



The Inclusion Initiative



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM
United Kingdom

International Women's Forum UK (IWF UK) Autumn Reception hosted by The Inclusion Initiative (TII)

6 October 2021 Alumni Theatre, New Academic Building, LSE



This October, TII and the IWF UK brought together leaders who focus on Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) in their senior executive and NED roles, for a conversation about key concepts and issues faced by leaders who aim to create more inclusive and productive organisations. Hosted by Dr Grace Lordan and Marty Rolle (Chair, IWF UK) at the LSE's Alumni Theatre, the conversation with Tosin Akinluyi (Managing Director, Morgan Stanley), Dame Inga Beale (Chair, Medycline International), Belton Flournoy (Director, Proviti) and Johannes P Huth (Partner, KKR) was attended by over 80 members and guests of IWF UK.

Dr Grace Lordan started by sharing with IWF UK members that The Inclusion Initiative at LSE has been awarded £2 million by the Economic and Social Research Council to study the link between diversity and productivity in the Diversity and Productivity: from Education to Work (DaPEW) project. This study will advance understanding of the barriers and facilitators to creating diverse workforces and provide new evidence on the impact of diversity on business performance and how firms can maximise the benefits of diverse teams. In implementing this project, TII will work hand in hand with businesses to design, test and implement the recommendations from its research, directly affecting practice and hence workplace diversity. If you are interested in having your company participate in this project at no cost to you, please email TII at diversity.productivity@lse.ac.uk. For more information about DaPEW, please visit <https://www.diversityandproductivity.com/> and follow @Div_and_Pro on Twitter.

During the panel discussion, Tosin Akinluyi emphasised that commitment to D&I is not just good for business but “the right thing to do”. In her experience, having a diverse matrix of mentors -many of whom don't identify the same as her- has been helpful in facing many professional challenges, especially those related to D&I. For her, true inclusion is about an organisation saying, “I want you here”, and the middle managers

are primarily responsible for creating micro-cultures that can contribute to more inclusive organisations.

Belton Flournoy emphasised that “leadership needs some conflict” to be inclusive because, in the absence of diversity, when everyone is too similar, leaders lack appropriate challenges and fresh perspectives that make them grow. In this regard, he pointed out that “uncomfortableness is not always a negative thing”, and we can all “get comfortable being uncomfortable”. Inclusive leaders should avoid trying to assimilate different people into the same kind of person. He also emphasised that finding his authentic voice allowed him to increase his productivity and “Employees recognise that belonging is feeling comfortable to speak your mind”. He invited the audience to complete TII’s course “Inclusive Leadership Through Behavioural Science”, available here: <https://rb.gy/i9sca5>.

Dame Inga Beale mentioned that a lack of women in senior roles in financial organisations has always made her frustrated and impatient. So, when she rose to senior positions, she decided she needed to do something different and become a driver of change. However, still to this day, she hears inappropriate comments, and she recognised that “At times I felt like it’s so hard and I should just give up. I feel the pressure and responsibility because I have a voice”. Dame Beale also warned about the “perpetuation of the sameness”: young people shouldn’t behave “like their grandparents”; they should avoid a drive to conformity if they aim to become inclusive leaders.

Johannes Huth mentioned that attracting diversity is relatively easy; the more significant challenge is creating the processes in management that will allow retaining people. In this regard, the most critical challenge for middle managers is to change the culture to ensure that women and other diverse employees can move up the curve. On the other hand, he discussed the association between diversity in teams and better business decisions. Finally, he pointed to the usefulness of the research being conducted by TII, with the support of CITI, to develop an index to measure inclusion at the firm level.

Moderating the discussion, Dr Grace Lordan discussed how the research and work that TII is conducting aims to address the many challenges that the panellists emphasised. With her team, she is bringing together teaching, academic research, and practice to build more inclusive work environments by producing research that has practical implications at the level of the organisation and developing teaching programs that promote inclusive leadership. Working with IWF UK to have this conversation, TII aims to find new allies and partners to promote inclusive leadership and all the good outcomes that come with them. If you wish to engage with TII, please email us at tii@lse.ac.uk, and to connect with Dr Lordan, please visit <https://www.gracelordan.com/>.