

Building an inclusive and diverse culture is a never-ending journey

PUBLISHED

20 November 2020



WRITTEN BY

Fiona Cicconi, Executive Vice President, Human Resources

2020 has been a year like no other, but it's reinforced something that I have known for a while; my AstraZeneca colleagues around the world are capable of truly amazing things.

I believe that one of our greatest strengths as a company comes from our individual differences. We are 76,000 people with a vast range of backgrounds, skills, experiences and perspectives, empowered to celebrate what makes us each unique. Our diversity enables us to rise to the challenges of today and overcome those of tomorrow. How? Because when we combine our strengths, we uncover the breakthrough ideas that lead to innovation. [Building an inclusive culture](#) that recognises and celebrates diversity is a never-ending commitment for us.

Holding ourselves to account

Our people are connected across 100 countries, speak many different languages and come from a wide variety of cultures. That geographical, racial and cultural diversity is important to ensuring our workforce represents the communities in which we operate, and we set annual diversity measures across every part of our company to hold ourselves accountable. And over recent years, we have made good progress.

Gender diversity is one area of focus. Currently, women make up 46% of our leadership teams, which is up from 40% in 2012. But we remain focused on reaching 50%. We also measure leadership team representation from Emerging Markets and Japan, where we've seen an increase from 5% in 2012 to 19% today. More recently, we are expanding our measures to ensure racial and ethnic diversity, and our first priority is expanding our internal demographic data so we can accurately track our progress.

Measuring our diversity is important, but it's only as effective as the confidence our employees have in our commitment to inclusion and diversity. In our bi-annual employee survey, 90% of employees said they believe their managers support inclusion and diversity in the workplace and 84% believe sufficient effort is made to get diverse thinking and opinions of our employees, compared to industry standards of 81% and 66% respectively.

Always striving to do more

I'm very proud of the progress we've made, and we know there is still more to do. In particular, the Black Lives Matter movement this year pushed us to dig more deeply into our role in addressing racial and ethnic inequities that still exist around the world, and [we have put a comprehensive plan](#) in place to begin to address these issues. Our plans recognise not only the work we must do within our company, but also the role we play in contributing to equity in our society through access to healthcare, clinical trials, healthcare delivery and more.

One of the steps we are currently taking includes a commitment that our clinical trials represent the diversity of the communities with the relevant disease. We are also actively ensuring that the Patient Advocacy Groups, Key Opinion Leaders and Lead Investigators that we work with are as diverse as the patient populations we serve.

Our commitment to inclusion and diversity goes beyond the measures we have set for ourselves, and we will always build on existing plans to ensure we embrace diversity in the world around us.

Building an inclusive culture

We also know that diversity in all its forms can only be put into action by creating an environment where we celebrate and leverage our differences. How do we do that? By promoting inclusive behaviours. That's why being champions of both inclusion and diversity is part of our company strategy and we've worked hard to build and evolve our culture over the years.

We encourage our employees to celebrate their differences because we know that people are able to work better in environments where they feel empowered and accepted for who they are. Our Employee Resource Groups – for example the AZPride group for our LGBTQIA+ community and allies – help to create psychological safety for people to be themselves and speak their mind. I've personally had the privilege of joining my colleagues as an LGBTQIA+ ally in a few recent Pride marches, and the opportunity to come together in this way builds deeper understanding and encourages employees to feel confident in bringing their authentic self to the workplace.

At the end of this month, we'll host our first ever global Power of Diversity week across more than 25 countries – and I can't wait. It will be an opportunity for us to come together as a global community to explore how inclusion and diversity fuels innovation, as well as give our employees the tools and resources to help us progress our inclusion and diversity priorities together.

Inclusion and diversity are part of our DNA

Inclusion and diversity are truly embedded across our entire company – it's not just an initiative driven by human resources, rather a business topic owned by all. It's a commitment that starts from the very top and spans to every level of our organisation. Our CEO, Pascal Soriot, chairs our Global Inclusion & Diversity Council – a diverse, strategic body of senior leaders that develops and implements our inclusion and diversity plans. We also guide managers and employees on how to support inclusion and diversity in the workplace and hold ourselves accountable to global standards expected by all.

I won't claim that we have it all figured, but I believe that when AstraZeneca focuses on something, we make it happen. This can already be seen in the progress we've made on gender diversity and leaders from Emerging Markets and Japan, and I'm confident we have the right people and plans in place to keep moving in the right direction. Inclusion and diversity are fundamental to our past, current and future success – the world around us is constantly changing, and our ability to respond is dependent upon our talented people and the diverse perspectives they are empowered to bring. I can't wait to see what else we can achieve through the power of our diversity.