



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Considerations for Content Producers

Claire McIntosh, Sisters From AARP editor-in-chief, offers DMAW some insights

Claire R. McIntosh is both a senior editor at *AARP The Magazine*, which serves over 38 million readers, and editor in chief of *Sisters From AARP*, which serves over 350,000 readers. *AARP The Magazine*, is the definitive lifestyle publication available to AARP members only, it offers celebrity interviews, features on health and tech, plus tips, recipes, book, and movie reviews and more.

Sisters From AARP is a free, weekly lifestyle newsletter celebrating Black women. *Sisters* readers get the very best in health, money, culture, style, relationships and more, plus exclusive related content on the Sisters website. The conversation continues in Sisters' social media communities, including Facebook, and Instagram.

McIntosh has also contributed award-winning content to platforms such as *Essence*, *Ebony*, *Working Mother*, *Heart & Soul*, *Black Enterprise*, *Crain's New York Business*, *Bettycrocker.com*, *Food Network*, *MSNBC*, *NBC*, *Generalmills.com* and *arp.org*. She is a coauthor of *Health and Healing for African Americans*.

Tapping her experience serving both mass market audiences in the tens of millions and niche audiences, Direct Marketing Association invited her to share these observations on DEI and content:

TIPS FOR WRITERS

- **Consider your audience and topic to determine who might be excluded intentionally as well as unintentionally**

For instance, though a story on prostate surgery may be intentionally aimed at men, it may quote a female urologist among its sources. Race or ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, faith, age, economic status, relationship status, geography, and other characteristics are all axes of diversity.

- **Consider your sourcing**

For example, when reaching out to Mayo Clinic for a cardiac specialist, there's no

reason you can't ask their media relations for someone who is a person of color or a person with a disability.

TIPS FOR EDITORS AND PRODUCERS

- **Screen for unconscious bias in your assignment guidance**

"We're doing a story on garlic, so get me an Italian chef." Why? Garlic is used in cuisines all over the world. Similarly, might you consider seeking out and quoting an African American sushi chef in a story featuring several sushi chefs?

- **Consider how diversity informs your style guide**

Does your organization capitalize Black, for instance? Do you include guidance on when to use Hispanic versus Latino? Do you avoid using Person of Color (POC) and Black interchangeably? Do you consider the nuances between Black and African American?

- **Cast a wider net for creatives**

You may have a go-to for a certain topic, such as automobiles, or for a certain style, such as humor. Are you overlooking talent that can help your brand stand out? Tap LinkedIn and other networks to find out.

- **Factor-in peer recommendations when sourcing fresh talent**

Consider these in addition to work samples when reaching out to a new content creator. Some talented people are overlooked because they've had fewer opportunities. Some experienced people are overhyped because others' polish their work.

TIPS FOR ALL MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

- **Subscribe to diverse media.**

Follow your favorite writers who serve BIPOC, Gen Z, or rural audiences, for instance. Share with them why you appreciated a story.

- **Reach out to community and culturally focused trade, civic or recreational organizations**

When sourcing talent and experts, discover groups that may support your search. There are organizations for Black engineers, Asian American Pacific Islander nurses, female pilots, disabled travelers, and other unique communities. You're just a few search keywords away from connecting with them.

- **Seek a sensitivity reviewer if you feel out of your depth**

When *Sisters* ran an essay by a Black woman about her family's complicated saga involving their American Indian heritage, we reached out to AARP's Oklahoma State Office and found

a colleague with that heritage to help us message it sensitively. It turns out there's a difference between saying one has American Indian heritage as opposed to American Indian ancestry, and it's a big deal in that community. We wouldn't have known that otherwise.

- **Be curious about your workplace culture**

For instance, pay attention to the topics and people that tend to crop up in casual office conversations about current affairs and popular culture. When the conversation centers on art, commerce, or power, what do the people being discussed look like? When discussing crime, social problems, scandals what do the people being discussed look like? Are they the same? Are certain groups excluded or overrepresented? Also notice who participates in the discussion, who smiles politely and silently and who tunes out. You don't have to comment on it, just be present to it.

5 WAYS WE CAN BE BOLD ABOUT DIVERSITY, NOT BLIND TO IT

- **Take a colleague from a different background to lunch**
- **Practice empathic listening**
- **If you are a member of a marginalized group, advocate for other such groups**
- **If you are a member of a majority group, advocate for marginalized groups**
- **Attend a meeting of an Employee Resource Group representing a demographic to which you don't belong**

Connect or reach out to Claire McIntosh via LinkedIn