

The PPA Guide to Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership is essential for any organisation that aims to attract and retain top talent from diverse backgrounds. It involves creating a workplace culture that values and respects individuals regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

This guide will provide an overview of inclusive leadership including associated behaviours of inclusive leaders, and tips on fostering an inclusive culture. By implementing these practices, organisations can create a more equitable and diverse workforce.

The leadership shadow

The concept of the "leadership shadow" refers to the idea that a leader's actions, behaviours, and decisions have a significant impact not only on the organisation they lead but also on the people they lead. The term "shadow" is used to emphasise the idea that the effects of a leader's actions may not always be immediately visible or tangible but can have a lasting impact on the organisation's culture, values, and performance.

The leadership shadow includes both the positive and negative aspects of a leader's influence. A positive leadership shadow can inspire and motivate employees, foster a positive work culture, and drive the organisation towards success. On the other hand, a negative leadership shadow can lead to low morale, high turnover, and even legal or ethical violations.

Leaders need to be aware of their leadership shadow and actively work to ensure that it aligns with their intended leadership style and goals. They can do this by seeking feedback from their employees, being open to criticism and suggestions, and holding themselves accountable for their actions and decisions.

Inclusive leaders

By empowering the voices of those who champion and deliver inclusion every day, inclusive leaders create a workplace culture that encourages all employees to recognise and challenge unacceptable behaviours and processes. These leaders inspire creativity, innovation, and ideas, maximising performance, improving retention rates, and lowering the cost of hiring. Additionally, they reduce the risk of "group think," leading to more diverse perspectives and better decision-making.

For any organisation that aims to have a more diverse workforce, inclusive leadership is essential. Without leaders demonstrating inclusive behaviours at all levels of the organisation, attempts to promote inclusion will have little effect. It is important to note that leaders are not limited to the highest-ranking individuals in the organisation, but

also include "people leaders" at all levels. While creating an inclusive leadership approach may take time, there are steps that can be taken to advance the process.

Inclusive leadership behaviours

Challenges inappropriate behaviour -

Inclusive leaders challenge inappropriate behaviour regardless of what level or role the person is operating at. Inappropriate behaviour can mean different things to different people, so it is important to agree what is tolerated at an organisation and to call out whenever somebody crosses the line. Training can support your leaders to do this.

Champions diversity in the organisation -

Inclusive leaders show appreciation for the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of their colleagues and are eager to learn more about them. They demonstrate their commitment by actively engaging in diversity initiatives and participating in conversations about inclusivity.

Celebrates different ways of doing things -

Inclusive leaders value the fresh perspectives and creativity that diversity can bring. They actively encourage unique viewpoints and promote constructive debates. As a result, they often have teams with diverse backgrounds reporting to them, as they recognise the immense value that different viewpoints can bring to the organisation.

Builds their knowledge -

Inclusive leaders seek to expand their understanding of others and are not afraid to ask for help when needed. They acknowledge that not all leaders are experts in diversity and inclusion, but they can improve by learning from others. This can include engaging in reverse mentoring, sponsoring those at the beginning of their careers, and other initiatives that promote continuous learning and growth.

Holds others accountable -

Diversity and inclusion is everyone's business and an inclusive leader will ensure that this message is heard. Inclusive leaders will be clear on the goals for their organisation and empower others to move towards the vision.

Taking inclusive leadership to the next level

Here are some activities to consider that can advance inclusive leadership:

- Inclusion activities should be visibly sponsored by the executive and board.
- Regular monitoring should be conducted to track progress against the diversity and inclusion strategy or action plan.
- All levels of leadership should role model inclusive behaviours.
- Leaders should receive unconscious bias training.

- Individual leaders should receive 1-2-1 coaching on specific challenges.
- Inclusion should be reflected in competencies/behaviours for recruitment in larger organisations.
- Diverse and inclusive leaders and board members should be actively recruited from external sources, with a demonstrated ability to exhibit the aforementioned behaviours.