

How to Build an Inclusive Construction Pipeline in 2023

Written by: Stacey Barkley, Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Leader, DPR Construction

MAPPING OUT A GAME PLAN FOR MORE EQUITY ON JOBSITES.

Last year marked the second iteration of Construction Inclusion Week, our industry's grassroots effort to bring necessary conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion to every jobsite and corner office in the business.

2023 needs to be the year we turn those conversations into action.

With more than 3,000 firms participating and 500,000 workers engaged in some way, the opportunity to do so is ours to take. But construction's legacy processes also stand in our way.

Author James Clear says "You don't rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems."

The best of construction's inclusion intentions will remain unachieved if they are not matched with policies and practices that enable and hold us all accountable.

Tracking DEI Progress

One place for firms to start is the DEI Maturity Model that was introduced during CIW 2022.

Using a series of 25 targeted questions, the Maturity Model helps firms understand where they are in their DEI journey. Based on which of three tiers they fall into – basic awareness,



strategic, or advanced – companies can then choose curated CIW curriculum programs to follow.

Making these kinds of tools available industrywide is essential, a sentiment that was reinforced by post-CIW survey respondents.

A Bottom-to-Top Approach

The flagbearers for progress in construction can't just be those in leadership positions. Employees throughout an organization must affect change from the ground up through their own ability to organize with each other.

For instance, employee-led discussions and programs are more credible and authentic than top-down decrees, showing a real commitment to DEI initiatives rather than just a corporate mentality of checking the boxes.

When employees are at the forefront of these initiatives, they typically get right to work, asking questions like, “How do I build the business case for my firm?”

As leaders, we need to answer that question and bring more engaging solutions and resources - modeled on the curriculum above - to the table for them to use in 2023. This kind of accessible information will not only help employees take the driver’s seat, but also provide all construction professionals with guidance for navigating what can be daunting DEI conversations.

Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable


One big takeaway from 2022’s CIW surveys was just that: people are still uncomfortable tackling uncomfortable conversations.

This is a sign that we need to leverage more interactive sessions and consider in-person workshops for construction professionals in 2023. With time and practice will come confidence. Sustained visibility for diversity and inclusion initiatives will gradually make it an easier discussion for everyone.

Establishing DEI Objectives In 2023

The best approach to crafting a DEI game plan for this year is simple. In conjunction with the ideas and objectives laid out during CIW 2022, both executives and employees should consider setting goals based on the following:

- » Provide more clear, long-term career paths for diverse populations to encourage greater interest from potential job candidates and more permanent commitment from existing employees in underrepresented groups.
- » Tackle gender diversity, equity, and inclusion by rethinking your jobsite conditions and logistics, psychological safety, and leadership opportunities.
- » Prioritize an inclusive culture both in the office and on the jobsite.
- » Create more opportunities for engagement between employees and company leadership to help break barriers.
- » Engage talent pools that have traditionally been under-accessed.
- » Explore or enhance recruitment efforts at HBCUs, HSIs, and other diverse institutions while tapping veteran groups and re-entry programs.

As we re-evaluate our industry’s diversity efforts this year, we need to remember Construction Inclusion Week is the catalyst, not the main event. With the right proactive mindset and a clear vision, 2023 can be our industry’s most inclusive ever. 



About the Author

Stacey Barkley is global diversity, equity, and inclusion leader at Redwood City, California-based [DPR Construction](#).

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