

Developing the Inclusive Leader

The debates are over. Yes, “those” are as well, but the debate over the business value of inclusion and diversity for organizations is done. It’s been proven time and again that inclusive leadership, inclusive cultures, and inclusive organizations outperform others and win every time.

The question becomes “Is inclusion developable?” The answer is “yes, but...” Inclusion is developed in leaders under one condition only: A leader makes a commitment, both publicly and privately, to make inclusion a personal priority in leadership and decision making. Have you ever spoken out loud about your commitment to inclusion? Think about the last decision you made.

Did I purposefully make space for inclusion? Did I create an inclusive climate for others to bring their whole selves and thinking? Most would answer- “maybe...” “sort of...” “a little bit...” to all of these questions.

Inclusion has never been an expected, table-stakes level competency for leadership so we shouldn’t expect leaders to be effective and public about this competency. However, we can firmly say that Inclusion has arrived as the new, required leadership skill for 21st century leaders.

Examples of the evolution of the leader:

- Hundreds of years ago leaders were largely defined by traits such as character and courage.
- Moving into the industrial age, leadership began to be defined more in terms of creating accountability and productivity.
- As businesses became more mature and complex, skills such as developing people and managing talent became increasingly necessary.
- Toward the end of the 20th century saw empowerment, emotional intelligence and coaching skills emerge as critical competencies for engagement, retention and motivation of teams and individuals.



We would humbly suggest we are in the “The Age of Inclusion” for leaders.

What then, does an Inclusive leader look like? Most research (1) agrees that inclusive leaders have six broadly defined competencies.

Before we talk about inclusive leader competencies, a crucial finding in the research is best described as a conscious decision, not a competency. A visible, public, commitment to be an inclusive leader, accompanied by a paradigm shift in thinking to recognize the “must have” nature of inclusivity to be a great leader. The public/private commitment and paradigm shift will drive the leader to do the tough, uncomfortable, and sometimes scary work of creating inclusivity and holding others accountable to the same standard.

The HBR article *“Why Inclusive Leaders Are Good for Organizations, and How to Become One,”* by [Juliet Bourke](#) and [Andrea Titus](#) provides a spot-on definition of how Inclusive Leaders demonstrate commitment:

- They articulate authentic commitment to diversity, challenge the status quo, hold others accountable and make diversity and inclusion a personal priority.

Once you have made the commitment to becoming an inclusive leader and made it a personal priority, be intentional about what inclusive leadership actually looks like. This equips you to think and lead inclusively.

Below are the six generally accepted **Inclusive Leader** competencies and key questions to ask yourself:

Inclusive Leadership



RECOGNIZE IMPACT OF BIAS - Have you thought about your blind spots? Have you considered biases embedded in your organization? Have you ever been a victim of groupthink? Have you ever intentionally challenged your own bias in favor of a different, more inclusive view?

COURAGE TO BE VULNERABLE - Do others describe you as modest? Do you readily admit mistakes and accept suggestions? Do you consider yourself empathetic? Do you consciously create space for other’s opinions?

CURIOSITY - Are you genuinely interested in others? When did you last actively listen, learn and adopt a new idea from a team member? Do you have a process to proactively harness diverse viewpoints? Do you make snap decisions without a broad array of input from others?

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE - Are you comfortable in cross-cultural environments? Are you prone to stereotype individuals based on their culture? Do you recognize the difference between understanding and valuing someone’s culture? Do you adjust your behavior based on your understanding of a person’s culture?

COURAGE TO TAKE ACTION - Have you challenged the status quo around bias and inclusion? Have you ever held anyone else accountable to address their biases? Have you ever publicly admitted your own limitations in practicing inclusivity? Is inclusion a personal priority?

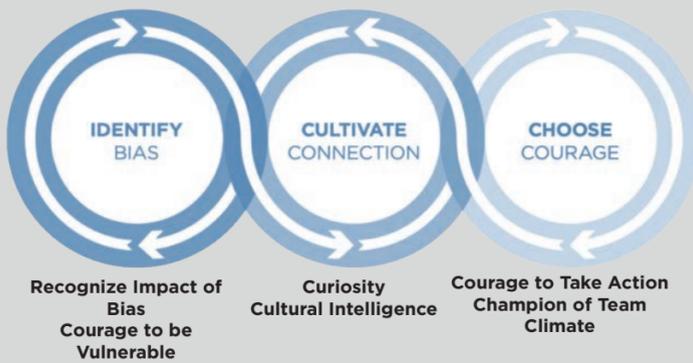
CHAMPION OF TEAM CLIMATE* - Do you consider the psychological safety of your team and colleagues? Do others share their opinions freely with you? Do you pay attention to team cohesion and relationships? Do you work to create shared team goals and promote an understanding of each team member’s value and capabilities?*

*“Champion of team climate” is described as “Collaboration” by Deloitte1 and HBR2.

Robert Gregory Partners’ coaching process makes inclusive leadership more accessible and understandable so you can think, act, and become a more inclusive leader. In short, our coaching process is the bridge between the leader you are today and the inclusive leader you need to be.

We’ve taken our proven executive coaching methodology and infused best-in-class content from FranklinCovey’s Unconscious Bias: Understanding Bias to Unleash Potential to develop skills needed for today’s leadership challenges.

The Unconscious Bias content is divided into three sections. Each section helps to build the Inclusive Leader competencies mentioned above in the following way:



Executive Coaching proves time and again to be effective in helping leaders develop critical skills. Inclusion Coaching is the optimal vehicle for a leader to learn and effectively implement the competencies and behaviors that lead to inclusive leadership.

Becoming an Inclusive leader is hard work and takes time. Learning and insight in this sensitive area is most effective in the context of a safe, trusted coaching relationship. New paradigms of thinking and new behaviors and habits are challenging to develop without accountability, help, and guidance over time. Executive coaching, delivered by a powerfully trained and experienced coach, is the best solution to creating inclusive leaders.

Creating Inclusive Leadership is a complex issue, and thus, requires a comprehensive solution. We’ve combined RGP’s powerful executive coaching methodology, researched Inclusive Leader competencies, FranklinCovey’s Unconscious Bias content, and Hogan’s early data on Inclusive personality traits. Together, we’re successfully developing Inclusive leaders to meet today’s challenges.

Sources:

- 1) <https://deloitte.wsj.com/cio/2016/05/04/6-characteristics-of-inclusive-leaders/>
https://www.sandiego.edu/news/detail.php?_focus=76018
<https://hbr.org/2019/03/why-inclusive-leaders-are-good-for-organizations-and-how-to-become-one>

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