

## EDI IN ACTION CASE STUDY: GRANT THORNTON

Grant Thornton is one of the world's largest professional services companies. They are also on a journey towards greater inclusion and have chosen to base their approach around a maturity model.

The organisation has set up five 'strands' to tackle issues relating to gender, ethnicity, LGBT+, disability and social mobility. Each one is made up of a board member, a convenor - typically a partner with a lived experience of the strand's focus - two secondees, and a working group. Together, the strand creates networks, arranges reverse mentoring, and challenges the organisation to enact change where it's required. All employees are invited to become Inclusion Allies who are involved in engagement days and trained to call in - instead of calling out - non-inclusive behaviour.





### Safe To Say...

The firm collects information about its employees through quarterly health and wellbeing pulses. One of its key measures of how well the ED&I strategies are working is to track the people who don't feel comfortable disclosing elements of their identity; the number of 'prefer not to say' options being ticked in staff surveys has become a measure of how comfortable their staff feel to bring their entire selves to work. Currently, the 'prefer not to say' response rate lies at around 10% and Grant Thornton's target is to reduce that as far as possible.

### Social Mobility Champions

As an outlier, the 'prefer not to say' response to questions about socioeconomic background is comparatively high at around 20%, so tackling issues around socioeconomic status and social mobility is high on the agenda at Grant Thornton. To remove bias in the recruitment process, criteria for candidates have been reframed and interview questions rethought; the firm was the first in Professional Services to remove the 2:1 at degree level requirement for new recruits. Now, as well as targeting cold spot universities for outreach work and sponsoring bursaries for young people of low-income backgrounds, they have entirely removed the need to have a degree by implementing entry routes for school leavers and internships.

Impact analysis the company carried out showed that socioeconomic status did not directly affect the ability to progress within the company, but impostor syndrome and lower confidence levels were identified as obstacles that this group had to overcome. As a result, work allocation and promotion reviews were carried out to ensure more equal outcomes and opportunities.

### Winning Initiatives

Grant Thornton attributes their success in moving the dial on diversity and inclusion to the success they have achieved in winning contracts. Clients are asking more and more questions about EDI, and Grant Thornton has historically found that both success and failures of contract bids have turned upon diversity issues.

Inclusion leads work closely with external partners such as Stonewall and Access Accountancy, and Grant Thornton has committed to the government's Women In Finance Charter. They're also members of professional groups and forums set up to share knowledge, learning and best practice, and have been involved in setting up wide-reaching networks for employees with protected characteristics to join.

“I am part of a global network of 120 D&I leads, and we all share best practice. It means we can get to information more quickly and we can share what we do. It is a common problem across all companies, so our view is we're better doing it together.”  
“It aligns with our goals of making sure we are delivering really high quality innovative work for clients because we know we can only do that with diverse thinking.”

**Jenn Barnett, Director of Inclusion,  
Diversity & Health**