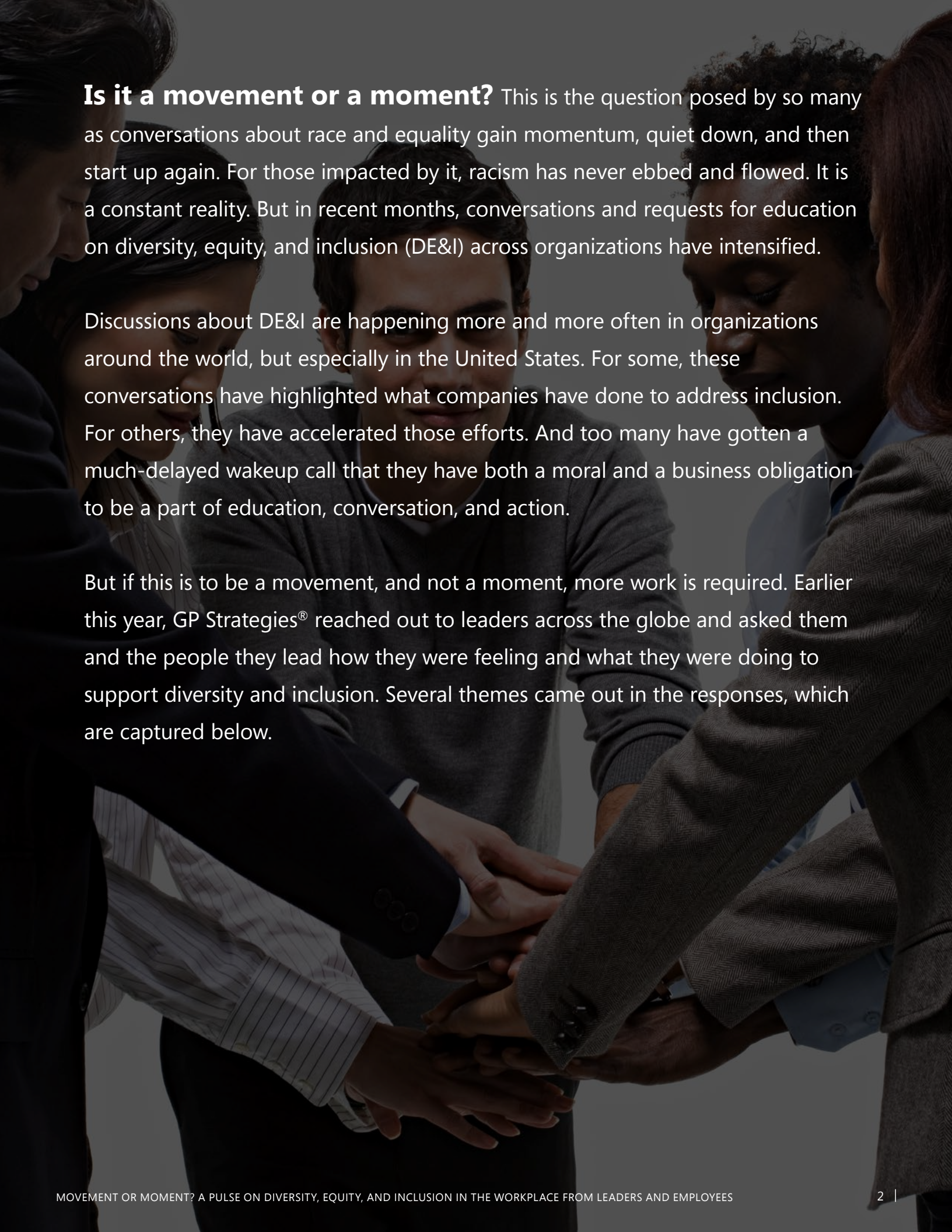# MOVEMENT
or
MOMENT?

A Pulse on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace from Leaders and Employees

PREPARED BY GPStrategies®

Is it a movement or a moment? This is the question posed by so many as conversations about race and equality gain momentum, quiet down, and then start up again. For those impacted by it, racism has never ebbed and flowed. It is a constant reality. But in recent months, conversations and requests for education on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) across organizations have intensified.

Discussions about DE&I are happening more and more often in organizations around the world, but especially in the United States. For some, these conversations have highlighted what companies have done to address inclusion. For others, they have accelerated those efforts. And too many have gotten a much-delayed wakeup call that they have both a moral and a business obligation to be a part of education, conversation, and action.

But if this is to be a movement, and not a moment, more work is required. Earlier this year, GP Strategies® reached out to leaders across the globe and asked them and the people they lead how they were feeling and what they were doing to support diversity and inclusion. Several themes came out in the responses, which are captured below.
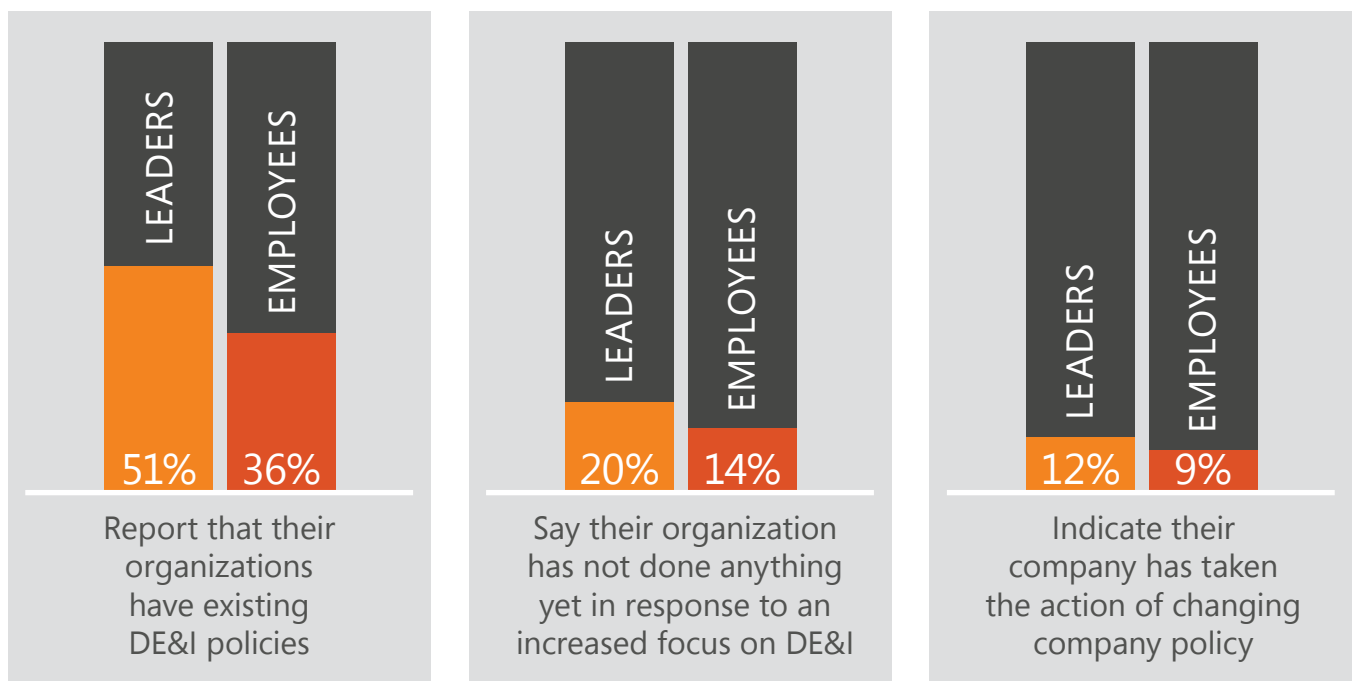
Statements & Policy

In the wake of George Floyd's death, many organizations quickly released announcements denouncing racism and expressing their commitment to equality. A third of the leaders and 24 percent of the employees we heard from reported their organizations had issued statements. But while statements send an important message, it's only by backing those statements up with meaningful action that real change can be achieved.

Slightly over half of the leaders we surveyed indicate they already have extensive diversity and inclusion policies in place—a number that reveals many companies either don't have policies, or if they do, their people are unaware of them. What's more, while half of leaders indicate their organizations have DE&I policies in place, only 36% of employees say they already have such policies suggesting that even if companies have put pen-to-paper to document their approach, their employees are not aware of these efforts and, perhaps, not feeling the impact. Widespread awareness, if not coverage, of policies to address DE&I is still lacking at a large cross section of the organizations we queried.

Perhaps uncertain of how to understand and address the most critical issues, twenty-nine percent of leaders and thirty percent of employees we surveyed said they've formed a committee to look at the issues.

Another 20 percent of leaders and 14 percent of employees say their organization has not done anything differently in response to this nationwide conversation. Just 12 percent of leaders and nine percent of employees reported their organizations have taken the bolder action of changing company policy.

LEADERS	EMPLOYEES		LEADERS	EMPLOYEES		LEADERS	EMPLOYEES
51%	36%		20%	14%		12%	9%
Report that their organizations have existing DE&I policies			Say their organization has not done anything yet in response to an increased focus on DE&I			Indicate their company has taken the action of changing company policy		

How is your organization responding to the increased focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

	Leaders	Employees
We already had extensive diversity/inclusion policies	51%	36%
We have increased training and education	31%	16%
We have formed a committee to look at these issues	29%	30%
We have issued/are issuing a statement	28%	25%
We have not done anything differently yet.	21%	14%
We have changed company policies	12%	9%
I don't know	7%	24%

This stay-the-course approach needs to be evaluated in light of how little seems to be changing when it comes to diversity in leadership positions. According to the 2020 Fortune 500, only one percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are Black[1]. Just 16.1 percent of board seats in the Fortune 500 were held by people of color, according to the Alliance for Board Diversity, compared to 40 percent of the US population that is nonwhite[2]. Black employees are six times more likely than white employees to feel that someone of their race or ethnicity would not reach a top position[3]. In yet another study, hiring managers were 74 percent more likely to hire candidates with white-sounding names when their resumes were identical those with more foreign sounding names[4]. From both a policy and culture perspective, there is more work to do.

Looking inward via a committee, organizational analysis, or conversations with employees is an important place to start to help organizations understand their unique challenges. But those committees are only meaningful if they result in action and change. Policy requires an intentional investment in the workplace. It means looking at employee training, day-to-day operations, approaches to hiring, compensation, and promotion. It means exploring the employee experience to understand the more subtle ways bias often emerges. It means addressing issues systemically, including looking at formal and informal policy. Statements are an emotional nudge in the direction of a moment, but it's formal and informal policy changes that can propel a movement. And movement will not happen until recruitment, promotion, and leadership changes are comprehensively addressed.

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1 2020 Fortune 500

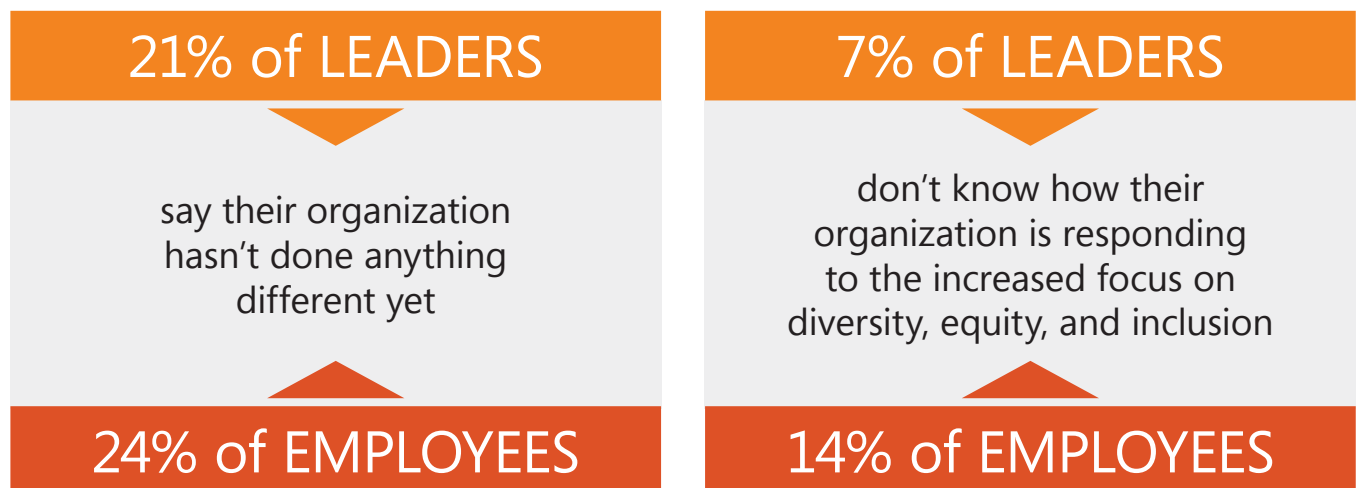2 Alliance for Board Diversity

3 Center for Talent Innovation

4 https://cos.gatech.edu/facultyres/Diversity_Studies/Bertrand_LakishaJamal.pdf

If organizations are taking action, they need to do a better job of communicating and cascading those actions. Perhaps because of their proximity to decision makers, leaders are more aware of their organizations' efforts. However, 24 percent of employees appear to be uncertain or don't know if their employer has responded to the call for change. While employees hear the statements and see committees forming, they seem less aware of real actions being taken to drive change. Organizations and their senior leaders need to do a better job of not only committing to DE&I policy, and action, but also communicating effectively so there is widespread awareness for their efforts. On both action and messaging, as far as employees are concerned, organizations are simply falling short. It is not enough to have the intention to address the lack of DE&I. That intention must be backed up by action for meaningful change to take hold.

But what about training?

Our research shows that organizations have increased their focus on training—a signal that these organizations are willing to invest time and money educating their employees. One third of leaders have indicated their organization has increased training and education, which is a smart move since leaders mentioned this will help them better engage around these issues. This is a contrast to the 16 percent of employees who have noticed an increase in training and education, which suggests training is not being made available across all levels of the organization or, if it is, employees are not aware of it.

Training, regardless of whether it is optional or mandatory, needs to be backed up with action and accountability. Research by McKinsey demonstrated that despite almost 80 percent of senior leaders saying they participated in unconscious bias training, a much smaller percentage of those same participants said their organizations had made diversity a priority or were actively working to address it. Training is a start, but it has to be backed up by action and accountability. Leaders and organizations need to measure their diversity and inclusion efforts and need to be held accountable for results.

21% of LEADERS
say their organization hasn't done anything different yet
24% of EMPLOYEES

7% of LEADERS
don't know how their organization is responding to the increased focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion
14% of EMPLOYEES

Skepticism about meaningful change

Perhaps because of this lukewarm move to action, leaders and employees have doubts about whether or not meaningful change will come from the increased focus on racial issues and the corresponding reaction from their organizations. Only 20 percent of leaders agree with the statement "I believe the momentum around diversity, equity, and inclusion prompted by the Black Lives Matter protests will cause meaningful change in my organization," while 22 percent disagree with this statement.

Employees share leaders' skepticism on this issue, reporting nearly identical results. Of the employees we surveyed and asked the same question, only 21 percent agree that meaningful change will happen, with 21 percent disagreeing, leaving a similar group in a middle position of apathy.

> " The momentum around diversity, equity, and inclusion prompted by the Black Lives Matter protests will cause meaningful change in my organization. "

Only **20% of leaders and 20% of employees agree** with this statement.

While **21% of leaders and 21% of employees actively disagree** with this statement.

It may be too soon for leaders and employees to answer this question with confidence. Against the backdrop of a global pandemic and a highly divisive political landscape, to say people are dealing with uncertainty is an understatement. Whether or not we are experiencing a tipping point concerning meaningful action and change around DE&I remains to be seen. Right now, leaders and their employees seem unconvinced. The late justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said "Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time." But what steps can leaders and their employees take to push for real and enduring change? Where can we start or where is there momentum and what can we continue?

"Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time."
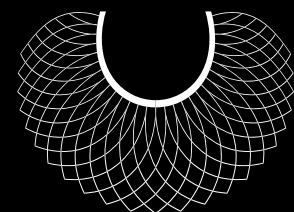
–Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Beyond organizational statements and macro-level policies, what would be most useful to leaders personally to help them confidently engage in DE&I conversations and action?

What can be done at the team level to effect change?

How leaders can best be supported

Our research on leadership mindsets indicates many leaders want to get better at engaging in inclusive conversations. They understand the benefits a diverse and inclusive team can have on productivity, collaboration, and innovation. Moreover, many want to create an environment where people can bring their whole selves to work—one where they can thrive personally and professionally.

Leaders want coaching. They prioritize it as a high-value tool, with 38 percent saying coaching would help them increase their confidence in having DE&I conversations. Coaching can be incredibly useful in helping leaders explore their own biases (conscious and unconscious) and work through how they address discriminatory behavior in a productive and supportive way. As a tool to aid in individual growth, coaching can provide great support. And while inclusivity often starts with individual reflection around personal unconscious bias, the leaders we reached out to gave even greater endorsement for team coaching, with 63 percent saying this type of team support would help them engage confidently. Beyond individual reflection and one-on-one development, leaders are signaling they need help actively navigating the dynamic among team members, and with good reason. When it comes to encouraging a broader culture of diversity and inclusion, team dynamics are pivotal. Creating an environment of psychological safety—one where team members can challenge assumptions and bring out the best in each other— is the hallmark of good leadership. But it can be hard to simultaneously drive for results while being mindful of team members' dynamics.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
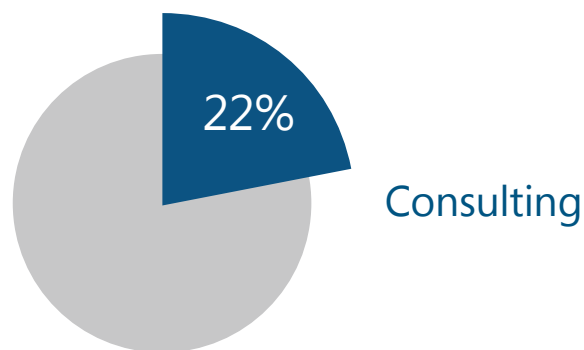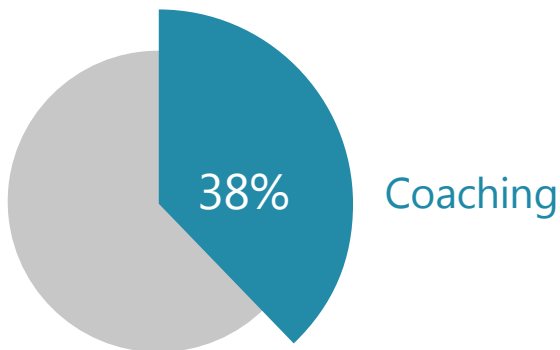
–Nelson Mandela

Forty-one percent of the leaders we surveyed are looking for training to enhance their confidence in engaging in conversation and action.

Training can provide a common language to define terms associated with DE&I, provide insight into the benefits of an inclusive environment, and give leaders and employees the tools they need to address bias and microaggression and engage thoughtfully in inclusive conversations. Training alone cannot transform a moment into a movement, nor can it solve the systemic issues of racism, but it can be an element of a broader strategy.

What would help you confidently engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion conversation and action? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

63% Team Development/ Team Coaching/ Team Support

41% Training/Workshops

38% Coaching

22% Consulting

In leadership, we talk about the importance of authenticity—being clear on what your personal values are and anchoring to those values in your words and actions. Leaders are trusted if people believe they are authentic. Policy, training, and committees can only be successful if an organization's efforts are authentic. Much like we advocate for individual leaders to be clear on their values, organizations need to anchor to their values and demonstrate that a commitment to DE&I is coming from within. Alignment of organizational head (policy, training) and heart (values, culture) must be present.

So while enduring change takes time, organizations can seize the opportunity in front of them to open up dialogue, educate, and support their leaders and employees. They should continue to encourage leaders to look at more systemic approaches to address DE&I with the goal of more change. And above all, they must lead with compassion and understanding. Start with the heart.

Seven Things Leaders and Employees Can Do to Move Beyond Moment and Sustain a Movement

1. AUTHENTICALLY CARE:

Policy and training are helpful tactics, but for change to take hold, there must also be a culture change. It needs to be felt as much as seen. When leaders move beyond understanding and express compassion through allyship, we will start to feel the pulse of equality beat. Leaders need to lead with their hearts, demonstrating respect and kindness towards those around them. Who do you want to be in this moment? How do you want to show you care? By sitting on the sidelines and issuing a statement, or jumping in and winning for others?

2. EDUCATE:

Self-educate and seek formal training. Use online and curated or suggested resources to educate yourself on the history of racism, explore different perspectives on race, and generally become better educated on the struggles of Black, indigenous, and people of color. Take advantage of formal training opportunities to expand your knowledge, talk with others about these issues, and learn practical skills and tools to support your journey toward more inclusive actions.

3. REFLECT:

Self-reflect and share with a trusted colleague. As a leader, before you can encourage an environment of greater inclusion, you need to confront your own biases. Know that this is not about reaching a place of nirvana as it relates to eliminating discrimination—that's unrealistic. Instead, commit to exploring your assumptions through self-reflection or with the guidance of a coach or accountability partner who can both push you and remind you that you will always be a work in progress.

7. SHARE POWER AND INFLUENCE

In June of this year, Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian resigned from Reddit's board, asking to be replaced by a Black candidate, in response to the killing of George Floyd. When leaders take bold steps like relinquishing their power, it's not about an individual loss, but a collective gain for the entire community.
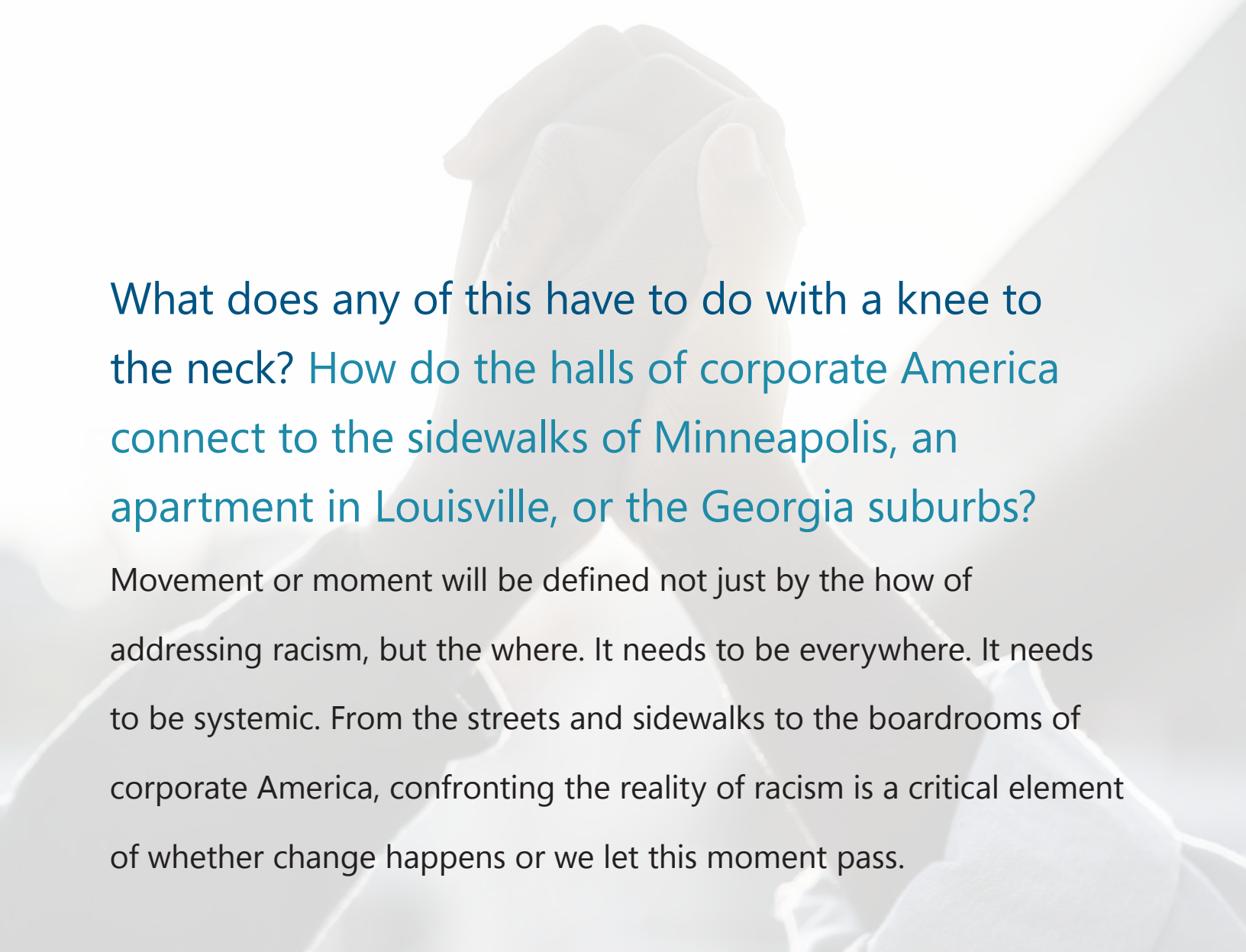
4. ENGAGE:

Engage outside of your own comfort zone. Get comfortable being uncomfortable. Then do the work. Move beyond conversations, reflection, and training and engage through action. Many leaders say they want to be more inclusive, but fail to step into the effort inclusion requires on a consistent, actionable basis. Wanting and trying to do the work are not options when we seek to engage. We either do it or we don't.

6. CHALLENGE YOUR SENIOR LEADERS:

Continue to challenge your organization to examine its values and align its policies to those values. Ask what your organization's approach is to encourage greater diversity, equity, and inclusion. How is hiring handled? What are the protocols for promotion? What is the process for individuals getting the support of mentors and allies in your organization? More systemic support and change can only happen if organizations take a top-down and bottom-up approach to DE&I.

5. MAKE MISTAKES AND ADDRESS THEM:

Engaging bravely means you will probably make mistakes like saying something hurtful without meaning to, or making assumptions about someone that may cause pain. Instead of getting defensive, apologize for the pain you've caused, seek more in-depth understanding, and commit to continued self-reflection, education, and thoughtful actions. Then commit to doing better next time.

What does any of this have to do with a knee to the neck? How do the halls of corporate America connect to the sidewalks of Minneapolis, an apartment in Louisville, or the Georgia suburbs? Movement or moment will be defined not just by the how of addressing racism, but the where. It needs to be everywhere. It needs to be systemic. From the streets and sidewalks to the boardrooms of corporate America, confronting the reality of racism is a critical element of whether change happens or we let this moment pass.

"You may live in the world as it is, but you can still work to create the world as it should be."

–Michelle Obama

Photo by Alex Nemo Hanse on Unsplash

Report Demographics

GP Strategies (NYSE: GPX) is a leading workforce transformation partner – one of the few truly dedicated global providers in the marketplace providing custom solutions. We believe our transformation focus, when paired with deep listening, a customer-centric approach, and innovative expertise, enables our clients to routinely achieve superior business and operational results from our evidence-driven and technology agnostic recommendations.

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- **LEADERSHIP SOLUTIONS,** including leadership development, coaching, career, and employee engagement

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- **TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS,** including enterprise technology adoption, HCM technology selection, implementation and cloud migration, support and health-check services, process automation, technical training, and technical documentation

Whether your business success requires a change in leadership performance and mindsets, learning technologies, or critical processes, **GP Strategies is the transformation partner you can trust.**

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leah Clark leads Strategy and Planning for GP Strategies' leadership division. She researches, writes, and speaks on the topic of leadership. Her work informs the organization's product development and learner experience efforts. Leah authored the 2020 research report, *Business as Unusual: Rewriting the Rules of Leadership,* 2019 research report, *Leadership Mindsets* and the 2018 research report, *Tomorrow's Leaders, Today – What Leaders Need Right Now, and in the Future, to Be Successful.* She has written several articles and blogs on steady communication during unsteady times, executive presence, psychological safety, introversion and mindfulness in innovation, and how to keep human connection alive in a digital learning environment. Leah has over 24 years of experience in marketing, strategy, and product development. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Organizational Psychology from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Arts in English and Sociology from Boston College.

Special thanks for contributions to this report:
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ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

GP Strategies conducted the research between July 1 and August 17, 2020. Overall, 946 responses were received with the majority derived from North America, EMEA, and APAC.

OF THE 946 RESPONSES:
356 are individual contributors
192 are first-level leaders
260 are senior leaders
138 are executive leaders

This combination of experience brings a wealth of understanding in terms of how individual performers and leaders are navigating the uncertainty and changes of today's world.

For more information on our research or insights on

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace, contact us:

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