

The PROFILE

By Krystal Scanlon

**T**he Drawdown (TDD): What drove Investcorp's decision to create the

**diversity & inclusion champion role? Why now?**

*Jordana Semaan (JS):* Since our formation, Investcorp was always built on diversity and inclusion. Our founding leadership comprises professionals from around the world.

As we've expanded into new geographies, we wanted to establish a leadership role for an individual to be responsible for driving change across the business internationally. This ensures we're continuing on the right path and initiatives are moving more efficiently across the firm, as the role has direct access to our executive chair.

It's important to continually look at ourselves and identify any unique barriers which are preventing us from achieving our D&I ambitions. By having the entire firm on board, we're able to make changes to the way we operate where necessary. It's not just about having policies, it's about respecting and understanding the needs of our employees and accepting their differences as individuals, and turning those ideas into actions which work for us.

**TDD: Can you describe your new responsibilities in this role?**

*JS:* I'm tasked with looking at how we can improve across all areas of the business. I look at our job descriptions to ensure they're inclusive, the recruitment process itself, including interviewing and employee onboarding. I'm currently completing a deep dive into all our policies to ensure they're fair and inclusive too.

The bottom line is, we want to maximise on the fantastic talent we have today, while bringing in new talent and retaining them. This requires having the right programmes in place to ensure the environment and culture allows them to thrive and celebrates them.



HEAD OF HR (GULF & ASIA) AND D&I CHAMPION AT INVESTCORP

**JORDANA SEMAAN,** discusses why the firm created this role, Investcorp's new talent acquisition process and why inclusion needs to be a focus

**TDD: Investcorp has partnered with various organisations including the GCC chapter of the 30s club, CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion, Level 20 and 100 Women in Finance. Other than gender and age, what areas of diversity is Investcorp looking to improve and what strategies are in place to handle this?**

JS: We are actually looking and re-emphasising the importance of all areas of diversity. This includes age, gender, socio-economic background, disabilities - there are no limitations.

We often find people focus on diversity, but it's also important to recognise the inclusion element, to ensure our employees feel comfortable. I also guide our senior management on what we can do to make an inclusive environment within teams and the broader business.

**TDD: Why do you think inclusion is so important to achieving an organisation's goals?**

JS: A focus on increasing diversity alone falls short of tackling the systemic challenges around workplace equality, personal bias or exclusionary culture. Hiring a diverse workforce doesn't guarantee that every employee has the same experience or opportunities.

Inclusion is what's needed to give diversity real impact, as empowering a diverse workforce requires looking at both the recruitment and retention of employees. If businesses haven't done the groundwork to make sure they have built an inclusive culture, they won't be able to retain any of the new hires made as part of their push for diversity.

Inclusion is fundamentally about individual experience and allowing everyone at work to contribute and feel a part of an organisation. It's about more than simply 'including' diversity - it's about individual experience and work and creating a positive

## SEMAAN BIO

In her earlier career, Jordana's positions were more focused on communications, relationship management and marketing. It wasn't until she joined Hyder Consulting in 2010 she started to take on HR responsibilities in an official manner. After nine years of HR experience, she joined Investcorp.

environment in which everyone can share knowledge and have their perspectives valued.

**TDD: The firm has implemented a new talent acquisition process in which a minimum of 50% of diverse candidates are required for all open positions. Can you describe how this works? What happens if you don't receive a diverse-enough pool of applications?**

JS: For all open positions, we brief our recruiters so they are aware of our requirements. In-house, it's up to the HR business partners to follow these exact same principles.

In the event we don't receive a diverse-enough pool by the close date, we either hold it longer, or push harder to get them. We are aware there may be rare situations where it isn't possible, but in such scenarios an exemption case needs to be signed off by the executive chair and myself.

**TDD: Investcorp is an international firm and it's listed in the Middle East (Bahrain). What are the main differences you notice in terms of D&I by region?**

JS: While we are a global firm, it's important to recognise and emphasise that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. People on different continents face different challenges. For a D&I strategy to be truly global, we need to understand the culture, politics, economics,

and relevant legislation within each region, all of which underscores the critical importance of being culturally competent.

To address differences across markets, we've adapted our approach and appointed a local diversity lead in each geography to ensure diversity measures are being enhanced across the firm but also tailored to the needs of individual markets. There are some measures that are firm based, then others where we drill down per geography.

We organise monthly meetings with regional diversity leads to review the firm's initiatives, any challenges faced, and discuss new ideas. Then each quarter, the wider firm and our executive chair have a group call to discuss what we've done so far and future planning. It's about making the current environment and culture the best it can be for our employees. Having that constant two-way feedback allows us to adjust where necessary so we can be the best we can be.

**TDD: What is your take on D&I across the PE industry at the moment and how likely are we to see changes happen quickly?**

JS: D&I is becoming a much more important topic for the PE industry and others, which is fantastic. Firms see the benefits of having a diverse workforce and are taking steps to promote this.

I'm very encouraged by what I see in the market, however we've got a long way to go. It's complex and can't be solved overnight. I continually emphasise the inclusivity part because it's one thing to be diverse, but if you don't have the inclusivity part, you won't stay diverse.

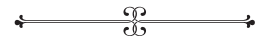
All companies have different challenges to overcome. There is a strong sense they are motivated to drive change so I believe there is a positive future. But we all need to remain committed to driving change and not become complacent; to move forward and have a more D&I world. ♦

## The TIME LINE

2003-2006

**BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT**

Logistics executive



2006-2007

**FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE FIA**

Communications assistant



2007-2008

**CAPIVEST**

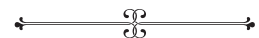
Wealth management relationship manager



2008-2010

**ABAAD REAL ESTATE & AMANAH FACILITIES MANAGEMENT**

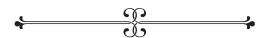
Sales marketing and PR manager



2010-2013

**HYDER CONSULTING**

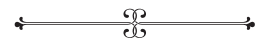
Senior HR and admin advisor



2013-2017

**PANALPINA**

Country head of HR-BAH/KSA



2017-2019

**APM TERMINALS**

GM human resources



2019-present

**INVESTCORP**

Head of human resources (Gulf and Asia), diversity & inclusion champion