

THE STRUCTURAL RACIAL DIVERSITY DISCONNECT IN ENTRY-LEVEL HIRING IN THE MARKETING AND ADVERTISING INDUSTRY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To truly embrace diversity, specifically racial diversity, the industry must examine the overall construct of talent mobility when entering the industry and keeping this talent engaged through their career journey. Since 2018, the ANA Educational Foundation (AEF) has conducted an annual study on the disconnects across academia, industry, and talent, specifically new hires and undergraduate students. The first focused on general talent; the second on diverse talent, specifically through the lens of racial diversity; and the third on analytics talent. Collectively, they highlight the structural entry-level disconnects that exist within the marketing and advertising ecosystem.



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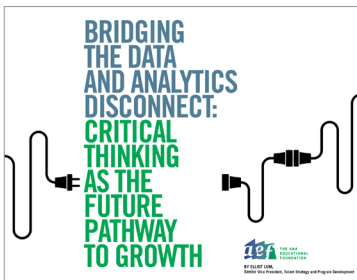
- **The Talent Disconnect (2018):** This study uncovered many disconnects that challenged industry to attract and retain top-flight entry-level talent. All stakeholders uniformly agreed that the best path to bridge these many disconnects was through internship experience. This experience often gives employers the highest degree of confidence that those entering the industry can “hit the ground running” when joining the firm. However, research demonstrated that many internships are gained through privileged networking opportunities, while the quality of experience is both variable and inconsistent. This led the AEF to create the Marketing and Advertising Education (MADE) program, designed to democratize access to summer internship opportunities based on skill and competency.



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- **The Diversity Disconnect (2019):** This study discovered that while both academia and industry were fully committed to diversity and inclusion efforts, diverse talent still did not feel a full sense of belonging. This was classified into four categories: microaggressions, cultural illiteracy, management disconnect, and workplace dissonance. Research revealed that to achieve representative diversity outcomes, inclusion and equity are key. The output of this study was to build an inclusion framework that linked inclusion behaviors to key business decisions and performance metrics.



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- **The Analytics Disconnect (2020):** This study identified three major disconnects — a marketing and advertising perception problem, lack of access to real and contextualized data in the classroom, and the need for talent to have both hard and soft skills — when recruiting analytics talent. The key takeaway of the study emphasized the importance of critical thinking as the most important criterion to solve business problems using data and analytics. This led the AEF to commit to building a marketing case study library for academic purposes with data and analytics at the core of each teaching module.

BREAKDOWN OF STRUCTURAL DIVERSITY DISCONNECT

The past three years of research have shown that a racial diversity disconnect exists because there is a structural disconnect. Different stakeholders own various components in the talent ecosystem and often struggle to collaborate. In academia, for example, professors are often not connecting with career counselors. In industry, marketers are not joined at the hip with recruiters. Aligning different groups in each ecosystem makes it challenging to bring together efforts across all ecosystems to drive better diversity outcomes.

The collective AEF research has shown that the disconnects in the talent ecosystem drive an overall structural disconnect, broken down into six categories:

- 1. Lack of Clarity with the Field of Marketing and Advertising:** Many students associate the field of marketing and advertising as “making ads and selling stuff” according to research conducted by McCann Worldgroup. Lacking a clear value proposition about what an innovative, exciting, and rewarding career marketing can be limits the overall candidate pool. Having a consistent and clear message about what opportunities exist in marketing and advertising can improve industry’s ability to attract the diverse talent the industry needs.
- 2. The Bias Inherent in Internships:** There is a premium placed by employers on students having internships on their résumés, almost as a prerequisite to securing entry-level roles upon graduation. Employers want their new hires to “hit the ground running” and contribute immediately. However, internships often reflect a certain amount of privilege based on type of access to opportunity and economic ability to afford, in many cases, this unpaid work experience.
- 3. Selection and Evaluation Bias When Hiring:** Data has shown the tremendous amount of bias when selecting and evaluating candidates. Diverse talent is often put at a disadvantage for an entry-level role when evaluated against a general pool of candidates across a variety of dimensions, including résumé selection, interview process, and offer extension.
- 4. Structural Disconnect Between the Recruiting and Marketing Functions:** While recruiting and marketing functions may be coordinated in recruiting talent, these groups are often not fully integrated in maximizing their efforts to recruit diverse talent. There is a significant opportunity to have those functional groups leverage each other’s skills to expand and enrich the pipeline of diverse candidates being considered for the organization.
- 5. Diversity Perceived as Outside the Mainstream:** Getting diverse talent is sometimes seen as a checkmark to acknowledge organizational commitment to diversity and inclusion. When diversity is pushed to the sideline, these diverse employees are often just seen as the “diverse hires”, which creates a miscast perception that not everyone is equal. Diversity must be integrated into the mainstream hiring and orientation process to normalize diversity as a key component in, not an exception to, the entry-level class.
- 6. The Inclusion Disconnect:** Many organizations struggle to integrate diverse younger talent into the overall company culture. Fitting in to a culture can be challenging for that diverse talent because it is often a culture they must learn to adapt to instead of having company culture embrace and celebrate their unique talents.

BACKGROUND BEHIND AEF PROGRAM APPROACHES

Since 2017, the AEF has developed each of these programs in response to specific disconnects identified or calls to action made by the executive-level marketing and advertising community. Many are not new initiatives, but are areas that reflect a consistent commitment to diversity and inclusion.

PROGRAM APPROACH	POINT OF ORIGIN	YEAR LAUNCHED	DESCRIPTION
Best Jobs Ever	ANA Global Growth Council	Nov 2019	A campaign launched by McCann Worldgroup in collaboration with the AEF to drive greater awareness of and accessibility to the marketing and advertising industry
Masters on Campus	AEF Board of Directors	Fall 2020	A campaign to have top marketing and advertising executives visit campus and syndicate that content across academia
CMO Career Pathing Analysis	ANA CMO Growth Council	Fall 2020	A report that quantifies the demographics and attributes of the CMO career path
Pledge to Reflect College Demographics in Internship and Entry-Level Class	AEF Board of Directors	Forthcoming 2020	An industry pledge to have all incoming internship and entry-level classes reflect the racial and ethnic diversity makeup of universities
Marketing Case Studies with Data and Analytics	Analytics Disconnect Report	February 2020	A joint effort between academia and industry to build more marketing case studies that contain actual data sets for classroom purposes
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Connect	AEF Board of Directors	Winter 2020	Creation of a program that specifically builds a recruiting pipeline to industry from the HBCU community
Diversity Disconnect Deeper Dive	All Three Disconnect Studies	Early 2018	Application of the disconnect study approach across industry, academia, and talent to specific racial segments to specific racial and ethnic segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black (2021) • Latinx (2022) • Asian (2023) • LGBTQ+ (2024)
Talent Week	Diversity Disconnect Study	Sept 2018	A forum to bring key stakeholders that focus on talent — academia, marketers, L&D, diversity executives — together three times a year for one week to work on key talent-related issues
Marketing and Advertising Education (MADE) Internship Program	Talent Disconnect Study	October 2017	Creation and launch of a leadership program that is the common application for students interested in the marketing and advertising industry. It has scaled from its first year of 700 applicants to more than 1,800 in the third year.
“Let’s Talk” Inclusive Conversations	AEF Board of Directors	June 2020	Hold “Let’s Talk” discussions to discuss issues of race and ethnicity with key stakeholder groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students/new hires (specifically the MADE Alums) • Professors (specifically our Visiting Professor Program alums and our <i>Advertising Society and Quarterly</i> contributors) • Industry (from our Talent Week community)
Inclusion Study: My Voice Matters	Diversity Disconnect Study	November 2019	Fielded a study that links inclusion to growth outcomes, looking at inclusion across three different dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the room • In the company • In the industry
Longitudinal Tracking of Diverse Talent	AEF Board of Directors	Fall 2020	Combine data across all entry-level programs that champion diversity to have a tracking system that publicly publishes how well diverse talent performs (e.g., promotions)



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