

The Path to High Performing Inclusive Organizations

A Developmental Process

In biology, a species that breeds strictly within a narrow population group becomes weaker. Similarly, metallurgists know that alloys offer a far greater range of performance than their individual metal components. Iron rusts and is brittle but add carbon and nickel and the resulting steel is stronger, more malleable and more durable.

In organizations, just as with living organisms and metals, diversity can lead to greater strength if nurtured and leveraged. Organizations can utilize diversity as a source of added value—a resource crucial to the organization having even higher performance. Diversity can give a group a greater range of creativity, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and a potential for obtaining more of a 360-degree view of a problem or the landscape (Miller, 1994). Organizations can see and utilize diversity as a fundamental enhancement, not as an obstacle to be overcome or a condition to be managed. They can seek to tap their diversity, not merely survive it. In an inclusive organization, diversity is seen as a necessity, not a luxury and monocultural groups are seen as inherently deficient.

An inclusive organization supports individuals of all identity groups (e.g., class, age, mental ability, physical ability, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, racial and ethnic groups (Jackson, 1993)) to contribute all their talents, skills and energies to accomplishing the organization's

mission and key strategies. As one client said, "I know we are an inclusive organization when the same group of leaders don't go into the same room to solve all our problems."

Creating an organization that leverages diversity, people's unique talents, and fosters an inclusive environment is hard to create and a departure from many of today's organizations. However, such organizations are critical in today's marketplace and services delivery environment where organizations must solve problems and deliver to customers rapidly. All organizations must provide solutions and solve problems in an ever-changing ecosystem. Innovating, producing, delivering, and serving in such a world requires constant innovation, flexibility and creative thinking. Old organizational models left over from the Industrial Age—where people were seen as "hands and feet" and hired for predictable and well-defined tasks—do not work in this new era. Making this shift requires a strategic phased process. Too many organizations approach diversity, equity and inclusion like turning on a light switch—you are not diverse, simply add in some the right number of individuals of different backgrounds, styles, genders, gender identities, races, abilities, nationalities and other differences, flip the switch and there you have it...a diverse organization.

The diversity that will catapult organizations to higher performance and being

stronger competitors in the world and/or better deliverers of service is not the "light switch" approach. Diversity cannot be reduced to numbers and mere tolerance. Inclusiveness is far more than Equal Employment Opportunity statements or setting hiring goals, or addressing bias and removing barriers or setting up Employee Resource Groups. Although all these factors may play a part in the change process, none result in the fundamental shifts needed inside organizations that tap the diversity of the organization as a lever for higher individual, pair, teams and organization performance. An organization shift in thinking, culture, processes and practices must happen enroute to becoming a high performing, inclusive organization that leverages its diversity to enhance and better accomplish the mission, vision, values and strategic direction of the organization.

Evolving to being such as organization requires fundamental organization and interaction changes: new styles of leadership, new mindsets, new capabilities and expectations of all individuals to effectively partner across differences, enhance engagement, problem solving and organizational performance. It requires strategy and planning to create a new culture and new organizational structures, policies, practices, behaviors, values, goals and accountabilities—in short, a complete systemic culture change.

Consequences of Failure

The above realities plus societal shifts, advances in technology and the reality of the “global village” have created an environment that increasingly requires organizations to be more diverse, more inclusive and reaching higher and higher levels of performance. Some organizations are recognizing the need to ensure they have the diversity of talent, skills and experiences needed for today’s and tomorrow’s challenges and opportunities. But diversity without inclusion will not meet the needs and challenges facing organization. Inclusion is critical: an organization is inclusive when everyone has a sense of belonging and agency; feels respected, valued and seen for who they are as individuals; and feels a level of supportive energy and commitment from leaders, colleagues and others so that all people—individually and collectively—can do their best work (Katz & Miller, 2009).

When inclusion becomes a way of life, people bring a Joining Mindset (Katz & Miller, 2013) in which they assume others have value to contribute, agency in the organization and trust is assumed. Individuals are given the benefit of the doubt and different perspectives and experiences are seen as critical to enhance problem solving and decision making. In an inclusive organization there is a fundamental shift from a Judging Mindset that exists today in many organizations, in which there is a sink or swim culture, trust must be earned, people who are defined as “outsiders” are rarely given the benefit of the doubt and differences are not valued or welcomed. In an inclusive organization all the people with information about the situation are able to bring their perspective to the team or group, as they solve problems together (Miller & Katz, 2018).

Many organizations whose systems, structures and processes were developed with a monocultural approach might find themselves unable to evolve fast enough to attract and retain the diverse talent they need to be successful in this new reality. The issue today is not can they become a high performing inclusive organiza-

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tion that leverages diversity, but can they get there fast enough? Young people of all backgrounds expect organizations to have already done the work of becoming more inclusive and valuing and tapping diversity. They expect their differences will be welcomed and leveraged. They are less willing to be trailblazers who have to lead the way than previous generations. When they are hired, they expect to be able to contribute quickly (e.g., day 1) and encounter few barriers. The challenge organizations face today: Are you prepared and positioned to attract, retain and leverage the diversity of talent you need for your current and future success?

Developmental Stages

Just as every human being must undergo a developmental process to reach adulthood, organizations must experience a series of developmental stages to achieve the enriching benefits of diversity and to create an inclusive culture. These developmental stages have a natural progression; passing through them requires the sustained effort of planned, systemic change over years. Just as children must crawl before they walk, organizations cannot expect to skip directly to inclusiveness. And just as children inevitably start by falling frequently, the road to inclusiveness is not traversed without bumps and bruises.

The Path

Using the developmental model of “The Path” (see Figure 2) as a road map can assist an organization avoid some bumpy ground without getting lost along the way.

One of the advantages of this model is in identifying the need for different strategies at different stages. Culture change interventions that might be effective at one stage along The Path might be disastrous at other stages. For instance, an aggressive recruiting program for a more diverse workforce would be counterproductive in an organization with practices, reward systems and a culture that is at the Passive Stage.

This model makes it possible to tailor interventions specifically for the organization’s stage of development rather than thinking that because something is called a best practice it is one.¹ Many actions that organizations are taking to be more inclusive and diverse are not appropriate for all organizations, it depends on the stage of development of a given organization. And it must be noted that many activities related to inclusion and diversity are labeled as best practices when in fact they are just common practices. Force-fitting the wrong practice into an organization before the organization is ready guarantees more struggle and probably a setback. In many organizations, it is inevitable that some business units, divisions or groups will be farther along The Path than others. Using the same strategies in all segments of the organization can cause a setback, and can be wasteful and counterproductive, leading to greater resistance and possible backlash. Diagnosing each unit individually and tailoring appropriate interventions are critical to success.

Beware of Self-Diagnosis

Because barriers to inclusion tend to be invisible to those already succeeding in an organization, leaders and some people identified as “high potential” often believe their organization to be farther along the path toward inclusion than they really are. This often leads to the creation of diversity initiatives that lack the comprehensiveness necessary to really transform the organization.

Sometimes leaders, managers and other team members find it difficult to accept that systemic and cultural barriers are embedded in the organization and that they prevent some people from contributing or succeeding in their organizations. The tendency is to believe that success is based strictly on individual merit or talent, that the organization has little or no biases and is accepting of all people who work hard and do a good job because they as leaders or people who have achieved some level of acceptance in the organization personally feel included and may work to include others. To those who are most accepted in the mainstream life and work of the organization, the organization’s culture is virtually invisible. It fits them or they have adjusted earlier in their careers, so that they rarely have to make new adjustments or accommodations in their behaviors to “fit in.” The organization’s environment, policies and prac-

tices mostly support them and how they get their work done. In trying to gauge where the organization is along the Path it is important to make sure that many voices are included to get as accurate picture of the organization and its culture as possible (see Figure 1).

Stage 1: Exclusive Club

Most of today’s larger organizations started as small, entrepreneur, monocultural entities. Often the founder(s) hired family members, classmates, neighbors, people they knew or people with whom they felt comfortable. The HR and Management policies, practices and organizational culture reflected the needs and experience of the founding members and the early employees, institutionalizing their approach and ways of interacting, working and doing business as “the right way.” Vestiges of those policies and practices still impact many organizations today, not always in a formal way, but in how people interact or how things “really” get done. In some of these exclusive clubs, the sign was up, “No X Allowed,” or the sign was down but all knew not to hire people who were different from the founders.

The Exclusive Club is rarer these days. However, there are still organizations that continue to be Exclusive Clubs to some populations. For example, some organi-

zations still are explicitly anti-gay, lesbian or trans people; and the military until recently would discharge members who developed a physical disability. Clearly, Exclusive Club thinking still exists in the larger society and comes into our organizations. Exclusive Clubs can still be found in teams and other subunits in organizations, “We prefer people like us, it makes everything work better.” The rules are tailored for them and their preferences (Figure 2).

Stage 2: Passive Club

The Passive Club has all the attributes of the Exclusive Club but with a facade of being open, welcoming and friendly, but the reality is who is allowed in the club is very selective. So, there are levels of welcoming, acceptance and inclusion. Just because you are there and people work with you does not mean you are fully included and acknowledged. There is a narrow bandwidth of acceptable behaviors. In the Passive Club people are not allowed to bring their difference. So, although someone might feel welcomed, there are limits and therefore individuals are limited in how much they can bring and how they are seen. Passive Clubs often pride themselves on “not seeing differences,” which translates into policies and procedures that reflect their monocultural origins and continue monocultural bias. Hiring processes, performance

Figure 1. Distribution of Organizations on the Path to Inclusion

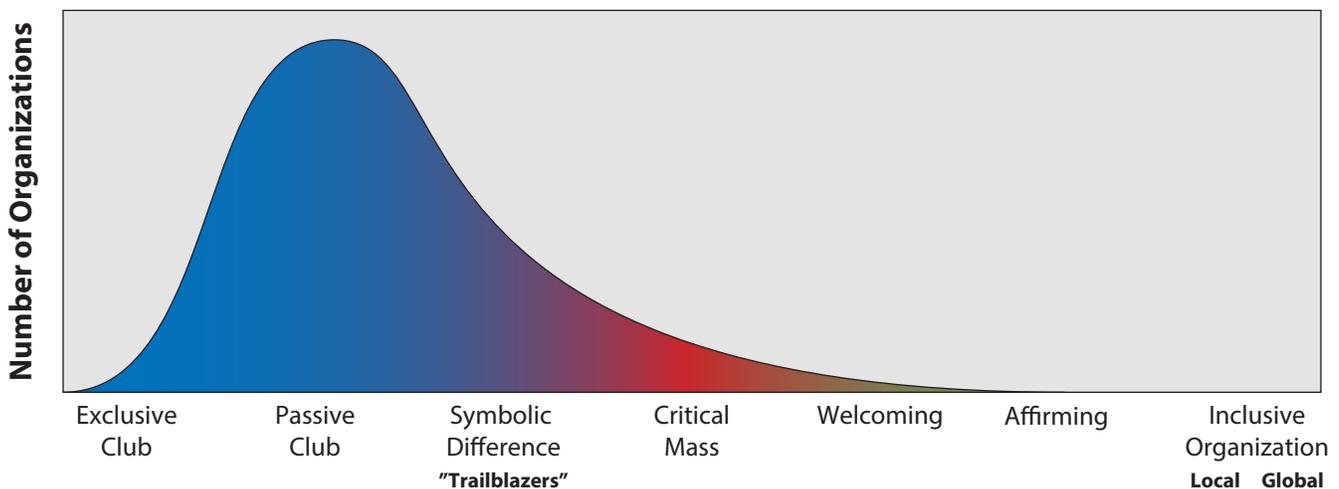
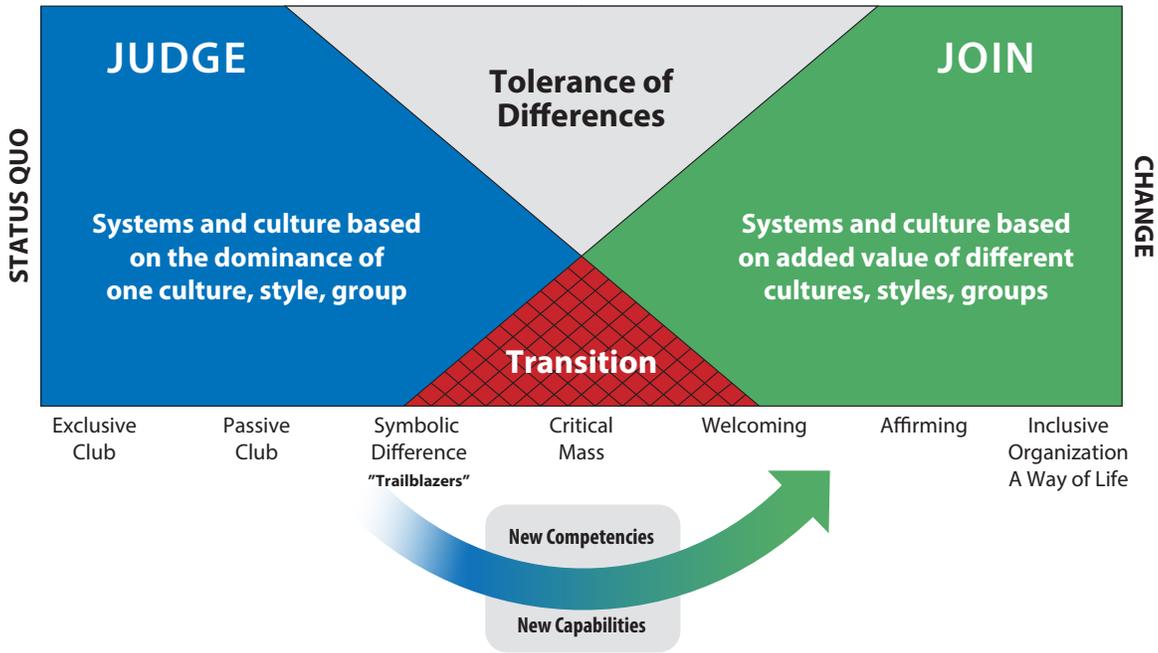


Figure 2. The Path to an Inclusive Organization



management systems, family leave policies, benefit plans and promotion opportunities favor those who fit in with the founding or leadership group in appearance, style, and behavior.

In a Passive Club there is a judging mindset. Those in or most like the dominant group often assume their way is the “only way” or the “right way.” They judge other approaches as not as good as theirs or just see people as less informed or not good enough to “get it.” Often the things people need to “fit in” have more to do with style or approach and much less to do with competency or results. In a Passive Club there is a strong emphasis on “cultural fit” which can at this stage of development focus on style, appearance, and acceptable behavior. Part of the Judging Mindset and culture of the Passive Club is a strong sink or swim culture in which trust must be earned and there is little benefit of the doubt given to others, within this environment there is often a strong seeking out of blame when something goes wrong (who did it) versus understanding the root cause of problems.

There is an assumption by the dominant group that this is “our organization” and often there is a question about letting

“outsiders” in. People are hired based on networks that reinforce the Passive Club. Friends and family members are most welcomed. People often will remark about the positive nature of being the same and sharing a similar approach to problem solving and decision making. Any one who is outside the team or different from the norm is viewed with suspicion.

Intervening in Passive Clubs. For an Exclusive or Passive Club, addressing diversity with a recruitment program does not make sense as an initial strategy. Bringing in “diversity for diversity’s sake” at this stage without addressing the culture often breeds resentment and newcomers are seen as being hired only for their difference. The work at this stage is to start increasing the flexibility of the organization. Often the team members that are in the Club are not all happy about how they are treated or how THEY feel restricted by the norms and quality of interactions. This is an opportunity for people to understand that changing organization policies and practices, norms and interaction patterns does not lower standards and does not negatively impact individual or organization performance, it in fact enhances performance and people’s commitment to the organization. At

this stage with those changes beginning to occur there is often the beginning of an understanding that flexibility and some human difference in people is not “bad” for the organization and this realization sometimes opens the door to move to the next phase of the journey to being a more inclusive and diverse organization...Symbolic Differences.

Stage 3: Symbolic Difference

Over time, most organizations expand their membership—at least nominally—to include some people who differ from the founding group or those who have been leaders of the organization. But the legacy of the Club remains and the organization itself can be highly resistant to change. In Stage 3, Symbolic Difference, the opening of its doors to outsiders may be a symbolic gesture toward diversity, while the organization’s norms, systems and processes remain anchored in the culture, behaviors and practices of old. Whether newcomers are recruited because they are the best qualified and/or because the organization desires to be more diverse, there is an expectation that newcomers will fit in to the existing organization and culture—leaving all (or most) differences outside. In most orga-

nizations people who bring some level of difference don't see themselves reflected as they look up the organization, but initially they are hopeful that things will change.

The "newcomers" to the organization who do not "fit in," often receive feedback and signs that they are not "right" and need to change. They constantly bump into cultural barriers and biases that keep them from doing their best work. Those who can't or won't make the necessary adjustments and accommodations to fit in tend to stand out; they often don't stick around very long. Those who do make the necessary accommodations to fit in and survive may pay a high price: lessening themselves to avoid standing out, keeping their talent and ideas to themselves, swallowing frustration at the lack of recognition, smiling and ignoring insensitive comments and leaving large parts of themselves "outside," so others can feel comfortable. The person is unable to do their best work and contribute all of what they were hired to do.

The more that people with differences learn to blend in, the more they are welcomed. Many in the organization will pride themselves at not seeing differences and are unaware of their, others and the organization's biases. Differences are avoided, and a belief that even with our differences "we are all the same," persists. This mindset minimizes differences, often punishes those who bring a different perspective, style or background to the table, and hampers the collective from doing its best work. The organization is still underperforming its potential and may not be seeing all the challenges and opportunities before it.

As a result, there is no leveraging of diversity, since the very talents and perspectives for which newcomers may be hired might be suppressed in response to the organization's discomfort with those styles or approaches (e.g., communication, dress, problem-solving). In fact, one of the criteria that will often be used is the degree of "cultural fit" that an individual has.

Roles that Trailblazers must play

A job description for an organizational trailblazer would probably un-nerve the average applicant. Following are some of the job's requirements:

- More than competent to do the job.
- Able to fit into the organization and its culture.
- Willing to take responsibility for making other members of the organization feel comfortable.
- Willing to accept the spotlight and the visibility of being the only one or one of a few of their "kind."
- Able to represent their identity group.
- Capable of disproving colleagues' preconceptions about members of their identity group.
- Willing to accept and work to overcome colleagues' discomfort, inability to communicate and differing standards.
- Able to deal with constant questioning as to whether the job was attained because of competence or difference.
- Serves on committees, task forces and public appearances related to their identity (none of which is in their job responsibilities).

Trailblazers. In many organizations, addressing the issue of diversity has meant bringing in one or two members of a different identity group. Although referred to by some as "tokens," these "firsts" are true trailblazers. In order to blaze a trail for themselves and others like them, these trailblazers must make many sacrifices and take on many roles. Those in the prevailing culture rarely see or understand their sacrifices. Those similar to them who come after the trailblazers may not appreciate or even approve of their sacrifices. The next generation may not give the trailblazers credit or support for the burdens they have borne. Instead, they may condemn the trailblazers for acquiescing to the prevailing culture and not doing enough for change.

In the eyes of the mainstream organization, these trailblazers in addition to excelling at their jobs are seen and asked to represent the entirety of their identity group (e.g., all women, all people with disabilities, all Asians). Citing "successful" trailblazers as examples, organizations often feel they have made great strides in their "diversity journey."

Few organizational trailblazers get to their desired destinations. Some give up and leave; some struggle through their entire careers isolated or with insufficient organizational support, and some achieve success, but at great personal cost. Most are blocked and have to settle for less than their career goals and less than the organization hoped for when it hired them.

Hallmarks of the Exclusive, Passive club and Symbolic Difference Stages

- People feel pressure to fit in.
 - People fear speaking up.
 - Relationship-driven culture, where "who you know" is more important than "what you know."
 - Cliques are common; you trust the people closest to you.
 - Denial of differences is considered a virtue ("we don't see differences here").
 - Hard for outsiders to learn the rules— it's sink or swim to prove yourself.
 - A strong judging mindset: trust withheld, people labeled, no benefit of the doubt, relationships are more important than processes or outcomes.
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Many choose to stop fighting and try to find comfort where they can.

Champions. In most organizations, trailblazers are hired due to the efforts of a champion for diversity from the traditional group who decides to break the rules. By challenging the status quo, often champions find their popularity, motives and loyalties questioned, and sometimes their careers jeopardized. In fact, champions are trailblazers in their own right. They may not appear different from the founding and traditional group, but their behaviors and commitment to stepping outside of the norm and supporting diversity make them stand out. Just as trailblazers are often criticized and scrutinized, champions are often criticized and their risk-taking efforts to change the organization not fully appreciated.

Intervening at the Symbolic Difference Stage. In a Symbolic Difference organization, a recruitment program focused on increasing diversity makes sense if leaders and team members understand the price new members must pay to be trailblazers in the organization and mitigate those challenges. Ensuring trailblazers' success might entail assigning the trailblazers to managers who are champions, or at least supporters and able to provide a productive, inclusive environment.

Before an organization can ensure trailblazers have the support they need to survive, they need to ask themselves, "Do we even know who are our current trailblazers?" Without support systems in place, the rate of attrition for trailblazers is high. And even with support systems, it can be very stressful to be an "only" or one of a few. The best support for trailblazers is more trailblazers and to understand the complex role that is being asked of them to help create a more inclusive and diverse organization. In many Symbolic Differences organizations support for the creation of Employee Resource Groups (ERG) is an important step in providing a safe place for people who are different from the founding or traditional group. Leadership must play an active and key role in sponsoring and engaging

with those ERGs to learn about the barriers that exist and ways to provide greater support.

Organizations often pride themselves on having a sink-or-swim culture. Unfortunately, the more different you are, the harder it may be to swim. Barriers to true performance and ability to contribute need to be honestly assessed and removed if the organization is going to be more inclusive and diverse.

Leaders should also begin to consider which elements of the culture they want to preserve, and which need to change. Some elements of the "traditional" environment may be important for success and to maintain the "essence" of the organization, while others are merely relics whose time has actually passed.

Stage 4: Critical Mass

At this stage the organization starts creating a work environment in which those who are different from the dominant group (in style, approach and/or identity) can bring more of who they are and how they can make a difference through their actions. This means extending greater flexibility to those already present in the organization e.g., someone feeling okay to wear their hair differently than the majority; leaving early to be with their children; working different hours; supporting a cause that is not one of the usual ones for the organization; hiring from a different college; or recognizing a style that is less aggressive than others.

Developing an imperative for becoming more inclusive and diverse is critical to helping organizational members understand why there is a need for change. As a part of that imperative, it is essential to identify how all people will gain by having a more inclusive and diverse organization. Unless the organization's leadership and membership can clearly see their own self-interest is being served by a change in behaviors and values as well as for the good of the organization, the change will not come about. Self-interest remains

the strongest motivator for and against change.

As an organization continues to add members who are different from the original group, many things begin to change. The old, monocultural norms and ways of operating no longer fit, but there are often no new standards and procedures to take their place. If the path to inclusion was a chain reaction, this is the point of Critical Mass. As more people who differ from the traditional culture join, there can be an increased understanding of the need for greater tolerance of different perspectives, styles and approaches. At the same time, members of the traditional group may feel threatened. They may believe they have fewer opportunities and resent that the rules are changing. Suddenly they are called on to interact with, and see themselves in competition with, a broader range of people. Complaints of favoritism, reverse discrimination or lowered standards can be common. However, this also is an opportunity for members of the traditional group to find greater freedom within the organization and to express their own range of diversity. As some members begin seeing the need for the organization to change, they come to recognize that leveraging diversity and a more inclusive culture means them, too, and that there is benefit to an environment in which there is acceptance for a wide range of styles and approaches.

A word of caution: the Critical Mass Stage is a precarious time for organizations that have committed themselves to diversity without committing to strategic culture change. Amid the conflict, chaos and upheaval of Stage 4, the "good old days" look particularly good. Diversity efforts may fail, stall and suffer from backlash; many may be scaled back or abandoned. The organization may experience a revolving door as the diversity that was hired leave because the organization is not moving far enough or fast enough along the path. Without a commitment to culture change and strategy for achieving it, turning back or going much slower seems easier and safer.

Intervening During a Stage of Critical Mass. Merely achieving the representation numbers that start to change the organizational culture is not enough. Without strategic intervention, such a state will devolve into chaos because the rules for success are no longer clear. The old ways no longer work, and no new norms, values and standards of competence have been clearly defined to replace them or if established are not often sufficient to support the new culture and what is needed for the new organization to thrive. Leaders at all levels may find this period of transition the most challenging on the journey to inclusion.

This is the stage where real culture change can begin to take place—not just on the surface, but in the systems, mindsets and behaviors that define the organization. Leaders need to maintain a clear sense of purpose and direction and stay committed to the goals of leveraging diversity and creating a culture of inclusion. They need to continue to outline a clear imperative for why the change is critical to organizational performance and success and articulate a clear “FROM → TO” culture vision (FROM where the culture has been → TO the new desired state). As a part of creating that culture vision the organization needs to identify which elements of the old culture they want to keep that are core to the organization’s essence and success and what needs to change. This FROM → TO enables people to have a clearer picture of the desired organizational direction, outcomes, expectations and accountabilities.

It is important to note for leaders and change agents what we all know, meaningful change does not require a majority or even a large percentage of the organization’s people; it can be guided by a small but sufficiently committed core group with a credible voice within the organization. Engaging and enrolling about 10-15 percent of the organization (the right 10-15 percent of people: new people, champions, allies, leaders and advocates) is enough to shift the culture. This group needs to be aligned with the future direction of the organization and well-versed

Hallmarks of Welcoming Stage

- Different points of view and experiences are beginning to be actively sought after.
 - Systemic barriers and bias are being examined.
 - Managers and leaders are developing new capabilities to lead, manage and support a inclusive and diverse team.
 - HR policies and practices are beginning to change to support a range of cultures, styles and groups.
 - The organization has a clear plan, direction and accountabilities to create a more inclusive and diverse organization tied to organizational performance.
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in the new FROM → TO mind-sets and behaviors needed to support and prosper in a higher performing inclusive culture that leverages its diversity.

Working on leadership competencies is also critical at this stage. Leaders need to develop a joining mindset and inclusive behaviors to effectively hire, lead, support, and engage a diverse organization and create an inclusive environment. Leaders need to be held accountable for effectively engaging and partnering with differences. As the diversity of the organization increases, developing new and broader communication and conflict resolution skills is an important priority for everyone.

Stage 5: Welcoming

As an organization enters the Welcoming Stage, it becomes apparent that mere “tolerance” for difference is counterproductive. Tolerance, after all, implies that there is a “right” way and those who subscribe to it must allow or “put up with” differences. Though they might endure differences, those differences are still seen as “wrong.” As the organization develops new structures, norms, values, procedures and rewards that tap the added value of diversity, tolerance gives way to Welcoming—an active acceptance and expansion of what is “right” that is an important precursor to a truly inclusive environment.

This is the stage at which a joining mindset begins to take hold. People are leaning into new behaviors and experimenting with how to move from a judging to a joining culture. Rather than seeing

others who are different with suspicion (whether because of identity or even a different business unit) they are seen as having something of value to offer. Joining means letting go of the past and mistrust of others and being ready and willing to build a new way of interacting. In a joining mindset people understand their biases and actively work to address them. Rather than judging others they give people the benefit of the doubt. When differences in perspective arise, individuals are curious and able to explore and learn from others.

Integral to the Welcoming Stage is recognizing the presence of systemic barriers and discrimination. The organization and its people are able to clearly see—some for the first time—the need for a systematic effort to not only level the playing field so all people have equitable footing but raise the playing field for everyone to support higher individual, team and organizational performance. All aspects of the organization are beginning to be examined to identify the structures, procedures and norms that impede people’s ability to contribute. People find it safer to speak up about obstacles to inclusion and the organization finds it easier to recognize and address those issues (Miller & Katz, 2018). This is the opportunity to truly redefine the organization, how it operates, and how it treats and engages people.

The Welcoming Stage is more than just being friendly. In fact, many Passive Clubs can feel welcoming and friendly. In the Welcoming Stage there is greater acceptance of differences and a willingness to understand and address differences from the other person’s vantage point. As dif-

ferences are truly welcomed and sought after, it becomes possible to see beyond them. People begin finding multiple ways of connecting with each other. Instead of sticking to culturally defined or stereotyped interactions or fear driven avoidance, people find areas of commonality and common ground. At this stage there is a shifting in mindset to seeing differences as normal and positive rather than something to be avoided or diminished. There is an openness as well to unearth, examine and change the biases and barriers that are baked into the organization as artifacts of a past time.

Intervening During the Welcoming Stage. When an organization reaches the Welcoming stage, it is critical to create a “pull” scenario towards achieving a higher performing inclusive organization that leverages its diversity by building effective partnerships and teams that are living and practicing new inclusive mindsets and behaviors. This can be accomplished by aggressively working with pockets of readiness (parts of the organization ready to move faster than the larger organization) and publicly rewarding business units that have adopted and show results from inclusive practices. Making public the results of the inclusive behavior that leads to higher performance often moves others to want to learn and live the behaviors since they see and experience the increase in individual, team, pairing and organization performance. At the same time, it is necessary to aggressively pursue an ongoing enhancement of the understanding, appreciation, and the tapping of the knowledge diversity can afford the organization and at the same time remove bias and barriers in systems and processes.

The Welcoming stage is also an ideal time to begin to integrate the concept of diversity into the overall business planning process, especially in areas such as market analysis, supplier resources, vendor qualification, recruitment, training, leadership development, community relations and strategic alliances with other organizations.

Hallmarks of Affirming Stage

- People of all backgrounds feel a sense of agency – the organization belongs to them not one group.
- People see more of themselves reflected in the various dimensions in the organization (all levels of leadership; key roles; art work; and physical plant).
- Skills in effectively engaging across differences are expected of all: team members, managers and leaders.
- A joining mindset is more the norm – there is an expectation that others bring value, trust is assumed and people are given the benefit of the doubt.
- People work effectively within their own teams and across the organization; silos rarely exist.
- There are more and more examples of how being inclusive and diverse is achieving higher performance.

Stage 6: Affirming

As the organization moves along the Path to Inclusion the organization is shifting from a Welcoming Stage to one that is Affirming of differences. People of all backgrounds are beginning to feel not only that they have a greater sense of belonging in the organization but also a greater sense of the organization belonging to them, i.e., they have agency in the organization. People who had been different from the founding or majority group now see themselves reflected in substantive ways at most levels of leadership; and the organization has made significant progress in changing the physical environment (pictures on the walls; art work, etc.) to reflect greater diversity on many levels; HR and management systems and processes are being transformed to ensure they support all members of the organization and have been examined to ensure that biases and barriers are eliminated. The organization has shifted from a mindset in which the dominant group in a monocultural organization saw the organization as theirs and were inviting “others” in, to one where there is now a mindset about the value added of different cultures, perspectives, styles and groups. The organization has worked hard to integrate inclusion, equity and inclusion in all aspects of the organization’s functioning. People are learning new skills and developing new competencies to effectively engage in a diverse, high performing workforce, and to innovate based on diversity of backgrounds and

perspectives. The organization has moved to a joining mindset in which people see each other as partners, and assume trust as a starting point for interactions. There is an assumption that others have something of value to offer and there is explicit encouragement for people to make problems visible, bring different perspectives and experiences to solve problems. People can cite examples of how a more inclusive organization is bringing value to organizational performance.

Intervening During the Affirming Stage. At the Affirming Stage the organization is deep in the midst of significant systems changes to ensure that they reflect the value added of different styles, cultures and groups. Diverse groups of people are brought together to create and assess those policies to ensure that they are promoting the culture that is needed for greater inclusion and diversity. Performance measures are integrating the new competencies, capabilities and accountabilities of engaging and working effectively on and across diverse teams. Operational reviews and business plans incorporate an inclusion and diversity lens into all aspects of the business beyond just talent reviews.

Stage 7: Inclusive Organizations: Inclusion as a Way of Life

In this stage, the organization is experiencing the benefits of the cultural transformation. There is a shared mindset of joining and seeing others as partners

to be valued (Miller & Katz, 2002). The organization has many examples of how greater inclusion and diversity unleash people's talents, resulting in higher individual, team, pairs and organization performance and also greater innovation and creativity. People feel free to speak up and make problems visible and decisions are made rapidly with diverse voices being encouraged and heard. People have a sense of agency and ability to make things happen. Inclusion has become a way of life - a part of all aspects of the organization. It is fundamental to how the organization achieves its goals. It is embedded in the culture, the systems, and processes.

Intervening in an Inclusive Organization. Inclusion is a process, not an endpoint. It is a way of being, a way of doing business. Critical to creating an inclusive organization is that the right people are doing the right work at the right time with the right tools. No longer can an organization operate from a "business as usual" framework of old. As one leader said of an inclusive effort: "Inclusion changes everything— how we make decisions, who comes to meetings, how we evaluate performance and how we work together."

Creating an inclusive organization requires addressing many of the aspects of the culture that were once seen as givens. For example, moving from an organization based on rank and tenure to an organization based on knowledge and abilities cannot be accomplished without a major shift in mindsets and processes.

In this stage, the organization is experiencing the benefits of the cultural transformation. There is a shared mindset of joining and seeing others as partners to be valued. The organization has many examples of how inclusion and greater diversity is unleashing people's talents.

Moving from only valuing individual effort to acknowledging and rewarding teamwork and collaboration, is a major part of shifting the culture to operate with an inclusion mindset. There is a new sense of "WE" in the culture rather than "I." Issues

Hallmarks of Inclusive Stage

- People are able to bring their full work selves to the workplace.
 - The organization actively encourages and welcomes people to contribute different opinions and points of view.
 - The organization has a performance-driven culture, where knowledge and ability matter most.
 - People form dynamic and diverse teams.
 - Trust is a given.
 - Differences are seen as additive and productive.
 - The mindsets and behaviors for success are explicit and the organization supports people in adopting them.
 - The organization has an interactive culture, where an array of points of views come in contact with each other.
 - People experience Interaction Safety.
 - People have the competencies and capabilities to adapt to different cultural contexts.
 - People share a joining mindset: see others as partners, differences as an asset, and extend trust and giving the benefit of the doubt are commonplace.
 - HR and Management systems support diverse cultures, styles and groups.
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of power and privilege that are rooted deeply in society and replicated in the fabric of many organizational structures must also change to create a more inclusive culture. To achieve sustainability the organization must continually "walk toward its talk" (Katz, 1994). It must identify those areas where its behaviors fall short of its values and its FROM → TO and continually strive to live up to its vision and needs for the future. As the needs of the workforce and market change and grow, the criteria for what diversity means within the organization must change with them.

Multiple Journeys

Even in an Inclusive Organization, when individuals of a new identity group join, the organization can backtrack along the Path to the Symbolic Difference stage and the newcomers are the next wave of trailblazers. But with each new identity group, the organization's range of welcoming broadens and its flexibility increases. The lessons learned from the inclusion of each new identity group into the organization make the next new group's journey easier.

At any one time, an organization may have several different business units, functions

Why inclusion is important

In the words of organization leaders...

- "Inclusion challenges our thinking, brings in fresh perspectives, raises the bar for our practices and strengthens the gene pool."
 - "It helps us tap our employees better as resources, leverage strengths better, uncover hidden talents and bring forth new/fresh ideas and perspectives."
 - "Inclusion fosters engagement and engagement increases efficiency."
 - "Our decision making is enhanced when people feel included."
 - "Leadership doesn't have all the answers, and we need those different perspectives. There is a delivery benefit in terms of us getting different perspectives."
 - "Inclusion helps us engage our employees at a higher level, which gets them to perform at a higher level."
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or identity groups at different places on The Path. The United States Armed Forces offer an excellent illustration of this point. Considering their numbers and the success of some, such as Colin Powell, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and many current leaders in the U.S. Army, many would say African-American men have reached the Welcoming Stage or perhaps the Affirming Stage in the Army. For women, however, the Army is still at the Symbolic Difference stage or possibly even Passive Club. The Army is still an Exclusive Club particularly for transgender people, whose status and ability to serve is at the whim of Executive Orders. And for people with disabilities, who today are included in the military, the Army has just begun their journey on The Path.

A Business Issue, Not a Social Issue

By creating an inclusive culture that leverages diversity, an organization gains greater ability to respond quickly to change, to be an adaptive, thinking organization and to position itself more effectively for the future in which speed, vision, flexibility and the ability to solve complex problems, problems that one view, one approach and one way of thinking will not solve.

Endnotes

1. This model, known as Multicultural Organization Development (MCO), was originally presented in "Racial Awareness Development in Organizations" (Working Paper: New Perspectives, Inc.), 1981, Bailey Jackson, Ed.D., Rita Hardiman, Ed.D., and Mark Chesler, Ph.D. See Jackson and Holvino (1986) and Jackson and Hardiman (1994). The original concept was adapted by J.H. Katz and F.A. Miller in 1986 ("Developing Diversity," The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc.) and continues to evolve.

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