**Meet the Trailblazers: Race Equality Matters’ success stories series - the Growth Company**

The Growth Company are an award-winning, accredited, social enterprise, who provide education, skills and employment opportunities.

Within their application, The Growth company demonstrated a commitment to tackling race inequality through continuous consultation and meaningful activity with a step-by-step approach. Through their Language paper, The Dignity at work Programme and their events which included guest speakers, they have shown transparency and determination in creating meaningful outcomes for those with lived experience by identifying what is important.

Panellists felt their application showed examples of clear impact with supportive activity as well as a focus on raising awareness and creating an environment that fosters inclusivity. Panellists expressed confidence that the Growth Company are on the right track and eagerly anticipate their continued progress. Panellists felt their actions were brave and significant.

100% of judging panellists voted that their application had demonstrated evidence of action and 62.5% voted for the Growth Company to receive the status.

**Actions and Initiatives**

**Events**

The Growth Company have demonstrated dedication by actively committing to significant events such as Windrush, Manchester Carnival, and Black History Month and using this to inform, educate and encourage engagement through thought provoking sessions and activity. This activity has been actively pursued by their [EmbRace Network](/people-and-engagement/equality-diversity-inclusion-edi-networks/gc-embrace-edi-network/) and carried out by their EmbRace Network and Allies.  In June 2022 they celebrated Windrush to highlight the important connection between the UK and the Caribbean. For Carnival they found an opportunity to uplift ‘Black Women in Business’ and sponsored the ‘Jet Black Dance Crew.' They also held a Women’s Round Table talk event which invited Black women to discuss their experiences.

During Black History Month their EmbRace Network sort to open meaningful discussion, going beyond unconscious biases to share tools with their colleagues on how to do this effectively. To achieve this they held a company wide virtual event supported by speaker Dr Delroy Hall who shared a presentation on “How to approach difficult conversations about race relations.” Following this they also held face to face panels at their largest sites (Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield. This was facilitated by a presentation by Dr Hall followed by an open discussion and a question-and-answer session an SMT sponsor was also present During Black History Month.

One Panellist described the organisation as ‘Brave’ for creating events and discussions where potentially uncomfortable conversations could take place. The face-to-face panels that were held at the Growth Company’s largest sites were praised by panellists as they felt this showed a real consideration for the voices of ethnically diverse colleagues and a willingness to go to uncomfortable places to create an environment that is comfortable for all. The application was also supported by qualitative evidence which truly captured the sentiment of colleagues.

**Language Paper**

Network members at the Growth Company fed back through their monthly meetings that there was dissatisfaction with the term BAME, following discussion and a vote the network made the decision to propose a language change for the businesses and their subsidiaries. They recommended to stop using the term BAME and researched terms such as ‘Ethnic Minority’ which they found to have negative connotations. After some continued research and recommendations there was a vote that settled on ‘Ethnic communities’ this was an important step as ethnically they felt this maintained dignity and respect and allowed individuals to self-identify in a way that was empowering for them. Panellists praised the Language Paper as it demonstrated a clear consideration of colleague’s perspectives and commitment to real consultation and investigate into the use of effective terms. The action steps taken by the organisation to vote on Inclusive terminology showed a real effort to build trust and facilitate active involvement in creating meaningful change.

**Dignity at Work campaign**

The Growth company also launched a Dignity at Work campaign which began in March 2022 and ran throughout 2023 with an overarching aim to better embed GC’s commitment to a culture which is safe from any form of harassment, bullying or discrimination. This was supported by several initiatives including the launch of the new EDI module, a Dignity at Work Policy and Charter, a live launch event, network events, interactive sessions, team talks, training and follow-up events throughout the year. They shared that this activity was heavily supported by their EmbRace Chair with lived experience to ensure the needs of ethnic communities were represented in the key objectives of the policy. In May they also held a live talk where Kelechi Okafor introduced the topic of dignity at work and explained why it is a vital part of developing an inclusive culture.

**Impact and Ethnically diverse Staff Endorsement**

* The revision to language used proposed by EmbRace reflects a more positive and cohesive language inclusive of all whether you are from the Black, European and Asian Communities
* In published ethnicity statistics of all employees; July 2022 data demonstrates staff from diverse ethnic communities continue to enter the business. With an overall increase of 52 employees across the business compared to July 2021
* Testimonial:

*“Being different is OK and respecting difference is a responsibility for us all. There’s beauty in the Growth Company’s diverse community and each person’s diversity brings a wealth of knowledge, experience and added value. Black History Month reminds us all of this value and what all colleagues bring to the company.”* – Fiona Mille

* All activity saw embRace members and wider organisation consulted to discuss what they wanted to see from the network with the support of their sponsors. SMT have been involved at all steps to ensure objectives of the network are achieved for the benefits of the network and the wider organisation
* With consultation of members and their SMT sponsors they have been able to ensure maximum reach in engaging all ethnic communities.
* Their activity has raised awareness of race relations and equality, the activity throughout October allowed for serious and progressive discussions regarding the experiences of those from ethnic communities. Feedback from members indicates progress within the organisation towards a clear commitment to improved race relations and racial equality
* Testimonial:

*“We’ve encouraged and empowered all colleagues to take the time to really listen and learn about the issues and experiences that affect Black people, to broaden their understanding and commitment.”*

**Feedback from an Ethnically Diverse Panel**

The panellists commended the inclusive approach taken by the network, where all activities involved consultation with members and the wider organisation. Discussions were held to understand what individuals wanted to see from the network, with the support of sponsors. Senior Management Team (SMT) involvement at every stage ensured that the network's objectives were aligned and achieved for the benefit of all. Additionally, another panellist shared that the talks with guest speakers showed how the Growth Company is bringing ‘a fresh perspective’ to the workplace which is impactful and positive.

Next steps…

Looking to the future, The Growth Company to (among other actions):

* The Growth Company want all colleagues who work for their organisation to feel included and that they belong. They will look to achieve this by working together and celebrating together.
* Further action to be completed include EmbRace to support the wider business with recruitment, retention and progression of ethnic staff, this will be accompanied by a full strategic plan.
* They will continue to build on the events and speaker sessions