

Best People-Focused CEO of the Year

Winner

Tracy Garrad, AXA Health

It may be the lot for a CEO to be pulled in every direction by competing needs, but almost four years into her post at AXA Health, Tracy Garrad has proved without doubt that she knows what it takes to put people first.

Ascending to the role in January 2019, Garrad has taken the company through a comprehensive modernisation programme.

In the company's transition from slower paced AXA PPP, she set out and united the company behind a vision of a more modern, digital and customer-centric organisation in AXA Health.

As experience transformation lead at AXA Health, Claire Fletcher, put it: "I was so inspired by Tracy's honesty about the task in hand, the recognition of the scale of the change, and the support Tracy was laying down to enable people to join her on that journey.

"Her focus on the people, the customer and the future of AXA Health in the market has ignited a new beginning that was absolutely needed, it has brought people together to want to achieve as a team."

Not content to rest on her laurels however, Garrad has pushed a number of high-profile initiatives to ensure the health insurer supports its employees like it supports its customers, including internal wellbeing campaign Switch it up, which encouraged employees to adopt healthy behaviours and live the AXA Health brand in their day-to-day life.

Most prominently Garrad has been a passionate proponent of diversity and inclusion (D&I), shining a light for diversity across company lines. She is the executive sponsor for D&I across AXA UKI, and chairs the D&I board, ensuring senior backing that has won notable victories for D&I across the company.

In particular, Garrad has been a driving force behind a brand new employee



network, Carers@AXA, which supports staff with caring responsibilities. She ensured AXA renewed its commitment to the UK HMT Women In Finance charter, in which companies pledge to have 40% of

Shortlisted

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Charmaine Griffiths, British Heart Foundation

Lucy-Marie Hagues, Capital One UK

Daniel Rabie, GetBusy

Beatriz Shorrocks, Marlowe Software, Risk and Compliance

Jo Williams, The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

James Wroath, Wincanton

senior roles held by women by the end of 2026; AXA UK smashed the target, reaching 40.4% by March 2022.

Garrad's enthusiasm for D&I comes from a deeply personal space. Born to a working class family in Blackpool, she became sole carer for her siblings at just 17. And yet for all her now considerable status, she has never once forgotten to help people up behind her.

Having beaten the odds, where 90% of financial services C-suite executives are from a wealthier background, Garrad has been a visible, vocal role model and accelerator for change.

Part of the UK government's Socio-Economic Taskforce and the HMT Women in Finance Accountable Exec Taskforce, she also speaks regularly to drive progress outside her organisation.

For her exceptional leadership through a period of upheaval not limited to the pandemic; her continued dedication to championing D&I and social mobility and the way she inspires those around her, Garrad truly deserves commendation. **HR**