



# How Inclusion Advisor Enhances Equity at Merck

ADVANCING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION WITH  
PEER-TO-PEER RECOGNITION

Merck, a 69,000-person biopharmaceutical company, uses cutting-edge science and research to improve lives for both patients and for Merck employees. Through partnership with Workhuman®, Merck is using Inclusion Advisor to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into its recognition program and culture.

Hear from Christopher Cardarelli, executive director of global diversity and inclusion at Merck, on how Inclusion Advisor ensures that employees are seen, heard, and encouraged to bring their whole selves to work.

Read on for details and to catch the full video on YouTube.



**It's important to understand that people receive things differently. Words matter. ... This is just another way to check your thinking, consciously check your mindset, because those recognition opportunities are moments that really matter.**



An interview with  
Christopher Cardarelli  
Executive Director, Global  
Diversity & Inclusion  
Merck

## Describe your role as executive director of global diversity and inclusion at Merck.



My role is to really ensure that when we look at those systems, practices, and policies, that they are most inclusive.

When you look at job postings: Are your job postings posted in a way that attracts, or [do they] use language that is more masculine vs. feminine? **There is no shortage of technology that allows us to understand that good intention[s] might be falling flat.**

So, how do you make these things more inclusive? That is part of my role. Trying to bring that to light helps leaders at all levels be better leaders when it comes to inclusive leadership. And for me, that is such an opportunity because I think as people, we hunger for that.

We've survived a pandemic. We still see social injustice. We still see hate crimes. People are experiencing mental health issues based on work, based on their experiences of work, far more than they ever have been reported.

## Merck was the first Workhuman customer to pilot Inclusion Advisor – what was that experience like?



I came into this, being in the diversity, equity, and inclusion space, because we recognize that Merck, that our systems – whether it is systems of talent attraction, recognition, promotion, compensation – we needed to make sure diversity, equity, and inclusion was embedded in it. So, that was the intent. **Let's work with Workhuman, to leverage, in the flow of work, the opportunity to remind people: Are you being equitable? Are you being inclusive, both in terms of who you're extending recognition to and the words that you use to recognize them?**

It's important to understand that people receive things differently. Words matter.

So, just these nudges – I like to call them nudges – you can choose to click on the pop up, or you can choose to [say], no, I don't need that, I'm just going to move on. But we saw most people were clicking on the pop up. And that nudge of: Are you being inclusive, in terms of who's being recognized? Are you being equitable, in terms of giving one person a certain amount vs. another? Does that make sense relative to their contribution?

And then when you go to write the recognition, actually thinking about the words: Are you sending a message that is the most inclusive [it] could be? We know not everyone clicks on the nudges ... but those who do, it's demonstrated that they are making changes. They are accepting [that] it's challenging their thinking.

**I've always, in partnership with Workhuman, have thought about, at the heart of this is humans, right? Understanding how to reach them, motivate them, inspire them – this is just another way to check your thinking, consciously check your mindset, because those recognition opportunities are moments that really matter.**

They matter to an individual: I feel seen, I feel heard, I feel like I belong. I feel like I'm adding value and it's appreciated.

## Based on your experience at Merck, what advice do you have for organizations looking to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion?



So, what comes to mind is really getting people to understand the value. Authenticity is so important. We hear a lot about that in this space, particularly in my role.

**[We need to] ensure that people are authentic, that they're vulnerable, that they're curious.**

Sometimes we hide behind what we think we need to be. We don't want to say the wrong thing. We don't want to do the wrong thing to be perceived as not inclusive. Make it be something that enables people. Vulnerability is power.

Authenticity – people can see through not being authentic, just thanking somebody for the sake of thanking them because it's performative or obligatory – but actually catching people and calling to mind the impact that they had [and] the outcome that they influenced.

So, I think our journey has been one that, from a DEI perspective, our ability to understand who's being recognized: Men vs. women? What about our communities of color? Our colleagues who maybe come from a different background [or] a different generation? Who's receiving? Who's sending?

We can actually motivate people to say, hey, you might be a little stingy on your recognition, you could do a little better, vs. other groups like, wow, you're really out there – is it adding value? Are we seeing more or something less based on how you are showing up with your people?

This provides an opportunity for every employee to have an impact on culture, to catch people doing things right and recognizing it vs. a focus on, we didn't get this done [or] you didn't do that, but really bringing attention to that which adds value to the organization.



This interview was recorded at Workhuman® Live 2023 in San Diego. Watch it [here](#).

**Ready to push DEI to the forefront  
of your culture? Book a demo to  
get started.**

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