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How Can Shoppers Market Create an Inclusive Environment for Women of Color?

“At Shoppers Market, we continually strive to create a culture where everyone feels they belong—where our employees can bring their whole selves to work. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to who we are as a company and how we make decisions. 2020 was a critical year for us to revisit our DEI goals and redouble our commitment inside our company and in the communities we serve. We remain committed to building teams that are diverse and inclusive, and ensuring that we create an equitable society for everyone.”

—James Spyers, President & CEO, Shoppers Market Inc., April 2021

It was an unusually warm, sunny day in late September 2021 outside the Shoppers Market corporate headquarters in Chicago. Ashima Patel, Shoppers Market’s senior vice president and chief diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) officer, looked at the company’s mid-year DEI report with a mixture of satisfaction and uneasiness. This was Shoppers Market’s first-ever mid-year report, a step toward greater openness and accountability on its DEI commitments.

Shoppers Market had achieved incremental gains in representation for people of color,ⁱ who now represented 53.31% of U.S. new hires, up from 42% just a year ago. Promotions from hourly roles to managementⁱⁱ also demonstrated representation gains for women and for people of color.

While Shoppers Market was making progress, it was facing a challenge that most of corporate America was grappling with: a lack of improvement in representation for women of color. Though women of color represented about one in four employees at Shoppers Market in the United States, they made up just 4.3% of officers—people with president or vice president in their titles. Despite an increase in hiring, the representation of women of color at Shoppers Market had declined by 8% overall, and by 33% in leadershipⁱⁱⁱ positions, over the last five years.

ⁱ African American/Black, Asian, LatinX, Native American/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander people, as well as individuals of two or more races.

ⁱⁱ Employees with titles of manager, senior manager, director or senior director.

ⁱⁱⁱ Employees at either “management” or “officer” levels.

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