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**INCLUSION
CHALLENGE**

WES BERRY

keynote speaker | wordsmith

*Business
Quick
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Series Volume 9

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WesBerryGroup.com
for more information.

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**GET ON
BOARD
And 7-DAY
INCLUSION
CHALLENGE**
By: Wes Berry

Part 1

Choosing Inclusion

“Diversity is a fact, but inclusion is a choice we make every day. As leaders, we have to put out the message that we embrace and not just tolerate diversity.”

–Nellie Borrero

Chapter 1

The Imperative of Inclusion

Inclusion is a concept that has become increasingly important in today's society. It refers to the practice of ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background or identity, is included in social, political, and economic activities. And it doesn't stop at race or religion. Inclusion can mean acceptance of different strengths, talents and core competencies as well. People are different in different ways,

The concept of inclusion is rooted in the belief that every person has the right to be treated with respect and dignity, and to have equal opportunities in life.

First, a Word About Merit

Jackie Robinson was the first baseball player pulled from the Negro leagues. He started at first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 15, 1947. It was a very difficult step for him to make because of all of the bald-face racism that existed. However, his quality was so high, and he was such a great player that it didn't take long for his team to rally around him, as well as the fans. His talent was incredible. With Robinson on board, the Dodgers won six pennants in his 10 seasons, along with the 1955 World Series title over the New York Yankees. Robinson brought his electrifying style to the base paths, stealing home 19 times to the chagrin of pitchers everywhere. Robinson was named National League MVP in 1949, leading the league in hitting (.342) and steals (37), while driving in 124 runs.

While hiring Robinson for the team was a bold move of inclusion, it wasn't about checking

boxes. Robinson was brought in based on his merit. He had the skills needed to take the Dodgers to the top. And he did.

Inclusion is not something that you sacrifice merit for. There are plenty of people that meet all of the inclusionary requirements that have merit. In the workplace, I have heard the words “That’s a diversity hire” and that can be insulting for the person hired. That’s an important thing to remember when you’re choosing/hiring someone to bring into an organization.

To be fair and ethical, you need diversity, but you also have to make sure they are the sort of person who is going to be unquestionable in their capabilities. The only exception is if you are bringing somebody new or young in to mentor or intern. Then, it is expected that they are in a learning position and may have a mediocre skill set. Otherwise, make sure they are capable of

doing the job you hired them to do. You wouldn't hire someone who is a mute to be a broadcaster; it simply isn't going to work. If I'm having surgery, I want someone with the most merit—I don't care what race they are, as long as they are great at their job.

The decision to hire Jackie Robinson was brilliant for many reasons. It offered Americans, especially African-Americans, hope. Jackie brought in another crowd to the games who weren't coming, which increased ticket sales. And he was a winner.

I'm sharing this story about Robinson because I want to emphasize that a diverse organization doesn't have to sacrifice merit in their selection processes. Doing so only ends up hurting everybody in the long run. On the other hand, hiring those with merit can silence any objections before they even occur.

Now, let's take a look at the many reasons why hiring inclusively can benefit your workplace.

The Benefits of Inclusion

It is always easier to embrace something like diversity or inclusion when benefits are clear.

To begin with, inclusion is a fairness issue, and having a fair corporate culture is simply the right thing to do. However, different perspectives also mean a greater variety of ideas, which leads to greater innovation. The culture of an enterprise is enhanced, which will help you attract more talented individuals. Improved community and customer relations will add to these benefits. Besides the fact that it is just fair play and simply the right thing to do, it will also contribute to an improved reputation for your business. And all of this will result in a more successful company. Isn't

it nice when the doing the right thing is also the best thing to do?

So, what does this really mean for you and your business? The value proposition that diversity brings is beyond calculation. Besides the increase in perspectives and all the qualities that come with that, embracing diversity also excludes those individuals with narrow minds from being attracted to your organization. This may be even the greatest benefit, as by repelling closed minded individuals, you are actually prequalifying your recruitment standards by avoiding those who would be a hindrance to your mission.

Research indicates that inclusive workplaces are more likely to outperform their less inclusive counterparts. Here are a few brief reasons why:

- *Enhanced Innovation:* Inclusive environments foster a diversity of thought, sparking creativity and innovation. A multitude of perspectives contributes to more comprehensive problem-solving and the generation of groundbreaking ideas.
- *Increased Employee Engagement:* When employees feel valued and included, their engagement levels rise. Engaged employees are more productive, committed, and likely to contribute discretionary effort to achieve organizational goals.
- *Better Decision-Making:* Inclusive teams benefit from a wide range of perspectives, leading to more well-rounded and informed decision-making processes. Diverse viewpoints help organizations navigate complex challenges with agility.

- *Access to a Larger Talent Pool:* Inclusive organizations attract a diverse pool of talent. By removing barriers to entry, organizations can tap into a broader range of skills and experiences, gaining a competitive advantage.
- *Improved Customer Relationships:* Organizations that reflect the diversity of their customer base are better positioned to understand and meet the needs of diverse markets. Inclusion enhances the organization's ability to connect with customers on a deeper level.

I don't know about you, but it feels like I hear about inclusion all the time these days. I read about it on the internet, I hear about it on the news, and I see it flash time and time again across my social media. On rare occasions, it's coming from

some jerk who feels the need to troll everyone for being a “social justice warrior” or some other nonsense, but for the most part, everything you hear about inclusion is positive.

Still, there are a lot of people out there who seem to treat inclusion as just another corporate buzzword, something that people say so they can sound smart and informed without really knowing what it means. But people use buzzwords because they represent important ideas, and inclusion is no exception.

Inclusion in the workplace isn't a new idea, nor is it a controversial one. So why, then, is inclusion still such an important topic? The answer is because we haven't done enough to make it not a pressing issue. Issues of bias continue to plague us, and even when we think we're doing everything right, there are still many areas where we can do much, much better. And as Colleen

Slaughter writes for LinkedIn, inclusive leaders are “essential to create thriving organizations where everyone feels valued.”

Inclusion comes up again and again because it remains an important issue. That’s why it’s worth our time to really think about what inclusion means, both for companies and for us as individuals. We should make sure we have a solid, clear definition, including a better understanding of why inclusion remains such a critical issue in our society. In this book we’ll talk about that, and we’ll look at some ways we can help improve inclusion in the workplace.

Finding a Definition for Inclusion

For all the attention that inclusion gets, there’s also a lot of misunderstandings about what it actually means. All too often, it gets lost among a sea of other admittedly important ideas,

including diversity, equality, representation, and more. Instead of each term getting the attention it deserves, there's a tendency to lump all of these ideas together under a single umbrella, and that doesn't do anyone any favors.

It helps to define inclusion by first thinking of its opposite: exclusion. Historically in America, laws and policies have been designed around exclusionary principles: who was invited in and who was left out. While we've made significant strides over the last several years, those exclusions still echo through our workplaces, and they stand in the way of our inclusion efforts.

In contrast, inclusion doesn't apply rules for admittance. Instead of using external factors to determine a person's worth, the focus is on what that person can contribute to the organization, from their skill sets to their points of view. Exclusion sets up barriers to keep people out; inclusion

removes barriers to not just let people in, but to welcome them as full members of the organization.

Diversity

The term that most people confuse with inclusion is diversity. It's not done out of any malicious intent—in fact, many companies tend to combine the two efforts under the label “Diversity and Inclusion,” or D&I.

This is because diversity and inclusion are really closely related. In the broadest sense, diversity means having a wide range of different voices in the same room. Each person has their own distinct identity, and while that identity may overlap somewhat with others, they have a unique perspective because of their backgrounds.

Now, when I said, “a broad range of different voices,” what did you picture in your mind? No matter what you saw, I want to invite

you to broaden it even further. Of course, diversity means including people of different races and ethnicities. But these aren't the only ways identities differ in the workplace. Gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, and disability are only some of the many different categories to consider when it comes to diversifying your workforce. What about strength levels, competencies and leaning styles?

Let's take a look at the different types of inclusion:

- *Cultural Inclusion:* Fostering a workplace culture that appreciates and celebrates diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions, and customs. Cultural inclusion involves acknowledging the richness that different cultural perspectives bring to the organizational tapestry.

- *Gender Inclusion:* Ensuring gender equality and creating an environment where individuals of all genders have equal opportunities for growth and advancement. Gender inclusion involves dismantling stereotypes and biases that may hinder career progression.
- *Cognitive Inclusion:* Embracing diverse ways of thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making, and appreciating that individuals bring unique approaches and insights to challenges.
- *Generational Inclusion:* Nurturing an environment where individuals from different age groups collaborate effectively, leveraging the strengths of each generation. Generational inclusion involves recognizing and valuing the experiences

and perspectives of individuals across different age brackets.

- *LGBTQ+ Inclusion*: Creating a workplace that is inclusive and supportive of individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Providing a safe and affirming environment for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Being aware of all these different backgrounds is important, of course, and a lot of training and effort goes into helping raise cultural awareness among employees and executives alike. However, being culturally aware isn't the same as being inclusive—it's only a starting point. Yet far too often, diversity training is both the beginning and the end of D&I efforts.

This is at least partially why so many companies have found that their efforts aren't resulting in significant increases in long-term diversification. Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev note that, despite significant increases to diversity training programs, the rates of diversity within their organizations have largely remained unchanged.

While many companies shout to the hills about their training programs, the net impact is insignificant at best. Why? Because they only focus on getting their diverse hires in the door. After that, they're left on their own. And no matter how much diversity training you do, or how much cultural awareness you raise, you have little to no chance of improving inclusion without the tools to deal with bias.

Conscious and Unconscious Bias

“Bias?” you might be saying to yourself. “I’m not biased! I don’t have a biased bone in my body!”

Well, as much as I’d love it if that were true, the fact of the matter is that we’re all biased. I’m biased. You’re biased. Your family’s biased, your pastor’s biased, even the little old lady who feeds all the neighborhood cats is biased. It’s just a simple fact, baked into our genetics over time.

In general, there are two kinds of biases. The one that’s easiest to recognize is conscious bias. This is the form that shows up in blatant racism, sexism, ageism, or ableism. It usually shows up as a feeling of superiority based solely on external personal characteristics, usually with no other reason than because someone either looks or sounds different.

Unconscious bias is much harder to spot, because it’s, well, unconscious. No matter how

open-minded you think you might be (and in many cases, people are very open-minded), your brain is making decisions below the surface, determining how you feel about a person by making extrapolations based on several factors—many of which are entirely unfair.

Many of these unconscious biases are based on what's called in-group favoritism or in-group bias. As humans, we tend to find ourselves attracted to qualities in other people that we feel we recognize in ourselves, even though these groups aren't based on much more than speculation. This instinct to form exclusive groups starts young, and it can be hard to train ourselves to think differently. ⁴

Unconscious bias is a terror for HR departments, since it's difficult to recognize these hiring patterns without looking at the larger picture. Even then, it's hard to see the cause unless

you're looking for it. While some companies try to combat this with things like employment tests, these methods are still imperfect.

Overcoming bias in all its forms is a critical part of any company's D&I efforts, not just in hiring but also when it comes to creating a welcoming, open, workplace for everyone. That, in a nutshell, is what inclusion means.

Inclusion

For me, the best way to describe inclusion is as sustained diversity. Diversity efforts don't stop when someone signs an employment agreement. It doesn't stop on their first day. And it certainly doesn't stop as soon as onboarding and training are done. Diversity is a process, and inclusion is how we sustain those diversity efforts on a long-term, ongoing basis.

Let's look at it this way. For all of our work, training, and education efforts, scientists say that bias is in many ways ingrained in our brains at subtle levels that we may not even recognize. We can learn to recognize these biases, but there's no way to completely eliminate them. As Dobbin and Kalev write, "you can't simply 'outlaw' bias because shaming and punishing bias doesn't really address the problem."⁵

Instead, inclusion efforts have to revolve around how we deal with bias, rather than trying to solve it outright. You and your organization need to learn skills and techniques to recognize bias and mitigate the impact it has on your workforce.

Listen, you'll never be able to completely eliminate bias, right? And that shouldn't be your project—you're running a business, and while improving your group's D&I efforts is an important part of good corporate stewardship,

solving all the world's problems isn't your main project. Your business is your main project—inclusion just makes that project work much, much better.

Another way of thinking about inclusion is to go back to the idea of cultural awareness. A big part of diversity involves being sensitive to the different cultures and identities that make up your workforce, as well as those that are in your hiring pools. From an inclusion standpoint, cultural awareness is the first step—it's essentially identifying the problem of inclusion without necessarily fixing it.

Think of cultural awareness as a mindset, one that accepts and embraces the wide variety of backgrounds your employees bring to your company. Inclusion, then, is a competency, a set of skills that you can use to effectively maneuver within the mindset of cultural awareness.

The cultural competency of inclusion means having the tools to create and maintain a welcoming, open environment; one that not only accepts people from all walks of life, but also one that relies on multiple voices and perspectives, creating a stronger, more effective, more creative workforce.

Why Inclusion Matters

For most of us, it might seem a little strange to spend time talking about why inclusion is important. I mean, we all know that it's important, so why take the time to go into detail? Well, there are two reasons.

First, while most of us recognize the value of inclusion, there are those who don't, and we should take any chance we get to show these people why inclusion matters. Second, it helps us

to put into words exactly why we should continue to focus our efforts on improving inclusion.

Inclusion is essential for a healthy and functioning society. When individuals are excluded or marginalized, it can lead to negative consequences for both the individuals and society as a whole. Studies have shown that inclusive environments are associated with better mental health, greater social cohesion, and improved economic outcomes.

According to a study by McKinsey & Company, companies with diverse workforces are more likely to outperform their less diverse counterparts. This is because diverse teams are better equipped to solve complex problems, generate innovative ideas, and make better decisions. Additionally, inclusive workplaces are more likely to attract and retain top talent, which can lead to increased productivity and profitability.

Inclusive societies also have better social outcomes. In a recent article in *The Lancet*, researchers found that social exclusion is a major determinant of poor health outcomes. Individuals who are excluded from social and economic opportunities are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes, such as higher rates of chronic illness, depression, and anxiety.

Inclusive practices can also lead to greater social cohesion. Inclusive societies are characterized by greater levels of trust, cooperation, and mutual respect among individuals and groups. This can lead to a stronger sense of community and social solidarity, which is essential for building a healthy and functioning society.

Just “knowing” the value of inclusion isn’t enough; in order to really make our D&I efforts effective, we must be crystal clear about the

reasoning behind them. When we can explain exactly why we're continuing to pursue better inclusion practices, we can focus our efforts more precisely, while also improving our ability to measure results.

Fairness

First things first: Focusing on inclusion is the right thing to do.

I know, it may seem a little hypocritical of me to talk about being more precise and specific, but then open things up with a general statement about what's right. But when it comes to inclusion, it's worth taking a moment to start out with a simple, declarative statement that should underlie every other argument we make for improving inclusion.

D&I programs aren't about "righting wrongs" from the past. Hopefully, these efforts will help heal some of those wounds, of course, but

that's not our main project. Instead, inclusion is about learning how to look at the whole person, rather than a collection of identity markers, like age, sex, race, and so on.

As a rule, I never say that we're looking past any of these things because that isn't inclusion, either. But while I see all of these factors, I incorporate them into getting to know the whole person, with each fact about their identity making up a small part of that identity.

This is especially true when it comes to hiring. When we're looking for new people to bring onboard, it's not uncommon for us to say that we're looking for quality new hires. The problem is that we don't always know what we mean when we say "quality."

We may have some vague ideas about skills, job fit, and personality profiles, but it's easy for those to get overshadowed by our personal

interactions during the interview process. The problem, then, is the troublesome issue of unconscious bias.

Personal interactions are important for getting to know a candidate, but they also introduce the opportunity for in-group biases to appear, usually without us even realizing it. We may start to recognize similarities with ourselves on an unconscious level and that can lead us to prefer certain candidates based mostly on how they resonate with our preferred in-group.

A lot of companies have stepped up their efforts to fight this bias and ensure fairness among all candidates, including adding skills testing to their hiring process. But even these systems can fall short, especially if they're unevenly administered.

The best solution—really, the *only* solution—is to combine these efforts to limit bias

with consistent training in cultural awareness, so you can keep inclusion in the forefront of your mind as you're making hiring decisions. Remember, D&I isn't an endpoint; it's an ongoing process.

Equal Opportunity

Looking at this section heading, you might be asking yourself how equal opportunity and fairness are different. It's a fair question, since the two concepts are very closely linked. The difference is a matter of approach.

Fairness, in most cases, is about treating people in an impartial, unbiased way. Equal opportunity, on the other hand, is the idea that jobs should be open to everyone, regardless of their identity, and should be distributed according to who could best perform the required tasks.

There are a number of different laws here in the United States that provide prospective employees protection from bias, including age, race, and sex. These laws, most of which are enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), have been used extensively since the 1960s to try and eliminate biases that have kept our workplaces from being truly diverse spaces.

These laws, in addition to affirmative action, have done a great deal to level the playing field when it comes to employment. But the simple truth is that these laws alone aren't nearly enough to foster diversity and inclusion—really, no law ever could.

Why? Because leveling the playing field is only about getting people in the door. Inclusion is so, so much more than that.

Remember, diversity is a mindset, and inclusion is the toolkit that allows us to sustain that diversity throughout every aspect of the workforce. Getting diverse people into the workplace is just the start. It's very difficult to legislate people's hearts and minds.

It can help to think of your organization's D&I efforts as a statement of values, a clear, declarative testimonial of where your group stands on creating a truly inclusive workplace. It isn't moral grandstanding; it's simply you making it very clear where your priorities lie.

Here are a few sound reasons that businesses should embrace inclusion.

Inclusion Makes Sound Business Sense

While the moral reasons for focusing on inclusion in the workplace should play a big role in your D&I programs, I've also pointed out that

fixing society isn't your business's main project. What is your main project? It's business—duh!

But here's the interesting thing, which I touched briefly on earlier. Study after study has shown that improving your company's diversity and inclusivity have a direct, positive impact on the success of your business. According to Boston Consulting Group, companies with more diverse leadership teams increased their revenue due to innovation by 19% over companies with less-diverse management. Meanwhile, a Gartner study states that more inclusive groups outperformed more homogenous teams by nearly 30%.

Higher profits and increased productivity? For most businesses, that would be enough by itself to encourage them to expand your D&I programs. But there's more to the relationship between better inclusivity and improvements in your business. There's a whole host of ways your

business can benefit from improving your D&I efforts, all of which can have an impact on your company's bottom line.

Broader Experience

I probably don't have to tell you that your business is stronger when you have multiple voices and perspectives. When you limit the number of viewpoints within your organization, it's easy to develop tunnel vision, limiting your field of view to a narrow band of possibilities.

This has a couple of negative effects that no company wants to see. First, it can make it difficult to see opportunities as they approach. Oftentimes, prospects for new markets or products come from unexpected places and voices, and when you limit the channels for those voices to reach you, those prospects can speed past you.

Second, limited voices hamper your ability to be flexible or agile, an essential quality for companies in this increasingly digitized world. As our need to be open to change continues to grow, we have to be able to rely on multiple voices to give us the insight we need to make choices that make our organizations stronger.

In a more diverse, inclusive workplace, you surround yourself with a much broader range of life experiences, and this gives you an advantage in the marketplace. By embracing these differences and giving your employees the space and the opportunity to share their perspectives, you can gain insights that would otherwise go unheard in a less inclusive environment.

Inclusion Offers a Wider Market Appeal

Just like broadening the different viewpoints in your workplace strengthens your

team, these same viewpoints can give you better access to a wider segment of the market. But how exactly does this work? Let's take a deeper look.

On one level, when you make D&I part of your brand identity, you signal to others your commitment to being a conscientious corporate partner. Consumers tend to respond positively to these efforts. Those who share your position will make it a point to patronize your business—and it costs you nothing!

Internally, a diverse workforce allows you to hear a variety of perspectives from people with access to different insider information pertaining to different markets. Again, with a single perspective, you only see part of the story; a more diverse team allows you to build a more complete picture.

I do want to caution you, though, against something called the cultural monolith. A cultural

monolith is treating someone's personal experience as representative of their entire group, which is unfair to both parties. It's imperative that you treat each person's opinion as their own. Cultures are varied and diverse, made up of thousands or millions of individuals with their own preferences and identities. Respect that difference—celebrate it!

Inclusion Creates a Customer-Centric Culture

One of the phrases that gets thrown around a lot in the business world is the idea of a customer-centric culture. I mean, aren't all businesses customer-centric? How, then, does creating an inclusive workspace create a customer-centric culture?

The answer is that yes, businesses in general are centered around their customers in that they

know they need customers to purchase their goods and services. But when it comes to serving these customers in the best, most efficient way possible, inclusion can have a dramatic effect.

Think about my previous point that inclusion can help you increase your market share by gaining access to new markets. The same diversity of perspectives that gives you access to those markets also helps you to serve those customers better.

Not all customers are the same. They have different needs, different desires, and different circumstances, all of which require you to find ways to meet their needs in order to better serve those different markets. With a diverse, inclusive workforce, you're better positioned to understand those differences, which gives you the opportunity to serve those customers better than your competitors.

Inclusion Builds a Better Work Atmosphere

One of the most valuable aspects of focusing on inclusion in your company is that it almost always improves the atmosphere in your workplace. When you emphasize the celebration of everyone's differences and the value of every person's contribution, you'll almost immediately notice a decrease in the behaviors that can make the workplace miserable—and less productive.

If you don't have a productive, welcoming work environment, it's usually a sign that your inclusion efforts aren't working. An improved work atmosphere underlies all the other benefits that come along with D&I initiatives, mostly

because it reflects the sense of acceptance that true inclusion requires.

The Challenges to Inclusion

While inclusion is an important goal, there are many challenges to achieving it. One of the biggest challenges is overcoming the biases and prejudices that exist within society. Individuals may have conscious or unconscious biases that prevent them from fully embracing diversity and inclusion., as we talked about earlier.

Another challenge is the lack of access to resources and opportunities for marginalized individuals. Individuals who come from low-income backgrounds or who have disabilities may face significant barriers to accessing education, healthcare, and other essential resources.

Finally, there is a lack of understanding about the importance of inclusion and its impact on society. Many individuals may not fully appreciate the value of diversity and inclusion, which can lead to resistance to change and a lack of progress towards more inclusive practices. In this book, we'll take a deep dive into all of these things, as well as better understanding inclusion and building inclusion into your workplace.

Conclusion

Inclusion is a critical component of a healthy and functioning society. It is associated with better mental health outcomes, greater social cohesion, and improved economic outcomes. However, achieving inclusion can be challenging due to biases, lack of access to resources, and a lack of understanding about the importance of inclusion. It is important for individuals,

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Inclusion

Wes Berry

organizations, and society as a whole to recognize the value of inclusion and work towards creating more inclusive practices and environments. By doing so, we can create a more just and equitable society for all.

Chapter 2

Building a Foundation for an Inclusive Culture

In 1986, Accenture, a US multinational professional services company specializing in information technology services and consulting, hired a Latino woman named Nellie Borrero. Borrero saw biases in the company that went unchecked. They were just the norm. She realized an opportunity to evolve the company's existing culture. She started making changes and saw the company transform to become the #1 ranked employer for inclusion, diversity, and equity in the United States.

Borrero says, “Diversity is a fact, but inclusion is a choice we make every day. As leaders, we have to put out the message that we embrace and not just tolerate diversity.”

Many of us have good hearts and want our employees to feel there’s inclusion in the workplace, but we don’t know where to begin.

Inclusion has to be embedded in the foundation of your organization. Let’s take a look at how we might build a foundation for an inclusive culture.

1. Assess Your Workplace

Improving the diversity in your organization has to start with a frank and honest assessment of your current workplace. This is more than just looking at your roster of employees and looking at how each member of your staff identifies themselves. While this can be a useful metric to

include as you look at the makeup of your workforce, it's only a small part of the overall picture—you also have to include your workplace culture. Who are your leaders? Are your D&I policies clear? Are there resources for employees with difficulties?

Many companies today are including the staff members in these assessments, which can provide crucial insight into the underpinnings of your company culture. As a manager, you're unlikely to see into the nitty-gritty of everyday interactions in the same way that your employees do. Having these honest conversations is a critical part of truly understanding how people feel about their experience in the workplace.⁵

As you progress through your assessment, you should start to find areas where you can improve your company's D&I efforts. Once you've identified those areas for improvement, you

can work together with your team to set goals for your company and develop a plan for achieving them. This is just the first step, of course, but setting that plan in motion can help your diversity efforts progress rapidly.

So how do you make your workplace more welcoming for employees from different backgrounds? Well, the first step should be adhering to equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws, not simply because it's legally required, but because it's the right thing to do. However, this is only the first step. You can consider a number of options to make your company more inclusive, including:

- Providing daycare options
- Exploring non-gendered bathrooms
- Offering flexible hours for employees, including remote work

- Providing time off for religious holidays
- Establishing committees for diversity and inclusion

And, as mentioned above, it's also useful to offer opportunities for employees to gather in social situations outside of work. This can help establish a company culture that celebrates the diversity of everyone's background, allowing every employee the chance to learn more about different ways of seeing and experiencing the world. It can help smooth over any differences of opinion and provide the opportunity for future growth.

2. Establish a Feeling of Belonging

It's not a surprise that making employees feel like they belong with your company is a key

part of improving your inclusion efforts. Heck, that emphasis on creating a shared sense of belonging and camaraderie has been around for ages, although for many years, it had little to do with issues of diversity.

But the same efforts that companies went to years ago to make the workforce feel comfortable and welcomed in the workplace are just as important today—they just need a little tinkering to make them work for your D&I planning and to really emphasize how inclusion impacts your employee's day-to-day lives.

There are a number of ways to create a sense of belonging within your employees. Happy hours are always a great idea, since they give you the opportunity to bring your workforce together in a social situation away from work. Supply some food and some drinks and let people share their stories.

You can also provide more structured events. Guest speakers are a great option, especially speakers from a variety of different backgrounds. You can also organize events like scavenger hunts or other relaxed office competitions, which have a tendency to bring groups together.

No matter what, the emphasis should always be on making everyone feel accepted and heard. Any conflicts or misunderstandings that may arise during any portion of the day should be treated as teachable moments.

3. Emphasize and Respect Unique Experiences

In a truly diverse, inclusive workplace, people are going to come from all walks of life, and their experiences are going to diverge, sometimes

to an extreme degree. Without a focus on inclusivity, this can be a recipe for disaster.

It's easy to see how these different experiences could lead to employees butting heads. Without a shared sense of understanding, it can be difficult if not impossible, to understand where the other person is coming from.

Ultimately, it all comes down to empathy. Being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes gives you the ability to experience what life might be like for someone else, even if it's only in your imagination.

Science has shown that when we witness someone else's experience, whether visually or through speaking, the empathy we experience is our mirror neurons firing. These neurons react in the same whether we experience something ourselves or simply witness it. If you've ever winced when you saw someone get a papercut or

felt a rush of warmth during a romcom when the main couple gets together, you've felt your mirror neurons firing.⁹

However, the power of empathy only comes from practice, and in order to reap the full rewards, you must be willing to try again and again to feel what others are feeling. At times, it can be difficult, but emphasizing empathy as a core value can help you build a strong, lasting, more inclusive workplace.

4. Remember the Little Things (That Aren't So Little)

I always hated the phrase "little things." I think it's mostly because those little things usually turn out to be so important. Anyone can handle the big, obvious things, but it takes dedication, creativity, and focus to handle the details, all the

things that must go right in order for those big things to go off without a hitch.

Using the right pronouns, for example, is a simple, easy way to make people feel included. It's such a small thing to include your pronouns at the bottom of your email, but for someone else, it could be transformative. And the best part is that it costs you nothing.

Another simple act is to keep a calendar that highlights diversity, marking not only the major U.S. holidays, but a wide array of holidays from across the globe, both big and small. That way, you can help your workforce celebrate their culture all year round, whether that takes the form of an office-wide announcement or a small gesture from you to your employee. Both are sure to be appreciated.

It's these not-so-little acts that accumulate over time, and when you encourage everyone to

participate in your efforts to encourage and celebrate diversity and inclusion in your workplace, it can bring everyone closer. Big or small, each gesture fosters an attitude of acceptance, and that's something that everyone can get behind.

5. Make Sure Your Leaders are Committed

No matter how inclusive you make your workplace, true change in your organization starts with leadership. Your employees take their cues from their leaders, and if those leaders don't fully embrace the D&I mission, then there's no chance that your organization will ever become truly inclusive.

The most important step towards diversifying your workplace and making it inclusive is to examine your leadership team. Look

at who is in place and what positions they hold. According to CNBC, 85% of all executives in the United States are white, while whites also hold 83% of all senior manager positions.⁸ If those numbers surprise you, you're not alone.

Now, I'm not saying that you have to assign slots to your leadership team that can only be filled by this or that specific designation. But if your leadership positions are held almost entirely by people of one particular background, you're likely to find it difficult to enact meaningful change. No matter what your good intentions may be, your efforts will ring hollow, simply because you don't seem to be following your own directives.

When you increase the diversity of your leadership teams, you're modeling the change that you'd like to see. If your leadership reflects the kind of diversity and inclusion you would like to create in your workplace, you'll find it easier to convince

your employees that you're earnest in your desire to make the office a more welcoming and accepting environment.

Of course, the real benefit of diversifying your leadership is that you broaden your perspectives, opening yourself up to more opportunities and in most cases increasing your profitability and innovation quotient. Honestly, it seems like a win-win, doesn't it?

Leadership commitment involves:

- *Visible Advocacy*: Leaders need to visibly advocate for inclusion, both in words and actions. This includes participating in diversity and inclusion initiatives, addressing bias, and actively supporting diverse talent.

- *Accountability:* Leaders must hold themselves accountable for creating an inclusive culture. This involves setting measurable goals, tracking progress, and addressing any gaps or challenges that may arise.
- *Role Modeling:* Leaders serve as role models for inclusive behavior. When leaders consistently demonstrate inclusive practices, it sends a powerful message throughout the organization and encourages employees to follow suit.
- *Embedding Inclusion in Decision-Making:* Inclusive leaders involve a diverse range of perspectives in decision-making processes. This ensures that decisions consider the varied needs and experiences of the entire workforce.

Leadership commitment is not a one-time effort but an ongoing journey. It requires a genuine dedication to fostering an inclusive environment and a willingness to adapt to the evolving needs of the workforce.

6. Have Clear Diversity and Inclusion Policies

Well-defined diversity and inclusion policies serve as a roadmap for organizations, outlining the principles and practices that guide their commitment to creating an inclusive culture. These should be transparent and comprehensive policies that are set in place early on, but it's never too late to start.

Clear diversity and inclusion policies involve:

- *Non-Discrimination Policies:* Establishing policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. This sets a foundation for fairness and equality within the organization.
- *Equal Opportunity Employment:* Communicating a commitment to providing equal opportunities for career growth and advancement to all employees, irrespective of their background. It's important to understand that providing equal treatment or resources doesn't necessarily deliver equally matching results. Some people will experience more hardship and obstacles than another, making it more difficult for them to reach their goals or dreams. Keep this in mind and be empathetic.

- *Diversity Recruitment Strategies*: Outlining strategies for attracting and retaining a diverse workforce. This may include targeted outreach, partnerships with diverse organizations, and inclusive hiring practices.
- *Inclusive Benefits*: Ensuring that employee benefits and programs are designed to be inclusive and cater to the diverse needs of the workforce.
- *Transparent Reporting*: Providing transparent reporting on diversity and inclusion metrics. This transparency fosters accountability and allows employees to see the organization's progress in creating an inclusive culture.

Clear policies not only set expectations for behavior but also communicate the organization's

commitment to diversity and inclusion. They serve as a guide for employees and leaders alike, creating a framework for an equitable and supportive workplace.

7. Consider Diversity Training

On April 12, 2018, two black men were waiting at a Philadelphia Starbucks to meet an acquaintance to discuss a real estate project. Although they hadn't made a purchase, it wasn't uncommon for people to use Starbucks as a meeting place. However, the Starbucks manager called the police, and the two men were shortly arrested, despite not being charged with a crime.

The incident sparked a call for a boycott of the coffee company, as well as anger at the Philadelphia Police Department. While Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson clearly saw the potential for damage to their brand, he also saw an opportunity

to improve his company's commitment to diversity. Starbucks reached an agreement with the two men, and on May 29, 2018, Starbucks closed its 8,000 locations to train their employees about racial bias. While some may have had doubts about Starbucks' motivation—after all, their brand was in danger—the fact that they willingly closed every single location on the same day to engage in serious discussions on race and bias is pretty incredible. Johnson himself said it was only the first step, and former attorney general Eric Holder praised the company for doing more than simply dressing some windows.

As the Starbucks example shows, diversity training can be a powerful way to instill a commitment to inclusion and equality that can permeate your workplace long after the training itself is complete.

From spreading techniques to help improve equality within the workplace, to sparking earnest discussions about the challenges that each person experiences both at work and outside the office, these sessions can bring employees together and open their eyes to new perspectives.

However, if you decide to employ diversity training, it's important to do so thoughtfully and to commit to the process entirely. There are a number of outside consultants that provide well-tested training programs, and it's in your best interest to search out a program that will provide your employees with the tools they need.

Training and education programs involve:

- *Unconscious Bias Training*: Addressing unconscious biases that may influence decision-making processes. This type of

training helps employees recognize and mitigate biases that can impact their interactions with colleagues.

- *Cultural Competency Training*: Building cultural competence by providing education on different cultural norms, values, and communication styles. This promotes understanding and respect for diverse perspectives.
- *Inclusive Leadership Training*: Equipping leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to lead inclusively. This includes strategies for creating inclusive teams, addressing bias, and fostering an environment where every voice is heard.
- *Harassment Prevention Training*: Ensuring that all employees are aware of and committed to preventing harassment in the workplace. This includes training on

recognizing and addressing different forms of harassment.

- *Diversity and Inclusion Workshops:* Conducting workshops that provide a platform for open dialogue on diversity and inclusion topics. These workshops can help break down barriers and create a more inclusive organizational culture.

Training and education programs should be continuous and adapted to the changing needs of the workforce. By investing in the development of employees' awareness and understanding, organizations can create an environment where diversity is not only acknowledged but celebrated.

8. Create Employee Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are volunteer, employee-led groups which are

instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging and community within an organization. ERGs provide a platform for employees with shared backgrounds, experiences, or interests to come together, share insights, and contribute to the broader organizational culture.

The role of ERGs includes:

- *Community Building:* ERGs create communities within the organization where employees with similar backgrounds or experiences can connect, share experiences, and support one another.
- *Networking Opportunities:* ERGs provide networking opportunities that can be particularly valuable for underrepresented groups. Networking within these groups

can enhance professional development and career growth.

- *Advisory Role:* ERGs often serve as advisors to the organization, offering insights and recommendations on policies, programs, and initiatives that can enhance diversity and inclusion.
- *Cultural Awareness:* ERGs contribute to cultural awareness within the organization by organizing events, celebrations, and educational programs that promote understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.
- *Recruitment and Retention:* ERGs can play a role in the recruitment and retention of diverse talent. Their presence signals to potential employees that the organization values diversity and fosters an inclusive environment.

5. Embed Inclusion in Values

Embedding inclusion in organizational values goes beyond surface-level commitment; it involves integrating inclusive principles into the core identity of the organization. When inclusion is woven into the fabric of an organization's values, it becomes a guiding force for decision-making, behavior, and interactions.

The process of embedding inclusion in values includes:

- *Alignment with Mission and Vision:* Ensuring that the values related to inclusion align with the organization's overall mission and vision. This creates a cohesive narrative

that emphasizes the importance of inclusion in achieving broader organizational goals.

- *Inclusive Language:* Incorporating inclusive language in mission statements, value statements, and organizational communications. This language should reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- *Leadership Role Modeling:* Leaders play a critical role in embodying the inclusive values of the organization. Their actions should consistently reflect the stated values, serving as a model for employees at all levels.
- *Integration into Performance Metrics:* Include inclusion-related metrics in performance evaluations. This reinforces the organization's commitment to inclusion and ensures that employees are evaluated

based on their contributions to creating an inclusive culture.

- *Communication and Reinforcement:* Regularly communicate and reinforce the organization's commitment to inclusion. This can be done through internal communications, recognition of inclusive practices, and celebrations of diversity.

Embedding inclusion in values is a long-term commitment that requires consistent reinforcement and alignment with organizational practices. When values truly reflect an unwavering commitment to inclusion, they become a driving force for a sustainable and inclusive culture.

Conclusion

Building a foundation for an inclusive culture is a multifaceted process that involves

visible leadership commitment, clear policies, employee resource groups, training initiatives, and the integration of inclusion into organizational values. These components work synergistically to create an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives. As organizations embrace the imperative of inclusion, they not only foster a culture of diversity and equity but also position themselves for sustained success in an ever-evolving global landscape.

Part 2

Implementing Inclusion

*“Diversity is being invited to the party;
inclusion is being asked to dance.”*

–Verna Myers, Vice President of Inclusion
Strategy at Netflix

Get on Board
Inclusion

Wes Berry

Chapter 3

Diversity as the Foundation of Inclusion

America has long been considered a “melting pot” Made up of immigrants from all over the world, our uniqueness began as a place where individuals could come for freedom and to pursue “the American Dream.”

In his 2014 Naturalization Ceremony speech for Service Members and Military Spouses, former President Barak Obama said these words: “And even though we haven’t always looked the same or spoken the same language, as Americans, we’ve done big things together. We’ve won this country’s freedom together. We’ve built our

greatest cities together. We've defended our way of life together. We've continued to perfect our union together.

And that's what makes America special. That's what makes us strong.

I understand that immigration is now a hot button topic, but isn't it true that if we work together, if we're united, we're stronger? And I'm not just talking about race or religion. We all have different abilities, strengths, learning styles. Some of us have more years on us than others. Different socio-economic backgrounds, different genders and sexual orientations. And more. We are all unique. But when we put those unique qualities together, we become stronger as a whole.

Diversity is not a singular dimension. Think of it more as a complex tapestry of intersecting identities and experiences. Defining diversity involves acknowledging and embracing the

multitude of factors that contribute to individual uniqueness.

Understanding the intersectionality of diversity involves recognizing that individuals embody multiple identities simultaneously. For example, a person can be a woman, a person of color, and a member of the LGBTQ+ community, each aspect influencing their experiences and perspectives.

Acknowledging and valuing this intersectionality is critical for creating an inclusive culture. An inclusive environment goes beyond just recognizing differences; it actively seeks to leverage the richness that diverse perspectives bring to the organization. By fostering an understanding of the multifaceted nature of diversity, organizations can move beyond surface-level inclusivity to truly embracing and celebrating the uniqueness of each individual.

Let's look at how that can be done.

1. Learn Strategies for Diverse Recruitment

Creating a diverse and inclusive workplace starts with building a representative workforce. Diverse recruitment strategies go beyond traditional approaches and actively seek to attract candidates from a wide range of backgrounds. Organizations that prioritize diverse recruitment not only benefit from a broader talent pool but also foster a culture where every individual feels they belong.

Effective strategies for diverse recruitment include:

- *Inclusive Job Descriptions:* Craft job descriptions that use inclusive language and emphasize the organization's commitment

to diversity and inclusion. This can attract a more diverse pool of candidates. You can do this by using inclusive language, emphasizing your commitment to DEI, and listing any inclusive benefits you offer such as continued learning.

- *Diverse Sourcing Channels:* Utilize a variety of sourcing channels to reach candidates from different backgrounds. This may include partnering with diverse professional organizations, attending events, and leveraging online platforms.
- *Structured Interview Processes:* Implement structured interview processes that focus on skills, competencies, and potential rather than relying on subjective judgments. This helps reduce biases in the selection process.
- *Diversity in Recruitment Panels:* Ensure that recruitment panels are themselves

diverse. A diverse panel is more likely to recognize and appreciate the skills and potential of candidates from various backgrounds.

- *Partnerships with Educational Institutions:* Establish partnerships with educational institutions that have a diverse student body. This can create pipelines for diverse talent and foster relationships with communities underrepresented in the workforce.

Diverse recruitment is not a one-time effort but an ongoing commitment. By consistently implementing and refining these strategies, organizations can cultivate a workforce that reflects the diversity of the broader community.

2. Foster a Sense of Belonging Through Inclusive Onboarding Processes

The onboarding process is a crucial phase in an employee's journey, setting the tone for their experience within the organization. An inclusive onboarding process goes beyond administrative tasks and actively seeks to ensure that new hires feel welcomed, valued, and included from day one.

Key components of inclusive onboarding processes include:

- *Diversity and Inclusion Training:* Incorporate diversity and inclusion training into the onboarding process. This training can help new hires understand the organization's commitment to diversity, become aware of inclusive behaviors, and

recognize the importance of their role in fostering an inclusive culture.

- *Buddy or Mentor Programs*: Pair new hires with experienced employees who can serve as mentors or buddies. This helps newcomers navigate the organization, build connections, and feel supported.
- *Inclusive Welcome Materials*: Provide welcome materials that showcase the organization's commitment to diversity. This can include information about employee resource groups, diversity initiatives, and success stories of employees from diverse backgrounds.
- *Inclusive Team Building Activities*: Incorporate team-building activities that promote inclusion and collaboration. These activities can help break down barriers,

build relationships, and create a positive and inclusive team culture.

- *Feedback and Adjustment Periods:* Creating opportunities for new hires to provide feedback on their onboarding experience. This feedback can be used to continuously improve and refine the onboarding process.

An inclusive onboarding process is not just about assimilating new hires into the organization; it's about fostering a sense of belonging and laying the groundwork for a long and successful tenure.

3. Address Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias refers to the automatic and unintentional stereotypes or attitudes that influence decision-making processes. Addressing

unconscious bias is a crucial step in creating an inclusive culture, as these biases can impact hiring decisions, performance evaluations, and overall workplace interactions.

Strategies for recognizing and mitigating unconscious bias include:

- *Unconscious Bias Training:* Provide training programs that raise awareness about unconscious bias and its potential impact on workplace decisions. This training helps employees recognize and mitigate their own biases.
- *Structured Decision-Making Processes:* Implement structured decision-making processes that focus on objective criteria rather than subjective judgments. This helps reduce the influence of unconscious bias in

areas such as hiring, promotions, and performance evaluations.

- *Diverse Hiring Panels:* Ensure that hiring panels are diverse and represent a variety of perspectives. This can help counteract the impact of individual biases and promote fair decision-making.
- *Regular Diversity and Inclusion Audits:* Conduct regular audits of diversity and inclusion practices within the organization. These audits can help identify areas where unconscious bias may be influencing decision-making and inform strategies for improvement.
- *Inclusive Feedback Processes:* Implement feedback processes that focus on behaviors and performance rather than subjective impressions. This helps create a more equitable evaluation system.

Addressing unconscious bias is an ongoing process that requires commitment at all levels of the organization. By actively acknowledging and mitigating biases, organizations can foster a more equitable and inclusive workplace.

4. Build Diversity into Your Leadership:

As we can see from the Sodexo example, the composition of leadership teams plays a pivotal role in shaping the organizational culture. A lack of diversity in leadership can perpetuate existing inequities and hinder the development of an inclusive environment. Organizations that prioritize diversity in leadership not only demonstrate a commitment to equality but also benefit from a broader range of perspectives that drive innovation and success.

Key considerations for promoting diversity in leadership include:

- *Diversity in Executive Positions:* Actively working to increase the representation of individuals from diverse backgrounds in executive and leadership positions. This involves intentional efforts to identify and nurture diverse talent within the organization.
- *Leadership Development Programs:* Implementing leadership development programs that identify and groom individuals from underrepresented groups for leadership roles. These programs should provide mentorship, training, and opportunities for skill development.

- *Diverse Board Representation:* Ensuring diversity at the highest levels, including board representation. Diverse boards bring varied perspectives to strategic decision-making processes, contributing to the overall success of the organization.
- *Accountability and Metrics:* Establishing metrics and accountability mechanisms to track progress in achieving diversity in leadership. Regularly reviewing and assessing these metrics ensures that the organization remains committed to its diversity goals.
- *Inclusive Leadership Training:* Providing training for leaders that emphasizes inclusive leadership practices. Inclusive leaders are those who actively seek diverse perspectives, champion inclusivity in

decision-making, and create environments where everyone feels valued.

Diversity in leadership is not just a checkbox but a fundamental aspect of building an inclusive culture. When leaders reflect the diversity of the workforce, it sends a powerful message about the organization's commitment to equality and inclusion.

Conclusion

As you can see, diversity is the foundation of an inclusive culture. Because all buildings are only as strong as their foundations, diversity in leadership is paramount to strengthening your organization. Let's take a closer look at that in our next chapter.

Get on Board
Inclusion

Wes Berry

Chapter 4

Fostering Inclusive Leadership

Sodexo is a quality food services company that supplies hospitals, schools, and more. But what makes them stand out is their commitment to diversity in their leadership. They have more than 420,000 employees worldwide and have worked hard to build an inclusive culture with a focus on gender equity. According to Bloomberg's Gender Equity Index, women make up 37% of the company's executive committee and 60% of its board of directors. Sodexo also has over 18 LGBTQ+ and ally employee networks around the world.

The company says that they have found that “when there is an optimal gender balance within an organization, employee engagement increases by 4 percentage points, gross profit increases by 23%, and brand image strengthens by 5 percentage points.” That’s pretty impressive. Add it makes sense, as by diversifying their leadership, they are not only providing role models for other employees but are bringing different perspectives into the mix. This not only helps inside the organization but creates a more relatable consumer approach.

1. Leaders Should Act as Inclusion Advocates

Inclusion requires more than just policies and initiatives; it demands leaders who actively advocate for and champion the cause. Leaders serve as the driving force behind cultural transformation,

setting the tone for the entire organization. Advocating for inclusion involves not only endorsing diversity and equity but actively promoting an environment where every individual feels valued and empowered.

Leaders as inclusion advocates can:

- *Communicate the Vision:* Clearly articulate the organization's commitment to inclusion. This involves communicating not only the "what" but also the "why" behind fostering an inclusive culture.
- *Lead by Example:* Demonstrate inclusive behaviors in their daily interactions. When leaders embody the values of inclusion, it sets a precedent for others to follow.
- *Address Biases and Barriers:* Proactively identify and address biases and barriers

within the organization. Leaders should be vigilant in recognizing and dismantling structures that hinder inclusivity. Make sure you have an open-door policy, where employees feel safe approaching you with their concerns.

- *Support Employee Resource Groups:* Actively support and engage with employee resource groups that represent diverse voices within the organization. This involvement demonstrates a commitment to listening and understanding the unique challenges faced by different groups.
- *Celebrate Diversity:* Recognize and celebrate the diversity of the workforce. This can be done through acknowledgment of cultural observances, events, and achievements that showcase the

organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Leaders who champion inclusion create a ripple effect throughout the organization, fostering a culture where diversity is not merely accepted but celebrated.

2. Leaders Should Embody Empathy and Understanding

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. In the realm of inclusive leadership, empathy and understanding are essential cornerstones. Leaders who cultivate empathy create environments where employees feel seen, heard, and valued. Understanding the diverse perspectives and experiences of team members fosters a sense of belonging and contributes to a positive workplace culture.

Key aspects of empathy and understanding in inclusive leadership include:

- *Active Listening:* Make eye contact, be aware of body language, and sometimes repeat back what you have heard to be sure you heard it correctly. These are some active listening techniques. Actively listen to your team members, seeking to understand their experiences and perspectives without judgment. This promotes open communication and builds trust.
- *Cultural Competence:* Develop cultural competence involves educating oneself about different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. Leaders who are culturally

competent can better navigate diverse teams and create inclusive environments.

- *Flexible Leadership Styles:* Recognize that different individuals may require different leadership approaches. Inclusive leaders are adaptable and can flex their leadership style to meet the needs of diverse team members.
- *Recognition of Microaggressions:* Be attuned to microaggressions and subtle forms of bias within the workplace. Actively work to address and eliminate these behaviors, fostering a more respectful and understanding environment.
- *Empathetic Decision-Making:* Make decisions with empathy by considering the potential impact on different individuals and groups. This approach leads to more equitable outcomes.

Leaders who prioritize empathy and understanding create teams that thrive on collaboration and innovation, breaking down barriers that may hinder inclusivity.

3. Leaders Should Use Inclusive Decision-Making

Inclusive decision-making processes create better outcomes and higher engagement and are foundational to fostering an inclusive culture. When individuals from diverse backgrounds are involved in decision-making, organizations benefit from a broader range of perspectives, leading to better outcomes and higher levels of employee engagement.

Illustrative aspects of inclusive decision-making include:

- *Diverse Decision-Making Panels:* Actively involve individuals from diverse backgrounds in decision-making panels. This ensures that different perspectives are considered and contributes to more well-rounded and equitable decisions.
- *Equitable Distribution of Opportunities:* Ensure that opportunities for involvement in decision-making are distributed equitably across the organization. This prevents the concentration of decision-making power in specific groups.
- *Inclusive Ideation Sessions:* Encourage inclusive ideation sessions where team members can contribute their ideas and feedback. This promotes creativity and innovation.
- *Data-Driven Decision-Making:* Use data to inform decisions and mitigate biases. Data-

driven approaches help organizations make decisions based on objective criteria rather than subjective judgments. Lufthansa Group is a global aviation group that used a data analytics platform and increased their efficiency by 30%. Pushing bias and other contenders are out of the way, simple, hard data can be the best and easiest way to make certain decisions.

- *Transparent Decision-Making Processes:* Ensure transparency in decision-making processes. Clearly communicating the rationale behind decisions fosters trust and reduces ambiguity.

Inclusive decision-making is not only a means to an end but also a reflection of an organization's commitment to fairness and equity.

It contributes to a workplace where all individuals feel that their voices matter.

4. Leaders Should Use Feedback Loops to Improve Their Leadership Practices

Feedback is a powerful tool for leaders committed to continuous improvement in their inclusive leadership practices. Establishing feedback loops allows leaders to gain insights into their strengths, areas for improvement, and the overall impact of their leadership style on the team.

Essential components of feedback loops in inclusive leadership include:

- *Regular Check-Ins:* Conduct regular check-ins with team members to gather feedback on leadership practices. This can be done

through one-on-one meetings, surveys, or anonymous feedback mechanisms.

- *360-Degree Feedback:* Implement 360-degree feedback processes where leaders receive input from peers, subordinates, and superiors. This holistic approach provides a comprehensive view of leadership effectiveness.
- *Incorporating Diversity Metrics:* Include diversity and inclusion metrics in feedback assessments. This ensures that leaders are held accountable for their contributions to fostering an inclusive culture.
- *Openness to Critique:* Encourage an open and non-defensive attitude towards critique. Leaders who are receptive to feedback demonstrate a commitment to growth and improvement.

- *Actionable Plans for Improvement:*
Develop actionable plans based on feedback received. This involves actively working to address identified areas for improvement and continuously refining inclusive leadership practices.

Feedback loops are not only about self-improvement but also contribute to the overall development and effectiveness of the entire team.

5. Leaders Should Use Accountability and Metrics to Ensure Progress in Fostering Inclusion

Setting measurable goals and holding leaders accountable is crucial to ensuring progress in fostering inclusion. Establishing clear metrics creates a framework for assessing the impact of

inclusive leadership practices and holds leaders responsible for creating positive change.

Key considerations for accountability and metrics in fostering inclusion include:

- *Defining Inclusion Metrics:* Identify specific metrics that align with the organization's inclusion goals. These metrics may include diversity representation, employee satisfaction with inclusion efforts, and progress in achieving diversity and inclusion milestones.
- *Regular Progress Reviews:* Conduct regular reviews of progress toward inclusion goals. This involves analyzing the data, identifying trends, and assessing whether the organization is moving in the right direction.

- *Leadership Scorecards:* Develop leadership scorecards that include metrics related to inclusive leadership. This provides leaders with a tangible understanding of their impact on fostering inclusion.
- *Rewarding Inclusive Behavior:* Recognize and reward leaders who demonstrate exemplary inclusive behaviors. Positive reinforcement reinforces the importance of inclusive leadership.
- *Adjusting Strategies:* Being willing to adjust inclusion strategies based on data and feedback. If certain approaches are not yielding the desired results, leaders should be open to modifying their strategies for fostering inclusion.

By establishing accountability and metrics, organizations ensure that inclusion is not merely an

aspirational goal but a measurable and attainable objective.

Conclusion

When you're in a position of leadership, you are a role model, whether you want to be or not. People are looking for you to make wise decisions and lead them appropriately. When your leadership is made up of a diverse group of individuals, they are not only more relatable to a wider group of employees and customers but are in the position to bring in different perspectives and fresh ideas to grow your company by leaps and bounds.

Next up, let's look at creative inclusive workspaces.

Chapter 5

Creating Inclusive Workspaces

Remember back to the elementary playground, when kids used to pick teams? There was always a kid or two who was picked last for kickball, or whatever it was they were playing that day. I've had my turn at being picked last, and it was tragic. Nobody wants to be unwanted. Everyone wants to be included because inclusivity makes us feel good, right? When you add inclusivity into the workplace, it not only gives us the warm fuzzies, but it increases productivity. As a matter of fact, Deloitte Australia Research shows that inclusive teams outperform their peers by 80%

in team-based assessments. Wow! Deloitte also reports that inclusive workplaces are 6X as likely to be innovative and have 2.3X the cash flow per employee over non-inclusive workplaces in a 3-year period.

So how do we make our workspaces more inclusive? Let's take a look at some ideas.

1. Pay Attention to the Physical Environment

The environment we live or work in can have a profound impact on our well-being. Creating a physical space where your employees feel comfortable will go a long way towards keeping them healthy and at work. Here are some ideas:

- *Make renovations to restrooms to include changing tables and other necessities.*
- *Have gender inclusive restrooms*
- *Establish lactation rooms for new mothers who are breastfeeding.*
- *Provide wheelchair access and attention to curbs.*
- *Have Day Care facilities in the workplace.*
- *Install commuter showers*
- *Equip a room for workout facilities*
- *Have break rooms.*
- *Include Pets.* Some companies allow pets to come in, or they have a company dog or cat. Be mindful of those with allergies.

- *Create reflection spaces.* This can be a simple, quiet corner with a few comfy chairs near a window. Add green plants. It feels good to get away from the harsh lights and computer screen to recharge.

2. Provide Flexible Work Arrangements

Flexible work arrangements give employees a feeling of control, along with allowing them to work around issues such as childcare or time to see their spouse.

- *Condensed Workweeks.* I have a friend who works 4 ten-hour days to make up his work week. Providing opportunities like this are often appreciated.
- *Flextime.* A business usually has core hours that people need to be present, say

between 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. These core hours make it easier to set up in-person meetings. But often, outside of those core hours, you can start or quit when you want, as long as you make up your 40 hours, or however amount of hours you are supposed to work that week.

- *Part-Time Work.* This is less than a 40-hour work week. Sometimes it comes with benefits, oftentimes it does not.
- *Shift Work.* This is seen a lot in auto factories and sometimes medical facilities. Employees work differing 8-hour shifts around the clock. Some people prefer the night shift.
- *Job Sharing.* The is ideas for two people who want to work part time. They share

the job responsibilities of a full-time employee.

- *Telecommuting.* All virtual. Employees usually work from home, but they could work in a library, a coffee shop, or a designated workspace somewhere in their hometown. They made need to come in for meetings.
- *Remote Work.* This is work that can be done entirely from home. It's pretty much the same as telecommuting and often the two terms are interchangeable
- *Hybrid Work.* Employees combine virtual with in-office days.
- flexibility in work arrangements to accommodate diverse needs and preferences.

3. Explore Inclusive Technology

Exploring how technology can be leveraged to create a more inclusive and accessible work environment.

These are technologies designed for people with specific disabilities. Examples could include screen reading for people who are blind, or voice-activated technology for people who can't type. There are also types of transmitters that allow hearing-impaired people to hear what a person is saying (in a team meeting, for example).

4. Don't Forget Mental Health Inclusivity

Highlighting the importance of addressing mental health concerns as part of an inclusive workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic gave us all some lessons in mental health. As such, I believe a lot of people understand the importance of

addressing mental concerns as part of an inclusive workplace. Most are dealing with stuff. Grief, anxiety, depression, health issues. Of course, you can't know everything about your employee's health due to privacy laws but be sensitive and try to be aware of areas that they are struggling. See what you can do to accommodate them. Does the migraine sufferer need to lose the fluorescent or LED lights in her office? Does the anxiety-ridden person really have to speak up in the team meetings, or can he write down his ideas to share with the team leader later?

5. Recognize Different Work Styles:

Work styles refer to the way a person's personality and skill set impacts the way they work. Here are a few examples:

- *Logical.* This work style is a person who analytical, data-oriented, and focused. Entrepreneurs fit into this category. They are usually go-getters.
- *Idea-Oriented.* These folks are optimistic and inspiring. They tend to be visionaries and are usually adaptable. Artistic types fall into this category, such as graphic designers.
- *Detail-Oriented.* This person is very strategic, thoughtful, and organized. They are good at pulling together projects and organizing the team. Many writers and teachers fit this work type personality.

- *Supportive.* This person works well collaboratively. They are empathetic individuals, emotionally intelligent. They read people well and are often able to easily relate to their colleagues. They are usually good at mediating conflicts. Your HR people, or folks who step up to volunteer roles such as metro programs are often the supportive work style type.
- *Cooperative.* These folks thrive when working with others and are great communicators. Project managers are good examples of this type of person.

Conclusion

It takes just a little thought to create an inclusive workspaces for your employees. Once you have environment that people feel safe in, there will be room for them to thrive, and your organization will benefit from their success!

Get on Board
Inclusion

Wes Berry

Chapter 6

Empowering Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Several tornadoes ripped through Plano, Texas in 2019, taking down trees and wreaking havoc. After the storm subsided, Neel Srivatsa, an employee at Ericsson (a telecommunications and networking company) emailed his fellow teammates to tell them he wouldn't make their scheduled practice for the upcoming Diwali celebration. Three big trees had fallen in his yard and presented a safety concern for his family and his neighbors. The city was busy clearing roads, so he'd have to remove the trees himself.

He was a member of the Ericsson Asian Connections at Ericsson ERG (ACE ERG) at his

company. Immediately, several other ACE members decided to skip practice themselves, and on their lunch hour, they arrived at Neel's house to help him with the trees. They cut and cleared, and soon the project was done.

Neel's involvement with his company's ERG had created ties that might not otherwise be there. This story shows the power of connection, which can be made especially strong through ERGs.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are volunteer, employee-lead groups—usually organized by the empower. These groups are instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging and community within an organization. ERGs provide a platform for employees with shared backgrounds, experiences, or interests to come together, such as Ericsson's Asian Connections ERG, and share

insights, and contribute to the broader organizational culture.

While they can provide a place for employees to voice common concerns and meet to discuss issues, they are also a place to connect with like-minded individuals and make friends. Strong connections help create a more pleasant work environment and insulate against disputes.

Here are a few reasons to have ERGs in your organization. ERGs provide:

- *Cultural Awareness:* ERGs contribute to cultural awareness within the organization by organizing events, celebrations, and educational programs that promote understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures.

- *Recruitment and Retention:* ERGs can play a role in the recruitment and retention of diverse talent. Their presence signals to potential employees that the organization values diversity and fosters an inclusive environment.
- *Community Building:* ERGs create communities within the organization where employees with similar backgrounds or experiences can connect, share experiences, and support one another.
- *Networking Opportunities:* ERGs provide networking opportunities that can be particularly valuable for underrepresented groups. Networking within these groups can enhance professional development and career growth.
- *Advisory Role:* ERGs often serve as advisors to the organization, offering

insights and recommendations on policies, programs, and initiatives that can enhance diversity and inclusion.

Many ERGs look beyond the workplace and perform volunteer work in the community, or organize events outside of work, often for the whole company. Ultimately, these groups provide a safe space for emphasizing the value of inclusion within the entire company.

Let's look at how to create ERGs in your organization.

1. ERG Formation: How to establish and empower ERGs

Typically, it's the employees who create these groups, but leaders can advocate for them. In order for the groups to succeed, you will need a few individuals who are willing to

come together and do a little work. AS management, it's your job to support, but to keep out of it unless invited. The ERG teams should feel empowered to organize events on their own.

Here are some thoughts that will help get an ERG started:

- *Determine the Group's Purpose.* What are you coming together for? What does it hope to accomplish?
- *Create an Application Process.* Who is this group for? Your application should tell the purpose of the group and what the expectations of membership are. Don't go overboard. Keep it short and simple.
- *Establish Leadership.* Most groups will need a leader (President?), a vice

president, secretary and treasurer. Not all groups will have funds but for those who plan to put on events or do fundraising, a treasurer is essential.

- *Clarify Expectations for members.* This should include the number of times you plan to meet, where, and what duties each member will have.

2. Strategic Alignment and ERGs

How can ERGs align their goals with broader organizational strategies? If management has done a good job of communication the company's goals, then the employees should know what they are. To take it a step further, management should collaborate with ERGs to figure out ways that the group can serve a two-fold purpose – making connections, while still fulfilling the purpose of the organization. What are some ideas?

Let's say the ERG wants to help the company foster cultural awareness. They can host two speaker a year pertaining to that goal. Or maybe they want to see the entire workplace building community together. They can create a workplace event every year to bring people together in a fun way.

Maybe it's not about culture of community. Maybe it's about career. They can host a career development class or video, perhaps just for entry-level or mid-level employees. What about a leadership class? Or a writing program?

There are many ways for ERGs to align with the organizational goals to help build a stronger company.

3. Leadership Opportunities in ERGs

ERGs provide a great place for employee to learn leadership skills. As a group, they will most

likely elect a leader. Perhaps several. Chair. Vice-chair. Secretary. They might need a treasurer to help with funds for events. Maybe an event coordinator or a communications leader. You get the idea. This is a small, safe place for people to try out these roles. In the process, leaders will be discovered along the way.

4. Cross-ERG Collaboration

Collaboration between different ERGs can create a more interconnected and supportive network. Here are some advantages:

- *Broader range of ideas.* As we've discussed, different people with different backgrounds can provide new insight into problems solving or ingenuity for your organization. The more that are in the mix,

the wide diversity of thought you have. This is a strength.

- *Broader range of perspectives.* Similar to our last point, this offers a broader range of perspectives to a lot of different issues including cultural, workforce, and family. Someone can bring an idea or suggestions that might empower another employee through a crisis.
- *Increased Allyship.* Many cultural groups, or gender groups, experience some of the same bias, albeit for different reasons. Being able to relate to each other is not only empowering, but also helps employee to realize they aren't alone in their experience.

5. ERGs as Feedback Channels.

Feedback is essential to help leaders stay on track. ERGs are great places to seek feedback, o

your management style, on the company's goals, and on how well things are going inclusion-wise in your organization. Provide an open and safe place for your employees to communicate their concerns and to offer constructive feedback. ERGs can serve as valuable channels for providing feedback and insights to leadership.

Conclusion

ERGs can be an important part of your organization's structure. They open up avenues for diverse sharing of ideas and thoughts, as well as help individuals identify within a group, they feel comfortable with. They foster a sense of belonging. And by doing so, they bring people together, and help us all to realize that we all can find a place to belong.

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Inclusion

Wes Berry

Chapter 7

Inclusive Communication Strategies

We hear a lot about communication these days. We are told to use “I feel” statements instead of blame. To make eye contact. To really, actively “listen” when someone is talking. And we don’t just communicate in person anymore, or over the telephone.

With the technology the way it is, there is a lot of communication going on these days. Texts, messaging, emails, social media, in-person, virtual . . . there are too many ways to mention.

And yet, we all seem to feel more misunderstood than ever. Why is that? And what about the people who don’t feel ‘heard’ in the first place, before we add all the miscommunication into

the mix? What can we do to incorporate inclusive communication strategies into our workplace?

Let's take a look at some helpful ideas.

1. Strive for Clear and Transparent Communication

Here are some ways to communicate better:

- *Use Simple Language.* Clear and concise communication is critical in any form of interaction, whether it's in personal or professional settings. When communicating with others, it's important to use language that is easy to understand and appropriate for the audience's education level, culture, and background.
- *Organize Your Thoughts.* Take the time to think about what you are going to say. It's never a good idea to speak off the cuff. This means planning your message before

communicating it and structuring it in a way that makes sense to your audience. Have you ever read an email that was sent out quickly about a meeting or product issue and you can tell the writer didn't take the time to properly formulate their thoughts? It leaves everyone in the email chain confused. Consider the needs of your audience, who you are writing to, and the type of communication that would be best: in-person, an email, or a phone call, for example.

- *Use Brevity.* Short is sweet. When you keep your message short and to the point, you increase the likelihood that your audience will understand and remember what you're saying. This means avoiding rambling or going off on tangents that can confuse your audience. Instead, you should focus on your

main message and convey it as clearly and concisely as possible.

- *Ask Questions.* Make sure you know what the speaker is trying to convey.
- *Show interest.* Don't scroll on your phone or—Heaven forbid!—roll your eyes.

It's important that you come across as you hope to, to avoid hurt feelings or mixed messages.

2. Be Aware of Language and Messaging Techniques

How we come across depends a lot on the tone of our voice and if we are reaching out to others in a way they can comprehend. Being aware of these things can lead to better understanding between parties.

- *Adapt Your Tone.* Have you ever heard a mother speak to her baby? She often uses a higher pitched, softer voice than when she's talking to an adult. We also naturally adapt our tone for other occasions, like working with young children, or when handling a sensitive situation, such as bereavement. But in daily life, it's easy to forget about tone. When speaking with other adults, we still need to remember that our tone reflects more than the words coming out of our mouth. Our tone sets the stage for the entire conversation. When in the office, figuring out tone involves striking a balance between approachability and professionalism. You want to come across as relatable

and familiar, but you don't want to be disrespectful.

- *Adapt Your Language.* Likewise, use language that is concise and easy to understand. Have you ever met a person who uses big words all the time to try to look smart or cool? Don't be that person. Speak in a respectful manner that can reach a wider audience.
- *Customize Your Delivery Methods.* (See below)
- *Be Empathetic.* Empathy involves stepping into the shoes of the audience, recognizing their emotions, and responding with genuine understanding. When you listen, try to relate. Be willing to grow. Identify common ground. These will help you build empathy with your audience.

3. Multichannel Communication

Customize your delivery methods based on what your audience prefers. Communication isn't a one-size-fits-all process. You will always need to use different communication channels with different people. By embracing a multi-channel approach, you can reach diverse audience preferences, ensuring that your message reaches and resonates with the intended recipients. What do they prefer? Some methods include a phone call, a chat, a Zoom call, an email, and a text. Or, you could just walk over to the person's cubicle and have a chat!

Also, if you are working with people for whom English is a second language, they may do better with written/email communication rather than spoken. This gives them time to absorb what is being said. I have high regards for anyone who has moved to a foreign country, learned their

language, and moved into the workforce. For those still learning, let's take that into consideration.

There are also different learning styles that impact communication methods.

- *Auditory learners:* Hearing something tends to stick more with these individuals. A good communications style might simply be to pick up the phone and call them. That way, you can explain it vocally.
- *Visual learners:* These learners do best when they can visually see something. A presentation with graphics or having something in print for them to read works well.
- *Kinesthetic learners:* These folks do best with hands on. A great example is letting them help put something together, such as a part for a machine, as you explain it.

- *Logical learners*: These folks like a rational, ordered method when processing something. A good style of communication would be to use short emails that lay out the idea with bullet points.

4. Active Listening.

Active listening goes beyond hearing; it involves fully comprehending and responding to the nuances of the message. When you are actively listening to someone, the relationship gains trust and satisfaction, which can lead to easier conflict resolution when problems crop up. Some active listening techniques include:

- Make eye contact
- When needed, repeat back what you have heard to be sure you heard it correctly.

- Be aware of body language, not crossing your arms or frowning.

5. Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback is vital for building trust and rapport with the other person. When you seek feedback, you are showing the other person that you value their opinion, and you are open to making changes to improve your communication skills. This can lead to a more productive and positive relationship in both personal and professional settings.

In an inclusion setting, feedback from your employees and colleagues can help to improve communication skills and make necessary adjustments to meet their needs. Don't be afraid to ask them their preferred communication methods. Your logical minded people might have different preferences than your creative thinkers. Likewise, in today's society, some people are sensitive to

gender titles. Be aware of what each likes to be called, and be respectful.

Constructive criticism is also a valuable tool for improving communication skills. Being open to constructive criticism can help you identify areas where you need to improve and develop your skills. When receiving constructive criticism, listen actively, remain open-minded, and avoid becoming defensive. Usually people aren't out to attack you. They are helping you to understand their needs better and provide you with ways you can improve.

For example, if you receive feedback that your message was unclear or confusing, you can use the feedback to adjust your communication style, such as simplifying your language or using more examples to make your message more understandable. This will not only allow you to build a better relationship but can make your communication stronger. As a writer, I am used to

constructive criticism from my editors. While sometimes it hurts, it usually only makes my writing stronger.

Conclusion

Being aware of what and how you communicate goes a long way towards promoting inclusion in your workplace. In all my years as an employer, I have found that, with a few exceptions, most people just want to be valued and understood. If they can see that someone is trying to understand them, trying to communicate with them, and maybe even trying to see their side of things (empathy) , defenses come down and it's a whole lot easier to work together.

Next up, let's take a look at what inclusivity means in talent development and advancement.

Chapter 8

Inclusive Talent Development and Advancement

When businesses begin to consider D&I initiatives, there's a tendency to start to think in terms of raw numbers. Does my workforce have the right percentages of people from different backgrounds? If not, how do I go about getting those numbers right? And if I do, does that mean I "did my job" when it comes to workplace diversity, and I can go on without thinking about D&I anymore?

If we only consider diversity as a part of the integrity mindset, trying to be "fair" and "equal" then this numbers-first approach isn't going to cut it. Looking at D&I as just a numbers game isn't an

honest attempt to create a more diverse, inclusive workforce. Instead, it becomes a kind of virtue signaling, where you're telling people you care about diversity without really being committed to the effort.

While numbers are part of D&I efforts, they can't be the only metric. The main idea of diversity in the workplace is to create a fair and equitable atmosphere, a place where everyone's ideas are welcomed and valued.

Here are some additional ideas to consider as you strive to build the most inclusive, equitable workplace possible:

1. Recruit Broadly

One reason many diversity and inclusion efforts fail is because companies don't change their approach to finding candidates. They tend to use the same job posting boards, go to the same hiring

events, and talk to the same people year after year after year. If you don't change your approach to recruiting, then how on earth can you expect to achieve different results?

That's why it's important to consider alternatives. Spread your job postings out to a greater number of boards, especially those targeted to particular populations. You can also increase your efforts to reach beyond your traditional networks, attending hiring and HR events in more diverse areas and writing your job postings with more inclusive language.

Another option is to add more diversity to your hiring pool, which helps undercut any unconscious bias.

2. Focus on Retention

Hiring more diverse candidates is one thing—keeping them with your company is

another. For far too many companies, the focus on diversity ends as soon as new employees are brought into the company. But that's really just the starting point for diversity in the workplace. Ensuring that the workplace is welcoming to an increasingly diverse team has to be the meat and potatoes of your D&I efforts.

For new employees, these efforts start with onboarding, making sure every new worker feels safe and secure in their new position, and that their opinions and contributions will be welcomed from day one. However, the process really begins even before the hire is made. If your assessment reveals that your office culture isn't as inclusive as it needs to be, then any efforts to include the new employee are doomed to fail.

3. Provide Equal Access to Opportunities

Provide ways for all employees to learn and grow. Find development opportunities that are available to all employees. You might even consider letting newcomers attend some executive level classes. You never know—you might discover someone who will be the next big leader of a future project. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- *Offer diverse and ongoing learning opportunities* for continued learning. They can include workshops, classes, video series, speakers, seminars, etc. Some companies pay full or in part for their employees to attend college or trade classes.
- *Mentorship programs.* I had a mentor when I was just starting out. Pairing a young or newly recruited hire with a wiser employee

who has more experience is a great way for the newbie to learn.

- *Job Shadowing.* This is similar to mentorship but involves hands on work as the less experienced employees works alongside the veteran.
- *Sponsorship programs.* This is similar to a mentorship. Upper-level employees work close with entry or mid-level employees. Sponsorship programs are a little more formal and a great way to connect the different levels of workforces in your organization.

4. Have Fair Performance Evaluations

None of the above matter if you don't have fair and unbiased performance evaluations to ensure equal advancement opportunities. Expectations should be fair and equal to all

employees, and they should know those expectations When they hire in.

5. Prepare Ahead With Succession Planning

Outline strategies for integrating diversity and inclusion into succession planning processes. Having a diverse and inclusive hiring team and Human Resources Department goes a long way to successful succession planning.

6. Offer Inclusive Leadership Training.

Your leadership training should always emphasize inclusion and diversity, not over everything else, such as profit, but alongside it. If your employees are happy and your leaders are fair, your business will thrive. Nothing goes farther towards having a successful endeavor, than people

who feel a personal connection (inclusivity) to the organization and take pride in seeing it succeed.

Conclusion

Talent Development and Advancement is an important part of any company's success. By striving to offer equal access to learning opportunities, mentors or sponsors who can guide your employees along, and fair performance evaluations, you will have taken the right steps to set your company up for a diverse and include talent field that can take you to the top.

Part 3

Continuing Inclusion

“You have a responsibility to make inclusion a daily thought, so we can get rid of the word ‘inclusion.’”

–Theodore Melfi

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Inclusion

Wes Berry

Chapter 9

Navigating Challenges in Inclusion

Now that we've learned how to incorporate inclusion into our workplace, we need to take a look at challenges. If you watch the news at all, you will realize that our country (most countries, really) has a long way to go. People are angry. They feel trod upon or ignored. They feel hurt or neglected. They feel life is unfair.

First, a Word About Respect

Before I continue, I feel it's necessary to say a word about respect. We live in a country which promotes freedom and the American Dream. But somehow, over recent years, that has come to mean that everyone for any reason must

have their “rights” protected. While I agree with this in theory, there are too many people out there abusing this concept.

When did we start letting someone’s rights matter more than someone else’s? What I’m about to say may cause you to put this book down, but I am going to say it anyway.

We should not expect our rights to come at the expense of someone else.

A friend of mine took her 16-year-old son to his driver’s test. It was during the pandemic, and they had to travel a long way (an hour) to get there. She has kidney disease, and getting COVID could be detrimental to her, so she asked the man who was conducting the test if he would please wear a mask in the car.

He immediately got angry and took the defensive. He pulled her aside and said (in an angry tone) that he would NOT wear a mask, that

she was infringing on his rights. He didn't have a medical condition that prevented him from wearing a mask, he simply didn't want to wear one. She explained her health issues to him, but he didn't waver. He seemed very affronted that his "rights" were being questioned, and he was so concerned about his "rights" to not mask that he would not budge. The whole thing was making the teen (who was already nervous) even more nervous. My friend could have left. She had the "right" to find another test drive, but her son was excited, he wanted to get his license, and they had come such a long way and had to wait a long time to get a tester. So she agreed to go on the drive with the man unmasked.

Nothing happened. The kid passed his driver's test, and she didn't get COVID. But in this crazy world we live in, that young man should have shown kindness and empathy. Would

it have hurt him to mask just for the less than 30 minutes it took to take the test?

I hope I didn't lose you. I'm neither for nor against masking. I was just trying to make a point that sometimes our "rights" can hurt other people, and it's then that we need to step back and see if we can find a compromise that will protect both of us. We need to look for a way to make all of us feel inclusive. My friend already has to be left out of many activities that her friends and family do; she already feels excluded from much of her life. So the simple mask incident only pushed her more outside of "normal".

We need to think long and hard about the consequences that our actions have on others. This book has been about trying to make people feel included. Sometimes you have to step outside of your own comfort zone, or give up some of your own perceived rights, to make that happen.

1. Overcoming Resistance.

There will be some who don't appreciate your Diversity and Inclusion efforts. Employees who grumble about inclusion training or who feel resentful towards those singled out for holidays, "special" groups or special treatment because of their minority status. And who could blame them? The strategy here is not to raise one group above the other, but instead, to make *everyone* feel inclusive and heard. Fear and misunderstanding are two things that will create resistance, as will skepticism that "this will never work." Here are some ways to overcome resistance in all its forms:

- *Merit.* As mentioned in chapter one, in the Jackie Robinson story, make sure you are hiring based on merit. If the hire can do their job, and do it well, it will be hard for anyone

to argue that they are getting special treatment simply because of their race, sexual identity and so forth.

- *Transparency.* I could teach an entire workshop on transparency. Transparency builds trust and is essential for overcoming resistance. Be honest and open about your reasons behind Diversity and inclusion. Create a safe space for open dialogue and feedback. Let it be known that you value all employees equally, and if they feel that isn't true, they should share how they feel with you.
- *Education.* The more we understand the reasons behind something, the more likely we are to come on board. Provide training to help people understand unconscious bias, and business bias - meaning where folks feel that a certain type of person is best for

the job. As I mentioned before, this isn't all about race, religion or gender. Sometimes people are overlooked because they are introverts, and not considered aggressive enough for the position, or perhaps the "artsy" type isn't considered for the "analytical" job, when in truth, they'd be perfect for it if we learned all of their skills. It's easy to put people in a box. Tech our employees that those boxes don't always work.

- *Leadership Support.* We talked about how leaders are role models. You need to not only lead the charge, but you need to be supportive to both the employees who feel excluded and the employees who feel threatened by the inclusive changes you are making. Have an open-door policy so they can come in and communicate when they

need to. Help employee to see that these aren't just empty gestures, but part of a well thought out plan.

- *Employee Involvement.* Ownership creates momentum. Let employees lead Employee Resource Groups and Inclusion training. Give them a stake and a say in what is going on. Instead of just top-down

2. Addressing Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the small, sometimes unintentional interactions between people that build defenses or hurt feelings Think of small jabs, verbiage, or bias towards others that just come out every day, on a regular basis. These build defensiveness and undercut trust. Hostility can build – sometimes which people are unaware of, until there is a bigger impact. The only way around this is through communication. It needs to be

addressed. This can be done through training, or privately through your HR department, but both parties need to feel like they can come forward. Also adults don't like to be told what to do, so don't do that in your training. Find a way for them to interact one-on-one and see if it can be worked out. Oftentimes, the person doing the microaggressions doesn't even realize what they are doing.

3. Intersectionality in Inclusion.

We all experience the world differently, uniquely, through our own eyes. Intersectionality means that not only do groups experience the world differently than each other (think of race, for example here) but individuals within a group all experience the world differently as well. And sometimes, these can overlap. As such, there are different elements of a person's personality that can be

discriminated against. For example, a lesbian Latino woman could be excluded for her orientation, race, or gender.

4. Consider Legal Compliance

It's not all about being nice. There are legal considerations and laws in place to protect people. Your organization needs to be aware of them and abide by them.

Conclusion

While most people will want to embrace inclusion in the workplace, there will be people who don't. For some it will be a bias handed down through generations. For others, it may be personal beliefs. And for some, it might simply be they don't want to take the time to learn something new. Whatever it is, there are ways to draw everyone in

and make each individual feel include, ad not excluded, from the workplace. As you work to create an inclusive space remember that *individuals*, and not groups, should be your priority. Human beings are valuable and each should be treated with respect and dignity.

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Chapter 10

The Future of Inclusion in Business

The COVID pandemic brought with it a lot of remote work, much of which has stayed around. So now more than ever, it's imperative that employees feel inclusivity. Given the virtual work and meetings we do, it's challenging, to say the least.

Throughout this book, we have looked at ways to bring inclusion into your organization. We have discussed how it broadens the talent pool, how it brings a more relaxed atmosphere into the workspace. We have given you ideas for providing safe spaces and open communication, so that all employees feel valued and secure, and hopefully, enjoy their jobs.

So what does this mean as we move into the future? What does inclusion look like ten, or twenty years from now?

1. Greater Innovation Through Inclusion.

As our workspaces become more inclusive, and people feel more secure and free to be themselves, this will open up the safety to create. Free of other burdens, they will be able to focus on their jobs and innovation will abound. Likewise, bringing together so many different personalities and perspectives, will broaden our reach, and open the door for an unstoppable approach to business.

2. Globalization and Inclusion.

With the inclusivity of different races and religions, think of the knowledge you will have to reach other countries and cultures! As the internet makes sales around the world possible, having a

team made up of a diverse group of people from all walks of life, who feel empowered to promote your organization, can have a profound effect on your reach.

3. Technological Advances.

Technology continues to move towards more inclusion. Soon, sight- and hearing-impaired individuals will have even greater access to the workplace, as will people with other disabilities. Instead of “special needs” employees these individuals will become the norm in the workplace.

4. Inclusion in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Integrating inclusion into CSR initiatives for a more sustainable impact is a win-win situation for all involved.

5. Continuous Learning and Evolution.

It will always be important to implement continuous learning and evolution in the pursuit of ongoing improvement in fostering inclusion. We change. The world changes. We must continue to learn and to educate others to keep up.

Inclusion Isn't an Endpoint—It's a Beginning

One of the most challenging aspects of diversity and inclusion is that there's no endpoint. There won't come a day when you'll come into the office, take a deep breath, put your hands on your hips, and say, "It's here. We're officially diverse and inclusive. Good work."

It's hard to measure the success of your inclusion efforts. For the most part, when it works, you won't notice anything at all. You can hold meetings and establish panels, or you could put out

surveys or have informal discussions with staff members and managers. At the very least, you should keep track of your staff's diversity.

When it comes to your D&I initiatives, it's important to think broadly in just about every way. Expand your time frame to include both short- and long-term goals. Consider the diversity of your current staff and the ways your new hires could help make your team even more diverse. Make use of a wide range of strategies to build inclusion in your workplace.

You should also broaden your range of what inclusion means. True inclusion is about welcoming people of every gender, sex, age, religion, ability and sexual orientation. And remember, each person is their own individual—they're not monoliths, representative of an entire identity.

When I was running my companies, much of my success was due to my hiring strategy. I only cared about some very specific characteristics, namely focused, driven workers who could take their own initiative. That strategy propelled me to over \$750 million in sales, thanks to the tireless work of my more than 300 employees.

Still, there's always more I could do to continue to build an inclusive workplace. That's the nature of inclusion. As a cultural competency, inclusion is about having the skills you need to sustain diversity over the long haul. Just like with fishing, when you teach a person to be inclusive, they'll carry those skills with them for the rest of their life.

Conclusion

It's not enough to check off the boxes, bringing in "one of each" so you can fulfill your

inclusion and diversity requirements. You need to do this *while* at the same time *finding* qualified individuals for the job – ones that either have the training you need or the skill set to be trained. And then making sure they feel included.

Also, you need to consider that we are *all* different. Again, at the risk of repeating myself, don't just look at race, gender, or sexual orientation when picking your hires. Think about core competencies, skill sets, personality traits, and other components to create a well-rounded team that will take you to the top of the business world. And not just to the top in sales, but to the top in Best Organizations to Work. The greatest gift you can give yourself and your employees is to create a space that people want to belong to. If that is the foundation of your organization, the rest will take care of itself.

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**ALMOST THE END! YOU STILL NEED TO
COMPLETE THE 7-DAY CHALLENGE!**

7-Day Motivation Challenge

Why Accept this Challenge?

If you're seeking personal growth and development, you need to commit to consistent effort. One way to jumpstart this journey is by taking the 7-Day Challenge. To succeed in this challenge, you must dedicate a little time each day to contemplation and reflection on the given topic.

The questions provided are only a starting point. If they don't resonate with your personal experiences, modify them to better suit your situation. This flexibility allows for a more

meaningful and authentic exploration of the subject matter.

When you commit to this challenge, you're making a decision to actively engage with your thoughts and emotions. Writing down your reflections is a powerful tool to solidify your insights and gain clarity on your internal landscape. This daily practice can have a profound impact on your overall well-being.

Approach this 7-Day Challenge with an open mind and willingness to explore. You may uncover aspects of yourself that you weren't previously aware of or gain a deeper understanding of your values and priorities. This challenge's benefits extend beyond the initial 7 days, and the act of carving out time for introspection and self-reflection can become a habit.

Ultimately, this challenge is a powerful tool for anyone seeking to enhance their self-awareness

and personal growth. By dedicating a small amount of time each day to contemplation and reflection, you are taking an important step towards a more fulfilling and meaningful life. Upon completion, commit to re-reading and updating this challenge when you find yourself challenged by this concept in the future.

A 7-day Challenge provides a roadmap for achieving your goals by breaking them down into smaller, achievable tasks. By having a clear challenge, you can stay motivated and focused on your goals. Each day's challenge builds upon the previous day's, creating momentum towards the desired outcome. Additionally, having a plan can help you stay organized and prioritize tasks based on their importance and urgency.

A challenge can help you overcome procrastination and stay accountable. By having a clear outline of what needs to be done, you can

avoid feeling overwhelmed and take action towards your goals. Furthermore, having a plan can help you track your progress and make adjustments as needed.

Overall, a 7-day Challenge is a powerful tool to focus on a particular issue and provide greater insight, bringing an area of concern into your comfort zone.

Day 7: Contemplate

Take time to reflect on your progress and experiences over the past week. Contemplate the importance of inclusion and the impact it has on individuals and society as a whole. Consider how you can continue to make a positive difference in promoting inclusion and diversity in your daily life. Ending on Sunday as a day of contemplation will give you time to reflect on the challenges and successes of the past week, and to set goals for continuing to promote inclusion in the future. Remember, inclusion is an ongoing process that requires continuous effort and commitment.

NOTES:

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About the Author

Wes Berry is a Keynote Speaker and Workshop Facilitator with the professional skills and real-life experience to deliver on any stage. He works with Fortune 500 companies like Johnson & Johnson to smaller businesses and associations of all sizes that are seeking a breakthrough experience. Wes changes lives and transforms organizations by delivering a Paradigm Shift. He has written sixteen business and success books and is a *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author and TEDx speaker. As an entrepreneur, he built a \$750 million international company that operated in 130 countries.

His business knowledge and communications skills have made him an expert media contributor on many topics, from commercial drone applications to the downsizing of

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Sears, resulting in appearances with various media outlets. His many media appearances include NPR, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The London Times*, *Entrepreneur* and *Time* magazines, Fox News, Neil Cavuto, Geraldo Rivera, and John Stossel, to name just a few.

Visit his website at WesBerryGroup.com to learn more.

