

DIVERSITY IN TRAVEL

*(A FOCUS ON THE
BUSINESS TRAVELER)*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 SESSION DESCRIPTIONS & TAKEAWAYS

04 NICE TO MEET YOU!

05 INCLUSION HUB

06 THE D & I ENVIRONMENT TODAY AND
ITS IMPACT ON TRAVEL COMPANIES

07 THE BUSINESS TRAVELER TODAY

08 CREATING AN INCLUSIVE BUSINESS
TRAVEL EXPERIENCE: THE TRAVEL BUYER

09 CREATING AN INCLUSIVE BUSINESS TRAVEL
EXPERIENCE: THE TRAVEL SUPPLIER



SESSION DESCRIPTION

As nations painstakingly try to reopen in the aftermath of this global pandemic, there is a new emphasis on developing a mindset that embraces diversity in travel and tourism. This session is going to help us understand how conversations on Diversity and Inclusion will impact today's business traveler and how to include diverse perspectives into your travel or selling strategies.

DIVERSITY IN TRAVEL – A FOCUS ON THE BUSINESS TRAVELER



TAKEAWAYS

- The Business Traveler in today's DEI environment.
- The role of the travel manager and supplier in ensuring an inclusive travel experience.
- How to include Diverse Perspectives into your travel or selling strategies.

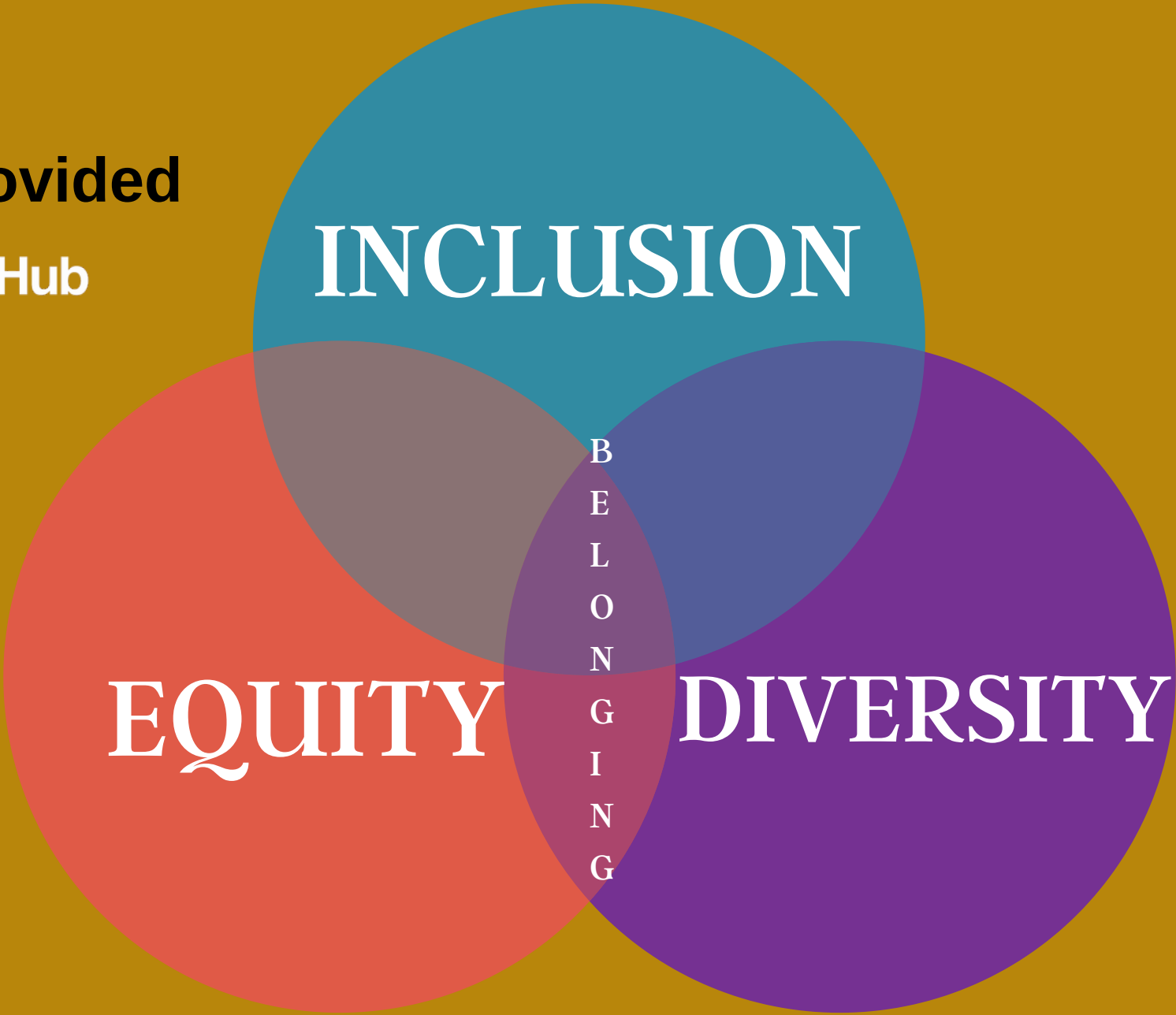


NICE TO MEET YOU!

Abena N. Bondah is the Managing Principal of Gemstone Marketing & Business Consulting, a Hotel Sales & Marketing firm based in the Washington DC area. They offer Taskforce Services during transitions in hotel's sales leadership, recruiting services for hotels and adhoc projects for management companies and asset management firms.

During her career in the hotel industry, she has successfully launched at least Seven brand new hotels in the Washington DC metropolitan area, including entirely new hotel brands. Abena is an award-winning Hotel Sales & Marketing Leader who always turn an underperforming team into a team that exceeds revenue goals. She's had the Highest Revenue Producing Sales Team and Leader awards. She has an extensive knowledge of management, sales, marketing, communications and business development and business travel sales. She is a practical problem solver who is excellent at cultivating strong client loyalty.

Abena is very passionate about improving the lives of children and women in Africa. She directs her time and resources towards such cause. She is a recipient of the U. S. Presidential Gold Service Award for her service to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). She mentors both the young and old in Kingdom work, personal and professional growth.



Diversity

Acknowledging all of the ways people differ: race, sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomics status, religious beliefs, and more.

Equity OR Equality

Equality: A system in which each individual is offered the same opportunities regardless of circumstance.

Equity: Distributes resources based on needs. In a disproportionate society, equity tries to correct its imbalance by creating more opportunities for people who have historically had less access.

Inclusion

Diversity in practice - the act of welcoming, supporting, respecting, and valuing all individuals and groups.

Belonging

Having a functional equitable structure to make all people, no matter their differences, feel welcome. Reaching for equity means, you are striving for a system that benefits everyone, no matter their circumstance. Belonging is when this not only works, but no one feels as if their inclusion is questioned.

THE D & I ENVIRONMENT TODAY AND ITS IMPACT ON TRAVEL COMPANIES

- ACCENTURE 2019 RESEARCH
- *“The Travel Industry’s Best Amenity – DIVERSITY”. By Sarah Dillon.*
- *Travel Providers: Hotels, Airlines & Cruise Lines are still lagging behind in maximizing the richness of diversity and cultivating experiences where travelers and employees feel a sense of belonging.*
- *3 out of 5 Travelers are now paying attention to companies who are committed to D & I – influencing their buying decisions.*
- *55% of Travelers surveyed will book with a hotel company that is committed to D & I practices and values that align with their own. They are also willing to switch travel companies.*
- *Companies without a strong culture of D&I will fail to gain new customers and risk losing their current ones. Losing customers to another travel provider could cost travel companies around the world up to \$212 billion in potential revenue. 3 in 5 travel executives report that it is more difficult now than ever to win customer loyalty.*

50% of travelers are willing to pay a premium of about 5% - 20% to book with travel companies who value and exhibit D & I initiatives.

Most companies have adopted a Hybrid telework model – thus, travel demand today has reduced in comparison to pre-pandemic mode. With suppliers having more rooms to sell than before, the business traveler today has more buying options and less compromises.

Business Travelers today feel empowered by their companies to be WHO they are. They are expressive of their values, principles and personal lives than they used to be. These values affect their travel buying decisions.

BLEISURE

According to a research from Expedia Media Solutions, published in Feb 2022, about 60% of business travelers today are including a leisure component in their business trips (sightseeing and relaxation).

Some are traveling with their families while they work.

Their employers are using BLEISURE as a perk to encourage people to travel again for work and also provide some sort of a work-life balance while on the road.

THE BUSINESS TRAVELER TODAY

- Buyer companies; ie. (Accenture, Deloitte, etc.) are placing D & I initiatives front and center – thus human resource pool (traveler), is more diverse than before.
- During/Post Pandemic, Buyer companies are expanding their client base across shores and venturing into new areas and territories than before. Exposure to new destinations, cultures, business processes and environments.
- According to the Accenture research discussed earlier on, 82% of travelers are looking to feel welcomed and to be treated fairly.
- The traveler today needs more than an efficient WIFI Connection – they need PERSONALIZED services: 74% care about the range of products and services hotels offer to make people in their diverse segment feel included.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE BUSINESS TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

THE TRAVEL BUYER



- During the RFP process, clearly communicate your company/organization's D & I practices and expectations of your suppliers in ensuring that these are upheld for your travelers.
- Ask suppliers to share their D & I initiatives with you during the RFP and contracting process.
- Utilize modern technology to create travel profiles for your travelers (listing their preferences and personalized experience expectations).
- Work with your suppliers and develop an online concierge tool that your travelers can access in their OBT, which highlights various items, local areas, dining and etc. which cater to their preferences.
- Invest in Realtime feedback applications or forums in your OBT that enable travelers to share their experiences during their stay – not post stay.
- “See before you buy?” – Where possible, buyers should invest in experiencing their key vendors' products, services and destinations prior to accepting RFPs.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE BUSINESS TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

The Travel Supplier

Make D & I a priority - know and understand your company's D & I initiatives (awareness, alignment, action, advocacy, accountability and authenticity).

Just like CSR – Package and market these initiatives on all your platforms.

Include in your reservation questionnaires (questions centered around stay expectations – the local area, dining options, etc.).

Invest in D & I strategists to develop and implement initiatives specific to your industry/clientele.

Time to revamp products – does your company have the ability to offer options?

Utilize your local vendors.

Create an inclusive welcome experience, services and amenities.

Have a D & I response team in place to take swift, corrective measures in any related incidents.

Be open to EVOLVING.

Connect
With
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