



15.4 Inclusion Skills for Managers



If inclusive leadership reflects a new, better way of leading teams, then we need to look beyond traditional leadership frameworks and how we assess effectiveness. Old ways won't open new doors.

Since 2011, Deloitte¹ has studied inclusive leadership extensively. Their research revealed that people feel included when:

- they are treated fairly,
- their uniqueness is appreciated,
- they have a sense of belonging, and
- they have a voice in decision making

The Six Signature Traits of Inclusive Leadership

Deloitte has identified six signature traits of inclusive leaders:

1. Commitment
2. Courage
3. Cognizance
4. Curiosity
5. Cultural Intelligence
6. Collaboration

Leaders who embody these traits and incorporate them consistently in how they work with employees are better able to tap into the benefits that come from diversity within the workplace.

Inclusive Leadership Superpowers: Curiosity and Empathy

Of these six Cs, one stands out as an inclusive leadership superpower: curiosity. Curiosity can be a game changer when it comes to inclusion. When you move from a place of judgement (which is where our brains are hard-wired to go instantly) to curiosity, you begin to consider how people are different, why they believe different things, and what that might mean when it comes to relationship building, communication, and collaboration.

Leaders that are inclusive are open and have a growth mindset. They seek to understand others and have a higher tolerance for ambiguity and discomfort – they are OK with the “grey areas” and sometimes being wrong. The value that they place on learning and suspending judgement leads to the second inclusive leadership superpower: empathy.

“Empathy is putting windows in your walls.”

Empathy is a crucial element in inclusive workplaces. It is recognizing emotions in others and attempting to understand the other person’s perspective and reality. Empathy, however, is not sympathy; they are often confused for each other. Here’s the difference:

Empathy: *“I feel your pain.”*

Sympathy: *“I am sorry about your pain.”*

Here are four ways to build empathy:

1. Perspective taking.

Set aside your opinion and try to see things from the other person’s point of view. What would it be like to switch places in life with them for a day? When you do this, you’ll realize that other people have had different life experiences and see things differently. They aren’t bad or wrong because they have a different perspective – they are just, well, different. Perspective taking helps you to better understand people.

2. Question your reactions to others.

When you have a strong reaction to a person, idea, or situation – whether that reaction is good or bad – pause for a moment. Why are you having that reaction? Are you quickly making a judgement and is it based on accurate information? Sometimes asking yourself “what don’t I know?” can help you change your attitude from judgement to empathy. This is also a good tip for reducing unconscious bias!

3. Validate the other person’s perspective.

A hallmark of inclusive workplaces is that people feel seen and heard – they can be themselves and share differing opinions. Once you begin to understand why others believe what they believe, acknowledge it. It doesn’t mean that you agree, just that you acknowledge them. Acknowledgment does not always equal agreement, but it does send an important inclusive message: I see you. And that is powerful!

4. Pay attention.

Would you be surprised to know that only 7% of communication is verbal? If we relied on only what we hear other people say, we would be getting things wrong an awful lot. This is called the 7% rule. Take time to develop your “emotional radar” by watching body language and listening for tone of voice. You will become more in tune with what people may be telling you without words.

The EDI Inclusive Leadership Continuum (Unaware, Aware, Active, Advocate)

Organizations - and the individuals within those organizations – are at different places on their EDI journey; it is natural to want to place a good or bad value on that. The following EDI inclusive leadership continuum from Jennifer Brown, a thought leader in EDI work, encourages us each to shift from placing a value on where we might find ourselves or others along this path. It also helps to assess just where leaders and employees are.

- 1. Unaware:** Mostly compliance driven with no personal accountability.
- 2. Aware:** Collective awareness of the value of inclusion and ongoing education about equity and diversity.
- 3. Active:** Inclusion is prioritized, and meaningful action is beginning to occur.
- 4. Advocate:** Proactive, consistent actions to address discrimination and create sustained change.

A goal of EDI work should be to increase individual and organizational self-awareness to move along the EDI continuum. Applying the two EDI superpowers - curiosity and empathy – helps to do that. And yes, you can be a leader in EDI without holding positional leadership (i.e.: a manager title).

Source:

¹ Deloitte. (2016, April 16). *The six signature traits of inclusive leadership*. Retrieve from: <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html>

Disclaimer:

Hire for Talent has made every effort to use the most respectful words possible while writing these materials. We realize, however, that the most appropriate terminology may change over time. We developed these materials with the intent to respect the dignity and inherent rights of all individuals.