

By Kevin J. Delaney

- The case for a personal DEI assessment.
- Remote work can boost the number of women in leadership.
- The best way to use your Fridays.

## The Macro Context

- The US gained 311,000 new jobs last month, according to Labor Department data, a higher number than had been anticipated. Wages increased by 0.2% from a month earlier, the smallest increase in a year.
- Some 3.88 million workers quit their jobs in January, the fewest since May 2021.
- New research estimates that independent contractors comprise 15% of all US workers, significantly more than the 7% estimate of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## Focus on How Individual Workers Can Use Data to Improve Diversity

“Organizations are composed of people, and if the people do not change, the organization does not change,” says Dr. Randal Pinkett, CEO of the diversity, equity, and inclusion consultancy BCT Partners.

That sentiment is a key tenet of Pinkett’s forthcoming book Data-Driven DEI, which, as the name suggests, offers a framework for workplaces and workers alike to measure their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. With many employers now slashing their DEI programs and staff amid layoffs and budget cuts, the question has taken on new urgency: How can individual employees push themselves to change, and how can they do so in a way that moves their organizations forward? Here are excerpts from our conversation with Pinkett about just that, lightly edited for length and clarity.

### You write that people change, not organizations. Can you explain more?

We’ve done an excellent job of articulating the business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion, why it matters to an organization. We talk about how it impacts the bottom line and how it enhances recruiting and retention, employee engagement, productivity, teamwork, and innovation. The list goes on and on and on. But I don’t think we’ve done as good a job, if any job, of articulating the value to people.

Why should you care about a more diverse, more inclusive, more equitable life? The canonical approach is, ‘Well, my employer cares, so I should care.’ Well, no, you should care whether your employer cares or not. And the reason that’s so important and so valuable is because people are the building blocks of any organization. The personal case for diversity, equity, and inclusion—not the business case, but the personal case—is it enhances your life experiences. It expands your worldview. It mitigates your blind spots. It also improves your ability to be a better team member. Your chances for promotions and advancement and even compensation, studies have shown, are enhanced when you are more diverse, more inclusive, and more equitable in your personal and professional life.

### What does that data collection look like on the individual level?

There are a growing number of tools that can measure two things that you should care about. The first thing is your preferences. And that’s neither right nor wrong, good nor bad, but a preference. You like water with lemon? I like water without lemon. You like it warm? I like it cold.

If I think about the Implicit Association Test out of Harvard, it’s measuring a range of different preferences—a preference for associating men with being leaders and women with being supporters, a preference for associating men with math and science and women with the arts. And the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument will measure your left-brain or right-brain preference, left logical, right creative.

These preferences have implications for my decision-making: By knowing my preference, I mitigate my blind spot. If I associate men with being leaders, I have a blind spot for interviewing women to become leaders. If I have a preference for logical thinking, I need to partner with somebody who’s better at creative thinking in order to create a more cohesive team.

The second thing you want to measure is your competences. That is, in some ways, a value judgment. A competence is knowledge, skills and abilities. And the value judgment says, do you have the competence or don’t you? Are you good at it? A good example:

The [Intercultural Development Inventory](#) can measure your intercultural competence, your ability to navigate different cultures. I want to know that, because it's going to tell me if I have areas for improvement, how effectively I can navigate different cultures.

But quantitative tools are not the only game in town. What you can also do is seek feedback from family, friends, and colleagues with what I call a diverse 360. A traditional 360 is where I have a direct report, a peer, someone who I report into. A diverse 360 says I'll get a woman, I'll get a Latina, I'll get an immigrant, I'll get a member of the LGBTQIA community, and I will ask them for feedback. That gives me a diverse set of perspectives on how well I function as a leader, as a manager, as a colleague, as a friend, as a loved one. And that gives me another set of data.

### **How can organizations encourage their employees a) to collect that data, and b) put it to use?**

You want to give people freedom within a framework. If everyone has a different tool, we're not speaking the same language. So we have to say, 'Okay, for preferences, we're going to use the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument. And for competencies, we're going to use the Intercultural Development Inventory.' Now having set that framework, give people freedom: How would you like to conduct your journey based on the results that you've received?

I recommend developing a personal DEI mission statement. A DEI mission statement is a more nuanced personal mission statement which says, what do I believe is my calling, my mission, my purpose in a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable world? Is it my calling to be a more inclusive leader in my organization? To create a culture where people feel included? Is my DEI mission to be an example of an ally for women to break down the barriers that prevent them from having equal opportunity? If I don't take the time to reflect and then to write, I don't fully capture and clarify what that personal DEI mission is.

### **You also argue that organizations should undergo a similar process.**

We recommend to our clients to develop what we call a DEI framework of mission, vision, and values. And they say to us, 'Well, we have a mission and vision and values.' I say, 'Well, no, we're talking about a DEI-specific mission, vision, and values. Because that reshapes the identity of your organization. It clarifies how DEI relates or interrelates to who you are as an organization and where it is situated within the overarching context of your organizational identity.'

Mission is purpose. It answers the question, why do we exist? Why do we serve to create more diversity, more inclusion, and more equity? Vision answers, what is the picture of the future we seek to create? So we envision an anti-racist organization in the future. We envision an environment of psychological safety where all voices are honored and heard. Values is, how should we behave in a way that is consistent with our mission along the path to achieving our vision?

[Read a full transcript of our conversation](#), including Pinkett's five-step framework and how to assess the quality of DEI tools.