

Diversity is a fact; inclusion, a choice

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An organisation's competitiveness may depend on its ability to create an inclusive workplace that uses the talents of a diverse workforce. Yet many organisations struggle with this, despite [research](#) linking an 'inclusive' culture, where all talent feels valued regardless of gender, ethnic background or sexuality, to higher reported innovation and teamwork.

People who feel different from the dominant majority [can feel like outsiders](#) if they don't feel valued for their individual contribution. The consequences of this for employees and businesses can be subtle, but with damaging effects. For instance, feeling different, [Catalyst found](#), had a detrimental effect on a woman's ambitions: among women who felt racially or ethnically different, 46 per cent were more likely to downsize their aspirations, compared with 33 per cent for women who did not feel different.

Women who felt racially or ethnically different (29 per cent) were also nearly twice as likely to perceive a "great" or "very great" [negative impact on their career](#) due to a lack of visible projects, described by Catalyst as 'hot jobs' i.e., high profile assignments that can propel a high potential employee's career ahead, compared with women who did not feel different (15 per cent).

If an employee [feels 'included'](#) by an organisation, they are more likely to suggest ideas and new ways of doing work and would go above and beyond their job description to get the job done, as well as pitching in to help other colleagues.

To feel 'included', an employee needs to feel that they are valued for their 'unique' contributions, while also feeling that they 'belong'. We found this [magic formula](#), uniqueness added together with belongingness, equated to feelings of inclusion across most countries surveyed. This was apart from India, where they saw this as being one and the same thing.

There are [many benefits](#) to a company demonstrating inclusive leadership, including higher reported innovation and higher reported team citizenship amongst employees, behaviours which can have a profound impact on overall team productivity. The tone of organisations comes from the top down, and leaders are in a privileged position to

make inclusion work.

Catalyst found [four leadership behaviours](#) that are linked to inclusion, the “EACH” behaviours, standing for empowerment, accountability, courage and humility. An inclusive leader is one who is able to empower others to do their work and encourage their team to excel; they are able to show humility by sharing their mistakes and acknowledge that it’s ok to make mistakes to learn; they show courage to put personal feelings aside, take risks, and act on their principles to get the job done; and finally they are confident in their team and hold them accountable.

To become an inclusive leader, we recommend four steps:

- **Engage Others in Dialogue** – Have [a dialogue, not a debate](#). **Practice HUMILITY** by focusing on what you can learn and less on debating your point. Too often leaders are focused on winning arguments or a debate.
- **Break norms that inhibit inclusion** – **Have COURAGE** to [change the norms](#) of how business is run to become more inclusive.
- **Role model and build awareness** – [role model](#) inclusive behaviors. Inclusive leaders **EMPOWER others** to lead. Build awareness of one’s own blind spots.
- **Build Alliances** – [build connections and alliances](#) with other key influencers who are committed to inclusion and hold them ACCOUNTABLE.

Joel Peterson, Chairman of JetBlue Airways, [said](#): “People are empowered only when they are trusted.” Leaders who embody inclusive principles create innovative and dynamic workplaces where employees feel connected to and supportive of one another, and where diverse groups advance and thrive.

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