

ADVISORY BOARD ON INCLUSION

First Report - May 2018

 **BUSINESSFORWARD**

Business Forward is helping local business leaders build more diverse workplaces and work with their employees, suppliers, clients, and customers to promote greater tolerance in their communities.

Our founding advisory board members are entrepreneurs, investors, executives, and small business owners representing a broad range of industries, business sizes, political parties, and communities. These leaders are being proactive, increasing the amount of time they spend training their managers and communicating with their employees.¹ For them, it's good business. Companies that embrace America's diversity attract new customers and better workers.² Naturally, they outperform their competitors.

But these leaders are making a much larger point: The office may be one of America's least segregated environments. It's the only place where many of us spend significant time around people of different races or with different religious or political views. If we can't fix it at work, we will have a harder time fixing it anywhere else.

I am pleased to report that 5,000 business leaders have already joined this effort.



Jim Doyle

President, Business Forward

**FOUR IN 10 AMERICANS
NOW WORRY A GREAT
DEAL ABOUT RACE
RELATIONS – THREE
TIMES MORE THAN 2010.³**

1. "Managing Workplace Conflict." Society for Human Resource Management. November 4, 2015.

2. Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton, and Sara Prince. "Diversity Matters." McKinsey & Company. February 2, 2015.

3. Art Swift. "Americans' Worries About Race Relations at Record High." Gallup News. March 15, 2017.

ABOUT THE ADVISORY BOARD

Among the 5,000 business leaders supporting this effort, 130 have volunteered to create Business Forward's Advisory Board on Inclusion.

Board members have committed to share best workplace practices from their own businesses with the rest of the Business Forward network. They have also committed to promote tolerance in their communities by publishing op-eds and blogs, working with local media, and partnering with local organizations in their communities.

Business Forward will support this effort by providing research support, media training, and help contacting interested media. We will share the results of our work with policymakers in Washington.

It is a civic-minded, bipartisan, highly motivated group. We offered members different ways to get involved and asked each to tell us which options interested them. Three in five offered to participate in multiple ways, and one in four said "all of the above."



OUR INITIAL FOCUS: IMMIGRANTS AND AMERICA'S MASA COMMUNITY

Business Forward has worked on behalf of meaningful immigration reform for the past eight years, helping local business leaders brief Congress, the Department of Homeland Security, the Justice Department, and the White House. Recently, we helped thousands of local business leaders submit testimony to Congress and the Department of Homeland Security on DACA and the International Entrepreneur Rule.

Our work with Muslims, Arab-Americans, and South Asian-Americans (MASA) business leaders is new. We kicked off our programming with a national briefing featuring executives from the Society of Human Resource Management, America's largest association of HR professionals in December, 2017. The following month, we led a media training webinar for business leaders interested in speaking with reporters in defense of immigration reform and greater tolerance.

4. Cristina Maza. "Jews in Trump's America Are Being Attacked Post-Charlottesville." Newsweek. Nov. 2, 2017. <http://www.newsweek.com/jews-racism-trump-antisemitism-charlottesville-attacks-jewish-700398>

RISING CONCERN, GROWING VIOLENCE

According to the FBI, the number of hate crimes in the U.S. increased 5 percent last year and 7 percent the year before that. Attacks on Muslims have doubled since 2014.

Attacks against other religious groups are also up. Attacks against Jews are up 67 percent.⁴

KEY THEMES

Through our early programming and a survey of our members, we have identified six common arguments.

1

Being proactive and encouraging candid conversation works best. Companies are offering better training, more communication, and more platforms for company-wide discussions.

2

Tolerance and diversity is good business. It helps us attract talent, operate more efficiently, and reach new markets.

3

Workplaces are the best place to start this work, because offices are often the most diverse part of people's lives. We can avoid people with whom we disagree by choosing which news to watch, where to live, where to pray, and on social media – but we all have to work.

4

Business must fill the leadership void in Washington. Business leaders most often cite George W. Bush's leadership after 9/11.

5

Tolerance is good for the economy. If the U.S. is perceived as intolerant, foreign markets are less likely to buy our exports, visit our attractions, or invest in our businesses.

6

Tolerance is key to global leadership – and global leadership is good for business.

SELECTED BOARD PROFILES



SALIM ZYMET
CrowdPac
San Francisco, CA

THE NEED FOR ROLE MODELS

Zymet works for San Francisco-based startup, CrowdPac. “As a Muslim American currently working in San Francisco, I’m lucky to avoid discrimination most days. But with a career that’s spanned over a dozen states, I’ve had my fair share of racial slurs, epithets, and fear-inducing stares sent my way. That’s why I’m grateful Business Forward is mobilizing Business leaders — the folks who honestly impact everyday Americans’ lives the most — to speak out about diversity, inclusion, and respect. It could not come at a more important time.”

Zymet will be putting his digital marketing skills to work helping Business Forward promoting role models. “It’s critical that MASA-Americans see leaders from private, public, and non-profit sectors that look like them, understand their unique backgrounds, and are advocating for them.”



GURWIN SINGH AHUJA
American Bass
Cleveland, OH

WHY BUSINESS?

Ahuja is president of American Bass, a car audio company in Cleveland, Ohio. Last year, he founded We Are Sikhs, a nonprofit promoting better understanding of the Sikh community in America. We Are Sikhs serves as a think tank that studies the social and cultural dynamics affecting the Sikh community. It also provides a forum and resource center for those interested in learning about the Sikh community and as a coordinator of other like-minded Sikh organizations.

Ahuja joined Business Forward’s advisory board because of its business leader focus. “Most ‘national’ advocacy campaigns tend to play out among affluent Americans on the coasts,” he explains. “Few of them really sink in with working-class people in the Midwest. By helping executives and small business leaders talk about these issues with their employees, we can touch more people, in a much deeper way.”



BRITNEY SUSSMAN
Deloitte Consulting
Los Angeles, CA

HR EXECUTIVE'S PERSPECTIVE

Deloitte research shows that “simply investing in ad-hoc programs to promote diversity initiatives may no longer suffice to help in fostering a lasting culture of D&I.” And while it’s great to deputize a diversity person, and even better to hire a Chief Diversity Officer who can champion efforts in the C-suite, inclusion will not become a real part of any organization until unconscious biases are made conscious and diversity is embedded at the top of every leader’s mind. All of that starts with the CEO.

It starts with the CEO, but diversity does not become fully ingrained into the organization until all employees understand its value and change their behavior accordingly. The CEO not only needs to champion diversity, but also ensure that her direct reports and their direct reports are following suit. There must be a top-down, as well as, middle-out approach.

Deloitte’s framework for how organizations should think about a culture follows these steps:

1. The foundation of corporate culture is a company’s business strategy. Culture then becomes an enabler of this business strategy. Culture must align with and support the business strategy. (For example, if your business strategy is customer-centric, then the company culture should lean significantly toward an external orientation.)
2. Culture is shaped by leaders’ actions and decisions.
3. Culture is sustained by employee behaviors.
4. Culture is reinforced by business and organizational systems.

Last year, Deloitte announced new research that identifies keys to driving a highly diverse and inclusive corporate culture, which in turn drives drive measurable and predictable business outcomes. An inclusive culture should be part of every company’s business strategy. If you overlay the above framework, that means:

1. A culture of courage and inclusivity becomes a key enabler for realizing a company’s business strategy.
2. The CEO and executive leadership shape this culture of inclusion through their actions and decisions.
3. An inclusive culture then becomes regularly demonstrated in employee daily behaviors.
4. Processes and systems are put in place to reinforce these inclusive behaviors (i.e. performance management, rewards, recruiting, training, and leadership development).



DEWITT PEART
Downtown Austin Alliance
Austin, TX

AUSTIN'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

As Austin continues to grow, and all aspects of our community become more diverse, inclusivity is critically important for our future. We heard this loud and clear during our recent public engagement project to envision the future of downtown Austin. The Downtown Austin Alliance is committed to ushering in a future that is welcoming to all people living here, regardless of background, socioeconomic status, or religious beliefs.

Intense growth presents challenges, but also opportunities for cities to rethink strategies related to promoting equity. We will continue to listen to all voices in the community and be stewards for tolerance and inclusivity for all who reside here.



BRENDA PEEK
Peak Communication
Group
Detroit, MI

ENGAGING DETROIT'S ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

As the daughter of Caribbean immigrants, it comes naturally for me to be sensitive to the social, religious, and artistic backgrounds of others who want to be represented as a part of the local community. Doing so creates a true sense of project ownership.

Michigan has one of the largest Middle-Eastern communities in the United States. As a long-time supporter of diversity and tolerance throughout metro Detroit and its surrounding communities, I made a special effort to educate myself and media train project engineers on Middle-Eastern cuisine, art, and community culture.

My work on behalf of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and with Peak Communication Group has brought me into frequent contact with Islamic organizations and companies. In my public relations role, I advertise in the Islamic community's publications and purchase broadcast media. I not only had to communicate effectively, but also provide extensive outreach to ensure that the community leaders, media, and business owners fully understand the projects and local issues.

I educate, collaborate, and earn the community's trust and continued respect by including them in the process. For example, I often provide and budget for print media in their preferred language. I also hired a local interpreter to take notes and help with any communication issues, so I could better represent them. As a result of my successful engagement with these communities, many projects have won state and federal awards and one was even featured on PBS-TV.

CASE STUDY: “TRUMP EFFECT” ON TOURISM

Foreign tourism is a \$236 billion business that supports 2.5 million American jobs. But business is suffering. While tourism is booming in most of the world, the U.S. welcomed 3 million fewer foreign tourists last year. That’s nearly \$5 billion in lost business — and 40,000 lost jobs.

Experts attribute the drop to two factors: the rising strength of the dollar (which makes it comparatively more expensive for foreigners to visit her) and the “Trump effect” (negative reaction to Washington’s increasingly harsh comments about Mexicans, Muslims, African, and refugees).

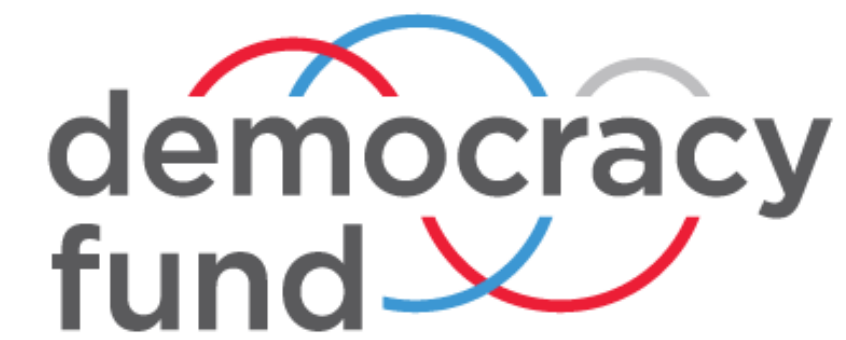
Some of the drop is due to a strong dollar, which makes visiting the U.S. more expensive. But, as NBC News reports, “Experts say that Trump’s proposed travel bans, anti-immigration language, and heightened security measures have had a negative impact on the U.S.’s attraction for foreign visitors.”

According to Adam Sacks, president of Tourism Economics, “It’s not a reach to say the rhetoric and policies of this administration are affecting sentiment around the world, creating antipathy toward the U.S. and affecting travel behavior.” Justin Fox of Bloomberg News agrees: “It seems quite possible that people in Mexico, Brazil, India, and lots of other countries are thinking, ‘I no longer feel as welcome in the U.S.’”

The U.S. Travel Association is responding with a public relations campaign. “While the U.S. government has been the source of a lot of negative media attention this year, the travel industry must continue to stand for open borders, inclusivity, and the celebration of diversity,” said Leigh Barnes, regional director of Intrepid Travel.

TO VIEW THE COMPLETE REPORT, [CLICK HERE.](#)

PARTNERS



ABOUT BUSINESS FORWARD

We Help You Fix Washington By Bringing Washington to You

Because you have a business to run, it can be hard to stay involved in the issues – even the ones that matter most to you, your business, and your community. That’s why Business Forward organizes briefings in more than 125 cities and conference calls that you can attend from your desk. Briefings are short, interactive, and free.

To date, more than 600 mayors, governors, members of Congress, and senior Administration officials have participated in our briefings. We’ve also briefed two presidents.

Help for Business Leaders Who Want to Do More

Some of the business leaders who participate in our briefings want their advice to go further. They publish op-eds, work with local media, write Congress, submit testimony, or help organize Washington fly-ins. We provide research support, alert you to public comment periods and Congressional testimony opportunities, conduct media trainings, and can help you identify local media covering your issue.

Action that Matters, When it Matters

Because you have a business to run, we try not to waste your time. Through surveys and email alerts, we let you know when a call, letter, op-ed, or interview can do the most good.

If you care about climate change and the EPA invites small business owners to testify about climate regulations, we contact you and tell you how to submit your comments. If you care about infrastructure investment and a reporter in your area is interested in talking to a business leader about how to fund local highway improvements, we will ask if you want to comment and teach you the ground rules for talking on-the-record.

Get Involved

If you are interested in joining the advisory board, or need media training and research help, please let us know by emailing us at info@businessfwd.org.



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