

Bridging inequality gaps in the travel sector

Patrice Gordon, Founder and CEO of Eminere, which helps organisations cultivate inclusive leadership, drive strategic change and amplify underrepresented voices, explains the transformative power of reverse mentoring and its potential to solve travel's talent crisis

With projections indicating that a staggering one in three new jobs will hail from the tourism industry by the year 2032, the seismic impact of the travel sector on global equity can no longer be understated. It contributes a jaw-dropping 11.3% to the world's total GDP and it is a linchpin of the global economy (WTTC 2022 Economic Impact Report)

THE FIGHT FOR TOP TALENT IS ON

We're continuing to witness a triumphant return of the travel industry in the post-pandemic world.

Passenger numbers are surging, flight bookings are skyrocketing, and recruitment drives in travel companies are running at full

throttle. However, while the talent inflow is indeed robust, attrition rates are also soaring and the industry is in a fierce tug-of-war, battling to not just attract top-tier talent but to retain them for the long haul as well. The paradox couldn't be more real: a booming industry on one hand and a revolving door of talent on the other.

CONSUMERS ARE MORE DISCERNING

Today's consumers aren't just looking for a room with a view; they're seeking experiences that align with their core values. Sustainability, ethical practices, and cultural sensitivity are no longer 'nice-to-haves'; they're non-negotiables.

We're witnessing a paradigm shift where

travellers wield their purchasing power to support companies that resonate with their belief systems.

COMPETITION THROUGH THE SUPPLY CHAIN IS RIFE

As if that wasn't enough, the industry has also become a hotbed for fierce competition. The explosion of digital platforms, the ease of online bookings, and the viral power of social media reviews have democratized travel like never before. It's an all-out war, with companies not just fighting for market share, but for a share of the consumer's heart. Our industry is laced with legacy, adventure, and endless possibilities, yet confined by outdated mental frameworks that shackle it to the past.

I am always perplexed by the irony that our sector, hinged on the wonder of new experiences and novel cultures, modernised heavily by the digital revolution, still exhibits archaic organisational attitudes held stagnant by traditional thinking.

REVERSE MENTORING: THE GAMECHANGER

When an industry moves at pace and is so susceptible to disruption, there is a necessity to ensure that the supporting systems can move at pace too.

I refer to reverse mentoring as the relationship that exists where a senior leader is mentored by an under-represented individual – under-represented by way of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, or disability. Basically, the representation that is missing from the decision-making table.

Oftentimes leaders are shielded from the gravity of the truth, understanding what actually happens on the 'frontline', sometimes

CRAVING CONNECTION

69%

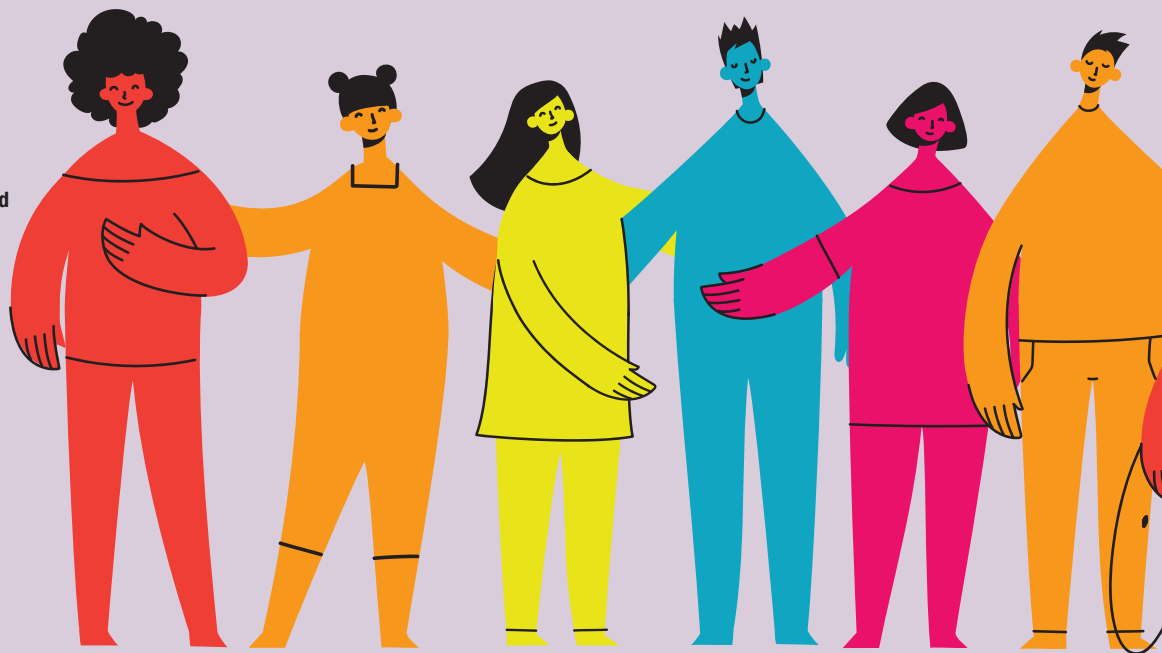
Of employees aren't satisfied with the opportunities for connection inside the workplace

52%

Want more connection at work

38%

Don't trust their co-workers



only discovering issues when either the staff survey or the customer satisfaction survey comes out.

But by this time it is too late, the damage has been done and now we move into the reactive space to try to uncover the root of the issue.

Recent research by coaching platform BetterUp revealed that 69% of employees aren't satisfied with the opportunities for connection inside the workplace, 52% want more connection at work and 38% don't trust their coworkers.

The insights report highlighted that a lack of connection in the workplace negatively impacts employee retention, performance, wellbeing, and more – community matters in the world of work.

Using reverse mentoring as a proactive tool to break down barriers that might exist, build belonging, and ultimately engage in the workforce, does take a significant amount of time investment, however, the results are far-reaching.

Leaders have the opportunity to build a relationship with someone of difference, in a safe environment. Allowing them the grace and the space to get things wrong but most importantly develop a deeper understanding of some of the issues that might be at play preventing certain groups from really thriving in the organisation.

THE POWER OF YOUTHFUL PERSPECTIVE

The current generation entering the workforce – Gen Z – are very intentional consumers as well as discerning employees. No longer are employers able to 'greenwash' or otherwise their policies through attractive PR campaigns.

ABOUT PATRICE GORDON

Patrice Gordon is a multi-award-winning professional with leadership skills nurtured in senior positions at British Airways, Royal Mail and Virgin Atlantic. Pivoting from commercial finance into commercial partnerships, she led the largest Airline Joint Venture across the transatlantic. The psychology of self-development has been a constant thread in Patrice's life. Recognising that the heartbeat of every organisation lies in its people, Patrice honed her skills as an executive coach. Dedicated to sharing commercial and financial wisdom from her 17-plus years of experience, she founded Eminere to provide executive coaching, group coaching and reverse mentoring programmes. Her book, *Reverse Mentoring: Removing Barriers and Building Belonging in the Workplace*, was published in November 2022.



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Gen Zs are holding companies to account – across the spectrum. Top of mind for this generation is sustainability, not only for the planet but for people too.

Young talent, unencumbered by years of 'how it's always been done', offers invaluable insights that can breathe life into outdated practices.

And with this, they are giving permission to others to also have the courage to speak their minds with the hope of change.

SO WHAT?

The industry, as a collective, needs to do better to engage and retain younger talent to ensure the survival of the industry in future years.

The lack of cohesiveness and career development opportunities intra-industry is a larger challenge that we need to address.

For now, my call to action for leaders is to identify the gaps in diversity that you have at senior levels in your organisation and set about a plan to address these.

Reverse mentoring may not be suitable for you but you will definitely be able to identify a few initiatives that will be able to support you to build a more inclusive culture.

I would love to hear your experiences of reverse mentoring – reach out to me at [Hello@eminere.co.uk](mailto>Hello@eminere.co.uk) and follow me on LinkedIn for the latest on leadership development. ☺

