

Intentional Inclusivity

3 Ways to Create Professional Opportunity for All

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There are a host of benefits vailable to organizations that choose to make inclusion part of their practice. Multifaceted, inclusive organizations are 35% more likely to outperform their competitors and 70% more likely to capture new markets. Inclusive teams are 87% better at making decisions, and inclusive leaders lead to 19% higher revenue.

These benefits g ow exponentially when organizations develop diverse groups of individuals within them. Leaders can create opportunity for all their people with an intentional, supportive approach to assessing and growing talent. Inclusive leaders build processes and look for opportunities to advance others within their organization. They build team connections that support engagement, productivity, and innovation.

The most e ective leaders are advocates for their team members. By listening and seeking understanding fi st, advocates avoid making hasty assumptions about others. Advocates build inclusive processes and look for opportunities to advance others within their organization. And advocates build team connections that support engagement, productivity, and innovation.

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Create an Opportunity Framework

An opportunity framework represents the factors that empower individuals to advance within an organization. Inclusive leaders contribute to a framework that encourages opportunity when they do the following:

- **Expand their mindset.**
  When they move beyond assumptions and traditional ways of thinking, inclusive leaders can model openness, thoughtfulness, and creativity.

- **Consider opportunity, bias, and workplace experience.**
  Inclusive leaders take steps to address personal, team, and organizational practices or viewpoints that limit people's growth and progress.

- **Reframe potential.**
  By seeing potential in every team member, inclusive leaders create an organizational landscape fille with possibilities for every person, regardless of their background or current role.



- **Offer relevant support.**
  Knowing team members means knowing their needs. Inclusive leaders provide the right support to set individuals up to successfully pursue new challenges. This can take the form of employee resource groups (ERGs) that serve as critical forums for conversations and resources, formal mentorship programs with regular checkpoints to measure progress, and ongoing support as team members perform their daily work.

- **Provide everyday advocacy.**
  Inclusive leaders are always looking for ways to champion their people. They regularly engage with every team member to understand their goals and experiences, and use this information to guide their decisions and recommendations in the moment.

As leaders construct an environment that connects them with their individual team members—and their team members with each other—they increase opportunities for diversity, development, and advancement at their organization. And diverse organizations reap benefits t every level.



Become an Everyday Advocate

Inclusive leaders see potential in everyone. In addition to contributing to inclusive career growth and professional advancement programs, they advocate every day for their people through consistent behaviors. Here are three ways leaders can advocate inclusively for their people and lift up their entire organization.

1. Advocate With Curiosity

To help people thrive, inclusive leaders let curiosity drive how they engage with team members and develop culture. When you use curiosity to champion others, you:

- **Inwardly challenge how you think about potential.**
  Instead of "I know potential when I see it," adopt an inclusive mindset that says: "I see potential where I look for it." Create opportunity by looking for potential in every team member, addressing any barriers to success, and advocating for them along the way.



In addition to taking initiative through organization-wide practices, inclusive leaders also choose to become everyday advocates for their people.

As leaders advocate with curiosity, they objectively look for people who have talent instead of for people who fit a p edefined descri tion of potential. This approach means you're using evidence, not bias, to assess contribution and capability in every team member.

- **Get curious about circumstances and the way leadership behaviors might be limiting opportunity.**
  A key part of e ective leadership is cultivating openness, including with yourself. Leaders are open when they question instead of making assumptions. Considering choices with openness and curiosity is crucial to a successful, diverse organization. When assumptions creep in for you as a leader, acknowledge it, then get curious about the person's experience instead.





2. Advocate With Awareness

Inclusive leaders take a more active approach to seeing potential versus passively noticing it. With this awareness, they assess contributions and potential using evidence instead of assumptions. Try these three behaviors to advocate with awareness:

- **Build the muscle of noticing patterns in individuals.** As you recognize actions in others, notice and ask about them. Seeking understanding about your people and their actions helps leaders uncover information about an individual's motivations and needs.

- **Understand the environment you operate in as a team or organization, and the biases that might exist there.** From one organization to another or one team to another, there will always be dynamics that signal things like similarity, potential, strength, and success. Recognizing these dynamics and how they impact your awareness of people's individual contributions is critical as you think about which opportunities are right for members of your team.

- **Couple awareness with humility and empathy.** As you acknowledge certain behaviors or practices, add a lack of ego and a compassionate viewpoint to your approach. Humility encourages team members to share feedback because they feel safe to do so. Empathy builds trust and creates connection between leaders and their teams, making it easier to make and implement shared decisions.

3. Advocate With Connection

When leaders make connections with their team members, they can advocate for each individual based on a knowledge of their potential and career vision. Advocating with connection can look like:

- **Having direct conversations with others as you explore new opportunities.**
  This kind of communication is important because it gives you valuable information and context about an individual from that individual. As a result, a leader won't disregard team members who don't have direct experience, nor will they assume that someone having specific skills or an opportunity means they want to pursue it.

- **Creating an open team culture.**
  Signaling value for everyone on your team creates a culture of openness and confidence th t encourages connections, making it easier for you to advocate for people and for people to advocate for themselves.

- **Investing time to support others as they take on new opportunities.**
  Connecting with your people matters—even after you've advocated for them. Giving a team member an opportunity and then being hands-o isn't a recipe for success. Continue to support this capable team member as they learn the ropes, and watch your investment pay o for the entire organization.

In addition, devote your time and energy to helping people develop their abilities before they take on a new role. This is an investment connection that benefits veryone down the road.

> "Diverse organizations reap benefits at every level."



Act With an Advocate's Mindset

To create a thriving workplace that attracts and retains top performers, leaders must commit to growing inclusivity and becoming intentional advocates for all their people—not just top performers or kindred spirits. When leaders grow their curiosity, dig in to build awareness of individuals on their team, and connect with people who bring di erent experiences and viewpoints, they're not only able to surface a wide range of talent for a wide range of opportunities, but also build a sustainable opportunity framework that helps every individual learn, grow, and advance.

Explore Our Solutions



Be Intentional About Inclusivity

The right support facilitates a smooth transition to inclusive leadership. Learn how addressing unconscious bias can help your leaders thrive and increase performance—across your entire organization.

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