SHL's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility

A report on how SHL supports DEI and accessibility practices internally and externally.

SHL.

Introduction

We are witnessing a global movement towards greater recognition of and appreciation for the value of diversity. Events, such as the murder of George Floyd, and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 and the surrounding pandemic on vulnerable groups have brought to light systemic racial injustice and highlighted inequality in our society. From a global perspective, discrimination in the workplace has been noted for over a century.

However, recent sociopolitical events have brought about a greater recognition of biased employment practices, resulting in increased commitment from organizations to provide equal opportunity to everyone, regardless of their background or privilege. A shift towards more inclusive workplaces is occurring, where individual differences are acknowledged, valued, and celebrated.

In 2022, thousands of Industrial and Organizational Psychologists rated Ensuring Inclusive Environments and Cultures as the #2 trend facing organizations in the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology's Top 10 Work Trends (SIOP, 2022). Further, diversity and inclusion were recently reported as the #1 talent management priority for CEOs in 2019 (Gartner, 2019). In response to this global movement, the United States Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) created an equity action plan to guard against systematic racial discrimination in organizations and engage with organizations to provide support for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives (EEOC, 2022).

Organizations globally are embracing initiatives to embed diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility into the workplace with an effort to move beyond traditional unconscious bias training towards a focus on action and allyship with initiatives such as:

- Greater focus on diversity through inclusive recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices that provide fair and inclusive experiences for candidates of various demographic backgrounds such as race, gender (gender identity/reassignment), sex, age, disability status, and sexuality.

- Creation of dedicated Diversity, Equity and Inclusion roles with the remit to establish clear goals and metrics to ensure ongoing accountability and tangible progress towards diversity goals

- Recognition of the unique value candidates with disabilities can bring and the rise of work programs which aspire to leverage the strengths of the neurodivergent talent pool

- Corporate commitment to serve individuals with disabilities illustrated by the Valuable 500, a group of private sector organizations who are joining a global movement to put disability inclusion on their board agendas

- Public statements on commitment to racial equity alongside implementation of initiatives such as ethnicity pay gap analysis and transparency

- Support for the International Women's Day campaign to #BreakTheBias, with a goal of gender equality and pay equity in the workplace. For instance, a recent study showed that setting diversity targets was commonly practiced by organizations who reduced their gender pay gap (HR Datahub, 2022)

- Adoption of LGBTQ+ inclusive benefits, policies, and practices such as the use of personal pronouns and internal employee-led ally groups

- Socializing the concept of privilege, defined as being privy to certain advantages or benefits because of a trait or being part of a certain group. For example, using exercises such as Privilege Walks where individuals are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences in this area to increase awareness and help challenge unhelpful norms to create a more inclusive environment

- Increased popularity of family friendly policies including flexible working arrangements, tax-free childcare benefits, the overhaul of traditional parental leave policies, and greater support for employees with a wide range of caregiving responsibilities

Diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility have been a thread in the fabric of SHL's business and culture for many years. As interest in this area is gaining momentum, SHL remains uniquely positioned to support broader adoption of DEI and accessibility by employers through the use of our fair and inclusive talent acquisition and talent management solutions. We have sharpened our focus on this important priority and formalized our point of view on DEI and accessibility as a key principle of our business and culture.

What is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

There are three elements that help to foster a more united, efficient, and successful workforce: diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). **Diversity** is a term used to describe the differences among individuals that make them unique, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, skin color, personality, sex, gender, sexuality, religion, cognitive differences and/or physical characteristics. This term can also be broadly applied to include differences in backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, thoughts, interests, and ideas.

While diversity refers to individual differences, **equity** refers to providing access to resources in a way that will level the playing field so all employees can contribute meaningfully, grow professionally, and reach their full potential. This is not to be confused with equality, which means giving everyone the exact same resources or opportunities regardless of their circumstances. Instead, equity involves recognizing that each person has unique needs, and giving additional support to those that need it.

Inclusion means intentionally creating a culture that results in belonging, where everyone feels safe, accepted, engaged, respected, and involved. In this type of workplace, employees are confident that they will be both heard and valued.

A diverse and inclusive culture creates a better work environment for everyone. For example, building a plan to include more gender minorities, like women, in leadership positions does not mean abandoning opportunities and fairness for men. Similarly, disability inclusion initiatives create opportunity for an underemployed population, without negatively impacting opportunities for others. Both of these example scenarios involve inclusion of minority groups to give them a seat at the table and increase representation.

Organizations should focus on embedding all three elements (diversity, equity, and inclusion) into their organizational cultures. Efforts focused on one or two of these aspects, while neglecting the other(s), will fail to achieve the desired outcomes. For example, a workforce may be diverse, but if women are not welcome on the leadership floor, people of color are patronized, candidates and colleagues with disabilities are ignored, or LGBTQ+ employees do not feel safe to be their authentic selves or voice their ideas, the culture is not inclusive.

An inclusive culture is as important as it is elusive. Despite the best intentions, few organizations are truly inclusive. In research conducted by Brandon Hall Group (2020), more than 80% of organizations say that diversity and inclusion are important. However, only 30% of organizations rated themselves highly for the critical signs of an inclusive culture. Similarly, a recent study conducted by McKinsey (2020) found that employee-reported sentiment was much more favorable on diversity compared to inclusion in their organizations (52% positive vs. 29% positive, respectively). Most businesses have the right intent, but face the challenge of effectively achieving an inclusive culture.

The Business Case for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The abundant benefits of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture are well documented. The business case for diversity is robust, with research showing that diverse organizations are more likely to outperform those that are not diverse, with greater representation in terms of gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity leading to greater organizational success (McKinsey, 2020). However, according to this research, inclusion seems to be the secret ingredient. When inclusion is combined with diversity and equity, a multitude of positive organizational outcomes are unlocked. These are described below.

Broader Talent Funnel
An inclusive organization is a desirable place to work. More and more frequently, candidates are expecting organizations to be driving DEI within their business. Candidates want to work for organizations that are socially responsible and striving to 'do the right thing'.

An inclusive recruitment process will contribute to increasing an organization's diversity by attracting a broader candidate pool with better representation of qualified candidates. Inclusion is a powerful tool to reduce recruiting costs and improve the average quality of hire by resulting in a broader reach to well-qualified, diverse candidates (Gaudiano, 2020).

Healthier Workforce
A workplace where everyone feels accepted, respected, and included will result in happier and more engaged employees (McKinsey, 2020) who are less likely to turnover (NACE, 2020) and who feel empowered to collaborate with each other (SIOP, 2021).

Improved Business Outcomes
Research shows that an inclusive culture motivates employees to bring their best selves to work. Inclusive organizations benefit from enhanced performance outcomes, specifically employees and leaders that are more productive, innovative, flexible, and effective (McKinsey, 2020; NACE, 2020; SIOP, 2021).

While research into the benefits of inclusion is becoming more prevalent, the complexity of the field creates challenges in demonstrating consistently replicable outcomes. There are still many gaps in the research and potential avenues to be explored. Perhaps some of the strongest, replicable findings regarding the benefits of establishing an inclusive workforce come from research into the 100 Best Companies to Work for in America. This study found that total shareholder returns for organizations that had built an inclusive workforce were higher than their peers year after year, and these findings were replicated over the following decade (Edmans, 2012; Boustanifar & Kang, 2021).

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SHL's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

SHL's commitment to our clients is to remain focused on ensuring that our solution offerings are fair, accessible, and inclusive for all candidates, and helping you support diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in your talent programs. Our commitment to our people is to continue to invest in internal initiatives to build our own diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce.

Commitment to Our Clients – How We Support DEI and Accessibility in Our Talent Solutions

SHL is committed to helping our customers create inclusive talent programs, which is a key component of building an inclusive culture. Implementing inclusive talent programs can help to reduce unconscious biases by objectively, efficiently, and effectively identifying talent. We aspire to move beyond compliance with professional best practices and minimum legal requirements for defensibility to create fully inclusive talent acquisition and talent management experiences that benefit organizations in support of their diversity goals and hiring outcomes for a diverse talent pool. For 40+ years, we have been continuously innovating, testing, and improving our solutions with powerful and transparent AI technology and data science. Our scientific approach is designed to help reduce common biases so that organizations can make the best and fairest decisions through application of the following principles:

Fairness

Our talent solutions are developed with the intention of providing a fair and inclusive experience for all candidates. We design our solutions and the assessments that feed into them with a focus on fairness in a variety of ways described below.

- Our thoughtfully designed Job Focused Assessments combine multiple assessment types (e.g., personality, experience, cognitive, etc.) in a way that minimizes score differences across demographic groups while maximizing predictive validity, helping organizations achieve both their diversity and performance goals. Our rigorous development process aims to provide a fair and inclusive experience for members of protected groups in accordance with best practice guidelines.

- We ensure cultural inclusion by following a robust localization process that adheres to the International Test Commission Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests (ITC, 2017). This process involves thorough reviews to confirm the global applicability of our content, followed by content decentering to remove any culture-specific material and a rigorous process of translation and back translation to ensure that the content will be equivalent for candidates globally, across cultures and regions.

- We monitor data on an ongoing basis, examining score differences across demographic subgroups not only to ensure compliance with professional best practices, but also to mitigate differences across groups to ensure our solutions are inclusive for all candidates to the greatest extent possible.

Accessibility

Individuals with disabilities and neurodivergent conditions are underemployed populations. According to The World Health Organization, over 1 billion people, or about 15% of the world's population, live with some form of disability (World Health Organization, 2021). Disability unemployment rates vary by locations (e.g., developing countries tend to have higher rates than those of industrialized countries; World Health Organization, 2011). In addition, the unemployment rates are subject to variation as seen by the rise in the disability employment gap during the pandemic in the UK. However, there appears to be a consistently lower employment rate for individuals with a disability compared to the general population. For instance, the disability employment rate in the UK was 52.7% in Q2 2021, compared to 81% for non-disabled people (Department for Work & Pensions, 2022). In the United States only 17.9% of individuals with a disability were employed in 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Force Statistics, 2021). Despite offering unique competitive advantages to organizations the disabled talent pool clearly remains under-utilized.

With the goal of disability inclusion, we consider the accessibility of both the assessment platform and the content itself when developing talent solutions. Our technology platform, TalentCentral, has been audited and reviewed to ensure best practices in accessibility. TalentCentral is screen-reader compatible and offers different color contrast options for those with visual impairments. In an effort to help break down barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities, we provide recommendations on a case-by-case basis for reasonable adjustments to help candidates demonstrate their job-related skills.

Science

SHL's rigorous science is central to our business. Our talented team of Scientists ensure the integrity of the psychometric properties of all of our assessments while using professional best practices to guide the development of our job-related, predictive assessments. We responsibly implement emerging technologies to ensure our offerings are compliant with evolving legislation and best practices.

For example, we adhere to three core principles for the ethical and effective use of artificial intelligence (AI) to assess talent:

1. AI assessment is still assessment and as such needs documented evidence of reliability and validity and employers' AI programs need to be demonstrably job related.

2. AI assessment should be explainable – users and participants should be able to understand what is being assessed and how the AI assessment is job related.

3. Big claims require big evidence – new approaches with new claims require more diligence and more empirical support, particularly around DEI and accessibility outcomes.

We conduct ongoing validation studies to monitor the business impact of our talent solutions. All of our products are backed by thorough technical manuals that document the assessment development process and important psychometric considerations such as reliability and validity, as well as analysis of subgroup difference effect sizes as a way of determining the potential for adverse impact against various demographic groups.

Research, Innovation, and Thought Leadership

SHL is committed to empirical investigation of important DEI and accessibility-related research questions that can help to inform best practices for practitioners in the field of talent assessment. We continually seek out information on the latest developments in best practice guidance, especially where this information is not yet established, unclear, or rapidly changing. For example, as new assessment methodologies emerge (e.g., artificial intelligence), we proactively monitor guidance as it evolves from industry leaders for best practices on applying these new approaches.

Our passion for research and innovation was the catalyst for launching SHL Labs, which combines our expertise across multiple disciplines including people science, AI professionals, and academics who come together to innovate for the future of talent and technology. One of the three key focus areas for SHL Labs is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Where limited best practice guidance is available, SHL Labs is committed to gathering and sharing information that will inform evidence-based DEI and accessibility related best practices in the field. Two such programs of work are described below:

1. In 2019 we launched our Neurodiversity Research Program. Neurodiversity is an umbrella term which refers to natural variations in the way people think and process information. Neurodivergence covers a broad range of conditions including autism spectrum disorder, dyspraxia, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and more. Despite the unique strengths neurodivergent talent can bring to organizations, this population remains underemployed (Austin & Pisano, 2017). We have partnered with thought leaders and researchers in this field, both academics and practitioners, with the goal of coming together to help organizations recognize the unique value neurodivergent talent can bring and break down barriers to employment. Our research has focused on understanding the strengths and experiences of neurodivergent candidates in order to identify best practices for serving this talent pool.

○ Our first neurodiversity research study provided an opportunity for participants to self-disclose autism spectrum disorder when completing three types of cognitive ability practice tests on SHL Direct. We then compared performance (both in terms of test scores and time taken to complete the test) for individuals who consider themselves to be autistic to those who did not disclose any disability. Preliminary results showed that candidates in this small sample of job seekers who disclosed autism when attempting practice assessments earned similar scores and reported similar perceived opportunity to perform to the best of their ability across three types of cognitive ability tests, compared to those who did not disclose a disability.

These findings are encouraging and show preliminary evidence that the use of cognitive ability tests to assess this talent pool will not unfairly disadvantage them, however, more research is needed. We will continue to collect data on the cognitive ability tests to bolster the sample sizes and resulting confidence in the findings of this research, as well as expand our research to include additional neurodivergent conditions and non-cognitive assessments such as the Universal Competency Assessment and the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ) to provide a better understanding of strengths across different types of neurodivergent conditions.

○ Our second neurodiversity research study, in partnership with the Healthy Work Lab at Florida International University, is aimed at understanding the experiences of autistic professional level (employed or job seeking) individuals when completing our assessments. This project includes participants completing applicant reactions surveys after each assessment type as well as a scripted interview to collect candid feedback regarding their experiences. Applying both a quantitative and qualitative methodology will allow for robust data analysis and a comprehensive understanding of the features of assessments which may be problematic, as well as insight into the accommodations that

would provide a better experience. The goal of this study is to inform our product development efforts in the future as we strive to create fair and inclusive assessments for all candidates, where accommodations are not required. Data collection for this project is still underway and findings will be published in our blog and on the Thought Leadership page of our website.

In addition to these efforts, as we define our future research agenda we continue to explore potential research partnerships with academic researchers and organizations to help us advance our Neurodiversity Research Program.

2. With the goal of creating a revolutionary diversity-driven biodata assessment, SHL Labs is working with a client research partner to create and validate a first-of-its-kind inclusive assessment. This effort is aimed at increasing workforce diversity by providing an inclusive assessment experience for all candidates, including those from underrepresented populations with lived experiences that may create barriers to employment (e.g., homelessness, history of incarceration, substance abuse, at-risk childhood, etc.). This research is focused on learning about the skills developed through those lived experiences and understanding how those acquired skills could contribute to successful on-the-job performance. The result of this research will be to create an assessment that will provide equal opportunity to all candidates who have the job-related skills required for success.

We share our research and best practices through articles, blog posts, webinars, podcasts, workshops, panels, employer-hosted events and speakers. Additionally, we present on our research at industry conferences such as annual meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology and British Psychological Society.

Partnerships

In our commitment to DEI and accessibility globally, we understand the value of working with communities of experts and have established the following partnerships:

- Membership in the Valuable 500, a group of businesses who have committed to putting disability inclusion on their business agendas
- Ongoing partnership with Purple, an organization supporting businesses on their journeys to be disability inclusive
- Disability Confident Employer Accreditation
- Careers For Her—we participated in the first virtual career fair for women in Egypt, promoting gender equality and supporting female participation in the workforce and leadership
- Ally Nudge—we join hands to support Black Lives Matter and anti-racism movement

Additionally, we continue to explore additional opportunities for key partnerships from a recruitment and education perspective.

Expert Services

Our professional services consultants are trusted advisers who help our customers maximize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility by leveraging best practices throughout the talent lifecycle. We aim to regularly upskill our consultants through internal training and sharing of relevant research, literature and best practice. We also offer specific services in this space such as Diversity Audits, Diversity Training, Unconscious Bias Workshops and Customized Workshops.

In addition, our global Client Support Team is available to support with questions about technical guidance and what accommodations can be made to our talent solutions.

Commitment to Our Clients – Helping You Support DEI and Accessibility in Your Talent Solutions

While we are not able to provide legal advice, we can share ideas on how you can support DEI and accessibility when using our solutions, based on our experience over the years. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Conducting job analysis** – ensuring that you are assessing against critical job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities reduces the risk of eliminating potentially suitable candidates and creates a level playing field where all suitable candidates are given an equal chance of success, thus supporting diversity and inclusion.

- **Selecting appropriate comparison groups** – when interpreting test results it is important to select a norm group that most closely reflects performance levels of your candidate group. Using a higher performing comparison group could mean that you are screening out more candidates than needed and this could exacerbate group differences in success rates.

- **Setting cut-off scores** – it is recommended to set cut-offs for ability tests with care. It is important not to set them too high, as it will be much harder to demonstrate that the candidates need to achieve such a high level on the test to perform well on the job and again may exacerbate group differences.

- **Monitoring for differences** – all accepted/rejected candidates should be monitored to ensure no particular group is being adversely impacted as stated by the Uniform Guidelines for Employee Selection Procedures (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission et al., 1978, Section 4D; Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2018).

- **Preparing candidates** – it is advisable to ensure that candidates are as prepared as possible, in order to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by not having previous exposure to tests. SHL has a practice test site where candidates can explore various test types anonymously and free of charge.

- **Assessing candidates' perceptions** – a useful way to measure the candidates' reactions to DEI and accessibility in your talent process is to seek their feedback directly – explaining why you're doing so, ensuring anonymity and making it optional so they are clear their responses will not impact their job application in any way. Useful topics to query may include engagement, difficulty, anxiety, opportunity to perform, fairness, and perceptions of inclusivity.

- **Adjusting for disabilities** – reasonable adjustments are changes you need to implement to prevent an employee or candidate with a disability from being at a disadvantage. SHL is available to provide guidance on available accommodations for our tools and solutions, but will rely on an organization to identify the needed requirement for any specific candidate to reduce their disadvantage. The best way to find out about a candidate's disability, how it might affect their performance on assessments, and the best way to accommodate them is to ask the candidate. Each candidate should be treated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature and severity of their disability. Please see our Reasonable Accommodations guidance for employers and recruiters in the US and UK on our website for more information about how you can explore this with the candidate.

Commitment to Our People

We are committed to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive future for our own workforce at SHL, where every employee feels valued and is empowered to succeed.

Fostering an inclusive culture and embedding DEI and accessibility throughout the organization is one of our top priorities as an employer. We structure our activity around 4 key areas: Recruitment, Progression, Culture and Customers.

Key activities so far include:
- Representation targets in areas where we believe our workforce does not represent society. We have started with Gender, where we will aspire to have 50% of senior roles held by women by the end of 2024.
- SHL Together Inclusion Communities which serve as our own global DEI and accessibility task force designed to increase global awareness and to support SHL's journey to becoming an inclusive organization. These special interest groups advocate for inclusion based on race, gender, sex, age, sexuality, disability, and those with caregiving responsibilities.
- Firmwide communications reiterating SHL's support and commitment to our DEI and accessibility initiatives, including company-wide Town Halls, senior leadership meetings and corporate communications.
- Effective workplace policies offering flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse personal situations (e.g., childbirth or adoption), enabling employees to choose their preferred pronouns and respecting these choices, providing volunteering/social action paid time-off for employees which employees can also use to attend civil rights protests, marches, or similar activities, and designating certain meaningful days as company holidays and encouraging employee reflection, introspection, or activism on those days.

- Listening Circles which provide an open forum for our employees across the globe where they can share their feelings, personal experiences, and thoughts surrounding racism, discrimination, and other DEI and accessibility topics.
- Efforts focused on closing the gender pay gap over time, developing female leaders and nurturing female talent throughout their careers at SHL. Gender Pay Gap Reports are published annually for the UK, as per the Government Equalities Office requirements, including a list of actions that we have taken to close the pay gap.

We are also consciously focusing on DEI and accessibility when choosing our own suppliers to help us recruit, hire, and retain a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce. For instance:

- For all our job advertisements, SHL will be working with U-Include, a web-based platform which reviews job advertisement wording for inclusive language and suggests amendments to make job advertisements appeal to a diverse set of candidates.
- For our UK roles, SHL will be working with Radical Recruit, a Not-for-Profit recruitment agency in the UK which supports candidates with "barriers to work" to re-enter the workforce.
- SHL will be partnering with APS Intelligence, an education partner who provides evidence-based solutions - starting with a 5-module program on "Inclusion Fluency" for our top 25 leaders.

At SHL, we believe in creating equal opportunities for everyone. We acknowledge and embrace differences in gender, sex, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, culture, physical abilities, interests, perspectives, and cognitive diversity. We are committed to building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture, which is a core principle that is baked into both our business and our culture.

Want to ensure you are supporting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in your assessment process?

Ask yourself these questions...

- ☐ Is the assessment platform accessible to candidates with disabilities?

- ☐ Is the assessment content accessible and inclusive for candidates with disabilities?

- ☐ Is the assessment content culturally inclusive?

- ☐ Do you use appropriate norm comparison groups that reflect the characteristics of your candidate pool?

- ☐ Do you provide candidates with information about what to expect with the assessment process?

- ☐ Do you provide candidates with opportunities to prepare by taking practice assessments?

- ☐ Do you use inclusive language in your recruitment process that encourages candidates to ask for accommodations when needed?

- ☐ Do you use job analysis to confirm the assessments are fit for purpose?

- ☐ Do you conduct validation studies to confirm the assessments predict on-the-job performance?

- ☐ Do you monitor potential for adverse impact?

- ☐ When selecting your Assessment Solutions, do you consider alternatives that may be fairer and more inclusive to a diverse talent pool?

- ☐ Do you collect feedback from candidates about their assessment experience?

SHL is committed to helping organizations drive diverse, equitable, inclusive and accessible hiring practices with our <u>Assessment</u> Solutions.

<u>Contact us</u> to learn how we can help your organization.

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