



Special Report: Insights and Advice on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from Top Black Executives in Corporate America

We live in a challenging world that is upending the traditional strategies that C-Suite leaders employ to drive business growth and performance. In addition to technology transformations, geopolitical uncertainty and shifting consumer behaviors, CEOs are considering how to embed the right norms and values into their companies, including what to do or say when what's good for business can put the company in the crosshairs.

In an unprecedented survey, The Executive Leadership Council (ELC) gathered insights from C-Suite Black executives across Corporate America on the impact diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) has, and should have on the world of business. The ELC surveyed its membership, comprised of current and former Black CEOs and senior executives at Fortune 1000 and Global 500 companies, to reveal foundational tenets and a path forward for enhancing DEI.



“Shareholders, investors, employees all want their companies to be peak performers. This survey of our membership offers a distinctive, vital

perspective to further the legitimate, strong business impact of DEI which drives profitability, decision-making, and employee retention and attraction. We, at The ELC, are proud to amplify our members’ experience and knowledge.”

Michael C. Hyter

The Executive Leadership Council President and CEO

METHODOLOGY

An online survey was distributed to over 800 ELC members, fielded from March 7, 2024 - April 1, 2024:



180

ELC members completed the survey

61%

respondents identify as C-Suite executives

12%

respondents identify as a member of a Board

55%

respondents have been at their companies between 1-9 years

37%

respondents have been at their companies for 10+ years



Approximately

67%

respondents work at companies with over 10,000 employees

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In contrast to much of today's debate, respondents indicated the primary focus of corporate DEI efforts should be on initiatives that contribute to the bottom line and ensure that all employees receive fair and equitable opportunities.



DEI Links to Job Satisfaction

- In the race for talent, corporate DEI positively impacts job satisfaction. 'Company DEI practices' is tied with 'corporate reputation' in being important to job satisfaction – coming immediately after pragmatic elements of role responsibilities, company mission and values, company growth and compensation.



Successful Corporate DEI Initiatives Need to Mirror How Other Business Imperatives are Implemented

- C-Suite involvement, especially from the CEO, is key to driving performance-based DEI. ELC participants indicate there is often Board and executive level support but those in middle management and below need to regularly hear from the CEO to reinforce the criticality of DEI initiatives to the business in word and deed.
- Companies could do a better job of instilling clear measurement mechanisms to determine and reinforce which DEI strategies work best to drive business outcomes.
- ELC respondents advise companies to treat DEI like every other known business driver; hold as a guiding principle that evident, accountable fairness and opportunity for all should underpin DEI initiatives; and even as attacks on DEI increase, remain steadfast in commitments to and actions that advance performance-based DEI.



Corporate DEI Efforts Should Focus on Performance, Fairness and Leadership

- Results from the survey of Black executives in Corporate America on DEI say the top goals for corporate DEI efforts should be equivalent access and opportunity for diverse talent, strengthening corporate culture and enabling superior business performance.
- 'Board and executive leadership', 'workforce diversity' and 'direct linkage to business strategy and profitability' top the list of what these ELC members consider important even as companies spend DEI resources on training, community partnerships and corporate philanthropy.



How Companies are Faring Today

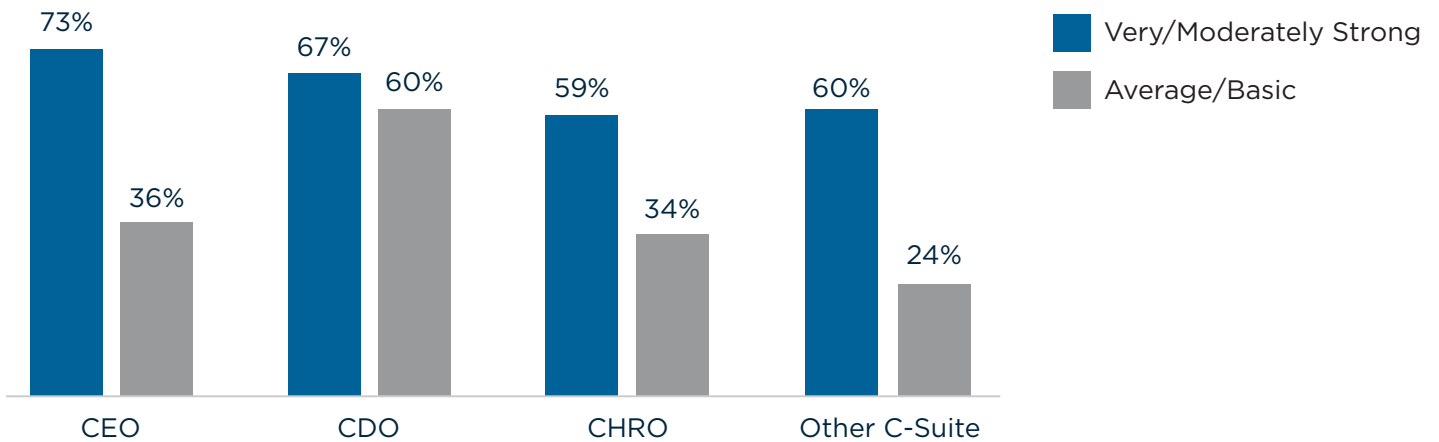
- While offering feedback for improvement, nearly 3-in-4 ELC participants (72%) rate their companies' commitment to DEI as strong (35% 'very strong', 37% 'moderately strong').
- In the face of increased anti-DEI pressure, most of these members' companies (64%) are either reaffirming or maintaining their DEI commitments. 36% say their companies have become less vocal – a shift more prevalent among those who perceive their companies as underperforming on DEI.

C-Suite involvement, especially from CEOs, is key to driving DEI performance.

Three-in-four of those who rate their company as a **strong performer** on DEI say their CEO is driving that DEI strategy (73%), vs. 36% for those at the **average/basic** level.

Who are the main champions for your company's DEI strategy?

(among those who say their company's performance is...)

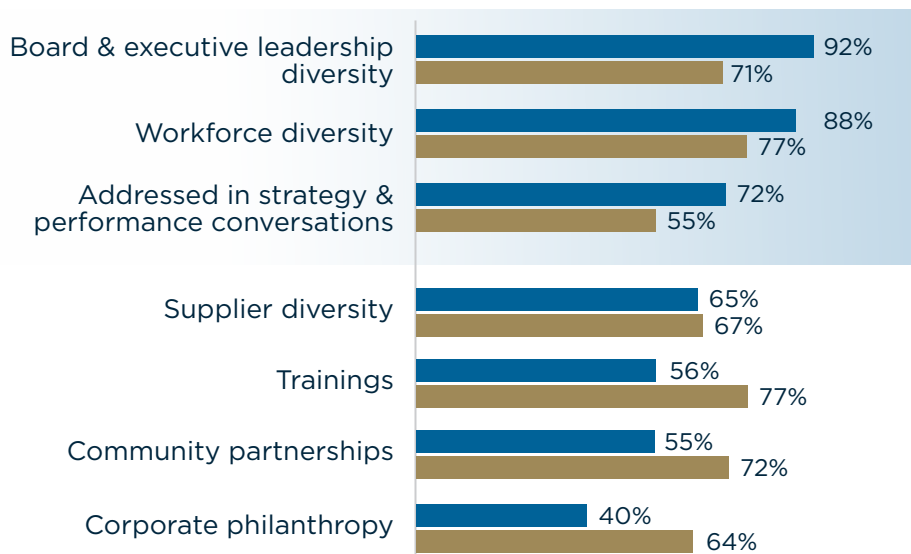


Companies are excelling in implementing bottom-up DEI tactics while lagging in addressing leadership approaches.

In your view, what DEI programs are most important?

How have you seen DEI programs implemented in your company/corporate partner?

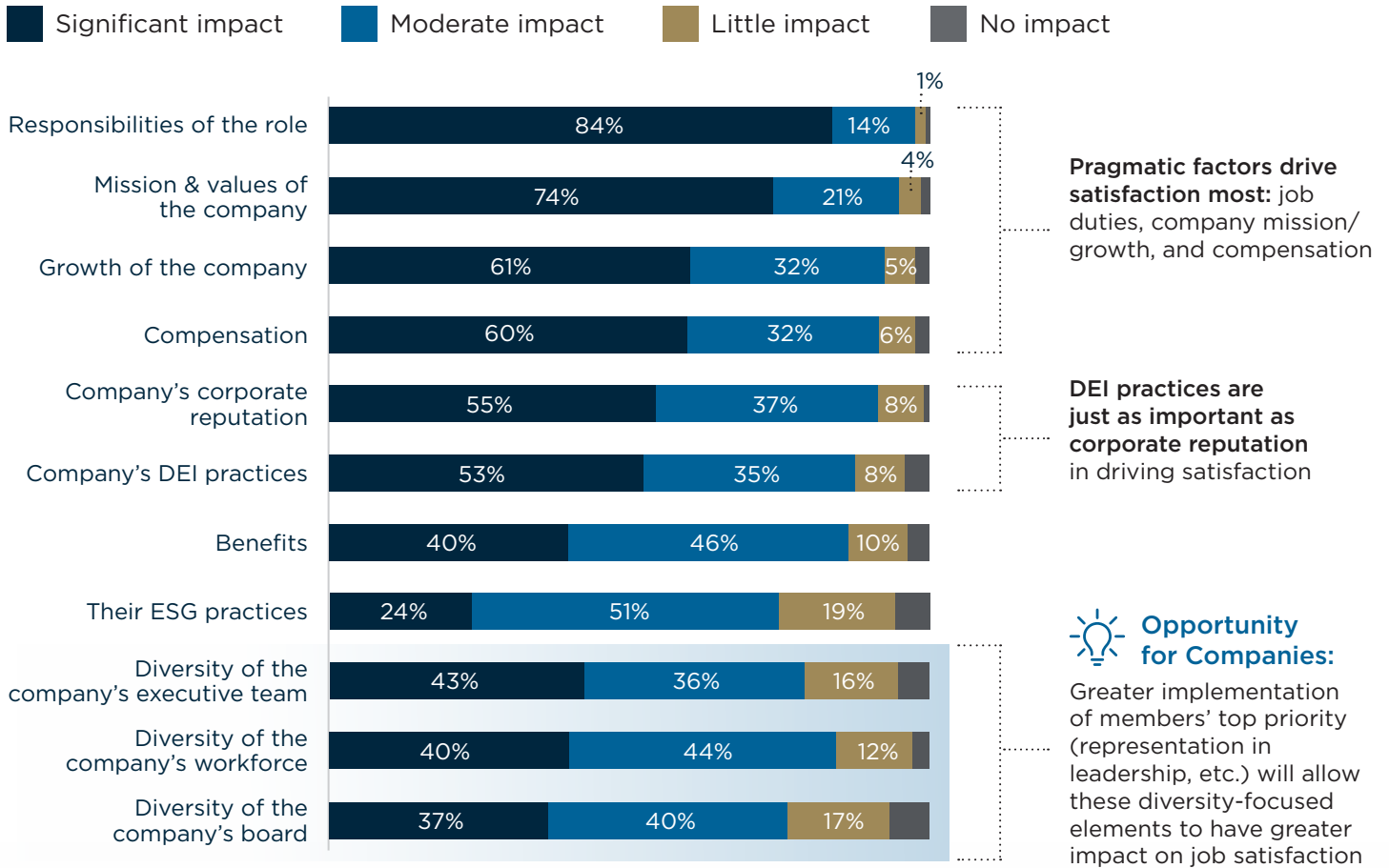
■ Important
■ Implemented



Lag between what is **most important** vs. what is **perceived as being implemented**

Job satisfaction is influenced by company DEI practices. Greater implementation of top priorities can enhance employee fulfillment.

What are the key factors of enhancing your job satisfaction?



Respondents at companies with stronger DEI report greater satisfaction from these initiatives compared to those with basic programs; moreover, these initiatives rank highest in terms of impact on satisfaction.

Those at companies with **very/moderately strong DEI programs**

% indicating "significant impact" on job satisfaction



Those at companies with **average/basic DEI programs**

% indicating "significant impact" on job satisfaction



Opportunity for Companies:

Elevating DEI practices will enable employees to reap more satisfaction from a variety of job factors

When asked about their own company’s DEI practices and the best way to improve DEI across Corporate America, advice was clear and consistent.

Treat DEI like a key business driver – because it is.

Fair and equitable opportunity, with accountability, should underpin DEI talent strategies.

Remain steadfast in support of performance-based DEI even as anti-DEI fervor increases.

“DEI is [about] aligning all stakeholders to increase productivity”

“[Companies must] understand DEI as a business practice [and have the] discipline to execute”

“[DEI is] critical to business growth and risk mitigation”

“Corporate America should treat DEI like other business strategies and tie outcomes to performance”

“[There is an]... opportunity for companies to operate more effectively and achieve bottom line revenue growth through DEI”

“[DEI] creates value and includes everyone”

“We are [all] in the talent business, and [DEI] will increase our access to all talent that is out there”

“DEI needs to be seen as good for all and not just good for women and minorities”

“We win as a country when we have everybody at the table”

“[DEI] drives improved business performance and competitiveness and is a positive talent acquisition mechanism”

“[DEI is] still a beneficial practice for the organization and the company should not shrink efforts due to the political climate and backlash”

“[Corporate pullback is] leaving ethnically diverse employees questioning their commitment to DEI and whether they should remain employed with the company”

“There are equal risks to abandoning the effort”

“Do not allow the voices of opposition to distract focus from the value created through DEI initiatives”

Footnotes: *Q. 9 “What would you like your company to know about its DEI practices and focus?”
 *Q.10 “What is the one most important area for DEI improvement to Corporate America?”



“We trust that leaders across corporate America will leverage the insights presented in this report and incorporate them into their own decision-making. The ELC stands ready to support companies and CEOs who remain committed to DEI as a strategic business imperative.”

Gale V. King
 The Executive Leadership Council Chair of the Board