

Diversity in the Workplace  
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PRAD 575: Ethics  
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March 8, 2017

**Introduction:**

The public relations and advertising industry has come under a lot of scrutiny in recent years in regards to diversity. Although reports show a predominantly female industry, the upper management does not reflect this majority. As of 2016, the industry was approximately 70% female and 30% male (Vardeman-Winter, 2016). However, research in the last ten years shows correlations between gender and salary. Similar results were found when reviewing racial diversity in our industry. The conclusion was made that salary gaps in our industry were largely correlated to race, gender and a combination of both (Vardeman-Winter, 2016). To address these issues, we at Edelman should create a strong internal communication plan that communicates to the workforce that diversity is a core value in our industry. There should also

correlated to race, gender and a combination of both (Vardeman-Winter, 2016). To address these issues, we at Edelman should create a strong internal communication plan that communicates to the workforce that diversity is a core value in our industry. There should also be accountability and evaluation of current diversity strategies that analyze effectiveness.

### **Background on the issue:**

The discrepancy of diversity in this industry is a major problem that permeates throughout all aspects of our business. When reviewing the leadership team of any major public relations or advertising firm, one will notice a majority if not an entirety of caucasian males. As mentioned above, men comprise approximately 30% of our industry, yet our leadership is predominantly male (Vardeman-Winter, 2016). This trend can be noticed in our own leadership team as well. Although we have a slightly higher ratio of women to men than most leadership teams in this industry, there is a complete lack of racial diversity.

As Millennials continue to enter the workforce, this issue will be more important not only based on principle, but also guided by a more diverse generational demographic. Nearly 40% of Millennials self-identify as being a minority (African American, Hispanic, Asian or Native American). 20% of Millennials are children of immigrants, and this generation is the most likely to come from a biracial or multiracial background (Gallicano, 2013). These statistics comprise a large portion of the generation, and workers with a more diverse background might feel unwelcome or as if they cannot succeed in our industry, based on current standards. Millennials also value diversity as a part of the job search. Research conducted by the Institute for PR found that 47% of Millennials consider diversity and inclusion to be an important factor when deciding where to work. Furthermore, 69% of working Millennials said that they would report instances of discrimination that they hear or see in the workplace. Lastly, Millennials are more comfortable discussing issues of diversity and inclusion in the workplace than older generations (Kochhar, 2016).

### **Relevance of the issue:**

All of this information can result in an opportunity for Edelman. As an industry leader, we have a responsibility to uphold the highest ethical standards of this industry. From the research above we can identify that there is a diversity problem in our industry. We also know that the future of our workforce is diverse and will not stand for a lack of representation in the industry and its leadership. Lastly, we know that this group is willing to discuss ways in which this problem can be eradicated, which opens the door for us to create a diversity and inclusion internal communications plan.

This generation will affect us not only internally but also as an audience. Millennials and younger generations are proving with their purchases that they desire accountability. This group responds to messaging that is representative of all of the voices they bring to the table. If we as practitioners are not diverse we cannot create messages and campaigns that reflect our audience base. The future includes a variety of voices, and it is time to give these voices a seat at the table. An article published by the Institute for PR discusses how the PR Coalition is a champion for diversity in our industry (Mundy, 2015). This is what we want for Edelman, moving forward we need to be a champion of diversity.

### **Existing guidelines:**

The Public Relations Society of America has a code of ethics for the public relations industry. One of the core principles of the code of ethics is advocacy. It is important to provide a place in the marketplace of ideas for all of the voices we represent. Before we can do this, we must be more representative of this audience.

Right now, Hill and Knowlton is the industry leader for diversity measures. Not only does the firm have a female CEO, there are also women leading two out of three regions and over half of its offices. Hill and Knowlton understands the problem our industry has with women in leadership positions and has implemented H+K HER (Helping Executives Rise), which includes a mentorship program, events that showcase women in business and initiatives that create visibility of female talent in our industry (Seymour, 2016). This effort has not gone unnoticed, earning H+K a diversity and inclusion award from PR Week in 2016.

### **Proposed solution:**

When considering steps that Edelman can take to work towards a solution of this issue of diversity, we must first look at what Edelman is already doing to cultivate a diverse environment. The steps being taken regarding women in the workplace are promising. Edelman's Global Women's Executive Network, commonly known as GWEN, takes several steps towards building a more inclusive workplace for women, providing an outlet for gender-based

Edelman's Global Women's Executive Network, commonly known as GWEN, takes several steps towards building a more inclusive workplace for women, providing an outlet for gender-based diversity in executive positions. Conversely, the page of Edelman's website focusing on diversity and inclusion is filled to the brim with, quite frankly, buzzwords that mean very little. The page outlines the importance that we place upon the concept of diversity, but does not explain any initiatives that the firm has taken to ensure that diversity amongst the workforce continues to grow.

With this in mind, we propose the emergence of Edelman's Global Minority's Executive Network, or GMEN. The program would serve as an outlet of leadership, development and comradery for Edelman employees across the globe who identify as a minority. It would create a greater opportunity to tailor potential leadership opportunities for minority employees. It would consist of workshops and guest speaker series that highlight minorities who hold executive level positions. This would create an outlet for minority employees to engage in a network that allows them to create greater opportunity.

Of course, our company needs to identify simultaneous initiatives that correspond with GMEN. If Edelman does not have a clear plan to bring minorities into executive roles, the entire program would be for naught. Thus, we introduce Edelman: Vision 2027. Edelman: Vision 2027 is a 10-year plan to integrate more diversity into our executive branch. The goal is lofty, but not unrealistic. At its core, Edelman: Vision 2027 is a plan to have an executive board that consists at least half minorities and/or women, with at least two representatives of each group on the board by 2027. While executive level employees do not tend to circulate regularly, this plan is certainly realistic, as the 12-person executive team of Edelman currently includes four women. Theoretically, while the company would need to bring two minorities onto the leadership team to complete the plan, the plan also opens a window for the company to actively work to hire a more diverse set of individuals throughout the company, thus successfully combining GMEN and Edelman: Vision 2027.

**Illustrative example:**

When considering the potential for the two-part program of GMEN and Edelman: Vision 2027 to be successful, there are two very clear already-existing examples of similar programs that leapt out at us.

The first brings us in house to Edelman itself with the GWEN program, which is mentioned above. The program has been wildly successful in setting up women for positions of leadership within the company and across the industry. The program includes more than 800 women across the world, and has representatives in every region the company is present in as well as every job level at the company. The program works every day to set women on a positive path towards company leadership through weekly emails, newsletters, speaker series, and many more opportunities. Most importantly, Edelman has shown that a program of this nature has the potential to be wildly successful. There are already four women who hold positions on the Edelman executive team. If this concept was extended to minority groups across the Edelman community, the potential for more expansion in leadership is exciting and filled with possibility.

The second example of a company that has been very successful in its efforts to increase diversity is FleishmanHillard. The company famously started the Alfred Fleishman Diversity Fellowship program. The program is meant to bring in new employees who are diverse into the company. It specifically targets candidates who are passionate about diversity and bringing a better understanding of diversity to the work force. It has been wildly successful and made FleishmanHillard a far more diverse environment to work. However, with this being said, there is still opportunity for Edelman to catch up to FleishmanHillard, as its leadership team of 21 individuals is made up of 12 women, which is where we should aim to be, but only two minorities. As such, even a program as renowned for diversity as FleishmanHillard has room to grow. While the program is slightly different from the programs that we have recommended, it exemplifies the fact that companies that put an emphasis on diversity have a greater opportunity to bring in entry level employees with a diverse background. If Edelman works to prove that it cares about bringing diverse leadership into its team, it is far more possible to recruit entry level employees who are diverse as well. It might even be realistic to start a program similar to the FleishmanHillard Diversity Fellowship down the line once we have implemented the above policies.

**Conclusion:**

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## Conclusion:

As Edelman strives to become a more diverse, inclusive company it should institute two new programs: GMEN and Edelman: Vision 2027. Each program is built with the idea of a more diverse company environment in mind and will allow the company to bring more diversity into the company everywhere from senior management to entry-level employees. GMEN is based off the already-successful GWEN women's leadership program and will allow minorities to gain better access to leadership positions within the company, thus exemplified in Edelman: Vision 2027. The plan will bring a larger base of women and minorities to Edelman's leadership team as the company strives to have an executive team that is representative of the PR industry as a whole. If Edelman takes these strides, it will open the door for more new, diverse talent across the company, but more importantly, it will make Edelman a leader in the PR industry for inclusion, which will then span across the industry, even beyond Edelman.

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