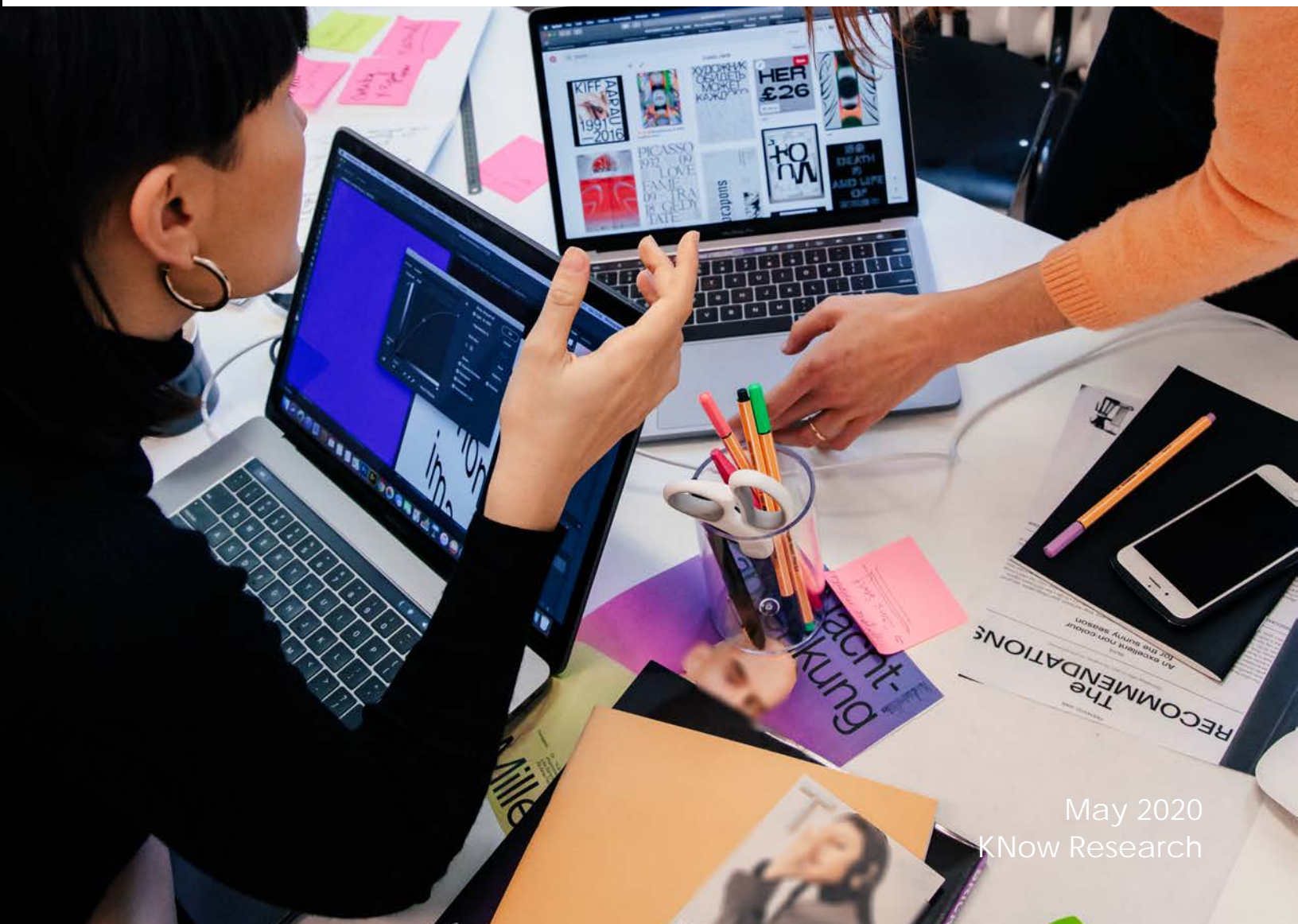




INCLUSIVITY & DIVERSITY BEST PRACTICES FOR INSIGHTS TEAMS



Diversity and inclusivity in advertising is a hot topic in society, and brands are reflecting this priority in their marketing and communication efforts to stay relevant and relatable to their target audiences.

Brands want to ensure their communication comes across as relatable, authentic and in touch with the needs of their audiences. So they turn to insights professionals, who keep a pulse on audiences' outlooks and reactions to brand's representations of the world.

We've seen brands put extra emphasis on diversity and inclusion due to a few key factors:

1. Expectations from society that brands need to be more inclusive overall
2. The belief that diversity in advertising will help a brand's reputation and success
3. Understanding that showcasing more diversity in marketing may help mitigate societal biases
4. A desire for marketing to reflect the world as they see it, or want to see

The Balancing Act

Through our work researching the landscape of brand successes and failures at KNow Research, we've seen there's a balancing act. Brands need to feature diversity and inclusivity in their messaging and imagery to ensure these efforts ladder up to their goals and resonate with their audiences, but have to be careful not over-represent or force diversity. Audiences recognize the difference, and give their business to brands who strike a natural, comfortable balance.

We've distilled our findings into:

1. Best practices for brands to effectively strike the right balance
2. How research can generate insights to guide brands in these efforts

Best Brand Practices

We recommend brands find their balance on the inclusivity tightrope with good intentions and sensitive execution.

1. Be focused and authentic: Brands can promote their diverse values and practices, but be sure to keep the primary focus around the brand benefits! Start with answering the consumer need and then ensure supporting messaging/imagery authentically and realistically compliments it. You don't want to overshadow the main message or confuse the audience. Diversity itself should only be at the forefront if there is a corresponding brand objective in doing so.

“That’s great that they have a diverse workforce, but what does that have to do with the product?” – Interview Participant

2. Rely on natural representation: Be careful not to ‘force’ diversity, your audience can tell! Be sure to exclude anything that seems forced or intentionally ‘inserted’. Use real photos of events or audience testimonials that reflect a diverse audience instead of artificially engineering it.

“That photo seems forced, like they made that girl sit there with the white girls so that the photo looks ‘diverse’.” – Friend Group Participant

3. Create unity: Instead of focusing on how diverse you can be, see if you can unify diverse audiences! Brands can find common ground among its target audiences to bring them together through a shared benefit, message and/or experience, such as humor. However, be careful not to cross the line into politics or take sides on contentious topics that don't have universal acceptance among them.

“I liked seeing all the diverse nationalities in the ad, but when they showed Democrats and Republicans, that went too far and made me start thinking about politics and how different we are.” – Focus Group Participant

Best Insights Practices

Insights professionals can effectively guide brands toward incorporating diversity and inclusion in their campaigns. Try one/all of these best practices to help them on their journey towards focused and authentic representation.

1. Conduct an inclusivity 'audit': Understand a brand's goals and how diversity and inclusivity play a role. Then, see how effective their current market collateral is in meeting those objectives. Your audit should incorporate all recent campaign material. See if the messaging and imagery supports the inclusivity goal and seems authentic and realistic. *Then work to understand what would convey their goals better going forward!*
2. Cast a wider net: Make it a rule to tap into a diverse participant pool. This ensures you're making decisions by listening to all your customers/audiences in a more inclusive way. *Remember, it's our job as insights professionals to do our part to design recruiting approaches and methodologies to give all penitential participants and audiences a voice!*
 - For more inspiration on how to bring more voices into insights efforts, check out [T.R.I.P \(The Research Inclusion Project\)'s podcast mini-series](#); a podcast dedicated to raising awareness of research practices for inclusion, challenging the status quo, and identifying assumptions in the insights industry by talking to people who are pushing the boundaries in their work.
3. Diversify the research team: Just as participant pools should be diverse in gender, ethnicity, age, background, location, etc., so should the teams that research them. Consider diversifying your insights team along these lines. *Make it a priority to temper biases and accommodate situations in which participants may be more comfortable talking to a team member they can relate to.*

We welcome the opportunity to talk with you about ways you can navigate this space for your brands and audiences!

Reach us at: admin@knowresearch.com