

Episode 288: DEI Metrics and Benchmarking With Gerri Allamby of @Unilever



Intro: [00:00:00.96] Welcome to the Workology Podcast, a podcast for the disruptive workplace leader. Join host Jessica Miller-Merrell, founder of Workology.com, as she sits down and gets to the bottom of trends, tools and case studies for the business leader, H.R. and recruiting professional who is tired of the status quo. Now, here's Jessica with this episode of Workology.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:00:26.89] Welcome to the Workology podcast sponsored by Upskill HR and ACE the HR Exam. Diversity, equity and inclusion are not new ideas in the corporate arenas and HR, but in recent months, the importance and significance of DEI in the workplace has taken center stage. For those of us in HR, this means we're not taking our DEI initiatives to stakeholders. Those stakeholders are coming to us looking for answers and we have to be able to create a narrative around these initiatives. In order to do so, we need data and DEI metrics. These data points help us indicate gaps or progress based on our DEI goals. Today I'm joined by Gerri Allamby. She's the Associate Compliance and Diversity Manager with Unilever, USA. Gerri works with Unilever's D&I and recruitment teams in helping to move the D&I agenda through EEO compliance. Gerri has spent her career producing relevant metrics and analytics to help organizations track their D&I strategies and initiatives for reaching their AAP diversity and inclusion goals. Prior to joining Unilever, Gerri was the Senior EEO/AA Associate at KPMG, one of the big four accounting firms, and before that was the global D&I analyst on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Team with Johnson&Johnson. Gerri, welcome to the Workology Podcast.

Gerri Allamby: [00:01:55.78] Thank you so much, Jessica. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk to you and your listeners.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:02:01.42] Let's start with some background. I, I don't know if I have ever met anybody that has said when they were a kid, hey, I want to work in H.R. metrics or analytics, but you have spent more than 15 years working in diversity and inclusion space specifically around those metrics and analytics. What led you to this work?

Gerri Allamby: [00:02:23.05] You're right. Nobody ever wakes up and grows up and says, I want to be an HR analytics person. You're absolutely right. What led me to this work, to be quite honest with you, was a pivot table. I was temping at Johnson&Johnson and someone had asked me to sit there and see if I could produce some metrics in the, I was an admin at Johnson&Johnson in the global D&I office and asked me if I knew

how to do a pivot table, if I could help with making some metrics for them. And I said, yeah, and basically because I knew how to do a pivot table, that set me on the path to where I am right now, which is EEO and Affirmative Action and D&I metrics and analytics.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:03:04.97] So really understanding Excel, yes, is that, that one decision what led you on the career track that you're in now.

Gerri Allamby: [00:03:14.78] Exactly. I mean, I know now there's like there's a lot of talk and there's courses and things like that. But you have to keep in mind that 15 years ago, there wasn't as much robust interest in it as it is now in metrics and analytics, big data, etc. So it kind of let me dip my toe, if you will, into that pool. And then also having managers and bosses who were there to kind of nurture me, exposed me to what DE and I was at that time and really kind of fanned the flames of my passion in that space, which is also what helped me grow and made me, you know, gain more interest in it.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:04:00.80] Well, before we dive into more on the metrics, I want to talk about inclusion and culture. There has been a lot of really good discussion in the HR space about allyship and that workplace culture. I wanted to ask you, what can we do as fellow employees and as human beings and allies to amplify someone else's voice?

Gerri Allamby: [00:04:21.50] It's a great question. For me and I'll speak from my personal experience, the first thing I do is listen. Just listen to what's being shared with me, what you have to think about as it takes a lot of courage for somebody to share their story and by listening, that lets the other person know that it's a safe space. Second, I have to be aware of the fact that I'm not going to understand or know everything about anyone's experience. My experience that I have in growing up and working is my experience, which may be completely different than somebody else's. That, in essence, is diversity of, its the definition of diversity, different perspective, different experiences. If there's something that I don't understand, then obviously I'm going to ask a question so that I can better understand. I also need to, because I don't know everything about everyone's experience. I have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable in what may be being shared with me. And then finally, I think as an ally, I've got to take responsibility. Once I, I do understand and once I am aware of someone else's experiences or what their situation is, is being able to be supportive of raising my voice to those other people who may not understand that person's experience and educating them, you know what I mean? So it's kind of like we all have a responsibility to be supportive of those who may not have the opportunities, if you will, to bring forth what their story is and what what they're experiencing. So I take that that responsibility very seriously, professionally and personally.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:06:07.27] Another question I wanted to make sure that we asked today, and I know there's no quick answer to this, but from your perspective, how do we quantify DEI?

Gerri Allamby: [00:06:18.25] Well, you know, one of the one of the best bosses that I ever had from one of my past slides said to me, what gets measured gets done. And I've kind of taken that to heart. So companies and organizations need to know where they currently are before they can decide where they want to go. And where they are currently may not be a good place. This is where being comfortable with being uncomfortable kind of comes in. While DE&I is the right thing to do, presenting a business case for DE&I is smart and sometimes leaders in leadership don't get that. In my opinion, you can't figure out where you want to go unless you know where you are and accept that where you are may not be a good place. I mean, I think that's a struggle with folks who are DE&I practitioners and EEO practitioners is that we understand and we know what the reality of the organization is. It's trying to make sure that leadership understands the reality of where the organization is. So a good way to get leadership on board with DE&I, I mean, it's a it's the right thing to do, but sometimes there's a struggle with leadership to really get them to to commit, is tying executive compensation to DE&I goal attainment. DE&I needs to be a top down approach. Right? The leadership needs to be on board with it and it needs to cascade down. If we go back to what I said earlier, which with what gets measured gets done, tracking your representation, your highs, your turns, your promos by race, ethnicity, gender, and tying that to executive comp is, to me, the best way to quantify it.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:08:07.44] What do you recommend to HR leaders, especially those of us who are working for maybe a smaller mid-sized company as a starting point to begin to collect and parse data around DEI?

Gerri Allamby: [00:08:19.44] That's a great question. So, again, going back to you got to know where you are before you can decide where you want to go. The best place to do that is an employee survey that I think is the the best place to start to determine what your workforce looks like. And the employee survey revolves around what is the you could ask an employee voluntarily now, what's your race or ethnicity, your gender, your disability status, your veteran status, etc. In my past lives, I did my, the employee survey around annual benefits, enrollment time just so that employees would understand that when you're enrolling in your benefits, it's also a good time to sit there and look at what your profile looks like in your HRIS system. An email would go out from the CEO saying something like, hey, its annual benefits, enrollment time while you're in your profile, why don't you go in and just take a look at make sure all of your information is correct. And then what I would do once that email would go out and we know annual, because annual benefits enrollment time is typically the same time frame every year. I take a snapshot before that that dates the cutoff date and then I take a snapshot after so I can compare to see if there was any increases, decreases, et cetera, like that. So that's a good place to start in determining where an organization is.

Break: [00:09:44.73] Let's take a reset. This is Jessica Miller-Merrell, and you were listening to the Workology Podcast sponsored by Upskil H.R. and ACE the HR Exam. Today I am talking with Gerri Allamby. She's the Associate Compliance and Diversity Manager with Unilever. We're talking about DEI metrics and scorecards.

Break: [00:10:04.62] Personal and professional development is essential for successful H.R. leaders. Join Upskill H.R. to access life training, community, and over one hundred On-Demand courses for that dynamic leader. H.R. recert credits available. Visit UpskillHR.com for more.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:10:20.91] As you're talking and we're talking about metrics and how to get started, I think one of the challenges, regardless of the size of the organization for executives, is they don't want to know about DEI or any HR metrics because being ignorant is, you don't have to take any action because you are unaware and therefore you don't have that information to make decisions. So I feel like what you're proposing that is, is a, is a good step, but most executives kind of want to live. A lot of them anyways. I know I do too sometimes, like, I would rather live in ignorance because it's such a happy place, but it's not the best place.

Gerri Allamby: [00:11:08.20] No.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:11:08.64] Not long term happiness and business success. Like you're going to have to get into the uncomfortable spaces of your business and the organization to truly be able to create something that's sustainable and is reflective of the market.

Gerri Allamby: [00:11:23.70] Exactly, exactly. Your consumers are diverse. Therefore, your employees have to be diverse. Therefore, your company has to be diverse if you're going to be competitive.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:11:34.73] Agreed. I just keep thinking of like a kid putting their fingers in their ears going, lalala. This is kind of how I think a lot of people think about metrics like these. Sometimes it's hard to connect to them directly to a customer transaction or a sale. But, unless you sit down and do the work and the research, you're not even going to see or understand that maybe customer journey or how an employee's role impacts that.

Gerri Allamby: [00:12:05.75] Absolutely. And that's why when you make your business case for diversity, you need to pull in statistics like what is this? What is the consumer spend of people with disabilities? What is the consumer spend of women? What is the consumer spend of black, Hispanic and Asian consumers? When you see it's in the billions of dollars, that's money that organizations are leaving on the table if they don't sit there and take a look at what their workforce looks like in order to reflect those voices. You know what I mean? So, again, what gets measured gets done. How do you become a good ally in sitting there and amplifying and raising awareness? Hey, there's all of, there's all this consumer spend that's out there that we're missing out on. Right? And so diverse consumers have money to spend. Wouldn't we as an organization want to get some sort of stake in that?

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:13:06.98] It's also good business.

Gerri Allamby: [00:13:08.48] Yes, yes. Yes. I mean, and again, it goes back to for those executives that are sticking their fingers in the ears and go in la la, la, la, la, la, la. If you're executive compensation is tied to achieving a diversity and inclusion goal, I don't think you're going to be sticking your fingers in your ears going la la la la la la la, if you don't meet your goal.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:13:27.35] True, it's impacting them in in their bank accounts and their wallets. And if you're an executive who likes to measure success by compensation, they're going to be motivated in that way.

Gerri Allamby: [00:13:42.14] Correct. So if you can't be motivated, if if an executive can't be motivated because it's the right thing to do, OK, let's motivate you with what's in your pocket.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:13:51.77] I like that. Another area I wanted to make sure that we talk about is DEI Analytics for the new SEC filing guidelines for public companies. I wanted to know, is this something that you're involved with in your current role and whether you are or not. Maybe if you could share some light or enlighten us a little bit on this. I know this is a new area.

Gerri Allamby: [00:14:13.79] Yes. So in my current role, I'm not specifically involved with this. However, referring back again again to my comments about tying DE&I to executive comp, I think the new SEC guidelines are commendable. They're admirable. It's a great example of what gets measured, gets done. So here you have a governing body that is sitting there and saying your board's organizations must be diverse. I think that's a great way of pushing that message out and through to corporate America.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:14:48.53] I like that. And we're going to be talking more and some other podcasts on some of the SEC requirements, what those look like from other organizations. I think this is evolving. It's really early stages. So, it's, I'm just interested as, I don't know, a student of HR.

Gerri Allamby: [00:15:08.81] No, absolutely, I am, because, again, you want your boards to be reflective of America, right? So if you don't, I think there's only, I think the statistic there's only a handful of people of color who are CEOs of companies of American companies. And why is that? What does your executive board look like? Is there diversity on your executive board? And if it's not, by having the SEC, like I said, a governing body, sit there and push it out and say thou shall do X, Y and Z or have X, Y and Z on your board, I think that's a great way to start to start pushing that narrative through in order to change the landscape.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:15:49.52] Agreed. Now, another question I wanted to make sure to ask you was, how can DEI metrics give us a qualitative as opposed to quantitative look into our DEI initiatives? For example, if we want to know, if we want to know if we have a culture in place that supports this kind of hiring.

Gerri Allamby: [00:16:08.93] So, it's a great question. So I think the first place, let's look at people with disabilities. OK, so individuals with disabilities, the first place that I would start is, well, do you have a way for your employees with disabilities to self identify in your system? If the answer is no, then you don't have a supporting culture, right? It's that simple. If you do, what's, what's the percentage of the workforce, of your workforce that that self identifies voluntarily that they're a person with disability? Because, think about it, if I'm a person with disability, I need to feel that I'm psychologically safe and identifying that I am a person with disability in my organization. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that in 2020, 17.9 percent of people with disabilities were employed. So if we do a quick math and I know I'm an analytics person, but I can't do it that quick, that means the rest of those people are people who don't have disabilities. So that leaves a large portion of people with disabilities that are not employed. If only about 18 percent of them are employed. And the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission has set a benchmark of seven percent of people with disabilities for all federal contractors within their organization. So hopefully an organization that has a supportive culture would have that representation of seven percent as the minimum.

Gerri Allamby: [00:17:35.42] Right? The other question in this space to think about is, well, what does your accommodation process look like for a candidate with disabilities? Do you have one? Is your applicant tracking system accessible for a person that uses assistive technology or maybe somebody that's deaf? Those are all. I don't want to say it's low hanging fruit, but those are all the minimums that an organization can do to show that they are supportive of people with disabilities within their organization. Disability is its own culture. Right? So how are we going to support people in that space? And those are, I think, the best places to start. What does your workforce look like? Because if you, if, if let's say the census says that you're supposed to have, and I'm going to make a number up, 12 percent people of color within an organization and you're at five percent, I would have to sit there and ask you why. Why isn't it more? Do you have a culture that's in place that supports people of color? Do you have business resource groups or employee resource groups? What does what who you're recruiting partners, depending on what jobs you're you're recruiting for. Are they diverse? That's where it all becomes qualitative for me.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:18:59.90] I love that you're talking about this topic. And it's something that I have been real intentional about on this podcast and in in our work is having more diversity of voices, of people with different backgrounds. And over the last, I guess, is my fourth year working with the Department of Labor. And we're focusing on employment for people with disabilities.

Gerri Allamby: [00:19:20.54] Right, because they're underemployed and underserved. And they are some of the most loyal and dedicated people that you have in your workforce. They are top performers. Disabled talent, they are top performers. So it's an untapped market, if you will, of talent.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:19:40.86] Agreed, I wanted to dive into analytics and scorecards a little bit more. Can you maybe talk about analytics scorecards and how they relate to DEI initiatives? Maybe kind of just walk us through the basics. I mean, you know, this is a 25 minute podcast, so the best that we can ask at a time. But if somebody is wanting to create a diversity, equity and inclusion scorecard, what does that look like?

Gerri Allamby: [00:20:07.26] Sure. So we could start with the basics. Right? So scorecards to me are crucial in tracking how your DE&I strategies initiatives are making an impact and if they're making an impact with moving the needle at all levels of an organization. So you start with the basics race, ethnicity, gender, disability and veterans. Right? If your HRIS has those those indicators where an employee can self identify, you're going to pull that data into what your scorecard is. You know, for those of us who are federal contractors, you know, there are some back, you know, there's some statistics that we can use as far as what's available out in the marketplace to sit there and compare that to our representation. Right? So just start with the basics. Race, ethnicity, gender. What does that look like? Stratify it out through your levels of your organization. Management levels, you know, could be a function. It could be a business unit, whatever. Stratify that out. The most important thing, and I can't stress this enough about analytics and scorecards, is data integrity. That has to be the highest priority of any organization because you're going to use that for your scorecard. So think of it this way. If there's garbage in your HRIS, there's going to be garbage in your scorecard, right? If your data isn't good, your scorecard isn't going to be good. I've worked on several scorecards throughout my career and they basically stay the same. Race, ethnicity, gender. We've been looking at individuals with disabilities. We've been looking at veterans. Now we're looking at generational. So that becomes another layer or component. So if I had any advice to give, start out simple. Race, ethnicity, gender first. And make sure your data is, is pristine.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:22:03.70] So what does that mean? Like what does pristine data look like?

Gerri Allamby: [00:22:07.54] Sure. So pristine data to me is everybody has a race, ethnicity and a gender. Right? There are times that, you know, sometimes when you're on boarding folks from your ATS, on the on boarding interim measure, and then they go into whatever your HRIS platform is, some of the data gets lost. So if you're running a headcount report and you have race, ethnicity, gender populated within your data fields, within your report, scroll through and look, are there any blanks? Am I missing anything from anybody? OK, maybe I have out of let's say I don't know, 500 employees. I might have three or four of them that are missing a gender. Maybe they're missing a race. Reach out to your HR partners. Reach out to the person that may be at the location to sit there and say, hey, can you do a visual for me and let me know what this person is? Because by federal law, you can do a visual as to what you may think that person is. And then when you find out where that person gets back to you work with whoever your data specialist is or your person who's in charge of your HRIS to sit there and update in your HRIS, hopefully you have a visual field, what that person was visually identified. So, no blanks in any of those, at least race, ethnicity, gender wise. With disability and with veterans, because that's a voluntary self ID, at least in the federal contractor world, it's a little bit more difficult to track that. So in a scorecard, or if you're looking at the at the at measuring that, you have to kind of put a disclaimer in saying that a disability and veterans is a voluntary self ID, out of the 500 people that we have in our workforce. Two percent or one percent have self-identified voluntarily as a person with disability, and kind of leave it at that.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:24:02.90] I think that I'm envisioning of all the ways that your data isn't pristine, right? People not entering the information, maybe went through an HRIS change. And so that information didn't, you didn't know, but it didn't get all the way pushed through from, you know, HRIS one to HRIS two. So think it's a very hands on approach what you're asking, time consuming. But once you have done all the data cleanup, ensuring that you've done your part, your numbers are going to be reflective of your current employee population.

Gerri Allamby: [00:24:38.05] Right. And the key thing here is to keep in mind, because in past lives, I've had people say, well, you know, I'm looking at the at this and how many more acts do I need to hire to be on point with? And I'm like, it's not a matter of how many X you need to hire. The numbers are what the numbers are and they're directional because no data is 100 percent correct, no matter how I may slice or dice data, meaning if I want to look at management level. So let me say, I want to look at my my upper echelon of my organization, VP and above that may not give me 50 percent gender and 30 percent people of color. It may not I may look at the next level down and I may be a 50 percent gender, but I may be at 10 percent people of color. Right?. So, it's not an exact science, again, you're trying to determine where you are as closely as you can because a lot of leaders get hung up in the numbers, missing the point as to its directional. If we know that the general working population, let's say for females, is 52 percent and we're at 35, that's simple math, right? We should have more, but we don't, so how do we go about solving for that? What initiatives can we put in place to attract more females? What succession planning can we put in place to promote high potential female talent? Do we have a mentorship program? Do we have a sponsorship program to sit there and help move females through the different levels of our organization?

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:26:22.17] I feel like you have somewhat answered this question, but I'm going to ask it directly. So given all this information, what in your mind are the top metrics that will help HR leaders form a compelling narrative for those key stakeholders about DEI progress?

Gerri Allamby: [00:26:40.05] Sure. Representation, obviously, number one. So you know exactly where you are and where you're not. Second, what do your hires look like? Are you attracting and hiring diverse talent? So you need to look at who's coming into your organization. OK. Lastly, what do your voluntary terminations look like, and I'm specifying voluntary because these are why people are choosing to leave your organization. Do you have an exit survey that sheds light on why your employees are leaving? Because retention is a key indicator, right? So if you have 25 percent of your hires that are diverse, that are coming in your door, they're, they're, they're happy with where they're going, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. However, 35 percent of your diverse employees are voluntarily leaving. Then you're not making an impact or increasing your diverse talent or meeting any of your representation goals. Right? So retention is key. Length of time is key. Is everybody that's leaving, are they there for a year, two years, three, five, or are they a lifer? Look at that as well. So I think those are the key representation, hiring, voluntary terms. I think that's a good starting point to get a good picture of where your organization is perfect.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:27:58.57] Well, I feel like you've given us a lot of really great hopefully a starting point. We need to get our data clean. Here are some top metrics that we need to be focusing on. And then, of

course, the the greater why behind this. Thank you so much for taking time to talk with us today. Gerri, I really appreciate it.

Gerri Allamby: [00:28:17.93] I really appreciate it. I enjoyed being here. I enjoyed being here and talking about it. I'm very passionate in this space.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:28:23.92] I love it. And we're going to link to Gerri's LinkedIn so if you want to connect with her there. Is there any other place that people should go to be able to get more resources, information, or support on this topic?

Gerri Allamby: [00:28:34.49] There's, there's a plethora you can go to. There's the, you know, the Bureau of Labor Statistics is great. Census Bureau is also good, although, you know, they are government websites. There's diversity best practices. Or you could reach out directly to me. I have like I said, like you said, I've had a lot of experience in this space I can help out with formulate what your card, your scorecard should look like or talk to anybody about what they should be measuring and how they're measuring or answer any questions that they may have.

Jessica Miller-Merrell: [00:29:06.04] Well, again, thank you so much for your time and helping H.R. get a jumpstart on DEI efforts or enhance or grow their efforts for the organization. Appreciate you.

Gerri Allamby: [00:29:20.26] Thank you. Thank you so much.

Closing: [00:29:22.57] Are you loving the Workology Podcast? Our Workology community reaches over 600,000 H.R. leaders every single month. Want to be a sponsor? Reach out to us at [Workology.com/advertising](https://workology.com/advertising).

Closing: [00:29:36.28] We want to be able to measure our DEI efforts, but many of us aren't sure where to start. Partnering with company leaders to promote diversity and inclusion throughout the organization is a good practice as we need leadership to be on board in order to make a cultural impact. DEI metrics and analytics can help us understand where we are now, where we need to be or where we would like to be and how large the gap is between those two points. I'm so pleased to have Gerri share her expertise on today's podcast. Thank you for joining the Workology Podcast sponsored by Upskill H.R. and ACE The HR Exam. This podcast is for the disruptive workplace leader who's tired of the status quo. My name is Jessica Miller-Merrell. Until next time this at [Workology.com](https://workology.com) to listen to previous Workology Podcast episodes.