



**INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP:**

## LEADING WITH EQUITY, EMPATHY & IMPACT





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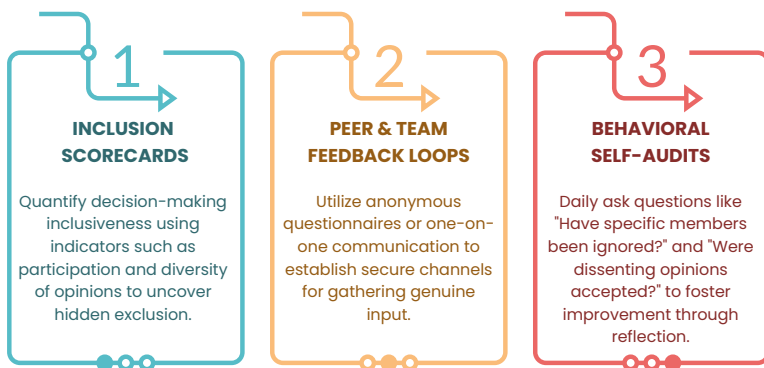
## BEYOND BIAS

# HOW INCLUSIVE LEADERS HOLD THEMSELVES ACCOUNTABLE

In today's globalized and diverse workplace, inclusive leadership lies at the core of team innovation and resilience. Its essence is in creating a psychologically safe environment where decisions and communication embrace diverse voices, as unique perspectives from different backgrounds can stimulate innovation. All of this begins with managers engaging in deep reflection on their own inherent cognition.

Unconscious biases—like an “invisible hand”—can lead managers into blind spots despite their reflective intent. For example, they may habitually focus on active participants in meetings, favor candidates with similar experiences during talent selection, or rely on personal experiences when allocating opportunities. These hidden rejections can easily result in rigid team thinking, a loss of the value that diversity brings, and even a decline in resilience to market changes.

**Three tools help managers identify these blind spots:**



Inclusive leadership starts with proactively breaking management inertia and preventing prejudice from becoming a barrier to team evolution. Choose a tool to begin measurable actions and let diverse voices drive your team's resilient growth.



**Jojo Wang**  
Director of Audit,  
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# THE ARCHITECTURE OF ACCESS: INCLUSIVE LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

Talent is everywhere, opportunity is not. When learning and development programs are shaped by unconscious bias, organizational silos, or legacy systems, they tend to benefit those already positioned for success – resulting in a compounding cycle of exclusion.

To truly lead together, organizations must intentionally design inclusive learning systems – systems that don't just exist, but actively work for everyone. As leaders, we need to move beyond considering only the ROI of learning initiatives, but rather shift our focus towards the RTI (Real-Time-Impact).

## Why does Equity matter in L&D?

- Fosters innovation by incorporating diverse perspectives
- Improves retention, especially for underrepresented talent
- Builds a future-ready workforce
- Enhances trust and psychological safety within teams

Consider where your organization stands on the below checklist, and start moving towards greater inclusion in your talent development initiatives.

## CHECKLIST

### UNIVERSAL ACCESS & BUILD

- ☐ Do we offer a wide range of learning formats and schedules?
- ☐ Are all employees aware of the learning opportunities available, and are they equally accessible to all employees, regardless of grade or location?
- ☐ Do our learning programs account for different learning paces, communication styles, and special needs?

### TRANSPARENT PATHWAYS

- ☐ Do we have a documented L&D strategy that prioritizes equity?
- ☐ Are learning pathways mapped with transparent progression milestones?
- ☐ Is our nomination or selection process transparent and criteria-based?

### MEASUREMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

- ☐ Do we track L&D participation by demographic data?
- ☐ Are promotion and advancement metrics analyzed for equity gaps?
- ☐ Do managers receive training to identify and reduce bias in development opportunities?

### DIVERSE MENTORSHIP & SPONSORSHIP

- ☐ Are diverse leaders visibly involved as mentors or sponsors?
- ☐ Do mentorship programs match across levels and lived experiences, not just seniority?
- ☐ Is reverse mentoring encouraged to give voice to underrepresented groups?

### CULTURE & FEEDBACK

- ☐ Are learning programs tied to career growth aspects like promotion readiness, mobility, or stretch assignments?
- ☐ Have we co-designed elements of our L&D strategy with inputs from diverse employees?
- ☐ Do employees feel psychologically safe to request development support and share their candid feedback on learning experiences?



**Keertana Srinivasan**  
Regional Manager



## HIRING FOR BELONGING:

# Rethinking Recruitment for Inclusion



**Inclusion doesn't begin on Day 1—it starts the moment a candidate reads your job post.** To build truly inclusive workplaces, leaders must reframe recruitment as the first gateway to belonging. Here's how to embed inclusion at every stage of the hiring process:

01

**STEP 1: AUDIT THE JOB DESCRIPTION**

- Use gender-neutral, inclusive language. Avoid phrases like “rockstar” or “digital native” that may alienate certain groups.
- Focus on must-have skills rather than wish lists—studies show women and underrepresented groups apply only when they meet 100% of the criteria.

02

**STEP 2: DIVERSIFY SOURCING CHANNELS**

- Go beyond traditional platforms. Partner with organizations that work with underrepresented communities.
- Tap into internal employee networks to reach diverse talent pools.

03

**STEP 3: DESIGN AN INCLUSIVE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

- Train interviewers to recognize and mitigate unconscious bias.
- Ensure interview panels are diverse and representative of your workforce.
- Standardize interview questions to ensure consistency and fairness.

04

**STEP 4: CENTER BELONGING IN CONVERSATIONS**

- Ask candidates about their preferred ways of working or communication styles.
- Share how your company supports inclusion through policies, mentorship, and feedback loops.
- Signal psychological safety from the start—candidates notice.

05

**STEP 5: CREATE A WELCOMING ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE**

- Assign a cultural onboarding buddy or mentor for underrepresented hires.
- Include inclusive policies, values, and language in your onboarding materials.
- Schedule early feedback check-ins to ensure new hires feel heard and supported



**Radhika Dahiya**  
Associate Consultant

**Rethinking recruitment isn't just a hiring tactic—it's a culture strategy.** When leaders design hiring for belonging, they don't just fill roles—they expand the table and invite everyone to bring their full selves to work.





# PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY ISN'T A PERK, IT'S A PRIORITY

The editor of the book *Good Boss, Bad Boss* said,

“Psychological safety is the key to creating a workplace where people can be confident enough to act without undue fear of being ridiculed, punished, or fired – and be humble enough to openly doubt what is believed and done.”

Studies reveal that 89% of employees consider psychological safety crucial at work. This environment encourages interpersonal risk-taking, which fosters innovation. Team performance thrives on psychological safety. Conversely, in its absence, you can expect reduced participation in meetings, risk aversion, reluctance to voice dissent, defensive reactions to feedback, and exclusion from informal networks.

Begin by reflecting inward: When was the last time someone openly disagreed with you, and you expressed gratitude for their perspective?

It is evident that there is an urgent need to establish a psychologically safe work environment. Here are some tips for leaders:



**Encourage open communication** by valuing honesty and curiosity. Be a receptive leader who embraces differing perspectives and challenges the status quo.

**Normalize failure as a learning opportunity.** Support experimentation, acknowledge mistakes as chances for growth, and openly share lessons learned.

**Foster dialogue** by promoting feedback skills and creating a safe space for discussions. Ask probing questions and actively listen to understand emotions, values, and facts.

**Recognize and celebrate achievements collectively.** Build trust through mutual respect, share credit, and promote a team success mindset over individual heroics.

Recognize that psychological safety is a fundamental necessity for inclusion and well-being—not a mere perk. Take action this week by identifying a team behavior or leadership habit to improve. Let's foster an environment where every voice is valued, and where growth and innovation can thrive.

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## FOSTERING INCLUSION FOR ALL:

# Empowering Underrepresented Voices at Work

The concept of DE&I (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) was introduced in employment management in the 1960s, and now, over 40 years later, we are still discussing the lack of inclusion and strategies to foster it. Surely, there has been progress; however, I strongly believe we can do better. We can make a profound difference by taking ownership. Even if we are not directly responsible for driving DE&I initiatives within our organizations, we can still become champions of inclusion in our own ways.

While policies are developed to uphold human rights in employment, the constant cycle of training and re-training, introduction of new strategies, and special celebrations can sometimes lead to burnout. These efforts may also remain surface-level. To an overburdened DE&I team, such activities can feel like just another box to tick, while others may see them as simply another “fun” workplace event.

Ultimately, everyone is responsible for ensuring that real inclusion is practiced at the ground level. We must reflect on and understand our biases, be intentional in our actions, and consider their impact on others. Ask yourself: What are my biases? Could they be culturally rooted, language-based, racially influenced, linked to national origin, or shaped by institutional affiliations?

Have you ever caught yourself pre-judging someone simply because they don't speak the common language fluently or the way you expect? Or felt a soft spot for an interview candidate who happens to be an alumnus of your own university? For diversity to be truly embraced and inclusion to thrive, we must go beyond frameworks and actively work to break our biases.

Consider applying the **FAIR** framework as you navigate improvements in policies and actions.

Definition	Individual Action	Group Action
<b>Fairness</b> (Everyone has equal opportunity for success and protected against discrimination)	Identify your biases, address them, and treat others fairly.	Are all the company's policies fair processes? Such as promotion, is it open to all based on performance instead of seniority?
<b>Access</b> (Everyone can participate in services, offers, experience, physical environment)	Be kind by sharing resources and opportunities to all.	Remove systemic barriers to participation. Are the differentiation between different employee groups?
<b>Inclusion</b> (Everyone feels respected, valued and safe)	Invite diverse voices, be interested in their ideas and listen actively.	Foster a culture of belonging and respect. Do people feel safe speaking up, sharing their observations?
<b>Representation</b> (Everyone feels their voice are heard)	Insist on diverse perspectives.	Ensure diversity in leadership and decision-making. Are all the groups' needs accounted for?

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