

Organization Name: Atkins North America

Project or Program Name: ED&I Network - STAND

Goal that best reflects your Project or Program's achievements: Promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist policies through our work in the tolling industry

Launch date for the Project or Program

8/12/2020

How many months of proven experience is this submission based upon?

10 months.

Is this Project or Program complete? If no, when will it be completed?

No. It is ongoing.

Briefly describe the Project or Program

- The STAND employee resource group was created following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, as well as the racial unrest experienced across the US. These events were a wake-up call to not only the country, but to Atkins, and made us realize that we need to do more to support our employees of color and to work to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace.
- Through the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) Network, a group of employees organized, and with many months of work, this formed the basis of the newly created STAND group in order to support black and African American employees and allies.
- The group serves to provide awareness and engagement around diversity, and inclusion, with a focus around providing support and development opportunities to black and African American employees.
- Through this group many initiatives and programs have emerged just in the last 10 months to provide more awareness and engagement around people of color, and a wider conversation around equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace.
- The program helps provide professional growth and leadership opportunities for people of color through our policies, projects, hiring practices, or actions.
- Here are a list of some of the initiatives that have come out of this group since it was first created: A 'Courageous Conversations' discussion series; employee book club to talk about race; panel discussion on top women of color in the organization; CEO panel discussion on how to build a more diverse and inclusive workforce; spotlight on mentors of color to support the Mentoring Program; discussion on mental health in the workplace; focus on diversity champions in each office, and more.

What objective(s) was the Project or Program designed to accomplish?

The mission of the STAND employee resource group is to provide an open, safe, and supportive environment for black and African American employees and allies to share their challenges and experiences with race and racism in and out of the workplace. This group will provide a forum that affirms and supports its members with resources and policies as well as to help bring awareness and education that will help influence change within the company and create a more inclusive workspace full of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

How did the Project or Program accomplish the stated objectives?

The group is accomplishing its objectives through the creation of four difference task forces: 1. Advocate and Ally Development: Establish senior management advocates and allies. This is accomplished through the group's executive sponsor, who is a member of the Senior Leadership Team, and is helping to work at the highest level to advance the mission and objectives of STAND at the top level. 2. Minority Recruitment, Retention and Advancement: Increase opportunities for minorities, with a focus on African Americans within the company, both internally and externally. An initiative to achieve our objective of hiring more diverse candidates is to establish closer ties with HBCU's in the geographies we operate in. The STAND group has identified alumni from these HBCU's and is working with our recruitment team on a diversity recruitment plan to better use these employees to strengthen our connections and build better relationships with these schools in order to recruit more diverse talent. 3. Community Engagement: Increase the visibility of Atkins in the communities we work and live in. One of the ways this objective is accomplished is through the Women and Minorities in STEM Scholarship, which is a gender and ethnicity-based scholarship awarded to juniors and seniors who are pursuing STEM-related bachelors degrees. The long-term goal of these scholarships is to hire our winners and interns as full-time employees, thus helping to increase the diversity of our workforce. 4. Education and Awareness: Bring awareness and education to our colleagues to influence change. This is an ongoing effort accomplished through educational panel discussions, informal discussion groups, and use of social media (yammer) to advance the ED&I discussion and give employees a dedicated space to discuss diversity and inclusion.

What were the successful, demonstrable results of the Project or Program that positively affected the customer, agency and/or the community?

- The work of the Education and Awareness task force, in close connection with the wider ED&I Network, has had a big impact in creating an awareness around ED&I, in helping to educate employees and in providing a dedicated and safe space for employees to have conversations around race and diversity in the workplace.
- On October 13th the US ED&I Network, in partnership with the newly created STAND employee resource group, hosted a panel discussion to talk about 'Becoming more comfortable with the uncomfortable – let's talk about race.' In total, 1,600 attendees came to listen and learn as our 5 brave panelists shared their personal experiences with race and racism, both in the workplace and in the community. The COO introduced the panel and emphasized the importance of enhancing awareness, and in educating our managers and workforce. He also linked ED&I to the bottom line: diverse groups make better decisions, which ultimately leads to better business results.
- The panelists wove together personal stories around racism, as well as advice for how to talk to friends and colleagues around issues of race, and how we can all be more aware. Panelists answered questions that employees submitted in advance, touching on delicate issues such as white privilege, All Lives Matter, and racial bias to name a few.
- Overall, attendees expressed a desire to continue to have these uncomfortable conversations and learn from each other as we seek to understand different perspectives and become a more culturally aware and inclusive workplace. This discussion reminds us of the importance of listening to understand - when we listen more than we speak, we create the space for learning, and we are changed by the conversation.
- The group has launched a Courageous Conversations discussion series and has hosted three different employee-wide discussions in the last year. The most recent Courageous Conversation discussion was around discrimination and violence against Asian-Americans. The goal of these discussions is to provide an informal safe space for employees to come and listen to others share their experience about a particular topic relating to race. Through listening to each other, we can better understand our differences and what connects us together.

- Panel Discussions: The group recently hosted a conversation with top senior women of color in the organization. The goal was to highlight how these women currently serve the business, how they have advanced their career with Atkins, and how they manage their personal accomplishments despite barriers. Employees had the chance to hear from 4 top women of color and ask them questions about their career journey, and life in general.

Is your Project or Program relevant and applicable to the overall toll industry? If so, how?

- Efforts to increase diversity in our recruiting programs will cascade down into our groups that support our tolls clients. For example, we are currently interviewing a minority intern candidate in support of the IBTTA 2020 Presidential Initiative Tolling Immersion Program
- Atkins created the STAND program because we are creating a more inclusive workspace full of diverse ethnic backgrounds. This program helps provides professional growth and leadership opportunities for people of color through our policies, projects, hiring practices, or actions which is applicable not only to the international toll industry but for a better world. Having a diverse and inclusive workforce ensures that our clients, our company and our employees have a full balance of a wide range of future thinking and growth. This program ensures that people of color are included in the growth of Atkins and the tolling industry.

- Atkins' STAND program not only aligns with the mission of the Task Force of Diversity, Social and Racial Inclusion Committee "The mission of the Task Force on Diversity, Social, and Racial Inclusion is to listen to the voices of those in our association and society who truly understand and recognize the depth of the inequity caused by racial and social injustice. With this knowledge, we will work to implement practices and programs that contribute to racial and social justice in our IBTTA family and beyond", but makes certain that people of color are included in the way Atkins moves forward in the toll industry. Atkins has a member on the IBTTA Task Force of Diversity and Racial Inclusion and has a board member on the IBTTA Foundation. Atkins contributes significant time and resources to assist in creating a more an inclusive and diverse international toll industry.

How did this Project or Program achieve or demonstrate excellence?

- The STAND employee resource group has not only caught the attention of top leadership within the US, but is helping to shape the global ED&I program, and provide leadership, advice and best practice to other regions who are looking to set up similar programs.
- The group mostly recently organized a CEO panel where three regional CEOs (from the US, Canada, and the UK) came together to discuss what has happened since the anniversary of the murder of George Floyd, including how the company has changed when it comes to diversity and inclusion, and how they have changed personally. More than 200 employees attended the panel discussion to listen to the CEOs talk about the company's ED&I journey and ask questions.
- STAND leadership is at the forefront of our ED&I journey and is acting as a driver to push the company into long-needed changes to help foster a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

Describe any innovative aspects of your Project or Program

- This program has received support and recognition from the most senior levels of the company, from the CEO, down to the Senior Leadership Team and below. The program has an executive sponsor who is responsible for helping to promote the program, gain support from the top, and provide the group with any resources necessary to support the stated objectives and goals.
- The STAND group is also closely connected to a similar employee group in the UK, and they work in

collaboration to launch events and initiatives where employees across the globe can participate. The group leads by example and is keen to help others by sharing best practices and lessons learned to expand and bring more people into the conversation.

- The innovation from this group is shown in employee feedback surveys, with many employees crediting the group with helping to create a more inclusive workplace, and dedicated space to have conversations around race, diversity and inclusion that previously did not exist before.

List individuals worthy of special recognition for this Project or Program

- STAND Co-Leads: Rukiya Thomas and Nicole Law
- STAND Executive Sponsor: Steve Malecki
- STAND Steering Committee Members: Alyssa Garcia; Faye Lyons-Gary; Robert Powell II; Megan Sweigert; Michael Varner; Alice Wong