PhocusWire
Powered by Phocuswright

(/)

Opinion (/Opinion) | Online (/Online)

A letter to the travel industry: The imperative of inclusion

By Lauren von Stackelberg - Expedia Group (https://www.linkedin.com/in/laurenvonstackelberg/?originalSubdomain=uk) | June 9, 2020

In my role leading global inclusion and diversity at **Expedia Group (https://www.expediagroup.com/)**, I often reflect on the obligation and opportunity that the travel industry has to create a more equitable world.

On one hand, we are lucky to work in travel, an industry that intrinsically promotes inclusion by bringing people abroad, increasing cultural awareness, immersing people in new languages and communities and giving travelers the chance to see the world from a new perspective.

But on the other hand, travel and tolerance remain intrinsically linked, and many people do not feel (or quite simply are not) safe traveling to certain places in the world due to deeply entrenched biases, laws and histories of violence that discriminate against their identity(ies).

With one in 10 people globally working in travel and 1.4 billion international tourists traveling each year, we are well-positioned to come together to change the world for the better by prioritizing inclusion for our travelers and our teams. To quote our **Expedia Group CEO, Peter Kern (https://blog.lifeatexpediagroup.com/inclusionanddiversity/ceo-peter-kern-letter-to-employees/)**: "We all must look in our hearts and do what is right – that is how change happens."

And there is truly no better time than the present. Inclusion and diversity has never been more imperative than it is today. In a world where everyone is concerned about the emotional toll of COVID on ourselves, our friends, family, employees and industry, we are also reckoning with the psychological ramifications of injustices like the murders of Black people in America, gender violence exposed by the #MeToo movement and widening socio-economic divides globally. These are trying times for us as an industry, but that certainly pales in comparison to the trying times that humanity is facing.

To quote **Arthur Chan (https://www.linkedin.com/in/arthurpchan/)**, "unlike COVID-19, which could potentially have a cure and vaccine, systematic racism is not going to be eradicated in the foreseeable future."

"

The question now is one we all must ask ourselves: How do we shift from anger and awareness to accountability and action?

Lauren von Stackelberg

Share this quote

That is true of many systems of oppression that show up in inclusion work and people's lives every day – sexism, ableism, classism, cissexism, racism, anti-semitism, islamophobia, colonialism, heterosexism. This is why people feel exhausted and let down – we know news headlines and legal consequences in a few cases have not and will not solve the problems we face today. The reality is, we have already faced these problems for hundreds of years.

We must face the realities of how we treat each other, how our policies, practices and systems benefit few and disadvantage many, how and why our biases show up and how we can use our privilege and influence to support others who are potential targets because of their identities.

Let's awaken our self-awareness, educate ourselves, align our heads and our hearts, mobilize our networks and make a continuous commitment to do better, to be better, to create a better world for our future generations.

The question now is one we all must ask ourselves: How do we shift from anger and awareness to accountability and action?

As people around the world answer this - and other - rallying cries for action, I thought I would share some learnings from my journey, and some of my peers' journeys, working in inclusion and diversity over the past decade.

I believe and hope these lessons are helpful as individuals and companies set out to be authentic change-makers and to create a more equal world. Ultimately, to quote Barack Obama, "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

1. Make allyship a verb, not a noun

Too often the focus is misplaced on "uplifting" marginalized communities by giving them resources to "help themselves" – executive presence courses, mentoring programs, books on how to get a seat at the table, etc. The problem does not exist within under-represented minorities. It exists within the majority. It exists within the structural policies/practices and biases that prevent true equity.

Allyship has become a common topic to engage the majority. But before you jump on the bandwagon, it's important to ensure you and your employees understand that allyship requires action – think of it as a verb, not a noun. It is not a title or a badge; it is an evolutionary, action-led journey to speak up, to advocate for or make real change and to use your privilege to support others.

To quote **Dr. Erin L Thomas (https://www.linkedin.com/in/erinlthomasphd/)**, "How do we bridge the gap between who we are now and the allies we aspire to become? [We need to] uncover and disrupt the psychological barriers holding people back from realizing their ally potential. Even when folks know how to ally, the follow through is often wimpy. It's like getting in shape: we want to do it, but the work isn't easy, so we don't develop sustainable habits. By showing more of our own humanity, we make it safer for others to do the same. In turn, we ready ourselves to connect more deeply with their experiences and comprehend realities that aren't our own. This is the ticket to amplifying belonging for all."

To quote **Jodi-Ann Burey (https://www.linkedin.com/in/jaburey/)**, "I want to see you put some skin in the game. If you are not willing to risk your professional capital or lose relationships for what you say you value, then you are not in the same fight with me. I have no use for your anger. I need your action. No more secret allies."

2. Expertise > passion

Many people claim to be "passionate" about inclusion and diversity, but passion is not enough to create lasting change. Passion can be transient, and unsurprisingly, it usually results in prioritizing "quick fixes," creating impermanent outcomes. There are no quick fixes in inclusion and equity work. What we need now is continuous, steadfast commitment to "mak[ing] a mark on the world that can't be erased," to quote Maya Angelou.

To quote **Sacha Thompson (https://www.linkedin.com/in/sachathompson/)**: "It's times like these when I look for all the folks that claim to be 'passionate' about DEI. Where are you now?!? This work isn't about only bringing women together and shouting about pay equity or representation at the top. This work is also about tackling systemic issues like racism. … What you are doing (or not doing) now won't be forgotten when things calm down. We will remember your silence. Your lack of empathy. Your excuses of, 'I didn't know what to say!'"

3. Lean into compassion and empathy

It's important to create the necessary space (both physically and emotionally) to have courageous and reflective conversations on difficult topics. But it's equally important to give people space to disengage when they need it.

Inclusion work is all-consuming, high stakes and emotionally exhausting. It's okay to not be okay. It's okay to take a break, to practice self-care, to ask for help. We are fighting for human rights, and at the end of the day, we should accept that we are all human.

4. Collaboration > competition

When it comes to inclusion, none of us win if someone loses. No company should aspire to be "the best" or "better" than its competitors on this topic, because what's at stake is human lives and human rights.

We need to collaborate rather than compete, to share best practices and mistakes along the way, and to let down our guard and truly learn from one another. We learn every day from our travel partners who joined our CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion subgroup to embark on a shared journey and to fulfill our collective commitment to progress inclusion and diversity in travel. Together we can go further and faster to create a more equitable world.

So now what? We all know the problems, and hopefully we all care about the solutions. The next step is taking action.

To get started, I compiled some resources that highlight and amplify impactful actions you can take now and going forward. These resources are ones that have meaningfully helped both me personally and my team at Expedia Group on our journey.

Please continue the conversation by acting and encouraging others to act urgently and authentically.

- **Expedia Group Inclusion & Diversity Resources (https://www.expediagroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Resources-Website-1.pdf)**: Ally action cards, multimedia resource guides, inclusive event and meeting guides

- **Fearless Futures' Workshops (https://www.fearlessfutures.org/)**: Training to introduce concepts and to design and discuss critical approaches to exploring inequities, power and privilege for transformational change

- **Anti-Racist Corporate Commitments by Dr. Erin L Thomas (https://twitter.com/erinlthomasphd/status/1266710736463675395?s=21)**: A Twitter thread highlighting how your organization can counter historical inequity, inequality and injustice

- **75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice by Corinne Shutack (https://medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234)**: A Medium article with 75 actionable steps to take

- **Anti-Racism Resources by Sarah Sophie Flicker and Alyssa Klein (https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1BRlF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VlBO-QgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/mobilebasic?urp=gmail_link)**: A resource for white people and parents to deepen their anti-racism work.

- **Opportunity Agenda Resources (https://www.opportunityagenda.org/explore/resources-publications/ten-tips-putting-intersectionality-practice)**: 10 tips for putting intersectionality into practice

- **Project Include (https://projectinclude.org/)**: Sharing data and resources to accelerate diversity and inclusion solutions in the tech industry

- **Better Allies Newsletter (https://betterallies.com/)**: Sharing everyday actions you can take to create inclusive and engaging workplaces

- **Equity Matters Reading List (https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/178l06fWxk4G8njbfPf2yNGE-7UE3NLX0v7ZFVOjEIPk/edit#gid=0)**: Featuring articles from journalists of color, focused on racial equity and COVID-19

- **CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion Travel Subgroup (https://www.ceoaction.com/)**: To learn more or to join, please email: EGInclusion@ExpediaGroup.com

Expedia Group (/Expedia-Group)   Diversity and Inclusion (/Diversity-and-Inclusion)

Womens Leadership (/Womens-Leadership)

ALSO ON PHOCUSWIRE

Sounding Off: Venture capital providers are …

21 days ago • 1 comment

Perhaps a question at the top of a founder's list, when under the spotlight during …

Sounding Off: Change can't come until you …

2 months ago • 1 comment

The travel industry does not have a great track record when it comes to …

Global air passenger traffic shows …

a day ago • 1 comment

IATA's baseline forecast for 2021 predicts an improvement of 50.4% …

VIDEO: Tr catching v

4 months ago

At least two-respondents they may co

2 Comments   **Phocuswire**   🔒 **Disqus' Privacy Policy**   ① **Login** ▾

♡ **Recommend** 1   🐦 Tweet   f Share   Sort by Newest ▾

Join the discussion…

LOG IN WITH   OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS ⑦

                     Name

kathy • 8 months ago

Are you serious??!! Expedia group is a pack of thieves who stole the vacation savings of millions of hard working people all over the world during a global health crisis. Now they want to fake

More on Online

(/Kiwi-com-draws-rash-of-complaints-for-not-paying-air-refunds)

Kiwi.com draws rash of complaints for not paying air refunds (/Kiwi-com-draws-rash-of-complaints-for-not-paying-air-refunds)

News | Online

(/Coronavirus-impact-travel-industry)

LIVE BLOG: Coronavirus and the travel industry - impact and recovery (/Coronavirus-impact-travel-industry)

News | Online

(/global-air-passenger-traffic-historic-decline-2020-future-bookings-down-70-percent)

Global air passenger traffic shows historic decline in 2020, future bookings down 70% (/global-air-passenger-traffic-historic-decline-2020-future-bookings-down-70-percent)
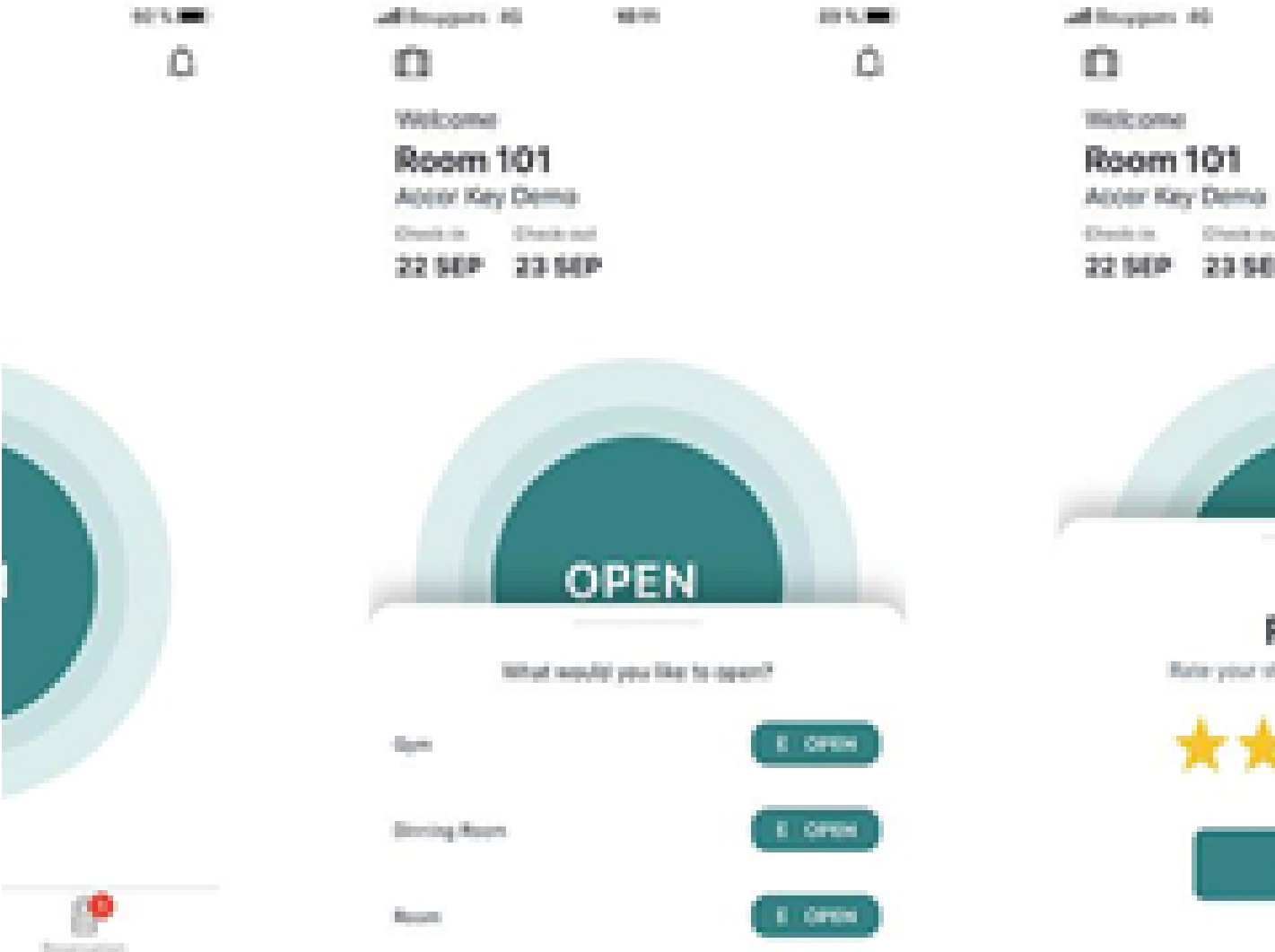
News | Online

The Latest

(/rad-power-bikes-raises-150-million-to-grow-ebike-business)

Rad Power Bikes raises $150M to grow e-bike business (/rad-power-bikes-raises-150-million-to-grow-ebike-business)

News | Technology

(/Accor-implements-digital-key-solution)

Accor begins digital key rollout, plans 500 hotels in 2021 (/Accor-implements-digital-key-solution)

News | Technology

(/in-the-big-chair-anand-krishnan-of-ibs-software)

In The Big Chair - Anand Krishnan of IBS Software (/in-the-big-chair-anand-krishnan-of-ibs-software)

Interview | Technology

 (http://www.northstartravelgroup.com/)

Phocuswright (https://www.phocuswright.com/) • The Phocuswright Conference (https://www.phocuswrightconference.com/) • Phocuswright Europe (https://www.phocuswrighteurope.com/) • Battleground (https://www.phocuswrightbattleground.com/) • TTE (https://www.traveltechnologyeurope.com/) • Web In Travel (https://www.webintravel.com/) • Inntopia (https://corp.inntopia.com/) • Retail Travel

(https://www.northstartravelgroup.com/Audiences/Retail-Travel) • Hotel Investment
(https://www.northstartravelgroup.com/Audiences/Hotel-Investment)