



CAPITAL H

Belonging: From comfort to connection to contribution

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Burt Rea: Welcome to the Capital H podcast, where we explore the topics and trends that focus on putting humans at the center of work. I'm your host, Burt Rea. As you know, we've been unpacking our findings from the 2020 Global Human Capital Trends survey, and an important topic we'll be covering today is belonging. We've broken down belonging into three mutually reinforcing attributes: comfort to connection to contribution. Workers should feel comfortable at work, including being treated fairly and to be respected by their

colleagues. They should feel connected to the people they work with and the teams they are part of. And they should feel that they contribute to meaningful work outcomes—understanding how their unique strengths are helping their teams and their organization achieve common goals. To tell us more about this concept, I want to introduce Jeff Schwartz, a principal in our Deloitte Consulting Practice, and Bob Gibbs, mission support director for NASA.

Jeff Schwartz: Bob, thank you for joining us today. I'm excited to be able to catch up with you again, and today to talk about belonging, which is part of a broader trend that we've been looking at for several years around employee engagement, employee experience, and now belonging, and what's happening at NASA. Let me start by congratulating you and the NASA team on the recent launch of the NASA SpaceX rocket that took off recently carrying American astronauts up to the space station.

Bob Gibbs: It was pretty cool, right?

Jeff: We were very excited to see that. So congratulations on that to you and the NASA team.

Bob: Well, thank you very much. Thank you very much.

Jeff: And we know, and hopefully we'll be able to touch on this today, that you've got some incredible missions you're focusing on at NASA, including the Artemis mission and hopefully, we'll be able to touch on some of these topics as well. There's a lot of things going on in the world, Bob. But just to start, before jumping in, can you just take a second to introduce yourself, talk a little bit about your role at NASA?

Bob: Sure. Happy to do it. And Jeff, it's great to talk with you again as well. My name is Bob Gibbs. I am the mission support director for NASA. For context, all of NASA is divided into five missions: human exploration, science, technology, and aerospace, and I'm the fifth mission, mission support. Everything that's not program- or project-related that's one of the other four missions, falls under the auspices of the mission support directorate, my organization. And so, yes, we were super excited about the launch on the 30th with SpaceX. It was a great moment, I think, for the nation and for NASA. It was pretty cool.

Jeff: Fantastic, Bob. Let me just jump in. You work for an organization that is uniquely known for its ability to foster an amazing culture, and an amazing culture of belonging as well. You've got an astonishing low attrition rate. I think it's about 3 percent. Maybe it's a little higher, a little lower. But when you're in the low single digits, you're in a unique position. Around that, let's just get started. How would you describe organizational belonging at NASA, and the impact that it has on the organization and the teams that you work with and that you support in mission support?

Bob: That's a great question, Jeff. I would tell you that without that sense of belonging, without that sense of commitment to mission, NASA, as we understand it and as it exists today, couldn't exist. It is one of the

core competencies of our organization that makes us successful as we go forward.

There's always the great historical story of when JFK asked a janitor what was he doing. And he was saying, "Well, I'm helping us get to the moon." And he kind of went through his contribution to the mission. That story has become a little bit like fable. But I will tell you from my experience at NASA, it's in the bloodstream of everyone in the organization, right? We have leaders that are committed to their employees. We have employees that are engaged and committed to the mission. And that sort of an arrangement, that sort of structure is very successful sort of going forward for all the things that we do and the reasons why we do it.

Jeff: Bob, when we talk about belonging, and belonging was one of the top two trends in our 2020 Trends report this year. The top two trends were well-being and belonging. I like to point out to my colleagues that they were statistically significant, but there is a tiny razor edge on well-being over belonging. But these are two very, very powerful trends.

When we unpack belonging in the research that we've been doing, we're looking at three interconnected dimensions, if you will, of belonging. We talk about three C's. We're the consultants, Bob, so this is the way we try to organize the world. And we talk about comfort, connection, and contribution. And many organizations focus their efforts on belonging, really around the first C, comfort, making workers feel that they're treated fairly and they're respected at work. We also think it's critical for individuals and workers to feel connected to the people they work with and obviously to the teams that they're part of. Also, the importance of individuals feeling that they can actually make a contribution, that their work is meaningful and that there are meaningful work outcomes, and that they can see how their personal strengths are advancing common goals.

Can I ask you to talk a bit about some of the steps and measures you're implementing and have implemented at NASA? How are you cultivating these three levels: comfort, connection, and contribution?

Bob: Yeah, I think it's really important. There's one small distinction I would make with the comfort. When we talked about making employees feel like they're treated fairly, and I think it's to actually treat employees fairly. I think leadership at NASA holds each other accountable for the way we treat, not only our employees, but each other and everyone that works on the mission.

One thing that's a little bit unusual about NASA, and you saw this on the launch on the 30th through Dragon. Remember that NASA is only about one-third federal, two-thirds private, international partners, and contractors, so we have an unusual composition of team. But we treat everyone fairly that's on that team. I think we all have to be pulling on the rope in the same direction in order to achieve some of the impossible things that NASA sets out to achieve.

I think it's incredibly important that you structure a work environment where people can feel comfortable being themselves. Our mission is very demanding. The science and technology that we use is somewhat unforgiving. We have to get the best from individuals on a regular basis in order for us to achieve our mission. People not only have to be comfortable at work but they have to be comfortable bringing their best to the workplace every day.

For me, contribution, it kind of builds from there. In order to be successful as an organization, we have to have the best from individuals, and they have to feel the ability to contribute. I'll give you an example, in the latest COVID-19 response. Within a period of two weeks, we had over 250 ideas from a NASA employee workforce about, "Hey, here are some things that NASA could do to help the nation." Our engineers and scientists out of the jet propulsion laboratory were able to create a ventilator that went through all the approval process, which didn't compete with the private market but supplemented it with a higher pressure ventilator that was shorter in duration that could help the noncritical cases and relieve the stress sort of on the rest of the healthcare system. This was basically the brainchild of a couple of engineers who worked on their own time to come up with this sort of a thought process

and were able to get that through all the testing regimen and start building prototypes within 30 days.

We also developed a way, something called ambu-stat, which is a way to disinfect small volume spaces like ambulances in a very efficient, effective way. Along with, we designed PPE. We started building PPE, positive pressure helmets and things, which would also help our healthcare workers. But all of that happened, it wasn't directed from the top, it was from employees who felt engaged to the mission. They felt they could contribute, and they felt inspired to contribute. And that's just one very small example.

A lot of times in transformation and other principles and other things that we work on at NASA, we have a principle called best idea wins. It doesn't matter where you sit in the organization, if your idea is better than the one we're pursuing, let's take a look at that. Let's see if that has legs. Let's see if that has merit.

Jeff: Wow, I love the stories. You and I have spoken several times over the last couple of years, and I am always fascinated to hear the stories that you tell about what's happening at NASA. And in particular, one of the themes that you spoke about today as well is the role of mission. And also how mission is measured and comfort is measured, not just on how people feel, but also on how people make other people feel as well, so both sides of this equation.

One of the things, and you've mentioned it a few minutes ago, that is not only unique but I think a very powerful story that we can leverage from your experience at NASA, as you mentioned, about a third of the workforce is federal and two-thirds are commercial and international partners. We've been talking for the last few years about what we call the open talent economy, the hybrid economy, on and off balance sheet talent. Can you just give an example of the kind of thing that you're doing at NASA to help the mission and contribution and belonging resonate both for the third of the workforce that are NASA employees and the, more interestingly for many of our listeners

and for me, the two-thirds that are not NASA employees but are also making that contribution and connecting to the mission?

Bob: Yeah, it's, I guess, how you approach the problem. There's probably some core DNA that runs through the entire NASA family, if you want to use that term; that is, the people who are biased towards action and want to solve problems, the hardest problems that can be presented. And it doesn't matter if you're working for a contractor or working as a member of the core federal team or a sub to another contractor or whatever it might be. It's a very interesting dynamic when you're trying to pursue the very, very toughest of problems, right, that the nation has to face, returning humans to space and then exploring further beyond that.

And I think you have to have purpose. I think people at NASA identify immediately that not only do we have a great mission, but it's a mission that has meaning. If you look back and you kind of look at sort of one of the core values of NASA, you're talking for the benefit of all, whether it's science or exploration or inspiration. All of those things, all those core values, it is really for the benefit of all. And I think that resonates very strongly with our workforce and allows them to feel like, "You know what, I can contribute. I can contribute to this mission. I can contribute to us getting back to the moon."

Jeff: Bob, I think you're capturing some of the key themes that we've been exploring this year around belonging. We started by talking about comfort as a foundation and then moving through connection and contribution. I like the way that you put it that part of the responsibility here for organizational leaders, leaders at NASA and other organizations, is to actually create the opportunity to make a contribution, and to create an opportunity where people can create a meaningful contribution. Is that a fair way to play that back?

Bob: Yeah, I think so. It's interesting because it seems to come about as a natural course of events. It isn't like we sit around as a leadership team and saying, "Okay, we're going to create these opportunities for contributions." Those are the conversations

that we never have. But it's the opportunity to discuss problems and collaborate, and find new ways to solve these things and to bring different thinking to the problems that present themselves.

It's a little bit different. Isn't something that you would sit out and develop a project plan and an execution schedule for the project to solve, but it's looking for that opportunity. And it's, I think, some of the foundations, Jeff, are very simple and straightforward and that's leaders that truly care about their folks. You can't fake it. You got to be genuine. You got to be authentic. You got to be who you are, but you have to care about your folks. You have to care about the mission. And I think those are some of the basic principles allowing contribution to come forward.

Jeff: Bob, I think that's right, but I think you also struck another chord earlier in our conversation. I wanted to come back to it. We are, obviously, at least when we're recording this, we're recording this in the middle of a healthcare pandemic. Hopefully, we are at the end of the middle of a healthcare pandemic. Hopefully, it is the wave, not the first wave, but we are in a global healthcare crisis. And the COVID-19 pandemic has actually helped us sort of witness how organizations are using contribution and using belonging as part of the strategy to get through this. And I just wanted to come back to something that we touched on a few minutes ago. The mission of NASA has something to do with space exploration and human scientific exploration beyond the earth itself, and you can correct me on that. But yet when we spoke a few minutes ago, part of what you talked about were the contributions that NASA engineers and scientists were making, not directly related to the science of humans in space but humans on earth, and you're creating space for that contribution as well. And I think that's a very interesting opportunity for us to explore just for a couple of minutes. Let me ask you to comment on that.

Bob: Yeah. There's some great public-facing websites, NASA at Home, and some others that you can see all of the things that have come about that impact our lives on a daily basis that have come out of NASA research,

our science, our engineering, all of our efforts. And we're now talking about doing research in a microgravity environment aboard the IS test, where we might have the ability to clone and replicate organs in a zero gravity environment exploiting that platform that is the international space station to do something that we have never been able to do before in science.

A lot of things like that that come out of our research, that we're able to apply in different ways because the basics or the principles apply in different ways. And that is always encouraged. Our understanding of the earth and our climate and all of the things that we face, that is part of our mission. Inspiring the next generation of scientists and engineers, that is part of our mission of the things that we're responsible to do.

It isn't always just really cool launches and rockets. It's science that changes our understanding of man in our environment. It's technology that changes the things that we're working on. It's working in the aerospace industry. That first A in NASA is for aerospace, it's for aeronautics. Those things that we do that we're helping commercial airlines and others with and trying to advance the art of flight in this country and others. I mean, there's a lot of things that go on far beyond the scope of just walking on the moon.

Jeff: Bob, the work that you're describing at NASA and the culture and the thinking that you've shared with us about belonging, I think is very exciting. Is there a page that you can sort of take out of the NASA culture and belonging manual? If you were to rip out that page and say, "Here are a couple of things that I would really suggest, whether you're leading in a public sector, mission-driven environment, or whether you're leading in a commercial environment or a not-for-profit environment." What might be on that page? What would be sort of your shorthand? And it's an unfair question, but we've known each other a little bit, Bob, so I'll ask you a hard question. I know you're up for it. What would be a couple of nuggets of advice that you would give? Especially right now, so much going on in the world, what advice would you

give either a CEO or an executive leadership team or a head of HR on how to think about and really promote belonging and contribution in their organization?

Bob: Yeah. That's a great question, Jeff. I would say, let me give you a big idea, then something a little smaller and more tactical, maybe less obvious. First the big idea, the one that I found to be the most impactful in my life, my professional life, is assuming positive intent. I think we may have talked about this previously, but let me kind of, just at its core, what it is when you assume positive intent. You assume the people you're working with are working on the right things for the right reasons. There's no hidden agendas. There's nothing behind the scenes. Walk into the meeting, walk into the discussion about assuming positive intent.

I will tell you if you are willing to embrace this concept, it can entirely change the way you look at work, the way you look at your work life, the way you look at your colleagues. I see it play out every day at NASA; and leadership holds each other accountable for assuming positive intent. I think it's incredibly important. It's one of those little things that's enormous, I guess, is the way I would put it.

On a more tactical level, I get asked quite frequently about, "Hey, we're trying to transform. We're trying to do X, Y, or Z. Can you take a look at what we're doing? Can you give us some advice?" And I would tell you most of the organizations that I have a discussion with, they fail on step one, which is really, and I mean, really knowing your process. Really understanding your baseline. How is work getting done today? What are your opportunities? What are your challenges? All of the things. What's your cost? I mean, broken down into discrete steps within each process, within each business line.

If you want to transform, if you really want to change the way you're doing business to try and leverage opportunities or respond to challenges, that first step, that is everything. That is foundation. That is foundation, not only for your progress, but how you measure progress. A lot of organizations know

they need to transform. They need to do something different.

Jeff: I'm going to summarize a little bit and then ask you a final question or two. The discussion we've been having, first of all, thank you, Bob, incredibly helpful and insightful. Certainly for me, and I've been working on the Trends Report for 10 years and this report for the last year. You've talked about a few things in the last few minutes. You've talked about really knowing your business and knowing your processes and having a granular understanding of what you're trying to do. It's very, very powerful. If you don't know where you are, it's hard to figure out where you're going as well. I'm totally with you on that.

Bob: One hundred percent right.

Jeff: And you've talked about crafting the opportunity for contribution and this very powerful idea of assuming positive intent. I guess my question, Bob, is thinking about this from your perspective at NASA but also what you've seen in other organizations, where's the friction? What are the struggles that you're seeing? Are there some lessons learned from challenges that you can share with us as we're moving through the conversation?

Bob: Yeah. Another great point. I would say one of the bigger challenges, one the biggest hurdles, is an internal hurdle that we all must face, and you've got to be comfortable just knowing when you're wrong, admitting when you're wrong, admitting when you don't know something. For a leader to admit that they don't know something, they feel like they're exposing themselves or showing themselves to be vulnerable. And I guess on some level they really are. But I would tell you that being willing to own up to mistakes and being willing to have an honest conversation and say, "Hey, look, you know what, I didn't get this right, but let's figure out how to get ourselves back on track and then move forward from here," I think that makes it safe for other folks to fail, to make mistakes, and to own up to those mistakes, and to learn from them.

Jeff: Bob, I think that's powerful, the importance of honesty, the importance of directness, the importance of humility. You didn't use that word, but that's what I heard in what you were describing. And I know one of the things that we've talked about, and we've discussed with clients and organizations in the US and around the world is the relationship between failing fast and learning fast. And the emphasis is on the last part, right? There is failure. What's rare is not failure. What may be a little bit too rare is the ability and the capacity of team leaders and enterprise leaders to create environments in which you can do that learning. And that really goes back to the heart of what we've been talking about, about comfort, connection, and contribution.

Bob, any final comments as we're discussing today sort of the importance of belonging and contribution as a trend? Again, this is 2020. I like to say it's always fun to do things in a year that ends in zero or five. This is sort of a big year. We can think about the next few years. I know for you all at NASA, among other dates, it's 2024 for the Artemis Project. But as we're thinking about what's coming up in the next few years, sort of any final observations you can share with us on contribution and belonging, and what you've been able to lead in running mission support at NASA.

Bob: Yeah, I think it has to start with sort of your connection to your people. It has to start with your connection and engagement to the mission. At the end of the day, it has to be a mission that matters and a mission that has meaning for individuals. It has to do with treating individuals with respect and understanding how can we get the best from them, expect the best from them? And they have to expect the best from me as well. It is a social contract of sorts.

In today's world, I think if we can find a way to work with each other and assume positive intent as we go forward, I think it can be a very powerful tool for everyone to find some common ground. Anyway, it's been a great conversation. Thank you so much for having me, Jeff. It's great. I love what you guys are working on.

Jeff: Thank you, Bob. Good luck to you. Good luck to the team at NASA. You are an inspiration, the work that NASA does. This has been a great conversation. We look forward to sharing it with our Capital H podcast listeners, and we wish you well. Thank you.

Bob: Thanks, Jeff. Take care.

Burt: Thanks so much, Jeff and Bob. That was really great insight on NASA's commitment to creating a work environment that keeps everyone accountable and drives toward a mission together. Next, I'd like to introduce our roundtable featuring Deloitte's human capital leaders. First, we have Jeff Schwartz again, a principal with our Deloitte Consulting Practice. Next is Juliet Bourke, our Diversity and Inclusion Consulting Practice leader for Australia, and finally Christina Brodzik, our US Diversity and Inclusion leader.

Burt: Hello, everyone. We're back and thank you for joining. We have an esteemed round table to discuss the topic of belonging. I'd like to introduce you, starting with Jeff Schwartz. Jeff is a principal with our Deloitte Consulting Practice, and he focuses on the future of work, as well as leading our marketing eminence and brand for the US. Welcome, Jeff. Juliet Bourke is our Diversity and Inclusion Consulting Practice leader for Australia. Welcome, Juliet.

Juliet Bourke: Hello.

Burt: And Christina Brodzik is joining us as our US Diversity and Inclusion leader. Welcome, Christina.

Christina Brodzik: Hello.

Burt: So, we'd like to talk maybe to this idea of belonging, and I'd love to hear from each of you, what does that mean for organizations today? And Jeff, maybe I'll start with you because it really was the top trend in our recent human capital trends report. What does belonging mean to organizations today?

Jeff: So, Burt, let me start, and I'll be really interested given what's happening in the world to have a conversation and really push our discussion with Christina and Juliet

on sort of where we're at as we're thinking about belonging and how the discussion and the conversation is really evolving. As you mentioned, in this year's trends report, the tenth trends report we've done for human capital trends around the world, the top two trends were the trends around belonging and the trends around wellbeing, which is very interesting. This was data that we gathered, of course, in the last quarter of 2019 and it's obviously, at least to me, interesting to see how these trends and these issues have played out in 2020 and how they're going to continue to play out.

I'll start by summarizing it this way. We've been looking at issues related to, and I'm not even sure what to call it, so I'm really going to defer to Juliet and Christina to help us figure out how to even have this conversation because it is shifting in front of us, or at least that's what I'm observing. Over the last 10 years, we've looked at diversity trends, inclusion trends, now sometimes I think we're beginning to think of them as equity trends as well. We've been looking at the evolution of employee engagement, of employee experience and the integrated experiences that workers have and how our personal lives and our business lives are coming together.

The way we summarize this trend is we try to capture three different aspects of belonging that are playing out in an interesting dynamic. We've talked about belonging from the perspective of comfort, creating an environment that people feel safe, that they feel that they can be authentic, creating an environment where people are not only comfortable, but also can make connections and this really builds on the discussions we've been having for the last few years, connections to people, to groups. And then we talked this year about moving in a trajectory and combining comfort, connection, and contribution.

By contribution, what we were trying to capture is it's not just creating a safe environment, which is critical, and it's not just creating an environment where we're connected, but it's also about creating environments where people feel that they can contribute, that their contribution as an individual is recognized, that they can play

different roles and make different kinds of contributions. That was really the platform that we introduced, but that was thinking that we really developed in 2019, so I'm very keen to hear some perspectives from Juliet and Christina on this as well as we're getting started.

Burt: Yeah. Juliet, let's hear from you. In terms of your perspective and the work that you've been doing around diversity, inclusion, a sense of equity, belonging seems to really resonate with those objectives. How are you seeing the connection, and how are you seeing organizations' inclusiveness and diversity objectives tie into this idea of belonging?

Juliet: I think what people are looking for is two things. I think they're looking to feel valued as an individual and valued for all of the unique skills and capabilities and experiences that they have. Then the second aspect of it is this sense of belonging, and that is that they feel a sense of connection and appreciation. What the trends did for me this year is highlight the people want that as individuals with the people around them, but they also want it to a higher purpose, particularly during this period of COVID when people are feeling so atomized, so disconnected, so dislocated, that they're looking to connect with something that is bigger than themselves. So, I think we can think about inclusion at two levels. One is that individual level to the people around you and the other is to a larger, let's say noble purpose. Does that make sense?

Burt: Yeah. I know in the trends, we've talked about this idea of paradox and how seemingly conflicting ideas actually can come together to bring a sense of strength and resilience to an organization. So, this idea of belonging contrasted with diversity and that we are stronger together because we're each bringing our authentic selves to our experience. We don't all have to be the same to have that common purpose.

Juliet: So, I think when individuals think about inclusion, and I know Jeff, you were struggling with trying to conceptualize this. It's the very first level, that first step, is where

people feel a sense of fairness, equity, respect, just participation. "I just got a chance to play." The second level is that one around value and belonging. That third step that we were talking about, and Jeff, you called it "contribution" is absolutely about people feeling safe to make a contribution, this idea of psychological safety. In fact, people feel such a high level of inclusion that they can really test the boundaries, put things into the mix, which are different to other people, and that's what psychological safety is. You can speak up, have a different point of view, and you won't be ejected from the group.

So, the first level, sometimes people worry about it because their inclusion is contingent upon them being the same as everyone else, whereas the highest order level of inclusion, this sense of contribution, is that you can be very different, bring different things to the table. So, I think we're just using language in different ways. As I say, around the world, different language resonates with different people, and there has been this sense that maybe diversity and inclusion is a word that we need to move on from. But belonging is actually a central concept within a broader concept, I think, of inclusion.

Burt: Yeah. So, Christina, I'd love to get your thoughts on this. How do you see the concept of belonging expanding our thinking around diversity, equity, and inclusion, or is it something that's always been there?

Christina: So, I do think, I echo what Juliet had said. I think of belonging as something that's always been a central part of inclusion, but what I can say is that we're seeing it evolve to a new level of importance. So, given all that's going on around us within the world, the volatility we're seeing, how polarized people are, people are looking to work as, their workplace as a place where they can find a shared purpose, shared values, everybody working together for a mission. They're looking for a different level of support, and they're looking at their team for solidarity. So, I think while belonging has always been a part of inclusion, it's taking on a new level of importance and people are really looking to belong more maybe today than ever before.

Juliet: I would agree with that. I think that's right.

Burt: Yeah. So absolutely see the importance and critical value of this to the individual, to be part of something bigger than themselves, to be respected, to be valued, to have a context, to make a contribution. Flip it around for us. And Christina, starting with you. What is the value to the organization? Why should organizations be concerned or want to facilitate this sense of belonging, this sense of inclusion?

Christina: It's not only good for the individual, but it's good for the team, and it's good for the organization as a whole. And we do cover this a little bit in our trends chapter on this. When people feel a sense of belonging, they start to have a greater connection to the mission, and you start to see their job performance increasing. When people's job performance is increasing, they're happy. They don't take sick days. They don't want to leave. They're excited to come to work. So, these are the types of things that we want to see as an organization. These are the things we want from our people and for our teams. So, to me, that's why an organization would care. It goes beyond just being the right thing to do for our people, to being something that actually drives and impacts our organizational performance.

Burt: I think that's really clear. Jeff, in your experience in working with different organizations, different clients, what are some of the ways that you're seeing organization successfully create this sense of belonging and inclusiveness? What are some tips and tricks?

Jeff: It's interesting because I think we're at a moment, we're recording this in July 2020, and we'll release it sometime in the next few weeks, so it'll come out late summer, or mid-winter in Australia, Juliet.

Juliet: Thank you. Very culturally sensitive there.

Jeff: So, this is a global report and one of the things you were talking about earlier, Juliet, is how there is a language question here, and

there was some social and political questions that we're grappling with as well. And what's interesting to me about how companies are doing it and how organizations are doing it is there's two parts to this discussion, and I'll summarize them, and I really want to get input from Christina and Juliet.

We did this survey, as we've mentioned, at the end, the fourth quarter of 2019. And I think that there was a realization when the economy was somewhere between pretty good to very good in many parts of the world, not all parts of the world. That focusing on the human dimension of work and the workforce was very, very important. That to get to a level of sustainability, and I'm talking about human sustainability, as well as climate sustainability, that we really needed to focus on belonging and wellbeing as part of our thinking in our business and organizational strategies. That to both be productive and innovative and creative, we really need to bring the entire workforce to the table.

The other piece, though, is we're in a moment now where questions about belonging and equity are being very openly discussed across societies, obviously with business leaders and with community and government leaders. And this is where I think there's an opportunity, and I'm excited about this discussion, because what was a leading trend in 2019 and 2020 could be an incredibly critical trend for business and organizations in society in the next couple of years.

Burt: Yeah, absolutely, Jeff. I keep reflecting back on the structure of the trends and why a particular topic is ranked. And that is the gap between the importance that survey participants placed on the topic and their self-perceived ability to deal with and address that topic and, of course, a high degree of importance and a low readiness to deal with it, characterized creating a sense of belonging for employees and dealing with this in an inclusive way. To continue the line of question, Juliet, what are you seeing as guidance, as best practices in organizations that you're working with, or on closing this gap of creating belonging, creating inclusion?

Juliet: There was a piece of work that we did about two years ago now, which was called the diversity and inclusion revolution, and it identified eight powerful truths. And one of those powerful truths was that this is a culture reset, so therefore it goes to sort of core. Whereas we have often talked about diversity inclusion as if it's fringe. And so, it's super interesting that it actually is kind of number one trend with wellbeing.

The second thing is that leaders themselves have basically outsourced their responsibility to employee resource groups or to HR, but not really considered that it's something that they need to embrace. And for me, the pivot when I've been working with different organizations, and I'm sure this is true for Christina as well, is when we've had the chance to work with leaders on their own kind of behaviors and mindsets around this. So, of all the, we identify kind of eight things that organizations could do, they go to thinking about your vision and your strategy and thinking about the metrics that you use and processes and policies, the most impactful is actually building inclusive leadership capability.

And we know that, we can see it from the stories. And I think in the Human Capital Trends report, there is a story there about Gilead Sciences and the way that they have been able to be much more collaborative and impactful. And, indeed, talking to the managing director, Andrew Hexter, they are one of the companies, as you may know, that have been first to market around clinical trials for a vaccine for COVID-19. And he attributes that to the work that they did on inclusive leadership because he said it got them to behave in a different way towards each other, and really bring out the best in each other. Psychological safety, as I was talking about before. So yeah, a focus on leadership, people's individual capabilities, means that they're taking ownership and accountability for the diversity and inclusion story and not outsourcing it to someone else. And then there's this magnified impact, because I think you're right, Jeff. This is actually part of an integrated value, and that is, these are just fundamental interpersonal skills. That's what being inclusive is. It's dealing to another

person the way that other person wants to be dealt to. It's reforming the environment so that everyone gets a chance to participate to their full potential. And it's not being a leader that thinks that my key role is just managing the numbers. Your key role is interpersonal within your organization. And as Jeff said, it's sort of extra person, if I can say that. It's part of being a social enterprise. It's seeing your organization as part of a community fabric, not as itemized.

Burt: I am fascinated by this topic, and it makes me think that there's been an epiphany among individuals and organizations that creating equity, creating inclusiveness, creating belonging, doesn't just mean creating belonging for me, whoever me is, within an organization or within a society. I'm now no longer satisfied for my own personal sense of inclusion and personal sense of belonging, which of course, if I'm part of a majority population, that's easy to feel included and that I belong. Where I think we're seeing a sea change is individuals recognizing that they're not satisfied until others around them feel a sense of belonging, feel a sense of inclusion. And Christina, I'd love to get your thoughts on that. How are you seeing that light switch change in organizations realizing that, "Wait a minute, belonging means more, inclusion means more, than just my feelings. It's about others also"?

Christina: So, I would say that I'm super energized by the change that we're seeing, that people are finally having this "aha" moment, because I think for too long people have looked at belonging and confused it maybe with conformity. We have cultural norms, this is how we behave here, and if you would just conform, if you would just act that way, then together we will all belong. And I think it's just been really recently that people are starting to see that that's not really belonging. So how can I create a safe environment? How can I invite people to truly feel safe and bring all parts of their self to work? And the other thing I would say too is I do empathize with organizations who are new to this journey and they struggle to say, "Well, where do I get started?" And so, if I could offer a tip or trick for anyone who's

listening who feels that way, I would say there's so many tools out there.

The first place to get started is just to ask. I would say, ask your employees, and I'm not talking about a survey or something that formal, but there's all kinds of collaboration tools out there that we could use where you can post a question and say, "How are we feeling today on belonging? Are you feeling like you do belong or you don't?" And if you are saying that you don't, next question, "Tell me a little bit about what you need? What could we be doing differently?" And you can use the functions where people vote up or vote down, you'll start to see the crowd trend and let the people tell you. So, if you're out there thinking, "I don't know where to get started," to me that would be a place to get started, a really practical place.

Juliet: I want to build on that because I think the other side to that, Christina, and I absolutely agree with you, is that you can also ask people, and I regularly do this, "What are the small acts of inclusion that you're seeing around you?" And you really want to celebrate and amplify those because people are doing good things every day.

Burt: Wonderful, wonderful.

Jeff: Let me pick up on a couple of themes that we're exploring in this belonging discussion. One of the questions that we've been discussing is the dynamics of belonging from different perspectives. And this year's report is all organized around paradoxes and paradoxes as a way forward. And when we started talking about some of the trends in purpose including belonging and the trends around well-being and the trends around what we've called the post-generational workforce, we really were struggling in a proactive way with the dynamic of individuality and collective behavior, and it's not a very simple question. And what we're looking at is all the different dimensions of how we can help individuals in the work and the work life environments that we're creating, and we've talked about safety, connection, contribution, for example.

We've talked briefly about the benefits of

that to the organization. I think we're starting to talk about, and we've touched on in this discussion, that there is a societal and a social and a political dimension here as well. And one of the opportunities that we have, especially in 2020 and 2021, as these issues are moving to the front burner, hopefully they will stay on the front burner, is to really push ourselves to open up these questions much more deeply and in much more meaningful ways. And I think the challenge for us as business leaders sometimes is we get defensive. When we start listening to whether it's our employees and our workforce and the members of our communities and our customers, and we hear their perspectives, we very quickly want to go into what I would call a defensive mode. But we have this program and we have initiative and we're trying to do that.

And if I could be so bold as to sort of ask both business leaders and organizational leaders and individuals for a takeaway, it's, what else can we do? And I would be interested, Christina, for you and Juliet, to sort of share some perspectives on, how do we keep that energy up and how do we keep this discussion on the front burner versus sort of back sliding a little bit to, "We've got a program for that. Let's move on"?

Christina: Well, I would say, I think we need to support each other, and we need to be very intentional that when you start to feel that drop within your team or your organization, that somebody brings it back up to the surface. I think it's just going to be so important that we keep at this until it becomes part of the organizational fabric. I would love to see a future where it's safe for anyone at any level of the organization to just stop and say, "Hey, you know what? Just wanted to let you know how that landed. Maybe we could have said that a different way." Or, "You know what? What you just said right there, I felt really great about that. That made me feel like I really belong," and then just keep on moving, where it's not something that triggers defense, where it's not something that triggers a big deal and the slow clap either, where it's just part of the fabric of the way we operate. And until we feel like we've achieved that as an organization,

and as a society, it's going to be up to every single one of us to just keep pushing it back to the front.

Burt: Juliet, thoughts?

Juliet: I think there is a moment for leaders to do some deep self-reflection on their own positions of privilege and recognizing that where we all get to is, to some degree, our capability but to others are privilege and luck. And once again, as I say, not outsourcing it to HR or a program, what can we do on the side? But what do I need to do to lead differently? And when I say lead differently, I don't just mean the grand gesture, which is standing up at the town hall and sort of extolling the wonderful things that we are doing in this organization. But what I do mean is the small things that those leaders are doing. And when I speak to leaders, they were saying, "I've really done some reflection and I've thought, you know what? I've never once spoken about racial diversity. It's not been on my lips. I've spoken about gender, I've spoken about LGBTI, but I've never really spoken about that, and I need to. I need to step up and say, 'I don't know enough.' Or, 'I need to,'" as Christina said, "ask other people questions and seek their answers." So I think that the pathway to change starts from each person as an individual and that person using their positional power or their influencing power to encourage others who haven't done that self-reflection to say, "Well, here's what I'm doing. What are you doing?"

Christina: I agree. And I would also say, it sometimes becomes overwhelming when we think about all that has to be done. But I just really like your concept of those small acts of inclusion, because every leader could do something right this second today, tomorrow. And it doesn't involve a big budget and it doesn't involve a team or a project plan. These are the things that if everybody just started to make some changes today, that we'd actually see quite a big movement in a very short amount of time.

Juliet: Yeah. I love that sort of accumulated collective actions. And I'm sure you do this too, Christina. When I'm working with groups of people, I get them to all identify what's

one thing that we as leaders could all agree upon that we're going to do? And one leader last week was saying, was suggesting to their group, "You know what? We're going to do a bubble burst. And that is, every time we get project teams together to do something, we're going to recognize this is a bubble.

And we're going to ask someone to come in from a different area. It could be a different perspective, could be a different ethnicity. It could be any aspect of difference and burst our bubble and be part of our conversation."

And then she was saying, "Okay, let's do this as a group." And there were 10 people on that call. And if they had all taken up, from now on, we're going to use this language of bubble burst. In this particular moment, a project team moment, we're always going to ask ourselves, "Do we need to burst our bubble?" And we will then always reach out to someone else to be part of it. Now, imagine the collective impact that's going to have on that organization.

Christina: Tremendous. The outcomes are going to be better. There will be more of them. Just higher quality, and people will feel safe. They'll be able to give more ideas if it becomes safe and you just know your bubble's going to be burst. I love it.

Juliet: And back to language, right? Now we've got a shared language that we don't want to be, of course we could talk about it as an echo chamber or something like that. Let's not be an echo chamber. But finding very everyday language, "Are we in a, do we need to burst our bubble right now?" And anyone can say that, and it becomes acceptable. "Yeah, we do. Come on. Let's get someone else in here."

Burt: Yeah. I can think of a lot of moments in history when I wish somebody had burst their bubble.

Juliet: Now that is English understatement.

Burt: I did do a genealogy thing and it revealed that I was half British. I didn't realize that. My DNA. It's coming out. Oh boy. Well, this has been a fascinating and really thoughtful and amazing conversation. And I

surely appreciate each of you taking the time to speak with us. Maybe we could just get one last thought to kind of summarize what your takeaways are for our audience? What one would thing you say, "Try this. Go do this." Juliet?

Juliet: Well, I do think Christina started in a good place, and that is to talk to other people, to ask other people, and the two sides of it. Which is ask other people, "What more could I do?" And also, "What are good things that you're seeing around you that I can amplify?" So, I do you think it does start with listening. And then I do think at the end of the day, there are some reinforcing rods, which are actually about metrics. What actually are you measuring here? And do you need to change those metrics so that they're reinforcing this desire to create an environment of belonging?

Burt: I love that because I think metrics is a concept that we all believe in. It forces us to think about, well, what are the outcomes that we want? And what is the evidence of the outcome that we want? And it forces us to be more intentional about the process to get there. Absolutely.

Christina: And I would also say, too, to make sure that we're doing some reasonable digging in the metrics that we're bringing home. Sometimes when our organizations do have very homogeneous groups, it's not that hard to get pretty good belonging scores. So, it's really important to look not just at the number, but also the comments and the different ideas that come back. Just to make sure you're doing a reality check and not just resting your laurels on what you see in those initial numbers.

Burt: Yeah. Maybe don't always take yes as an answer.

Christina: Yes.

Burt: Though I will take yes for an answer in that case. Jeff, your thoughts? Summary.

Jeff: Well, this has been a great discussion, and I'll end with this reflection because Juliet asked me to reflect as a leader. So, we're

all thinking about that. My hope is that the takeaway that business leaders have and organizational leaders have, and individuals have, is that we deeply reflect on actually what's happening around belonging. How it's impacting us as individuals, our teams, our organizations, and our society. And that we recognize whether it's the trends data that we've seen or what we're seeing in our communities and our societies now, that we're probably not doing enough. Because, as Juliet said, we can't outsource it to somebody else. We can't shift it to a program that is off to the side that somebody else is looking at. It needs to be part of the way that we live, the way that we interact, the way that we listen, and I think the challenge for us in 2020 and 2021 is to stay in this energized state if we can, and to do more than we've been doing. Because, we knew in 2019 and 2020, this is important. We're energized about it, I think, in society. How do we actually make this part of the way that we live and we lead? It's a huge challenge for us. It's a huge challenge for us and an opportunity going forward. And a great discussion that's coming out of the trends that we're looking at in 2020.

Juliet: I want to build on that just one second. I know I'm getting a second bite at the cherry here, but I just, if I threw out that challenge to leaders to say, every time you're in a moment that matters, let's call that recruiting graduates, where you're doing the welcome introduction or you're doing a town hall, let's just call it a moment that matters for leaders. Every time they're in one of those moments, make sure that at least once you talk about belonging, so that's your personal metric is to bring that into. And you may be thinking, I'm talking about a merger and acquisition here. How could I be talking about belonging? But throw yourself that challenge, because is this the right merger and acquisition to take us on our path to belonging? Do they have the right culture to bring us into our organization? So that would be my challenge to people. Have that frame on every moment that matters and see where it takes you.

Christina: It's a lovely challenge, and it's a great closer.

Burt: It's an awesome perspective. Thank you. Well, Juliet, Christina, Jeff, thank you very much for being here. I have certainly learned a lot and I think our audience has too. Really appreciate your perspectives, and we'd love to continue the conversation. Thank you.

Jeff: Thank you, Burt.

Burt: Take care.

As organizations continue to invest enormous amounts of leadership focus, energy, and resources to ensure people feel respected and are treated fairly at work, leaders have the opportunity to build on comfort, to encourage connection and contribution, to enable a sense of belonging that can improve organizational performance. Thanks to my colleagues Jeff Schwartz, Juliet Bourke, and Christina Brodzik, for sharing their perspective on belonging, and thanks again to Bob Gibbs from NASA. To learn more about the Human Capital Trends, you can find the report online at www.deloitte.com/HCTrends. We hope you enjoyed today's episode, and join us next time as we continue to explore the topics and trends that put humans at the center of work.



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