

How diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) could radically transform the events industry



Across the top 20 largest events organisers, there are now four women in the top job (two more than in 2020). There are still zero top leaders from a minoritised ethnic background, and fewer non-White women in senior leadership positions than two years ago.

With interviews from Michael Adeniya (**UK Black Business Show**), Susanne Hennigers (**Messe Muenchen**), Anne Lafère (**Easyfairs**), Mary Larkin (**Diversified Communications**), Mike Sealy (**Informa Markets**), and Nil Sönmez (**Easyfairs**), we ask:

What is the industry missing out on? What could the industry become if we became more inclusive? And how do we get there?



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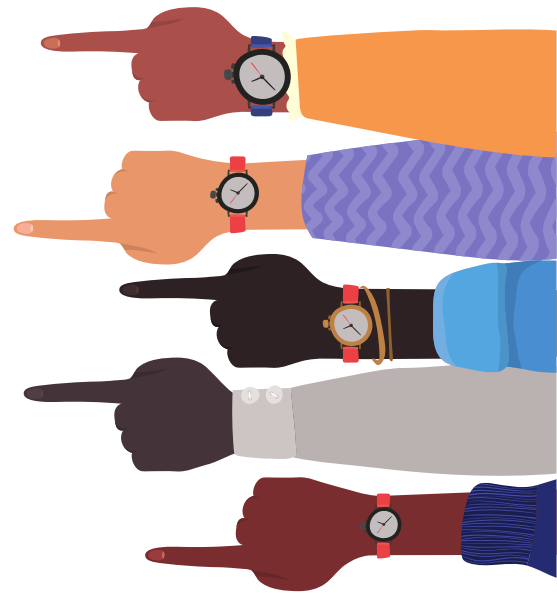


Executive Summary

We are seeing more women at the top of our industry. But the numbers are still low, and the lack of racial diversity leaves our industry far behind other sectors. We have an opportunity to build on the growth of women leaders to cultivate a radically different industry - one that attracts top talent, grows in new directions, and showcases genuine innovation. The key is to invest in inclusion in new ways.

Key findings

- Since 2020, the number of female CEOs has grown from 10% to 15%
- The number of women on senior leadership teams has grown from 20% to 23%
- Only 2 out of 151 professionals (1%) on senior leadership teams are from a minoritised ethnic group
- 19 out of the top 20 organisers have entirely White or ethnic majority senior leadership teams
- There are no minoritised ethnic female professionals on any senior leadership team (a decline since 2020)
- The lack of diversity means we are missing out on talent, innovation, and growth
- To transform the industry we need to overhaul how we support and identify new leaders, led by data



The benefits of diversity could transform the industry

What might the industry look like if things changed? What if the data started to show that women, minoritised ethnic professionals, and events professionals from other marginalised groups, enjoyed equitable progression opportunities to everyone else?

We envision an industry where the top talent from other sectors want to join (and want to stay), delivering highly-innovative content to ever-growing audiences.

We can get there by taking bold actions and using data

To see different results we need to do things differently. At the core of our recommended actions is the need to improve succession planning and to provide enough flexibility for new leaders to rise up from under-represented groups.

Being bold requires confidence. A data-driven plan that identifies your needs and measures impact is key to success.

① What do the numbers say?

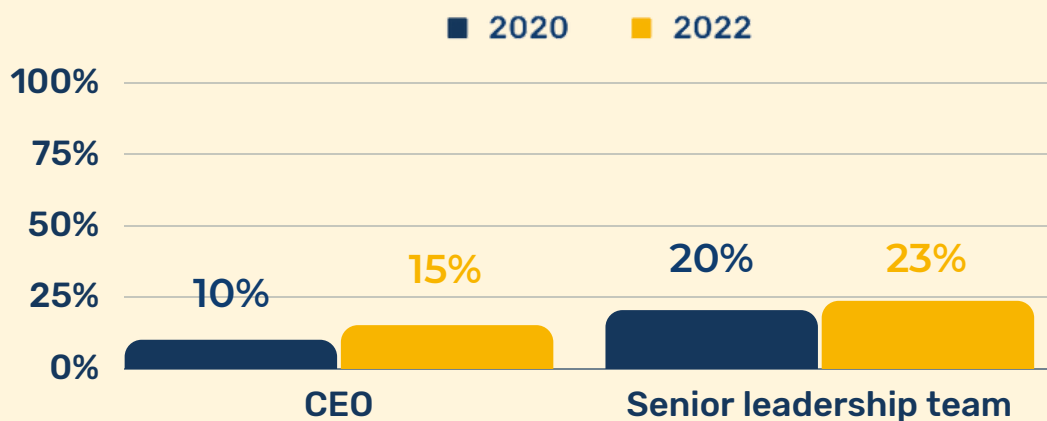
Data holds the power to move us away from "gut feel" or wishful thinking.

You wouldn't assess your revenue growth or profit margin based on whether you felt things were going well or if you heard some positive anecdotes.

Likewise, data on the demographics of the events industry is the only way to assess whether we're making progress.

The state of the top 20 largest organisers provides a powerful indicator of the state of the wider industry.

% of women leaders across top 20 organisers



Source: Clusivity analysis based on publicly available information. List of top 20 from AMR International

Gender

Earlier this month Clarion Events announced that Lisa Hannant will become the company's new CEO. One week later, Easyfairs announced that Anne Lafère and Matt Benyon were to become the group's new CEOs.

Hannant and Lafère join only two other women at the top of their organisations across the 20 largest organisers, growing the % of women CEOs from 10% to 15%.

Clearly there has been progress. Lafère shared with us that one of the main reasons why more women can now reach the top is the growth in flexible working

policies. We're excited to see how Clarion and Easyfairs build on this momentum. In addition, Yancy Weinrich was recently named as CloserStill Media's President of North America.

But before we say a job well done, it is worth recognising that even at this rate, we would only reach 50% female leadership teams in 14 years time. A sobering fact when the events industry is majority-women overall.

It remains critical to invest in actions that will accelerate change at the top.

Race/ethnicity

There are still no professionals from a minoritised ethnic background in the top job at any of the largest organisers.

This is a long way behind other industries. 66 Fortune 500 CEOs are now from minoritised ethnic groups (13%).

The picture does not get much better when we pan out. Only 2 out of 161 senior leaders are from minoritised ethnic groups (1%). These are Eric Reaves (VP, People and Culture, Emerald) and Ron Walden (SVP, Strategic Sales, Emerald).

This means that 19 out of the top 20 organisers have entirely White or majority ethnic senior leadership teams - despite these organisations being based in cities with significant racial diversity including London, Paris, Frankfurt, Munich, Madrid, and Milan.

There may be progress at the lower levels. But until we see improvements at the top, we cannot justifiably claim that we are an industry where minoritised ethnic professionals are supported to thrive.



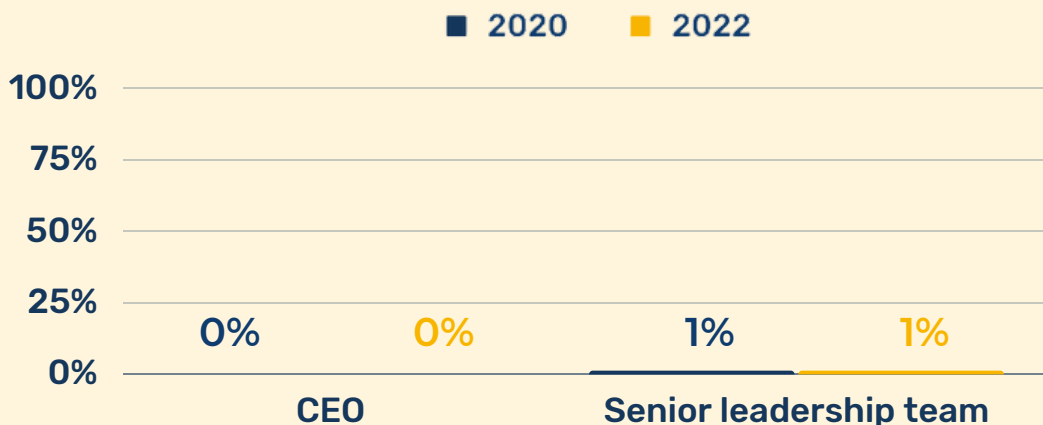
People need role models that reflect themselves. That's why it's great that we're seeing more women at the top of these leading organisations. There is more change and focus on diversity at the lower levels, but we need to do more in succession planning if we want to see more diverse role models at the top.



Mary Larkin,
President, Diversified
Communications USA



% of minoritised ethnic leaders across top 20 organisers



Note: "Minoritised ethnic" is defined by the country where the company is headquartered.

From an intersectional lens...

The overall percentage of female professionals in senior management teams has grown. But the number of minoritised ethnic women leaders has declined.

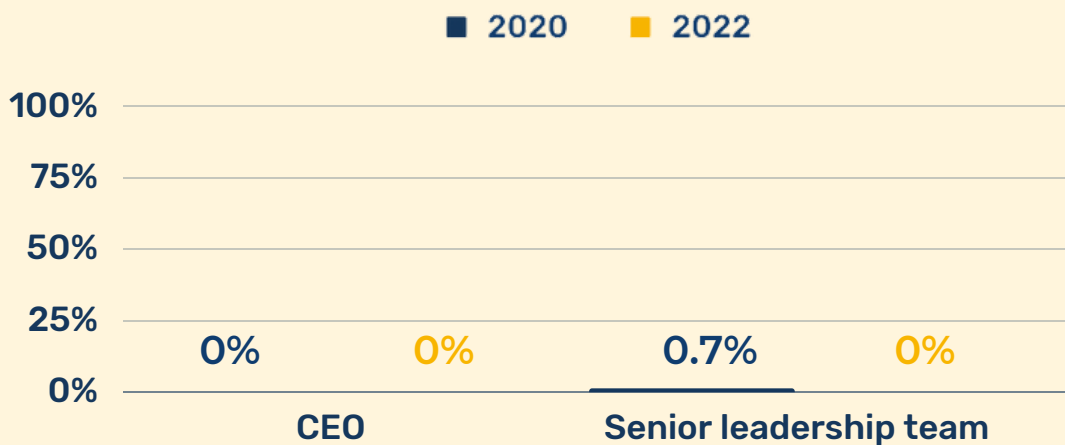
In 2020 there was one Black woman out of 148 senior leaders. Now, there are zero minoritised ethnic women in any senior leadership position in any of the top 20 largest organisers.

Zero.

Can we really say that there has been progress in gender when minoritised ethnic women have not benefitted at all?

This is the question that an intersectional lens on diversity, equity and inclusion encourages us to ask.

% of minoritised ethnic women leaders across top 20 organisers



...and a holistic lens

Looking ahead, we need to go beyond race and gender. We need to ask whether our industry is inclusive to people of different sexual orientations; different faiths; different socioeconomic backgrounds; different neurodiversities; different disabilities.

It is up to industry leaders to commit to using a holistic lens in DEI efforts.

② What could the industry become?

Why does this all matter? Why should we care that our industry leadership is predominantly male and almost entirely White?

Quite simply, because we're missing out. We're missing out on top talent. We're missing out on innovation. We're missing out on growth opportunities.

Top talent has options

A quick glance at the charts above might quickly send leaders asking, how can we increase the number of new-joiners from minoritised ethnic groups?

For some organisations, this might be the right step (depending on their specific gaps and challenges).

But most of the time, this misses the importance of retaining the people from under-represented groups that are already under your roof.

In our research, both of the senior leaders from a minoritised ethnic background in 2020 had left their organisation by 2022.

You might be losing your future women leaders and minoritised ethnic leaders to employers offering more inclusive environments and equitable progression opportunities.

This carries a significant financial cost. The CIPD estimates the cost of replacing an employee is 7.5x their annual salary.

Get your DEI right, and you could be on the winning side of this equation.

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We need to attract talent based on the fact that this is an industry where everyone is welcome, and everyone has an opportunity to grow. We are not there yet. **Having Anne Lafère as Group CEO has sent a very positive signal within our company,** and we need to keep educating our people at all levels of the firm about the benefits of diversity.



Nil Sönmez
Group Head of ESG,
Easyfairs

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The key to innovation

Retain and promote your employees from under-represented groups, and you'll benefit from a diversity of thought that could generate new ways of serving your markets.

Take the UK Black Business Show, for example. In 2017, Raphael Sofoluke and Michael Adeniya felt they did not see themselves represented in the events they were building. They launched the UK Black Business Show to celebrate Black-owned businesses and Black entrepreneurs.

The first edition in 2017 had 25 exhibitors and 500 attendees. In October 2022, this had ballooned into over 130 exhibitors and 10,000 attendees. 67% of these attendees provided a net promoter score (NPS) of

9 or 10 (out of 10), driving a +49 NPS score overall. This is a powerful indicator of the event's value and relevance for a growing audience.

“ The industry has a tremendous opportunity for growth and improvement, if it was more diverse, benefitting from more **diversity of thought and diversity of experiences.** ”

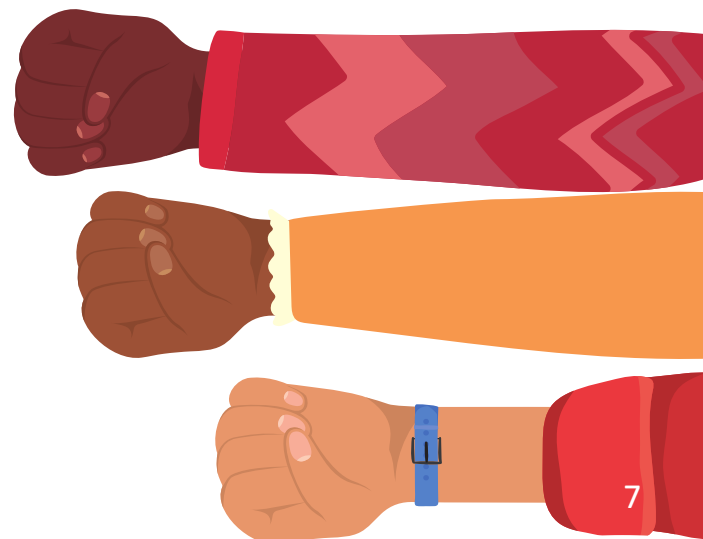


Mike Sealy
Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Informa Markets

“ As audiences across all shows get younger and more diverse, it's really important for us as organisers to continue **to drive change through innovation** to stay relevant. It's widely known that diverse and inclusive teams breed innovation across all sectors. ”



Michael Adeniya
Chief Operating Officer,
UK Black Business Show



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Especially now, companies are under pressure to innovate. We want trade shows to be a window into the future. **And diversity is a critical factor for innovation.** That's why we are supporting a study to identify why most of our trade shows have 80 or 90% male visitors. If we learn how to attract more women at very male trade shows, we can implement these formulas at other trade shows.



Susanne Hennigers
Director of Corporate
Partnerships & Platform
Growth, Messe Muenchen

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The formula for growth

In Germany, Messe Muenchen are supporting a research project into the gender balance at trade shows.

By identifying the touchpoints that maintain the trade show space as "male" or "masculine", the team hope to grow their events by opening them up to new groups of attendees.

In other words, the key to what we all want - trade shows that showcase innovation, acting as a window into the future, and attracting new and growing audiences - lies in growing the diversity of our teams.

We can be an industry where:

- **Top talent wants to join, and wants to stay.** This means saving the money we are currently spending on replacing the professionals we lose to more inclusive industries
- **We showcase genuine innovation,** keeping our events and products highly relevant.
- **Our events are growing,** because we are serving new communities.



③ How do we get there?

We have an opportunity to build on the momentum of our progress in gender. A different industry is possible - one that retains top talent, fuels innovation, and grows in new directions.

We can only get there if we start to be bolder. We need to do things differently if we want to see different results. That means making radical changes.

Data, insights, action!

- **Make DEI part of your business imperatives**, not solely a function of HR. This includes appointing a dedicated Chief Diversity Officer with a direct line to your CEO and assigning appropriate budgets to your DEI initiatives.
- **Build a data-driven plan.** The only way to make sure you are implementing the right actions is by diagnosing your own issues. Find out where your employees are experiencing barriers and biases before you embark on well-meaning initiatives that will not make an impact.
- **Develop your own pipeline of leaders from under-represented groups.** Develop targeted mentoring schemes and remove biases in your promotion processes. To solidly embed DEI into

your succession planning, measure your managers on how well they are identifying high-potential talent within their teams and tie their compensation to this metric.



I'm not saying that this is something that can be achieved overnight. But if a CEO stood up and said, "We are embedding DEI into our business goals and strategies. **My leadership team will be measured on it, and it will form part of their overall rewards, incentives and bonuses.**" That alone will drive change and behaviour through the company.



Mike Sealy
Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Informa Markets



- When a top job opens up, **require your headhunters to find a shortlist of candidates from under-represented groups.** Implement rigorous processes to avoid rushed hiring processes.
- **Support flexible working patterns** (including part-time working, job-sharing, flexitime, compressed and annualised hours, term-time-only working, working from home and mobile working). Don't stigmatise people based on schedule.

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The new flexible ways of working since the pandemic are a great opportunity for women. In the past, we were not proposing a way of working which was flexible enough. That is one of the main reasons why there are so few women at the top.



Anne Lafère
Group CEO, Easyfairs

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- **Measure impact.** Measure the impact of your DEI efforts by surveying your employees. Watch and celebrate as you improve employee retention, feelings of inclusion, and levels of diversity. Changing the representation of marginalised groups at your organisation (and especially in positions of leadership) will take a long time. It is key to track progress annually to ensure you are moving in the right direction.
- Lastly, **share what works.** As an industry, we will only move the needle if we make inclusion open-source, for us all to learn from.

We've added more information and helpful resources on each of these actions in this [online action board](#).



Who we are

Our vision is to create a world where people from historically marginalised groups are able to flourish.

To do this, we help our customers to take measurable steps on their diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) journey.

The Clusivity platform measures the level of inclusion at your organisation, covering gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and disability. It pinpoints areas to celebrate and provides a data-driven action plan, empowering you to improve employee retention and track progress.



Meera is a data and analytics enthusiast with an academic training in gender and race inequalities.

Meera trained as a strategy consultant with Plural Strategy Group in London and in New York. In 2019 she joined as Senior Manager to lead the Customer Success team at Smartxpo, a data and analytics company for the events industry. Meera has a Master's degree in Gender Studies from LSE and has also worked as a researcher into business, human rights and gender for UNDP Asia.

Andrew is an entrepreneur with a passion for helping organisations take better decisions.

Andrew trained as a strategy consultant with AMR International. He joined Plural Strategy Group as one of the founding members. During his consulting career, Andrew saw the opportunity to build a SaaS tool for the events industry as a complement to the work of consultants. He launched the data and analytics platform Smartxpo in 2015 which offers price optimisation for event organisers.





Diversified Communications is working with Clusivity to take a data-driven approach to their global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy.

As a leader in the global expositions and conference industry, Diversified recognises its responsibility to advance social justice and inclusion. Diversified has invested in several inclusion initiatives including company-wide training in unconscious bias and conscious conversations, and recruiting a Diversity Exhibition and Event Industry Associate.

"We are excited to build the next stage of our DEI strategy with Clusivity. Clusivity's metrics-driven approach will pinpoint which groups of employees face barriers, so that we can cultivate an environment where everyone feels a strong sense of belonging."

- **Janice Rogers**, Corporate Vice President, Human Resources (recently recognised by TSNN with the DEI Leadership Award)



Clusivity is supporting Encore to gather DEI data across its global offices.

Encore is the global leader for event technology and production services. It cares deeply about investing in the growth and development of all its team members, as shown by its place in the Forbes 2018 and 2019 America's Best Employer list and its recent certification as a Great Place To Work. Encore supports several Business Resource Groups that play a critical role in fostering inclusion across the organisation, covering gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, veteran status, religious belief and mental health.

"We are committed to equality of opportunity. For every Encore Team Member to have roles models with whom they identify and can be inspired by and to ensure that we are representative of the communities we serve. The data is clear; a diverse business is a better business. Clusivity is an important partner in measuring our success against our goals."

- **Nicholas Rudge**, Managing Director - EMEA

