



Dear Network,

In 2026, inclusion is no longer about optics. It is about access; to talent, innovation, and better decisions.

The strongest signals this year are clear: organizations are widening talent pools through neurodiversity and skills-based hiring, auditing AI for bias, investing in psychological safety, and responding to major demographic shifts. Across every region, the same lesson emerges: the organizations best positioned for the future are those that can unlock the full potential of their people.

Europe: The Era of "Trust Us" is Over

Europe is moving from intentions to accountability.

- **EU Women on Boards Directive:** Organizations across Europe are actively adjusting succession plans and leadership pipelines ahead of the June 2026 deadline for 40% non-executive or 33% all-board underrepresented gender representation.
- **SAP continues to expand its Autism at Work programme,** demonstrating how neurodiverse talent contributes to innovation, with 215 colleagues with autism across 15 countries.
- **European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Awards (2026)** recognized cities such as Józsefváros/Budapest, Leven and Leiden, highlighting inclusion as a driver of economic development and competitiveness.



North America: The Debate is Loud. The Strategy is Quiet.

While public discussions around DEI remain polarized, organizations continue investing in inclusion as it solves business problems.

- **Mastercard Inclusion Hub (January 2026):** Co-designed with autistic Australians through Autism CRC, offering 25 practical measures including Sensory Notes for accessibility.
- **Mastercard Global Inclusive Growth Forum (April 2026):** Leaders in Washington, D.C. discussed AI, financial inclusion, and economic participation, reinforcing inclusion's link to innovation.
- Many are **rebranding DEI** as "Belonging," "Inclusive Culture," or "Opportunity Strategy" while maintaining similar practices.



Latin America: Inclusion Meets Opportunity

Across Latin America, inclusion is increasingly linked to economic mobility and market growth.

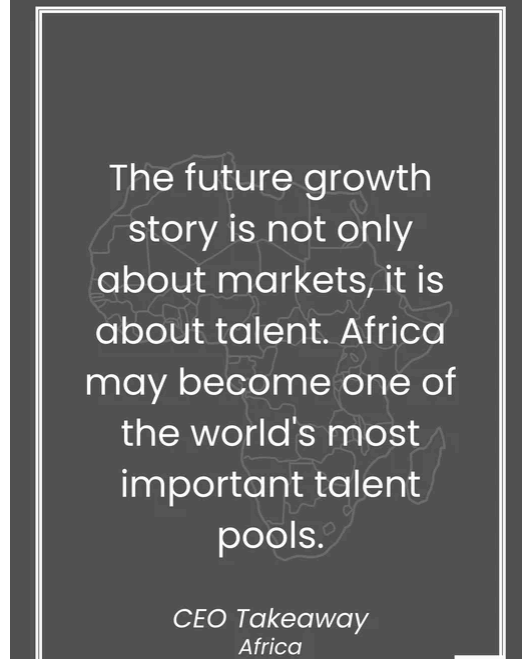
- **Natura &Co** continues to lead on gender, race, and LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- **Mercado Libre** is investing in digital inclusion and female talent development across the region.
- **Grupo Bimbo** has expanded accessibility and inclusive leadership initiatives across multiple countries.



Africa: The Next Global Talent Engine

Africa remains the world's youngest continent, with a median age of approximately 19 years. The challenge is no longer whether talent exists, but how to develop and integrate it.

- **Safaricom** continues expanding initiatives focused on digital inclusion and women's participation in technology.
- **MTN Group** has strengthened leadership-development programmes aimed at increasing female representation in management.
- Governments and employers across the continent are investing heavily in **youth employability and workforce readiness.**



The Middle East: Inclusion is Fueling Economic Transformation

Across the region, workforce participation is increasingly viewed as a growth strategy.

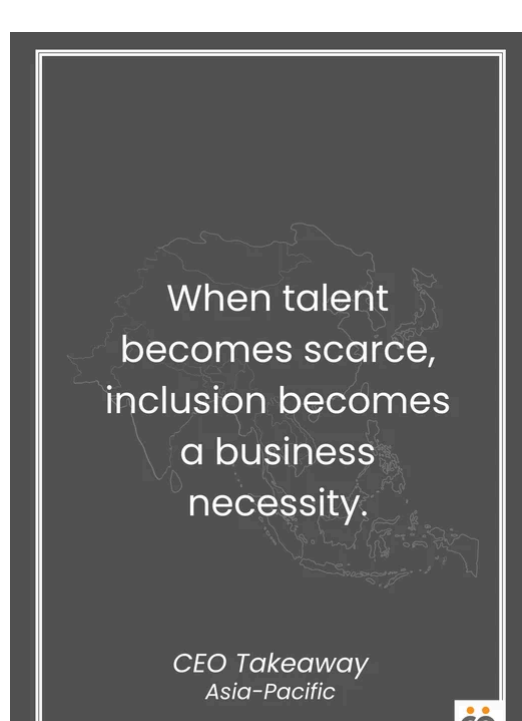
- **Saudi Arabia's female labor-force** participation reached **36.3%**, significantly exceeding Vision 2030's original targets.
- **Flexible and modern work arrangements (2026)** expanded opportunities for women, with over 240,000 flexible work contracts recorded for women between 2020-Q3 2025 and 280,000+ remote work contracts since 2019.
- **Nitaqat 2.0 (2026)** aims to create 340,000 private-sector jobs for Saudi nationals over the next three years.



Asia-Pacific: The Talent Shortage has already Started

Across Asia-Pacific, aging populations and labour shortages are forcing organizations to rethink how they attract, develop, and retain talent.

- **Infosys** continues expanding disability inclusion and workforce development programmes.
- **DBS Bank** remains a regional benchmark for inclusive leadership and future-of-work practices.
- **India's public transportation** initiatives for women demonstrate how accessibility can directly influence workforce participation.



Five Signs CEOs shouldn't Ignore

1. AI Is Becoming an Inclusion Issue

As AI becomes embedded in recruitment and decision-making, organizations are increasingly auditing algorithms to reduce bias and improve trust.

2. Neurodiversity Is Going Mainstream

Organizations are widening talent pools to access scarce skills and different ways of thinking.

3. Skills Are Replacing Credentials

Potential increasingly matters more than pedigree in a rapidly changing labour market.

4. Psychological Safety Drives Performance

The best ideas rarely emerge from cultures where people stay silent.

5. Demographics Are Rewriting Workforce Strategy

From aging populations in Europe and Asia to workforce expansion in Africa and the Middle East, inclusion is increasingly becoming an economic necessity.

Looking Ahead: Inclusion as a Leadership Capability

As we move into the second half of 2026, the challenge is turning inclusion into everyday behaviors that strengthen collaboration, innovation, and performance. Lasting impact depends on leaders creating environments where diverse perspectives contribute to better decisions.

Around the world, the most successful organizations are reaching the same conclusion: talent is becoming scarcer, innovation more complex, and change more constant. In this environment, inclusion is no longer a programme. It is a leadership capability.

Warm regards,
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