

INCLUSIVENESS

What is inclusiveness?

Inclusiveness is the demonstration of the commitment to include others in conversations, discussions, projects and ensuring no one feels left out.

Why is it important to be inclusive?

One way to gain the best for your business is to include your colleagues in what you do. Your colleagues are an integral part of the business and by including them you have access to a wealth of experience and information in addition to your own. Whatever your role may be within your profession or organisation, there is only so much that you can know and contribute on your own.

The same goes for your colleagues so it makes good business sense to set the example by modelling inclusiveness so that you do your part in making it part of the culture you work in.

Including colleagues in your role not only allows you the valuable asset of different viewpoints, it also displays that you value your colleagues, their experience and their roles. And when people feel valued and included, the boost to self-worth and confidence means people feel safe enough to make suggestions and float ideas which they might otherwise keep to themselves. It is from freely sharing ideas and possibilities within a group that true innovation and creativity come.

Additionally inclusiveness is key to conflict prevention. When people know that their point of view has been taken account, even if a decision is made that goes against their point of view, the fact that their input has been heard and considered means you can then discuss with them why their suggestion or idea was not acted. This is a far cleaner and more effective process than dealing with differences of opinion after the event when you may have to enter a conflict resolution process. Added to this is the fact that this process of inclusiveness up-skills all of the people involved because of the pooling and sharing of ideas and experience and of decision making.

Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of inclusivity?

It is easy, on occasions, to fall into the trap of thinking that we can do things faster and more efficiently on our own so we skip the process of including others in order to save time. This often turns out to be a false economy, however, because we are not giving ourselves the benefit of the insights of others. We are also robbing other of the chance to learn through the process and augment their skill set – which doesn't only benefit them but also benefits us as their colleague.

It is also important to understand the process of delegation so that we use an inclusive approach. Sometimes, due to pressure or work load demands, we delegate a task to another totally let go of our responsibility for the quality and completion of the task. To delegate effectively we need to stay involved in the process such that the person we have delegated to uses us as a sounding board to check in on how they are going, to get ideas on next steps, to be filled in on any gaps in required information they may need and so on. In this way we take responsibility for making sure the person has all that they need in order to complete the task on time and to the required standard. So in this

instance we are including ourselves in the process to once again add the benefit of multiple points of view, skill sets and experience.

Another reason that we can slip up in the area of inclusiveness is through the desire to be in control. There can be a tendency to think 'if I want this done how I want it done, I just have to do it myself'. The problem with this, however, is that the more we do it, the more true it becomes, because we are not sharing our expertise and skills - so we actually adding to a scenario where no one else has what is required to do the task to the required standard. In addition this is a great way to head into burn out. It is worth remembering a time when you didn't know how to do what you are now able to do, and thinking about what took place to enable you to learn and grow. Chances are that it was because you found yourself working with a person or people who practised inclusiveness.

If we operate without inclusiveness we will tend to set up an environment where people are unwilling to stretch themselves if it means going outside of their role in any shape or form. Not only does this mean a loss of opportunity to develop, it also means people stick to a certain level of responsibility. The more you practise inclusiveness, however, the more you may find that those you work with offer to take more of the responsibility of the required tasks and show initiative, because they feel more included, more valued and more invested in.

We are all a part of a team in one way or another, and although it is useful to have clear boundaries around our different roles, there are great advantages in operating in an inclusive way so that we have a sense of a pool of resources, expertise and experience to draw from.

Evaluate your own inclusivity

- In what ways do you include others?
- In what ways do you exclude others?
- Speak to 5 colleagues and ask them for feedback on how included they feel in their working relationship with you. Ask them to be specific about which of your behaviours and actions make them feel included and which make them feel excluded. And ask them what behaviours and actions they think would help them to feel more included by you.
- Think of someone you know who has exceptional standards of including others. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 10, what would you be)?
- Think of the least inclusive person you have come across. How would you rate yourself in comparison to this person (if they were a 1, what would you be)?
- When you have a key decision to make, do you more often consider it alone and make the decision alone, or do you commonly seek input from others? Do you think your current balance is optimal?
- Do you have one or two key people whom you always consult for their points of view? Or do you go to different people appropriate to what it is you need to make a decision about?
- Do you feel able to freely share your point of view and give input in your workplace, or do you tend to keep your ideas to yourself? If the latter, do you think that practising

inclusiveness yourself would have a positive impact on your work culture around inclusiveness?

Improve your inclusiveness

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- At your next staff or business meeting what are 2 things you could do differently in order to be more inclusive? How will you know that those steps have been successful?
- How could you be more inclusive with your clients or customers?
- If you manage a team, in your day-to-day operations what are 3 new things you could try to increase your practise of inclusiveness? How will you measure the degree of success?
- Define what would be different for you at work if you took steps to be more inclusive? What benefit would this provide?
- Notice how it makes you feel when others include you. Notice what specific behaviours and actions they take that produces this experience for you. Allow this insight to provide you with behavioural guidance and added motivation and inspiration for you to commit to becoming exceptional in your own inclusivity.
- Write your own inclusivity areas for improvement, and place it somewhere prominent to remind you of your personal commitment to becoming more inclusive. Make sure you set a range of areas such as:
 - conversations
 - discussions
 - projects
 - meetings
 - functions and social gatherings
 - celebrations
- If you are a manger involved with staff appraisals, use these to provide an “inclusive space” inviting them to share how they are feeling with their roles and responsibilities, and give them the opportunity to voice concerns or other content which they would not normally voice. In order to do this you will need to create a ‘safe’ space - this is often done by modelling openness and an appropriate level of vulnerability.
- If you work in retail or customer service, make it your habit to ask questions in order to fully understand the customer or clients needs, demonstrating that you are genuinely interested in them and giving you the opportunity to truly meet their real needs.
- Get into the habit of acknowledging the contributions of others. This doesn’t mean you have to be in agreement with them; this is simply about showing your appreciation for them inputting and sharing their ideas and thoughts. This significantly enhances the standard of communication and is also a confidence booster.

- Think about what would need to be happening for you to feel included in your workplace and then model this behaviour.

Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of responsiveness, the following books, courses and consultants may be worth considering. Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources. The list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- <http://www.mindtools.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it is an incredible resource to assist people in developing their own professional skills regardless of whether they run their own business or work for someone else.
- <http://www.selfgrowth.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it offers both personal and professional self-development information and resources. You can type in any search word you want, such as “sustainable decision making” and you’ll get a list of articles, blogs, resources and links to other sites which could assist you in your own development.
- <http://www.high-ideals.com> – Check out the Member Directory section for High Ideals members who offer services which could support you, such as coaching, mentoring or consulting on High Ideals criteria/values.

Author and editor acknowledgement

High Ideals would like to acknowledge and thank Narelle Holland for her work on this document. Narelle is the Victorian State Membership Manager of High Ideals, a life coach, consultant and trainer and assessor. To find out more about Narelle, please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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