

FLEISHMANHILLARD FISHBURN CASE STUDY

Delivering guidance and best practice in the journey to be the most diverse and inclusive PR agency in London

WHAT THE CLIENT WANTED

Recent times have seen FleishmanHillard Fishburn (FHF) lauded by the PR industry. In the last two years alone it has won a clutch of 'best agency' awards and new high profile clients, but its leadership team knew something needed to change. The PR industry is dominated by white, middle class young graduates and while the days of Mad Men are gone, the sector as a whole has been slow to shape up. FHF made a commitment to correct that. Its leaders announced a vision for the firm in 2018 – to be "the most diverse and inclusive PR agency in London – for the work and the workforce to reflect the communities we serve." The key challenge FHF faced was that it lacked specific expertise in diversity and inclusion best practice and wanted to hold itself to account publicly for its progress. There was a real desire to be "best in class" which is why experts from outside were called in.

WHAT WE DID

The FHF Exec Board appointed EY to begin its extensive NES accreditation process. Over the course of a few weeks, FHF was invited to share evidence of its diversity and inclusion practice across 35 areas. Everything from how it tracked and supported the careers of its talent to ensure everyone's progress was fairly supported, to the role of the leadership team in creating an inclusive environment. Staff were interviewed, policies and progress shared and a series of confidential focus groups were run to ensure what was being said by the leadership was being felt and truly experienced on the ground. EY's project leads were collaborative and supportive throughout and really got under the skin of our business. Some of the findings related to 'known' weaknesses while others showed how the firm's performance was best in class. More interesting were areas where the leadership thought everything was in place and it transpired that wasn't the case! After a few weeks and on time, EY presented their detailed findings. FHF had scored well but not quite met the pass mark. This came as no surprise. In fact, the exec had fully anticipated it, reasoning that one of the key benefits to going through the process with EY was the guidance given after the audit in how to correct areas of weakness.

VALUE

Not only did the EY assessment process give FHF a crystal clear understanding of its current performance in all things diversity and inclusion, but also invaluable guidance on how to address it. Best practice examples were shared, further questions were responded to with great thoughtfulness and the counsel was pragmatic throughout. Ali Gee, Deputy CEO of the firm and its D&I lead said "I'm so proud that we embarked on our D&I journey with EY. Simply by partnering EY, we're ahead of our industry peers. We have nine months to really address our areas of weakness before being reassessed and I'm quietly confident we'll be the first PR agency in the UK to be accredited which puts us in an incredible cross sector peer group."

