Pinterest CEO Ben Silbermann: ‘Parts of Our Culture Are Broken’

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25 mins ago
Pinterest CEO Ben Silbermann addressed a litany of allegations by two former employees earlier this week in an email to staff.

Ifeoma Ozoma and Aerica Shimizu Banks took to Twitter Monday to air their grievances, which included issues over salary and leveling, as well as retaliation they allegedly faced after speaking up. They are both Black women who held the title of public policy and social impact manager before leaving the company in May.

Silbermann wrote in his email—which was obtained by Bloomberg News and confirmed as accurate by Pinterest—” What I’ve learned over the past few weeks is that parts of our culture are broken. Truthfully, I didn’t understand just how much work we have to do. That’s not an excuse, that’s a failure in leadership, and I’m truly sorry for letting you down. I’m grateful that so many of you had the courage to share your experiences honestly and openly.”

He admitted that the company lacks diverse representation, particularly in senior leadership, and said recruiting plans for senior-level roles are now “baked into” the core role expectations and performance reviews for Pinterest’s leadership team.

Silbermann also pledged to add a person of color to Pinterest’s board of directors by the end of the year.

Across the company, Pinterest will raise the standard for

building diverse slates across all roles and report on progress during weekly recruiting reports.

Pinterest will require all employees to take classes on building inclusive teams and unconscious bias, and Silbermann wrote, “My team is doing a monthly breakfast to learn more about an aspect of systemic racism and inclusivity and will host a monthly meeting with their own teams, including bringing in outside experts to share their experiences of systemic racism.”

Silbermann also addressed content on Pinterest’s platform, saying the company will establish a metrics-based understanding of how inclusive its product experience is currently and set measurable goals to improve on it by featuring a diverse set of creators, businesses and merchants.

The company will improve representation in teams across engineering, product and design through both recruiting and development, and Silbermann promised to rethink inclusion in forums where decisions are made.

Silbermann addressed the issue of employees being afraid to raise concerns with their supervisors or with human resources, along with questions over whether the company’s compensation structure is fair, writing, “We need to get to the bottom of these. We will hire external experts to comprehensively review the compensation of our employees starting with people of color, then expanding to other groups. We are also finding external experts to independently review our other internal processes.”

He added, “I want to make our culture better. And that starts with me. I own this. I care about all of you more than you might know or feel. Most important, I still believe that we can make Pinterest a company where Black employees, people from all underrepresented groups and everyone will be proud to work. It will be a hard and long road. My deepest thanks to

everyone who is helping push the company forward. We have a lot of work to do.”

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