

“You Belong”

An Interview with Wanda Bryant Hope, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Johnson & Johnson

EDITORS' NOTE Wanda Hope is responsible for globally advancing J&J's diversity and inclusion strategy, strengthening D&I capabilities, improving reputation, and driving innovation and growth for future success. Prior to her current role, she served as the Vice President of Global Performance & Development, Vice President of Commercial Analytics, Development & Operations, Vice President of Sales & Marketing, Surgery and Chronic Care Franchises, National Sales Director, and Global Marketing Leader. She was recently recognized by Black Enterprise as one of the Most Powerful Women in Diversity and has received several awards including the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association's Rising Star Award, the YWCA Tribute to Women in Industry Award, and the National Sales Network Community Service award. Hope received her B.S. in marketing from The Pennsylvania State University.



Wanda Bryant Hope

COMPANY BRIEF Johnson & Johnson (jnj.com), together with its subsidiaries, researches and develops, manufactures, and sells various products in the healthcare field worldwide through three divisions: Consumer, Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices. The company markets its products to the general public, retail outlets and distributors, as well as distributes directly to wholesalers, hospitals, and healthcare professionals for prescription use. Johnson & Johnson was incorporated in 1887 and is based in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

How does Johnson & Johnson address diversity and inclusion?

At J&J, diversity and inclusion have always been a part of who we are and are embedded in our company's Credo. When J&J was founded more than 130 years ago, more than half of our first 15 employees were women, which was unheard of at that point in time. So having diverse representation has always been a part of who we are.

When I stepped into the role, we took a step back and decided that we needed to think about D&I differently. Our heads and our hearts were absolutely in the right place and it was embedded into our culture, but we weren't thinking about it as holistically as we could. We felt we needed to treat D&I the same way we would any business challenge or any business opportunity and build a strategic plan that we could align and incorporate across all of J&J's businesses.

Our first step was to create a situation assessment, so we connected with more than 7,000 J&J employees around the world to ask them their thoughts on both diversity and inclusion. We also did a pretty big external scan to figure out what was working and driving success in some other organizations.

From those, we found that while diversity may look different depending upon what country you are in, everybody wanted to feel like they belonged. Everybody wanted to feel like they had a voice and that they were being heard.

We then built a whole new strategy anchored on inclusion because we know that by focusing on inclusion, we can engage every single employee at J&J across the globe in this conversation.

We have redefined D&I within J&J as a part of that effort, and our new definition is “You belong.” Diversity at Johnson & Johnson is about your unique perspective. It is about you, your colleagues, and the world we care for. It involves all backgrounds, beliefs and the entire range of human experience coming together. Inclusion at J&J is about creating a deep sense of belonging, where you are valued, your ideas are heard, and you advance this culture for everyone.

This helps our people understand the responsibility that we each have in driving a more inclusive culture and what that does for us as an organization as well as for the patients, the consumers and the customers that we serve around the world.

How does D&I fit into J&J's talent processes and business strategies?

As we looked at integrating D&I into our talent processes, we found that there is unconscious bias built into systems and processes that we needed to mitigate. So we have actually started using artificial intelligence to help us tease out phrases and words from our job descriptions that we know are inherently biased against women. We have developed training on how unconscious bias may impact our thinking and our decision-making during the interview process. We have also embedded more inclusive concepts into the way that we manage performance and development throughout the year.

There are other ways to incorporate D&I into other parts of our business. For instance, we have embedded multicultural marketing into many of our brands to ensure that we are connecting with an audience in a way that resonates with them.

Having D&I as a business imperative is so critical. If we can educate our organization on the overall value and the importance of it and people really understand that, it starts to shift the way everyone thinks about D&I and starts to shift processes, systems and the way we operate on a day-to-day basis.

Is this more difficult to do given the size and global footprint of J&J?

J&J is a massive, global organization with about 140,000 employees in 80 or so different countries. Our D&I team only has 15 people, which makes it difficult to engage each of those employees, so the first thing that we needed to do was to engage our leaders.

The impact that D&I has on our culture, on engagement and on innovation, is not owned only by the office of D&I. It belongs to every employee across J&J. We felt it was critically important that we engaged our leaders around the world in owning and executing our D&I strategy.

We started at the top, with our CEO, Alex Gorsky, and our executive committee. Alex, our Chief Human Resources Officer, Peter Fasolo and, quite frankly, our entire executive committee, are a team of leaders that truly believe in diversity and inclusion. They understand the value of what this brings internally and externally for J&J. So when we shared the strategy with them and explained what we were asking them to do as leaders to help us drive this, everyone was immediately onboard.

We then enlisted leaders around the world to help us gather data and develop insights. We split the world into four different regions – North America; Asia-Pacific; Europe, Middle East, and Africa; and Latin America. We created a diversity and inclusion advisory board of individuals at very high levels and co-created strategies with them so they would share ownership of these strategies. This meant we had a group of D&I ambassadors that was able to help us deliver these messages to the people that they lead day-to-day.

Finally, we actually created a launch around our new definition and way of thinking about diversity and inclusion and reached out to all employees through their leaders. We explained our new vision and talked about what this means for each individual as well as for patients, consumers and customers that we serve around the world.

This enabled everyone to get engaged in this effort and to understand the value and the importance and the individual role that they play, whether they were a people leader or an individual contributor within J&J. ●