



## SUPPLY CHAIN INSIGHTS

# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AT DHL – JOINING UP THE DOTS, STARTING AT THE TOP

Roxi Corp, HR Vice President UKI & Global D&I Lead – DHL Supply Chain.

**DHL Supply Chain – Excellence. Simply delivered.**



**International Women’s Day is one of the big days in the events calendar for those of us who work to build diversity and inclusion in the workplace.**

The theme for 2021 was ‘Choose to challenge’ – the idea being that a challenged world is an alert world, and that from challenge comes change.

As part of the event, the organizers called for women’s achievements to be celebrated and their visibility to be increased within businesses. At DHL Supply Chain we did exactly that with a series of short video clips made by women in all kinds of roles and from regions around the world.

We showcased what it’s like to work for DHL, and hopefully corrected the widespread – and outdated – misconception that logistics is a career option just for white males.

In fact the reality is quite the opposite – we are working hard to build a culture in which logistics is recognized as a career for anyone, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, age or physical abilities.

So, aside from diversity and inclusion being simply the right thing to do, why do we place so much importance on diversity and inclusion?

### **Diversity as a strength**

Within our organization we bring together people with a wide range of skills, experiences, cultures and viewpoints. That gives us a depth, breadth and diversity which as a global company, we’re very proud of.

But it’s a strength that we can only make the most of if our people feel that they can bring their true selves to work every day.

From a purely commercial perspective, a strong diversity and inclusion strategy helps organizations attract top talent and drive bottom line results.

If colleagues feel able to ‘be themselves’ at work, they are more likely to remain with the business – meaning our customers enjoy continued service from an experienced team that knows their business – and attract new talent who recognize us for our inclusive approach and resonate with that.

We are seeing the outcome already. While logistics has had a reputation for being traditionally male-dominated, we are seeing more and more women joining DHL, often as graduates, who bring a different mind-set and viewpoint to what we do.

### **Start at the top**

Of course, recognizing the value of diversity and building a diverse, inclusive culture are two different things. So where do you start?

The short answer: **from the top.**

It absolutely has to start with your leadership, rather than simply as an initiative that’s owned by HR. For real change to happen, every individual leader needs to buy into the value of belonging – both intellectually and emotionally. Only when the entire C-suite steps up to own diversity and inclusion will a company’s Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) practices thrive.

We’re very fortunate in DHL Supply Chain, that we have that Board-level buy-in and approval for our D&I program and Board members who are very happy to talk about the value it brings. When you have that kind of authentic leadership role-modelling of what good looks like, it gets filtered down the organization via leaders at all levels. We have around 155,000

colleagues globally, 85% of whom are frontline workers. It's crucial that they are led by leaders who have embraced the differences that each individual employee brings. It's therefore about educating our leaders on the role that they play, and helping them to be as inclusive as possible.

You have to make sure leaders are equipped to make the story their own, feel it within themselves and be able to explain why they care; why it matters, and why it should matter to their direct reports.

### **Creating a level playing field**

To achieve that we've created an Inclusive Leadership programme as part of our D&I strategy to build knowledge, capability and confidence in our leaders. The first phase is about bringing everybody to a level playing field in understanding and talking about D&I. So we look at things like what actually does diversity and inclusion mean, and what does it mean to have an unconscious bias? Around 20,000 colleagues globally will go through that training, with the aim that by the end of it they will understand the part they play as a leader in creating an inclusive organization,

The feedback we've had so far has been hugely positive and people generally think it's great that we're having these kinds of conversations. Sometimes, line managers don't necessarily have the confidence or the right skills to talk to someone who is different from them. If they don't feel adequately equipped to have those conversations, they may choose to simply say nothing out of fear of causing offence. However, that reticence can often be misinterpreted as stand-offishness or rudeness. It's handling those kind of scenarios that the training addresses.

We've also, as part of our leadership work, established a D&I taskforce. It's made up of representatives from across the business who meet regularly throughout the year. They are recognized as ambassadors and champions of diversity, and they help to ensure buy-in. They are involved in goal-setting around hiring, retaining and advancing a diverse workforce,

promoting engagement and addressing any employee engagement problems among underrepresented employee groups. They also discuss the strategic direction of diversity management and requirements in the business, and offer suggestions on key issues.

### **Commitment and connection**

But despite the focus on leaders, we know that a top-down approach isn't enough because it drives compliance, not commitment. From senior leaders to frontline employees, every individual must see and understand their role in company culture. That means identifying differences in employee experience and values across the organization so that change can be made relevant for each person and knowing that lasting change must activate different parts of the system – top down, bottom up, and middle out – in different ways.

So that we can understand to identify those differences in the employee experience, we are launching our first ever global D&I survey. We will be inviting over 55,000 colleagues across 21 countries to participate and give us their feedback on how inclusive they think DHL is as an organization.

We're excited to discover the results and find out in which areas we need to focus.

Of course changes like these take time, and they aren't always linear. You don't just fast-forward to a sense of belonging. You have to go through the hard work of focusing on diversity and creating that inclusive culture before you get there.

But at the end of the day it all comes back to our purpose at DHL: **Connecting people, improving lives.**

Having a connection to an organization or group of people that makes you feel you can be yourself not only results in greater engagement and creativity in the workplace, it fulfils a psychological need.

Because if we make sure that our own people are connected – whatever their superficial differences – we're better placed to join the dots that mean we can help our customers run their supply chains smoothly.

