INCLUSIVE
LEADERS GROUP

Talent Management Leader's Belonging
CHECKLIST

Building a Culture of Belonging
For Strategic Talent Management

An Inclusive Leaders Group eBook

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

For at least the past decade human resource strategies have acknowledged the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in talent management. Diversity refers to a workforce's physical, mental, and emotional differences. Equity involves intentional actions—policies, processes, and procedures—that ensure all employees have the same opportunity to do their best work. Inclusion refers to intentional behaviors that involve everyone in a meaningful way. Since the workforce comes from diverse backgrounds, organizations must carefully craft policies and practices that foster diversity and create a sense of community for all employees.

As a brief review of why DEI in talent management is important... The benefits can be illustrated below:

- Enhanced Creativity and Innovation
- Improved Employee Engagement and Retention
- Expanding Market Reach and Customer Base
- Mitigating Legal and Reputational Risks
- Enhanced Problem-Solving Skills
- Enhancing Workplace Morale and Well-Being
- Enhanced Decision-Making Agility

It's no longer just about DEI, it's about Belonging

Belonging takes DEI a step further and examines how individuals feel as they engage with the rest of the organization. It is a mental and emotional state of feeling seen, valued, and supported based on a person's uniqueness.

"[Belonging] focuses on employee sentiment," says Adam Weber, senior vice president of community for 15Five, a performance management platform based in San Francisco. *"Does the employee feel like they have a voice? Do they feel valued and seen? Can they show up as their true selves and be supported?"*

Research has shown that having a sense of belonging leads to greater happiness and overall well-being, as well as reduced feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. A recent survey by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) measured employees' sense of belonging in the workplace. Among workers surveyed:

- ✔ 25 percent reported not trusting their manager to treat them fairly.
- ✔ 26 percent did not feel emotionally safe at work.
- ✔ 27 percent said their workplace does not clearly provide opportunities for employees to openly discuss issues without fear of penalty, punishment, and retaliation.
- ✔ 27 percent did not think their manager encourages a culture of open and transparent communication.

The report also revealed that Black workers were more likely than white workers to say their workplace discourages discussion of racial justice issues (45 percent versus 30 percent). Research shows that when business leaders speak out about social issues, people of color feel a greater sense of belonging at work.

WHY SHOULD TALENT MANAGEMENT LEADERS FOCUS ON BELONGING?

Inclusive Talent Management is Under Attack

"DEI Backlash" "Gesture politics" "Anti-woke" "Affirmative Action is illegal" "Culture Wars" "Reverse discrimination" "Identity politics"

Are these terms all too familiar? Lately it seems like there's no escape from increasing social and ideological polarization. Recent legal and political developments have given many CEOs, HR leaders and DEI practitioners cause for concern. There's no doubt about it, efforts to address DEI at work and in society are under attack.

Political debate around the world is pushing against efforts to address social inequities. The idea of being "woke" has been weaponized and politicized (e.g., in Europe, "wokeism" is seen as an American import and a threat to traditional values by some; the phrase "go woke, go broke" has been used to imply – *erroneously* – that corporations supporting workplace DEI and progressive social issues are suffering financially).

Candidates and Employees Expect and Demand Inclusive Talent Management & Sense of Belonging

Research from BetterUp proves that belonging is essential for strategic talent management. The research included a survey of 1,789 full-time employees across a diverse set of industries to better understand the role belonging in the workplace. Findings show that workplace belonging leads to a 56% increase in job performance, a 50% reduction in turnover risk, and a 75% decrease in employee sick days.

THE VALUE OF BELONGING AT WORK

Employees who feel the strong sense of belonging perform better and stay longer than employees who lack that feeling.

50%

LOWER
TURNOVER RISK

75%

FEWER SICK
DAYS USED

56%

INCREASE IN JOB
PERFORMANCE

Source: The Value of Belonging at Work, New Frontiers for Inclusion in 2021 and Beyond, BetterUp
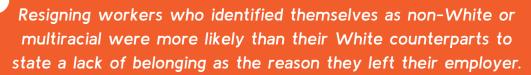
Talent Management Strategies for Creating a Sense of Belonging Among Employees

Talent management leaders can help improve employee retention and loyalty, as well as workforce health and productivity, by building a greater sense of belonging in their organizations says Cindy Ryan, executive vice president and chief human resources officer at Cigna.

"In some cultures this may be challenging," said Ryan. *"But there is a simple, scalable approach to start that helps level the playing field between employees who are at home or in the office: for meetings that are video-based, ensure that all participants use their own video so virtual attendees can observe body language and other key interactions the same way people physically in the room can."* Treating all employees equally in this way can help them feel like a respected part of the team, Ryan added.

Individual check-ins, by both talent leaders and HR colleagues, can also go a long way. Ernst & Young's Belonging Barometer found that Talent and HR colleagues checking in with one another, both personally and professionally, was the most effective tactic for fostering a sense of belonging for employees across all generations.

Which method makes employees feel the greatest sense of belonging at work

39%	coleagues checking in with them
31%	receiving feedback
23%	public recognition
20%	being invited to put-of-office events
14%	being asked to join the meeting with senior leaders
9%	being included on emails with senior leaders

Source: Ernst & Young's Belonging Barometer study

> **Resigning workers who identified themselves as non-White or multiracial were more likely than their White counterparts to state a lack of belonging as the reason they left their employer.**
>
> – Source: McKinsey

"A sense of belonging by itself will not solve all of an organization's recruiting, engagement, and retention issues," said Cigna's Ryan, "but those issues cannot be addressed without it."

Your Checklist:
Ten (10) approaches recruiting leaders and teams can use to help people feel that they belong

There is a good deal of research that suggests one key to creating a sense of belonging is effort.

The Mayo Clinic says, *"You cannot belong if you don't choose to make the effort to engage with others."* **This goes for talent management leaders too.** In this ever-evolving world of work, where hybrid and remote work will continue, HR and talent teams need to make an effort to create and nurture a sense of belonging as well. But that is just the start. **There are at least ten action steps to take by talent management leaders, including these:**

❶ Encourage evolving your DEI efforts to a DEIB strategy

Encourage your Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) to evolve your DEI efforts to a DEIB strategy. By including Belonging - the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group – to form a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) strategy is at the forefront of current initiatives to create a culture of belonging.

❷ Sourcing

Sourcing is a first step to ensuring a diverse candidate slate. Enhance traditional sourcing methods through targeted community outreach, leveraging employee resource groups for referrals, and internships for underrepresented groups. Partnering with high schools, women's universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities or Hispanic Serving Institutions can further diversify your applicants. Scrutinize your selection criteria for unconscious bias. Are all the criteria you've listed essential to the job? Diverse interview panels go a long way in ensuring a range of perceptions and demonstrating your organization's commitment to belonging.

❸ Create a sense of community

Identify opportunities to create regular interactions among teams and functions, maintain opportunities for continued collaboration through multidisciplinary projects, teams, and work streams, and find opportunities for colleagues to give back through volunteering or other charitable events.

❹ Enable empowerment

Encourage colleagues to share ideas, encourage productive feedback, and create a respectful environment where others can feel heard, appreciated, and valued. Encourage kindness, gratitude, and empathy in the workplace.

❺ Practice empathy

This is probably worth a callout, as it has been a topic that has risen to the top over the past two years. With social unrest, political upheaval, and a global pandemic, among other things, understanding where people are coming from, appreciating differences, and acting with compassion couldn't be more important.

❻ Build trust

This is foundational—people need to have trust in your leadership, goals, vision, and purpose. Build that trust by communicating often and with honesty and being authentic.

❼ Lead

Be an active leader, not a passive one. Pay attention to your team members and colleagues. Acknowledge the big and the small accomplishments. Ask your colleagues for input and involve them in decisions that affect their work.

❽ Provide growth opportunities

In this environment, it's even more critical to ensure that people see the opportunities for growth and development. And when you have both in-person and remote employees, be sure you include a mix in key projects and opportunities.

⑨ Advancement

Onboarding, developing, and promoting diverse talent needs to be deliberate, intentional, and tailored - supporting people in their roles, dealing with problems proactively, and moving people to new positions, if necessary to ensure that each person is set up for success. Look at the data. How long are people staying at the company? What are the rates of promotion for underrepresented groups and how do they compare to overall representation? Is underrepresented talent in the successor pool? Are certain groups clustered in certain roles or departments? Provide opportunities for development, including high-profile assignments, mentoring, sponsorship, and leadership development. Provide exposure to senior leadership and provide exposure to career paths including encouraging underrepresented talent to take on profit and loss roles as a pathway to senior leadership.

⑩ Retention

Analyze the data from engagement and DEI surveys, attrition, and retention rates through a diversity lens. Are there some groups who are less engaged or more likely to leave the organization? Gather employee feedback through the exit and stay interviews. What encourages diverse talent to stay? What pushes them to leave? Engender a sense of belonging through inclusive benefits, employee resource groups, community volunteer activities, and flexible work arrangements. Work toward pay equity by rigorously examining the pay data by level, function, and identity demographics. Publishing salary ranges for each position builds transparency, and regular monitoring of bonuses and pay increases for bias can help reduce the pay gap. The practice of salary negotiations can disadvantage some groups, as can the practice of asking for the last salary – which simply perpetuates the pay gap.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

GET STARTED

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