

*Committed to improving
employment for people with
disabilities in Canada*



Deep Dive:

Performance Management to Support Inclusive Cultures



Ensuring that performance on disability inclusion goals is part of regular performance management discussions will help managers to understand it is a priority.

Why is This Important?

Making disability inclusion part of regular performance management discussions will help managers to understand it is a priority. Managers may be open to learning more about how to practice an inclusive management style and benefit from coaching.

The [Untapped Talent Guide](#) notes that inclusive leadership requires managers to recognize, respect, and value diversity. More specifically, managers need to cultivate habits like curiosity over judgement, while developing their own understanding of how to mitigate unconscious bias in their decision making.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- ▶ Have we given our managers training in unconscious bias and the skills to disrupt bias when they think it may be impacting decision making?
- ▶ Have we invested in educating our management team about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?
- ▶ Have we been clear about what behaviours and characteristics we believe result in an inclusive management style?
- ▶ Do we ask staff whether they feel managers are matching their actions to the cultural expectations for inclusion?

What to Change

Identify inclusive behaviours

Name the characteristics you want managers to cultivate. [Harvard Business Review](#) researchers identified 6 key traits demonstrated by inclusive leaders:

1. Inclusive leaders articulate an **authentic commitment to inclusion**, which they back up by challenging the status quo, holding others accountable, and clearly making inclusion a personal priority.
2. They are **humble about their own capabilities**, transparent about their mistakes, and make space for others to contribute.
3. Inclusive leaders show **self-awareness of their biases**, faults in the system, and work hard to focus on capabilities.
4. They demonstrate open mindedness and **intentional curiosity** by listening without judgment and engaging their sense of empathy to understand challenging situations.
5. Leaders who cultivate inclusion are **attentive to cultural difference** and adapt their approach as required.
6. They empower others by **valuing diversity of thinking** and psychological safety and tending to team cohesion.

Apply your existing inclusive leadership practices to disability

The good news is that the work you may have already done to improve inclusion of other historically excluded groups like



women, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, LGBTQ2SA+ and newcomers, can be applied to your disability inclusion efforts.

While there are some technical aspects to supporting disability inclusion which don't have analogues in these other dimensions of diversity, the key principles are the same.

Elevate inclusion in your performance narrative

[Deloitte's research](#) into the key traits of inclusive leadership offers actions that can embed inclusion in your organizational culture.

Review your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure that inclusive behaviours are part of your metrics. Reward leaders who role-model inclusive behaviors.

When leaders are doing it right, showcase their efforts and successes across the organization. Ensure the leaders of the organization see recognition is the result of inclusive efforts.

On the other hand, you also need to develop accountability for managers whose behaviour contradicts your inclusive culture. If a hiring manager repeatedly rejects qualified candidates with apparent disabilities, have a conversation that embraces the key traits described above to challenge the disparity.

When appointing new leaders to senior-level positions, highlight how they model inclusive leadership or demonstrate a genuine commitment to developing the capability for inclusive leadership, when you explain why they were selected for this job.

Ask employees about their experiences

Basing performance evaluation on one person's perception increases the risk of bias entering into the evaluation.

Whether through a [360 degree review](#) process, [pulse surveys](#) or [employee engagement surveys](#), it's important to develop a mechanism for employees to have their say in whether their manager is creating an inclusive environment.

What to Say

Here is some sample text you can adapt for use in your coaching conversations with managers:

“Creating a workplace where people with disabilities feel welcomed and included is a team effort. As a leader in this organization, we want to ask you to do your part to create an inclusive team. If this work feels new to you, we can help you to build your confidence and self-awareness as a manager of a diverse team.

Here are a few of the ways we would like to support you in developing these leadership traits...”

Here you have the option to include [training options](#) or share [reports](#) and [articles](#) that may be helpful. You also may want to set up mentoring relationships for a manager. This could be an introduction to another manager who has been successful in creating an inclusive team, or connecting the manager to an [employer network](#) where they can connect with other inclusive employers.

What to Ask

In alignment with the characteristics of inclusive leadership, you should ask the manager what kind of support they know would be most helpful.

“What other ways would you like support?”

Ask managers to make a commitment in the right direction. This creates accountability.

“What are some actions you can take to put these traits into practice?”

Conclusion

Every member of a team has a role to play in creating an accessible and inclusive workplace, and managers play a very important role in setting the tone for their teams.

You can support managers by setting clear expectations, providing support, and ensuring that the organizational culture recognizes and rewards the right behaviours and practices.

Further Reading

Korn Ferry’s [Inclusive Leader Quiz](#)

Forward Focus article [Are You an Inclusive or Exclusive Leader?](#)

Employer Assistance and Resource Network article [Performance Management](#)