

# Appealing to all preferences

Kathryn Hobbs looks at how being an inclusive firm is about tapping into others' strengths and unlocking the collective intelligence of the team.

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I'll bet your firm has at least one person leading on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), probably more. You might have some internal networks for LGBT, female, disabled or BAME employees. What about an allies programme? Blind CVs? Unconscious bias training? Tick, tick, tick.

And yet, how diverse and inclusive is your firm? Has your gender pay gap changed since last year? Do you represent the population of the cities in which you operate? And, importantly for marketing and business development professionals, how are you thinking about the diversity of your clients?

We live in a diverse world. Four mega-trends are reshaping the environment and influencing business priorities (Deloitte):

- Diversity of markets
- Diversity of customers
- Diversity of ideas
- Diversity of talent

Inclusive leaders embrace this diversity, harnessing different perspectives, experiences and ways of thinking to ensure their organisations and their employees thrive.

We know the business case. A more diverse team improves financial performance. Workforces that are diverse and inclusive have 12% higher employee productivity, 19% higher retention and 57% higher team collaboration (McKinsey & Company).

Despite this data, research by Curium Solutions suggests that although organi-



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sations have made some progress in terms of race and gender, there is less diversity around leadership style. This misses an opportunity to harness the power of diversity in its widest sense; to understand and empower diversity of personality, thinking and behaviour.

Curium carried out a study of managers working in various business sectors. Each of them has experienced TetraMap®, a learning model that accelerates an understanding of self and others – the results and report,

*Empowering inclusive leaders for a diverse age*, can be found at [www.curiumsolutions.com](http://www.curiumsolutions.com).

At the heart of TetraMap is this belief: strength lies in valuing differences. The Elements TetraMap uses are rooted in nature and are: Earth, Air, Water and Fire. Every Element has a part to play. TetraMap's instrument has 10 questions, each with four forced-choice answers ranked by preference and answered intuitively. The results reveal an individual's natural preferences.

- **Earth:** like a mountain is firm
- **Air:** like the wind is clear
- **Water:** like a lake is calm
- **Fire:** like the sun is bright

Curium's survey reveals that people with a high Earth preference – who are typically task and outcome focused – are more likely to be in senior roles. More people-focused individuals – those with a high Water preference – are less commonly found in leadership roles.

Curium asked, 'Which Element is most likely to reach a senior position?'. Almost half the respondents said that people with a high Earth preference are most likely to reach a senior position. Air and Fire were cited by 20.5% with Water being chosen by only 4%.

While all four Elements have a strong desire to attain a senior position in their organisation, respondents with high Water and Air preferences are less confident that they will do so. In terms of self-promotion, 88% of people with a high Earth preference and 60% of Fire prefer-



ences feel able to articulate their ambitions. The figures are far lower for people with high Air and Water preferences.

### Task v people

Anne Clews, Head of Performance Solutions at Curium says, “Our research shows that the current trend is for leaders with high Earth preferences. Typically, this group sees fewer barriers to leadership. Earth thinking is: if you want it enough, then you can go out there and be a leader.”

However, the attributes that make successful inclusive leaders, for example building relationships and understanding people, are those common among people with a high Water preference. The way to craft an inclusive organisation is through empathy and team work.

For marketing and business development professionals working with fee earners in professional services, there are some useful lessons from Curium’s research.

Anne says, “Typically, we see high Earth and Air preferences among lawyers and accountants, with Fire and Water preferences more common among marketing professionals. Learning how to work together and make the best of all four preferences will ensure better outcomes from a firm’s business development and marketing efforts.”

Prioritising one type of leader in an organisation can lead to one way of thinking and acting. For example, in the West, a high Earth preference is seen as

positive. This leader will get the job done, in some cases putting the task before people and/or relationships.

But, this modus operandi for long periods of time can result in staff, particularly those with a low Earth preference, to feel burned out and exhausted. Operating in this style can miss potential opportunities for sponsorship and nurturing others.

### Buying behaviours

To be an inclusive leader is to recognise the diversity of employees, customers, markets, ideas and cultures, and how to integrate inclusive practice into each of these elements.

For inclusive marketers, EDI has a dual role: for your firm’s brand and to ensure that your proposition, pitch or presentation hits the spot.

EDI is essential from a brand perspective. General counsel are increasingly using their pulling power to create change. If a firm can’t demonstrate that it is taking practical measures towards improving its diversity – and providing evidence that they are working – then clients will choose a firm that can.

Most firms have this first point covered. Fewer apply a diversity perspective to their clients and prospects. Think about global market opportunities and how to facilitate access to products and services. This then feeds into the customer experience and how different groups will buy and promote your product or service.

How you connect with your clients during ongoing relationships and in the quest to win their business will determine how long that relationship lasts. Clients are diverse and will have preferred ways of working, communicating and engaging.

For all that procurement attempts to take that element out of the process, buying is an emotional decision. You can use a greater understanding of natural preferences and psychology to help prospects choose your firm and for clients to remain loyal.

James Farrow, Master TetraMap Facilitator and director at Curium Solutions, says, “This is where the real beauty of TetraMap comes into play. TetraMap removes the guess work about why you cooperate better with some people than others. Knowing the different styles people prefer and how to communicate with them is invaluable.”

We are entering the age of the inclusive leader. Being an inclusive leader is about tapping into others’ strengths and unlocking the collective intelligence of the team. Inclusive leaders will leverage diversity and difference for high performance, thus providing an innovative response to clients’ needs.

Questions to consider:

- What is the predominate leadership style of your organisation?
- Do the leaders in your organisation champion diversity and inclusion?
- How do you think about EDI and its impact on clients and prospects?

Action:

- Use a diagnostic tool to discover the preferences within your teams and firms
- Make your communication more impactful by appealing to all styles and preferences
- Shift mindsets by promoting the positive impact difference and diversity have on achieving results
- Implement a leadership programme where leaders learn and practise the skills, and behaviours needed for a diverse and inclusive future.



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