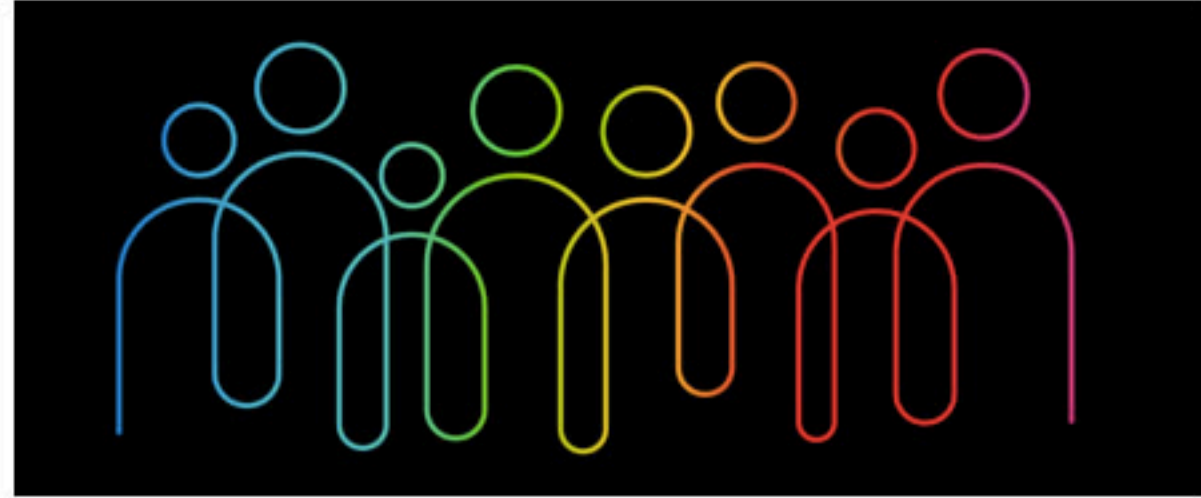


An Important Conversation about Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion with Helen Duphorn, EDI global leader of IKEA/Ingka Group

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At IMSA Search Global Partners, our clients rely on us to identify top tier candidates, leaders who can drive companies through today's uncertainty to deliver future success. Partnering with companies across industries and across the globe, we spot emerging trends and determine the knowledge and skills necessary to harness them. We regularly engage in conversations with corporate leaders who are at the forefront of their fields. One topic that has

been top-of-mind for the past several years is EDI or DEI, depending on where the company is located.

Pedro Hipolito, Partner at IMSA Search Global Partners Portugal and Argo, sat down with **Helen Duphorn, EDI Manager for Ingka Group at IKEA** to discuss equity/equality, diversity and inclusion. As founding members of the *Leaders for Equality Forum*, Argo and IKEA regularly collaborate on DEI-related projects.

IKEA is the world's largest furniture brand, designing and selling ready-to-assemble furniture, appliances, home accessories, and decor. The IKEA brand is renowned for its customer-centric approach, modernist design, and market adaptability. Ingka Group operates the majority of IKEA Retail, runs Ingka Centres (meeting places anchored by IKEA stores), and runs Ingka Investments (supporting the growth of IKEA Retail).

Helen Duphorn first joined IKEA 25 years ago to handle purchases from Sweden and Baltics. Since then she has worked in departments from purchasing to retail to corporate communications, and in countries including: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, France, Austria, and Portugal. Today, having experienced roles throughout the organization, Duphorn feels very connected to IKEA employees as well as to its customers, and is particularly well-situated to help build IKEA's DEI focus. What follows is a most interesting conversation:

Pedro: Having lived and worked in many different countries, did you find differences in the way people relate to work? What impact has this cultural diversity had on you as a leader?

Helen: When it comes to needs and desires, I feel that most people want the same things – respect, space, and opportunities to perform at their best, to be themselves. On top of that, of course, we all have different identities and cultural backgrounds.

IKEA is built on humanistic values and it is very important to us that everyone feel respected. Even if each market has its own cultural nuances, I feel confident in the strong focus IKEA has on our people, regardless of background or identity. Staying close to people and always working to further improve equity in the organisation, has strengthened me as a leader, but above all as a person.

Pedro: What is your main mission in your role as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Manager for Ingka Group?

Helen: During the past two years, I had the responsibility to build this new function in Ingka Group. My main focus has been to create common direction and alignment, to engage with many leaders throughout the organisation and around the world, increasing their knowledge about Inclusion and Diversity and supporting them in building an even more inclusive IKEA. Our goal is to reflect the diversity of our society within our organisation, not only at the co-worker level, but also in leadership positions, while making sure we create a culture of inclusion where everyone can be true to themselves and bring their best to IKEA, no matter their gender, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, ethnic and cultural background, or any other dimension of their individuality.

Pedro: What good EDI practices have you managed to implement as a company in recent years and which achievements would you like to highlight?

Helen: Even if my role is new, Inclusion is not new to IKEA. We have always been for the many people with thin wallets – and this is a diverse group in most markets. Being inclusive is grounded in our culture and values, recognised as the “right thing to do” as well as the best for our business. If we want to have more creative and productive teams and also increase our relevance to our customers, we should be mirroring the societies we operate in. As an example, we have been working for more than 20 years on the gender topic and now we are proud to see women in 50% of the leadership roles at all levels, and also to have zero pay-gap between men and women in comparable positions.

But we want to continue to enhance the individuality of our co-workers, taking into account other dimensions of diversity, always starting by listening to the experiences and needs of co-workers. Our global diversity and inclusion survey – *Ingka Includes* – first launched in 2021 at a group level and it will be fielded again this year. We want to understand if people feel included, valued, and safe to fully express who they are. We're committed to creating an inclusive workplace where everyone can grow, thrive and be their unique selves. But to help us get there, we need to know what stands in the way. This survey is completely voluntary and anonymous and really helps us explore how people feel and importantly, how we can improve as a workplace.

Another key initiative is the structural work we are starting related to Ethnic and Cultural background. We have many challenges here, starting with getting accurate data in society on this dimension of diversity, but we acknowledge that, even without exact numbers, we have a long way to go to represent society in our leadership positions.

So, we are launching different initiatives and programs to promote positive structural changes, like being more inclusive in the way we recruit, retain, and develop people from underrepresented ethnic and cultural backgrounds. And we have set measurable goals, to secure that we will represent society on all leadership levels in a couple of years in these aspects of diversity.

Pedro: What types of talent/experience/skills will be essential at Ingka Group in the future? How do you see the role of EDI in this evolution?

Helen: Today, more than ever, people seek to work in companies with a clear purpose, which share their values and where they feel respected and valued for who they are. Fortunately, the IKEA culture often meets these expectations. We are all about creating a better everyday life for people: customers, co-workers and society at large. And we do this in an evolving environment that's diverse, open and inclusive. Working at IKEA is much more than a job. It's having space to feel at home, safe and to be the best version of ourselves every day.

So, more than a background, skill, specific training or course, we recruit people based on values. We also promote and encourage people to take roles in areas that may not be directly connected to their initial training. We encourage people to try new areas and even new markets. Commercial, logistics, food, people. Thousands of IKEA leaders have experienced different functions and lived in many countries – this fosters inclusion and helps us grow as humans.

Pedro: Listed companies are under great pressure for short-term financial results. Do you think that incorporating EDI-related indicators in ESG ratings could help change mindsets and get companies to invest further in adopting good practices in this area?

Helen: A company that is inclusive and open to welcoming people from different backgrounds and identities, is more likely to succeed. The world is an increasingly diverse place, and the better we understand our customers and co-workers, the more relevant we will be to them. We believe we can contribute to positive societal development by creating positive movements. This is done by setting targets and measuring change. ESGs can support this movement, I believe, because we usually don't impact what we cannot measure. Having common and aligned indicators will enable us to be comparable between companies, track change and be transparent about our results.

Pedro: During your career you've seen many great changes in companies and businesses. What other changes would you like to see in the future?

Helen: I hope that even more consumers will feel that our product and service offerings are relevant to them. And that everyone feels welcome at IKEA, both as co-workers and customers. To continue to drive systemic change, we need reliable data about demographics as well as goal fulfilment. The latter part is up to us. But official and correct data about e.g. the number people of underprivileged groups, such as different ethnicities or people with disabilities, would help us with accurate goalsetting and follow up. Of course, privacy is an issue, but I don't believe the current position that many countries and organisations are taking, ignoring the need for reliable data due to the sensitivity of the topic, is moving us forward. We should face reality, to make it better for everyone.

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