

Five Ways to Build a More Inclusive Team

Toolkit 7: Five Ways to Build a More Inclusive Team

Purpose of Inclusive Teams

Inclusive teams are characterized by open communication, transparent decision making, and creativity. The purpose of building an inclusive team is to create a productive work climate of trust and respect.

Duke University/Duke University Health System is a diverse community. We have members of our community that represent multiple and different identities. Whether our differences and similarities are based on generation, culture, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, or personality, many of us recognize that diversity is what is, and inclusion is what we hope to do with diversity. Here are some ideas for increasing an atmosphere of inclusion in your department:

Do's

- Develop a brief vision statement related to teamwork and inclusion for your department.

Example: "BlueDevil department celebrates the diversity of the community we serve. We have a responsibility to foster an environment of mutual respect and inclusion for our patients and their families, visitors, volunteers, trainees and board members. Our commitment is to provide a workplace where each person is respected, and supported."

- Link inclusion to specific behavioral expectations that are likely to generate trust, openness and inclusion.

Example: Some of the behaviors that demonstrate inclusion are communicating information consistently, being open to feedback rather than defensive, respecting colleagues regardless of different styles or beliefs, and offering criticism in a constructive manner.

- Communicate regularly to your staff why an inclusive culture is important: enhance productivity, improve communication, boost problem solving, and foster retention.

Example: There are several ways to remind your team that inclusion is an important value in your department: One sentence that states departmental values and vision in all new hire letters, quarterly staff meetings devoted to work

culture topics such as teamwork, communication, and inclusion, and setting professional development goals for each member of your team related to at least one aspect of communication and inclusion.

Don'ts

- Rely on the same advice from the same people all the time.

Example: Who you turn to for advice and buy in should be as varied as your stakeholders, patients, and customers. If you find yourself with a homogenous group of advisors, who never push back or point out challenges, your advisor group is not sufficiently inclusive. Seek out the perspectives of colleagues and customers who have different backgrounds and expectations. Projects generally benefit from having such diverse feedback.

- Use all your staff meeting time as an “information dump.” Make an effort to occasionally change the meeting format. Try to facilitate staff meetings that invite participation, explore ideas, and model dialogue.

Example: There are many tools for increasing participation at meetings: a quick go-around where each person is invited to give an opinion, “straw polls” where staff is invited to vote on a decision or idea, or breaking up into smaller groups to explore a topic or make recommendations.

- Allow exclusionary or intolerant behavior to go unaddressed. Respond efficiently and with respect to behaviors that mock, shame, insult or injure staff.

One characteristic of an ineffective work culture is one in which negative behavior is ignored. One way of responding to individuals whose behavior negatively affects the team is to focus on and address the impact of their behavior, while recognizing good intentions. We must be able to hold one another accountable for creating more inclusive workplaces.

How can I mentor a supervisor, who reports to me, on becoming more inclusive in their leadership style?

The best way to mentor supervisors is to model behaviors that you would like to see more of from them. When we demonstrate how to handle challenging situations in an inclusive manner, we are showing our staff some of the tools we would like them to develop.

In addition, you can recommend a book, website or external coach to your supervisory staff and then discuss take aways with them. Perhaps they could present this information to their peers?

Scenario: Since you became the department director three years ago, Stacy and Mark have been reporting to you.

Stacy's style with her team is very inclusive. She has upbeat staff meeting with lots of participation, often asks for feedback and input, and rarely appears "out of touch" with her staff. Mark has struggled more with his leadership style and seems to prefer a top down approach. You have deliberately modeled an inclusive style to both Stacy and Mark, although you have never taken time to talk with them about it.

After reviewing the Managing Diversity Toolkit, you decide to have a staff meeting with Mark and Stacy and open up a discussion of leadership styles. You ask what they think about the term "inclusion." They become interested in the idea of self assessment tools related to leadership and inclusion. You ask them to bring you some recommendations about how to continue their professional development in this area.

Process Points

- The scenario above does not stress that inclusion is better than exclusion; it invites both Mark and Stacy to consider the impact of their leadership style on their teams.
- The Director puts the onus on the supervisors to do the research, and bring a proposal regarding next steps.
- The focus for this mentoring is on better self understanding and recognition that style differences can be as important as other elements of diversity.