

Gartner Research

Five Things Leaders Can Do Today to be More Inclusive

Diversity & Inclusion Research Team

27 September 2019

Gartner[®]

Five Things Leaders Can Do Today to be More Inclusive

Published 27 September 2019 - ID G00712167 - 4 min read

Diversity and Inclusion Research Team

Initiatives:[Diversity and Inclusion](#) **and 2 more**

As organizations become more collaborative, a lack of inclusion will directly hurt business performance. Inclusive leaders incorporate specific practices in their daily behavior to enhance team operations. Here are five actions HR leaders can take today to make their organization more inclusive.

Introduction: As today's workplaces increasingly rely on collaboration to drive business performance, effective managers must create inclusive work environments to unlock the power of their teams' diversity. An inclusive work environment is one in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization's success. We know that inclusive leaders increase employee motivation and productivity by over 80%.¹ Although leaders recognize the importance of practicing inclusion, Gartner research shows that only 31% of employees agree their leaders promote an inclusive team environment.² How can leaders close this gap? Here is a list of five actions HR leaders can take today to make their workplaces more inclusive.

1. Support employee resource groups (ERGs). Gartner research shows that 80% of organizations have at least one ERG and, on average, ERGs receive 20% of the D&I budget – making them the single greatest line item in it. Given this investment, leaders should consider leveraging ERGs to communicate the organization's commitment to inclusion. If your organization already has an ERG, ask if you can attend their next meeting. First, attending an ERG meeting signals that leaders like you care about inclusion, and, moreover, attending can provide leaders with a new perspective on the challenges their team members face. If you don't have an active ERG at your organization, read how to [establish and develop ERGs](#) and how to [select ERG executive sponsors](#) here.

2. Use inclusive language and images. Using inclusive language and imagery ensures team members feel recognized as individuals, building a more respectful connection between leaders and employees. Some inclusive language practices you could incorporate today are saying "you all" instead of "you guys" when addressing a group of employees and using "people first" terms like "people with disabilities" rather than "the handicapped or disabled." In addition to inclusive language, inclusive imagery can help diverse employees build stronger connections with the organization. By highlighting the diverse range of team members who have achieved success within your organization, leaders can help all employees envision a career path at the organization. Organizations should consider partnering with their marketing and communications teams to ensure all images on the company's website and intranet appeal to all talent segments.

3. Build psychologically safe teams. [Psychological safety](#) plays an important role in supporting diverse and inclusive teams. One of the main ways employees experience psychological safety is when they feel included and heard by leadership. ³ Gartner research shows that feelings of psychological safety increase by 21% when frequent and open dialogue exists between employees and leaders. ⁴ Leaders can facilitate open dialogue by practicing simple gestures such as leaving your office door open while not in meetings, limiting phone use and actively listening during conversations and meetings to communicate that leaders value diverse employees' contributions and recognize their concerns.

4. Assemble diverse teams. Diverse teams provide organizations with new perspectives on issues, foster innovation, and result in better problem-solving capabilities. When assembling teams, think about the different backgrounds and perspectives each employee will bring. Leaders should consider relying on a ["cultural broker"](#) (someone with multicultural experience) to strengthen their team through the facilitation of interactions across employees from different cultural backgrounds. By building teams that are equally representative and inclusive, organizations benefit from diversity in thought and experiences.

5. Incorporate inclusion nudges in meetings. Nudges are soft, non-intrusive mental pushes that result in objective decisions and affect predictable behaviors to make them more inclusive. Here are some nudges HR leaders can incorporate into meetings to better include and unlock the power of diverse teams:

- Broaden remote team members' access and presence in meetings. Make sure to introduce them, allow them time to speak, and point out any hand-raise feature or message board for everyone to be aware.
- Ask someone who tends to dominate meetings to be the meeting's scribe and aim to rotate this role in future meetings. This allows for others to speak and encourages active listening for all participants.
- Provide equal seating at the table. If seating is too tight or some people cannot see the screen or board, rearrange everyone to ensure equal access.
- Emphasize individual employee contributions to an inclusive workplace. One way you can do this in your next meeting is by publicly recognizing an employee who practices inclusive behaviors.

Conclusion: Our research shows that inclusive leaders build teams that have higher retention rates and increased productivity compared to those led by less-inclusive leaders. By taking tactical steps to build more inclusive leaders, organizations will drive inclusion and improve overall business performance.

Recommended by the Authors

- [“Inclusive-Action Enablers \(Visa\)”](#)

While it can be challenging for organizational leaders to recognize their biases, it can be even more challenging for them to behave in an inclusive way. Learn how Visa’s L&D leaders addressed this challenge by teaching specific, small inclusion behaviors that are easy to put into action.

- [Understanding Psychological Safety: When and Why it Works](#)

Organizations that create a “psychologically safe” environment drive engagement and performance as employees feel they can bring their authentic selves to work and are more open to sharing different perspectives, thoughts and ideas. Learn how heads of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) can better partner with business leaders to identify and mitigate environmental factors that inhibit psychological safety.

- [“Reimagine HR: How Inclusion Nudges Can Augment Your Organization’s D&I Strategy”](#)

Learn from two D&I executives who implemented inclusion nudges at their organizations.

Endnotes

1. Gartner 3Q18 Global Labor Market Survey. N=22,043
2. 1Q19 Gartner Global Labor Market Survey
3. [“Understanding Psychological Safety: When and Why it Works,”](#) Gartner.
4. 2017 Gartner Culture Workforce Survey

Also recommended for Gartner clients

[How to Hold Business Leaders Accountable for D&I Outcomes](#)

[A Holistic Approach to Advancing Women in Leadership](#)

[Building Sustainable D&I](#)

[Creating Organizationwide Ownership for D&I](#)

[Diversity and Inclusion Primer for 2020](#)

This complimentary research is part of Gartner's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) resource center.

Access additional free content and coverage at gartner.com/smarterwithgartner and gartner.com.

Become a Client

Get access to this level of insight all year long — plus contextualized support for your strategic priorities — by becoming a client.

gartner.com/en/become-a-client

U.S.: 1 800 213 4848

International: +44 (0) 3331 306 809

About Gartner

Gartner, Inc. (NYSE: IT) is the world's leading research and advisory company and a member of the S&P 500. We equip business leaders with indispensable insights, advice and tools to achieve their mission-critical priorities today and build the successful organizations of tomorrow.

Our unmatched combination of expert-led, practitioner-sourced and data-driven research steers clients toward the right decisions on the issues that matter most. We are a trusted advisor and an objective resource for more than 15,000 enterprises in more than 100 countries — across all major functions, in every industry and enterprise size.

To learn more about how we help decision makers fuel the future of business, visit gartner.com.

© 2020 Gartner, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. Gartner is a registered trademark of Gartner, Inc. and its affiliates. This publication may not be reproduced or distributed in any form without Gartner's prior written permission. It consists of the opinions of Gartner's research organization, which should not be construed as statements of fact. While the information contained in this publication has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, Gartner disclaims all warranties as to the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of such information. Although Gartner research may address legal and financial issues, Gartner does not provide legal or investment advice and its research should not be construed or used as such. Your access and use of this publication are governed by [Gartner's Usage Policy](#). Gartner prides itself on its reputation for independence and objectivity. Its research is produced independently by its research organization without input or influence from any third party. For further information, see "[Guiding Principles on Independence and Objectivity](#)."

Gartner[®]