



## Background

*This year the BSA, in partnership with Associate Member Trowers and Hamlins LLP, launched a series of events focussing on the role of the human resources function in the boardroom.*

*This was the second in the 'HR in the Boardroom' series and looked at the important topic of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.*

*Values and diversity across the business services sector is one of the BSA's key themes for 2016.*

## Speakers

**Lt. Co. Guy Benson,**  
Engagement Projects and  
Army Reserves Lead, HM  
Forces, Ministry of Defence

**Donna Halkyard,**  
Head of Inclusion &  
Diversity, RPC and Vice  
President of the City  
Women Network

**Megan Horsburgh,**  
Head of Diversity &  
Inclusion, Sodexo

**Omar Khan,**  
Director, The Runnymede  
Trust and Member of the  
Government's Ethnic  
Minority Employment  
Stakeholder Group

**Dee Sekar,**  
Head of Diversity and  
Inclusion, OUTstanding

## HR in the Boardroom: Diversity roundtable

*The BSA, in conjunction with Associate Members Trowers and Hamlins LLP and New Street Group, held an event on diversity and inclusion in the business services sector. The event brought together speakers from a spectrum of diversity-focussed organisations and HR Directors from service providers to discuss how the business services sector is approaching diversity and inclusion within the workforce and to share best practice.*

### Why diversity and inclusion matters

Not only is seeking a diverse and inclusive workforce at all levels the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense. A diverse team brings diversity of thought and different experiences and viewpoints. At decision-making levels of the organisation, particularly board level, this diversity of thought can lead to better choices. Diversity and inclusion also rates highly on clients' agendas and best practice can be shared both ways.

### Diversity in the talent pipeline

In order to see diversity prevail at every level of an organisation, the talent pipeline should be a priority. For some organisations this will mean looking at how people are attracted into the organisation. For others it will be about progression through the company.

There are a number of ways organisations are trying to tackle this challenge. Common strategies include staff networks and senior sponsorship for diversity initiatives. Organisational culture is important for everyone, not just minority groups, as well as a willingness to try new approaches and see what works.

As part of progression routes, rewards and bonus systems within organisations can be where differences between groups become more evident. It is important to look at data and understand any patterns. Unconscious bias in policies and processes should also be looked at, using data to ensure unintended consequences of seemingly fair processes are identified. The Army was cited as a good example, where reaching defined objectives leads to promotion, irrespective of personal characteristics.

### Challenges

One of the challenges identified is knowing where to start as diversity and inclusion is a far reaching topic. Do organisations start with a particular group and extend the programme over time or does this in itself discriminate? Looking at data, the business case and understanding what is driving organisations to put in place diversity and inclusion initiatives can help to make this difficult decision.

Another challenge is around communication and use of inclusive language. Inclusive language is one area where employees at all levels may lack confidence and fear causing offence. Networks and facilitation of open conversations can help to mitigate this and training is available.

In a client-focused sector such as business services, the culture within the client organisation and unconscious bias on the part of the client also form part of the picture. Understanding the client relationship and developing a relationship where diversity and inclusion can be raised are vital to address any issues that may arise and to align diversity and inclusion agendas.