



# HOW TO MAINTAIN AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

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# CONTENTS

- 3 What is Inclusion?
- 4 Benefits of an Inclusive Workplace
- 5 Emotional Intelligence and DEI
- 6-11 The 5 Steps to Operationalize DEI
- 12 About Exude

# WHAT IS INCLUSION?

Inclusion is the achievement of a work environment in which employees feel welcomed, are treated fairly and feel respected. Every individual has equal access to the opportunities and resources within the organization and they can contribute fully to the organization's success.

An Inclusive culture values diversity and creates belongingness, promotes mutual respect and affords all employees the opportunity to learn and grow professionally and to contribute fully to the organization's success. True Inclusion, along with Diversity and Equity, is something that every employee at an organization has a stake in.



# BENEFITS OF AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

The benefits of an inclusive workplace culture are well known. Organizations with inclusive cultures are more likely to be high-performing, innovative and agile. They have better business outcomes and can exceed financial targets.

An inclusive culture also positions an organization to attract and retain top talent. Over 86% of job seekers say workplace diversity is an important factor when looking for a job.

In addition, employees who feel they can be authentic and bring their whole self to work are 42% less likely to say they intend to leave their job.

Creating a culture that values all employees and their backgrounds will help your recruiting efforts and ultimately your brand by positioning yourself as an open, accepting and encouraging employer.

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND DEI

As you continue to focus on creating and maintaining an inclusive culture in your workplace, it's important to keep in mind that inclusion is not a destination, instead it's an ongoing journey.

One way to move closer towards true inclusion is through emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control and express emotions in order to handle relationships empathetically and influence others' emotions.

In a work environment, emotional intelligence is a key skill in leadership and creating an inclusive environment. It requires leaders to think outside their cultural boxes and experiences to find common ground among people of different backgrounds. Leaders with emotional intelligence are more aware of their own biases, can more easily resolve conflict and understand the cultural "whys" behind employee behaviors.



# 5 STEPS TO OPERATIONALIZE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

# STEP 1: LISTEN

In order to improve your organization's culture, start by understanding where your workplace culture currently stands. Solicit employee input to understanding where your workplace culture currently stands and what needs to be changed.

Additionally, solicit feedback from employees and learn what changes they want to see. This step should be done regularly to ensure all employees feel valued and comfortable with current practices.



# STEP 2: PROVIDE ACTION

After listening, create an achievable DEI plan to tackle the suggestions you've heard. Beyond just hiring diverse talent, this will include ensuring DEI is in things like the organization's values, marketing plans and public image. This prevents DEI from being a cosmetic idea and shows employees it's not "all talk, no action."

Encourage authenticity; conformity can stifle employee innovation and performance. Make it safe for people to contribute and progress at work without surrendering who they really are.

Foster belongingness: employees need to be able to connect their own identity to the organization's intrinsic identity in order to feel that they belong.



# STEP 3: VALUE ALL INPUT

A truly inclusive workplace will support employees of all levels, creating a sense of belonging for all. Allow all employees to express their ideas and opinions without negative repercussions.

Understand yourself and how you make decisions about people. Acknowledge your biases and be mindful of the impact your communications and behavior can have on others.

Enhance everyone's capability to recognize and mitigate unconscious bias in decision making and to avoid pigeonholing people and giving into stereotypes.



# STEP 4: CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

Establish a communication style that works for everyone and fosters two-way communication between leaders and employees. Make it psychological safe for employees to express their ideas and opinions openly and take risks without fear of negative repercussion.

Be comfortable being uncomfortable and having your thoughts challenged. The common goal of inclusion is an environment which supports, promotes and hears all voices, even if they disagree with your own beliefs.

Avoid using jargon and slang, as these assumptions can create a barrier between employees. If in doubt, respectfully ask for further clarification.

Be open to learning and be willing to share new practices and ideas you've learned around DEI.

# STEP 5: CULTURAL HUMILITY

Cultural humility is the ongoing process of self-exploration and self-critique combined with a willingness to learn from others. It involves entering a relationship with another person with the intention of honoring their beliefs, customs and values. It requires one to step back and understand one's own assumptions biases and values, in order to recognize the dynamic nature of culture.

Cultural humility can increase the ability to see from each other's viewpoints, understand each other's backgrounds, and ultimately work better together. This creates a tighter knit community in the workplace. Understanding each other can go a long way to knowing why people can have certain behaviors.

To ensure DEI goals are met, cultivate cultural intelligence and humility at all levels of the organization. Build capability for mutual respect, understanding differences in viewpoints and backgrounds.

# ABOUT EXUDE

Founded in 1996, Exude, Inc. is an award winning consulting firm that specializes in all things people. We are Minority Owned Business and have been servicing our clients for 20+ years. At Exude, we work with our clients to achieve their optimal organizational success by ensuring their strategy, culture, and employee experience are aligned. Our Philadelphia-based team includes HR and inclusion and diversity experts – however, the power of our deliverable is not in our great individual expertise, but rather when we work together as one.

Creating a culture of inclusion doesn't happen by chance. Organizations need to commit and continuously work to create an environment that embraces differences and is truly inclusive. Exude provides companies extensive Inclusion and Diversity solutions. Areas where Exude can support you include Diversity Assessments, Diversity Consulting and Diversity Training.

# LEARN MORE

Looking for support with your DEI efforts?

Contact Jenna Conroy for more information

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