Conversation Starters: This set of questions is meant to provide a framework to assess the current state of diversity and inclusion at your organization and to consider the key question, “has diversity lost its meaning?”

1. Consider this statement from Diversity is for white people: The big lie behind a well-intended word, by Ellen Berrey:

“Appealing to diversity can unite people across differences that divide us deeply. It affirms a much-needed basis of commonality — a shared, self-reinforcing commitment to each other. But with what other issue of inequity do we think that the solution is just talking about it?...We need fewer cheerful logos and more effective action.”

What effective actions is your organization taking to support a diverse and inclusive workplace? In what ways are you supporting your ERG/BRGs to move beyond “cheerful logos” to make a more strategic impact on the organization’s culture? What is your “call to action” for your senior leaders regarding diversity and inclusion efforts?

2. In Has ‘Diversity’ Lost Its Meaning? Anna Holmes asks, “How does a word become so muddled that it loses much of its meaning? How does it go from communicating something idealistic to something cynical and suspect? If that word is “diversity,” the answer is: through a combination of overuse, imprecision, inertia and self-serving intentions.”

What is your organization’s current strategy to combat “overuse and inertia” in its diversity and inclusion efforts? How do you communicate that strategy both internally and externally that preserves the integrity of the word diversity and supports the efforts to move forward and create change? What strategic partners will be essential in developing and communicating that message?

3. In his recent piece Diversity’ Is Rightly Criticized As An Empty Buzzword. So How Can We Make It Work?, Gene Demby states, “The bottom line: Having different kinds of people in the room means thinking concretely about different kinds of stressors — and opportunities. It means acknowledging that our workplace cultures were shaped by the people who've been in the room for a minute, and now the furniture needs to be rearranged.”

Consider your workplace culture. Who created it? How has it changed over time? What are the opportunities for growth to ensure an inclusive culture for employees outside the dominant one? In what ways does the “furniture need to be moved” to create a more inclusive culture? Who are the key stakeholders that need to be engaged and leveraged to affect this change? How will you continue to re-evaluate your workplace culture over time?
4. Consider asking your organization the following questions to assess if you treat diversity as a **Business Imperative or as lip service**. If anything, you can use these questions to start the dialogue.

*Does company leadership communicate and role model that D&I is a strategic business imperative (SBI)? Compared to other business initiatives, is it equitably funded as a SBI? How is it measured? Is it measured and reported on during operating reviews and/or with Board of Directors? Are managers at all levels held accountable for achieving results? Is it embedded into performance objectives? Do employees refer to their D&I responsibilities as “work outside of work vs. their day jobs”? Are leaders and managers incented for achieving growth and results?*

**Moving Forward: Tools to assess and advance the conversation about privilege and diversity and inclusion in your organization**

DBP’s insight paper, *Does Race Still Matter?: Moving Toward a New Global Conversation on Race and Colorism* is a great discussion starter and includes a **mini learning session guide**.

*Make Your CEO a Diversity Expert in 24 Minutes* by Jennifer Brown Consulting includes a link to the JBC Diversity Starter Kit for CEOs. Use the starter kit and the attached exercise to find D&I stories grounded in business principles.

*Racial Equity Tools* offers tools, research, tips, curricula and ideas for people who want to increase their own understanding and to help those working toward justice at every level – in systems, organizations, communities and the culture at large.

*White Culture Worksheet* provides a framework to have this difficult conversation about white privilege.

*Tools for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion* includes a case study and toolkit developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation for organizations to assess and advance an organization’s diversity and inclusion efforts.

**Additional Reading**

*The Power of Speaking Up and Speaking Out for Diversity and Inclusion* by Sharon Orlopp former CDO of Walmart. We often return to this piece as a reminder of the important role D&I practitioners play in our organizations and communities.

*Has ‘Diversity’ Lost Its Meaning?* by Anna Holmes

*‘Diversity’ Is Rightly Criticized As An Empty Buzzword. So How Can We Make It Work?* by Gene Demby from NPR’s Codeswitch

*Diversity is for white people: The big lie behind a well-intended word*, Ellen Berrey