

Inclusion: The *HOW* for the Next Organizational Breakthrough

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What is Inclusion as the *HOW*®?

Many organizations have undertaken inclusion efforts as a program or initiative. When organizations see Inclusion as a *HOW* they understand that Inclusion is a way of interacting that underpins everything the organization does: how it develops strategy, sets goals, makes decisions, runs meetings, solves problems, and engages people. Viewed this way, inclusion is not a “nice thing to do” but rather **an essential lever** for achieving higher operational performance and accelerating bottom-line results.

When organizations define Inclusion as the *HOW*, they understand the importance of an environment where people feel respected, valued, and seen for who they are; one where there is supportive energy and commitment from leaders, colleagues, and others so that everyone can contribute and do their best work, both individually and collectively. The focus shifts from over-reliance on a few people to always ensuring the right people are doing the right work at the right time. People reject old mindsets of judging and embrace joining as the default for interaction, assuming everyone is working for the collective good of the organization. They share common language and processes that make interactions more effective and speed results.

Every massive social change calls for a breakthrough in the way organizations work. Rarely has such a breakthrough been more urgently needed than today.

Why? Because the need for change is so profound. Competitive advantage is shifting fast, and the need for improvement is continuous. Being better, faster, and more user-friendly, with more direct connections between customer and provider, is essential for success. Today’s exceptional achievement and innovation are tomorrow’s baseline. Organizations face more unknowns and unknowables in their quest to achieve sustained results. As enterprises expand globally, they are challenged with the complexity of doing business

in an environment where one size no longer fits all for customers or the workforce.

There has been a significant shift from an industrial-based economy, focused primarily on production in which people had highly segmented, routine tasks that required little brainwork to a highly competitive knowledge era, in which the need for people to connect with one another and to unleash their ideas, thinking, and creativity are keys to success. In this era of knowledge and connection, organizations need everyone to contribute their thinking, abilities, and broad range of perspectives in order to solve problems and implement actions.

Structural changes, such as Lean or Quality initiatives, have shaped the organizational redesign of processes and reduced waste, but those can only move an organization so far. The next breakthrough involves the interactions between people—HOW they Join together to have Right First Time interactions as they solve problems, make decisions, innovate, implement projects, execute objectives and generally do business to optimize and accelerate organizational performance and results.

The Power of Inclusion as the *HOW*

One of the fundamental elements for sustainable operational results involves workplace interactions:

how people interact with each other, the dominant styles that are reinforced in a million informal ways each day, and the mindsets and behaviors that drive people. These interactions define how the organization functions. No matter how much a new program or procedure is reinforced, it won't succeed if it is at odds with how people interact in the organization. The ways in which people are comfortable interacting will trump policy and strategy every time, unless people see it in their best interest to interact differently.

In the past, people were rewarded for getting business results by any means; in contrast, an organization that implements Inclusion as the *HOW* understands that *HOW* a task is achieved has significant impact on the short and long term sustainability of the work itself and on organization viability. There is an acknowledgment that the more people are engaged, the more they will contribute not only their primary energy, but their discretionary energy and ideas.

Inclusion is...

A sense of belonging:

Feeling respected, valued, and seen for who we are as individuals;

There is a level of supportive energy and commitment from leaders, colleagues, and others so that we—individually and collectively—can do our best work.

An Inclusion as the *HOW* organization also recognizes that no one can succeed in today's environment through her or his efforts alone—or through the efforts of a select few. In the past, it was acceptable to utilize and “go to” the same people to solve every problem. The result is that organizations fail to tap into all existing talent, wasting some people's talent and overburdening others. Some people never receive opportunities to grow, develop, and stretch while others “burn out” or leave. With Inclusion as the *HOW*, by contrast, leaders recognize that talent and ideas reside at all levels and within all people. The challenge is how to tap into the wisdom that resides throughout the organization.

Often, what prevents many people from being able to do their best work, both individually and collectively, is a sense of not being included in the flow of the organization, particularly related to issues that affect them or issues on which they have valuable perspective and expertise. They feel their ideas and perspectives do not matter and are not particularly wanted. They experience pressure to keep differing points of view to themselves, simply do what they are told, and leave the thinking and decision making to those at the top or the “chosen few.” At a time when organizations need everyone's ideas to address complex problems, where there are many unknowns and unknowables, that mindset is at odds with what is needed for success.

Several important elements distinguish an organization that uses Inclusion as the *HOW*:

- **People adopt a Joining mindset.** People recognize the need to Join others to achieve goals, rather than to Judge others, which slows down actions and creates barriers to working effectively together.
- **People are respected.** Regardless of job title, seniority, identity, or other characteristics, everyone in the organization is treated with dignity and honor. There is respect for people's time, talents, needs, and life outside the organization.
- **People are valued.** Every person is an important member of the organization whose contributions are essential for overall success.
- **People are seen.** There is no need to hide elements of one's identity or not share experiences in order to “fit in.” People are not put in a box because of their title, role, experience, or identity. Inclusion as the *HOW* acknowledges and values who people are and sees their background and experiences as providing organizational capability.
- **People speak up.** People feel safe to share their ideas. Contributing ideas and perspectives is expected and seen as essential for leveraging the talents of all

members of the organization.

- **People offer peer-to-peer leadership.** While a managerial hierarchy may still be in place, it is understood that leadership and expertise exist at every level in the organization—titled or non-titled—and that each member has influence and knowledge to bring to work teams and day-to-day interactions.
- **People are willing to Be BIG, step out, and be bold.** Individuals are no longer hiding and waiting for others to initiate. They take leadership where and how they can.
- **People use common language.** Inclusive language and Conscious Actions for Inclusion are the standard for enabling understanding and quickly building trust.
- **Meetings are Inclusive.** Inclusive Meeting Norms are commonly used across the organization to reduce waste in meetings and interactions.

Breaking Through: Inclusion as the *HOW* for Higher Performance

A result of Inclusion as the *HOW* is that breakthroughs in operational, individual, and team performance occur daily. Rather than an endpoint in itself, it is a means to an end. It is how organizations can continually raise the bar on performance and

perpetuate an environment that is as limitless and resourceful as its collective membership. It establishes new mindsets and expectations for how people treat each other and get results. The resulting workforce is one that is more connected, one in which people Join with one another to accomplish the organization's objectives.

Inclusion as the *HOW* enables people to focus on Joining with others to create the partnerships necessary to achieve collective goals, rather than primarily on reporting relationships, as the cornerstone of who and what matters. They no longer treat one another with caution, defensiveness, second-guessing and Judging. Instead, with a Joining mindset in place, they are focused on solving complex problems and ensuring the right people are included to have *Right First Time* interactions. As they make connections, information flows across traditional organizational boundaries and establishes more holistic work interactions. People begin to value how their work connects to the work of others.

Inclusion as the *HOW*, in short, breaks down the silos that so often act as barriers to effectively addressing organizational challenges and achieving goals. It also removes the walls that limit people's ability to engage effectively with others.

In their place, the Conscious Actions for Inclusion (see sidebar to the right) and Inclusive Meeting Norms (see sidebar

next page) provide a common language that both clarifies and opens the door for more effective interactions.

Effective partnerships can only take hold when trust, valuing, and respect are a part of everyday

12 Conscious Actions for Inclusion

1. **Lean into Discomfort.** Be willing to challenge self and others. Speak up—bring your voice and street corner.
2. **Listen as an Ally.** Listen, listen, listen and engage. Be a partner. Challenge as an Ally.
3. **State Your Intent and Intensity.** Clarify intent: State Notions, Stakes, Boulders, and Tombstones. Say what you mean and how much you mean it.
4. **Share Street Corners.** Accept others' thoughts and experiences as true for them. Hear others' differences as additive.
5. **Greet people authentically—say "hello."**
6. **Create a sense of safety for yourself and your team members.**
7. **Work for the common good and shared success.**
8. **Ensure right people, right work, right time:** Ask who else needs to be involved to understand the whole situation.
9. **Link to others' ideas, thoughts, and feelings—give energy back.**
10. **Speak up when people are being made "small" or excluded.**
11. **Address misunderstandings and resolve disagreements—work "pinches."**
12. **Build TRUST:** Do what you say you will do and honor confidentiality.

mindsets and behaviors. Without a sense of belonging and a feeling that each person matters and makes a difference, connections cannot be formed, and collaboration and idea-sharing are hampered.

that are needed to meet and exceed customer and marketplace expectations.

Inclusive Meeting Norms

1. Right People, Right Work, Right Time

Ask who else needs to be involved to understand the whole situation.

2. Hellos and Connecting

3. Review Standard Work Agenda (SWA)

4. Share a Success Story - Sign of Progress

What are we doing well?

5. Buddy List

Who is not here? Track comings and goings.

6. Critical Connections

Conversations we need to have outside of the meeting.

7. Have the Right conversations to make the Right decisions

8. Review Action Items

How the meeting went; Give energy back.

References

Katz, J.H., and Miller, F.A. (2008). *Be BIG: Step up, step out, be bold.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Miller, F.A., and Katz, J.H. (2002). *The inclusion breakthrough: Unleashing the real power of diversity.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Conclusion

Organizations will always have goals, objectives, and problems to solve. The question becomes how to solve those issues and how to do it quickly. When an organization creates an environment where Inclusion is the HOW—a common language with common practices—it enables everyone to contribute and do their best work. By setting inclusion as the standard for how people interact and how work gets done, the doors to trust, understanding, and collaboration open, creating the breakthroughs