



How to Create Cultures of Belonging

The BRIDGE to Connection, Winning Teams, and Thriving Organizations

"Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.

Belonging is dancing like nobody is watching."

— Vernā Myers

What Is Belonging? Belonging is the highest level of inclusion. It is when people feel respected, valued, and connected for who they are. Diversity gets people in the room. Inclusion invites them to contribute. Belonging ensures they feel safe, seen, and celebrated.

The BRIDGE Practices:

B — Be Genuinely Curious: Ask about others' perspectives and experiences. 'Tell me more...' shows you value their voice.

R — Recognize Unique Contributions: Acknowledge what each person brings. Say 'I appreciate how you...' specifically.

I — Include Every Voice: Invite quiet members to share. 'What are your thoughts?' ensures everyone feels heard.

D — Demonstrate Care and Compassion: Check in genuinely. Ask 'How can I support you?' and mean it.

G — Give Growth Opportunities: Offer chances to lead, learn, and shine. Mentoring creates lasting belonging.

E — Elevate Others: Amplify good ideas. Credit others publicly. Be the champion of those around you.

Signs of Exclusion vs Inclusion

Exclusion Behaviors: Interrupting, talking over others, holding side conversations in meetings, making assumptions about people, or dismissing differing perspectives.

Inclusion Behaviors: Actively listening and asking questions, ensuring everyone can participate, seeking to understand differences, and building on others' ideas.

The Platinum Rule for Belonging: Treat others the way THEY want to be treated, not how you want to be treated. Ask, listen, and adapt.

Reflection and Action Steps

Reflection Questions

1. Who in my workplace or life might feel excluded, and how can I bring them in?
2. Which BRIDGE practice do I naturally live, and which one needs more attention?
3. How do people feel after being around me — lifted and included, or overlooked?

Action Steps

1. Connect with one person this week and ask a meaningful question about their experience.
2. Recognize someone's contribution in a specific and public way.
3. Practice at least one BRIDGE habit in every meeting this month.

Leadership Challenges:

1. **Belonging Challenge** | Build belonging every day.
2. **Platinum Rule Challenge** | Treat others the way THEY want to be treated.
3. **Legacy Challenge** | Every leader leaves a ripple. Will yours include or exclude?

A Closing Reminder

Belonging is not about perfection; it is about intention.

- Ask.
- Listen.
- Recognize.
- Include.
- Elevate.

When people feel they belong, they thrive, contribute, and multiply success.

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