



2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

GMR MARKETING DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

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STORY 01



“The work of DEI belongs to everyone at GMR, regardless of job title, seniority or tenure with the agency.”

CAMERON PARSONS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

At GMR, we make experiences that become lasting memories. Those experiences will only resonate if we understand all our audiences deeply, and if our talent reflects the diversity of the world around us.

In 2021, GMR placed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the center of every action or decision we made, with the belief that diversity drives business growth and innovation. As you’ll read in the pages that follow, applying that singular strategic focus requires a great deal of intent. It also requires a shared understanding that the work of DEI belongs to everyone at GMR, regardless of job title, seniority or tenure with the agency.

This past year was one of change and growth at GMR. For DEI, that meant building the strategic framework required to ensure our mandate of ownership by all StoryMakers was supported by the tools, resources, and access required to drive progress.

In this year in review, we’re inviting you to learn more about the ways in which this

commitment came to life, and how we see it shaping GMR in 2022 and beyond.

You’ll read about our Executive DEI Council, which has set the tone for leadership accountability when it comes to both supporting and participating the work, and how that flows down to our day-to-day actions in forums like our Representation Advisory Committee and our Employee Resource Groups.

I also hope that you’ll see a clear thread of commitment to continuous improvement. We believe this powerful journey is never complete, and we’re actively seeking ways to further ingrain DE&I in how we run our agency, and everyday interactions with our clients and community partners.

There’s room for continued growth in pursuit of these goals, but for now, I’m honored to thank all of the StoryMakers across GMR who put in the hard work to deliver the progress we made in 2021. Together, our future is bright.



STORY — 02



“We know that great stories are made when individuals responsible for crafting them feel unencumbered in bringing forth their unique talent and individual perspective.”

ALIAH BERMAN
CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CDO

As Cameron mentioned, collaboration is central to ensuring success in the integration of DEI as a strategic pillar of our business. We know that great stories are made when individuals responsible for crafting them feel unencumbered in bringing forth their unique talent and individual perspective. In order to create the environment for that vision to come to life, we placed a great deal of our focus in 2021 on advancing our DEI guiding principles, of which we have 10 (see graphic on next page).

The principles bolded (on the following page) are the ones we’re opening a direct window into for this year in review. And when you come back here in 2023 to read about our progress in 2022, it’s my intent that we’ll open the window a little further to more of these principles, because that’s the type of progress that defines success on this continuous journey – building a strong foundation, staying uncomfortable in search of accountability, and always checking back with the goals of our three DEI pillars: Culture; Workforce; and The Work.

Aliah Berman

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01

Uphold DEI as our operating system. It is central to everything we do.

02

Hold ourselves accountable, always.

03

Make room for mistakes. Even with good intentions, we're still learning and growing.

04

Acknowledge discomfort. Move forward with courageous dialogue.

05

Keep a clear goal but take a flexible path. Allow for healthy disagreement.

06

Strive to be an industry leader. Be the change we expect to see.

07

Lead with respect and kindness. This is non-negotiable.

08

Never stay neutral on inequity or human rights.

09

Focus on impact, not intent.

10

Value progress over perfection. Let's go.

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Story — 03

HOLDING OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE

Without measurable goals, delivering meaningful and visible progress in diversity, equity and inclusion in an organization is difficult, if not impossible. Knowing that GMR is not unique in looking for ways to use data to track improvement, we set out in 2021 to create a blended approach that factors in progress for workforce representation along with insights in to driving inclusive culture and advancing business goals.

“DEI work gets complex quickly,” Aliah Berman, chief diversity officer for TBWA/America and GMR, said. “It’s a target that evolves at the speed of culture, and the work is never done, but if you root yourself in giving people a voice, listening, and taking action, you’ve got a start in the right direction.

“We’ve spent years revamping metrics, raising the bar on manager training, and working to establish more inclusive systems and practices and our hope now is that the work put in evolving these efforts translates to metrics that clearly demonstrate the business impact of elevating DEI as a priority.”

We are pleased to have made significant progress in the way of gender representation at leadership levels, with female leadership equaling that of male leadership in mid-manager roles. We have also doubled Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in executive leadership levels and seen an encouraging increase in overall BIPOC representation at the agency as well BIPOC in mid-manager roles.

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Story — 04

“Trust is built on proof, and proof comes from putting in the work, not just the words. And we’re all responsible for putting in the work.”

ADAM LIPPARD
CHIEF PARTNERSHIP OFFICER

NEVER BE NEUTRAL

This guiding principle, along with the principle of accountability previously detailed, led us to examine our opportunities like how to close gaps in representation of BIPOC employees at all levels of the company and women in senior level leadership. We use data to identify our key areas of opportunity and inform where we need to focus our attention.

Like many brands and corporations, GMR found itself in a unique position in the summer of 2020, seeking to deliver an authentic message of outrage, empathy, and compassion in the face of violence against the Black and Asian American/Pacific Islander communities and larger instances of racism and systemic oppression.

In 2021, it was clear that the time had come for messages to translate into actions that impact how we do business.

In our evolving world of remote work, we believe in the power of building connections through transparent conversations and idea sharing, which is why providing our StoryMakers with agency-wide platforms for DEI discussions was a priority in 2021.

Our DEI Talks series, which centered intimate conversations on broad issues of diversity spanning identity, race, gender, and culture was crucial in fostering an internal culture where we then felt comfortable leading those same types of cultural conversations externally with our clients.

At the 2021 Sports Business Journal ALL IN conference, GMR’s chief partnership officer, Adam Lippard, led a conversation with longtime marketing executive Antonio Lucio on how leaders can operationalize DEI and weave it into the fabric of their organizations. In his reflections on the conversation, Lippard discussed how expectations of brands and employers have shifted.

“We’re way past just avoiding missteps: the bar is now set at actions and solutions, and it will only continue to rise,” he wrote. “Trust is built on proof, and proof comes from putting in the work, not just the words. And we’re all responsible for putting in the work.”



Knowing when to step back and let your team take over isn't weakness. It's strength. And it's leadership. But it's something we haven't seen enough in sports or in business, because for too long we've held a narrow definition of what "strength" and "leadership" look like — and who gets to lead.

GMR MARKETING
ON THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

LEADERS ON MENTAL HEALTH

As the world's eyes shifted to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic & Paralympic Games, the emerging issue of mental health as a centerpiece of DEI was brought to life by Simone Biles. The Team USA legend withdrew from several gymnastics events after publicly admitting her struggles with a series of physical issues and connected mental health moments that Biles felt were impacting her safety on the gym floor.

With GMR's decades-long connection to The Games, we recognized that this elevation of a long-suppressed aspect of DEI required a public outpouring of gratitude and support for Simone, and for celebrating leading through vulnerability. On our LinkedIn page, we published the [first-person perspective of a StoryMaker](#) who had the strength to recognize their own need for a pause and to ask for help with their mental health. We believe that type of selflessness is the future of leadership for institutions across the world, and we want to be at the forefront of helping to tell those stories.

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STORY — 05

UPHOLDING DEI AS OUR OPERATING SYSTEM

For DEI to really stick across an organization as an operating system, you must identify, attract, and grow a diverse workforce that feels empowered to enact transformative change. At GMR, we believe this starts with having StoryMakers that reflect the rich diversity of our world, because their creative vision is what drives the success of our work.

At the heart of this is our Experience Design (XD) team, which consists of hundreds of creative minds who constantly reimagine how the world's best brands come to life.

In 2021, the XD team set out to mobilize its recruitment efforts around connecting with communities of color in order to build meaningful relationships and create pathways for new talent to become part of the GMR creative team. This effort, dubbed "Diverse Force," connected with organizations such as Array Crew, Free the Work, Hue, Queer Design Club, Black Creatives, Artists Working in Education, Black Holocaust Museum and others to diversify the team.

"In 2021, we created Diverse Force to address the need to take an active role in creating a pathway from BIPOC communities to our team and ensure more perspectives are represented.," said Diana Klassen, executive creative operations director for GMR. "I'm proud that our teams are feeling confident as more voices are being represented and that we recognize our work is just beginning.

"We see Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as fundamental to our world, because we are people making things for other people. We must show up - listening, accountable, and credible to the worlds we want to participate in.

"I am also proud that the energy is stronger than it was a year ago and that this is a leadership conversation driving action and expectation to recognize distinct perspectives."

Our Experience Technology (XT) team undertook a similar effort in 2021, creating a DEI task force focused on tackling recruitment opportunities, upholding our diverse slates initiative, and identifying areas of creative thinking and client work to evolve our DEI offerings.

"I'm grateful that GMR has made Diversity, Equity and Inclusion a priority across the company," said Stacy Mallak, a digital project manager at GMR. "DEI efforts were trendy in 2020 and it would have been easy to fade into the background as cultural discussion decreased. I'm so pleased that our efforts have not fizzled out but are gaining continued momentum into 2022 and beyond.

"I'm excited to see what unique perspective the Experience Technology and Experience Products DEI task force will bring to the way we continue to do the work."



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DIANA KLASSEN
EXECUTIVE CREATIVE OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

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STORY

06

FOCUSING ON IMPACT

One way this comes to life externally is through partnerships with organizations that have existing pipelines with professionals of color.

In 2021, GMR sponsored the 2021 Sports & Entertainment Equity Network (SEEN) Career Showcase. The SEEN Career Showcase is an opportunity for business professionals of color to network with a myriad of companies in a variety of industries to get exposure to potential opportunities for career growth. For GMR, this partnership led to us adding new full-time StoryMakers to our agency.

TALENT MANAGEMENT

Implementing a talent management system that leads with a DEI lens has allowed us to rethink our employee life-cycle, from recruiting and hiring to development and advancement. Leading with the way we discover and attract talent for open roles, GMR provides hiring managers with a comprehensive talent pool that reflects our populace and includes the best talent that ensures reflects racially diverse interview slates that intentionally addresses gaps in the workforce identified through our data analysis. To further our recruitment efforts, hiring managers are also expected to diversify their professional networks and approach talent searches with an eye for bringing the best and brightest Storymakers to our agency. As a result, 51% of our 2021 new hires were racially diverse which can be attributed to our intentionality around this new approach to recruitment.

FORMAL & INFORMAL LEARNING

We also know that progress in positively impacting your workforce takes time—we cannot expect rapid changes overnight—which is why we set about in 2021 to empower every StoryMaker to commit to formal and informal learning and to taking action to mitigate unconscious bias in our interacts and work processes. We know that those small actions add up to big outcomes.

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Our Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are a major part of this effort to give every employee a chance to make an impact, with their members playing a role in developing programming and content for the agency that expands how we think about various dimensions of diversity and to make us more culturally fluent. In 2021, we had employees across the country participating in 11 active ERGs, which included: Allied (focused on DEI), Community Impact (focused on CSR in the places where we live and work), Health + Wellness, Culture Committee (focused on internal events and culture) and GLOW (focused on the growth and leadership of women). We also spent the year evolving our ERG structure to ensure they build connection in our new remote work environment.



“Participating in this year’s Hispanic Heritage Month Panel and in various DEI discussions over the past year has taught me how to have a voice. It’s taught me how to vocalize the things I’ve felt, but never had the words to express; it’s taught me how to vocalize humility when my biases have played a role in impacting others and it’s taught me the importance of teaching, encouraging and empowering my family to do the same. For that, I’m grateful.”

PALOMA CHAVEZ
ART DIRECTOR

DIVERSE VOICES

For Black History Month, Pride, and Hispanic Heritage Month, ERGs brought together blended topics that centered the experiences of GMR’s creative and diverse voices. For each community, StoryMakers talked about how they brought their perspectives forward to represent an authentic voice in their work.



“Coffee Convos was the first group I joined as a new hire at GMR, and I immediately felt welcomed and connected to the agency with my pairings,” said MaryJane Lukas, a human resources specialist at GMR and the Coffee Convos lead. “Two years later, I’ve built great relationships and expanded my friendwork through Coffee Convos. The initiative has adapted and evolved, but the one thing that hasn’t changed is creating meaningful connections across our agencies.”

MARYJANE LUKAS
HR SPECIALIST

COFFEE CONVOS

StoryMakers also took their own steps to create new opportunities to connect and engage on topics of belonging in 2021. Our Coffee Convos platform evolved to a virtual platform and expanded to include our partner agencies across the Omnicom Experiential Group.



“The creation of DEI toolkits demonstrates our commitment to supporting leaders with the tools and resources they need to be effective DE&I communicators, an area where we can all grow.”

ELKE JONES
CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER

DEI TOOLKIT

And to ensure this work reached all levels of the agency, leaders across GMR were provided a new training platform and DEI Toolkit, which offered practical, everyday application of our DEI guiding principles on topics like talking about current events in the workplace; addressing microaggressions in real time; and giving equitable feedback to everyone.

“The creation of DEI toolkits demonstrates our commitment to supporting leaders with the tools and resources they need to be effective DE&I communicators, an area where we can all grow,” said Elke Jones, GMR’s chief strategy officer.

The live training platform that supported the toolkit reached more than 65 percent of leaders across GMR, providing them an additional layer of understanding on how they can help StoryMakers grow in their individual learning and development pathways.

“DEI is our collective responsibility – it is tethered to intentional reflection, collaborative discomfort, and measurable execution,” said Christopher McCoy, a talent development designer at GMR.

“Behavior change, much like adult learning, may be sparked from a catalyst, yet it must be reinforced through consistency and accountability. Our approach to DEI learning embraces the philosophy of ‘progress over perfection’ combined with an array of learning modalities that encourage us all to learn and grow, together.”



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CHRISTOPHER MCCOY
TALENT DEVELOPMENT DESIGNER

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STORY — 07

“At GMR, we’re always partnering with our clients in search of partnerships that drive sustainable, game-changing progress and impact.”

PETER AIELLO

VICE PRESIDENT OF SPONSORSHIP & EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

STRIVING TO BE AN INDUSTRY LEADER

Making stories rooted in cultural fluency is a lofty goal for any creative agency, but at GMR, we believe we’re building the standard of diversity required to help deliver brands the relevance they desire in a vast and shifting array of culture moments.

In June 2021, our long-standing partnership with America’s Black Holocaust Museum (ABHM) afforded us the opportunity to work with them on a virtual Juneteenth celebration. GMR’s video production and Experience Design teams collaborated with ABHM to lead insightful discussions and showcase musical talent that brought forth America’s nationwide story of Juneteenth in concert with deep local connections of the celebration to community leaders from throughout Milwaukee, where the ABHM is located.

We were also honored to be embedded in supporting a game-changing partnership for women’s sports, headlined by Google’s connection with the WNBA and ESPN to deliver the best of Google’s products and innovation to the WNBA fan experience.

As part of this partnership, Google is now a WNBA Changemaker, and their focus as the world’s leading technology is working with ESPN as the league’s television broadcast partner to help expand reach for women’s basketball. Ultimately, representation for women’s sports in the media will improve as Google helps to deliver the league’s incredible talent to a growing audience via multiple platforms, and GMR is proud to be a partner in that effort.

“At GMR, we’re always partnering with our clients in search of partnerships that drive sustainable, game-changing progress and impact,” said Peter Aiello, vice president of sponsorship and experiential marketing for GMR. “Google’s WNBA Changemaker platform, designed to increase visibility and coverage of women’s sports and to help break down barriers, delivers on that.

“And as a dad of a six-year-old girl, it gives me hope that she and other little girls will have the same opportunity to watch, play, and have a career in a sport they love, as my son does.”



ABOUT GMR MARKETING

We are an experience agency, built to make stories that become lasting memories. GMR pioneered experience marketing back in 1979, and we're still leading the way. We embed brands into experiences leveraging shared passions. We create experiences that are founded on data, rooted in

science, grounded in strategy, designed meticulously and executed flawlessly. Our passionate global team creates, consults and activates in more than 70 countries. We're headquartered in the United States and are part of Omnicom Group Inc. Learn more at [GMRMarketing.com](https://www.gmrmarketing.com).