In a Year of Profound Change, Over 1,100 C-Suite Leaders Convene to Accelerate Commitments to Diversity & Inclusion

CEOs, CHROs and CDOs are taking action to create a more equitable future for employees, stakeholders and society at large

November 19, 2020 - In the midst of a global pandemic, a divisive election and civil unrest, when CEOs could have pulled back on diversity and inclusion commitments, we have seen the opposite -- business leaders have stepped forward.

As stakeholders increasingly look to the C-Suite for leadership and tangible action on D&I, CEOs are collaborating with their peers to drive greater progress in their organizations and communities. CEO Action has increased its signatory base by 40% in the past five months as CEOs -- ranging from Fortune 50 companies to organizations with under 100 people -- come together to share, learn and make bolder commitments and investments in D&I.

Today, CEO Action brought together over 1,100 CEOs, CDOs and CHROs for the 4th Annual CEO Closed-Door Session and CHRO & CDO Summit, underscoring the coalition’s continued leadership in convening CEOs to take critical action on D&I in the workplace and society during a definitive year in our nation’s history.

Topics addressed included how to facilitate tough conversations about race, be proactive about succession planning, hold business accountable to its commitments and facilitate cross-functional collaboration between CEO, CDOs, CHROs and Government Affairs.

Featured speakers included author Dr. Robin DiAngelo, consultant, bestselling author, educator and facilitator on issues of racial and social justice, Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, Wes Moore, CEO of Robin Hood, and Emmanuel Acho, former NFL linebacker, author and host of “Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man.”

“Stakeholders are putting heightened importance on racial equity and CEOs need to collaborate with their peers to drive greater progress in their own organizations.,” said Tim Ryan, PwC US Chair & Senior Partner and co-founder of CEO Action. “As CEOs accelerate change by taking actions such as appointing Chief Diversity Officers, engaging their boards and making external commitments and statements, they collaborate with their peers and the coalition to drive greater progress.”

Now more than ever, CEOs understand that they must also come together to use collective resources, experience and time to change systems that have contributed to societal injustices. In October, the coalition launched CEO Action for Racial Equity, a one to two year fellowship that has brought together over 100 organizations and 250 fellows to address racial equity public policy.

“One of the clearest and most painful takeaways of the past several months is that racial injustice remains a stain on our society—both in the United States and around the world. And one of the most important lessons that we should draw from this
moment is that each of us must play an active role in fighting to eradicate systemic racism and standing up for equality in all its forms.” said Enrique Lores, President & CEO, HP. “It’s not simply the right thing to do for the people and communities we serve. Embracing a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion drives innovation and strengthens a company’s performance.”

Four key takeaways from the 4th Annual CEO Closed-Door Session and CHRO & CDO I Summit:

- **Being antiracist requires persistent self-awareness and regular self-examination.** Organizations should consistently listen and reflect on practices, culture and the experiences of people to make lasting change.

- **Potential is universal, opportunity is not.** Leaders can — and should — extend their privilege and voice to help break down barriers and create pathways for others and be deliberate in succession planning.

- **Be an active listener as you lead.** Uncomfortable conversations are a critical component to addressing diversity and inclusion in succession planning.

- **One of the best things we can do for the economy is to make sure all people have equitable opportunities.** Collaborating as a business community to address racial equity public policy together is essential for changing society.

“This is a defining time for us as CEOs, and we must let our purpose and core values guide us to champion the interests of not only our clients, but of all our stakeholders in the communities that we serve.” said Penny Pennington, Managing Partner of Edward Jones. "With the help of CEO Action, we’re committed to doing the work, to listen, learn, lead on issues of inclusion, equity and diversity and be accountable.”

Learn more about CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion and how to become a signatory at [www.ceoaction.com](http://www.ceoaction.com).

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About CEO Action:

CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion is the largest CEO-driven business commitment to advance diversity and inclusion within the workplace. This commitment is driven by a realization that addressing diversity and inclusion is not a competitive issue, but a societal issue. Recognizing that change starts at the executive level, more than 1,400 CEOs of the world’s leading companies and business organizations, are leveraging their individual and collective voices to advance diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

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