

# Creating a Culture of Inclusion in the Hybrid Workplace

Inclusion starts at the top in organisations. Putting a strong, leadership-driven foundation in place can deliver a return on inclusion — stronger business performance and better financial outcomes.

There are a number of practical steps leaders can take to unlock the vast potential that inclusion can bring in a market defined by an ever-growing diversity of customers, ideas and talent.



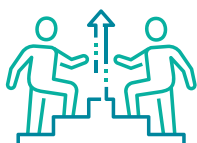
## Demonstrate a visible commitment

It is only through committed personal responsibility to nurture inclusive workforces that a truly inclusive leader is made. Demonstrating that commitment consists of taking the time to inspire your people and investing in their passions and goals. As well as being part of the change efforts on an organisational level, leaders must also be brave enough to call out their own personal limitations and be willing to admit they don't have all the answers.



## Recognise the power of psychological safety

Leaders and their teams are frequently challenged to find new ways to collaborate. For this free-flowing collaboration to occur, team members must be comfortable enough to share their thoughts, without fear of retribution or criticism. The inclusive leader must create a unified team dynamic that values such contributions, harnessing psychological safety as the launching point for effective collaboration. When team members value each other's capabilities and knowledge, inclusion can blossom.



## Make accountability your business

Position yourself as a leader at the centre of the high-level conversations around diversity and inclusion in the organisation. HR and employee resource groups within companies have an important role to play, but it is leaders themselves who must uphold the standards for inclusive leadership. The inclusive leader should hold people to account, reinforcing inclusion as a key priority and encouraging team members to set individual inclusion commitments.



## Put fairness and transparency first

The presence of diverse talent within an organisation is an essential driver of inclusion, but companies must put a stable infrastructure in place first. Leaders must play an active role in ensuring that advancement opportunities within organisations are fair and transparent, utilising analytics to go deeper on promotions and pay processes. The inclusive leader should be mindful of laying the foundation for the advancement of diverse talent into more senior positions across the business and promoting multivariate diversity, which goes beyond gender and ethnicity.



## Create a learning culture

A learning-oriented culture is open-minded, has a clear focus on flexibility and has been linked to stronger inclusion and diversity in organisations. By leaders choosing to align their organisation's culture around learning, the emphasis shifts to bringing people into the business who have unique and varied experiences - and therefore a more cognitively diverse workforce. This culture shift will rely on leaders demonstrating a focus on learning in their own routines and stimulating conversations about learning throughout the organisation. A learning culture will create an expectation in the organisation to stay ahead of the curve, innovating and evolving to better navigate an ever-changing business landscape.



## Develop self-awareness for bias

Operating effectively in today's business environment requires a holistic view of personal leadership traits and organisational inclinations. Adopting this wider focus is critical to eliminating bias, which can creep into leadership decision-making. The inclusive leader must take measures to be cognisant of their own biases, which if unchecked could see mistakes being repeated and a lack of diverse ideas and thought processes in their teams and the wider organisation. Leaders should implement rigorous policies and processes to ensure a well-rounded diversity and inclusion agenda is a part of the organisation's DNA.



## Be aware of hybrid inequities

While hybrid has many advantages, leaders must be aware of the inequities it can create and take the appropriate actions to mitigate them. The inclusive leader will have to be mindful of team members being marginalised, stopping at source any interpersonal conflict, issues or concerns that are developing. Problems such as these that bubble under the surface can be damaging if left unattended. A truly inclusive team and workplace is dependent on a keen awareness in leaders to equitably disseminate information, avoiding the creation of 'in-groups' in teams that can have a negative impact on team cohesion, and fostering a healthy intra-team dynamic through having hard conversations in a psychologically safe way.



## Carve out time for team building

Set aside time in the schedule for structured remote team-building exercises, creating a network effect within the team to make up for lost face time in the office. The inclusive leader will be able to comfortably facilitate connections to ensure that team members who would not typically have the chance to interact and collaborate can do just that. If done correctly, virtual meetings can become more inclusive, with meeting attendees energised, engaged and less likely to go into 'observer mode'.

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Sources: Diversity wins: How inclusion matters, McKinsey; 6 characteristics of inclusive leaders, The Wall Street Journal; The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths, Deloitte; The key to inclusive leadership, Harvard Business Review; Don't let hybrid work set back your DEI efforts, Harvard Business Review; How inclusive is your leadership, Harvard Business Review; Design physical and digital spaces to foster inclusion, Harvard Business Review; Sustaining and strengthening inclusion in our new remote environment, McKinsey; Taking the lead for inclusion, McKinsey; When inclusive leadership goes wrong and how to get it right, CCL; What makes an inclusive leader? 6 ways to up your game, BetterUp; The benefits of inclusive leadership, Korn Ferry; 5 practices to make your hybrid workplace inclusive, Harvard Business Review; The necessity of consciously inclusive leadership, Forbes; The hybrid work model: a new challenge for diversity, equity and inclusion, Forbes; Build radical inclusion in a hybrid world, Thrive Global; How sharing stories builds inclusion, Harvard Business Review; Six signature traits of inclusive leaders, Deloitte.