

# Countering Myths That UNDERMINE Black Talent in Fortune 500 Companies

According to Center for Talent Innovation, *only 3.2% of executives and senior-manager-level employees are black, and only five Fortune 500 CEOs are black.* Black employees ask for promotions and raises at about the same rate as white employees but get worse results.

To combat this problem, Catalent’s black employee resource group (REACH) partnered with CALIBR to host a B.L.A.M.E. webinar for Catalent’s executive leadership team. The session addressed the invisible barriers or myths that make achieving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) goals increasingly challenging in Fortune 500 companies. Highlighted during the session, were the biases Black talent often experience when applying for jobs or asking for promotions. REACH and CALIBR recommended actionable steps that Catalent’s senior leaders could implement to counter the myths that undermine DEI goals, specifically Black inclusion at Catalent.

## SESSION GOALS >>>

1. Shine light on beliefs, unconscious biases (myths and claims) and behaviors that B.L.A.M.E. Black Talent for practices and policies that create obstacles to recruitment, retention and promotion
2. Shift mindsets about Black talent availability and potential
3. Share lessons and strategies that organizations can use to address B.L.A.M.E. myths

## SPEAKERS >>>

The panel discussion featured the following CALIBR leaders, senior managers, and executives who shared their stories and offered actionable insights to inspire diverse professionals.

*Disclaimer: The panel participants shared their personal leadership experiences. They were not speaking on behalf of their organizations.*



## Panelists



**David Greene**  
CALIBR Program  
Officer, Strategist  
and Executive Coach



**Shavonne Gordon**  
Morgan Stanley  
Global Head of Diversity,  
Technology, Operations, and  
Firm Resiliency & CALIBR CEO  
& President



**Oral Muir**  
Hilton Worldwide  
Vice President Global Distribution  
Channels & CALIBR Chairman of  
Board



**Sabrina Mays Diagne**  
CALIBR Member



**William Lumpkim**  
Alexion Pharmaceuticals  
Executive Director, Head  
of New Product Strategy  
and Business  
Development

What is

**B . L . A . M . E . ?**

**B.L.A.M.E.** is an acronym for the biases Black talent often experiences when applying for jobs and asking to be promoted. Individually, they are myths that hint at underlying beliefs that, left unaddressed, undermine the wide range of proven and potential contributions of Black talent. Together they represent patterns that threaten DEI efforts and business performance and results.

- **B**elief About Missing Black Talent

- Mindset and biased beliefs about promotability
- There isn't enough qualified Black talent
- Developing and assigning Black talent to key roles is spoken of as a risk versus an investment

- **L**evel Playing Field Claim

- Shifts the blame to talent as inadequate
- Creates the illusion that access to opportunities is universal and the same for all

- **A**uthenticity and **A**ccountability Means to Assimilate to Fit In

- Difference is viewed and treated as deficit
- Little to no accountability in place to promote or reward acceptance of difference

- **M**eritocracy and Missing Talent Belief

- There aren't enough qualified Black talent of merit that meet our standards. Therefore the organization will be comprised
- Qualified Black candidates don't apply

- **E**qual Treatment

- Claim to treat everyone the same to imply fairness
- Equity is not equality and equitable treatment is a skill gap

**David Greene coined the term and created a framework for B.L.A.M.E. after the six-year case study conducted by CALIBR to help its partners understand the black employee experience.**

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# SOLUTIONS TO B.L.A.M.E. =



To conduct research, CALIBR hosted sessions with its members and high-potential Black talent and asked about the Black employee experience at their organizations. Distinct themes emerged, as participants mentioned the following as barriers to their advancement:

1. An inconsistent or lack of support from managers, which made it difficult for participants to share business ideas and career aspirations.
2. Not having relationships or being connected to key decision-makers often made it challenging for participants to succeed in roles or have their work recognized.
3. A lack of support and resources put participants at risk for career derailment.

Despite asking for support, members and non-members alike explained that they were often **blamed** for NOT doing enough to succeed with little, if any, acknowledgment of these obstacles to their performance. They explained often having to point out inconsistencies in administrative policies or inequities, which often led to them developing an unwanted reputation. These types of no-win situations led CALIBR to describe their experiences as B.L.A.M.E.: Myths and Claims that skirt accountability.

*Creating the conditions for Black and other diverse talent to thrive means elevating Practices, enforcing Accountability, encouraging Conversations, espousing Transparency, and embracing inclusion Trends. The panel explored and discussed what often gets in the way of this approach.*

## What creates the conditions for black talent to thrive?

- **Practices** - Foster retention and advancement through career planning
- **Accountability** - Develop your leadership with the cultural competence to advocate for change at multiple levels
- **Conversations** – Encourage open, honest dialogue across differences
- **Transparency** - Embrace vulnerability, authenticity, humility, courage
- **Trends** - Model, track, report, and reward inclusive behaviors

### ABOUT Catalent

Catalent is proud of its commitment to diversity and inclusion. The company lives this value in many different ways including supporting the investment in and advancement of its diverse employees and partnering with external diversity organizations, like CALIBR, that help advance this mission by providing programming, networking opportunities, and development for its employees.

### ABOUT CALIBR’S INDUSTRY INITIATIVE TO ADVANCE INCLUSION

Catalent is a partner and proud supporter of CALIBR’s Industry Inclusion Initiative – an ongoing and strategic effort to help senior leaders, black mid-level talent, and executive leaders facilitate and champion cultural transformation in Fortune 500 companies. The initiative started in 2020. To learn more about how your organization could benefit from joining the initiative, email [info@mycalibr.com](mailto:info@mycalibr.com).