CEO Action Reports Significant Progress In Elevating Diversity and Inclusion as a Workplace Priority Among 800+ Signatories Nationwide

Announces the extension of the Check Your Blind Spot unconscious bias tour to June 2020 and designation of the Day of Understanding as an annual coalition observance

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 14, 2019 – At its first-ever combined gathering of CEOs, CHROs and CDOs, CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion™ (CEO Action), the largest CEO-driven coalition to advance diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the workplace, hosted nearly 300 signatory organizations to address complex challenges, drive progress in key impact areas and plan for the coalition's 2020 initiatives.

“There’s a very real expectation and need for chief executives to prioritize diversity and inclusion,” said Tim Ryan, US Chairman and Senior Partner of PwC and chair of the CEO Action steering committee. “With CEOs and board chairs coming together to have the tough conversations, admit where we can do better and share where we’ve seen success, I hope this signals to stakeholders that business leaders are proactively tackling this incredibly challenging and critically important issue.”

CEOs and their board members shared how they are working together to drive accountability on cultivating talent and inclusive work cultures. This furthers an important dialogue started this past June when CEO Action marked its second anniversary with the addition of a fourth pledge commitment. The new commitment is accelerating prioritization of D&I work through the engagement of board of directors to create and evaluate strategic D&I action plans.

“We believe our ability to cultivate a culture that delivers on our commitment, while aligning with our corporate strategy, requires visibility and dialogue at the highest levels of our leadership, including our board,” said John Miller, President and CEO of Denny’s. “By elevating the level of dialogue around diversity and inclusion, our leadership team has gained invaluable insights that are translating to specific actions responsible for the progress of key areas such as supplier and workforce diversity as well as the diversity of our owners and operators.”

Earlier this year, CEO Action polled signatory organizations and found that not only are they enacting the pledge commitments (93%) and reporting positive impact via their engagement (91%), but CEO Action is driving the evolution of organizational D&I strategies. More than 60 percent are “doing something new as a result of their involvement with CEO Action” and 91 percent are engaging their boards, driving increased accountability and visibility on this topic.

While actively supporting the dialogue around D&I plan development and board engagement, the coalition announced the extension of key initiatives to help signatories remain focused on executing the pledge’s original commitments. Launched in 2018, CEO Action’s Check Your Blind Spots unconscious bias tour and Day of Understanding have reached more than four million people, advancing complex conversations about D&I issues and raising awareness of blind spots. Based on feedback from signatories and their employees nationwide, CEO Action is announcing the extension of both of these initiatives:

- Originally a one-year commitment, Check Your Blind Spots unconscious bias tour is extending through June 2020 with up to an additional 50 new tour stops. Launched in 2019 with the goal of making 100 stops across the country and engaging one million people, the unconscious bias tour has made 115 stops and reached more than three million workers and students. With more than 700 active requests from signatories, the tour will also release new content to find more ways to connect people and humanize D&I conversations.
First held on December 7, 2018 with engagement from 150+ signatories and more than 615,000 employees, the Day of Understanding will return in 2020 with signatories hosting employee dialogues anytime during or around the month of February. A coalition-wide initiative, the Day of Understanding directly reinforces CEO Action’s goal of advancing difficult conversations in the workplace. A first for many organizations, signatories cited the first Day of Understanding as an opportunity to build trust between employees, and as a conversation starter that led to enhancements around recruitment and retention programs.

“The Day of Understanding created a safe space to talk about topics usually avoided at work, and was an authentic and powerful experience that left many of our people feeling inspired,” said Clorox Chair and CEO Benno Dorer. “I’m glad to see this become an annual event because there’s a pull for more of these discussions at a human level. When we have these difficult conversations, it helps people get out of their comfort zones to experience personal growth.”

As D&I continues to be a major priority for leaders across industries, CEO Action has experienced nearly 70 percent growth in signatories in 2019. Since launching, the coalition has become a unique platform for networking and enablement, realizing measurable change in how signatory organizations are tackling D&I issues.

“CEO Action provides valuable perspective, resources and insights that can help organizations evolve and grow, and a great example is their Check Your Blind Spots tour, which encouraged our workforce to mitigate unconscious bias,” said Susan Stith, Vice President, Diversity, Inclusion, Civic Affairs and the Cigna Foundation. “At Cigna, we are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive culture where employees feel valued and able to do their best work. Helping people recognize and address personal biases will strengthen our ability to work together effectively and inclusively, in support of our mission to transform healthcare for all.”

Companies represented at the CEO Closed-Door Session and CHRO & CDO Summit included: