



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

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What inclusive leadership looks like – and how to practice it

By Julie Rawe

Deloitte recently studied the opinions of millennial and generation Z workers, defined as people born between 1983 and 1999. They found that survey respondents overwhelmingly believe that profits alone don't make a successful business. Respondents pointed to additional priorities – including “an emphasis on diversity and inclusion in the workplace.” At the same time, roughly two-thirds of participants from both generations believe that business leaders “simply pay ‘lip service’ to diversity and inclusion.”

Employees' trust must be earned. To build a truly inclusive workplace, leaders need to show personal commitment and take responsibility for making it happen. So what does inclusive leadership look like? And how can you practice it? We've got some tips.

6 traits of an inclusive leader

Inclusive leaders are open to change. They genuinely care about their employees as people. And they respect and welcome differences.

“For a long time, the workplace mantra was to minimize your personal life, to leave whatever it is at the door,” says Ashley Oolman, a disability inclusion consultant

whose clients range from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses to school districts. “Now the mantra is to bring your best self, your whole self, to work.”

Inclusive leadership can help employees feel comfortable doing this. Deloitte has identified six inclusive leadership traits for business leaders to work toward:

- 1. Commitment** to improve diversity and inclusion.
 - Allocating resources and holding yourself accountable for improving diversity and inclusion
 - Treating all team members with fairness and respect
 - Understanding what makes individuals unique, and ensuring they feel connected to the team
 - Working through obstacles, and adapting to meet the needs of others
- 2. Courage** to admit you don't have all the answers on what needs to change or how to change it.
 - Seeking feedback and acknowledging personal weaknesses
 - Showing humility and admitting when you've made a mistake
 - Challenging the status quo and calling out bias when you see it
- 3. Awareness of bias** as an individual and as an organization.
 - Developing an understanding of different kinds of personal biases, such as implicit stereotypes, groupthink, and confirmation bias
 - Learning to self-regulate and take corrective steps to ensure fair play

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- Establishing transparent policies for making merit-based decisions about promotions, rewards, and task allocations
- 4. Curiosity** and openness to different ideas and perspectives.
- Showing a desire for continuous learning and improvement
 - Accepting your own limitations and seeking diverse perspectives
 - Coping with ambiguity and accepting that some uncertainty is inevitable
- 5. Cultural intelligence** and confidence to lead cross-cultural teams.
- Valuing cultural differences and seeking opportunities to learn about other cultures
 - Developing an awareness of how cultural stereotypes can influence expectations
 - Accepting that people might need to change their behavior to navigate cross-cultural interactions
- 6. Collaboration** that empowers people to challenge and build on each other's ideas.
- Putting together diverse teams and avoiding the appearance of favoritism among members
 - Building trust so everyone feels comfortable speaking up
 - Empowering teams to handle difficult situations and being ready to help address conflict if needed
- I will show commitment to diversity and inclusion by setting targets with accountability.
 - I will measure commitment by analyzing promotion rates by factors such as race, gender, and disability status.
 - I will deepen cultural intelligence by attending a workshop on disability etiquette.
 - I will model curiosity by seeking diversity in my professional network.
 - I will encourage collaboration and respect differences by offering employees a variety of ways to contribute opinions and ideas.
 - I will display courage by calling out bias, and by admitting when I make a mistake or don't have all the answers.

Ashley Ollman says: "Courage to admit mistakes and show humility can be one of the hardest traits for some executives to develop. It is human nature to feel defensive or to feel defeated if you're uncertain about next steps. But inclusive leadership in its most successful form is about constant questioning. Challenge your own decisions. Recognize that even if you're the most senior person in the room, you might not have the best solution in the room."

References:

<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/what-inclusive-leadership-looks-like-and-how-to-practice-it>

Putting it into practice – leading an inclusive workplace

Inclusion consultant Felicity Menzies recommends framing an action plan around inclusive leadership traits. The action plan might include commitments such as:

- I will develop awareness of bias by taking the implicit association test.
- I will demonstrate awareness of bias by questioning my assumptions when making promotion decisions.