An introduction to…

Inclusive Teams

This course is a 10min read
with additional time required
for exercises

Making a business people want to work for

Inclusive teams create an environment to help people be the **best versions** of themselves.

When people are able to be more authentic rather than masking themselves at work, that's when the real magic happens. It leads to happier, more comfortable employees who are likely to be a lot more effective in their working environments.

Inclusive leadership leads to increased team performance, improved decision-making quality, and better team collaboration. Creating an inclusive team environment involves: checking your privilege, allowing yourself to feel uncomfortable, becoming an equality ally, and committing to real, long-term change.

Have a think about your own organisation. Is there a genuine inclusive team approach?

Key terms:

Privilege
It's not a bad word! In fact, it's not at all about guilt or undermining achievements. The key message around privilege is that we become aware of the privilege we have, and seek to learn how to use it to help those who are less privileged.

Cognizance of Bias
Being conscious of your own unconscious bias, as well as flaws in the wider system, and working hard to ensure opportunities for others. Bias is a leader's Achilles' heel.

Getting started

1.   Comfort and self-reflection
Self-reflection is never comfortable, but we have to get used to being uncomfortable to truly understand the emotive subject of inclusivity. After all, some people have been feeling this discomfort for decades (or even centuries!).

It can be difficult to know what to say, how to support, and what to do. When faced with challenging conversations about movements such as #BlackLivesMatter or any form of discrimination, we might make mistakes. But the important thing is to **accept that we need to feel uncomfortable** if we want to truly lead to creating change for those that need it.

2.   Courage: becoming an equality ally
Inappropriate behaviours, comments, microaggressions, and structural discriminators are far more entrenched in our society and culture than you might think – they're also often invisible to those they don't impact.

So, how can we help - and show others that we are willing to learn? By becoming an ally.

Becoming an ally involves:

· 	actively listening
· 	avoiding rationalising bad behaviour
· 	remaining respectful
· 	understanding your privilege
· 	calling out inappropriate behaviours and biases on behalf of others
· 	educating yourself (and not by asking those affected by these behaviours to educate you when it isn't their responsibility)

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It's also important to remember that we're human and will most likely make mistakes – but it's also our responsibility to recognise when we do, apologise without making it about ourselves, and learn from it.

3.   The Four D's
How do you respond to inappropriate behaviours and comments? The best four ways are:

1. **Direct action** – you might directly intervene by asking the person to stop immediately or call out negative behaviour, explaining why it isn't OK.

2. **Distraction** – dependent on the situation, it might be better to indirectly intervene - for example, de-escalating the situation by interrupting or changing the subject or focus. This can be useful for when a more direct approach might be harmful to the target or bystander.

3. **Delay** – waiting for the situation to pass and checking in with the individual. Take action at a later stage when you have had time to consider the situation.

4. **Delegation** – informing a more senior member of staff, someone with social power and more authority to take action.

4.   Inclusive Leadership & Team Performance
What can leaders do to ensure their leadership is inclusive and enhances team performance? When inclusive leaders pay attention to individual feelings of inclusion, it can lead to a 70% increase in experiences of fairness and respect, a 17% increase in team performance, 20% increase in decision-making quality, and 29% increase in team collaboration (Deloitte Australia).
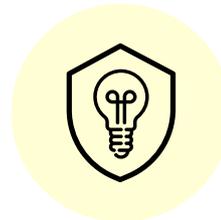
One of the **key traits of inclusive leaders is commitment** – being deeply committed to diversity and inclusion, because it aligns with their personal values. They believe in the business case for diversity and inclusion, and articulate their commitment authentically, through taking personal responsibility for change.
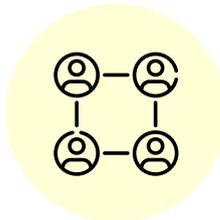
Fairness and respect	**Valued and belonging**	**Safe and open**	**Empowered and growing**

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The Deloitte diversity and inclusion maturity model

Levels of diversity and inclusion in your organisation:

Mandate	Transition point	Movement

Level 1   Level 2   Level 3   Level 4

COMPLIANCE	PROGRAMMATIC	LEADER-LED	INTEGRATED
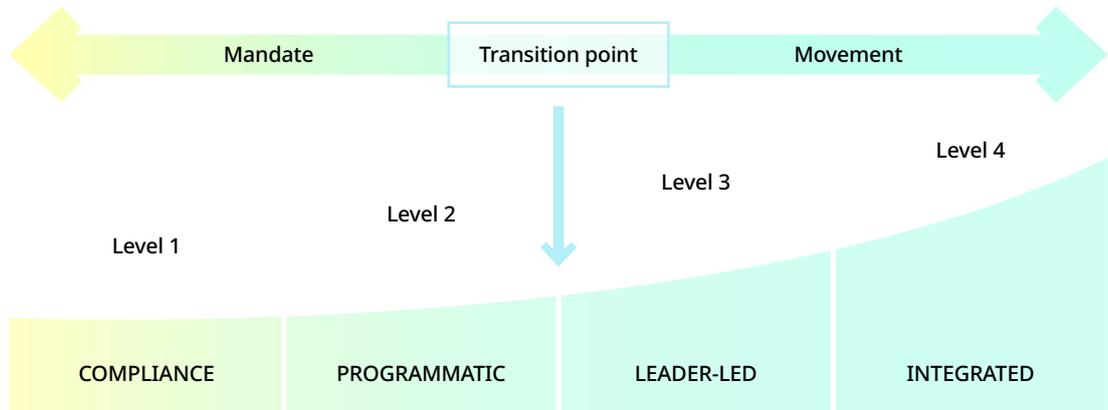
Compliance (level 1)

Compliance with equal opportunity and affirmative action goals. Characteristics of this level include viewing diversity as a problem to be managed, and legacy clubs/cliques exist. It is typically led by Legal/HR/D&I teams, and the organisation typically has a homogeneous workforce.

Programmatic (level 2)

Increasing the representation of specific demographic groups, e.g. women. Diversity is seen in terms of demographic numbers, with targets in place. Ad-hoc and/or stand-alone initiatives are taken such as mentoring, unconscious bias training, etc. Minority employees usually adapt or leave. This level is primarily led by HR/D&I teams.

Leader-led (level 3)

This is a transition point - between programmatic and leader-led levels – which acts as a tipping point for genuine change. At this stage, an organisation levels the playing field for all employees, with business leaders addressing systemic cultural barriers.

Organisations have a more sophisticated understanding of D&I, which links to business strategy. D&I is a personal priority for the CEO and executive team, and progress is monitored relentlessly.

Integrated (level 4)

The fourth and final level is about leveraging differences to create business value – where the whole organisation is involved. The workforce will be demographically and cognitively diverse, with a shared sense of purpose, i.e. diversity of thinking.

Their external brand matches their internal brand, and there is integration into all aspects of the organisation, e.g. behaviours, structures, and systems.

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Top tip

Invest in people

So, what else can your organisation do to help create more inclusive teams - and better understand inclusivity yourself?

One way is to commit to extra training. Getting your teams to participate in something like the **University of Leicester's Hate Crime training** is a great place to start.

You can also seek out anti-racist and inclusive educators and trainers. Attend their classes, courses, workshops, and webinars, and get your teams involved to help educate them too. There are also specific tools to use to work towards inclusivity – for example, **textio** can be used to help gender decode your job alerts.

On a more personal level, you can help uplift, centre, and elevate those who are different. Show up and speak at meetings, events, and in general conversations, and give space to those who can be helped by your privilege to let their voices be heard.

Remember, working on inclusivity isn't a short-term thing – it's a lifelong commitment. It's your **ongoing** responsibility to uphold your commitments to living a life of integrity for your inclusive views.

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This activity takes 15min

Activity: Unpack Your Privilege Knapsack

We all have certain privileges that we might not even realise, and a crucial part of working towards inclusivity is to recognise our privilege – so we can better understand how to become an ally to those who lack that privilege.

- Identify some of the daily effects of your privilege in your life. Choose as many conditions as you can think of – your ethnic status, class, religion, education, geographic location, etc.
- Have a look at the examples on **'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack' and 'Some Notes for Facilitators'** if you need help with what kind of realisations you might list.
- Use Serial Testimony to respond to prompts in a group, or pairs, to respond to the following prompts:
  - Round 1: What are one or more ways in which you've had unearned disadvantage in your life?
  - Round 2: What are one or more ways in which you've had unearned advantage in your life?
  - Round 3: What is it like for you to sit here and talk about/hear about these experiences of unearned advantage and disadvantage?

Further resources

- **Bardo Inclusive Living**
- **Textio – tool for gender decoding job adverts**
- **University of Leicester Hate Crime training**
- **Deloitte – The diversity and inclusion revolution**

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