

Inclusive Leadership

EIGHT THINGS INCLUSIVE LEADERS DO

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Tips from Jill:

Inclusive leaders advance the success and sense of belonging among all staff members, especially those who have traditionally been excluded or underrepresented.

While anyone can learn to become an inclusive leader, the prime candidates are those who rarely, if ever, have been made to feel they don't really belong.

These are eight things inclusive leaders do:

1. LEARN AND GROW.

Inclusive leaders start with self-management. They increase their knowledge and understanding of inequities past and present – in their profession and in society. They look outward but also inward. What about their own organization? Their own team?

Inclusive leaders also build their capacity for empathy, which can be a challenge for some leaders. Research shows that power can diminish our capacity for empathy – unless we work to retain it.

2. SPEAK AND SHOW THEIR VALUES.

It's not enough to learn. Inclusive leaders act on their knowledge and make their values apparent. They embed inclusivity in their daily actions and interactions. People know what they expect in hiring, promotions, content creation, meetings and decision-making. A stranger observing an inclusive leader can SEE that person's values in action.

3. IDENTIFY AND INCLUDE THE MISSING.

Whether it's a CEO heading an organization or a team captain leading a project, inclusive leaders look for gaps. Who's not represented? Who's here but sidelined or silent – and why? Whose input can keep us from missing ideas and opportunities? Who are we benefitting by our work and who's left out?

4. GIVE OXYGEN TO AUTHENTICITY.

Authenticity can encompass life experiences, values, heritage, faith, family, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, health, personality type, speech, style – and more. Inclusive leaders make sure their colleagues don't have to be different people at work than elsewhere. Inclusive leaders ensure that policies, procedures and benefits create an environment where people feel heard and supported.

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5. SCRUTINIZE SYSTEMS, BREAK BARRIERS.

Within every organization, there are longstanding systems that merit scrutiny. Inclusive leaders check their impact on equity and inclusion. Job descriptions, hiring, training, promotions, transfers, onboarding, scheduling, planning, internships, pay scales and recruiting are all places where barriers may exist to growth and opportunity. Even the concept of “paying your dues” can be so subjective as to exclude worthy people, because it can be based on life experiences, professional opportunities and even the eras of select leaders.

6. LIGHT THE PATH TO SUCCESS.

Inclusive leaders make sure people understand how performance is assessed, how stretch assignments are given, how they can effectively pitch ideas and how to make the most of opportunities. Inclusive leaders don't foster a “sink or swim” environment where people are hired and expected to fight their way to success or intuitively understand how not to fail.

7. DELIVER MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK AND COACHING.

It's hard to feel you belong when you don't really know where you stand. Inclusive leaders assume that annual re-views for employees are grossly insufficient. They create a culture of ongoing feedback and coaching, so staffers know how well they're meeting the organization's standards and their own personal goals. They get a healthy diet of feedback that is candid and caring, encouraging and engaging.

8. SHARE POWER, INFO AND CREDIT

Inclusive leaders enjoy empowering others. They delegate with trust. They don't hoard information; they share it, so people can feel in the loop. Inclusive leaders never miss a chance to spotlight someone else's good work. They help people network and open new doors whenever possible. And while doing that, they don't think of it as an extraordinary effort. It's just the right thing to do.

REMEMBER:

DIVERSITY is the start. It opens doors.

INCLUSION happens when people feel they belong.

LEADERSHIP turns commitment into culture.