



If young people understand the offer early on — that this sector has a great offer it's — not only for nerds and geeks, anyone can do this - and it's not only for boys, it's also for girls and it's not only for white boys sitting in the cellar, never seeing the sun — it's a normal job. This is basically the message that we're trying to send. So we do understand that we need to start really early on with that messaging to help people understand you do not need to do the job your parents did, because when they went to school, there were no data scientists - that job didn't exist.

Anne Huber, Chief of Staff

Profusion

COMMITMENT



Profusion is a data consulting agency that specialises in predictive modelling, email marketing, business intelligence and customer satisfaction.

It aims to help businesses become more effective through the innovative application of data science.

Profusion is a privately owned company that has been operating for over 15 years and has won multiple awards for innovation across marketing and data science.

Profusion also have wider ambitions and want to make a real difference to people's lives.

They have established a Data Academy to train the next generation of data scientists and engineers from underrepresented groups and established **Profusion Cares**, a philanthropic foundation to use data for good and to find ways to share Profusions products and facilities with communities that can benefit from its support.

Employees | 75

profusion

Commitment to EDI

Diversity for Profusion is not just a moral imperative it is also a commercial necessity. They believe that diverse teams drive innovation and produce better data science. Diversity helps prevent unintentional bias in the algorithms they create and their diversity of their workforce means they offer up a wide range of skills that enables Profusion to deliver great work for their clients.

Improving Diversity & Inclusion

Since joining the organisation the CEO and COO have significantly improved the diversity profile of the organisation including at senior management level.

They now have a 55% to 45% female to male ratio in their leadership team. This has turned round from being about 72% male two years ago to now being 55% female.

They have an international team with about 22 nationalities represented and over 30 different languages spoken, with an age range from 19 to around 55 or 60.

Across the company, the diversity of the whole workforce has also changed with 55% male and 45% female staff. This is a significant change from about 78% male, 22% female two years ago.

While Profusion recognise that they have made progress in all of their benchmarks, they are ambitious to do more, particularly around diversity from a BAME perspective –



Impact of ED&I on Young Black Men

When you join Profusion its diversity is immediately obvious, you see people from multiple different backgrounds, different nationalities, and a lot of women as well.

I would say its about the team spirit that's there – when I first joined, I was greeted by the whole team and I felt really welcomed. People approached me, I didn't have to approach them. '

Dirie Isse, Trainee



I think that if we're inspiring young people making career decisions at school leaver age from a more diverse cohort, to help them understand the kind of jobs that are open in our sector, and actually try and influence their career choices at the point they're making them - I really think that the grassroots level work will actually increase the funnel, and the number of people from more diverse backgrounds thinking about this sector as a career choice.

Kevin Ronan, COO

whether that is black males, black females, or people from other ethnicities that are under-represented in the sector.

We want to have appropriate representation for BAME groups but for us, our approach is also connected to culture, for people to feel that they are welcome, that they are appreciated, that 2s people want to work for and with us and with the team that we have.

As a small organisation, a key driver for ED&I and positive communication is the commitment by the

leadership team and the range of opportunities and initiatives they provide and promote.

Opportunities & Challenges

Profusion have looked at their offer and sought to improve diversity in their policy and practice, in their values and in their business rationale. They do not have a corporate EDI strategy but this is something they are currently looking to develop as a logical next step.

The Black Lives Matter movement was also a catalyst for change. Profusion set up their diversity and inclusion working groups to have a more listening and action focused approach and to exchange ideas.

To make positive change, they have introduced initiatives to support and build inclusion, with a focus on engaging at a social level, through their values and their communication approach.

Opportunities to talk about issues and to raise issues is important as are the behaviours that support respect and inclusion.

Profusion has actively sought to de-bias its recruitment practice to ensure it is open and inclusive, they also ensure that their commitment to ED&I is communicated and visible.



We've implemented a really strong diversity, equality and inclusion policy and have things like a Profusion culture library where people share all different sorts of ideas.

Kevin Ronan, COO

They have enhanced their family friendly policies and offer all staff unlimited annual leave. This has helped them to recruit people returning after maternity leave and to retain staff that are intending to have families because they know they're going to be supported at Profusion.

The changes help to explain, in part, the difference achieved in gender balance and the rapid turnaround on that.

Profusion's core values and behaviours are embedded in their policy and practice. 'Embrace Difference' is about being cooperative, collaborative and honest. 'Act Together' is another core value

which is about being inclusive, supportive and understanding. The behaviours are displayed in the office and are a visual presence. Profusion recruits to these values which form part of the interview process.

It's also made clear to staff that poor behaviour around inclusion, equality, diversity will not be tolerated – this is followed through within the performance management process and people are assessed at the end of the year on how they've demonstrated and lived Profusion's values and behaviours.

In terms of having a listening voice, the company has roundtables every quarter where all of the company are involved and are split up into smaller facilitated groups.

The discussion may be about stereotypes or micro-aggressions or other topics around the D&I agenda that are particularly top of mind at the moment in the sector.

Education is important and Profusion offers staff opportunities to improve their understanding through, for example, 'Lunch and Learns', where they invite guest speakers to come in and talk about ED&I topics.

Profusion are a social company and engage their staff on a social level as well as a work one which was particularly important during lock down.

For example, they built an algorithm, 'Roulette Coffee', that matches people to have an online or in person coffee with each other once a month.

It matches you to somebody that you probably don't naturally or normally connect with in the organisation. This helps people, who don't normally collaborate or work together, to get to know each other a little bit over a coffee with the idea that you don't talk about work.

Measuring success

About three years ago, Profusion did not collect any data on any of the protected characteristics.

However, over the last two years, they realised that while it's nice to say, 'we just want the person's best for the job', they wanted to be able to validate that statement in terms of their ED&I approach and started capturing diversity data. They now are in a position where they are gathering data and using it to inform their understanding and identifying gaps.

Profusion works with schools as they believe there is a need for young people to be educated about the possibilities open to them.

This is a longer-term investment with a view to supporting and building interest in data science and STEM subjects. The company works with girls schools and those in socio-economically deprived areas.

Advice

Leadership has been key to the changes at Profusion. The CEO of Profusion is passionate about ED&I, she joined from a background in social enterprise and that commitment has followed through into Profusion where ED&I is deliberately kept top of mind, ie. it is on the leadership meeting agenda and the company meeting agendas.



I think, especially, with gender, it's quite easy to say, well, 50-50 is a good idea, but with other stats, it's more difficult to say. So, for example, in a city like London, should we have the same percentage of each ethnicity group that is represented in London? Or should it be the same as in the UK? Or should it be for our industry or what should be our benchmarks?'

Anne Huber, Chief of Staff

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We've got a calendar of cultural events, so if it's Eid, if it's Ramadan, if it's Passover, whatever it might be, from all the different sort of religions across the company, we have messages going out that explain what the day is and what it's about and wishing people 'happy Eid, or whatever it might be, for all religions across the company.

Kevin Ronan, COO

In terms of improving inclusive practice, Profusion believe that it's really about starting to do something positive something, something that shows you care, and that you are going to make a difference.

Take steps to de-bias your recruitment practice, make sure that your external facing channels highlight your commitment to E&I, that the images and the content on your website are inclusive, encouraging and welcoming to different people.

Check your job descriptions are welcoming and open, making it clear through advertising that you welcome applications from all backgrounds and all different people.

Think differently about how you recruit, where you advertise and consider how you can open up the person requirements for the job.

Profusion do not ask applicants for university experience or specific qualifications in their job descriptions, and are open to the experience people bring however they have gained it.

Place job adverts at places like [Women in Tech](#), [Ada's List](#) which is and on line site that encourages wider representation in women in the market.

Put job adverts out on disability websites, with community groups and community websites and apart from advertising look at your processes and actively de-bias your recruitment process as far as possible.

If organisations, make a change at the entry point to their organization, that is a good starting point.

Then, look internally and try to create an inclusive workforce, focus on education, conversations and discussion, listening to and involving your workforce.

