

INCLUSION CONFERENCE 2025:

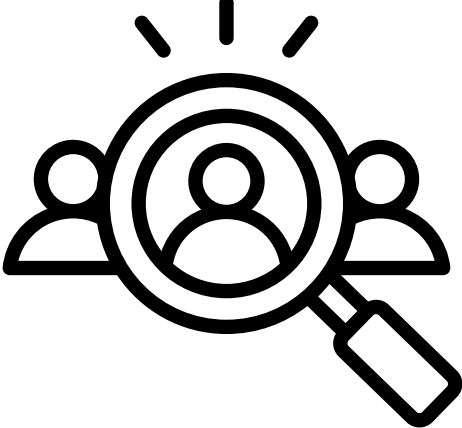
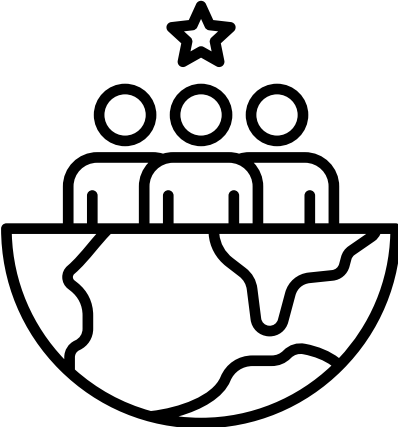


REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS

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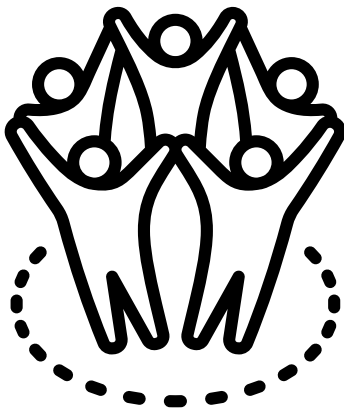


TACKLING REPRESENTATION GAPS ACROSS THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

Representation at all stages of the Employee Lifecycle is important, however, this can be difficult to achieve due to numerous barriers faced by those from Ethnic Minority backgrounds. The key is to break down and fully understand the Employee Lifecycle; only then can you understand where each challenge (or set of challenges) arises. This will enable you to address these issues and bridge the Representation Gap.

 <p>Recruitment: Talent Attraction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job adverts often fail to attract diverse candidates due to the wording being unappealing or inaccessible to candidates from specific backgrounds • Roles are not always promoted using channels that effectively reach diverse communities <p>Making job marketing more inclusive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use plain, straightforward language • Advertise through channels that reach diverse groups • Include diverse visuals and language to reflect inclusion
 <p>Recruitment: Diverse Recruitment</p>	<p>Ethnically diverse candidates often feel excluded and unwelcome when they don't see themselves represented in the recruitment process</p> <p>Ensuring diverse panels and/or introducing 'interview ambassadors'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some organisations have diverse "interview ambassadors" who help ensure fair recruitment and represent different perspectives, especially when diverse panels aren't possible
 <p>Develop: Progression</p>	<p>Diverse employees often leave mid-career due to stalled progression, lack of support, and biased promotion practices</p> <p>Data driven strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-career attrition among diverse employees requires a targeted approach. Collecting data through surveys and interviews helps identify where talent is lost, enabling strategies like training and system reviews to address disparities • Collect data on attrition rates so you can spot anomalies and diagnose their root cause(s). Implement targeted mechanisms to address 'hotspots' for attrition in the employee lifecycle
 <p>Develop: Voice & Belonging</p>	<p>Many organisations lack spaces where diverse employees can openly share and advocate for themselves</p> <p>Safe spaces and advocacy mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations should recognise varied lived experiences and provide avenues for diverse employees to share them. Key approaches include network groups, surveys, anonymous platforms, listening sessions, and reverse mentoring

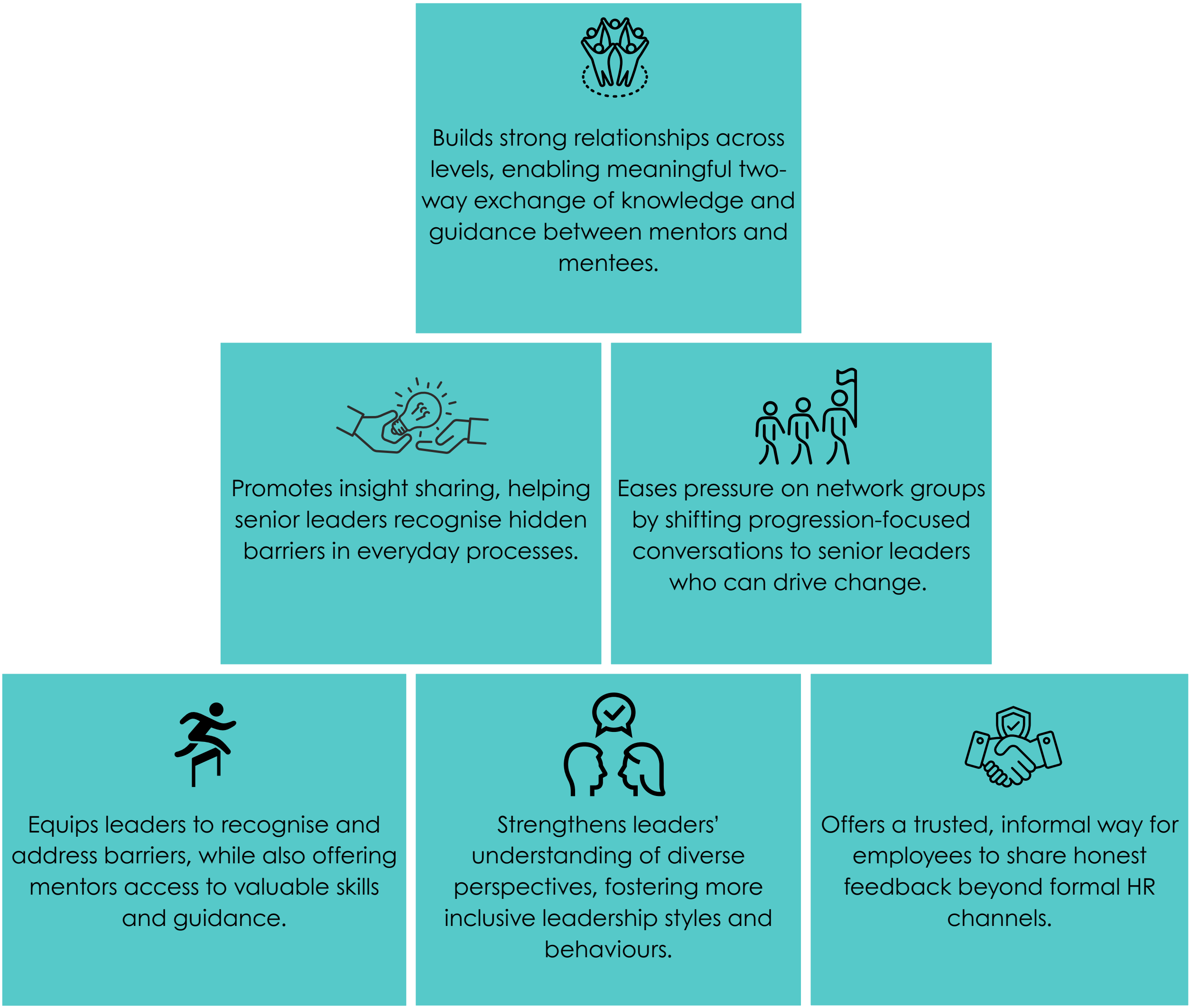
TACKLING REPRESENTATION GAPS ACROSS THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

 <p>Throughout: Allyship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racial bias often goes unchallenged as non-diverse staff may lack confidence or tools to address <p>Provision of allyship tools and discussion spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering allies is key to fostering an inclusive workplace. Organisations can support this through providing discussion spaces, training sessions, and leadership forums that encourage open dialogue and action against non-inclusive behaviour
 <p>Develop: Performance management</p>	<p>Performance management processes often lack transparency, leaving diverse employees vulnerable to bias and dismissal of their concerns</p> <p>Transparency is key</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building trust and advancing ethnically diverse talent requires transparency. Key steps include clear career pathways, internal vacancy advertising, fair appraisal systems, regular feedback, and aligning performance ratings with organisational values
 <p>Develop: Progression</p>	<p>Diverse employees often leave mid-career due to stalled progression, lack of support, and biased promotion practices</p> <p>Data driven strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-career attrition among diverse employees requires a targeted approach. Collecting data through surveys and interviews helps identify where talent is lost, enabling strategies like training and system reviews to address disparities Introduce targeted measures to support visibility, for example sponsorship or networking with leadership opportunities
 <p>Throughout: Culture and values</p>	<p>Diverse employees often feel alienated due to mispronounced names, Eurocentric norms, and narrow leadership archetypes, leading to a lack of representation at senior levels</p> <p>Embracing diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating an inclusive workplace begins with valuing diverse perspectives, respecting names, and fostering cultural awareness through regular communication and events To broaden leadership representation, organisations must diversify pipelines, embrace varied leadership styles, and break away from limiting stereotypes

By employing these strategies, organisations can start to address gaps in representation across the employee lifecycle, making inclusion part of everyday practice rather than a one-off initiative. This helps create a workplace where people from all backgrounds can thrive, contribute meaningfully, and see a future for themselves in the organisation.

REVERSE MENTORING & ALLYSHIP: A DEI CASE STUDY FROM AMAZON

In 2022, Amazon launched *Trading Places*, a reverse mentoring programme that paired 20 senior leaders with employees from underrepresented backgrounds. Members of that initial cohort later joined this panel to share their experiences. Below are some of the **key benefits** of reverse mentoring highlighted during the discussion:



Key Tips for Senior Leaders:

- 1.Be Present: You may not always have an open door, but making time to engage shows you're open to honest conversations - especially around progression.
- 2.Listen First: Prioritise the voices and ideas of your team over your own. True leadership creates space for others to lead.
- 3.Focus on the Process: Issues often lie in systems, not people. Improve the process to support growth for yourself and your team.
- 4.Assume Positive Intent: Most people mean well, even if outcomes fall short. This mindset helps you support development more effectively.

For further information, please refer to our resource on [Reciprocal Mentorship](#).

ENGAGING SENIOR LEADERSHIP & TAKING THE ENTIRE ORGANISATION ON THE JOURNEY

We interviewed two high profile senior leaders who are classed as DEI champions. Throughout this conversation we got key tips on how to engage leaders in DEI work as well as insight into how leadership engagement with DEI looks. Leadership engagement has three key elements:

- 1.Impact: Working smarter and having measurable objectives
- 2.Reach: You need to have reach; this means having engagement at all levels including leadership
- 3.Consistency: Consistent messaging on inclusion at your organisation will increase buy-in

The key messaging from our session was that leaders need to:

ADVOCATE	EDUCATE
Inclusive progress often starts in the boardroom, so leaders must use their influence to represent underrepresented voices among their peers	Senior leaders should lead by example, demonstrating how to engage meaningfully with DEI and take actionable steps

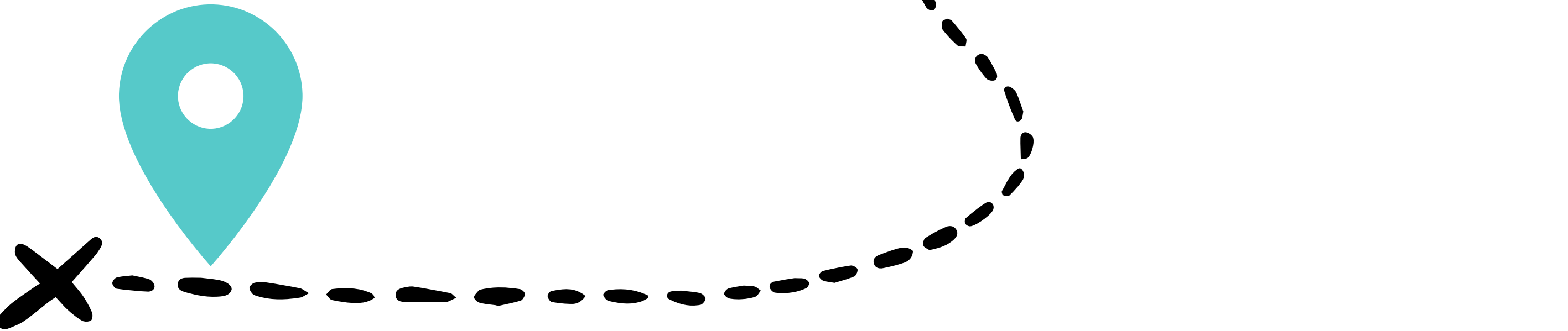
Tips to engage with senior leaders:

Quick Tip: Senior leaders often fear getting inclusion wrong - support them with training that shares lived experience, gives clear guidance, and creates space for open discussion.

Exec summaries are key
Keep messaging to senior leaders brief and clear. A one-page executive summary helps them quickly grasp key proposals and take action.

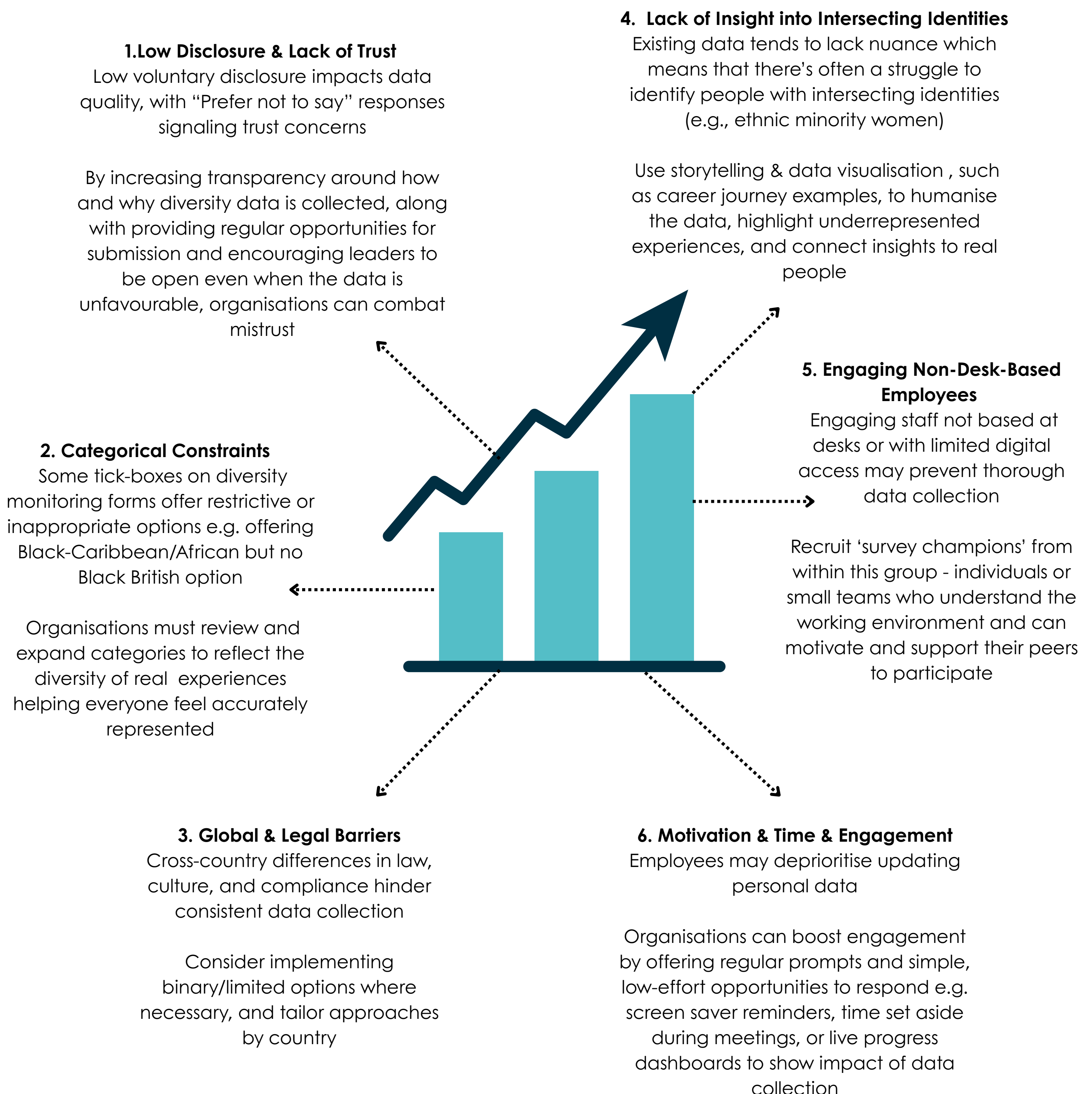
Get to know your CEO
Target your approach by understanding what motivates each senior leader. Take time to learn their priorities and tailor your engagement strategy accordingly.

Demonstrate through data
Use clear, tailored data to highlight inclusion gaps or progress. Tools like live dashboards can help make the case for diverse representation.



MAKING DIVERSITY DATA USABLE

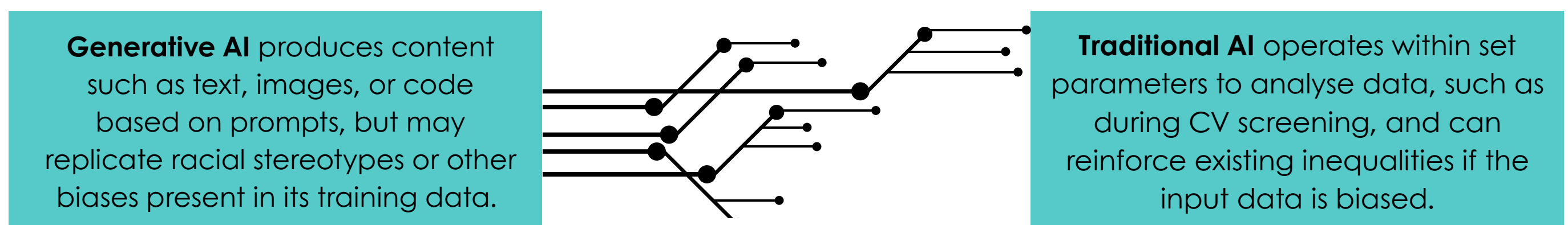
Diversity can be heavily driven by data, however many organisations collect lots of data but instead of using it to drive strategy, it sits in archives. We have outlined the key challenges organisations face when it comes to data usage and collection our top tips on Making Diversity Data usable.



INCLUSIVE AI AND RECRUITMENT

Businesses that develop and commercialise AI recruitment tools frequently use words such as 'bias free', 'time saving', and 'efficiency' to entice you. AI appears at various stages of the recruitment process on both the jobseeker and employer side. It's essential to understand the various ways in which AI can be used so that the impacts of this on inclusion can be considered fully.

In recruitment, the two main types of AI used are **generative** and **traditional**, each carrying distinct inclusion risks:



Inclusion considerations for the use of AI during recruitment

Screening considerations

When using AI for screening, inclusion risks can arise at several stages. CV sifting may favour certain formats or experiences, disadvantaging diverse candidates. Predictive analytics based on CV data can reinforce historical bias when estimating job performance or tenure. Similarly, AI analysis of cover letters and application responses may misinterpret language or tone shaped by cultural or linguistic differences.

Working beyond the CV

AI models may analyse publicly available information, including social media profiles, as part of their evaluation process. This expanded data scope can introduce additional bias and affect decision-making.

AI discriminates beyond 'protected characteristics'

AI models often consider factors that, while not legally protected, may reflect societal disadvantage - such as being a single mother. These can still influence AI-driven decisions and contribute to biased outcomes.

Discrimination by proxy

AI may infer personal characteristics based on indirect data, even without access to diversity information. For example, it might assume a candidate's ethnicity based on their location, which can influence decisions through predictive analytics and introduce bias.

Assessment considerations

Virtual interviews and assessments often involve AI tools that analyse speech, eye movement, or facial expressions, which can unfairly disadvantage affect candidates with disabilities, neurodivergence, or from different cultural backgrounds. Tests approved by AI and performance predictions based on these results may also carry bias if not carefully designed.

MAINTAINING A NETWORK GROUP

Network groups play a vital role in fostering inclusion, but getting started and sustaining momentum can be challenging. To help, we spoke with the chair of a major employee network with over 4,000 members, who shared their top tips for building, growing, and maintaining an impactful network.

The PAN Model

Plan

P

- Start by defining the purpose of the network e.g to build community, support career growth, or influence change
- Secure executive backing early: according to the Matrix, 93% of organisations have an executive sponsor for ethnicity, which can provide influence, visibility, and resources
- Set a clear strategy with goals, key activities, and success measures
- align your strategy with wider DEI priorities to ensure long-term impact and relevance

Act

A

- Start engaging your members through regular communication, events, and opportunities to contribute
- Listen to their needs and build a sense of community
- Identify the resources available to you e.g. budget, time, or internal support and use them strategically to deliver value and keep the network active and visible

Nurture

N

- Track your progress by measuring impact whether through engagement, feedback, or outcomes
- Stay flexible and adapt to changing circumstances or member needs
- Keep communication consistent and transparent to maintain trust, build momentum, and ensure members feel connected and valued



Running a successful network group leads to...

- Engaged members
- Increased allyship
- Increased engagement
- Embeds culture of inclusion
- Higher employee retention rates
- Personal sense of achievement

EXPLORING ETHNICITY WITHIN INTERSECTIONAL DEI PRACTICES

We brought together inclusion leads from a range of organisations to talk about how to prioritise ethnic inclusion while keeping an intersectional perspective. It's not always easy as many organisations still approach inclusion in silos, making it hard to join the dots across different lived experiences. Below, we've shared some of the common challenges that came up in the discussion, along with practical tips for tackling them.

Challenge	Key takeaways
Single-issue focus Senior leaders often focus on single identity groups, missing those with intersecting identities and creating data blind spots.	Think broadly Inclusion efforts can unintentionally disadvantage other marginalised groups if not carefully planned. Consider the wider impact of policies and use diverse data to guide decisions.
The 'need to do something' Leaders are often well-intentioned, but their urgency to respond to inclusion needs can lead to rushed policies that lack meaningful input. Without proper consultation, these efforts may focus more on protecting the organisation's image than driving real change in the workplace.	Don't rush due to external pressure It's tempting to act quickly when others are responding to an issue, but effective inclusion policies take time. Focus inward, consult those affected, and let solutions be shaped by the people impacted to ensure lasting change.
Solution vs Strategy Organisations are often too focused on finding a single, fixed solution, but DEI is ever-evolving and can't be addressed with one stagnant approach.	Be flexible Instead of being overly solutions-focused, there needs to be more emphasis on developing flexible strategies that can adapt to the changing nature of DEI work. Continuously review your inclusion policies to ensure they are appropriate
Lack of trust Employees from various diverse backgrounds (Ethnic minority, LGBTQ+ etc.) often do not trust their organisation to accommodate them properly.	Communication is key Effective inclusion strategies rely on clear, transparent communication. People need to understand what's changing, why it matters, and how it reflects their experiences. Being open about intentions and limitations builds trust and helps ensure strategies are meaningful and responsive to those affected.

Thank you to everyone who joined the conference!

- The conference was held on 9th May 2025 at Amazon's head offices, and engaged 150 Diversity, equity and inclusion professionals, network group chairs and leaders
 - Thank you to everyone who participated, and shared your feedback and key takeaways
- We will be running conferences in the future and value your feedback.

For further information and to discuss your Investing in Ethnicity membership, please your client manager or contact admin@investinginethnicity.org