

Table XI

DEIB History

Updated March 2021



Diversity equity and inclusion cannot be sidework to our overall product. It cannot be a program of work or an initiative – but rather a core part of our company strategy. At Table XI, it has to be with all of us in everything we do.

–Mark Rickmeier, CEO, Table XI

DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging) work cannot be an initiative or “project” in our culture – initiatives have a defined start and end point. Creating an initiative gives everyone the illusion that by the end of a certain period of time, things will be fixed and we can go back to business as usual. It also separates DEIB from everyday culture. Our goal is to make DEIB work core to our company strategy and something everyone understands and participates in.

Table XI has never been perfect in these regards, but perfection is neither an achievable goal nor a reason not to strive. Setting goals and measuring how we get there is a way to keep moving forward. And remembering our history helps us to recognize that this is “a movement, not a moment,” as *Hamilton* and many activists since have said. And that we all need to keep making space for this work as our company evolves.

2016: Creating the DEIB team

In 2016, we had four people leave the company within a few weeks of each other. While each individual story could be explained by circumstances outside of Table XI, all four of the people leaving were women. It forced the mostly male leadership to step back and ask: “Is there something going on we don’t see?”

We began to interrogate our own inclusivity and diversity. What started as a conversation expanded into a research project, inviting a neutral third-party interviewer in to talk with current staff and alumni about our culture. The results showed that we had a lot to learn, and important changes to make. We

started the DEIB team to engage everyone at Table XI who was interested in working towards a more equitable culture.

More Inclusive Language to Attract Talent

To make Table XI welcoming to all applicants, we published our inclusivity statement, added details on our DEIB work to our careers page, and evaluated our job postings for unconscious bias and exclusionary language using [Textio](#) and a consultant.

Lunch and Learns for Diversity and Inclusion

The DEIB team hosted several lunch and learns covering topics such as dealing with microaggressions and unconscious bias. We brought in several guest speakers to talk about how they were promoting inclusion in their companies and how we might learn from their experiences.

2017: Taking the conversation about DEIB company-wide

By 2017, we were looking to scale conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion company-wide. That meant establishing dedicated time for training and making changes to our benefits to better support a broader group of our team members.

Improved Benefits

After researching the adoption and usage of our existing benefits, we decided to make some big investments in 2018, including expanded parental leave and better mental health benefits for all employees.

Company-wide Diversity Training

At our company retreat, an external facilitator led us collectively through a series of exercises designed to help us reveal and probe our own biases and microaggressions. The off-site training gave everyone a shared experience and vocabulary, which we built on throughout the year with trainings and workshops on unconscious bias as it relates to race and gender.

New Priorities for Recruiting

Looking at the homogeneity on our own team, we determined to make a conscious effort to change our hiring evaluations from “culture fit” to “culture add.” The new guidelines asked hiring teams to look for observable behaviors, rather than common interests and experiences. We introduced new tools for sourcing, including Vetterly, to help bring in candidates outside of our immediate network.

Community Participation

Part of expanding our hiring efforts involved extending our network into more diverse spaces. In 2017, we sponsored conferences and engaged various communities in the tech industry, joining the Women in Tech conference, Brave Space meetups, Anita Borg Institute, Code Platoon and more.

Support for Different Communication Styles

One of the pain points that surfaced during the retreat was around giving and receiving feedback – people didn't necessarily know how to best communicate with each other. We brought in [Speech IRL](#) founder Katie Gore to run several workshops on effective communication and feedback.

Airtime for Diverse Voices

Our Tech Done Right podcast gave us a new platform to amplify voices in the community. From the outset, host Noel Rappin sought out diverse perspectives and ensured 50% of guests were non-white or non-male.

Continued Learning

The DEIB team continued its lunch and learn series with events including:

- A bookclub on *Angry White Men* by Michael Kimmel
- *Ask vs Guess Culture* - Conference talk discussion with Katherine Wu
- Social justice and bias in algorithms
- Giving advice and how it intersects with privilege
- Using improv techniques to improve collaboration

2018: Making the implicit explicit

Our company-wide work in 2017 made clear that everyone needed the same access to information for our team to grow without bias. We put a big focus on explicitly documenting things that had historically been implicit, and in making sure everyone could understand the ways Table XI made decisions and rewarded team members.

Partnership with FWD Collective

The FWD Collective (For Women + Diversity) helps other companies create inclusive cultures, making them an ideal partner for us as we crafted explicit new policies. We brought folks from FWD Collective in to educate our team and help facilitate several events, including the inclusion dinners. In the fall, we attended and spoke at FWD Summit in Chicago.

Updated Company Values

In 2018, we reworded or outright replaced some values:

- The more proactive “Seek out and embrace new ideas” replaced “Be receptive to new ideas.”
- We made sure to always include the “and share” in “Grow passionately and share.”
- “Challenge and support each other” replaced “Don’t be an asshole,” reorienting us around what we value, not what we want to avoid.

A Clear Hiring Rubric

We formalized our hiring rubric to make our decisions more consistent and transparent, awarding one star for each observable behavior, rather than collecting general impressions. This was another way for us to move away from culture fit – are they like me? – and toward culture add – what can they bring to our company?. Read more about how we approached [diversity recruiting](#).

Transparent Career Progression

Before 2018, we had no formal process for moving up at Table XI. As we wrote down the observable behaviors that would lead to hiring, we also wrote down the observable behaviors that would lead to promotion, providing answers for questions like:

- How does an associate become a consultant?
- How does a consultant become “senior”?

Clear levels and a rubric for achieving them made our promotion process more transparent and equitable.

Inclusion Dinners

To extend our learning to a broader audience – and bring in new perspectives – we started a new event series called “Inclusion Dinners.” The dinners gave us an opportunity to invite guests and speakers from across the city to our space, where we would host dinner and learn together.

Focus on a Feedback Culture

After learning new communication techniques from Speech IRL, we brought Katie Gore back in 2018 to continue helping us build soft skills. She delivered three 90-minute workshops on communication – specifically how to effectively provide and receive feedback across communication styles – talks we still share with new hires.

Slack Education

With a lot of our culture being built across Slack, we introduced Allie Bot to socialize more DEIB concepts and topics where we were already working. The bot introduces topics, shares articles and engages our team in personal learning about diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging every week.

A new DEIB section on company emails

To spread awareness of our work and learnings internally, we began adding a section for DEIB progress to our all-company emails. This helped involve folks who weren't regularly at DEIB meetings or lunch and learns.

All Hands Accountability

We finished the year with our first internal roadmap planning session around the DEIB work. At our day-long company offsite, we assessed where we felt we were with DEIB and used a technique called “success island” to map out where we wanted to go next. This helped to shape our actions and goals for the coming year.

DEIB Lunch and Learns

- “Reflections on Being Marginalized in STEM” - Discussing Naomi Ceder’s Presentation at Write/Speak/Code 2016
- Don’t Be “Don’t Be an Asshole” – Discussion About A New and Improved Table XI Value
- Table XI Terms: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging
- Terms Discussion: Gaslighting, Meritocracy
- “Queer History 101” Discussion
- “Improving Equity in Chicago” with Guest Speaker Imran Khan of Embarc
- “Your Organization Is Not a Melting Pot” with Guest Speaker Michelle Sharp

2019: Making more things equitable

In 2018, we started on a company-wide mission to make things more explicit and give everyone equal access to information. In 2019 we continued that work, adding with further clarification around salary expectations and bringing more formal training and roadmapping to our initial DEIB work.

Published Salary Bands

After creating transparency around levels and promotion criteria, our next big task was to create more transparency around salaries. 2019 was the first time we introduced salary bands and articulated the compensation philosophy of the company.

Rollout of the DEIB Weekly Tips Slackbot

While Allie Bot was focused on general education, we wanted a tactical DEIB Slackbot capable of current nudges to incorporate actions into your week. Two members of our team – Meara and Gilad – built the Slackbot from scratch. The first tip was posted June 10, 2019, and the team has met monthly since to populate the bot with content and invited contributions from across the organization.

Diversity Training and Roadmapping

In 2019, we engaged Ethos Talent, a DEI consultancy, to help Table XI evolve our DEIB understanding and culture through:

- an inclusion survey to help us better audit our company culture
- a training for our management team on diversity, equity and inclusion

Following that training, a combination of DEIB and management team members worked on a new roadmap for 2020. This was our first formalized annual planning around DEIB, and would continue as a practice going forward. [Read more about it here.](#)

The Pairing Checklist

After team member Kara launched the [Pair-A-Palooza experience](#) to make pairing more equitable, we made a concerted effort to evaluate what makes pairing effective. The output was a pre-PAIR-ation Checklist (a punny spin on a pre-flight checklist) that guides folks through reflections and actions to take before, during and after a pairing session to promote listening, caring and exchanging feedback.

[This is the checklist document.](#)

DEIB Lunch and Learns

- Employee Contributions to Mission-Driven Organizations
- A11y @ TXI
- Agile Allyship
- Report Back on Anti-Racism Training
- Open-sourcing DEIB at Highland Solutions
- DEI Book Club, Electrum
- [“Why Don’t We Call Agile What it is, Feminist!”](#)
- What’s Trust & Safety
- “Trans & Gender Identity 101” with Dina Nina Martinez
- DEIB Article Club, [Identity Politics](#)
- DEIB Power Dynamics, through a Goal and Relationally Oriented Lens
- Inclusion Cards and Table XI Playtesting
- Tour of Two Tools to Test for Accessibility
- Climate Action Group Kickoff
- Perspectives on Pronouns
- Microaggressions Through the Lens of Emotional Intelligence

2020: Making DEIB Core to the Company Mission

Guided by 2019’s roadmap, we made significant investments in sustainable change at Table XI. 2020 was our year to make DEIB goals central to Table XI’s long-term growth and value creation strategies. And, like other core aspects of

our strategy, the DEIB team needed more dedicated representation, budget and planning.

An Equity Officer in Leadership

As the business grows, the DEIB team needs more opportunities to share insights and advice. We added a new seat to our leadership team to serve as a voice for the DEIB team and elevate its priorities and initiatives. This new role would help ensure progress toward our stated goal of becoming an actively anti-racist organization, helping to drive the organization's structure, culture, recruiting, training programs and community outreach. In 2020, we opened that role and job description, held an internal application process and promoted a new member to our leadership team. The job description and final selection were ratified by the DEIB team.

A DEIB Community Engagement Chair

We also created this role to build community partnerships, find new learning opportunities and champion ideas to help us become a more anti-racist and inclusive company. The job description and final selection were ratified by the DEIB team.

Clients Aligned with DEIB Goals

In 2020, we partnered with a number of clients who made an impact in the communities they serve: Table XI invested approximately 4,600 hours of work on these projects:

- **HopeLab**, defining an evidence-based digital tool to support mental health, wellness and happiness among LGBTQ/SGM youth
- **Impact Navigator**, partnering with Margot Pritzker and ChiByDesign to study food insecurity and inequity in Chicago – specifically food deserts with limited access to healthy food in low income areas of Chicago
- **Percent Pledge**, redesigning the platform for the non-profit tech startup, which allows organizations to build a funding portfolio of non-profit organizations to improve the impact of employee donations and charitable giving
- **Slipstream**, helping building designers and architects create spaces that consume less energy and create more sustainable blueprints
- **Brink**, building a mobile app to help people with disabilities find voting information.
- **Renalis**, designing a bladder diary to connect women with doctors specializing in pelvic health, ultimately supporting remote therapeutic services
- **NU Mesulam Center**, building an iPad app that gives patients with aphasia word-matching tasks with audio and visual cues to help them maintain a vocabulary and to help researchers track patient success with different treatments

Investment in the DEIB Team

For the first time in 2020, we created a budget for DEIB work, with both hard and soft dollars to achieve our annual goals.

This meant employees could count DEIB work towards their weekly hours targets, rather than adding it on to a full week of client work. Formalizing DEIB work allowed us to run it like we would any project, with regular retrospectives, an actively groomed backlog and a dedicated project manager. We also engaged an agency to help our team share our efforts and learnings with our clients and community.

Collectively, we spent more than 900 hours on DEIB work between July and December. In addition to internal team hours, we also invested approximately \$25,000 for professional services and education related to DEIB.

Expansion of the DEIB Weekly Tips Team

To make it more effective, we doubled the number of contributors to the Slackbot we developed in 2019, diversifying the group of people writing its tips. The larger team now meets weekly.

DEIB Exercises at Quarterly All-Hands

We introduced a new ritual to our quarterly all-hands meetings, a 90-minute workshop to allow the entire company to engage in DEIB learnings together. This protected, focused time allowed us to more clearly connect.

DEIB Orientation for New Hires

New hires to Table XI now get an introduction to the DEIB team, our roadmap, our backlog and our regular meetings as part of their onboarding. This improved education is helping bring new contributors and new awareness to our ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

Land Acknowledgement

To further our anti-racist efforts, we drafted a land acknowledgment recognizing our physical existence on stolen lands and our digital existence on internet domains meant for countries and displaced indigenous communities.

Monthly DEIB Blog Posts

With our commitment to sharing our DEIB journey, we also expanded our editorial calendar to include a monthly DEIB post. This allowed us to share new insights and learnings with our clients in our regular newsletter and with our community through social media and on our blog. You can [see the posts here](#).

A Continuing Education Policy

In an effort to make access to learning and growth opportunities more equitable and transparent, we created a personal learning budget and continuing education policy for each person in the company.

Coaching from the DEI Leadership Program at Loyola

Our CEO applied for and was accepted into the first DEI Leadership Program at Loyola. This program created a peer group of Chicago leaders across industries who meet quarterly to discuss DEI topics and strategies. Through this program, Table XI also got an external DEIB coach for our CEO for the first time, to help guide members of our team in our roadmap efforts.

Donation Matching for Racial Equity



2020 Year in Giving

The Causes You are Most Passionate About ❤️
 You impacted **9 causes** this year. Top 3 Portfolios listed below:

1. Racial Equality 🖐️
2. Table XI
3. Youth & Education 📦 ↑ 45% increase in donations from 2019
 + a **255% increase** in donations to Employee Created Portfolios.

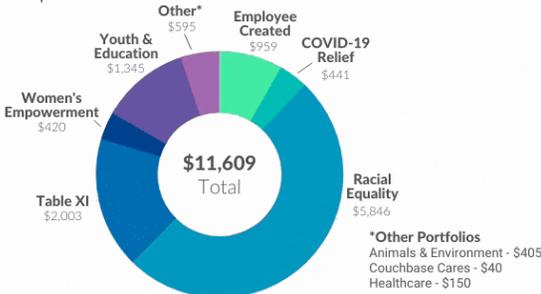
Your Team Gave to New Causes 📌
 You managed to further your impact by adopting **4 new cause portfolios** supporting the most vulnerable communities during COVID-19, serving the Black community, and empowering women all around the world. Listed below.

1. COVID-19 Relief 🧪
2. Healthcare 🩺
3. Racial Equality 🖐️
4. Women's Empowerment ♀️

The Charities You Supported Most 🤝
 You not only made it through 2020, but you also helped **44 charities** and several communities through it all too. Top 4 charities - the Racial Equality portfolio:



Your Impact on Hundreds of Individuals 🧑🏠
 You impacted hundreds of people this year with a total of **\$11,609 donated**.
 Your highest total month was **June with \$2,474!** See a breakdown of 2020 total giving by cause portfolio:



Cause Portfolio	Amount
Racial Equality	\$5,846
Table XI	\$2,003
Youth & Education	\$1,345
Women's Empowerment	\$420
Employee Created	\$959
COVID-19 Relief	\$441
Other*	\$595
Total	\$11,609

*Other Portfolios
 Animals & Environment - \$405
 Couchbase Cares - \$40
 Healthcare - \$150

Your Giving Increased Since 2019 📈
 Your total giving increased by **199% since 2019!**

In 2020, Table XI created a donation program through Percent Pledge, one of our values-aligned non-profit clients. All employees could use the platform to contribute to recognized 501(c)3s, and Table XI matched contributions to nonprofits focused on racial equity, up to a \$5,000 annual limit.

In 2020, Table XI donated more than \$7,600 to nonprofits focused on racial equity.

Sourcing Strategies to Improve Diversity in Recruiting

Rather than just solicit resumes from people in our existing networks – often filled with white men – we invested time and resources to attract candidates we weren't personally connected to, hiring some great people as a result.

DEIB Lunch and Learns

- Green Team Action Meeting
- Tatiana Mac on Inclusive Design
- Individual and Collective Action on Climate Change
- International PK Day: Lessons Learned in the Climate Fight
- Tips on Distributed Communication and Collaboration from EchoBind
- Managing Large(r) Project Teams
- Animals have PRIDE too: Behavioral and Reproductive Diversity in the Animal Kingdom
- Disability Justice
- Company Conversation around Anti-Racism
- Table XI Update on DEIB and Anti-Racism Work
- Dismantling White Privilege
- Alternatives to Calling the Police
- White Supremacy Culture – Urgency Part I
- White Supremacy Culture – Urgency Part II
- !Presente! Snacks + Tracks for Latinx: Hispanic Heritage Month
- Sexual Harassment Prevention Training
- Post-Election Decompression
- DEIB Followup to All Hands
- Individualism and the Expectation of Autonomy

2020 Investment

Our DEIB investment for 2020 included:

- Over 900 hours of internal work time
 - Approximately \$25,000 on professional services and education
 - About 4,600 hours of client work in support of organizations aligned with racial justice, environmental justice, or accessibility justice projects
 - More than \$7,000 in donations and employee donation matching for anti-racism causes
-