

Diversity, equity and inclusion are “The Aflac Way”

In 1999, Dan Amos, chair and CEO of Aflac, approached Human Resources leaders to build a culture of diversity that would permeate throughout the organization. Dan said, “I don’t want everybody sitting at the table to look like me.” That is, he didn’t want to be surrounded solely by white, male faces that wouldn’t accurately reflect the diverse communities Aflac serves.

With the country’s increased social awareness, promoting workplace diversity is hardly radical among business leaders. But saying this in 1999 was a different matter—and it turned out to be the genesis of Aflac’s award-winning diversity, inclusion and equity programs.

[Here’s](#) how that conversation from 1999 now takes form:

- 64% of Aflac’s board members are people of color or women.
- 49% of employees are female people of color.
- 66% of employees are women.
- As of the end of 2021, 64% of new hires were people of color and 76% were women.

These statistics, while impressive, don’t tell the whole story: a tale of principles, philosophy and devotion at every level of the organization — starting at the top — to make Aflac reflect the world in which it lives.

Diverse recruitment at Aflac is a start, not a finish

The Human Resources team pulled in Brenda Mullins, then a manager of employee relations, to help bring Amos’ vision for diversity to life. Mullins researched and analyzed Aflac’s state of diversity starting in 1999, and landed upon what she calls the “five R’s” —recruitment, retention, reinforcement, recognition and relationships. “We wanted people outside of the company to understand what Aflac was doing and how Aflac is an inclusive organization,” says Mullins, Aflac’s vice president of human resources and chief people officer. “We were doing these things while we weren’t being recognized, so we intentionally applied for awards so that we were being recognized.”

Recognition indeed:

- [Twelve appearances](#) on the *Black Enterprise* list of [50 Best Companies for Diversity](#).
- Twenty-one years on *Latina Style*’s [50 Best Companies for Latinas to Work for](#) in the U.S
- [Dan Amos ranked No. 16](#) on Comparably’s list of Best CEOs for Diversity.
- Mullins herself is a magnet for accolades, including a *Black Enterprise* 2019 Most Powerful Women in Corporate Diversity award and placement on *Ebony*’s Women at the Top list.
- In 2021, ranked No. 9 on Forbes’ fourth annual list of America’s [Best Employers for Diversity](#).

But it’s the fifth R — relationships — where Aflac’s essence shines. In its most direct sense, this plays out in Aflac’s relationships with suppliers and business partners in the community. In 2021, Aflac launched a [global investments strategy](#) that supports minority partners and identifies investments that drive DEI and support social justice, with 74% of its donations impacting underserved populations to include communities of color.



Fostering an open culture

Relationships form the core of Aflac's equity efforts in other ways, too. In 2001, our Chairman & CEO, Dan Amos, led the cause to create the first Diversity Council at Aflac. Though time has passed, our commitment to diversity continues to this day with over nine employee-led councils globally.

Setting the tone for diversity from the top

Aflac is known for paying customers' claims instead of refuting them. This commitment to advocacy underscores the company's diversity initiatives as well. It's all a part of ["The Aflac Way"](#) — tenets based on the philosophy of the founders.

The Aflac way is part of what drew Dan Amos — the son of Aflac co-founder Paul Amos — to approach HR and Brenda Mullins about how to make sure the table wasn't solely flanked by white men. When Amos asked what he could do to support her as she set out to pilot Aflac's diversity programs, Mullins said it was crucial that other leaders knew that promoting workplace diversity came from him directly, thus setting the tone from the top.

"Dan sending that strong message was so powerful," Mullins says. "Leaders bought it, they got it and they made it happen. So that's how Aflac got to where it is today. It was intentional. It was strategic. And it worked."