

IGI's D&I journey

More and more insurance and reinsurance companies are looking to establish diversity and inclusion (D&I) programmes into their workplace. But what does this mean in practice? On International Women's Day, IGI D&I champion **Aida Abu-Jaber** shares the company's D&I journey, explaining how a culture of equality and fairness has been a conduit to a tangible D&I strategy.

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) is no longer just seen as the right thing to do, but as something that is fundamental for the health of a company.

But how does a company successfully implement a culture of D&I? The answer is that it is not easy, particularly for smaller companies, for whom D&I can be last on the list of financial priorities. Incorporating a successful D&I strategy involves many measures that include reviewing hiring procedures, career progression paths, harassment and misconduct measures, working hours and holidays and internal policies and procedures.

However, waving a D&I banner is not enough; groundwork needs to be done and implementation measures need to be taken. These are costly in time and resources. But in today's changing and interconnected world, D&I is quickly becoming more and more integral to a company's success and ultimate survival.

IGI has only just started its D&I journey. We had a good starting point – IGI has a workforce with a 50:50 male-to-female ratio and a culture of supporting women. However, we needed to address the low female representation at the senior and board levels in the company, so IGI set up a D&I programme in 2018. Several efforts, events and initiatives ensued.

Change starts from within, so IGI is looking internally to develop and nurture its own talent. In March this year, at the same time as the world celebrates International Women's Day, IGI will be investing in its female human resource. By partnering with Career Excel, an online leadership training programme, IGI's female professionals will be able to achieve their potential through live coaching and training.

Over the course of nine weeks and 18 sessions, enrolled female employees at all IGI's five offices will be trained on being better leaders, developing their careers and achieving their professional and personal goals.

The key to nurturing young women into future leaders is helping them develop and sustain confidence. In the KPMG Women's Leadership Study, entry-level working women report the lowest levels of confidence (44 percent) compared to their professional counterparts (mid-level: 52 percent, senior level: 55 percent). This illustrates a strong need for confidence-building at the onset of a woman's career. Women also feel apprehensive about claiming their achievements.

This needs to change, and we hope the training program will help empower our female professionals and give them

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the confidence and state of mind to rise into a leadership mind frame.

Over the past two years, IGI has also been an active proponent of D&I and backed many projects that support female empowerment via industry events and some unconventional but effective methods.

In 2018, IGI teamed up with Lloyd's of London to host Jordan's first Dive In Festival, which was themed around female empowerment. At this event, we invited guests and speakers from diverse parts of Jordanian society, including government, financial institutions, civil society and the private sector.

For this event, IGI also partnered with the Jordanian-founded social enterprise "The World of Letters", which spearheaded a collective women's movement called Women as Partners in Progress. Led by Arab women leaders, the programme highlighted gender imbalance in the workplace in the Middle East and North Africa region and is working on changing laws and legislation that discriminate against women.

In last year's Dive In Festival, we went to the grassroots, and sponsored a panel discussion in a remote area in the south of Jordan where several industries are located. The panel taught working women in the local community about actions, rights and legislation related to harassment and misconduct in the workplace.

IGI also believes in joining forces with reputable and competent industry-led D&I initiatives, and has sponsored *Insider Progress* and partnered with the Insurance Supper Club – a group dedicated to empowering women in the (re)insurance sector.

On the unconventional side, IGI has supported Equal Playing Field (EPF), a non-profit organisation dedicated to highlighting female under-representation in sport by breaking Guinness World Records. Last year, IGI sent an all-female team from the insurance industry to take part in the Guinness World Record biggest game of football ever played – which lasted five days, with over 800 players from different countries, ages, groups, ethnicities, religions and backgrounds. The purpose was to shed light on the parallels between sports and insurance in gender disparity.

Most notably, IGI has recently made a couple of senior female hires, one being named on the company's board.

For IGI, the D&I strategy is unfolding and taking effect slowly, but surely.

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