees feel connected, particularly in a remote or hybrid work environment?

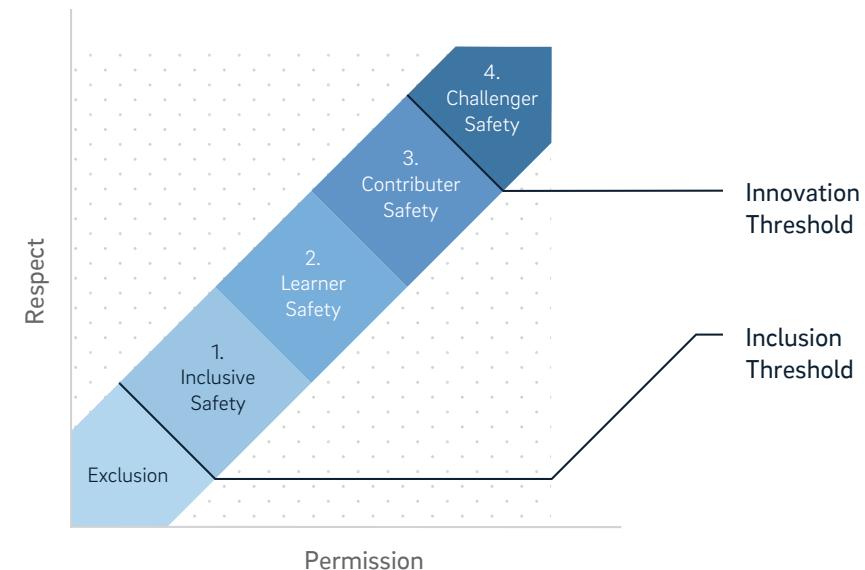
Feeling connected to a team or an organization is an important part of belonging. Many organizations struggle with maintaining a level of connectedness in remote or hybrid environments. The key here is to **be intentional about formal and informal interactions**. Removing the water cooler presents an opportunity to engage in other informal interactions amongst employees. Find ways to group people with similar interests and give them a space to interact beyond the work. Also, it's important that you create a culture that doesn't encourage productivity theater. In the office, most employees feel comfortable taking breaks, visiting colleagues, and having informal conversations. This must also be true in a remote work environment. If employees feel that they need to appear productive 100% of the workday, they will be less inclined to engage in other types of necessary workforce interactions.

Belonging is fundamental to our engagement, yet...



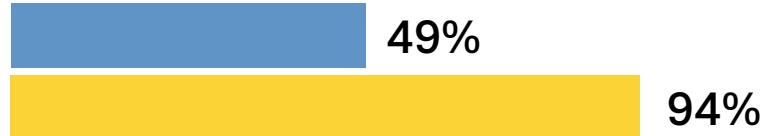
**40%**  
of people say they feel isolated at work<sup>4</sup>

## THE 4 STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGY SAFETY<sup>5</sup>



## FEELING LIKE WE BELONG DRIVES A SENSE OF PRIDE AND PRODUCTIVITY IN OUR ORGANIZATION<sup>6</sup>

I am proud to work for my company



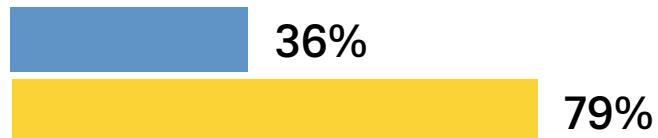
Most days I am very productive at work



My company is known for being creative



When innovative ideas are proposed, they get acted on very quickly



■ Low Belonging Score

■ High Belonging Score



## QUESTION 04



# What is the relationship between DE&I and employee well-being?

Reducing workplace stress, addressing burnout, and creating spaces and conditions that allow employees to be whole and present at work are the main objectives of employee well-being. Creating and maintaining a culture of belonging as a vehicle to enhance, engage, and elevate the entire workforce is an objective of DE&I. Because of this, the understanding, pursuits, and impacts of **DE&I and employee well-being are inextricably linked**. Attempts to support an employee's holistic

well-being, increase their feelings of belonging, ensure fair and equal treatment and experiences and allow them to find purpose will likely result in desired outcomes for both the employee and the organization. In short, the degree to which an employee feels comfortable, engaged, healthy, and whole within an organization has a direct effect on their stress levels, their performance, their level of engagement, how they perceive their place within their organization, and the organization itself.

### Objectives of Employee Wellness & Well-being

Wholeness/Completeness

Reduction of Workplace Stress

Productivity/Flow

Engagement

Attracting and Retaining Talent

Belonging

### Objectives of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Activating Diverse Perspectives

Removing Barriers to Fair Treatment

Reduction of Workplace Stress

Productivity/Flow

Attracting, Retaining and Engaging Talent

Belonging

## QUESTION 05

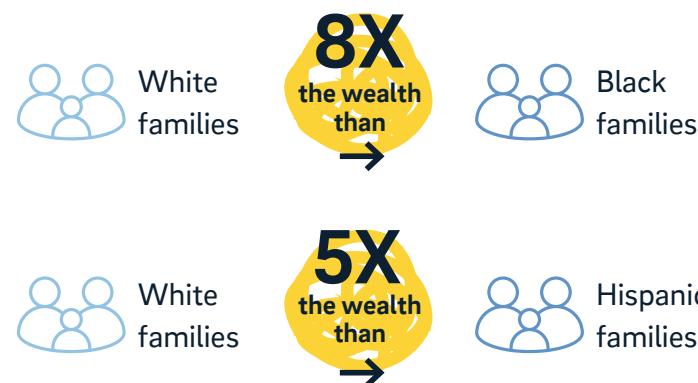


# What role does financial wellness, in particular, play in fostering DE&I and helping to erode systemic inequities?

One of the most significant forms of stress in the workplace involves an employee's relationship with their finances. We see employees spending time during the workday **struggling to solve financial issues**. In the US, anywhere from 50% to 78% of the workforce<sup>7</sup> is earning just enough money to cover bills, and missing a paycheck could have devastating results. Furthermore, for many groups of people, the reasons for this are systemic. Promoting financial wellness is one way to address some of these **inequities for underrepresented communities** as well as support the entire workforce with a leading cause of employee stress.

Focus on addressing gender and racial equity, access to financial education and advice, bridging wealth gaps, and promoting wealth management for all employees, no matter where they are in their financial journeys. Many see this as an opportunity for organizations to help close some of the systemic gaps and historical inequities that many underrepresented communities still face today. Not only will doing so have a direct and exponential impact on the employee, their families, and their community but it can also have many desired outcomes for the organization. Increases in engagement and belonging, a reduction in workplace stress and more favorable recruiting and retention outcomes are likely to follow.

### THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP<sup>8</sup>

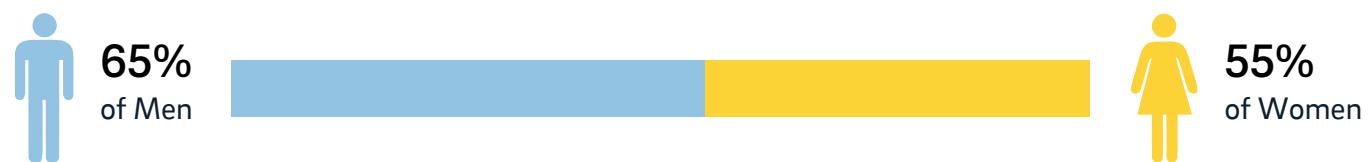


### WHO IS INVESTING IN THE STOCK MARKET?<sup>9</sup>





## WHO IS CONTRIBUTING TO RETIREMENT? <sup>10</sup>



### Objectives of Financial Well-being

Access to Financial Education and Advice

Gender and Racial Equity

Bridging Wealth Gaps

Promoting Wealth Management

### Impacts of Financial Well-being

Stress Reduction

Employee Experience, Engagement & Productivity

Attracting & Retaining Talent

Dismantling Systemic Injustice

## Conclusion

Employees want to work for companies that care about their overall well-being and offer benefits that support them in all aspects of their personal and work lives. Building an inclusive culture will go a long way in creating a workplace in which employees thrive and do their best work, ultimately achieving greater business outcomes.

# Sources



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2. The Value of Belonging at Work, BetterUp
3. BCG Diversity and Innovation Survey
4. Harvard Business Review, The Value of Belonging at Work
5. Leader Factor, 4 Stages of Psychological Safety
6. Forrester Future of Work Survey, 2021
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8. The Federal Reserve, Disparities in Wealth by Race and Ethnicity
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10. BlackRock Annual Global Investor Pulse Survey



## About BrightPlan



BrightPlan is a leader in Total Financial Wellness. BrightPlan provides a comprehensive solution that addresses all aspects of employees' financial health at every stage of life, and empowers HR teams to enhance the employee experience and better attract, retain and engage talent. Its unique combination of digital platform and human advisors enables employers to deploy at scale while delivering personalization for employees. The company is the first financial wellness solution certified for fiduciary excellence by the Centre for Fiduciary Excellence (CEFEX). For more, visit [brightplan.com](https://brightplan.com).

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