

Inclusify

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Tags: [#diversity](#) [#inclusion](#)

Dialogue

Distinction between diversity inclusion

Key point --> two most basic human drives: to be unique and to belong

Most leaders miss out on one or the other of these two ingredients and end up with either cohesive teams of people who all act similarly or a lot of diverse individuals who don't gel.

What's the difference between organizations that do both?

Let's explore Optimists

People settle in when they think things are working, so the problem with Optimists is that they lack the intention and motivation to initiate real change unless something triggers them to do so.

Challenge --> when you get a diverse organization, you're done

Moving from optimist to inclusifyer

As one man, Rob, from a professional services firm pointed out, the difference between an Optimist and an Inclusifyer is "pretty basic. Fundamentally, it's just actually talking about it.

Obstacle --> It will fix itself over time

Key area --> Hiring practices (Hubble example, faculty)

Key area --> Fly in front of the radar by becoming more vocal

One of the first steps Optimists can take to move into becoming Inclusifyers is to be more public with their commitment to championing uniqueness and belonging.

Key --> metrics

How do you keep from being transactional?

What's the power of the leader doing this?

What have you changed your mind on?

Reserve

Key point --> choose equity over equality

Quotes

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I uncovered the two skills that the best leaders had in common. First, they embrace different perspectives and backgrounds. Second, they fit all the unique pieces together to create a cohesive, interdependent team with a shared purpose. Together, this set of behaviors enables people to do what I call Inklusify. Unlike “diversifying” or “including,” Inklusifying implies a continuous, sustained effort toward helping diverse teams feel engaged, empowered, accepted, and valued.

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Inklusifying is the leadership skill of tomorrow, but you can capitalize on it today. It starts with understanding the two most basic human drives: to be unique and to belong. In other words, we want both to stand out and to fit in; to be singularly ourselves but also to be part of the collective We.

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Of course, these two ingredients have an inherent tension: being your unique self is easy if you don't have to interact with people who are different from you, and creating a team is straightforward if everyone on the team is the same. Because of this tension, most leaders miss out on one or the other of these two ingredients and end up with either cohesive teams of people who all act similarly or a lot of diverse individuals who don't gel.

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I learned lessons from what I gleaned during my interviews with business leaders and have translated them here so that anyone can learn to be an Inklusifier. My interviews revealed eight key behaviors exhibited by Inklusifying leaders. Four of them focus on supporting uniqueness (or the SELF) and four of them focus on enhancing belonging (or the TEAM). Throughout this book we'll explore these concepts in depth.

Chapter 1: The Power of Uniqueness and Belonging

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Everyone feels like an outsider every now and again. Think of a time when you walked into a room where there was a social gathering of the opposite sex; imagine walking in on an all-men's cigar party or poker game if you are a woman or imagine walking in on an all-women's baby shower or book club if you are a man (please excuse the stereotypical gender norms). Or think about how odd it might feel to be the one white person sitting at a dinner with a group of black, Asian, Middle Eastern, or Latino people. Or consider how it feels or would feel to be the only straight person at a gay bar. Women, POC, WOC, and LGBTQ people experience this all the time in the workplace. I am no stranger to that feeling. As a female professor in a top business school, I am often the only woman in the meeting room. For some time, I was the only woman in my department (and definitely the only Latina).

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The thing about leaders is that they have the power to ensure that people are not left out—the power to create space for everyone to be welcomed and be a part of the team even if they are different. That's how leaders create belonging, by welcoming people to fit in while supporting them in their desire to stand out.

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Furthermore, in one of the greatest advances in gender and identity theory over the last fifty years, Kimberlé Crenshaw developed the idea of intersectionality, pointing out that you cannot understand one identity (such as being black) without understanding other identities (such as being a woman) so that being a black woman is something different from just the combination of being black and being a woman. ⁴ Indeed, such intersections greatly affect how we are viewed by others and how we view ourselves. ⁵ Individuals with intersectional identities are constantly trying to navigate the complexities of fitting in or standing out in multiple competing ways.

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Pretending that we don't see race or gender is actually hurtful to people of color, women of color, and women. First, if you don't see race, for example, what do you see when you meet an Asian person? To me, if you don't see their race it means "I don't view you as less than; I see you as white." But can you see how that is insulting? It suggests that white is the norm and the ideal. Second, seeing everyone as being the same actually denies people their basic human need of uniqueness. I think of my race and gender as something that adds value to the conversation, rather than something that should be ignored. Third, ignoring gender or race denies the fact that someone might have experienced sexism or racism in the past. And to negate those experiences sends the signal that you don't care about that person.

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The first step any leader needs to take to pivot from being a well-intentioned leader to one who is making change is to admit that he or she has unconscious bias. To be fair, all leaders have unconscious bias, which is, simply stated, a mental association that is stored in your mind without your conscious awareness.

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As the Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman described in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, quick, heuristic processing is needed in order to make sense of the world. He suggests that we all have two systems for decision-making: a heuristic, emotional system (System 1) and a more effortful, rational system (System 2). When we are making quick decisions, it is simply easiest to rely on System 1 because we have so much information to contend with. But this fast system makes errors because it is based primarily on cognitive stereotypes.

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To start you on the path to overcoming your biases, I have created the ABCs of Breaking Bias: Admit it, Block it, Count it.

Chapter 3: Three Lessons to Put You on the Path to Inclusifying

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Three Lessons You Need to Know There are three foundational points to remember before Inclusifying: First, the playing field is not level; people have to travel different distances to get to the same place. Second, entrenched systems can inhibit your diversity and inclusion efforts. And third, we are living in a post-# MeToo world.

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Many people insist that it is easy to ignore people's background information or argue that it is unfair to hold candidates' relative advantages against them when making hiring or promotion decisions. But I argue that this is a red herring. Even if you don't care about social justice and improving inequality, your organization will be better off hiring people who have achieved more with less because they demonstrate a wealth of skills that will serve your organization.

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The analogy of flights is easy. You can't argue with physics. But when it comes to people, the forces propelling people forward or pushing them back are much harder to see. Kids who have to pay their own way through college might take longer to finish school, but that says nothing about their intelligence or performance; it just means that they faced headwinds. So when those kids make it from New York to Los Angeles in five hours despite the headwinds, I call them "Jets": they flew faster, harder, and smarter than other kids. They are the type of people I want in my team, my organization, and my life.

Chapter 4: Meritocracy Manager: How Can Merit Be Bad?

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The recent college admissions scandals I mentioned earlier, in which high-profile celebrities and other wealthy parents paid a fake nonprofit to buy their kids' way into some of the top schools in the country, clearly showed that not all credentials are earned. And if it's possible that some people succeed by methods other than merit, couldn't it also be possible that some people who have tons of merit were unfairly blocked from achieving their goals? Isn't it possible that the system is not totally fair? It may not be intentional, but the subtle decision to ignore the instances when merit fails and luck (or outright cheating) prevails is what leads Meritocracy Managers to justify a lack of diversity and to dismiss injustice as an unfortunate but intractable part of society.

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The results were staggering. Black applicants were half as likely to receive a callback or job offer, though they were equally as qualified as the white applicants. Furthermore, black and Latino applicants with no criminal records fared no better than white applicants just released from prison. 1 This means that the status loss of just being nonwhite is similar to that of being a convicted criminal.

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They found that when participants evaluated the résumés with meritocracy in mind, they rated the male applicant more positively than they rated the female applicant, despite the fact that the candidates were identical. The results indicate that when you tell people to hire on the basis of meritocracy, they actually favor white men. When they told individuals that an organization valued meritocracy—rewarding people in accordance with their performance—they responded by favoring a male employee over an equally qualified female employee. Making a hiring decision based on meritocracy caused them to adopt very unmeritocratic decision-making by giving an unfair advantage to men! 3
INCLUSIFYING ACTION: Delete the word meritocracy.

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If you believe, even unconsciously, that women, POC, WOC, and LGBTQ are not as competent as white men (we call this pro-white man bias), anytime you hire someone who is not a white man, you will believe that you have lowered the bar or engaged in affirmative action. In fact, experiments show that unless it can be proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that a woman or POC was the best candidate for a job or that a company is firmly against affirmative action, people will infer that any nonwhites or women at the company benefited from affirmative action.

Chapter 5: Leadership Strategies for Meritocracy Managers

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So if you're sold on becoming an Inclusifyer, I will share a couple of first steps to take toward becoming one: (1) work to enhance fairness by anonymizing assessments and (2) focus on being clearer about how decisions are made by using aggressive transparency. Anonymizing assessments increases perceptions of fairness (the F in SELF), which supports uniqueness, whereas being transparent (the T in TEAM) about processes helps people feel that they belong.

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The leader who championed this effort was Kenneth Sembach, the director of the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) and a professor at Johns Hopkins University. As someone who had worked hard for his position, publishing more than 170 articles in peer-reviewed journals, he believed in meritocracy. But unlike a Meritocracy Manager, he also recognized the potential for a less-than-meritocratic system because of bias.

"Certain people have privilege [tailwinds]," he told me at the Hubble Space Telescope offices on Johns Hopkins's Maryland campus. "Maybe it's the school you are at or your past successes, being part of a successful team. All of these things affect how reviewers rate an application. We are not trying to select the people who had the most success in the past; we want to give telescope time to people who have the best ideas for the future, ideas that no one has ever considered or had the technology to test." When the proposals were anonymized, women outperformed men by almost 1 percent. Though 1 percent may not sound like a lot, with that one change, the bias was broken.

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The data did not only convince me—I'm always aware of the possibility of bias against women. It also convinced people all across the astronomy community—so much so that in 2019, NASA announced that it, too, would adopt the anonymized process.

Anonymizing assessments for selection and promotion: Remove names from applications before evaluating them. Create a list of the best-qualified candidates versus the nominated candidates for promotion. Compare the lists and look for diversity disparities. When Meritocracy Managers anonymize assessments, their unconscious biases might start to become conscious ones.

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This suggests that information should be pushed out to employees on a regular basis. 17 You should tell people: When you are making a decision What you decide Who are the people involved Who is affected The researchers also suggest sharing company benchmarks, processes, and practices and, even more important, getting input on those decisions.

Chapter 6: Culture Crusader: The Curse of Crusading While Homogeneous

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In a study of GitHub programmers, scientists compared the performance of teams with two members who had worked together previously to those with members who had not. The diverse duos—who had not previously worked together—performed nearly eight times as well as those who had more experience working together. 1 Working with new people translates to better performance.

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INCLUSIFYING ACTION: You wouldn't program in MS-DOS; learn the language.

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It seems pretty obvious that there is no room for hate language in Inclusified businesses, but there are more subtle ways that language can hurt. Hateful terms such as "bitch" and "battle-ax" are used to disparage women, but even language that sounds endearing can undermine them. Calling women "sweet," "playful," "darling," or anything that sounds as though you're talking about a kid is outdated.

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No Girls Allowed One quick way to sound more Inclusified is to stop calling women "girls." An accountant named Todd told me, "I've heard some of our senior partners . . . they'll be talking with a client and say, 'She's a great girl,' in reference to one of our young female staff. She just went from twenty-three to five. And it's already hard for a twenty-three-year-old to establish themselves in front of an executive. They didn't mean anything by it, but every word matters." But when Todd told a senior partner that he shouldn't call the female staff "girls," the exec blew Todd off, saying that he's old and to him they are girls. They are as young as his daughter.

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Would he have said, "He's a great boy," had I been male? Of course not, because that would have made me sound juvenile. Yet women are diminished to "girls" in the workplace every day.

Chapter 14: Optimist: Positivity Without Action Does Not Get Results

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The Optimist was the most interesting find in my leadership research. I heard a lot of leaders talk about all of the great things they were doing to build belonging and all of their efforts to highlight uniqueness. They would use phrases such as "I want everyone to be their best self" and "I want them to bring their whole self to work." "I do things to build up the team. We had a Diwali party." They seemed to believe there was nothing left to do. But when I interviewed their team members, I got a different story: "I'm not sure if he cares about diversity and inclusion. I mean, he never directly talks about it." And: "I don't know if he really wants different viewpoints. I think he'd rather have clones

of himself, but our team is diverse.”

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People settle in when they think things are working, so the problem with Optimists is that they lack the intention and motivation to initiate real change unless something triggers them to do so.

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It feels good to be an Optimist because you can support uniqueness and belonging without alienating any group. It is also easy to be an Optimist because you don't need to put a lot of effort into making change; instead, you get to rest in the comfort of complacency. In other words, you simply maintain the status quo. You stay comfortable. The preference for doing the same thing because it's always more appealing than making a change is called the status quo bias. Think about the way you hired the last people at your organization. Why did you do it that way? Was it because it was how you had always done it?

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Almost universally, we believe that the way we have done something in the past is a sound justification for continuing to do it that way in the future. Optimists are no different. It's just that instead of not wanting to change the way things are done because they don't believe in change at all, they don't want to change things because they naively assume that enough has already been done and things will naturally get better on their own.

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One CEO I worked with who had a very diverse board assured me that inclusion at his organization had happened naturally “over the last fifteen to twenty years.” You have to take small steps, goes the Optimist's thinking. It takes decades to make real change. Only someone not affected by biases could possibly be satisfied waiting that long to feel included and welcomed. If you and your teams want to wait 170 years to have equality (that is what the World Economic Forum estimates it will take to have gender parity; it is longer for race), just sit back and remain optimistic. But if you want to see change in your lifetime, you need to start taking action.

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As one man, Rob, from a professional services firm pointed out, the difference between an Optimist and an Inclusifyer is “pretty basic. Fundamentally, it's just actually talking about it.

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In countries where opting in is the status quo—you have to check a box to opt out—about 98 percent of people donate their organs. In countries where opting out is the

norm, only 15 percent of people donate. He argues that it is the way the question is phrased that influences the decision. If you believe that organ donation is the norm, you will assume that it is the right thing to do, there are no risks, and you will donate. If you assume that it is not the norm, you are less likely to choose to donate. 1 The problem is that the same feeling of accepting the norm applies to making change in organizations with regard to uniqueness and belonging. Going with the norm feels a lot better than making a dramatic change or having to take a stand.

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(in my view, the CEO is also the chief diversity officer, even if there is a formally named CDO).

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Paula Dressel of the Race Matters Institute says, "The route to achieving equity will not be accomplished through treating everyone equally. It will be achieved by treating everyone justly according to their circumstances."

Chapter 15: Leadership Strategies for Optimists

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Then she came to the realization that optimism is not going to change society. Her words were poignant and eloquent: "The reality is that the 'It will fix itself over time' mentality doesn't work if every generation and every subsequent leader says 'It will fix itself over time.'

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She summed up her transition from Optimist to Inclusifyer by saying, "If you are not uncomfortable, you are probably not pushing yourself hard enough. It's a constant, active process of building a more diverse workforce, but then building the inclusive spaces that people need in order to continue to be successful, to feel satisfied, engaged, rewarded."

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One of the first steps Optimists can take to move into becoming Inclusifyers is to be more public with their commitment to championing uniqueness and belonging.

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All of the employees I interviewed at Crowe agreed that Powers' stance on diversity was sending a clear message and that message was trickling down to affect other managers' behavior. Ray Calvey, audit partner at Crowe, told me, "Part of what the CEO has said is that he wants people to be active advocates for diversity and inclusion. Some people say, 'Well, I'm not against it.' That's great you're not against it, but Jim challenges us to ask, 'What am I doing to promote it?' Those are two very different things. For example, on my team, I set a goal that we were going to increase our overall diversity around race

and gender over a three-year period. So, we measured ourselves on it: Are we getting more diverse, or are we not?

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Even though diversity initiatives have profound impact on bottom-line outcomes for organizations, many people feel uncomfortable with setting diversity goals. But the fact is, a meta-analysis (a study summarizing previously done studies) showed that setting goals was the number one most effective diversity intervention. And lots of companies have followed suit.

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Of course, setting goals is pretty meaningless without accountability, and one of the things that really differentiates Inclusifyers from Optimists is their emphasis on accountability. Just as important as having goals is having accountability around those goals. Most people aren't evil; they rely on stereotypes because it is easy to do so. So people need a compelling reason to interrupt stereotypes. Accountability is one of those reasons.

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Second, to increase accountability, the chief diversity officer required that every time a white male was hired into the company, the hiring manager would have to clarify why a woman or POC had not been hired. This might sound extreme, but he explained that for decades he had been forced to explain why and justify every woman or POC he had hired because white men had been the status quo. Hiring a woman or POC had always represented a perceived risk, so he had always had to make the case for them. What if he flipped the script and required hiring managers to justify the hiring of a white man? He found that it caused people to put a lot more thought into their hiring decisions rather than just opting for the easy choice.

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Squarespace, which has been voted the best place to work in New York for two years by Crain's New York Business, promotes belonging by focusing on a flat, open, creative culture. To help employees feel that their voices are heard and listened to, the CEO has office hours that anyone can attend. The company also hosts great events, such as a monthly new-hire social. The social is hosted in the office café/ bar area, and food, drinks, and games are provided. There is a slideshow with every new hire's photo, his or her team, and a fun fact about him or her to help get the conversation started. There is a "question of the month," such as "What's your favorite TV show theme song?" to help employees get to know one another. The company also has an annual summer party, on-site arts and crafts, life-size checkers, minigolf, and food from local vendors.

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