Six signature traits of inclusive leadership

Thriving in a diverse new world

In today’s workplace, core aspects of leadership, such as setting direction and influencing others, are timeless, but we see a new capability that is vital to the way leadership is executed. Highly inclusive leaders demonstrate six signature traits, which represent a powerful capability highly adapted to diversity. Inclusive leadership is essential to fostering an environment of empowered well-being, where people are given the support and flexibility they need to be energized, confident, and aware.

Inclusion leadership traits

**Cognizance of bias:** Because unconscious bias can be a leader’s Achilles’ heel
- Self-regulation: Follow processes to ensure personal biases do not influence decisions about others
- Fair play: Employ transparent, consistent, and informed decision-making processes about talent

**Cultural intelligence:** Because not everyone sees the world through the same cultural frame
- Knowledge: Take an active interest in learning about other cultures
- Adaptability: Work well with individuals from different cultural backgrounds
- Drive: Are confident leading cross-cultural teams

**Commitment:** Because staying the course is hard
- Belief in the business case: Treat diversity and inclusion as a business priority
- Personal Values: Treat all team members with fairness and respect

**Courage:** Because talking about imperfections involves personal risk-taking
- Humility: Seek the contributions of others to overcome personal limitations
- Bravery: Hold others to account for noninclusive behaviors

**Curiosity:** Because different ideas and experiences enable growth
- Coping with ambiguity: Engage in respectful and curious questioning to better understand others’ viewpoints
- Perspective-taking: Demonstrate a desire for continued learning
- Openness: Seek opportunities to connect with a diverse range of people

**Collaboration:** Because a diverse-thinking team is greater than the sum of its parts
- Teaming: Assemble teams that are diverse in thinking
- Voice: Work hard to ensure that team members respect each other
- Empowerment: Create a safe environment where people feel comfortable to speak up

How organizations can support inclusive leadership

**Highlight inclusive leadership** as a core pillar within the organization’s diversity and inclusion strategy and empowering a culture of well-being

Formally assess inclusive leadership capabilities across senior leaders and people managers

Integrate development of the six signature traits of inclusive leadership into leadership development programs

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Diversity—of markets, customers, ideas, and talent—is an essential part of today’s business environment. When leaders have clarity about what it means to be highly inclusive they are positioned for success.

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