intapeople

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion across the board in STEM

Encouraging true ED&I from the top down in STEM organisations

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Executive summary

Welcome to the IntaPeople report on equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I). We wanted to undertake a study which would give ourselves and the STEM communities we serve insight into the current state of play of ED&I in some of the leading UK STEM organisations. We frequently receive requests for diverse short and long lists and wanted to explore how far an ED&I hiring campaign ought to go to have a lasting, and authentic impact on an organisation.

We have found in our research that while the vast majority of top STEM employers in the UK have published an ED&I policy (80%), this falls dramatically when it comes to a.) Board representation, b.) published ED&I commitments elsewhere and c.) employee perception which drop below 50% in all instances.

This is concerning in two ways:
1. Policies aren't being met*, indicating greater work is needed
2. Policy isn't shared across all internal and external channels, indicating unified commitment to the policies themselves is lacking

Despite many businesses failing in both these respects, there are a small number within our sample who have committed to their ED&I policies and who do achieve diversity on their Boards. However, it's important to note that these are exceptions to the norm, which supports rather than contradicts the hypothesis that STEM sectors lack diversity. Nevertheless, it is important to enjoy these successes and appreciate that, while there is some way to go, organisations do generally understand the imperatives behind ED&I and many are moving in the right direction.

We hope you will enjoy this exploration of the ED&I disparities in STEM and find our advice and guidance on this topic useful in your own recruiting efforts.

Sincerely,
Arran Warner
Director of IntaPeople

*Assuming policies have committed to achieving EDI, at least to some degree

Introduction

Albeit not a problem unique to STEM, it is well known that the STEM sectors suffer from a lack of diversity at all career levels, from junior through to Board level, with dwindling representation at each progressive stage.

This is probably most noticeable, certainly most scrutinised, when it comes to gender. While women make up 52% of the overall UK workforce, this currently stands at **around a quarter** for STEM professions. However, women are not the only under-represented group within STEM organisations; all marginalised and/or minority groups suffer from a lack of representation within the STEM fields. BAME people are **disproportionately under-represented** within the field, as are disabled employees (11% cf. 14% of the workforce), and those in lower-economic groups.

These figures also fail to distinguish and effectively examine intersecting identities, for example, while women are disproportionately under-represented it's likelier still that women of colour are less represented yet (and/or disabled, LGBTQ, neurodivergent, of a lower socio-economic group). Analysing the number of BAME employees within STEM organisations is masked by many organisations effectively 'lumping together' ethnic minorities, which can help conceal further disparities between specific minority groups.

Our research seeks to examine the relationship between these ED&I policies (that indicate a desire for greater diversity and inclusion) against their overall public message when it comes to diversity. While we consider the numbers themselves by examining how diverse these organisations are at Board level, we are also interested in how diversity can look from the outside in employer branding channels, including: social media, dedicated web pages, careers pages, review sites and so on. Does this messaging correlate with organisational policy? This is important in terms of accountability but is also an important factor in the resolution of under-representation in STEM – if it 'looks' like the stereotypical image of white, cis, probably heterosexual, able men making up the majority of the STEM workforce, this has the power to put those entering or staying within the field off if they fall outside of this demographic.

Unifying ED&I policy with internal and external messaging means a more authentic ED&I brand message that will appeal more to current and potential future employees, create a culture of idea exchange and collaboration, drive equal career progression, productivity and much more.

The benefits of a diverse workforce

There is a plethora of research available to support the benefits of a diverse workforce. These point not only to greater equity and will, therefore, contribute to greater social outcomes, but also to tangible financial outcomes for businesses. Research undertaken by **McKinsey** shows that Boards with better gender and racial diversity outperform their peers by as much 48% between the most and the least diverse organisations.

A more diverse workforce is likely to benefit organisations for a number of reasons, including but not limited to:

— Creating a variety of perspectives
   leading to varied solutions
— Creating better understanding
   of a wider range of customers
— Fostering an engaged workforce
— Boosting productivity and collaboration

While recruiting a more diverse workforce is crucial, it is just one part of the picture; a concerted effort to uphold diversity and inclusion within the workplace is essential. This means not only having the presence of a diverse workforce but embodying diversity through practices, policy, how the business is represented both outwardly and internally, and so on through employer branding channels. This leads to a much more inclusive environment, where diversity is holistically achieved and maintained.

Our methodology

We identified 118 of the biggest STEM employers in the UK and through desk research we uncovered their diversity footprint by analysing:

— Their Board makeup and
   the diverse members included
— Whether they have a vision
   or diversity policy online
— Their social media presence, including
   LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and online reviews
— Their careers pages and signs of gender bias

We wanted to examine how unified and consistent their ED&I policy was through examining said policies in the first instance, to Board representation and representation of ED&I principles in their employer branding activities.

We used quantitative analysis to assess these component parts when considered alongside each other (policy, board representation, public message, employer branding), to ascertain the link between ED&I done well and its impact on employee satisfaction and candidate experience. These factors considered together give us an overall impression of the importance of authentic ED&I policies, values and communications when it comes to recruiting in STEM.

Our findings: Board-level diversity in STEM organisations

Given the length of time ED&I has been on the business agenda it is no surprise to see that the vast majority of organisations within our sample have published ED&I policies (80%). Although very high, these are the UK's largest STEM employers and it is perhaps a surprise that this figure is not higher.

These numbers drop considerably, however, when looking at the diversity on their Boards, where only 8% of boards are made up of at least 50% of women (dropping to 3.5% for over 50%) and with the same percentage make up of BAME people. For 50% Board representation or less, women are better represented than BAME people:

Percentage of women on boards	Percentage of organisations*	Percentage of BAME people on boards	Percentage of organisations*
50% or higher	8%	50% or higher	8%
40 – 49%	25%	40 – 49%	1%
30 – 39%	32%	30 – 39%	8%
20 – 29%	16%	20 – 29%	17%
10 – 19%	13%	10 – 19%	32%
<10%	7%	<10%	34%

This means that for almost all of the organisations we studied, their boards predominantly consist of white men. For employees applying for roles within these organisations, this implies that they are likelier to progress if they are white and male.

Diverse boards, on the other hand, demonstrate to outside applicants that all people have the ability to progress in the organisation. For those employees considering the 80% of employers with an ED&I policy published to their own website, further scrutiny of those ideas in practice at board level would show a discrepancy between their stated objectives and values against their actual practice.

What role does employer branding play in ED&I authenticity?

ED&I relates not only to visible representation of different groups that both the public and those within the organisation can see, it relates to the embodiment of those values in terms of messaging and perception. We can see whether an organisation "talks the talk" quite easily, but whether or not they authentically "walk the walk" is equally important.

Where policy was visible on company websites for the 80% majority, this was a similar figure for ED&I policies or statements published on careers pages or dedicated microsites, although they weren't necessarily the same ones, which indicates some organisations believe that one message on one channel suffices.

Social media and press mentions of ED&I, however, drop dramatically.

Only 6% of our organisations mentioned ED&I on their social media output, withpress mentions at less than 2% (one mention was a negative press story).

Mentions of ED&I policies on LinkedIn and Glassdoor also dropped considerably beyond the 80% of organisations with a published ED&I policy on their website to 47% and 36% respectively.

Perception is also important internally. While reviews regarding ED&I were more positive than negative, this was by a narrow margin (57% and 43% respectively). Furthermore, these are reviews that are in the public domain and often the negative reviews were arguably stronger than the positives.

How important is ED&I to candidates?

In very few instances, people complained about diversity as a problem in itself. Although very few in number, this highlights the need for internal ED&I education about the importance of a culture of ED&I.

Not only do the variety and tone of reviews indicate a need for a better narrative internally, they also highlight an area of concern for businesses as applicants do look at and consider the reputation of the organisation they are applying for.

More than 3 out of 4 job seekers and employees (76%) report that a diverse workforce is an important factor when evaluating companies and job offers

83% of employees/job seekers are likely to research company reviews and ratings if deciding on where to apply for a job

What can STEM organisations do to improve their employer branding to better support ED&I?

It is clear from this message that a concerted effort to embody and also promote a strong sense of equality, diversion and inclusion is strongly lacking among the majority of the UK's largest STEM employers, irrespective of efforts towards an ED&I policy. This draws a question mark over the level of authentic ED&I within these organisations as well as, as our research is concerned with, the employer brand messaging when it comes to ED&I, which has the potential to encourage – or to deter – candidates when applying for or accepting roles.

What steps can be taken to address this?

1. Review your ED&I policy in first instance

Reviewing your ED&I policy means more than just checking you've included as many groups as possible; it means looking at your internal structures, your leadership makeup and forming a policy that best represents your company's values in the most authentic way. If you lack diversity at Board level, you should express a commitment to change and supporting internal development and promotion to correct it as a long-term plan.

2. Review all employer branding channels to ensure the most up-to-date version of ED&I policy is presented

Channels to consider include:

a. Careers pages
b. Jobs boards
c. Job descriptions
d. Dedicated ED&I page
e. Social media

f. Review platforms (Glassdoor, The Muse, Comparably, etc.)
g. Events
h. PR
i. Blogs page

3. Review internal documents and communications to ensure the same

While employer branding channels focus on representation of policies to external viewers to attract potential new employees, internal representation is just as important. Company culture is something that needs to be managed from within; that means unified and consistent communications of your ED&I policy. Ensuring your internal communications are unified and communicated effectively will support employee retention and job satisfaction.

4. Create an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) and communicate it to senior leadership

Your ED&I policy and efforts can't just focus on diversity alone, it needs to also support authentic equality and inclusion. One great way to do this is to develop and EVP, that will help put in place a framework for inclusion and development for employees.

Diversity lacks impact without meaningful inclusion, which means that once you have hired a diverse workforce, you need to know how they are treated and how they feel about their experience.

5. Ensure buy-in from the top down for your ED&I and EVP

Nothing can change unless everyone is committed to change. Your ED&I values, and policy need to be more than just an HR initiative, they need to be something that everyone is committed to. A good way to do this is to ensure everyone understands the benefits and value of true ED&I within STEM through training on the subject.

Conclusion

Organisations within the STEM sector seem to understand the need for ED&I generally, evidenced through the majority who had published policies. However, what also seems evident from our research is that this has not yet been achieved in terms of creating a diverse workforce (specifically in our research at Board level) and that the messaging is not consistent both in terms of their own output, such as social media and PR, but also through their perceived ED&I successes internally, i.e. from their own employees.

Such consistency is an imperative if ED&I policies are to become more than a box-ticking exercise and are instead truly embodied values, objectives, and principles. Furthermore, candidates coming on board will have access to, and will likely research, said policy claims, but may also consider how these are replicated elsewhere in order to ascertain their authenticity.

Organisations must therefore work harder to ensure a consistency of message if they are to be believed.

How IntaPeople can help

Our experienced, ED&I trained consultants can help organisations with convey and enact their ED&I policies as part of the recruitment process, advising on shortlists, sourcing diverse candidates and more. We can provide a detailed breakdown of the diversity of the current STEM talent pool. In the last 12 months, the current gender split of 17,958 STEM applicants was:

75% male and 25% female

We can:

— Create diverse long and shortlists
— Structure a recruitment process
  with diversity and equality at its core
— Create recruitment strategies
  designed to attract diverse applicants
— Support with creating inclusive job adverts
  with our **Gender Decoder tool**
— Advise on employer branding
  communications and representation
— Advise on ED&I considerations
— Support with ED&I training
— Analyse current ED&I standing and
  benchmark against industry standards

For more information, please get in touch:
Email: info@intapeople.com

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We are IntaPeople and we take the hassle out of hiring

We are more than just a STEM recruitment agency, we are passionate about making a difference. Our desire to create meaningful relationships has allowed us to transform thousands of careers and support the growth of UK businesses for more than 25 years. Based in Cardiff since 1994, we have outlasted multiple recessions and market shifts.

This is due to our commitment to excellence and industry knowledge, which flows through everything we do. This sets us apart from our competitors and enables us to offer specific market advice-based issues unique to STEM industries and professions.

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