

DIVERSITY IN CONTENT

It is our belief... that the content we create must be as diverse as the society we serve. Content needs to celebrate all genders, BAME, age, LGBTQI, disability, neurodiverse, religious beliefs, class, socio-economic groups and ideologies. People are intersectional: identities combine in many ways. To live and breathe this ethos and tell authentic stories, we have to start with the teams who make the work. Diverse teams = diverse work = diverse audiences.

The leadership position

Every management team across the industry should lead by embedding the principles of diversity, inclusion and equality throughout their companies, teams and working practices. At board level, all leaders should be accountable for their workforce composition setting KPIs which are regularly reviewed, targeting recruitment, retention and career progression, along with putting processes into play which create diverse and inclusive content.

Commercial imperative

The internal benefits of diversity are well understood – ranging from increased morale and a widened pool for recruitment, through to diverse teams and companies performing better¹. However, the advertising industry may see special benefits. In a setting where creativity, innovation and the ability to understand how consumers will interact with products and services are key, having a diverse team helps us tap into different perspectives and nimbly react to the latest trends. Diverse teams would also likely help safeguard against creating ‘tone-deaf’ or offensive content.

We believe all organisations should make the following commitments and these should be included in all agency briefs:

1. The briefs

- Ensure that briefs are written and/or approved by at least 2-4 individuals in the organisation from different backgrounds.
- Consider requesting diverse pitch teams to respond to proposals. Also ask the agencies responding to briefs to be inclusive in how their pitch team is put together.
- Identify any potential elements of stereotyping/prejudices within the brief and share concerns with client/pitch team. Make sure the work follows the Advertising Standards Association Guidelines on Gender [Stereotyping](#).

2. The audience

- At brief stage identify any ‘assumptions’ made about the audience and check
- Where possible, use audience testing/focus groups to feedback on creative before launch to ensure that content does not offend/ridicule/stigmatise etc.

3. Process

- Learn how to identify any areas of concern, such as potentially tone-deaf and inappropriate content and poor web accessibility through adding a ‘diversity lens’
- Put a process in place that encourages ways of pushing back on inappropriate content – one that points to a business case and protects the individual making the case
- Enable other audience groups to be a part of the feedback process for a wider representation of voice
- Make sure your supply chain is representative. Sign up to [FreeTheBid](#), for example, a non-profit initiative advocating on behalf of women directors for equal opportunities to bid on commercial jobs in the advertising industry

¹ McKinsey – Hunt, Layton & Prince, 2015; Harvard Business Review – Gompers & Kovvali, 2018

4. Recruitment

- Insist your recruitment partners have signed up to the Creative Equals' [Recruitment Equality Standard](#)'. The recruitment sector is often a blocker for diverse groups coming into the industry, particularly BAME and returning mothers
- The key site for hiring in this space is [The Dots](#), who are 61% female on their platform, 31% BAME and 14% LGBTQI
- Remove bias out of your hiring processes, for example, taking names, age and education off CVs and removing your staff-incentivised bonus scheme
- Sign up to the 'London Living Wage Pledge' [here](#) if appropriate

5. Fostering diverse teams

- Hold targets for diversity at board level
- Make sure equal opportunities are available for all
- Ensure you foster a fully inclusive culture so staff can turn up as themselves without having to hold back any aspect of their identity (covering) and where discrimination/harassment is not tolerated.
- Support grassroots initiatives that foster entry talent like the [Girlhood](#), the [Ideas Foundation](#), [Creative Access](#) and [D&ADShift](#)
- Sign up to the [Creative Equality Standard](#), which gives businesses a review, rating and road map for change, recognised by the AAR, Oystercatchers, Creativebrief and Campaign Magazine's School Reports and key advertising bodies.