

# Improving Diversity and Inclusion, in 2021 and Beyond

► **Maureen O’Neill, a longtime advocate for diversity and inclusion within the legal profession and a member of Consilio’s D&I leadership team, has recently stepped up as their D&I officer. Here she discusses how their organization measures up and the initiatives the organization has underway to ensure continuous improvement.**

**CCBJ:** Consilio recently released its second annual D&I report. What inspired the firm to conduct the initial survey, and what is the organization is hoping to achieve with it?

**Maureen O’Neill:** One of the first decisions that our D&I leadership team made when we began to put this structure around our work was that we were going to be transparent with our efforts. We wanted to hold ourselves accountable, and in order to do that, we wanted to let our employees, our clients, and the market as a whole know what our goals and objectives were. We also hoped to encourage conversation about these issues within our industry.

We didn’t believe that was happening as much as it should, and we hoped that by publishing these annual reports, we could help foster change. That’s really what inspired us to go public with these reports and metrics and survey results – that interest in transparency. I believe that in large part we have achieved what we hoped to. We are beginning to hear more and more talk about these issues. We are inspiring some candid and productive conversations.

**The survey findings explain key initiatives undertaken in 2020 and detail performance against goals. Among these goals is the development of affinity groups. Please talk about that concept and your organization’s plans to design and maintain these groups.**

In our view, the creation of employee affinity groups is a key element of our programming around inclusivity, and by creating these affinity organizations, we create safe spaces for employees who share things in common to be able to talk about issues, share ideas, and discuss their



---

## We are planning to continue our efforts to get more of our employees to self-identify their diversity characteristics.

experiences. Coming out of 2019 and into 2020, this was high on our list of things that we wanted to achieve in 2020 – the formation of that first set of employee affinity groups.

That work got underway in the first few months of 2020, and then of course the world turned upside down in March, and Consilio went to a 100 percent remote workforce almost overnight. When that happened, our D&I leadership team realized that we needed to accelerate the work around the formation of the employee affinity groups. With all of us working at home and not being able to be together in person, not being able to share a coffee or lunch or cocktails after work, not having those in-person interactions with our mentors and allies, we needed to have these groups up and running so that we could have those safe spaces in the virtual world instead.

We formed these groups by soliciting opinions from our employees. We put out a survey, polling folks on which groups they would be interested in, and we used the results to prioritize which groups to form first. This work was underway by April and May of 2020, and as we went into the summer of 2020, we saw the terrible things going on with respect to racial injustice and the escalation of the Black Lives Matter protests around the United States. We decided that we needed to make the formation of our Black employees affinity group the top priority. The group we formed is called BRAG, which stands for Black Responsiveness Affinity Group, and it was a huge success. It garnered tremendous

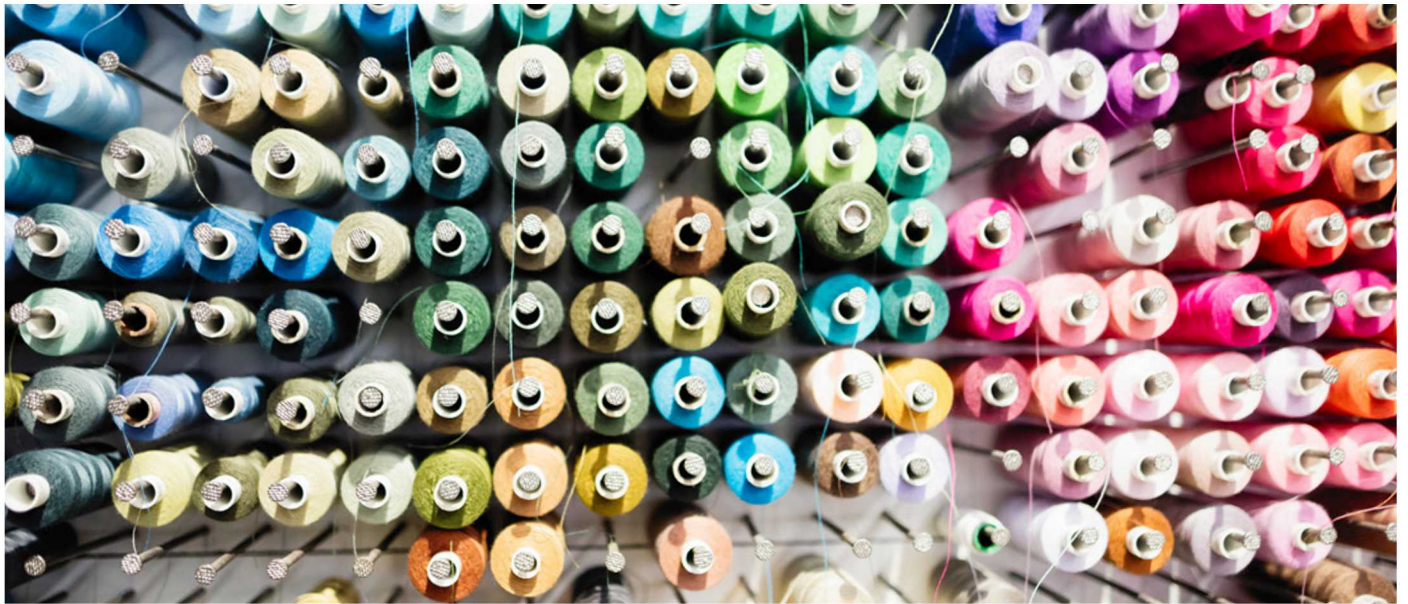
interest and support from our employees around the world, hosting a series of well attended meetings that created some thought-provoking and innovative programming.

We continued to work to form more of these affinity groups throughout 2020. We formed one for employees who are interested in multicultural issues, called MC-LITE. We also began the process of creating two additional groups, a women's group and a group for employees interested in health and wellness. Those groups began being formed in 2020, and now they are fully launched and underway.

### **Another key initiative was to expand your recruiting pool of diverse applicants, a goal shared by many in the legal community. Please describe how Consilio approached this.**

There are two key aspects to that process. First, we made an investment in a new human resources recruiting software platform. With that new platform, we are able to tap into recruiting sources around the United States that we weren't able to in the past. These are state-by-state resources – community job boards, state-run employment agencies, job-seekers' support groups, etc. By being able to post our job openings with these sources, we are able to access a much more diverse pool of applicants than we had with our traditional recruiting sources. In the past, we used the same sources that many in the legal industry do, like LinkedIn and Indeed, but now we are finding that by accessing these other sources, we're seeing a whole different pool of applicants – folks who may not have traditionally thought about working in legal tech.

The second aspect of this really came out of the pandemic and switching to a work-from-home model, and it relates in particular to the recruiting pools for our document review workforce. We have moved all of those reviewers



to a remote model, to what we call our Secure Virtual Review platform, or SVR. By enabling reviewers to work from home through the SVR arrangement, we have found that we are tapping into document reviewers we couldn't have used in the past. These are people who, for whatever reason, aren't able to come to a traditional brick-and-mortar review center, or they have constraints on the hours of the day they can work. In this new environment, those concerns disappear.

**We understand you've made some key hires to support these ongoing efforts. Please share a bit about these new colleagues.**

When I was approached about taking on the role of our Diversity and Inclusion Officer, I was honored and excited and accepted immediately, and I quickly got to work on a

list of things that I wanted to accomplish in 2021. But just as quickly, I realized that I was going to need some help, that it was time for us to expand our leadership team further and create some additional roles to help us carry out these ambitious projects.

To do that, we added two new positions, which we call program leads. Our program lead for workplace diversity is Nicola Mason. She's based in our London office, in our Human Resources organization. She has a background in the HR aspects of diversity and inclusion, and in particular, the collection and analysis of diversity data about applicants and employees – the analysis of applicant flow and the analysis of promotion activity and so forth. Nicola is going to help us continue to improve our collection of diversity dimension data and help us craft more sophisticated analyses of that data.

---

## By being transparent, we are bringing more awareness to these issues.

Our new program lead for workplace inclusion is James Edwell. He's based in Pittsburgh, in our Global Sales Organization. James and I have worked together for a long time. We were both at DiscoverReady prior to Consilio, so I knew when James stepped up and expressed interest in this role, he would be a great fit. He is focused on ways that we can continue to build a culture of inclusivity at Consilio.

Those are the two new appointments for program leads. Also, within the last month, we onboarded our new chief employee experience officer, Brandyn Payne. She has extensive experience in the D&I space, and she's going to be a really valuable partner to the D&I leadership in terms of executing on our plans and ideas for 2021.

### What are the key goals Consilio has identified for 2021?

We're going to continue to expand our employee affinity group program. Another goal is maintaining our more generalized efforts around inclusion and keeping up our culture of inclusivity, especially as we continue working from home.

We are planning to renew our efforts to get more of our employees to self-identify their diversity characteristics. One of the things we accomplished in 2020 was a survey of all of our employees, asking them on a voluntary basis to self-identify those characteristics, so that we could get a more complete picture of who we are as a company. We had good results from that, but there's still room to do

better, so we are planning to roll out a similar effort this year – a survey of our employees asking them to please consider voluntarily self-identifying these dimensions.

Once those data collection goals are accomplished, we will engage in more sophisticated analyses of our data. In the past, we have done these analyses at a fairly high-level aggregated basis. Part of why we haven't stratified our analyses more than we have is that we haven't had enough data. But the more data we have, the better able we are to carry out more granular analyses. So in 2021, we want to start performing analyses, for instance, by function or by geography or by seniority level. We're devoting significant attention to that this year.

And finally, we will create a Supplier Diversity Program. We want to make sure that what Consilio spends with external partners and providers and vendors includes diverse organizations. So, for instance, in the same way that a corporate legal department expects its outside law firms to staff its matters with diverse lawyers, Consilio would like to see that from its providers. We are working to understand what that program will look like for us, and then we hope to get it underway soon. ■



**Maureen O'Neill** is senior vice president and diversity & inclusion officer at Consilio. Maureen engages with Consilio's customers to ensure a best-in-class client experience. She works cross-functionally across the company to develop and deploy best practices that embed Consilio's commitment to service excellence, and to deliver the highest levels of quality and value. Reach her at [maureen.oneill@consilio.com](mailto:maureen.oneill@consilio.com).