

Belonging at Bellrock

2 years ago



Insight from Bellrock chief people officer John Hamilton, who explains what belonging at Bellrock means to the business and its people, and how it underpins the evolution of its DE&I Strategy.

We are a people business. We don't make anything. We don't build anything. We don't dig anything out the ground. We are not farming anything.

We are a services business.

So having people who are motivated and inspired to do their very best is absolutely crucial to us, and to the success of what we do. Which is why nurturing, supporting and developing our people forms the basis of our progressive diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) strategy, Belonging at Bellrock.

But why does it matter?

Over the past few years the company has seen rapid pace in growth. As we aspire to grow as a business, our DE&I strategies need to keep pace.

So, when I joined, I was given this magic opportunity to form, from scratch, a whole new structure and people strategy, which a company like ours needs. My role as chief people officer is a board level position, which excites me because that demonstrates just how important people development is to our board.

We need to become, and remain, a much more engaging, much more rewarding place for people to work. So, over the past year we've been working on evolving our DE&I strategy for the business, building it from the ground up.

Equity, the next step in Equality

Now would be a good moment for me to explain the reason why we chose to use 'equity' and not 'equality' in our DE&I Strategy name. The two words are often incorrectly used interchangeably but there's a difference in meaning.

Equality means giving everybody the same resources or opportunities, whereas equity goes that extra step. It recognises that everybody is unique, which means accounting for everybody's variable circumstances and allocating resources and opportunities according to what their individual needs are, so they receive an equal outcome.

Not everybody starts in the same place so when we were doing our research on the strategy it felt important for us to make that distinction.

What is Belonging at Bellrock?

When we began unravelling our existing policies to start exploring how our DE&I Strategy could evolve, we took it back to basics and asked some simple questions, such as 'What sort of business do we want to be?' 'What's the best measure of the people strategy?' to look at what really matters to us as a business.

First and foremost, we want Bellrock to be a place where people feel they belong. Belonging is a combination of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It's about creating a place where everybody can be their authentic self, where they get that equality of opportunity, are treated equitably and where anybody and everybody who wants to, can thrive and progress.

You can point at the tangible benefits of inclusion or diversity or equity, whereas belonging is a feeling; it's an essence of the place.

If we can create an environment where our people can be themselves in a safe space, and be the person they want to be without feeling that it's hampering their progression or aspirations, then that's a place where people can belong.

And we have to then align that belief against the vision of our people strategy, which is to create an organisation that people choose to join and then be part of our Bellrock family for a long time.

Attracting a diverse and inclusive talent pool

We want to attract and retain people in our business. For context, we work in a sector – property and construction – that is predominantly male, particularly in senior roles, particularly in technical roles, and it's predominantly white.

It's also predominantly ableist in terms of we don't have a high number of disabled people and we don't do enough to champion LGBTQ+. And this comes at a time where attracting talented people to our business is really hard, and yet we're disenfranchising large portions of the population by not appearing to be the kind of employer for them.

We need to go beyond the minimum, not just because it's a good thing to do, but because it's actually good for business as well.

Our recently launched [Women at Bellrock](#) series is a great example of showcasing talent and giving our people the platform to shine and inspire. The series shares real stories from successful women across the

business. It's about authentic people doing real jobs. It highlights that we don't need to change massively, we've just got to do a better job at championing the people that we have got to inspire and attract other people like that to come and work here.

Our DE&I strategy is absolutely crucial to developing this, if you don't make a workplace inclusive, if you don't make it equitable, and if you're not diverse, then you're not going to attract the people that you need to power your business, which is ultimately what we're trying to achieve.

We're not interested in one-hit-wonder policies, we want to embed great solutions that are everlasting (to give a nod to [Jim Collins' Good to Great](#) article). We want our strategy to evolve and become part of the way we do things.

The next step for us is to turn the strategy into an action plan. With the help of an internal non-hierarchical steering group, we'll map out a three-year action plan for the business.

Time to stop talking and start doing.