

An Inclusion Revolution

An Interview with Cristina Santos,
North America Head of Inclusion & Diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity, Sanofi US

EDITORS' NOTE *Cristina Santos is a seasoned pharmaceutical industry professional having held various positions for the past 18 years. She first joined Sanofi US as Head of Multicultural Marketing for Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease. Prior to joining Sanofi US, Santos worked in a number of key commercial roles in the areas of Global Oncology Commercial Excellence, U.S. Sales Leadership, Product Marketing, and Training and Development. Her passion for D&I sprung from years of devoted energy to global and local council work and leadership of several employee resource groups. She holds a strong belief that in order to achieve significant impact, it is critical to invite the majority to the conversation, not just those traditionally underrepresented.*



Cristina Santos

COMPANY BRIEF *Sanofi US (sanofi.us) is headquartered in Bridgewater, New Jersey, and employs more than 12,000 professionals throughout the United States. It is comprised of five business units that focus on human vaccines, rare diseases, multiple sclerosis, oncology, immunology, infectious diseases, diabetes, cardiovascular, consumer healthcare, and established prescription products and generics.*

Will you discuss the role of a diversity and inclusion officer and is this role a part of business strategy at Sanofi US?

The role has evolved. Years ago, many HR practitioners came up through the space. Today, the role has evolved into being more of a business partner and I come from the business side. Our ability to make D&I as relevant as every other aspect of what we do for business is helping drive greater progress with greater urgency.

Are Sanofi's diversity and inclusion initiatives consistent globally or do they differ by market?

They differ greatly by market. There are consistent themes that we all hold close and that tie us together, gender equity being one of them. We are guided by an overall ambition to reach global gender balance within our senior leadership by 2025. We are just now introducing significant efforts globally around LGBTI inclusion and disability inclusion. Those have been a part of our agenda in North America for a while. Of course, we also have significant efforts focused on age, race and

ethnicity as well as veterans' inclusion and other aspects that we make a priority at Sanofi US.

Does hiring the best and brightest talent ensure a certain level of diversity or do you need to develop partnerships with different organizations in order to reach a diverse candidate population?

The primary goal in talent acquisition is hiring the most qualified individuals for a given role. Sadly, merely seeking to hire the best and brightest talent doesn't always ensure diversity so we

still need to make a very intentional effort to make the company and its opportunities known to various diverse communities. Exceptional talent exists in all communities, but we need to have meaningful presence and networks established to be seen as an employer of choice. If we're not there, they may not think to bring their perspectives and skills to Sanofi US. To improve our diversity outreach, we have strategies for reaching populations that are historically underrepresented in our industry. For example, we were recently at the Service Academy Career Conference (SACC) to make an intentional outreach to veterans transitioning to civilian life. Our Sanofi US ambassadors representing us are veterans themselves, so they can speak to their experience here. We have also nurtured relationships with NSN, a black sales network, as well as the National Black MBA Association to make sure that we are showing that there is a place for all kinds of diversity within Sanofi US's organization. We do this with a number of groups reaching other demographics as well.

There is a major focus today on inclusion. How do diversity and inclusion relate?

Stated simply, diversity is a fact, and inclusion is a choice. Last year, we made the switch to leading with inclusion. I'm head of inclusion and diversity, not diversity and inclusion. This also brings more people into the conversation.

Inclusion is more difficult to define for people, so we use the Vernā Myers method of saying, "Diversity's being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance." We recently added the additional mantra, "Belonging is when you dance like nobody's watching." Belonging is that feeling that you have. It's that connection of the heart with the head.

I believe that right now, more than being in a diversity revolution, we are in an inclusion revolution. We want we make sure everybody feels like they are a part of this conversation.

In North America, over the last 18 months or so, this has involved inviting men, especially white men, into the conversation because it has traditionally been something that they have not been included in, which is absurd. We continue to have many men in positions of power. If we are not offering them the same opportunity to be included and give them the benefit of learning what it means to feel "othered," then how can they, with their influence, champion others and advocate for them?

So I think the conversation today is almost exclusively about inclusion. If you get that part right, the diversity will follow. If we can get people in the habit of asking, "Whose voice is missing from this table?" "Who is not in the room?" "Who's not being included?" Well, then we'll see huge leaps and bounds of progress.

Is the proper dialog taking place around gender parity today?

I'm thrilled that the conversations are happening at the C-Suite level. I'm also thrilled that we have five business units in the U.S. and all five of them are run by exceptional leaders that happen to be women. That is a very powerful example for others to look to. We have come so far, but we have so far to go. However, it is not just about gender. I want everyone to feel included, irrespective of their age, their race, their orientation, their abilities, or their gender. So that's where it gets complicated but exciting, because there's no shortage of opportunities.

Are you able to take moments to reflect and celebrate the wins when you look at Sanofi's diversity and inclusion efforts?

We have been able to celebrate things that we're very proud of. We are very proud of having a perfect score for the Human Rights Campaign. We are proud of coming back to Working Mothers 100 Best and being a Best Company for Dads for the first time.

It is exceptionally rewarding when you bring business partners and business leaders to these award events. The joy and the legitimate excitement I see from them makes it worth it and fuels their fire to do more.

I know what this work can ignite in people when they truly feel like they belong. We can choose to be frustrated and upset about the often divided state of the world and the state of this country, or we can look at it and say, "Well, my gosh, all of that crazy has brought so many people into the conversation that perhaps never would have been engaged before." So I'll take it. ●