

# NORDSTROM

## Afrotech 2021

October 18, 2021

To conclude our week-long reflection on our DIB pillars, we're diving into our efforts around Talent.

We will increase demographic diversity in all our corporate and leadership positions to better reflect the North American population. By the end of 2025, we will increase the representation of Black and Latinx populations in people-manager roles by at least 50%.

We will leverage our internship program and other initiatives that help us reach qualified candidates early in their careers, with a goal on average of at least 50% of participants in these programs coming from underrepresented populations. We're revisiting our practices and the training resources we offer for all customer-facing roles to ensure they include anti-racism and anti-bias content.

To talk about how this comes to life, we spoke with Ian and Jimiece.

### **IAN HEISSER, DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING**

#### **Why is important to have diverse talent within technology?**

Diversity within technology brings awareness and appreciation of different cultures, experiences, values, and ideas that must be considered to develop compelling and engaging experiences for our customers. Our aim as Nordstrom is to make ALL of our customers "feel good and look their best." To do that, we must also represent across our teams the customers we serve.

#### **How does Nordstrom ensure it is hiring and retaining diverse talent especially within technology? Are there specific programs in place?**

As part of our hiring practices, we ensure that we reach out to diverse communities, institutions and professionals within and beyond the industry. We actively recruit and support Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other institutions and organizations supporting our Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging initiatives. We provide our team members opportunities to grow and advance their careers, ongoing support, learning, and ongoing one-on-one and group mentoring. Our group mentoring sessions offer our Under-Represented Minority communities unique opportunities to share experiences and grow within supportive environments with leaders within our technology organizations.

#### **Why does Nordstrom value its partnership with AfroTech?**

AfroTech has become a leading entity in growing a diverse network of professionals and students, particularly Black professionals, to create an inclusive environment to support thought leadership, entrepreneurship, and social justice in the technology industry and our communities. These core principles directly align with our values as a company. We are excited and honored to partner with AfroTech to make a difference within the technology arena and our communities.

#### **How does diversity help drive the business?**

Our diversity efforts help drive the business by partnering and bringing to light some of our most deserving diverse fashion leaders in the industry today. In most respects, these leaders lead small, game-changing, entrepreneurial companies like Henna and Hijabs, founded by Hilal Ibrahim, giving them a platform to share their stories and provide their products to our diverse community of customers. Again, we aim to make ALL of our customers "feel good and look their best." Providing our Nordstrom platform to support our customers while at the same time supporting and growing Black and other diverse businesses helps drive our business.

#### **What makes Nordstrom a great place to work?**

Personally, I came to Nordstrom because of the opportunity to revolutionize the intersections of fashion and technology. Envisioning and delivering on new ways to use technology to engage our customers and bring them the very best of what Nordstrom has to offer them. I have had the opportunity and honor to support a great team of Engineers and Technical Program Managers that continually push for greatness and deliver value to our customers. We've done some incredible things, even throughout the pandemic, that have helped our customers and our business.

I've enjoyed bringing my authentic self to Nordstrom. I know that sounds cliché, but I have been able to be myself with my team and partners, being seen and valued for the value I bring. I've been encouraged and supported by my entire leadership team to help us grow in our Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. Being one of the Nordstrom sponsors of AfroTech, being our engagement sponsor for my Alma Mater, Xavier University of Louisiana, and being a core leader of our mentoring groups, are examples of how I've been able to bring forward opportunities for Nordstrom to live up to our commitments.

### **JIMIECE FORD, ASSOCIATE RECRUITER**

#### **Why is important to have diverse talent within technology?**

It is important to have diverse talent within technology because it allows us to best meet the needs of our customers and the business. Having diverse tech talent within an organization allows many different perspectives, skill sets and creative visions to come together and produce more innovative products and services that can appeal to a broader range of people.

#### **How does Nordstrom ensure it is hiring and retaining diverse talent especially within technology? Are there specific programs in place?**

Nordstrom has committed to increasing the representation of Black and LatinX populations in people-manager roles by at least 50%. Its goal is to have

at least 50% of individuals participating in an Early In Career program identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color). In the Tech internships space, we focus on core schools that include HSI's (Hispanic-Serving Institutions) and HBCU's (Historically Black College or Universities). We put together Tech Talks and One-on-one's with specific groups and organizations within each school to further promote Nordstrom's Tech presence. We know that we must consistently engage with these schools to help increase diverse talent within Nordstrom.

**Why does Nordstrom value its partnership with AfroTech?**

Nordstrom values its partnership with AfroTech because it provides a space for us to engage with African-American tech professionals and enthusiasts from a variety of backgrounds, and is also an opportunity for individuals with limited resources to connect with others who have an interest in tech. Nordstrom's participation in this event helps to promote our diversity initiatives and allows us to reach a pool of future candidates who may not have had the opportunity otherwise.

**How does diversity help drive the business?**

Diversity helps drive the business because it facilitates creativity and innovation. At Nordstrom, our customers and associates come from many different walks of life, and it is important that our team of vision leaders reflect that diversity. Working with a team of individuals from diverse backgrounds creates an environment of collaboration where different perspectives are valued and allows us to consider experiences and ideas outside of our normal sphere of thinking. Additionally, a diverse work culture where a variety of perspectives are heard and understood results in a space where team members are excited to contribute because they know that their ideas will be considered and understood.

**What makes Nordstrom a great place to work?**

Nordstrom is a great place to work because they support your personal development and growth. Nordstrom is committed to diversity and believes that each role you take on, prepares you for the next. The work I did on the store side allowed me to pursue different areas in my career with Nordstrom. There is a huge emphasis on internal mobility and rotation. Encouraging people to thrive by doing what they are passionate about. Because this is something they feel strongly about, I got to have this amazing opportunity to work as an Associate Recruiter on the Early In Career team.

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Advancing diversity, inclusion and belonging across a company is everyone's job, but it starts with our leadership. We will measure our leaders on their performance in this area through the Inclusion Index and feedback from their teams and coworkers.

Additionally, we will double our charitable giving to nonprofit organizations that promote anti-racism, bringing that total to approximately \$1M per year for the next five years. We have also joined a multi-year corporate partnership with the National Urban League, a historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment, equality and social justice.

Edmond Mesrobian shares his thoughts on Nordstrom's efforts to date.

**EDMOND MESROBIAN, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER**



### **Why is Nordstrom partnering with AfroTech?**

AfroTech aligns with our commitment to building talent diversity in tech. We have partnered with this organization over the years building our relationship with the organization and connecting with candidates. AfroTech is one of many ways we look to attract talent to our Nordstrom tech organization.

### **Why do you feel that diversity is important in tech?**

There are two focal points to diversity —one focusing on diversity in tech and the other with underrepresented communities. Diversity is important because the quality of teams you put together will approach problems from many angles —you get richer and better solutions. To get the best solution that resonates with the population we serve, we also need to represent those populations on our teams.

### **Diversity isn't an HR initiative; it takes the whole organization to drive meaningful change. Can you speak to that and where it starts?**

At Nordstrom, we very much believe in servant leadership. We have a large population of 50,000 employees that are in our communities and serving customers every day, so we need to ensure we are representing our customer population through our employees.

From the corporate perspective and technology, what we've learned is that talent is the most precious thing we can have access to. What's really unique to Nordstrom is we really care about representing the communities we serve, not just serving the community.

### **What makes Nordstrom a great place to work?**

Nordstrom's culture and values are what make it a great place to work. You can see the line of sight to the origin of founders back 120 years ago. The idea of servant leadership also makes Nordstrom a great place to work. It's about how you serve, not how you lead. So the fact that servant is in front of leadership reaffirms that our culture is about listening and being attentive.

There is a level of respect for the individual, respect for the employee and respect for the company that goes hand in hand. So, most conversations start with, how do we make the company better? It's not about you winning as an individual. It's about us winning as a company. Our job is to teach, mentor and help people on their journey to have successful careers —that is at the core of leadership is at Nordstrom.

Working at Nordstrom is all about a career and it's not about where you start. It's a journey you can take. So, if you're starting at the store level, we're working on apprenticeship programs that get you from the store into technology. To us it's about joining our company, joining a family and building your career.

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Today we're talking all things Culture —specifically, how we build up employees internally and are working to become a more inclusive place to work.

For this DIB pillar, we're focused on strengthening belonging and addressing favoritism through greater consistency, collaboration, communication and connection. Our Voice of the Employee survey will be our benchmark for success in this area, and we're working to improve our Inclusion and Belonging Index score by 8 points and Favoritism Index score by 6 points by 2025.

We spoke with Damion and Lauren for their thoughts on our culture and what projects are in place to continue to improve this topic.

### **DAMION WILTSHIRE, ENGINEER 1**

#### **What is your view on mentorship and sponsorship? Have you had mentors and/or sponsors throughout your career?**

I think mentorship and sponsorship are incredibly important for a fulfilling career. I did not actively pursue mentorship for the first 10 years of my career. Once I transitioned to software engineering, that changed. Mentorship gave me a safe space for to ask questions and get feedback. It also gave me a wider range of people I can turn to for help and opinions on various topics. Without mentorship, you really only have your manager and your teammates.

#### **What changes has Nordstrom made in recent years to become a more inclusive place?**

I've noticed how transparent Nordstrom is with information, and I think that plays a huge role in inclusivity. For example, when Nordstrom announced their promotions, they also announced gender and race information with it. Knowing how many women and minorities got promoted —and how that compares to both our own company goals and the broader tech industry —was great information to have. Not a lot of companies share this level of information.

#### **What are Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) at Nordstrom? What roles do they play in Nordstrom's overall culture and how might they help individual employees?**

ERGs at Nordstrom create a space to celebrate and learn about different cultures. They also create a sort of "home" for people that share the same culture, race, etc. Personally, the Black Employee Network (BEN) provides a space for me to connect with people that share the same struggles and background as me. Being a minority in tech can be isolating at times, and BEN helps me remember that I'm not alone here.

#### **What makes Nordstrom a great place to work?**

Nordstrom is a great place to work because we strike the perfect balance of kindness and brilliance. In previous jobs, I felt like I always had to choose between the two. It was typically difficult to solve hard problems when a team had too many good-natured people, and a team with several sharp people also had several abrasive people. Here at Nordstrom, we do great work without leaving a trail of fire behind us.

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In today's blog, we're exploring our Marketplace pillar, which is all about how we will serve customers on their terms, through a lens of anti-racism, identity and equity at every touchpoint.

To help achieve this, we're committed to delivering \$500M in retail sales from brands owned by, operated by, or designed by Black and/or Latinx individuals by the end of 2025. We are also renewing our Supplier Diversity program, which will track and support diverse-owned suppliers across all areas of our business.

To highlight what this all means, we spoke with our Marketplace expert Christian, senior program manager.

### **CHRISTIAN RICHARDSON, SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER**

#### **Can you give a little bit of context around what the supplier diversity program is?**

When we think about supplier diversity at Nordstrom specifically, we really want to look at supplier diversity holistically —race, ethnicity, size, gender, sustainability, etc. We want to develop a cohesive, best-in-class, easily navigable program.

While we are still working on our supplier diversity program, things are absolutely in flight to help us achieve our goals. We have recently established relationships with the 15 Percent Pledge and Harlem's Fashion Row, a consulting agency dedicated to amplifying and creating more visibility for new and emerging BIPOC designers. Our immediate focus is defining our philosophy on what makes a solid diversified offering and using that to build a supporting strategy with integrated programming.

#### **How does diversity at Nordstrom, whether it be on the store side or corporate help with customer service?**

Diversity promotes innovation through the introduction of new products, services, and solutions. Looking at multiple sourcing channels can drive competition and create space for our existing and potential vendors to come to the table. It also enables us to enter new markets and gain new customers by diversifying our brand and supplier partnerships. Diversity makes good business sense, but we must pair it with an inclusive and equitable culture. Being equitable allows us to create an environment that enables every individual —from our internal team and onto our customers —to flourish.

#### **What do you think that Nordstrom is doing to keep up with that evolving need for diversity in fashion?**

We have our Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging team and we each own one of our key pillars: culture, talent, leadership, and marketplace. Each pillar works closely with one another. Marketplace does not function without a talented workforce, healthy company culture, or committed leadership —the work done in each of those pillars helps execute our broader marketplace goals which impact our brand partners and customers.

We're looking to create a culture here that leads with diversity, inclusion, and belonging, which is the foundation we continue to build on. We learn more as we become increasingly connected. It is imperative to be open to hearing opinions and voices unlike your own and accepting that just because you cannot relate does not mean that it is not happening. We are creating a platform for other people to share their stories and amplify their voices and experiences because it also reflects the communities we serve.

#### **What makes Nordstrom a great place to work?**

I would say the access to leaders —there are a lot of organizations where you don't necessarily have that access. Our leadership structure makes it easier to voice your ideas and solutions. Making those connection points serves the greater good of our culture —and our one community.

#### **Do you have anything else to add to that? And why that's important that's not just an HR function?**

It is every single person's job to think through the lens of diversity, inclusion, and belonging. Thinking about a day-to-day role and a person's job function —what moments in their day can they lead with DIB? How can they be more inclusive as part of their job function and influence their team? We all have a role to play in moving the needle. Systemic change does not just happen in one place; it must happen on all sides. I am starting to notice the conversation shifts in that way, and those are the types of conversations we should be having and strategies we should be creating.

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We've long believed we are all made better by the diversity that exists within our communities. Our values are centered on the notion of creating a place where every customer and employee is welcome, respected, appreciated and able to be themselves. But that doesn't happen by accident or overnight —we know we have a lot of ways to improve as we strive to be a better, more inclusive and anti-racist company.

We've created a diversity, inclusion and belonging (DIB) strategy that is focused on four pillars —Talent, Culture, Marketplace and Leadership. Over the next few days, we'll highlight employees from around the company to discuss each pillar and the important role AfroTech plays in achieving our goals.