

RAPP 

FIERCELY **INDIVIDUAL**

**HOW DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION
HAVE SHAPED RAPP'S MISSION AND APPROACH**



THE EVOLUTION OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY

In the summer of a health crisis unlike anything we'd seen in over a century, the world reached a tipping point — because of a different type of pandemic. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was killed by the Minneapolis police. He was just one of [at least 164 Black people killed](#) by police in America in the first eight months of 2020, but when The New York Times released a compilation of video footage documenting the moments leading up to Floyd's death, the world's collective anger finally reached a fever pitch.

Brands like Nike, L'Oréal, and Visa spoke out on social media, with hundreds of others making vague declarations of support or simply posting black squares. But the extent to which we saw companies scrambling to craft appropriate messaging showed just how unprepared, out of touch, and reactive many brands are to the realities of the world we live in.

The harsh truth is that the advertising industry is woefully behind in diversity, equity and inclusion, and almost every agency has been complicit. The problem is twofold: There isn't enough diversity within the industry itself, and the content coming from agencies and brands hasn't done a good job of portraying the lived experiences of people of color, the disabled, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and other marginalized groups.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION BY THE NUMBERS

ROUGHLY HALF OF THOSE WHO WORK IN ADVERTISING TODAY ARE WOMEN. IT'S ABOUT THE ONLY STATEMENT OF EQUALITY WE CAN MAKE.

ONE-QUARTER OF U.S. ADULTS LIVE WITH SOME TYPE OF DISABILITY, WHICH AMOUNTS TO 61 MILLION PEOPLE. YET LESS THAN 18% OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS HELD EMPLOYMENT IN 2020.

ONLY 5% OF ADVERTISERS IN 1978 WERE BLACK AND HISPANIC. BY 2019, BLACK REPRESENTATION HAD BARELY BUDGED (TO 6%). LATINX REPRESENTATION WASN'T MUCH BETTER (8%).

SOME 42% OF THE POPULATION IS NOT WHITE, WHILE 5% OF AMERICANS IDENTIFY AS LGBTQIA+ AND 10% LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE. WHO IS TELLING THESE STORIES?

Representation and visibility matter — both for minority groups who want recognition and the overall population who can better understand and empathize with these communities.

While women now make up [roughly half](#) of the ad industry, representation of people of color lags far behind the general population. In 1978, Black and Hispanic workers made up just [5%](#) of the advertising industry. By 2013, that number had crept up to just [5.8%](#) for Black employees and 9.2% for Latinx workers. In 2019, those numbers appeared to have stagnated or lost ground, with [6%](#) of respondents identifying as Black and just 8% identifying as Latinx.

It's no better for people with disabilities. [One in four](#) U.S. adults lives with some type of disability, yet only 17.9% [were employed in 2020](#) (down from 19.3% the year before). Tellingly, you cannot find specific statistics for representation figures within the advertising industry. It's infinitesimally small.

But in the U.S. alone, non-white consumers make up [42%](#) of the population and nearly [5%](#) identify as LGBTQIA+. Society looks even more diverse when you account for age and socioeconomic status. Sixteen percent of the U.S. population is 65 and older, and [10%](#) live below the poverty line.

And while a [recent survey](#) found that people of color are gaining visibility in advertising, people with disabilities, people over the age of 60, and LGBTQIA+ folks are still woefully underrepresented in ads.

[Research shows](#) that increased exposure to LGBTQIA+ people in the media fosters greater acceptance amongst the general population, and [seeing themselves](#) represented in the media can have a positive impact on the members of the LGBTQIA+ community themselves. [Another study](#) found that greater media visibility of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) individuals was associated with lower instances of hate crimes.

Visibility matters — for all underrepresented communities. Generally, the industry has made progress. But it's nowhere near enough.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AS A CULTURAL IMPERATIVE

When marketing teams are less diverse, they are less likely to include people from diverse backgrounds in their work.

This is especially important when you consider that brands and agencies are heralds of the cultural zeitgeist ... culture shapers and shifters. The industry has enormous power — and responsibility — to create a safer, more equitable world. But we've been missing the mark for far too long.

Altruism aside, when you consider the amount of money that's at stake, it's shocking that diversity has not been more of a priority. Consumers see the brands they buy as an **extension of their values**, and **nearly half** are willing to pay more for brands that reinforce those values and reflect the real world in which we all live.

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests last summer, **74%** of consumers said supporting businesses that work to improve diversity and inclusion had become more important. In another survey, **64%** of consumers reported taking some type of action after viewing an ad they perceived as

diverse or inclusive. The percentage of Latinx, Black, and LGBTQIA+ consumers who are motivated by inclusive advertising tends to be even higher.

“As a gay, Jewish man, I have seen certain brands that have stood by my various communities' sides for decades. They've earned being my first choice. That retention only comes from genuine and understanding work, resulting from teams who understand who I am.”

— Jack S.

Clearly, there is a huge upside to getting DE&I right, but individuals have grown skeptical of brands that purport to stand for social justice and equality without putting their money where their mouths are.

All too often, ads come across as out of touch, insincere, or simply an attempt to hop on the bandwagon. And when brands get it wrong, they risk alienating a huge swath of consumers.



DIVERSE ORGANIZATIONS PERFORM BETTER, BUT REPRESENTATION REMAINS A STRUGGLE

Considering all of these opportunities (and risks), why do ads still reflect such a limited range of experiences? The answer lies within the walls of the agencies themselves.

For decades, people of color, members of the LGBTQIA+ community and those with disabilities were completely excluded from the conversation in marketing and advertising. Even over the past few years, DE&I efforts lingered in the background as a box to be checked, with agencies half-heartedly broadening their recruitment efforts and casting more diverse folks in their ads.

Today, there is a public mandate for every industry to bring more diverse talent into the workforce, and agencies are all clamoring for this talent at once. But a diverse workforce is not a destination that an agency will one day arrive at. It is an evergreen journey that should constantly be evolving. DE&I efforts are meant to be fluid and flexible so that as culture and demographics change, representation within agencies can shift to mirror society.

The problem starts in the talent pipeline — or, arguably, much sooner. Advertising hasn't historically been presented as a career path for students in marginalized communities, and there has never been a push to bring candidates from diverse backgrounds into the industry until now.

Study after study has found that diverse leadership teams **perform better**, and companies in the top quartile for racial/ethnic

diversity were 33% more likely to lead the industry in profitability. Amid the pandemic and a groundswell of support for the social justice movement, ESG investing is also on the rise. In the United States, **\$1 in every \$4** is now invested with environmental, social, and governance factors in mind, and the social component will only grow in importance.

Agencies have finally realized that it's time to right the ship, but it's not as simple as making sure their organizations are generally representative of the consumer base. They must ensure that there are individuals from a wide range of backgrounds in leadership positions as well.

While the number of women in leadership **soared** between 2019 and 2020, other populations have not made similar strides. Among industry professionals who were promoted in 2019, 75% were white. For companies that belong to the Association of National Advertisers, only **4%** of CMOs are Latinx and just 3% are Black.

How do you elevate diverse leadership? It's not enough to hire more diverse candidates. More is required. Agencies must focus on nurturing talent and providing a sense of belonging, as well as a path for growth, so that individuals from any background will stay and flourish with the agency. That means providing more mentorship and sponsorship opportunities for people of color, LGBTQIA+ folks, and people with disabilities, as well as creating a culture where everyone's perspective is valued and heard. DE&I must be woven into the very fabric of an organization so the agency can retain the best of the best and produce authentic work for its clients.



HOW RAPP'S MISSION OF FIERCE INDIVIDUALITY MANIFESTS THROUGH DE&I

At RAPP, we are committed to building an agency that reflects our values of fierce individuality. That means prioritizing diversity and inclusion through our people and our work.

The first step is building an organization where people feel that they can bring their whole selves to work. Groupthink is the enemy of creativity, and we aim to create fearless, standout work. We need to have those hard conversations, but that can only happen when every member of our team feels safe, valued, and heard. To do that, we've gone to work on building a more inclusive, equitable environment where every individual is celebrated.

OUR STAKE IN THE GROUND: RAPP'S GLOBAL DE&I POSITIONING STATEMENT

At RAPP, we stand up for individuality.

We value the richness in people's wholeness. We know that everyone is at their best when they feel accepted for every facet of their being — recognized for their diversity in every dimension. We embrace that none of us is just one thing — and, in fact, it's our multitudes that make us powerful, beautiful, and brilliant.

And we recognize that actions speak louder than words because brands and agencies — facilitators of culture — have the power to influence a better world than the one we live in today.

So RAPP stands firm in keeping DE&I at the center of our process and our work, fundamentally affecting change for our own organization, the brands we serve, and the industry at large. We know there's magic in amplifying diverse perspectives and celebrating lived experiences — and we prove, through our craft, that those points of difference are truly valuable.

We commit to being explicit and open in our conversations, fostering a culture that shines light on diversity, equity, and inclusion as the human issues they are — while being gentle with each other's fragile humanity. And we pledge to empower and enable our people, giving them the safe spaces and tools needed to set them up for success and channel their energy for good.

Put simply: Individuals come first, so bring all of yourself. You're welcome here.

COMPANY ADVOCACY AND RESOURCE GROUPS



Omniwomen

Omniwomen is an Omnicom global initiative designed to champion women in the workplace and encourage them to move into leadership roles. Through education, mentorship, and HR programs designed to promote better work-life balance, Omniwomen's goal is to inspire greater gender equality and take action for change.

OPEN Pride

OPEN Pride is a worldwide Omnicom employee resource group dedicated to inclusion and diversity. It was formed to promote awareness, acceptance, and advocacy for the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies by improving visibility and creating more opportunities for leadership, community involvement, networking, and business.

The Neighborhood

The Neighborhood is RAPP's internal diversity, equity, and inclusion committee. It's responsible for fielding questions and gathering input for agency projects and prioritizing DE&I efforts through education, events, and observances. The Neighborhood hosts monthly events, virtual panels, and [RAPP ReLearns](#) — a short video series featuring RAPP team members who want to talk about a subject that isn't often discussed.

OPMG BLQ

This employee resource group, or ERG, has been established with the intention to facilitate interaction and organize activities that foster an inclusive environment by sustaining conversation surrounding the subject of Black equality today. In addition, OPMG BLQ intends to be the primary resource for the programming, best practices, and opportunities for dialogue and collaboration to further promote Black equality and inclusiveness, awareness, and acceptance to create a supportive, transparent working environment for all our employees in the process.

OPMG API Collective

The ERG aims to unify, illuminate, and empower OPMG's API talent. It creates a safe space for API and allies to network, connect, support, and celebrate one another. It drives awareness of the complex API experience and provides API and allies with education and resources that will foster greater inclusion. It provides training, mentorship, and leadership opportunities to increase AAPI leadership representation within OPMG and the API community at large. And it cultivates safe spaces to empower Asian and Pacific Islanders into leadership roles and amplify API voices. As a collective, OPMG API Collective seeks to progress inclusion and visibility of API.

ORGANIZATIONS WE PARTNER WITH

AIMM

The Alliance for Inclusive and Multicultural Marketing is an arm of the Association of National Advertisers. AIMM is a group of industry leaders focused on “evolving and enhancing the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of multicultural and inclusive marketing” to connect with consumers and maximize business growth in an increasingly diverse marketplace.

The Valuable 500

The Valuable 500 is a global organization formed to put disability on the business leadership agenda. By mobilizing corporations, The Valuable 500 seeks to drive inclusivity and unlock the \$8 trillion in spending power of 1.3 billion people living with disabilities.

Creative Spirit

This is a nonprofit dedicated to matching employers with individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. Creative Spirit believes that hiring people with IDD brings a new kind of energy to organizations — as well as a group of employees who are loyal, enthusiastic, and qualified.



DE&I DNA:

HOW DE&I IMPACTS RAPP'S APPROACH TO CLIENT WORK

**At RAPP, we understand that our people
are our greatest resource.**

Diversity and inclusion isn't something we "do." It's who we are — and it's how we help our clients celebrate their customers' individuality and craft more authentic and empathetic brand messaging.

"The benefit of different voices will become obvious... You'll always have someone on board who may be able to provide a deeper perspective on what's happening. By listening to those signals early, you can lead the pack."

— **Frank C.**

The diverse backgrounds and experiences of our team are what allow us to understand our clients' customers in an intimate way. We understand their hopes and fears. We "get" their values, wants and needs, and their day-to-day struggles. We know the conversations they're having around the dinner table, because those are the conversations we're having, too.

Recently, we worked on PNC Bank's [Grow Up Great](#) initiative, which provides resources for parents and educators in underserved communities to help children develop a passion for learning. The team working on this project didn't have to put themselves in the shoes of the parents the program was designed for. They were parents who understood the magic of watching their children write their own names for the very first time.

There were also people on the team who understood how much more impactful it is when the families represented in advertising look like their family.



Since then, we've made some big changes, from the top down, to prioritize DE&I in all the work we produce:

- We're leading a project in partnership with other Omnicom agencies to create a framework to review the work produced by our agencies through a DE&I lens. This will help ensure the work we're producing for clients reflects our global culture.
- We're developing an internal playbook and marketing best practices guide to help shape the conversation around DE&I. We hope these documents will serve as living, breathing resources for creating more authentic and inclusive marketing — for our people and for our clients.
- We're developing a one-pager for creative vendors we partner with to evaluate whether they share our values of diversity and inclusivity.
- We use The Five C's framework (connection, control, choice, conviction, and community) to determine whether a potential new client is a good fit to work with us.
- We're working across every department to eliminate bias and bring a richer set of backgrounds and experiences to all the work we do.
- We're creating a system to account for bias within data sets, working to minimize potential bias in strategy.
- We're creating a process through which we staff our pitch teams (and eventual client teams) with employees who have the appropriate backgrounds to speak to the client's customer base.
- We've updated our creative brief to ensure that all of our work is prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion from the very beginning.

All of these activations came to life following a series of interviews with our diverse talent, across all of the disciplines within our agency, so that we could better understand, directly from our people, how to best impact change. Most notably — and what we consider a key differentiator for RAPP — is our institution of the Diversity Strategist role across our U.S. and U.K. markets.





ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

HOW DE&I HAS IMPACTED RAPP'S INTERNAL PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

At RAPP, we recognize that longstanding inequalities still contribute to the underrepresentation of key groups within the industry. We do not live in a fair and equitable world, which is why it's so important to investigate, learn, and take concrete steps toward building a more inclusive agency.

Implementing recommendations from [In for 13](#) and those published in an [open letter](#) signed by 600 Black advertising professionals, we've taken a multipronged approach to bringing a more diverse group of people to the table within our organization.

Since last year, we've been working closely with our counterparts at Omnicom Precision

Marketing Group to make improvements across six pillars:

- Our work (ensuring that DE&I is woven into every piece of advertising content)
- Accountability (by measuring the data around diversity and inclusion)
- Belonging (making people feel valued and heard)
- Representation within our organizations across levels
- Community engagement (both within the industry and in our local communities)
- Education (which includes career coaching and mentoring)

One of the most impactful things we've done at RAPP has been establishing The Neighborhood and DISCO — our diversity, equity, and inclusion committees that represent employees from diverse backgrounds. These committees amplify the voices of these individuals, help facilitate tough conversations, and give us a platform to start making real changes within our organization.

Recently, we took a hard look at our company metrics to evaluate the demographics represented on the RAPP team and in leadership roles. Since last year, we regularly share our metrics to provide transparency to our people and keep ourselves honest about progress. We spoke to members of The Neighborhood and DISCO and did a deep dive into our processes to see how we could become more representative as an organization.

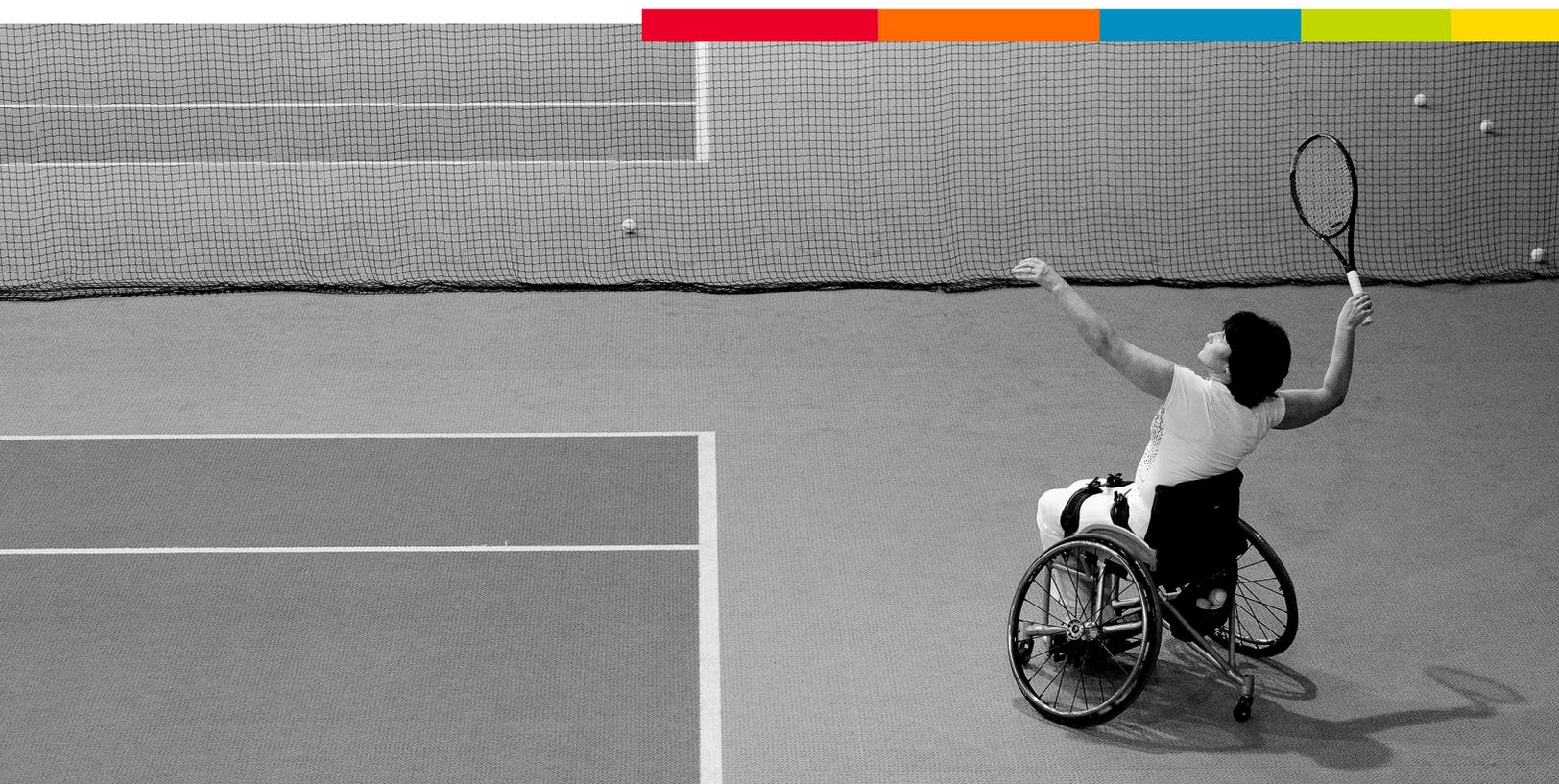
In the past, we offered unconscious-bias training to every employee at RAPP. We've since added multiple DE&I trainings and learning sessions, and we're partnering with new vendors, including Mark Strong Coaching,

Sayge, and Courageous Conversation, to further education within our organization.

We've set aggressive hiring goals — and revamped processes and approaches — for improving inclusivity, including bringing more BIPOC individuals into leadership roles. And we're constantly revisiting those KPIs to ensure we're moving in the right direction.

Finally, we're making activism and pro-bono work a more visible priority within the organization. In December 2020, RAPP kicked off a partnership with Creative Spirit to begin a pro-bono project of cleaning and sorting the organization's data to allow for better candidate matching. And, starting in 2022, we set the goal of mobilizing the entire RAPP team for one activism project per year.

There's still work to be done, but our goal is to make strides every year toward a more inclusive agency. We're continually auditing our policies and putting our internal culture under a microscope to identify areas for improvement.





STACKING THE DECK IN FAVOR OF INCLUSION: HOW DE&I IS SHAPING RECRUITMENT AT RAPP

It's worth repeating: Diverse teams, experiences, and ways of thinking are the key to producing diverse work. It's impossible to create groundbreaking marketing if a team is composed of carbon copies of the same employee.

This is why we strive to embrace fierce individuality at every turn — and why our vision for recruitment is not about finding a “culture fit” but rather a “culture add” — gaining something different through employees’ lived experiences and cherishing those insights.

That said, you’ll often hear that one of the biggest barriers to DE&I in hiring is the candidate pool itself. While we wouldn’t necessarily say this is true, without a doubt, the talent pipeline in the industry lacks diversity. So we’ve taken measures to ensure that a wider pool of candidates have the opportunity to find a home, and build their craftsmanship and careers, at RAPP.

STEP 1 ELIMINATING BIAS FROM JOB POSTINGS AND IMPROVING OUTREACH

Discrimination doesn’t start in the candidate-selection process. All too often, people feel excluded before they even submit an application. [Research shows](#) that using gender-coded language in a job description sends a clear message to candidates about who belongs in a role and who does not. Words such as “aggressive” and “ambitious” can skew male and [have been shown](#) to deter female candidates from ever applying.

Whenever we have an open position at RAPP, we use AI software to review the content and ensure that our job postings and descriptions are free from bias.



We work to avoid selection criteria that may limit our pool of candidates and, therefore, impact diversity. And our HR team has partnered with the Professional Diversity Network and Ongig to share job postings across their boards.

To attract more diverse candidates, we're also expanding our outreach efforts. We give back to, and partner with, diversity-focused organizations including She Runs It, GLAAD, HACE, ADCOLOR, The Valuable 500, and The 3 Percent Movement. We participate in the MAIP Fellowship program and have developed partnerships with target HBCUs. Our goal for 2021 is to hire a minimum of three diverse candidates for internships or apprenticeships.

Finally, we're also evaluating our referral program as a means of encouraging more diverse candidate applications so that our referrals represent more diversity than simply those in our inner circles who likely "look and act more like us."

STEP 2

EXPANDING OUR CANDIDATE POOL

At RAPP, we don't have diversity hiring quotas. We believe in hiring the best person for the job. But we are using data to understand the work we have to do in creating more diverse and equitable opportunities and thus setting targets to be more inclusive in our hiring.

The reality is, if you stack a deck of cards with only hearts, spades, and clubs, you're never going to draw any diamonds. The same principle applies to hiring: If your candidate pool doesn't include BIPOC talent, people of all genders, people with disabilities, or members of the LGBTQIA+ community, you'll never make any real strides in improving diversity on your team.

One of the most radical and impactful changes we've made is holding hiring managers and agency leadership accountable to DE&I efforts by requiring that 50% of candidates submitted for a job be from diverse backgrounds. We are aggressively hunting for a diverse range of talent and finding those passive applicants to get them excited by RAPP. We're also asking that these individuals make up 50% of the candidates in the final round of interviews. Doing this holds us all accountable for extending our reach to find new candidates and hire for talent versus craft so we can bring fresh perspectives and energy to our team and our work.

STEP 3

ENSURING FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY IN HIRING DECISIONS

To reduce bias, we try to include as diverse a group in the interview process as possible. We're also developing interviewer guardrails and have baked unconscious bias training into our behavioral interview training in order to avoid introducing bias at this stage in the hiring process.

THE DON'TS OF BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEWING:

- Ask leading questions
- Ask theoretical questions
- Jump to conclusions
- Let vague statements, opinions, and feelings get by you
- Ask questions that will get you and the company in legal trouble: medical or mental health history; age; sexual orientation; childcare, family planning or number of children; religion or religious beliefs; disabilities; physical characteristics; current compensation.

"Not a cultural fit" is no longer an acceptable reason to disqualify a candidate. At best, this leads hiring managers to select candidates who are most like themselves, which promotes groupthink. At worst, it perpetuates a "Mad Men"-esque culture in advertising that is predominantly young, male, cisgender, and white. This is where that "culture add" component really comes into play.

STEP 4

EMBODYING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FROM THE TOP DOWN

At RAPP, we believe all leaders should share our passion about diversity so that they embody and model these behaviors throughout the entire organization. It's also important to promote people with diverse backgrounds from within the company so junior employees see people like themselves represented in those roles. We realize that we've got a ways to go, as it relates to ensuring that our leadership team is diverse and balanced, so this year, we set goals for increasing the percentage of BIPOC individuals in leadership roles and, with OPMG, are partnering with organizations like InFor13 to see it through.

HOW RAPP'S ONBOARDING PROCESS NURTURES A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

Prioritizing DE&I doesn't stop with recruitment. Engaging employees from diverse backgrounds is equally important. Employees won't stay if they don't feel welcome and enthusiastic about the work, which is why we've made employee onboarding, training, and development such a priority.

The employee experience doesn't begin that first day on the job. We know that employees begin forming an impression of RAPP during recruitment or upon that first interaction with our brand and our team. From the moment people start their journey with us, we want them to have a positive experience. We've evolved our business in ways that are especially attractive to people looking to make a difference, and we want them to be enthusiastic about the work they'll get to do at RAPP.

The first six months on the job are critical — especially those first 90 days. New hires are forming impressions that will have a lasting impact on whether they decide to stay with us long-term — and they are important brand ambassadors on social media, in the communities we serve and with future talent and clients, too. Here's what we do those first six months to nurture connections and help new employees grow:

BEFORE DAY ONE

Once an employee accepts a role at RAPP, we encourage managers to reach out immediately — even if the employee's start date is still weeks away. This affirms their decision to join us and to makes new team members feel welcomed and excited about this new chapter in their lives.

Before they arrive, new employees receive a welcome package along with emails, texts, phone calls, and an onboarding schedule. That schedule includes meet-and-greets with key team members to learn our processes and procedures.

DAY ONE

We know that new employees often experience anxiety and discomfort when they find things are different than they expected. Our onboarding process is designed to help ensure that our new hires' transition to RAPP is easy by providing guidance and assisting them in becoming fully acclimated team members.

When new employees first arrive, they're invited to day-one orientation. At orientation, we share information about our employee resource groups and our partnerships with The Valuable 500, AIMM, ADCOLOR, and Creative Spirit, just to name a few. New employees will learn about The Neighborhood, our ERGs and culture teams, and whom they can contact to get involved.

We're also assembling a learning map of diversity training they'll take during their first month on the job. (If they were brought on as a hiring manager, they'll be invited to an additional training on behavioral interviewing that focuses on removing bias from the selection and interview process.)

FIRST 30 DAYS

We believe in setting people up for success by playing to their strengths and ambitions. One thing that helps new employees succeed is building safe, trusting relationships on the team and through ongoing career coaching.

During their first two weeks, employees receive an email from our Global Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion & Communications Officer reminding them of all the DE&I engagement opportunities that were shared with them, inviting them to a Neighborhood meeting, and introducing some more of the DE&I team. They'll meet with key team members to learn about the different disciplines within the organization. They'll also meet with their manager to set goals and objectives for the first 30, 60, and 90 days.

During their regular check-ins with their manager, they'll begin to form a complete picture of their team and how it works. We encourage employees to bring feedback to our leaders during these meetings to create an opening for challenging conversations, and the development of opportunities, around diversity and inclusion.

FIRST 90 DAYS

Every new team member at RAPP is assigned a buddy within their first 90 days. Having a buddy provides a hire with a reliable, motivated, single point of contact to get their questions answered. Buddies can offer advice and guidance on the day-to-day aspects of working at RAPP while helping employees feel at home at the agency. An employee's buddy should be a resource and an ally.

FIRST 6 MONTHS

At RAPP, we believe orientation should be an ongoing process rather than a single learning event.

The majority of a new hire's development takes place on the job with the help of their manager. Learning on the job does not mean "learning by doing" or throwing newcomers into the deep end of the pool to see whether they sink or swim. (More often than not, they'd sink!)

Instead, it's about placing employees in learning situations with plenty of support and opportunities to ask questions. Employees' primary development takes place in the trenches, working alongside senior employees who are primed to respond to the new team member's needs. This may include formal training or simply allowing newcomers to shadow them.

In client-facing roles, we make sure new team members get senior employees' insights on how best to engage with clients. Newcomers need to understand the RAPP way of doing things and why certain things work or don't work. In debriefings, senior employees help newcomers develop an eye for detail, decode what's being said between the lines, and generally become aware of company priorities. Sharing that expertise and client know-how helps create a strong learning environment.

Without making new employees feel welcomed and valued, even the most inclusive team can't reap the benefits of the diverse experiences that employees bring to the table. People might be afraid to speak up — especially if they're raising a sensitive issue or they have an idea that could disrupt the status quo.

Behind the scenes, we're constantly working to dismantle unconscious bias within our organization. We provide highly engaging and interactive training to help managers learn to lead more openly and inclusively. This training is designed to help them spot people who might feel excluded or insecure speaking up in meetings. Above all, we want to ensure that we're creating an environment where people feel heard, respected, and valued.

"What I love most about RAPP is the heartbeat of this agency. It's a community where people feel appreciated, feel comfortable sharing who they are, unapologetically, and are encouraged to bring unique perspectives to the table. I've enjoyed being able to interact with the diverse cultures across the different offices. RAPP New York is different from RAPP LA, which is different from RAPP Dallas — and rightfully so, because the people are different! But one thing always remains consistent, from office to office: RAPP cares."

— **Kyla J.**

THE WORK AHEAD OF US: OUR PEOPLE, OUR CRAFT, AND THE FUTURE OF RAPP

Here at RAPP, we're proud of the strides we've made toward greater diversity and inclusion, but there's always more work to be done. It's not simply that the way we think about DE&I will evolve over time; it's that human needs change.

Our focus is and will continue to be our people and our craft. Unfortunately, agencies have developed a reputation of being a revolving door for talent. This shouldn't be the case for newcomers — especially for individuals from marginalized populations. It's important to get more diverse talent in the door, yes, but it's equally critical to keep them happy, fulfilled, and growing once they join our team.

All too often, BIPOC talent look at a company's leadership staff and don't see enough people who "look like them." Junior talent and potential employees need to be able to see a career path for themselves, which is why we're striving to improve representation on our leadership team. Our goal for 2021 is to increase our BIPOC leadership by 10% at the VP level and above.

We're also doubling down on training, mentorship, and advocacy to ensure that every employee is on a level playing field. In 2021, we kicked off a mentoring program for a cohort of BIPOC employees. We're also honing a plan for upskilling and reskilling existing talent. Each role in our company now has performance KPIs to help ensure that promotions and raises are awarded strictly based on merit.

From a craft perspective, we have the opportunity to be trailblazers in the DE&I space. We're building tools such as our

Diversity Audit and blowing out our Diversity Wheel — both of which will be heavily used by our growing Diversity Strategy team — and developing resources like our Marketing Best Practices Guide. Everything we're doing is an opportunity to build an agency that embodies our core value of fierce individuality — which means way more now than ever before.

If there was one silver lining to the pandemic, it was that it forced everyone to slow down and pay attention to what was happening in the world. Once people were forced to be truly present, we saw an amazing groundswell of support for diversity and inclusion within our communities and our industry.

As we all head back to the office, it's our job to ensure this support doesn't fade into the background. The focus must remain on lifting people up and promoting diversity and equity because shaping a more inclusive world starts with us.

What we put out into the market doesn't have to simply be a mirror of society: We can actually use our work to help shape a better future. We've reached an inflection point as a society where there is a lot at stake for women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities.

As an agency, an industry, and a global community, we have to get it right.

