

Beauty For All

An Interview with Angela Guy,
Senior Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion, L'Oréal USA

EDITORS' NOTE *Angela Guy is a member of the L'Oréal USA Executive and Benefits Committees and collaborates to align L'Oréal's global diversity efforts. Prior to this appointment, Guy was Senior Vice President, General Manager of SoftSheen-Carson, the #1 ethnic haircare brand in the world, which is part of the consumer products division of L'Oréal USA. In this role, Guy oversaw all aspects of the SoftSheen-Carson brand in the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean. Previously, she worked for 19 years at Johnson & Johnson throughout the U.S. and Canada, for three years in sales with Levi Strauss & Company Accessories Division and for three years in retail management with Hills Department Stores. She sits on the boards of several organizations and has often been recognized for her leadership by these organizations. Guy received her B.A. in psychology from Pennsylvania State University and completed Executive Leadership Development Programs at UCLA, Kellogg and Harvard Kennedy School.*



Angela Guy

COMPANY BRIEF *L'Oréal S.A. (loreal.com), is the world's leading cosmetics company with the mission of offering all women and men worldwide the best of cosmetics innovation in terms of quality, efficacy and safety. It provides access to products that enhance well-being, while mobilizing its innovative strength to preserve the beauty of the planet and support local communities. L'Oréal was founded in 1909 and is headquartered in Clichy, France.*

How do you define the role of a diversity and inclusion leader?

I probably define the role of a diversity and inclusion professional differently than others because I did not come from an HR background. I came from the business side. Frédéric Rozé, President and CEO of L'Oréal USA and Americas, had the vision to shift the approach that we were taking around inclusion and specifically wanted to have a business leader lead the function, not just internally, but also to represent L'Oréal USA as a business externally.

I think that this approach creates a whole new environment in which companies can ensure that they really are a great place to work for all of their employees and also exhibit social responsibility by reaching out beyond the talent. It allows us to look at these efforts through a different lens that broadens our view of diversity. Inclusion should be expanded beyond the status quo and should be

looked at from a consumer, marketing, business and community perspective.

The focus solely on diversity has moved toward an emphasis on inclusion and even further to belonging. Will you discuss this evolution?

The evolution of diversity to inclusion to belonging is a natural one. Much of the diversity conversation was initially about race and gender. Then it became about sexual orientation, disability, and veterans. At L'Oréal, we are inclusive of introverts in an extroverted kind of environment and caregiving as other dimensions of diversity. So I believe the evolution is natural if you have a business that's focused on inspiring everyone to feel like their voice matters.

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Since we are in the beauty industry and the L'Oréal corporate mission is beauty for all, we take this very seriously. The more we know about an individual, the better we are at inspiring their beauty. The more we know about the employee, the better we are at aligning their career aspirations to the business needs that we may have. Visible diversity matters and so do the unique attributes that make our employees who they are and what attracted us to them from the beginning – their differences, what they bring to the table, their ability to add value, and their expertise.

Is it important to build metrics to track the impact of L'Oréal's diversity and inclusion initiatives?

It is important to find a way to measure whether our culture is inclusive and consumers feel like our message is one that resonates with them. We conduct employee surveys and we measure consumer engagement. The key is to take action on the insights that we receive from both with the same passion and urgency.

Does L'Oréal have employee resource groups as part of this effort?

We have employee-led resource teams but we don't call them employee resource groups. We call them think tanks because they are intentional. Where we saw that we had some opportunities to have better representation, we asked employees who had an interest in the topic to weigh in. Each one of the think tanks grew from there.

Our CEO took the initiative to say, "We need gender balance that includes more women at the top, and we also need to make sure we have a pipeline of men who can give us that equity over the years to come." So we created a think tank called L'Oréal for Women. In the U.S., we asked our executive women to come together in a roundtable and talk about their experiences and where they felt we had gaps in leadership development. We then partnered with the Harvard Kennedy School and created a women's leadership program. We have sent about 100 women to Harvard to work on skill development over the course of two years.

We took insights from the Men@L'Oréal Think Tank on how to better market L'Oréal as a company to be more inclusive of men. They shared that the way we were communicating open jobs came with a level of bias in some of the words that we used to describe the work, so we made some changes. We have taken similar approaches to engage Think Tanks to drive a sense of belonging with veterans, the LGBTQ community, women of color, and people with disabilities.

How critical has it been to have such deep engagement from the top of the organization for this work?

Having senior leadership support really makes a difference. I know this because I talk to colleagues all the time who don't necessarily have that, and their struggle is harder. Frédéric Rozé has been very vocal about these efforts. He joined a group in the U.S. called CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion. They now have more than 600 U.S. CEOs of companies and institutions who have come together to say, "We have a responsibility to create an inclusive marketplace, and we can leverage the successes and the challenges as CEOs to impact the way our society operates." ●