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## The Sleeper Group



The annual listing of 20 companies  
that are at the forefront of tackling  
customer challenges

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# The Sleeper Group

## Carving Out Customized, Data-Driven DEI Strategies

*“A diverse mix of voices leads to better discussions, decisions, and outcomes for everyone.”—Sundar Pichai.*

**D**eeply resonating with this mantra, The Sleeper Group (TSG)—a reputed, woman-owned consulting company—provides services through a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens to organizations across the U.S. A diverse and inclusive workplace is a perfect representation of a melting pot of talent, which elevates companies, big and small, to great heights of success. A diverse mix of opinions in a culturally rich workplace induces greater readiness to innovate, helping leaders make better decisions and achieve more favorable business outcomes. With a focus on achieving organizational, team, and individual excellence, TSG helps companies launch, build upon, and sustain DEI, eLearning, and management efforts to reach higher levels of efficiency, cultural competence, and improved morale.

In an interview with the editorial team of Manage HR, Dana Sleeper, Founder and CEO of The Sleeper Group, discusses at length how their team designs, structures, and tailors every DEI plan as per the needs of their clients.

### **Please provide a brief overview of TSG.**

We focus on providing DEI consulting that is as unique as the needs of our clients. Companies have made significant progress in recent years by investing time and money in DEI initiatives. However, commitment and investment aren't the only things that lead to success; you need a strategic plan



Dana Sleeper

that works for your company. There's no cookie-cutter approach or list you can check off. This is where we come in. We meet our clients where they are, creating a vision for the future, implementing a plan, and tracking their progress over time.

We are always excited to work with various clients as it gives us a chance to not only assist them wherever they are in their DEI journey, but also learn with each new challenge we encounter. We apply DEI best practices and leverage the knowledge that we gain from each of the projects to better serve our clients.

### **What are some of the major challenges organizations face, and how is TSG positioned to address them?**

For years, commitment from the top, through the engagement of executives,

was key to initially achieving buy-in and investment in DEI initiatives. We have found that now that the C-suite has directed organizations to prioritize DEI, managers and HR professionals are the ones who often struggle the most, as a majority of the day-to-day DEI work falls to them, for example, resolving conflicts between the team members and facilitating difficult conversations about race, gender, or other diversity dimensions. These professionals do not necessarily receive the same level of training and support as the executive team, and often general training on unconscious bias does not include manager or HR-specific development opportunities. As a result, managers and HR team members may lack the knowledge, skillset, or confidence needed to realize their DEI goals. They want to do the right thing, but they're not sure what that means in

practicality, or what actions they should take — this is one of the biggest issues that we come across on a daily basis when working with clients. This is where our DEI strategies, tools, and training programs come in handy.

### **Could you elaborate on the approach you follow to cater to the unique needs of your clients with the help of a customer success story?**

Whether we work with an organization that has just started out, without having any internal conversations about DEI, or a company whose DEI strategies are out-of-date, we identify where our clients stand in their DEI journey, and thoroughly assess their workplace environment. Our team begins by gaining a clear understanding of the steps companies have taken to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace. We meet with their stakeholders, form focus groups, conduct one-on-one interviews and cultural assessments, and generally gather information on the current state of their organization. Additionally, we analyze an organization's HR documentation and policies as part of the initial fact-finding and gathering process. Our team is highly consistent in evaluating clients' current practices.

When performing a complete cultural audit, we consult with our client's staff, design a custom survey that the employees fill out, and analyze the responses received from clients to better customize solutions according to their needs. This helps us develop a more comprehensive, effective plan for our clients. These plans can include training and development opportunities for their staff and one-on-one coaching for executive teams. We also develop a strategic plan with goals and objectives that are tied to specific metrics.

For instance, we engaged with one of our clients and conducted a cultural assessment to find out that only 30 percent

of the staff was comfortable in effectively balancing work and their personal lives. This became a specific area of focus for us when developing robust solutions for the client. We helped them establish better boundaries and determine the policies that need to be put in place to assist the staff and alleviate their concerns. Ultimately, these changes will improve employee perceptions of the workplace and also benefit the company by reducing staff turnover and therefore, recruitment costs.

*We use a series of proven strategies to deliver the best result in every project and drive measurable outcomes for clients*

### **What, according to you, steers you ahead of the market competition?**

What differentiates TSG from our competitors is our talented team of professionals with extensive industry expertise and the unique network of consultants we work with. Our staff hold certifications from relevant institutions, such as IDC and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Because we are a recognized leader in this space, I actually work with the Institute for Diversity Certification (IDC) to help develop criteria and exams for diversity certifications.

We are nimble and flexible. Unlike other consulting firms that have a regimented process that clients struggle to plug into, we provide the right resources at the right time. Additionally, we are a

data-driven company. We leverage data to understand the past and the present of DEI at organizations, adjusting our practices and recommendations based on what works for each unique workplace, developing strategies for the future, and measuring the progress in their DEI journey. We use a series of proven strategies to deliver our best in every project and drive measurable outcomes for clients.

### **What does the future look like for TSG?**

We just welcomed a new Director of Learning and Development to the team, along with several new consultants. Another big development is that we are building out a new suite of on-demand e-learning modules and micro-learning tools. These self-assessment tools and content will help our clients' employees by providing asynchronous, on-demand learning opportunities. Our platform comes in handy especially in a remote working environment. At the same time, we continue to explore new certifications and tools to leverage as we work with more clients and address their diverse needs.

### **Would you like to share a piece of advice with the readers?**

There's a huge opportunity for organizations to positively impact people's lives while simultaneously improving their profitability. I encourage clients to invest in DEI as much as they do in any other aspect of business, with the seriousness and conviction it takes to build a new product, venture, or department. As we are constantly learning and growing, it is natural to falter along the way. People must own their mistakes and use them as an opportunity to correct themselves and find a new and better path for their team or company. We will always be there to support organizations and individuals alike and ensure that they have the expertise they need to implement these programs. **HR**