

The Eleven Blog

This is how we always manage to hit our client's targets.

Marketing and strategic communication can be a challenge for some.
But with our help, we can achieve your objectives together.

[All Posts](#)[Insights](#)[News](#)[Learning](#)

E Eleven International · Sep 8, 2023 · 9 min read

Truly Eleven 'International'; The diversity that shapes us

Updated: Oct 19, 2023



DE&I in Different Cultures

'The Diversity That Shapes Us' is an article series presented by Eleven International. Throughout these articles, we speak on prevalent Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) topics as they relate to our own unique brand of Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace.

DE&I in the workplace is a fast-evolving conversation happening all around the world. While the call for DE&I in the workplace is a concept generally accepted, inspiration behind these initiatives naturally vary from place to place. As a team spread across the world, we've decided to conduct a small sample study of our own to explore the prevalent notions of DE&I from the places we come from.

This article will feature a few team members, highlighting their responses to the question: 'What are the prevalent notions of DE&I in your home country?' In this article we'll break down how DE&I is reflected in our own cultures and businesses.

Where we come from:

- Camilla is our Senior Public Relations Strategist. A UK/Swiss citizen with Taiwanese residency and work experience in London, Beijing, and Taipei.
- Tyler is our Content Manager. A Canadian citizen with work experience in Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong and Toronto.
- Nuray is our Influencer Marketing Associate. A Kazakhstan citizen with Hong Kong residency and work experience in Almaty and Hong Kong.

How is DE&I generally perceived in your home country?

Camilla:

According to Camilla, in the UK there's a somewhat awkward history in terms of "interactions" with other races and peoples. While they're not quite ready to have an open and frank nationwide discussion about the country's colonial past, people are very aware that Britain as a whole has some making up to do.

"We're very aware that Britain today is a very different idea to what it used to be."

Nuray:

Nuray talks to us about how Kazakhstan is quite unique due to its rich historical and cultural background. Kazakhstan is inhabited by more than 120 ethnic groups, which Nuray says makes it one of the most multinational countries in the world.

"The country's population speaks 23 different languages and professes Islam, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Judaism. Our multi-nationalism and education in several languages serve as a great foundation for diversity and inclusion in any institution."

Tyler:

Tyler feels that in Canada, DE&I is a hot topic with fast-growing adoption across many sectors. Deemed as an essential component to a modern company's image, Tyler's understanding is that 'DE&I initiatives' generally have the end goal of diverse representation and leadership accountability.

"We tend to forget that the institutions that propagate injustice in our country stem from our colonial history. And it's especially hard to right the wrongs of what was willfully forgotten."

What are the primary obstacles to DE&I in your home country?

Camilla:

As Camilla sees it, people in the UK really don't like to air their differences out in public. So this makes talking about any kind of differences in an open and frank way very difficult.

"But it's a helpful practice to better understand each other, and realize that in the end, we're not all that different after all."

Nuray:

Nuray says that although women are well-represented in the workforce, they are not equally paid as men and are less likely to hold senior-level management roles or be business owners.

"There are no anti-discrimination laws protecting the LGBTQ+ community, and same-sex marriage is not legal."

Tyler:

Tyler referenced conversations surrounding DE&I in the workplace as a relatively new thing. And even those with the best intentions sometimes tend to fall short with integrating such lofty goals. Organizations are reactionary rather

than proactive when it comes to their DE&I strategy, he says...

"Canada, in schools and in our politics, have only just recently come to grasp the generational harm for minorities and indigenous Canadians brought about by our history of colonization and cultural genocide. But also boasts multiculturalism as woven into the fabric of our society. Such conflicting ideas have made these extremely sensitive discussions about equity, especially in the workplace, hard to navigate."

Out of all the places that you have worked, where do you think has the best answers to DE&I issues?

Camilla:

Camilla spoke candidly here about Eleven International, our cross-border marketing and communications agency, based out of Hong Kong. She's worked at big and small corporations and agencies, mentioning that across the board every company has been fully aware that diversity is a strength. However at Eleven, the very nature of our work, has fostered the most naturally diverse and accepting place she's worked at to date.

"Hong Kong has typically been a hub for a variety of peoples for a long time, with a very global mindset, and that diversity is a real strength of the region's economy."

Nuray:

Nuray doesn't tell us specifically of a previous company, but describes to us an ideal workplace where everyone is encouraged to fully participate and bring their uniqueness to work everyday. A company with diverse cultural backgrounds and minimal age gaps between coworkers.

"Knowing that you are not the only one from a minority group and working with like-minded coworkers, brings a sense of safety and belonging, which makes me want to participate in the organization more, and voice my opinions freely."

Tyler:

Tyler emphasized that, It's about the willingness to have the conversation and the seriousness of the company's approach.

"Something that is special about Eleven International is that we are creating our own 'culture' within the framework of DE&I from other places. It's an ongoing process that aims to broaden the capabilities of our team members and our client services."

What advantages and challenges do you think DE&I initiatives bring?

Camilla:

Camilla pointed out that being part of a team that's willing to talk about and address diversity, equality and inclusion issues, helps us all to grow as individuals and as professionals.

"We have to pick apart the cultural assumptions we've always lived with, and are usually entangled with our perceptions of our own identities."

Nuray:

Nuray shared some advice indicating that employees are more engaged when they feel included, and that a sense of belonging creates a safe, trusting, and healthy space for employees to perform better at work.

"I think a major challenge is mending the disconnect in communication that comes with cultural and age diversity. DE&I drives creativity and innovation. "Cognitive diversity", diversity in the way individuals "think about and engage with new, uncertain and complex situations."

Tyler:

Tyler says the advantage would be how it's turned the tables on current modes of work culture and de facto hierarchies in the workplace. Working in an environment where you trust that everyone feels heard and has inherent value is one of the most powerful things about taking DE&I seriously.

"The challenge would be recognizing on an institutional level that everyone has different capacities and should be placed in an environment conducive to their growth and development. It's a challenging conversation that can sometimes be more alienating than unifying."

What are companies most likely to be sensitive towards when discussing social issues?

Camilla:

Camilla thinks it's difficult for companies to know where the line is in terms of where their own responsibilities lie. So there's definitely a balancing act in terms of supporting but not co-opting social movements.

"For example, no one likes the corporatization of LGBT+ Pride events. These companies weren't on the front lines at Stonewall, nor are they putting themselves on the line in countries where Pride events are illegal."

Nuray:

For Nuray, a public stance on every social issue can be a tricky path for companies.

"Most companies speak out on issues that are aligned with their strategy/values and meaningfully influence the issue."

Tyler:

Tyler spoke about how in Canada, greater sensitivity is reserved for indigenous rights, understanding of racism in society, gender inequality and LGBTQ+ representation.

"There is a lot of learning, but much more has to be done (concretely) for the term to hold weight and contribute to meaningful change, rather than become a superficial badge of honor in difficult socio-political times."

Is it common for companies to take a stance on socio-political issues in the country you are in?

Camilla:

Camilla noted that companies in the UK are becoming increasingly confident in speaking out for and supporting issues that are important to their team or their customers.

"But brands can often overreach into social issues that have nothing to do with them, purely as a brand marketing initiative, and that will always land badly. But in general, if the intent is pure, people are forgiving."

Nuray:

Nuray predicts that companies will be increasingly pressured into forming public opinion from employees and consumers. Especially now that millennials and Gen Z expect companies to have a voice on social issues.

"In my country, most companies may take a stance on topics such as COVID, climate change, voting, and equality, however, there are still highly sensitive political topics in our country that not many companies take the risk to speak about."

Tyler:

In Tyler's opinion, Canadian companies are sometimes too eager to get ahead of an issue and signal the 'right' decision. The momentum of it all might force a heavy hand on something we weren't equipped to tackle in the first place.

"It's great to be an early ally, but it's not always a race to see who's first. So long as we all help each other get there eventually, that's the important bit."

Do you feel, as an individual, that your voice has been represented in the workspaces you've experienced/ been in?

Camilla:

Camilla admits to have benefited from the fact she works in communications, which is a fairly female-dominated space. But she also comments that as a white, British, native English speaker, she's fully aware that her voice is automatically respected in most places.

"That's a benefit for me but also a thorny issue in itself, when I see colleagues of the same age and ability as me not necessarily receiving the same reception."

Nuray:

Nuray has been in situations where coworkers have directly correlated her age with inexperience, disregarding her voice. From her personal point of view, she says it's hard to further work with people who don't see you as an equal member of the team.

"Unequal work dynamics reduces the creativity and productivity of the organization. It's an underlying cause of turnover as people feel undervalued and unappreciated. It makes it hard to bring our best selves to work, much less find joy in what we do."

Tyler:

For the times when 'race' is explicitly mentioned Tyler finds that he is consulted a little bit more given his background as a mixed race Canadian national.

"When posed with the question, 'how does it feel to be you?' It's difficult to articulate because generally, we haven't been anyone else but ourselves. Speaking on behalf of a group you may come from, puts you in a position to be a representative and that comes with a lot of responsibility."

Where do you feel DE&I initiatives pose the largest potential to change your work environment?

Camilla:

Camilla's number one example is finding talent in emerging markets (made easier due to the remote nature of work today). Her next step would be to make sure everyone's voice is heard, which leads directly to stronger work and better business outcomes.

"Networks are so important to professional development, so breaking the echo chamber and expanding these professional circles goes a long way to making the work environment more diverse, equitable, and inclusive."

Nuray:

Nuray says that one of the most high-potential DE&I changes in the workplace, in her opinion, is paying attention to Gen Z and learning how to work with them. Gen Z will make up a third of the workforce by the end of the decade, and the 13% who are already in the workforce are making drastic changes to how things used to work.

"Because they have so many choices accessible to them, they tend to make decisions based on company cultures/values and salaries. If companies want to attract and retain Gen Z talent, they need to make a step forward to meet their needs and work styles."

Tyler:

Tyler reflected on how because Eleven is a global organization, we're completely open to candidates from all around the world.

"We have so much to gain by highlighting DE&I as a pillar of our work culture to attract more talent."

Talking about politics can be very divisive in the workplace. Do you feel that talking about DE&I in your country has a similar effect?

Camilla:

Camilla reminded us that openly discussing social topics that are so closely entwined with our sense of identity is akin to taking group therapy. From what she hears from friends and family back in the UK, progress is being made, and people's expectations and willingness to engage in such discussions is shifting.

"People are usually the most complex aspect of any undertaking."

Nuray:

On the other side of that same coin, Nuray warned when companies fail to talk about diversity and inclusion at work, they show that it is simply not a priority. Many people feel as if their experiences don't belong in the conversation, some are afraid to say the wrong thing, and some just don't know where to start.

"Many companies try to hire people with diverse cultural backgrounds, try to be inclusive, but they rarely have solid conversations about DE&I and bring up issues or ways to improve the current state of DE&I."

Tyler:

Tyler closed with saying in North America, talking about DE&I is likened to talking about politics because usually one dictates the direction of the other. People generally agree that equity for all is a good thing, but diversity for the sake of diversity is divisive where others feel like opportunities are not properly earned.

"We come from different countries, see lots of the world throughout the year, and that generally makes us a lot more understanding of each other's circumstances."

The answers given this time around reflected but a few voices in our team's mosaic of cultures and experiences.

While the rate of adoption may differ across various regions, the tide of progress we're seeing in this area has made

Eleven International

Established in 2017, Eleven International is an award-winning cross-border communications agency for consumer tech, Web 3.0, and B2B tech brands.

Eleven International is [RMA™ certified](#).



Let's work together



Send us an email
connect@11.international

[Home](#)

[About Eleven](#)

[Success Stories](#)

[Blog](#)

[Work With Us](#)

© 2025 Eleven International. All rights reserved.

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Service](#)