



May 2021

## **Moving from Hashtags to Action – holding Canadian organizations accountable**

*At the one-year mark since the murder of George Floyd, Canadian organizations must assess their progress against the promises they made to combat systemic anti-Black racism.*

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The murder of George Floyd sparked a global awakening that forced our private, public and corporate worlds to reflect on the deep pain that many within our Black communities are faced with daily due to the impacts of entrenched systemic racism.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, many organizations made significant promises on how they would support Canada's Black communities – making public pronouncements of solidarity, hiring more people of colour, conducting anti-bias training, building diversity and inclusion task forces, and addressing a lack of representation in senior leadership roles.

One year on, now is the time to reflect on how many of these promises have actually turned into actionable results. (Hint: if the only racialized member of your leadership team is working in a DE&I role, you're a long way from being inclusive.)

The business case showing that diverse organizations are more profitable is often cited as the rationale for change. The problem with that argument is it implies that if profits go down, diversity and inclusion initiatives will be discarded. The willingness to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion should be driven by ethics and values, not by profit. It should be mission critical, not just because the business case for diversity is strong, but because it's the right thing to do.

We take meaningful steps toward environmental change because we understand the consequences of not doing so – the degradation of our planet. We pay the cost today to change the trajectory and help make the earth healthier for everyone tomorrow. Unfortunately, we do not have the tools to measure the impacts of excluding Black and racialized Canadians from participating fully in our society and economy. As we understand the need for investments today in environmental equity for the greater good, so too must we be equally ready to pay the short-term cost to ensure equity and inclusion in the long-term for all Canadians.



Today's consumers are increasingly demanding a high standard of ethical conduct from the organizations they engage with. The organizations that have been active in bringing equity and inclusion to the forefront have rewritten and built inclusion into the very DNA of their mandate. Companies, governments and community organizations that do this work and support Black Canadians because it's the right thing to do will diversify their customers and revenue, find more creative solutions to problems and will ultimately see a boost to their bottom line. Organizations that are not authentic in their efforts will pay a price.

It is the motivation to want to be equitable and inclusive – to do the right thing – that will allow for the foundational changes that will truly dismantle systemic discrimination and anti-Black racism; that will create more opportunity and achieve meaningful equity and inclusion for our Black communities that will last beyond a trending hashtag.

It's easy to talk about change, but here are some meaningful actions Canadian companies can take to be more inclusive:

- Don't hire for 'fit'. Too many companies confuse harmony with conformity and create 'mirror-tocracies.'
- Limit referral hiring – if your organization is homogenous, hiring from within or from employee's social networks reinforces the status quo.
- Broaden your pipeline – advertise jobs in ethnic media. Do job fairs at university & college ethnic/cultural student associations.
- Use objective criteria for offering internal job opportunities. Too often racialized employees have to prove competency, while non-racialized employees are given the benefit of the doubt.
- Ensure that anyone involved in recruiting or hiring has HR-specific unconscious bias training
- Require that your suppliers demonstrate a commitment to DE&I.

While these actions don't come close to rounding off the work that needs to be done, they're a great starting point for organizations to reflect on their equity 'report cards,' to understand where the gap between their promises and action may lay, and to improve moving forward – because it's the right thing to do.