

diversity & inclusion — charter for change 2022

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Charter for Change 2022

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, much like society, has moved on significantly in the last three years.

We now renew our Charter with a fresh set of ambitions each year, across our People, Culture and Work, building on what's worked or refocusing on things that are still important to us. We do this to ensure 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, here 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 2022 Charter ambitions:

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OUR PEOPLE

1. We commit to diversity, inclusion and equal representation in all departments and at all levels of seniority.
2. There are numerous barriers to entry to the creative industries. We will seek to address these through initiatives and support.
3. We will create a culture that promotes a healthy work-life balance and supports mental health.

OUR CULTURE

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.

OUR WORK

6. We commit to creating work that is progressive, and which 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 at all levels of seniority.

Where are we now?

In September 2021, we reviewed our progress in terms of inclusivity and representation across the agency, via our annual all-staff survey. This year, we changed the categorisation for gender to be more inclusive of different gender identities.

We exceeded industry standards in several areas. Across the business, 54% of our team are cisgender women; 46% identify as cisgender women at a leadership level, up from 42% female in 2020 (IPA target is 40% women in senior management roles). LGBTQ+ representation in the agency is 21%, up from 12% in 2020.

In 2021, we set ourselves a target to achieve 25% multi-ethnic representation. We didn't achieve this goal, despite several initiatives throughout the year, which we have taken as learnings for 2022. Currently, 19% of our team come from multi-ethnic backgrounds, compared to 18% in the previous year. We are, however, making progress when it comes to inclusive hiring policies – 25% of our new joiners in the past year were from multi-ethnic backgrounds.

We found that 4% of people in our team have a non-visible disability, down slightly from 6% in 2020. No-one identifies as having a physical disability, and this remains consistent with 2020. We recognise we have more work to do here, especially around education in this area.

We also asked our team about neurodiversity for the first time. We found that 11% of people identified as neurodiverse.

“Across the business, 54% of our team are cisgender women; 46% identify as cisgender women at a leadership level, up from 42% female in 2020.”

In 2022, we will:

- Continue to work towards our target of increasing multi-ethnic representation in the agency from 19% to 25%. As part of this, we aim for 1 in 4 interview candidates for open roles to come from a multi-ethnic background.
- Work with recruiters who specialise across a mix of diverse areas, from ethnicity and sexuality to neurodiversity, disability and more, to identify and expand our talent pools.
- Review the makeup of our teams on a quarterly basis to ensure we have representation across all areas of our business, at different seniority levels, that accurately reflect the culture and society we live in.
- Review pay, promotion and development aspects on a quarterly basis to ensure we are being equitable to people from all backgrounds.

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2. There are numerous barriers to entry to the creative industries. We will seek to address these through initiatives and support.

Where are we now?

We know that many groups in society are either unaware of the opportunities available in the creative industries, or struggle to access the support they need to progress in a creative career. In 2021, we partnered with the [School of Communication Arts \(SCA\)](#) – the most awarded creative school in the world. A social enterprise, the SCA is committed to increasing the diversity of talent across gender, age, care system, disability, ethnicity and geography. We have provided funding for four students to attend the school for the year. We will work closely with the SCA to help students prepare for a role in the creative industry by providing creative briefs for them to develop their skills, and mentors to support them.

We also continued to commit to the BIMA Digital Day where we sent three of our people to coach and mentor two classes in responding to a brief on climate change.

We have evolved the way we discover up-and-coming talent. Our Creative Upstarts programme originally offered placements to London-based students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In 2020, we ran a new programme focused on talent from outside London, run virtually due to Covid-19 restrictions, and this was extended into 2021. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic and continued restrictions, we made a permanent placement into our editorial team through this initiative.

It remains our policy not to offer work experience placements to contacts of staff, clients or others. We believe this helps level the playing field for new talent who are unable to gain experience through personal connections.

2021 was a tough year to find talent in our industry. Whilst we are London based, we believe that great talent exists throughout the UK and internationally, so we'll be focusing more on creating partnerships so that we are expanding our expertise in 2022. Whether that is in education, industry or recruitment partners.

“It remains our policy not to offer work experience placements to contacts of staff, clients or others.”

In 2022, we will:

- Utilise our partnership with the School of Communication Arts to bring new talent from diverse backgrounds into the agency.
- Continue our partnership with BIMA, including our involvement in its schools/digital day.
- Consider regional and international hiring as part of our recruitment strategy to widen the talent pool.

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

Where are we now?

The pandemic has been difficult for everyone from a mental health perspective. We have reviewed and consulted with our team to better understand how we can support all of our employees.

In 2021, we made a number of changes to how we work in order to address some of the feedback we received. These include a meeting etiquette guide to address the increasing number of online meetings, blocked time for all staff at 1pm-2pm to ensure everyone has the opportunity to take a lunch break, and monitored levels of time off in lieu to identify peaks in additional work time.

We have arranged confidential 1:1 counselling sessions for anyone struggling with work or personal challenges, and introduced hypnotherapy as part of our support offering. Our working parents have been provided with extra support, in the form of time off during half term to ensure that they could balance home and work life.

We ran a Lunch & Learn to raise awareness of the menopause, and subsequently created a new company policy to support employees experiencing the peri-menopause and menopause.

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, which includes free counselling sessions. We have worked with MIND to raise the profile of mental health with our heads of department, and brought in speakers to talk to the whole agency about it.

However, despite this, our survey showed a decrease in those who felt there is enough awareness and support around mental health in the agency – 56%, down from 67% in 2020. As a result, we will be looking to increase our efforts here in 2022.

We know that a healthy work-life balance has a significant impact on people's mental wellbeing. To encourage this, our post-pandemic approach to working involves a blend of working in the office and from home. In late 2021, we started a trial for 2 days in the office and 3 days from home – a pattern 85% of our team said was their preference. The trial will be concluded early 2022.

“We currently have nine fully trained mental health first aiders who offer peer-to-peer support.”

In 2022, we will:

- Monitor and assess our flexible and blended working trial via staff feedback, in order to help our team balance life with work.
- Continue to work closely with MIND on training such as helping our management team spot the early signs of poor mental health, and provide the right support to those who need it.
- Review our existing initiatives and create a focus in our wellbeing programme that improves support available regarding mental health and actions the feedback from our staff engagement survey.
- 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 are we now?

We want to create an agency environment in which everyone feels like they can be themselves; where everyone feels that they belong, and where we can openly talk about our cultural and social differences. In our 2021 Diversity & Inclusion survey, 76% of people said they feel they belong here, while 84% said the agency respected individuals and valued their differences. We've seen a significant improvement in how comfortable people are talking about race and racism – 66%, up from 47% in 2020.

We continued with initiatives to encourage more open dialogue, including our internal anti-racism education programme. This programme featured The Black Cultural Archives, who spoke to our team about the 1981 Brixton Uprisings, and writer Remi Sadé, who shared her experiences of Black motherhood. Our Black Perspectives Instagram Live Series has now been running for 18 months, during which we've spoken to six talented Black creatives making waves in a range of industries.

We have run Cultural Awareness training sessions in partnership with Creative Equals, helping us to get to know each other's heritage and talk openly about our experiences. We partnered with organisations such as BIMA, Creative Equals, NABS, who ran pioneering programmes that addressed areas including gender identity, equality, microaggressions and anti-racism. We also signed up to the [#timeToo](#) Sexual Harrassment Code of Conduct, and the Creative Equals open letter to the social platforms asking them to do more to address racist comments.

We have raised awareness of neurodiversity through Lunch & Learn sessions, and members of our team have shared their experiences of being neurodiverse through both our internal and external communications platforms.

“We’ve seen a significant improvement in how comfortable people are talking about race and racism – 66%, up from 47% in 2020.”

In 2022, we will:

- Continue with our anti-racism education programme, with internal and external speakers from different cultural and social groups.
- Continue to use our blog and our social channels to give more diverse voices a platform in the 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 periodic mandatory cultural training for everyone.
- Work with partners to continue our programme of cultural awareness training and unconscious bias.

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

Where are we now?

In 2021, we launched an Anti-Discrimination Code of Conduct which clearly defined the key behaviours that we expect from those we deal with across every part of our business. This has been shared with all our existing clients and suppliers, and has been included in all RFI responses and new business pitch presentation documents. The Code of Conduct has been positively received by clients and suppliers. It has helped to ensure an environment where we work only with businesses who operate with integrity and decency.

The key principles of this code remain:

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

“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.”

In 2022, we will:

- Continue to actively promote our Code of Conduct when pitching for new business.
- Always 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.

Charter for Change 2022

Our Work

Charter for Change 2022

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

Where are we now?

Having a team that represents the diversity of our audiences will help us create more progressive and inclusive work.

Our teams have worked closely with our clients to ensure everyone involved understands the importance of creating work that represents a diverse audience. In 2021, we worked across a number of high profile multi-market campaigns with global brands to champion diversity and representation. We have also helped our clients respond to challenges of diversity and representation with their audiences and communities.

We maintain ongoing conversation and education within our team to keep the importance of creating representative work front of mind. This includes educating our team on areas like how to communicate with diverse audience groups, through talks with expert external speakers. Following our successful session with Beloved in 2020, during which Marvyn Harrison spoke about marketing to Black families, we held another talk with the organisation in 2021 which focused on how to market to South Asian audiences.

We continue to gather insights from representatives of communities that feature in our work. This year, we've also been working with social reading platform Wattpad to produce an informative report into Gen Z's perceptions around marketing and social media. When launched in 2022, this report will help our team, our clients, and the wider industry understand how to build authentic representation into their marketing.

“We maintain ongoing conversation and education within our team to keep the importance of creating representative work front of mind.”

In 2022, we will:

- Continue to partner with organisations and community groups to help gain deeper insights into the needs and motivations of diverse audiences.
- Gather and share our internal expertise on understanding diverse audiences – and developing creative work that champions diversity and inclusion – to help educate teams on approaches and methodologies used.
- Through our partnership with the School of Communication Arts, we will work with up and coming creative talent on some of our client briefs.
- Invest in research that helps us, and our clients, better understand how to create progressive and inclusive work.

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

Where are we now?

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. Members of our Studios teams have mentored students from ELAM and BIMA, though we feel we can do more to offer our support here in 2022.

In 2021, we have worked with a significantly high proportion of female directors - from 20% in 2020 to 45% in 2021, have ensured multi-ethnic representation both in front of and behind the camera, and have cast talent with visible disabilities. For one campaign focused on female empowerment, we created a production for a global brand with its first all female crew.

“We support organisations and initiatives such as Free The Work and Bid Black, and use these resources to continually expand our talent database.”

In 2022, 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 ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, and people with disabilities.
- Continue partnerships with talent representatives/creative communities to ensure we are aware of industry initiatives, and give opportunity to emerging talent.
- Launch a filmmaking scheme in 2022 that will give young, aspiring filmmakers from underrepresented groups the opportunity to get a foot in the door of the advertising industry, and ultimately co-direct a live campaign with our production support throughout.
- Enable and encourage our producers to mentor aspiring, underrepresented talent.

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For more information contact:
peopleandculture@wearesocial.net