

diversity &

inclusion

charter for

change 2021

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Introduction

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Jim Coleman, UK Chief Executive Officer

The advertising industry has a responsibility for greater representation, both internally and in the work we do.

Our clients have a significant influence on culture. To operate responsibly, we need to build teams who can partner with them to create work that authentically reflects all aspects of society - not just those in the majority consciousness.

This is why, in 2018, we created our first Charter for Change. It was a three-year plan with ambitious goals and objectives, and we have made a lot of progress. But the industry - and society - has moved on significantly in the last three years.

So, in 2021 we have renewed our Charter with a fresh set of ambitions, across our People, Culture and Work. This time we're focused on actions in a shorter, one year time period, ensuring we maintain momentum, along with offering greater transparency and accountability. It also incorporates the actions we're taking to ensure we build a culture at We Are Social that is actively anti-racist.

Delivering everything in this Charter is the responsibility of the UK board, chaired by me. And because actions mean more than words, you will also see an update on where we are now. We will share an annual report on our progress, both internally and publicly.



Jim Coleman

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Our 2021 Charter ambitions:

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- 1. We commit to diversity, inclusion and equal representation in all departments and levels of seniority.**
- 2. Social mobility is a key barrier to entry. We will address this in our hiring approach.**
- 3. We will create a culture that promotes a healthy work-life balance and supports mental health.**
- 4. We will create a culture of open dialogue, understanding and respect for different cultural and social values.**
- 5. We will ensure our clients and the suppliers we work with are aware of, and share, our values.**
- 6. We commit to creating work that is progressive, and represents different cultural and social values in an authentic way.**
- 7. We will ensure that on and off screen talent is diverse and representative within our productions.**

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Our People

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1. We commit to diversity, inclusion and equal representation in all departments and levels of seniority.

Where we are:

In 2018, we ran our first UK Diversity & Inclusion survey to help us understand who we are and identify areas for focus. Following this, we expanded our preferred recruitment partners to ensure we have diverse representation for every role we hire. We ensure our candidates have different nationalities, backgrounds and ethnicities. We actively seek people with contrasting viewpoints and opinions to those within our existing teams. We were also founding partners for Creative Equals' Returners Programme, which helps creative women to overcome barriers to re-entering the workplace after taking time out for their family.

We ran the survey again in 2020, both within the UK and, for the first time, all our global offices. In the UK, we exceeded industry standards in several areas. Across the business, 56% of our team are women; 37% at a leadership level (+3pp above industry average). LGBTQ+ representation is 12% across the agency.

Currently, 18% of us come from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, up from 14% in 2018 (+5pp above industry average). Our focus on bringing in more representative talent meant that 36% of new joiners in the last year were from BAME backgrounds.

We also asked about disabilities for the first time, and found that, while 6.4% of people in our team have a non-visible disability, no-one identifies as having a physical disability.

“Our focus on bringing in more representative talent meant that 36% of new joiners in the last year were from BAME backgrounds.”

We will:

- Review and set diversity benchmarks by team and seniority levels, to ensure we have representation across all areas of our business and accurately reflect the culture and society we live in.
- Work with specialist recruiters to ensure at least 1 in 4 interview candidates for open roles are from BAME backgrounds.
- Increase BAME representation at the agency from 18% to 25%.

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2. Social mobility is a key barrier to entry. We will address this in our hiring approach.

Where we are:

In 2018, we launched our Creative Upstarts programme, offering placements to London-based students from low socio-economic backgrounds. In 2020, we ran a new programme focused on talent from outside London. This was paused due to COVID 19, but will be completed once we're back in the office.

Since 2018, we have not offered work experience placements to contacts of staff, clients or others, as part of our efforts to help level the playing field for new talent who are unable to gain experience via personal connections.

“We will continue to ensure no work experience placements are undertaken via contacts of staff, clients or others, to help create a level playing field for new talent.”

We will:

- Evolve existing and develop new apprenticeship and intern programmes which will help us reach untapped talent across the UK.
- Ensure we consider talent and potential—as well as qualifications and experience—when hiring, particularly for entry level recruits.
- Continue to ensure no work experience placements are undertaken via contacts of staff, clients or others, to help create a level playing field for new talent.

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3. We will create a culture that promotes a healthy work-life balance and supports mental health.

Where we are:

We encourage open and honest conversations about mental health at all levels of the business, and offer full support to those who need it. Our survey showed that 67% said they felt there is enough awareness and support around mental health; we will be looking to increase our efforts in this area in 2021.

We currently have nine fully trained mental health first aiders who offer peer-to-peer support. We have improved our employee assistance programme, providing 24 hour support and free counselling sessions. We have worked with MIND to raise the profile of mental health, most recently chairing a discussion with four employees who talked about their own mental health.

We know that mental health and wellness can be closely linked to work-life balance, and we are looking to create a culture in which people can be their best selves both in and out of work. Pre-pandemic, 6% of our team worked flexibly; we are now evolving the way we work to ensure everyone in the agency can benefit from increased flexibility.

“We encourage open and honest conversations about mental health at all levels of the business, and offer full support to those who need it.”

We will:

- Move to a blended working pattern of working from home and from the office, giving people greater flexibility and time to manage life beyond work.
- Train leadership teams with the practical skills to spot the triggers and signs of mental health issues, and equip them with the confidence to intervene and support where needed.
- Create a culture that prioritises the prevention of fatigue and mental health issues by encouraging healthy working habits.
- Look to increase satisfaction from our team in relation to awareness and support around mental health from 67% to 80%.
- Continue to encourage people to speak out and share their experiences through our own internal initiatives.

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**Our
Culture**

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4. We will create a culture of open dialogue, understanding and respect for different cultural and social values.

Where we are:

We want to create an agency environment in which everyone feels like they can be themselves, that they belong, and where we can openly talk about our cultural and social differences. In our 2020 Diversity & Inclusion survey, 80% of people said they feel they belong here, and 78% said the agency respected individuals and valued their differences. However, only 47% said they felt comfortable talking about race and racism.

We have set up a number of initiatives to encourage more open dialogue. Our internal anti-racism education programme covers different cultural perspectives, Black history, our own privilege (and white privilege) and the history of racial injustice. Speakers have included best-selling author, Dr Ibram X Kendi, and social enterprise, The Black Curriculum. Our ongoing Black Perspectives Instagram Live Series gives a platform to Black creators, and celebrates being Black in the industry. We run Cultural Awareness training sessions in partnership with Creative Equals, helping us get to know each other's heritage and talk openly about our experiences. We have been partnering with organisations such as BIMA, SheSays, Who's Your Momma and NABS to run pioneering programmes that address areas including equality, resilience and anti-racism.

We want to ensure that our people feel accepted regardless of how they identify and we respect and welcome all genders. We encourage the use of preferred pronouns on our agency 'welcome postcards' as well as on our internal communications platform, The Ship. In order to equip our team to have more inclusive conversations, everyone has undertaken select modules from LinkedIn Learning's Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging For All course. Our work here is ongoing.

“In our 2020 Diversity & Inclusion survey, 80% of people said they feel they belong here, and 78% said the agency respected individuals and valued their differences.”

We will:

- Continue with our anti-racism education programme from internal and external speakers, broadening it to different cultural and social groups.
- Continue to use our blog and our social channels to give more diverse voices a platform in the UK creative industry.
- Pay for every employee to attend industry events and talks that are promoting diversity, supporting Black creators and raising awareness of diversity issues.
- Allow any We Are Social employee that wishes to join peaceful anti-racist marches and demonstrations the opportunity to do so without it affecting their annual leave.
- Continue mandatory cultural training for everyone - working with partners like Creative Equals.
- Work with partners to develop a fuller programme of cultural awareness training in areas such as language, gender identity and microaggressions.

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5. We will ensure our clients and the suppliers we work with are aware of, and share, our values.

Where we are:

We expect any partners we work with to behave with integrity and decency. Our Anti-Discrimination Code of Conduct is shared with all our clients and suppliers; it defines key behaviours that we expect from those we deal with across every part of our business.

These are the key principles of this code:

1. **We expect all personnel to be treated with dignity and respect**
2. **We will not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of age, race, racial group, colour, ethnic or national origins, gender, pregnancy, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief**
3. **All allegations of discrimination will be taken seriously and the appropriate action taken**
4. **We expect that our suppliers and third parties can demonstrate diversity within their own workforces and within their supply chain, or will show a commitment and action plan towards this**
5. **No brief that encourages or incites discrimination, racism or racial segregation will be accepted**
6. **There will be no association with any organisation that promotes hate or funds supremacist activity**

“No brief that encourages or incites discrimination, racism or racial segregation will be accepted.”

We will:

- Ensure the Code of Conduct is shared with all staff, with support provided for those who actively use it in conversations with clients and suppliers.
- Actively promote our Code of Conduct when pitching for new business.
- Always to share the Code of Conduct with all new clients and suppliers, and have inclusive conversations with both new and existing parties.
- Discuss the Code of Conduct at internal quarterly client business reviews to ensure ongoing awareness and discussions around our values with our partners.

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Our Work

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6. We commit to creating work that is progressive, and represents different cultural and social values in an authentic way.

Where we are:

We want to find and tell more authentic stories from different cultures.

We are working to better reach and engage with under-represented groups through our work. We do this both by building diverse teams, and understanding how cultural values and perspectives can be sourced, respected and leveraged at all key points in the creative process. We will be holding sessions with external experts to equip our teams. The first of these took place in 2020 and covered “How to market to Black families”, hosted by Marvyn Harrison, co-founder of BELOVD agency.

We have also made changes to the way we work. We now ensure we consult and collaborate with representatives from communities that feature in our work, from development through to testing.

This is an ongoing and iterative process to build teams that are as culturally aware as possible, and have the guidance that they need to approach complicated cultural and social topics.

“We now ensure we consult and collaborate with representatives from communities that feature in our work, from development through to testing.”

We will:

- Partner with organisations and community groups to help gain deeper insights into the needs and motivations of diverse audiences, through a 12-month education programme.
- Develop a cultural oversight playbook covering areas such as representation, role, characterisation, language, publishing and production. This will continually evolve as new best practices emerge.

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7. We will ensure that on and off screen talent is diverse and representative within our productions.

Where we are:

Equality and representation is not just about talent and casting, it's also important behind the scenes. Along with our dedicated production division, We Are Social Studios, we seek to provide equal opportunities to underrepresented groups both in front of and behind the camera. We support organisations and initiatives such as Free The Work and Bid Black, and use these resources to continually expand our talent database.

“We will ensure fair representation of talent both on and off screen from different genders, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, and people with disabilities.”

We will:

- Ensure that at least 1 in 3 Directors on our projects are from an underrepresented group.
- Ensure fair representation of talent both on and off screen from different genders, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, and people with disabilities.
- Our Producers have pledged to Change The Lens, which states specific targets for Black representation on every production.
- Enable and encourage our Producers to mentor aspiring, underrepresented talent, partnering with organisations such as ELAM (East London Arts and Music) and No Trace (BAME initiative).
- Undertake an evaluation of our roster of production partners to make sure they share our values.

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