

The Four Traits of Inclusive Leadership: Creating Opportunities for All

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Inclusive workplaces are not just a matter of chance; they require deliberate effort and committed leadership to create and maintain. If you're a leader or an organizational influencer, the responsibility to ensure your workplace is genuinely inclusive lies with you. Your role is pivotal in making a real and lasting difference. It's up to leaders, particularly those in positions of authority and influence, to actively seek out and create opportunities for those for whom access is often limited or non-existent.

There are four essential traits, exemplified by talent development masters, that can empower you to create opportunities and provide exposure for talented individuals, especially those from underrepresented groups, who might not otherwise have access to such opportunities.

1. The Sponsor: Elevating Colleagues

The Sponsor is a leader who vocally supports the work of colleagues from underrepresented groups. They do this in all contexts, but particularly in situations that can enhance the standing and reputations of these colleagues.

How to Act as a Sponsor:

- Recognize and highlight the expertise you see in others, especially during performance evaluations and promotion discussions.
- Recommend individuals from underrepresented groups for stretch assignments and learning opportunities, such as nominating them for internal leader accelerator programs.
- Share your colleagues' career goals with influential individuals (with their permission).

2. The Champion: Advocating Publicly

A Champion operates in a manner similar to a Sponsor but does so in more public venues. They willingly defer to colleagues from underrepresented groups in meetings and during visible, industry-wide events and conferences, sending powerful messages to broad audiences.

How to Act as a Champion:

- Direct questions about specific or technical topics to employees with subject-matter expertise instead of answering them yourself.
- Advocate for increased representation of women, people of color, and members of other underrepresented groups as keynote speakers and panelists at industry events.

3. The Amplifier: Ensuring Equal Representation

Amplifiers work tirelessly to ensure that marginalized voices are not only heard but also respected. Their focus is on guaranteeing equal representation within all communication channels.

How to Act as an Amplifier:

- When someone proposes a valuable idea, repeat it and give them credit, highlighting their contributions.
- Establish team norms for meetings and shared communication platforms, including email, chat, Slack, and more, to foster inclusivity.
- Invite members of underrepresented groups within your organization to speak at staff meetings, write for company-wide newsletters, or take on other highly visible roles.

4. The Advocate: Expanding Exclusive Circles

An Advocate is a leader who leverages their power and influence to bring peers from underrepresented groups into highly exclusive circles. They recognize and address the omissions by holding their peers

accountable for including talented professionals from diverse backgrounds.

How to Act as an Advocate:

- Scrutinize the invite list for events, strategic planning meetings, dinners with key partners, and other career-building opportunities. If you notice someone from a marginalized group is missing, advocate for their inclusion.
- Offer to introduce colleagues from underrepresented groups to influential individuals in your network.
- Invite someone from an underrepresented group to be a co-author or collaborator on a proposal or conference, providing them with opportunities for recognition and growth.

Incorporating these four traits into your leadership approach will not only make your workplace more inclusive but also set a powerful example for others to follow. As an inclusive leader, you can help create a workplace where talent and potential know no boundaries, and every individual has an equal chance to shine.



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