

Diversity & Inclusion Transformation





Background



When Victoria Russel joined Papa John's as a marketing professional in October 2012, the Pizza maker did not have a formal practice of addressing diversity and inclusion (D&I). Little did Victoria know that in 2018, after a media and consumer storm following comments made by the chairman about not featuring African Americans in its ads, she would play a vital role in the efforts to transform the company's D&I culture.

Following the comments and corresponding backlash, Papa John's had a choice in how to respond. Instead of thinking about this situation as a PR issue that needed "handling," leaders made the bold decision to tackle the issue head-on and flush out the root causes—not just around race, but all possible inclusion blind spots. It was then that senior management asked Russel if she would consider assuming the role of the company's first-ever Chief Diversity Officer (CDO).

The appointment coincided with a seminal moment in the company's history: the launch of its inaugural D&I Board, consisting of 10 senior-level employees and a separate external advisory board, which includes three high profile public figures, including a hall fame basketball player, a NCAA basketball championship player, and an esteemed community leader.

What became quickly evident was the need to engage with an external D&I partner to bring credibility to the initiative and to convince senior leaders that D&I needed to be firmly embedded into the company's culture.



Company Engagement

The concerted D&I efforts for Papa John's, began with the company engaging Icarus Consulting. Icarus immediately launched an assessment of the organization. The aim was to gain a clear understanding of the prevailing D&I skills gaps, raise awareness among the workforce, and build a strong business case for D&I.

Papa John's and Icarus Consulting initiated the first company-wide D&I survey, reaching employees in stores and offices cross the country. Through the survey results, the leadership team came to realize that it had overestimated the internal D&I capabilities of the organization.

During this time, Papa John's top executives were interviewed, and the D&I board participated in a two-day session to define the business case for D&I. The meeting highlighted the benefits of a diverse workforce within a diverse marketplace and the power of diversity of thought within an inclusive work environment.

To further assess the day-to-day realities of the organization, Icarus Consulting conducted focus groups with employees across the company. To dive deeper into diversity and inclusion topics in the various countries, the focus groups were carefully arranged so that the facilitator of each session was the same race and ethnicity as the focus group participants. This allowed for an authentic connection and honest discussions.





Measurements



The qualitative and quantitative data collected helped to develop the D&I training. All HR policies and procedures were reviewed for unconscious biases and were updated to mitigate inadvertent exclusion.

The rollout of diversity training began in 2019 for all office employees, followed by sales and store teams over the six months. The program content covered the broad spectrum of D&I, including building awareness of unconscious biases, and the need to develop cross-cultural agility.

Icarus Consulting helps design and deliver a course that explained to Papa John's employees that diversity goes deeper than just gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and age—the course emphasized that “we're all multidimensional and we need to show empathy towards others.” The course helped Papa John's leaders understand how to manage a diverse work team and sustain an inclusive workplace. As a result of the training, senior leaders played a more active role in the company's D&I efforts.



Papa John's Pizza is an American pizza restaurant franchise. It runs the fourth largest pizza delivery restaurant chain in the United States, with headquarters in Jeffersontown, Kentucky, a suburb of Louisville.

Jul 22, 4:00 PM EDT - Disclaimer

Founder: John Schnatter

Headquarters: Louisville, KY

CEO: Steve Ritchie (Jan 2018–), John Schnatter (Apr 15, 2011–)

Employees: 4,500





Competing to Win

To make the company competitive again, Papa John is needed to have employees around the country who could drive change in their local markets. The company set high standards and insisted that every function and market perform at a certain level in terms of achieving D&I goals.

The company also made findings from the employee survey and focus groups available to all employees. The company thought this was important because it was critical to have grassroots support from the bottom as well as executive buy-in from the top. The company also engaged its Employee Resource Groups.

With the help of Icarus Consulting, Papa John's leaders came to understand that D&I is intertwined with the business strategy and growing profitability. As a result, the company took bold steps to embed D&I into its day-to-day activities. Senior leads became accountable for showing how D&I strategy could provide a measurable impact on business performance—in an increasingly diverse marketplace.

Today, Papa John's understands that the company is not just about pasta, sauces, and baked goods; but how people eat and prepare these various foods can vary around the country. There is no doubt that a truly diverse workforce will help them achieve a more significant competitive advantage on the national stage.





Results

The D&I assessment and focus group results revealed that the success of any D&I initiative was dependent on the full support and backing of the executive management team.

There have been many notable successes, including a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index. In 2015, Papa John's CEO was invited to sign the CEO Pledge for Action. The company also supported the launch of two Employee Resource Groups: "Voce" for LGBT employees and allies, and "Balance" to help advance gender balance.

Now D&I is one of the performance goals for leaders. The CDO is responsible for monitoring and intervening on key D&I metrics. The CDO is also accountable for reducing bias in talent management and total rewards.

But Papa John's and Russell are not resting on their laurels. The company understands that the accurate measure of success will be when employees can look at the company's D&I scorecard and see that they have exceeded their goals. Papa John's still has some way to go, but there is a strong commitment at all levels of the organization, and employees now know diversity goes far deeper than just gender, nationality, and age. Papa John's maintains an ongoing partnership with Icarus Consulting.





About Icarus Consulting

The mission of Icarus Consulting is to unleash the power of human potential by helping people—and organizations—to defy gravity and fly. We help organizations to achieve excellence through inclusion by ensuring employees at every level in the organization valued, respected, and connected. We do that by assisting organizations in developing strategies to attract, develop, and retain highly skilled talent from an emerging diverse workforce and, at the same time, enhance the engagement, knowledge, and skill of current employees. As a certified minority and veteran-owned strategic leadership and diversity consulting firm, we at Icarus understand how important it is to empower all members of your organization to drive positive organizational change and the future of work in today's rapidly changing business landscape. Based in Atlanta with a global capability, we partner with HR, talent management, diversity and inclusion, and business leadership teams on change management organizational culture around the corner and across the globe.

Icarus understands how important it is to empower all members of your organization to drive positive organizational change and the future of work in today's rapidly changing business landscape. Whether we're developing and delivering training on unconscious bias, setting up a diversity and inclusion council, leveraging our proprietary BRG Leadership AcademySM to transform resource groups into real business partners, launching an executive learning curriculum, rolling out a diverse mentoring program for your entire organization, or providing coaching to hi-potential and emerging leaders training, we customize everything we do; channeling our extensive experience to resolve your unique challenges. We partner with our clients to build a more diverse workforce and inclusive workplace around the corner and across the globe.





WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU.

MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEB SITE:
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DIVERSITY & INCLUSION TRANSFORMATION

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