SOHO MEDIA CLUB

PRESENTS

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN MEDIA BREAKFAST

In Partnership with Kynigos

HOSTED AT GOOGLE HQ

The breakfast was introduced by David Black, Senior Director, Google UK and Managing Director of Technology, Media & Telecoms

David kicked off the breakfast with key trends across media:

3 key trends

- **Everyone is connected:** The majority of the world's population is now connected on the internet. The average person unlocks their phone more than 100 times a day. David stated, *"We don't go online, we live our lives online"*
- **Everything is available:** As an example, free to access, Youtube has 2bn users every month, it's bigger than all of commercial TV channels in terms of audience
- **Everything is smarter:** David highlighted the launch of Google Bard in the same week, as an AI enhancement of Google Search."The future is not just being able to find links, but to find any answer to something you look for – that's accurate and representative."

3 tenents

Google has 190k employees, 70 offices in 40 countries. Its culture is maintained by three tenets which are followed through at every level of the organisation. This clarity helps Google to attract talent.

1.Mission
Google's mission is to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.Often likened to the "Toothbrush test" – every product should be useful at least once a day for everyone in world.

2.Transparency
At Google, nearly everything is open for observation, questioning, and debate. Transparency is paramount.

3.Voice
Google believes that every employee is brilliant and has valuable ideas to contribute

Driving diversity at Google

David gave a glimpse into his own challenges as a young person, growing up in Essex in a working class family and the encouragement and opportunities that he was given, and how he has learnt to be proud of his roots, "to celebrate them and use my privileged role to make sure people have the same chances."

Black described his role in driving diversity and his role in overseeing hires, to make sure the business stays true to its commitment to diversity. He spoke of initiatives at Google. Some key examples included:

Prince's Trust Technology Leadership Group

David is Chair of the Technology Leadership Group of the Prince's Trust, which does amazing work with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and works to help more young people from a wider range of backgrounds get skills and roles in tech and digital.

Google's Diversity Annual Report

The 2023 Diversity Annual Report shares the past year's progress towards building a Google that reflects and embraces the diversity of our world.

#IAmRemarkable

In 2016 a movement called it #IAmRemarkable was launched to bolster confidence for emerging leaders. While it was originally only offered to Google employees soon there were requests from customers, agencies, universities, and it is now available publicly. Google provides facilitators and workshops which are open to everyone, and the has been phenomenal.

> **"I DON'T STAND BEFORE YOU AS 'THIS IS JOB DONE'. I AM KEEN TO LEARN FROM THE DISCUSSION TODAY."**
>
> -DAVID BLACK

Who attended the breakfast?

Representatives from leading brands, including:

Publicis Groupe
Reuters
Banijay UK
All3Media
Financial Times
Bloomberg LP
ITV Plc
Nevision
BBH Group
Netflix

BBC
Disney
Telegraph Media Group Ltd
Fully Focused
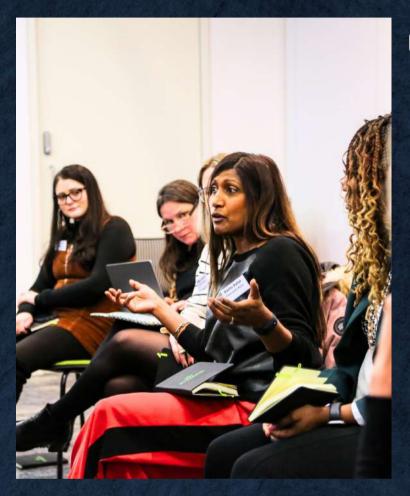Residence Pictures
Gravity Media
Moonbug Entertainment
PACT
Snap
IBC

Following David's insight into Google, the conversation opened out to include everyone in the room. The Group agreed on the big picture objective and a key challenge to this.

GROUP OBJECTIVE

"The end result should be that those with different protected characteristics feel that they can turn up and do a job."

THE COMPLEX REALITY

"It's such an individual experience everyone's got to go on their own DNI journey."

KEY EMERGING THEMES

- Training is undervalued & needs to be part of the business culture
- Responsibility must be taken at all levels
- Change takes time and costs money
- Accessibility must be front and centre
- Connecting with one another is critical
- Cross-industry initiatives lacking

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Training is undervalued
One participant said that free leadership and inclusion training sessions organised by Pact and other organisations via Zoom were poorly attended.

"The real issue is prioritising it and that's where leadership can make a big difference - by them showing up to those sessions"

"PARTICULARLY WITHIN LEADERSHIP TRAINING, WE THINK WE CAN GET BY WITH A NICE SMILE AND CHUTZPAH, WITH GOOD NETWORKING AND CONNECTIONS"

"One of the issues is a misunderstanding about learning, it's not doing training, it's more about positioning it as continuous learning"

A participant from one major production company insisted that CEO's need to attend training, "to show they care and show publicly and everyone realises it's ok to give up an hour and half of time."

Another added, "You can do all the training you want and provide if for free but if it's not deeply ingrained in the company culture at the top level, it becomes a matter of ticking boxes."

The way forward
One way forward is to re-evaluate the mission statement of the organisation and do a systems review, as "Training has got to be part of the business processes."

Responsibility must be taken at all levels

"WHY SHOULD WE NOT PLACE IT BACK ON OUR LEADERS AND ASK WHY AREN'T YOU DOING THIS?"

"The creative industries in this country are homogenous, with people who are very similar.

While there is an intention to be more inclusive and diversity, there's undue pressure on those who experience marginalisation to do the job of leading.

From leadership, to new-comers, training around unconscious bias is key, especially for line management, to cascade the message down.

Create inclusive conversation at the top

One suggestion was to bring less-than-diverse management together to talk about power privilege and allyship. "We brought people in to talk about their power and privilege and ended up being a good conversation and ongoing dialogue - it was not nailed in one session, as with homogenous leadership teams, you've got to give them space."

One participant organised training for those working in the animation creative process, giving them the tools, language confidence to talk about hair colour, skin tone etc.

Change takes time and costs money

Even where hard cash might not be needed, it does take time, especially for smaller businesses.

One participant from post production, said that the industry has been lazy and not found time or money to invest in diversifying its employees.

They took downtime in the business to implement policies towards change and to develop a training academy targeting under-represented groups.

"We couldn't be on that journey unless we developed time and space, as we are always busy with the day job."

Freelancer training is a challenge

For freelancers, time equals money, so training is squeezed and there's a question of who pays for freelance training.

"Production companies have a multitude of different constraints around budgets, time, access, talent to manage as well as meeting deadlines and collecting data on the back of it."

One participant puts a line in the budget for Diversity & Inclusion for every project in Europe and every production has a training programme attached at all levels.

One big gap identified was heads of department – such as lighting or camera. They aren't employed and as they are nominally operating under limited companies, for tax reasons employers shouldn't be offering them coaching.

There is also a tendency to not address bad behaviour by a freelancer, but rather not to employ them again.

"What's lacking is brave conversations, feedback. If you don't have feedback culture, it's too easy just not to hire that person and then they carry on to the next gig."

"IT TAKES PEOPLE TO SIT DOWN AND BE A BIT BRAVE, TO SAY 'THAT'S NOT ACCEPTABLE, WHY DID YOU BEHAVE LIKE THAT? WE USE THE BRUTE WEAPON OF HIRING AND FIRING."

Accessibility must be front and centre

Lots of companies in the media are housed in inaccessible spaces. What's needed is an accessibility blueprint, something all companies need to think about.

Asking questions can force the issue

"When we talk about accessibility and make buildings inclusive it means asking the landlord – it's a legal requirement - they have to make it accessible."

The downside of not asking the questions is critical. "The knock-on effect is disabled talent won't work for you"

Connecting with one another is critical

"IT IS GREAT TO CONNECT... PEOPLE WANT TO CONNECT MORE IN SAFE SPACES"

The big events such as Edinburgh TV Festival or Sheffield have their place, but not everyone can get to these.

The need to connect also exists among the leadership across different companies.

"Sometimes it feels like we're islands on our own. If we meet more regularly, focus on specific areas and hold each other to account, you might see progress."

There are organisations – SkillSet, CDN, the BFI that provide resources for the whole industry. But no one go-to directory.

"Effecting change in an organisation is one thing but you're always spinning in your own orbit," said one participant, referring to "circles of change."

"The key is working together and not being so fragmented an industry."

Cross-industry initiatives lacking

The question was asked, are there cross- industry initiatives, or is like cottage industry doing own thing?

"No-one is taking responsibility have to have a shared collective approach," said one participant.

There are successful schemes at individual companies, but there was general agreement that there's no such thing as best practice, as it's different for everyone.

ACTIONS & OUTCOMES

Do we need an 'open source' database/ directory to pull together resources across the industry?

Could there be a continuation of cross-industry meet-ups, in the same vein as this leadership meeting?

Is there a need for tailored media specific training around leadership that might cascade down?

As a group, should we create a Manifesto for Change?