

Leadership for Everyone

5 tips for Inclusive, Effective Leadership



Leadership for Everyone

We're creating mindful cultures from the top down, because today's employees are seeking career opportunities where they feel included, motivated, and valued in their work — and that often starts with their manager. Creating a confident and trusting work environment helps employees perform at their best. Leaders can build the skills to lead by example to demonstrate how to thrive in the workplace. In this guide, we'll help leaders learn how they can create these happier, healthier environments.

1

Create Psychologically Safe Environments

Psychological safety is defined as a cultural dynamic where team members feel respected and accepted as their true selves and can safely take moderate risks, be creative, make mistakes, and ask questions. Research shows that companies that create higher levels of psychological safety experience reduced employee turnover, better employee engagement, more productivity, and more life satisfaction.¹

¹ Accenture, 2021. "[Why psychological safety at work matters to business.](#)"



1

Create Psychologically Safe Environments

It is no surprise that employees who feel comfortable and safe in the workplace do their best work. There are four stages of psychological safety leaders can work toward creating in their workplace:

Inclusion Safety

When the basic human needs to connect, belong, be themselves, and be accepted for who they are, are met.

Contributor safety

Fulfills the need to make a difference. When employees feel safe using their skills to make a meaningful contribution at work.

Learner safety

When the needs to learn and grow are met. Employees feel safe to ask questions, give and receive feedback, experiment, and make mistakes.

Challenger safety

When employees feel safe speaking up and challenging the status quo to change or improve something at work.

2

Lead With Inclusivity

In order to build happier, healthier teams, leaders should make sure each team member feels supported. Research from McKinsey & Company found that women, LGBTQ+ employees, and people of color were more likely to report acute mental health challenges. In fact, they reveal that “only one in six diverse employees feels supported.”²



² McKinsey & Company, 2020. [“Diverse employees are struggling the most during COVID-19—here’s how companies can respond.”](#)

2

Lead With Inclusivity

Given the challenges that underrepresented groups can face in the workplace, leaders can be more effective when they support every employee:

Recognize and check unconscious bias

Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about groups of people formed outside their own conscious awareness. Participating in, and offering, unconscious bias training for both leaders and employees helps ensure people make a conscious effort to reduce biases and build inclusivity.

Ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) are at the forefront of your mental health strategy.

One important way you can support underrepresented communities in the workplace is to invest in culturally competent mental healthcare services. Culturally competent mental healthcare works with your DEIB programs by reducing barriers to care and providing a safe space to articulate and work through trauma.

Find value in diverse perspectives.

Having a diverse team that feels safe in their work environment results in better outcomes for teams and organizations, as individuals feel comfortable leveraging their life experiences and different backgrounds to inform their work. By recognizing the value in diverse perspectives and empowering your employees to share their points of view, you can create collaborative, healthy, and effective teams who produce better, more culturally informed work.

3

Listen With Intention

When employees feel their leaders are actively listening to their thoughts, perspectives, and feedback, they are more likely to feel valued and appreciated, driving deeper engagement.



3

Listen With Intention

Recent research shows that a leader who actively listens and is 'present' is important to 92% of people.³ To make sure your employees feel heard:

Show compassion in the workplace

Check in with your co-workers and team members and practice mindful listening. This gives others space to share their feelings, both mentally and physically. Be sure to acknowledge how someone else is feeling, then take the space you need to respond in a skillful way. By showing compassion, we create space to understand each other and show support — helping teams create, collaborate, and communicate more effectively.

Be open to feedback — and take action on it

Once you've taken the time to mindfully listen to your employees, you may walk away with new feedback you didn't expect to receive. Take the time to reflect on the information, then create a plan to take that feedback into account and make a change. When leaders can demonstrate their employees' feedback is valued and beneficial, they feel more comfortable to provide new perspectives in the future.

³ The Compassionate Leadership Company, 2020. "[Insights for Conscious Leaders in 2021.](#)"

4

Support Employees Through Storytelling

According to the 2022 Workforce Attitudes Report, three-quarters of employees say they appreciate when their leaders speak about mental health.⁴



⁴ Headspace Health, 2022. "Fourth Annual Workplace Attitudes Toward Mental Health Report."

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Support Employees Through Storytelling

When leaders share their own stories about mental well-being, it helps reduce stigma around mental health and creates space for others to feel comfortable both sharing their own stories and taking advantage of mental health resources.

Be open with your team

57% of CEOs report that talking about their mental health actually makes them better leaders.⁴ By opening up about the day-to-day challenges you face and the steps you take to overcome them, you send a clear message to your team that they're not alone and it's okay to ask for help.

Facilitate dialogue around mental health

It's important to encourage people to discuss mental health in appropriate settings, and in ways that feel safe and respect personal boundaries. Consider creating self-care-focused Slack channels, empowering individuals who can serve as wellness champions within your organizations, and providing regular reminders about mental health benefits available to employees.

Learn from each other

We are social creatures, and much of our learning takes place in the context of relationships. By hearing how others have managed tough situations, you create opportunities for team members to gain tips to overcome challenges and build skills to become more resilient.

⁴ Headspace Health, 2022. "[Fourth Annual Workplace Attitudes Toward Mental Health Report.](#)"

5

Model Positive Behavior

Ultimately, one of the best ways to encourage positive behaviors in your employees is to lead by example.



5

Model Positive Behavior

When leaders demonstrate the skills and traits they hope to see in their employees – such as openness, collaboration, and engagement – teams understand the guidelines they should follow and feel more comfortable engaging in those behaviors as well. There are many ways you can model these behaviors:

Practice self-care

When employees see leaders taking time to recharge, it inspires them to do the same. Make sure to demonstrate how you follow company standards, like working only during established work hours and taking full advantage of your paid time off. When teams take the time they need away from work, they come back more energized.

Engage in company culture

One of the best ways to build relationships with your team members is to engage in company culture activities alongside your employees. Leaders who invest their time in participating in company culture – such as Employee Resource Groups, virtual events, and team bonding activities – will likely see their teams get involved. And, when more people are involved, everyone benefits.

Encourage collaboration

Employees who see their manager values the opinions of others are more likely to seek diverse perspectives in their day-to-day work as well. When you host brainstorming sessions and request feedback from your employees, they'll understand that your organization values collaboration.

**When leaders take action to
create healthier cultures and
invest in their teams, employees
feel the difference**

Active, inclusive leadership results in more engaged, happier, healthier employees. Interested in learning more about how to help your leaders be their best? Contact us [here](#).