

D. PAKALOV



One DNA: A New Trust Architecture for DEI and Supplier Diversity

Methodological Guide

Daniil Pakalov

**One DNA:
A New Trust Architecture for DEI and Supplier Diversity**

Methodological Guide

Belgorod

2026

BBK 65я73

P 13

Author

Daniil Pakalov - Independent Expert in Business Management and Development

Daniil Pakalov

P 13 One DNA: A New Trust Architecture for DEI and Supplier Diversity:
Methodological Guide / Daniil Pakalov. – Belgorod: Epicenter LLC,
2026. – 36 pp.

ISBN 978-5-6056850-7-4

This methodological guide presents the One DNA trust architecture - a framework for integrating HR policy (DEI) and supplier management into a unified system that reduces transaction costs in uncertain business environments. The author proposes a practical maturity model, a metrics framework, and a step-by-step implementation approach designed to translate social initiatives into measurable business value and eliminate the “illusion of choice” in procurement. The methodology helps companies transform fragmented processes into a transparent trust ecosystem, supporting innovation and competitiveness.

The publication is intended as a practical guide for senior management, HR leaders, and procurement and supply management executives working to develop their organizations systematically.

This is the English-language edition of the methodological guide originally published in Russian in 2025.

BBK 65я73

ISBN 978-5-6056850-7-4

© Daniil Pakalov, 2026

Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter 1. Conceptual Foundation: One DNA	7
Chapter 2. Five Levels of the One DNA Maturity Model	14
Chapter 3. Maturity Assessment Methodology	22
Chapter 4. Methodology Implementation Framework	28
Chapter 5. Application Cases	31
Conclusion	34
References	35

INTRODUCTION

In today's global economy, organizational structures are changing fundamentally as organizations adapt to new social and economic conditions. Traditional management models based on rigid hierarchies and functional separation are proving inadequate for the challenges of the twenty-first century [1]. Organizations face two challenges that shape their long-term viability: developing human capital through diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and building resilient, adaptive, and ethical supplier ecosystems.

The One DNA concept addresses a central contradiction in management practice. Although the objectives of DEI and Supplier Diversity are aligned in their underlying purpose - both seek to expand access to opportunities, ensure fairness, and unlock the untapped potential of diversity - in practice, these areas tend to develop in isolation. This fragmentation threatens business effectiveness: DEI and Supplier Diversity operate as autonomous functions, often competing for resources, resulting in lost synergies and what may be described as the "chaos of fragmented initiatives" [2].

Amid geopolitical turbulence and the disruption of established logistics networks, trust should be regarded as an economic resource rather than merely a moral or ethical concept. Companies with high levels of both internal and external trust demonstrate stronger innovation performance. Research indicates that such organizations incur significantly lower transaction costs than their counterparts [3]. The absence of a unified methodology integrating supplier management (Procurement) and people management (HR) creates recurring gaps in an organization's overall trust architecture. The One DNA methodology is designed to bridge this gap by providing an integrated approach to managing the ecosystem as a unified whole.

The central *issue* addressed in this guide is the systemic misalignment between strategies for managing internal and external diversity, which gives rise to institutional conflicts and reduces the overall effectiveness of the organizational

system. An analysis of the corporate environment reveals several fundamental contradictions.

First, there is a conflict between metrics and role expectations. Human Resources (HR) departments are assessed against employee engagement, cultural diversity, and talent retention indicators, whereas Procurement functions are traditionally focused on cost minimization and risk reduction. A company may therefore invest substantial resources in training employees on the principles of inclusion while simultaneously applying procurement procedures that effectively exclude small and diverse suppliers. Such practices create double standards that undermine trust in the organization's stated values.

Second, there is no unified framework for managing the trust ecosystem. Under the traditional approach, suppliers are viewed as replaceable resources, while employees are regarded as capital [4]. The One DNA methodology challenges this distinction by arguing that both groups participate in a trust-based system and therefore need the same fundamental principles to govern their interactions: transparency, predictability, and safety. Fragmented approaches create an internally inconsistent corporate culture, in which the rules change depending on whether a person is inside or outside the organization's formal workforce.

Third, a key barrier is the "illusion of choice." Organizations often establish formal participation mechanisms, such as tenders and internal competitions; however, in practice, these mechanisms do not guarantee genuine access to opportunities because of opaque decision-making and hidden barriers imposed by decision-makers. The perception that choice is merely illusory undermines motivation: suppliers stop proposing innovations, while employees lose the incentive to develop because they believe that the winner has already been predetermined.

The purpose of this guide is to define, explain, and set out how to implement the One DNA methodology as a universal trust framework capable of integrating DEI and Supplier Diversity management into a strategic system designed to achieve competitive advantage.

The guide pursues the following objectives:

1. To describe the conceptual foundations of the One DNA model by setting out the theoretical basis for integrating HR and procurement practices through the concept of trust.
2. To present a five-level maturity model, providing a detailed description of the organization's evolution from a fragmented understanding of diversity to the creation of an integrated leadership ecosystem.
3. To formulate a methodology for assessing maturity by developing a metrics framework encompassing both quantitative indicators, such as procurement structure and demographics, and qualitative dimensions, such as the Trust Index and Perception Economics.
4. To develop an implementation framework by proposing a step-by-step transformation process with a clear description of management interventions at each stage.
5. To demonstrate how the methodology can be applied across different organizational contexts, illustrating its broad applicability and potential for scaling.

Chapter 1. Conceptual Foundation: One DNA

1.1. From Fragmented Initiatives to a Unified Architecture

Historically, corporate governance has been based on the principle of specialization. Although this principle proved effective during the industrial era, it has created significant challenges in the knowledge and network economy. The traditional approach created rigid barriers between human resource management and the management of external resources - namely, suppliers. DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) developed within HR as a values-driven, human-centered discipline focused on cultural transformation and social justice. Supplier Diversity, by contrast, evolved within the Procurement function as a technical discipline focused on compliance, quotas, and supply risk management [5].

This form of siloed management has resulted in several critical limitations. Companies spend resources on overlapping training and assessment systems for employees and suppliers while overlooking the fact that the competencies required for successful interaction - communication, ethics, and innovation - are universal. Employees immersed in an inclusive culture may experience cognitive dissonance and lose confidence in the sincerity of leadership when they encounter cynical practices in the organization's dealings with suppliers. Suppliers' innovative potential is not incorporated into the development of internal teams, while information about talent and competencies within the organization is not used to strengthen the supply chain.

The One DNA concept proposes a fundamental shift in approach. It calls for removing artificial boundaries in favor of a unified trust architecture.

Under this model, the organization is viewed not as a closed fortress but as a permeable membrane, in which the principles governing interaction with people - whether permanent employees or external contractors - are based on a single "genetic code": One DNA. This makes it possible to transform the chaos of fragmented initiatives into a coherent and manageable system.

1.2. Three Axioms of the One DNA Model

The theoretical foundation of the One DNA methodology rests on three axioms, presented in Figure 1, which integrate economic theory, organizational sociology, and management psychology into a unified logical framework.

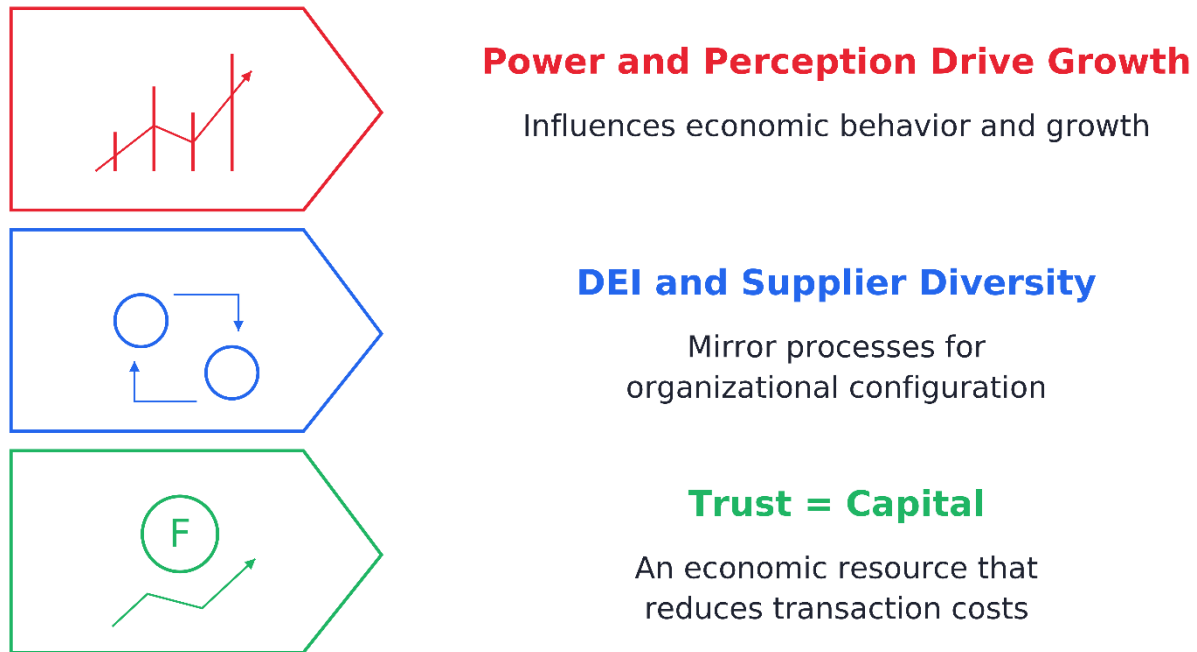


Fig. 1. Three Axioms of the One DNA Model

Axiom 1. “Trust = Capital”

The One DNA model treats trust not as an abstract moral virtue, but as a measurable economic resource that can be built and drawn upon. The methodology proposes that trust is a key determinant of transaction costs. In low-trust systems, organizations are forced to invest substantial resources in controls, inspections, legal safeguards, and risk insurance. By contrast, trust reduces friction in working relationships, accelerating information exchange and decision-making.

The axiom states that the growth of both human and supplier ecosystems is impossible without trust; trust is the currency that buys speed and innovation.

Axiom 2. “DEI and Supplier Diversity Are Mirror Processes”

This axiom challenges the traditional functional separation between the two areas and proposes that an analysis of DEI and Supplier Diversity at the level of

underlying principles reveals a shared underlying structure. Both processes address similar challenges in designing the organizational environment and managing access to opportunities. Both prioritize accessibility, transparency, equitable participation, predictability, and effectiveness.

Accessibility means enabling the broadest possible range of participants to enter the system and removing artificial barriers that are unrelated to actual competencies or the value they create for the system. Transparency requires clear and consistently applied criteria for selection, assessment, and advancement, thereby reducing arbitrariness and perceived unfairness. Equitable participation means designing rules and practices so that the likelihood of success is determined primarily by competencies and value creation rather than by privilege, membership in particular groups, or affiliation. Predictability means the consistent and stable application of rules, which gives participants a sense of security and enables them to develop long-term strategies for interacting with the system.

Finally, a focus on performance metrics prioritizes outcomes over procedural compliance and enables DEI and Supplier Diversity to be assessed not as formal initiatives, but as manageable dimensions of organizational performance. Recognizing this shared structure enables an organization to apply a unified management toolkit across both domains by harmonizing policies, standards, and procedures. Such harmonization reduces the fragmentation of management practices, improves decision consistency, and contributes to the development of an integrated architecture for managing diversity and engagement at both the human-capital level and the supplier-ecosystem level.

Axiom 3. “Power and Perception Drive Growth”

The third axiom introduces a political dimension into diversity management. Power architecture - the way in which decision-making authority and the right to allocate resources are distributed - is a key factor in ecosystem development. Where the power architecture is opaque, the organization develops the phenomenon of the “illusion of choice”: formally announced opportunities, such as tenders and vacancies,

may offer no genuine choice in practice. This perception directly influences the economic behavior of participants. Suppliers do not invest in quality, and employees do not pursue development or learning if they believe that the outcome of the process has already been predetermined. Accordingly, managing perceptions of power can help support economic growth.

1.3. Trust Architecture

Within the One DNA methodology, the concept of trust architecture describes the structured organization of processes, rules, technology platforms, and cultural norms that collectively build and sustain trust across the organization. It is not a spontaneous phenomenon, but the result of deliberate organizational design.

At both the organizational and ecosystem levels, trust architecture consists of interconnected components that sustain stakeholder relationships and support predictable, fair, and effective management decisions. Its key elements include a demonstrable link to business outcomes, a safe environment, procedural fairness, and information symmetry. Together, these elements create the institutional conditions needed for effective collaboration. Under such conditions, participants in the system are more inclined to invest in collaboration, innovation, and long-term commitments.

Information symmetry requires mechanisms that provide equal access for all ecosystem participants, without exception, to essential information about opportunities, criteria for success, and the rules governing the system. The scope for self-serving behavior is reduced when hidden rules and selective access to information are eliminated. This, in turn, strengthens perceived fairness and reduces transaction costs. Procedural fairness, meanwhile, relies on a system of checks and balances designed to ensure, wherever possible, that management decisions are based on objective data and formalized criteria rather than informal arrangements, implicit bias, or personal preferences. This strengthens trust in institutions rather than in individual leaders and reduces the system's dependence on particular leaders for its stability.

An organizational culture in which acknowledging mistakes, raising concerns, and demonstrating vulnerability do not lead to stigma or punishment constitutes a safe environment. Such an environment is a prerequisite for collective learning, controlled experimentation, and innovation because it reduces fear of negative consequences for taking initiative and enables the organization to accumulate, process, and learn from experience, including failure.

Finally, trust architecture must demonstrate a clear and traceable connection between efforts to advance diversity - both within DEI and Supplier Diversity - and business outcomes. This connection must be institutionalized and made visible to all stakeholders through a system of metrics, reporting, and management decisions so that trust in diversity initiatives is based not only on values, but also on empirically demonstrated effectiveness. The overall architecture is shown in Figure 2.

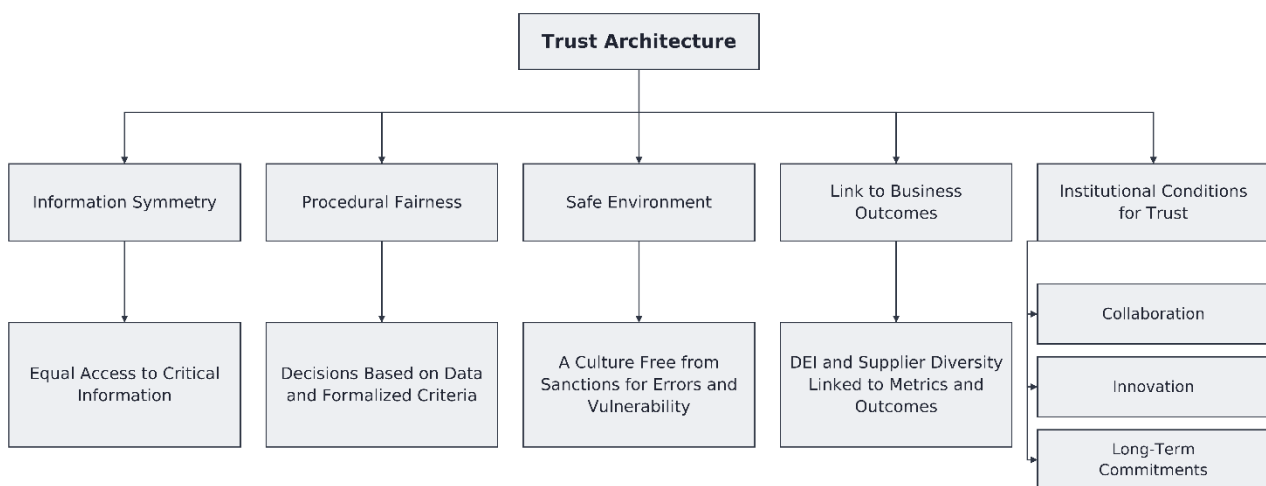


Fig. 2. Trust Architecture

It is the trust architecture that determines whether diversity becomes a resource for development or a source of conflict. Transparency and predictability within the environment make it possible to turn differences among participants into productive collaboration.

1.4. Perception Economics

One contribution of the One DNA methodology is its integration of Perception Economics. This approach holds that the economic value of interactions is determined not so much by objective reality itself - for example, the wording of a procurement policy - as by how participants perceive that reality - for example, whether a supplier believes that a tender is fair [6].

The key dimensions of Perception Economics include the following. First, there is the participant's subjective assessment of whether genuine alternatives exist and whether they can meaningfully influence an outcome. Where the "illusion of choice" is strong - that is, where the participant believes that the choice is merely fictitious - the motivation to compete can disappear. Second, participants assess the relationship between the effort they invest and the reward they receive relative to other participants. A perception of inequity is a powerful demotivating factor that can lead to opportunistic behavior. Third, participants assess the extent to which opportunities for social and economic mobility are genuinely accessible.

The One DNA methodology provides tools for quantifying these subjective factors and converting them into manageable metrics. Perception management thus becomes an economic lever: by strengthening confidence in the fairness of the system, an organization encourages participants to invest more actively in innovation and collaboration.

1.5. One DNA as the Organization's "Unified Code"

One DNA describes the target state of an organization in which the principles of trust and inclusion are embedded in every business process. It functions as a "unified code" that governs the behavior of the system regardless of whether the organization is interacting with an employee or a supplier.

Implementation of One DNA involves integrating people and suppliers by creating a seamless environment in which talent can move between roles and statuses - for example, an employee may become a supplier, while a supplier may become integrated into an internal team - thereby creating a flexible resource base. It also

requires the integration of governance mechanisms: a transition from fragmented HR and Procurement dashboards to a single integrated analytics dashboard that monitors the health of the entire ecosystem. Equally important is aligning values by shifting corporate culture from formal compliance with rules to deliberate commitment to shared principles. One DNA represents a new management paradigm, marking a shift from managing separate components mechanically to managing the organization as an interconnected whole. Under this paradigm, the organization becomes a self-learning and self-managing system capable of adapting and generating sustainable competitive advantage through trust.

Chapter 2. Five Levels of the One DNA Maturity Model

2.1. Logic of the Maturity Model

The One DNA Maturity Model is a tool for assessment and development planning that enables an organization to determine its current position across the dimensions of trust and inclusion and to define a path for further development. The need for a phased approach is driven by the complexity of cultural transformation: an organization cannot move directly from chaos to an ecosystem without passing through the intermediate stages of structuring and integration.

The logic of the model is based on the development of management capabilities and the ability to sustain trust at scale. At lower levels, trust is either absent or localized, while management remains reactive. As an organization progresses through the levels, trust becomes systemic, management becomes proactive, and the ecosystem develops the capacity for self-regulation. Table 1 provides a summary of the One DNA maturity levels.

Table 1. Summary of the One DNA Maturity Levels

Level	Name	Management Focus	Key Characteristic	State of Trust
1	Awareness	Absent / Reactive	Chaos, denial, silos	Low / Toxic
2	Policy & Compliance	Control and rules	Formalism, quotas, bureaucracy	Formal / Imposed
3	Integration	Processes and data	Integration, emergence of dialogue	Unstable (transparency crisis)
4	Trust Ecosystem	Culture and relationships	Synergy, shared values	High / Systemic
5	One DNA Leadership	Strategy and influence	Self-management, external expansion	Trust as an asset / Benchmark

2.2. Level 1 - Awareness (Basic Awareness)

At this stage, the organization is in a state of “unconscious incompetence.” DEI and Supplier Diversity issues are either ignored altogether or addressed only at the level of slogans unsupported by concrete action. Diversity within the supply chain is absent as a management principle: procurement decisions are driven exclusively by short-term price considerations, while concentration risks and the opportunity costs associated with forgone innovation are disregarded. The HR function operates

primarily in an administrative support mode. A reactive management approach prevails, with problems addressed only once they become critical - for example, in the event of a reputational scandal or a supply disruption.

The key symptoms are as follows. The organization lacks a shared vocabulary for discussing the value of diversity. Any related initiatives are perceived as a “fad” or as an externally imposed burden. Information on suppliers and employees is dispersed across separate systems, and analytics are absent. Hiring and contractor selection decisions lack transparency, while favoritism flourishes, creating an atmosphere of latent cynicism.

The primary objective at this stage is to build basic awareness of the problem and establish a common language. The organization must conduct a “reality inventory,” acknowledge existing trust gaps, and establish diversity as a legitimate priority for senior management. The Level 1 architecture is shown in Figure 3.

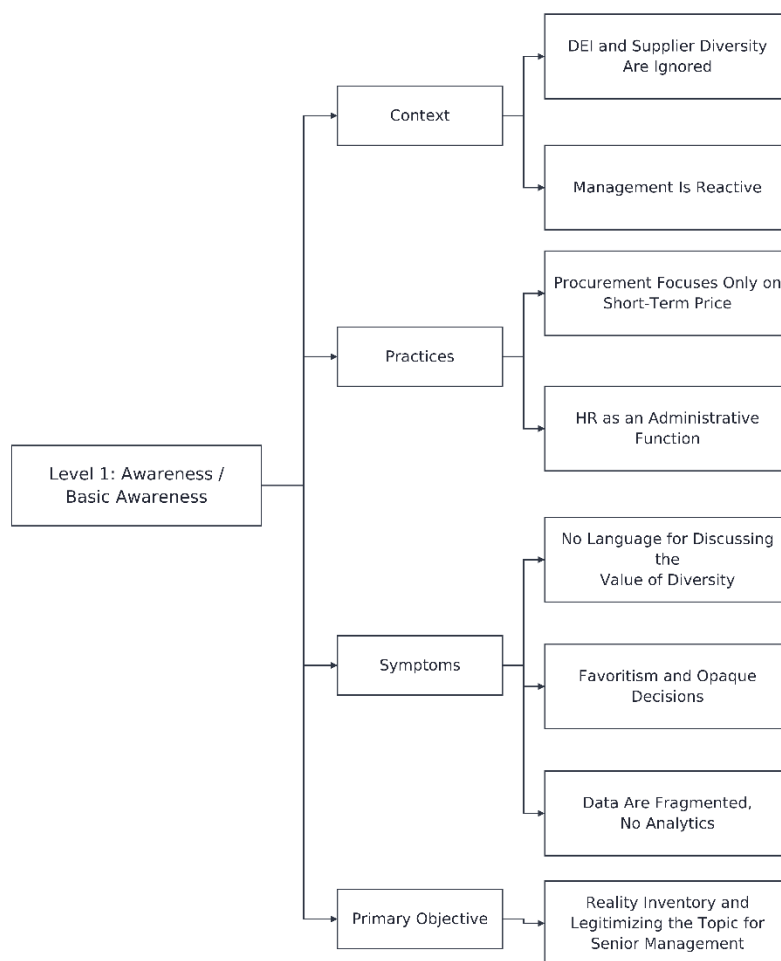


Fig. 3. Level 1 Architecture

2.3. Level 2 - Policy & Compliance (Policies and Formal Requirements)

The organization moves into a phase of “conscious incompetence.” Under pressure from external stakeholders - regulators, clients, and investors - formal DEI policies and Supplier Diversity procedures are introduced. Quotas emerge, along with KPIs for minority hiring and supplier reporting requirements. However, these changes are imposed from the top down and often remain procedural.

The key symptoms are as follows. A gap emerges between stated commitments and actual practice - “we do it because we have to, not because we value it.” Employees perceive the new requirements as bureaucratic obstacles.

Minimum quotas are introduced, yet actual procurement spend with diverse suppliers remains negligible. Contracts are often split to meet supplier-count targets without providing those suppliers with meaningful business volume. Risk management takes precedence over the pursuit of opportunities.

The primary objective is to establish a minimum governance and accountability framework, introduce basic operating standards, formalize processes, ensure the collection of baseline data, and begin training personnel on the applicable rules. The Level 2 architecture is shown in Figure 4.

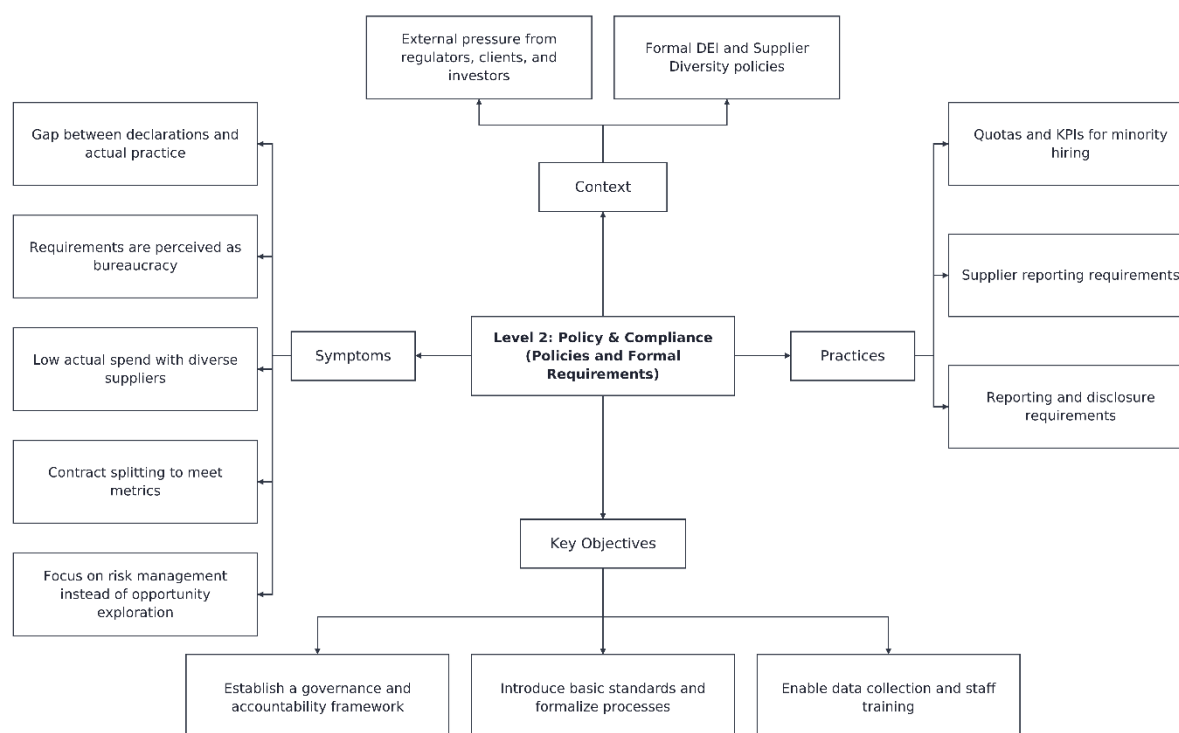


Fig. 4. Level 2 Architecture

2.4. Level 3 - Integration (Integration of the Two Systems)

This is a pivotal stage in the transformation. The organization begins to recognize that developing HR and Procurement in isolation is no longer effective. Integration processes begin: DEI is embedded into HR cycles - including recruitment, assessment, and compensation - while diversity criteria are incorporated into procurement category strategies. However, integration often exposes problems that have accumulated over time.

The key symptoms are as follows. The first cross-functional dashboards appear, although advanced correlation analysis is still lacking. People start to recognize differing standards of conduct toward employees and suppliers. Problems become visible, which may temporarily reduce trust indicators. This stage involves substantial disruption. Working groups are established that bring together HR and Procurement representatives to develop unified approaches.

The primary objective is to integrate data and processes into a single management framework, overcome resistance from middle management, harmonize standards, and transition from formal control to management by objectives. The Level 3 architecture is shown in Figure 5.

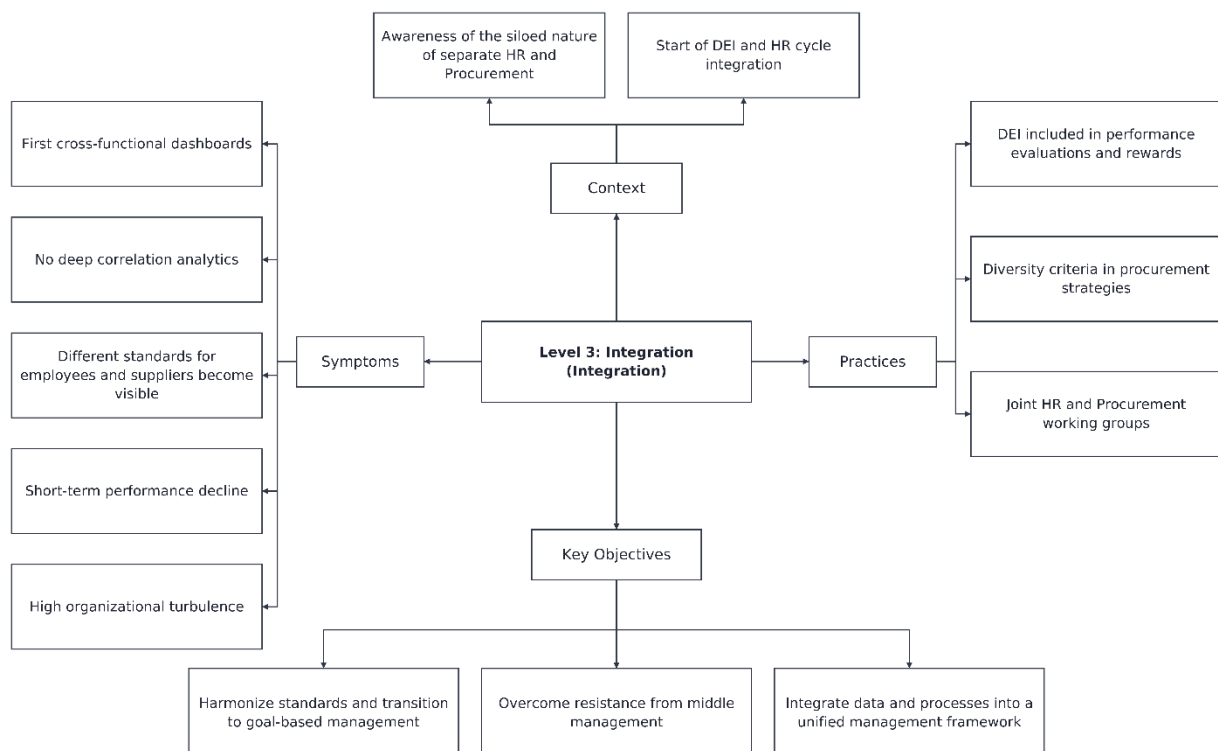


Fig. 5. Level 3 Architecture

2.5. Level 4 - Trust Ecosystem

At this level, the organization reaches a stage of “conscious competence.” A unified One DNA trust architecture takes shape.

Employees and suppliers are trained through common programs and use shared communication platforms. DEI and Procurement metrics become correlated, making it possible to see how team diversity affects the quality of supplier relationships and performance.

The key symptoms are as follows. The organization systematically eliminates the “illusion of choice” through radical process transparency. Tenders and promotions become predictable and fair. Loyalty increases among both employees and suppliers. Turnover among key employees declines, while long-term supplier partnerships expand. A safe environment encourages a flow of ideas both “from within” and “from outside” the organization. Suppliers actively propose improvements.

The primary objective is to establish a sustainable mechanism for developing the trust ecosystem, transition from managing processes to managing culture and context, and embed these achievements into the organization’s corporate DNA. The Level 4 architecture is shown in Figure 6.

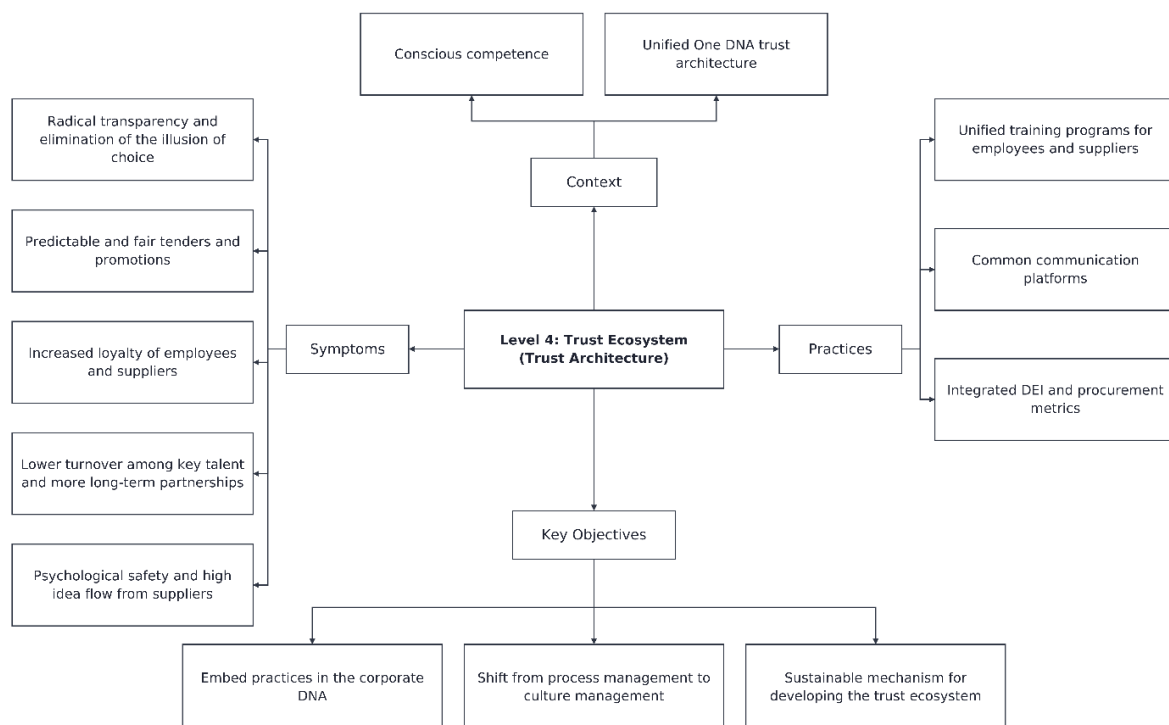


Fig. 6. Level 4 Architecture

2.6. Level 5 - One DNA Leadership (Organization with a Unified Code)

This is the level of mastery, or “unconscious competence.” DEI and Supplier Diversity cease to exist as separate programs and become fully embedded in the business strategy. All key decisions, including investments and new product development, are evaluated through the lens of their impact on the trust ecosystem.

The key symptoms are as follows. The organization actively develops its own suppliers from internal talent through intrapreneurship and spin-offs, creating a seamless entrepreneurial environment. The system becomes self-learning. Cultural norms become strong enough to discourage toxic behavior without management intervention. A high level of trust becomes the organization’s principal asset, enabling it to move faster than the market. The organization begins to set industry standards.

The primary objective is to scale the model beyond the boundaries of the organization and extend One DNA values into industry associations, partner networks, and society at large, thereby helping to shape a new business environment. The Level 5 architecture is shown in Figure 7.

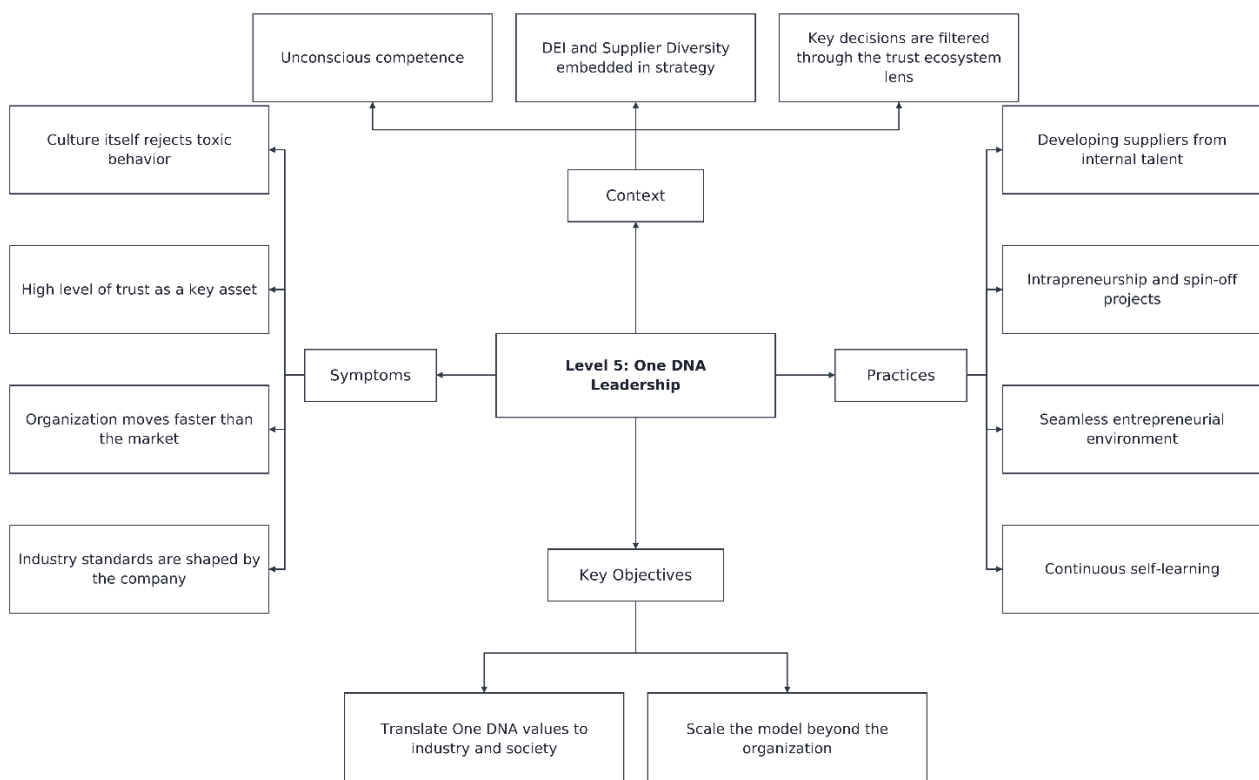


Fig. 7. Level 5 Architecture

2.7. Transitions Between Levels

Progression through the maturity levels is neither linear nor consistently upward; transitions between stages involve periods of disruption. Each transition involves a substantial change requiring different management mechanisms, a different configuration of the power architecture, and a different level of organizational readiness for change.

The transition from Level 1 to Level 2 is associated with what may be termed a crisis of will. Overcoming it is virtually impossible without firm and consistent commitment from leadership capable of setting a clear direction, withstanding resistance, and ensuring the consistent implementation of decisions. At this stage, the personal authority and determination of the leadership coalition become the key resource.

The transition from Level 2 to Level 3 is characterized by an integration crisis. The organization encounters constraints arising from functional silos, fragmented accountability, and misaligned processes. Overcoming this barrier requires the deliberate dismantling of functional silos, redesign of the organizational structure, redistribution of roles and authority, and introduction of mechanisms for coordination and integration across functions.

The transition from Level 3 to Level 4 can be described as a cultural crisis and is generally the most difficult. At this stage, it is necessary not only to change formal policies and procedures, but also to transform the mental models of system participants and reconsider prevailing assumptions about control, trust, and accountability. This requires moving away from micromanagement toward management models based on trust, autonomy, and self-organization, which in turn entails substantial changes in leadership practices and day-to-day management routines.

The transition from Level 4 to Level 5 takes the form of a scaling crisis. At this stage, the central challenge is to preserve the organization's distinctive identity and culture while expanding globally and increasing in scale. In geographically and contextually diverse environments, the organization must be able to reproduce its

core principles and standards of behavior without allowing them to become diluted or reduced to mere formalities. At the earlier stages of maturity, the leadership function evolves from a predominantly directive and hierarchical approach toward a more supportive and adaptive style. At higher stages of development, it combines servant leadership with visionary leadership.

Accordingly, the power architecture and the distribution of authority must remain flexible enough to support the organization's development trajectory and ensure that its management mechanisms remain aligned with the current level of system complexity.

Chapter 3. Maturity Assessment Methodology

3.1. General Principles of Diagnostics

The One DNA assessment methodology is based on a comprehensive, multidimensional approach. Maturity assessment cannot rely solely on “hard” data such as procurement spend and headcount, as such data often conceal underlying cultural issues. The methodology therefore combines quantitative metrics (hard metrics) with qualitative, perception-based indicators (soft metrics) gathered using social research methods.

Assessment must be comprehensive (covering the entire ecosystem), regular (monitoring changes over time), and strategically oriented (linked to business objectives). The outcome of the assessment is not merely a “score,” but a comprehensive profile of the organization’s overall health.

3.2. Six Metric Blocks

A balanced framework comprising six metric blocks is used for a comprehensive assessment covering all dimensions of the One DNA model. The One DNA metrics framework is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. One DNA Metrics Framework

Metric Block	Description	Examples of Indicators (KPIs)
People Maturity	Assesses the state of HR processes and the extent to which DEI principles are integrated into recruitment, development, advancement, and retention. Reflects the organization’s “internal health.”	Representation of demographic groups at each organizational level; retention rates for different groups; pay equity gap; percentage of employees who have completed One DNA training
Supplier Maturity	Assesses the supplier structure and the inclusiveness of procurement. Reflects the organization’s “external openness” and economic inclusiveness.	Share of spend with small and diverse suppliers; number of new suppliers added to the supplier base (supplier-base renewal); economic impact of supplier-driven innovation
Trust Index	An integrated measure of subjective trust. Measures transparency, predictability, and psychological safety within the environment.	eNPS (Employee Net Promoter Score); sNPS (Supplier Net Promoter Score); Psychological Safety Index based on Edmondson’s scale
System Integration Index	A technical and process-oriented metric. Indicates the degree of connectivity between HR and Procurement data and processes.	Availability of a unified analytics dashboard; percentage of processes covered by end-to-end metrics; level of automation in diversity data collection

Metric Block	Description	Examples of Indicators (KPIs)
Leadership Intent	Indicators of leadership behavior. Assesses the gap between stated intentions and actual behavior.	Percentage of leaders' working time devoted to mentoring and DEI; participation of C-level executives in diversity councils; linkage of management bonuses to One DNA objectives
Perception Economics Score	A Perception Economics metric. Assesses how people perceive power, choice, and fairness. Serves as a key indicator of the "illusion of choice."	Perceived Fairness Index for tenders and promotions; assessment of access to social mobility pathways; gap between expectations and reality (Reality Gap)

The proposed metrics framework forms a comprehensive system for measuring DEI and Perception Economics because it combines traditional operational KPIs - such as People Maturity, Supplier Maturity, and the System Integration Index - with "softer," yet strategically critical indicators of trust, leadership intent, and the subjective perception of fairness.

Each group of metrics is linked to a specific dimension of the system: the internal environment (HR processes and retention across different groups), the external ecosystem (supplier structure and supplier-base renewal), the quality of process and data integration (unified dashboards and end-to-end metrics), and, finally, the behavioral and perceptual dimensions (actual leadership involvement, psychological safety, and the "illusion of choice" in career and tender-related decisions). This architecture makes it possible not only to track formal progress in DEI - for example, demographic representation or the percentage of spend allocated to diverse suppliers - but also to identify systemic gaps: situations in which data and processes indicate maturity, while the Trust Index and Perception Economics Score reveal that people still do not perceive the system as fair or transparent and do not believe that genuine social mobility pathways are available.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

The proposed approach combines four complementary data collection tools. The first stream involves survey research, consisting of large-scale anonymous surveys of employees and suppliers. The results are used to calculate the Trust Index

and Perception Economics Score. Strict respondent anonymity is essential: it encourages candid responses and supports valid interpretations of perceived fairness, trust, and the economic reasoning behind decisions within the ecosystem.

The second stream involves data analysis and includes the automated extraction and processing of information from ERP, SRM, and HRM systems. These data are used to calculate People Maturity and Supplier Maturity indicators, providing an objective view of the maturity of people-management and supplier-management practices based on transactional and operational records. Supplier Maturity is also assessed within the analytics stream, although it is not shown separately in Figure 8. This approach minimizes subjectivity in assessment and makes it possible to identify hidden patterns that may not be apparent when survey methods are used alone.

The third stream consists of in-depth interviews, conducted as a series of semi-structured conversations with key stakeholders, including representatives of senior management and heads of functional areas. The purpose of this tool is to assess Leadership Intent, that is, to identify the actual priorities, values, and strategic outlook of the management team, which cannot always be inferred directly from formal documents or quantitative data.

The fourth stream consists of process analysis (process mining/audit), including the audit of formal procedures and actual business-process flows. Based on this analysis, the System Integration Index is calculated, reflecting the degree of alignment between formal rules and actual practice, as well as the level of integration of key processes into a unified management architecture.

Taken together, these four tools provide a comprehensive, multidimensional picture of the state of the system and ensure the depth and reliability of the analysis. The overall data collection framework is shown in Figure 8.

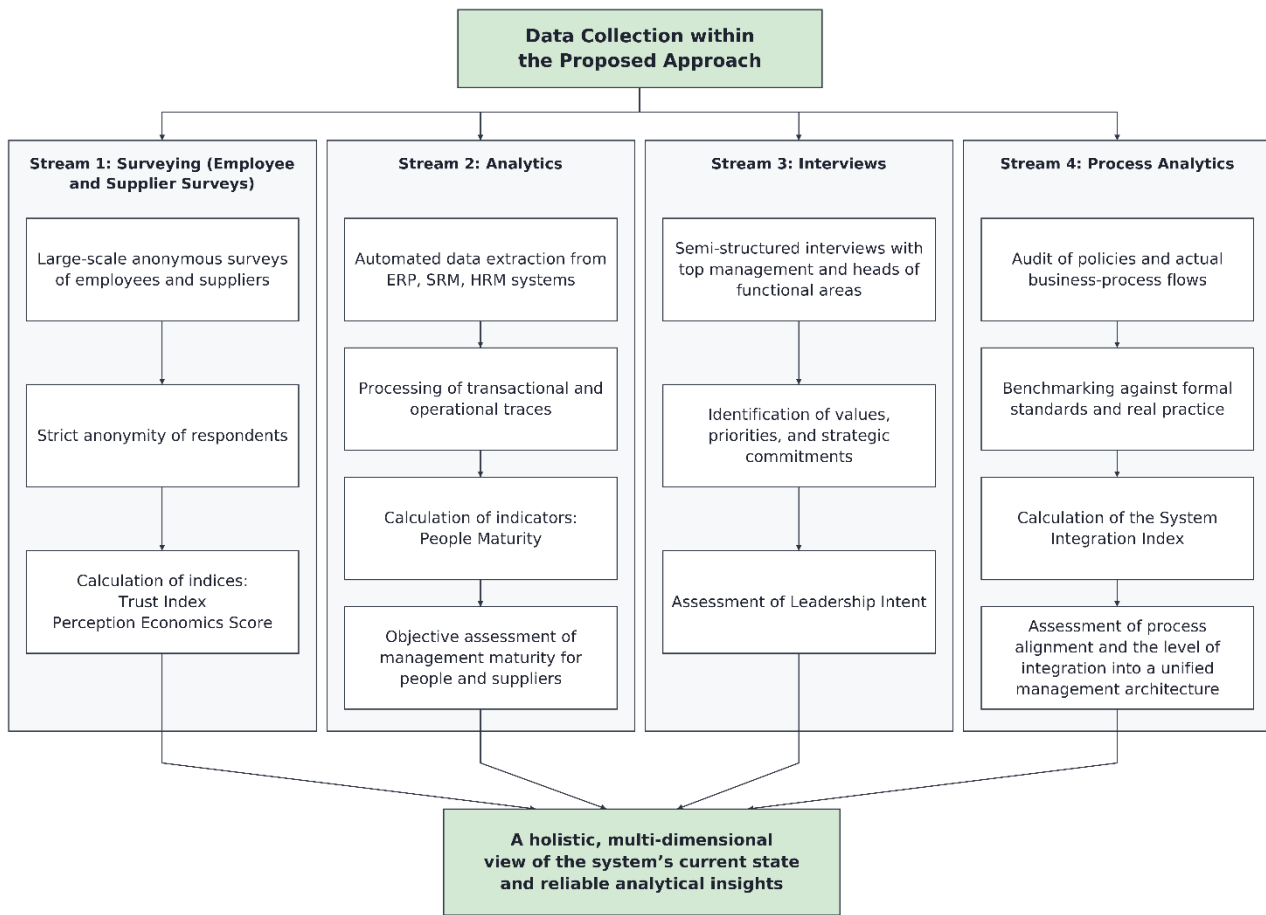


Fig. 8. Data Collection Framework

3.4. Scoring and Interpretation System

Each of the six metric blocks is assessed using a standardized five-point scale aligned with the levels of the maturity model. This alignment allows the organization to create an integrated “maturity profile” in the form of a radar chart, clearly illustrating structural imbalances in development and asymmetries among the various components of the system. The profile helps identify strengths and vulnerabilities and establish management priorities. The five maturity levels of the One DNA model are described below.

Level 1 (overall score range of 1.0-1.9) represents a critical zone in which the organization or ecosystem faces high risks, systemic instability, and an absence of repeatable practices.

Level 2 (2.0-2.9) represents a formalism zone, in which rules and procedures exist but are not fully embedded in operational practice; processes remain largely

nominal. Level 3 (3.0-3.9) represents a transformation zone, where significant progress is evident, but is accompanied by high turbulence, conflicting norms, inconsistency in practices, and substantial pressure on the management system. Level 4 (4.0-4.9) corresponds to an effectiveness zone, in which a functioning ecosystem has been established and operates sustainably, delivering predictable outcomes and ensuring alignment among the key elements of the architecture. Level 5 (5.0) represents a leadership zone, in which the organization serves as a de facto benchmark, demonstrates best practices, and sets reference standards for the market or industry. Interpretation of the results involves conducting a gap analysis, that is, assessing the difference between the current state and the strategically defined target maturity level for each metric block. Based on this assessment, a change priority map is developed. In addition, areas for improvement are identified - those areas with the lowest scores that require priority attention from the management team and focused resources. This approach makes it possible to move from a static description of the current state to a planned development path informed by quantitative and qualitative evidence.

3.5. Preparation of the Diagnostic Report

The final output of the diagnostic stage is a Diagnostic Report, a comprehensive analytical document integrating the quantitative and qualitative results of the assessment.

The central element of the report is the Maturity Map, which provides a visual representation of the current system profile across the key blocks of the model. This visualization shows the level of development of individual system dimensions, the degree of balance and alignment among them, and any structural asymmetries or areas of potential vulnerability.

A second important component is the Trust Map, presented as an organizational heat map. It identifies areas where distrust is concentrated - the so-called “toxic pockets” - as well as areas of high trust that can serve as anchor points for future change. This tool makes it possible to identify problem areas not only

within formal structures but also within informal interactions, which is essential for planning interventions.

The report also includes a risk analysis, describing the key threats associated with identified gaps in maturity and trust levels and assessing their potential impact on the resilience and effectiveness of the system. Based on the combined findings, a roadmap is developed containing recommendations for progression to the next maturity level. This roadmap is linked to specific actions, timelines, and areas of responsibility, allowing the Diagnostic Report to be used not merely as a descriptive assessment tool but as a practical management resource for planning and supporting the transformation process.

Chapter 4. Methodology Implementation Framework

Implementation of One DNA is a large-scale change initiative requiring discipline and consistency. The implementation framework comprises four core steps and a risk management system spanning all four steps.

4.1. Step 1. Diagnostics (0-30 Days)

The diagnostic stage, covering days 0-30, aims to establish an objective picture of the system's current state - "truth on the table" - and establish the baseline for transformation. At this stage, a coordinated set of activities begins, including a communication campaign explaining the purpose of the diagnostic process and reducing concerns about assessment and its potential consequences. A full-scale survey of employees and key suppliers is conducted, supplemented by spend analysis and workforce statistics. Particular attention is given to identifying perception bottlenecks - areas in which the "illusion of choice" is most pronounced and where participants' subjective perceptions differ significantly from the opportunities actually available. The analytical findings are consolidated and presented to leadership, after which the organization's current maturity level is established as the baseline, defining the initial state across the key parameters.

4.2. Step 2. Developing the One DNA Plan (30-60 Days)

The second step, covering approximately days 30-60, focuses on developing the One DNA Plan. The objective is to design the target architecture of the future system and prepare the methods and organizational tools needed. A cross-functional One DNA Project Office is established to coordinate activities and ensure alignment of decisions across different functions.

A unified training standard is developed, incorporating content that communicates One DNA values to both internal audiences - employees - and external stakeholders, including suppliers and partners. In parallel, a Trust Map is developed, involving the redesign of key decision points, such as recruitment and supplier

selection, to improve transparency and predictability of procedures. The organizational structure and business processes are adjusted, while conflicting KPIs that encourage inconsistent behavior are eliminated. In addition, procedural bias identified during the diagnostic stage is addressed, reducing systemic unfairness and strengthening trust in decision-making.

4.3. Step 3. Pilot Launch (60-120 Days)

The third step, covering days 60-120, involves launching a pilot to test the new model within a limited scope. The primary objective of this stage is to obtain empirical evidence of the approach's effectiveness, generate "quick wins," and refine processes before scaling. To achieve this, one or two pilot departments and a related segment of the supply chain are selected. Pilot participants undergo intensive training in the One DNA model, ensuring a shared understanding of its objectives, principles, and expected behaviors. Within the pilot area, new and more transparent interaction procedures are tested for both internal and external participants. At the conclusion of the pilot, the first Trust Report is prepared.

This report demonstrates changes in trust levels, perception metrics, and performance indicators within the selected scope. It serves as an evidence base for the subsequent expansion of the methodology across the rest of the organization.

4.4. Step 4. Scaling (4-12 Months)

The fourth step, spanning four to twelve months, focuses on scaling and embedding the changes into the organizational culture. Its objective is to extend the successful practices tested during the pilot across the entire organization. At this stage, solutions are rolled out across all business units and procurement categories, accompanied by the organization's progression toward higher maturity levels - Levels 4 and 5 - in accordance with the adopted model. One DNA metrics are fully integrated into the system of strategic and operational KPIs at all levels of leadership, transforming them from a standalone project into an element of the organization's standard management practices. The Talent-to-Supplier Program is launched and

developed to help employees become suppliers when they have the necessary competencies and entrepreneurial potential. In parallel, public reporting in accordance with One DNA standards is introduced, strengthening the company's reputational capital and ensuring external transparency regarding its efforts to develop the trust and diversity ecosystem.

4.5. Implementation Risk Management

Implementation risk management extends across all of the stages described above and is based on an understanding of the typical threats associated with transformation initiatives.

One of the key risks is management resistance, particularly among middle management, whose members may perceive increased transparency as a threat to their authority and control over resources. The principal mechanisms for managing this risk are targeted engagement, training, and the close alignment of behavioral expectations and new practices with the incentive system. A second significant risk concerns insufficient data and poor-quality information in existing systems. Mitigating this risk requires an early emphasis on process digitalization, ensuring that data are sufficiently complete and reliable for analysis. Finally, a critical risk is superficial adoption, whereby the organization imitates new practices without achieving genuine cultural change. The primary mechanism for managing this risk is the continuous monitoring of the Trust Index and Perception Economics Score, which are intended to reflect lived experience rather than formal compliance alone. Changes in these indicators therefore help assess whether transformation is genuine, making it possible to distinguish genuine organizational change from change that exists only in official statements.

Chapter 5. Application Cases

The One DNA methodology is designed for broad application, but its implementation must be adapted to the specific context. Several theoretical examples across different sectors are considered below.

5.1. Educational Institutions

The One DNA model offers potential practical value in university ecosystems, which can be viewed as “cities within cities” - complex organizational systems that simultaneously function as major employers, significant purchasers, and institutions shaping the values of future generations. In this context, One DNA is applied to align student admissions policies with faculty recruitment policies, as well as procurement policies involving local businesses, through the creation of an inclusive campus environment. This approach makes it possible to establish shared principles of trust and engagement within the internal environment, encompassing the academic and administrative community, while also extending to the external environment, including the local economy and small and medium-sized businesses. By earning students’ trust, a university can also serve as a catalyst for local economic development, providing opportunities to apply and develop management practices in real time.

5.2. Large Corporations

Within large corporations, One DNA can be used to integrate fragmented DEI and Supplier Diversity programs into a unified architecture in environments characterized by complex hierarchies, global supply chains, and widespread siloed thinking.

Reducing the fragmentation of management approaches, standardizing behavioral expectations for stakeholders, and ensuring the consistent application of trust and transparency standards on a global scale help harmonize strategies across different regions of operation. As a result, transaction costs are reduced and supplier-

driven innovation is stimulated. The employer brand is also strengthened by creating a more predictable and impartial environment for employees and partners.

5.3. Public Institutions

In the public sector, where corruption risks may be acute, transparency requirements are particularly high, regulatory frameworks are stringent, and public trust may be limited, the One DNA model can be used to reform HR policies and public procurement practices. In this context, One DNA can also function as an instrument of anti-corruption policy. It supports fairer access to public-sector positions and government contracts, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of public institutions. This can contribute to improved public-service quality, greater access for small businesses to public procurement opportunities, and a sustained increase in taxpayers' trust in public institutions.

5.4. International Companies

For international companies operating in multicultural environments and subject to differing legal requirements relating to diversity and non-discrimination, One DNA can function as a “supranational” corporate standard.

Such a standard supports the management of diversity through a common set of trust principles, while allowing specific tools and procedures to be adapted to local legal and cultural norms without compromising the integrity of the overall architecture.

This supports the preservation of a unified corporate culture on a global scale and reduces compliance risks arising from inconsistent practices across different jurisdictions.

5.5. Social-Mission Startups

For startups with a strong social mission, which are typically characterized by limited resources, high flexibility, and an early focus on impact, the One DNA model can be applied from the earliest stages of development through a Born-Trusted

approach - that is, by building the business from inception with an embedded trust-ecosystem architecture. This initial configuration transforms trust management into a sustainable competitive advantage, helping attract ESG investors, strengthening loyalty among team members and partners, and accelerating growth through an expanding network of trust-based relationships.

5.6. Key Lessons from the Application Cases

These illustrative applications suggest that successful implementation of One DNA depends on a combination of three principal factors. First, leadership is critical - particularly the active involvement of the organization's most senior executive, who sets the tone and provides the organizational backing and resources required for transformation. Second, data integrity and candor are essential, meaning a willingness to assess the current state without embellishment and without attempting to reshape reality to fit a desired narrative. Third, consistency and long-term commitment are indispensable. This means being prepared to "play the long game," avoiding expectations of immediate results, and recognizing the inevitability of inertia and resistance. A common mistake is to attempt to "buy" diversity by introducing quotas and formal measures without changing the trust architecture or redesigning the underlying institutional mechanisms.

Such a strategy typically produces only a short-term effect, followed by regression to the level of formalism - Level 2 - where diversity is visible in reporting but remains disconnected from actual processes and relationships.

CONCLUSION

The One DNA methodology presented in this work offers an integrated approach to understanding and managing organizational development. This guide argues that integrating DEI and Supplier Diversity on the basis of a unified trust architecture is not merely an ethical choice, but an economic necessity.

The One DNA model provides an integrated system ranging from philosophical axioms - such as “Trust = Capital” - to practical tools, including five maturity levels and six metric blocks. It makes it possible to transform the “chaos of fragmented initiatives” into a coherent strategy in which people and suppliers develop within a unified framework, while the “illusion of choice” gives way to genuine opportunities.

The theoretical contribution of this work lies in synthesizing the disciplines of HR, Procurement, and institutional economics within the unified One DNA concept, as well as in introducing Perception Economics as a management concept and tool. The integrated maturity model developed in this work offers a framework for further research into organizational effectiveness.

The practical contribution is a transformation framework that can be scaled and adapted to different types of organizations. The methodology provides managers with a common language and a metrics framework for managing an intangible asset: trust.

Further development of the One DNA concept may involve advancing quantitative assessment methods, including validation of the Trust Index and Perception Economics Score using large samples; examining long-term correlations between One DNA maturity levels and financial indicators such as ROI and EBITDA; and developing industry standards and certification frameworks based on the model. The methodology opens the way toward a new type of organization: a trust ecosystem capable of remaining resilient in the face of disruption.

REFERENCES

1. Annosi M. C., Capo F., Appio F. C., Bedetti I. Unveiling Microfoundations of Digital Transformation: Cognitive Models, Routines, and Organizational Structures in Agri-Food SMEs // *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*. 2023. Vol. 197. Article 122922. DOI: 10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122922.
2. Cooper M. Understanding the Impact of Supplier Diversity Initiatives in Procurement // *Preprints*. 2024. DOI: 10.20944/preprints202407.0758.v1.
3. He J., Hu C., Lin C.-C. Service Innovation, Inter-organizational Trust, and Performance in Hospital Platforms: Social Network and Agency Perspectives // *Frontiers in Public Health*. 2022. Vol. 10. DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.819371.
4. Koelmel B. et al. Are German Automotive Suppliers in the Commodity Trap? Risks and Potentials of the Taiwanese Platform MIH EV Open // *Commodities*. 2024. Vol. 3, No. 4. pp. 389-420. DOI: 10.3390/commodities3040022.
5. Judijanto L., Noor A., Muhtadi M. A. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace: A Bibliometric Perspective on the Role of HR in Building Inclusive Cultures // *West Science Social and Humanities Studies*. 2025. Vol. 3, No. 2. pp. 206-217. DOI: 10.58812/wsshs.v3i02.1683.
6. Kamel D. Perception Economy: How Currency of Collective Beliefs Redefines Organizational Value and Power. 2025. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.5362599.

Educational publication

Daniil Pakalov

One DNA:

A New Trust Architecture for DEI and Supplier Diversity

Methodological Guide

Approved for printing on September 8, 2026. Typefaces: Times New Roman, Cambria.
Format: 60×84/16. Conventional printed sheets: 2.09. Print run: 500 copies. Order No. 85.
The camera-ready copy was prepared and the publication was printed by Epicenter LLC
Office 40, 135 B. Khmelnsky Avenue, Belgorod, 308010
APNI Limited Liability Company, 135 Bogdan Khmelnsky Avenue, Belgorod, 308023