



The Importance of Belonging at Work

At last month's DEI Council, we discussed the importance of Belonging and why we should all talk about it. Most of us spend the majority of our time Monday through Friday working. Whether that's still at the office or now from home, it's crucial that employees at all levels feel that they belong and can be themselves at work.

For the past two years, Stephanie Creary, PhD, assistant professor of management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and her team researched the factors driving feelings of inclusion and belonging in companies today. Creary defined a feeling of belonging as being comfortable and feeling accepted in the workplace. She defined Inclusion as an employee feeling accepted and valued for their differences.

According to her research, feelings of inclusion and belonging improve engagement, performance, promotion and retention at the workplace. Employees with a high sense of belonging take 75% fewer sick days than employees who don't feel like they belong and have a 50% lower turnover rate.

"We're currently facing economic uncertainty and we don't know when business will return to normal or if we'll be facing a new normal," Creary said. "While disruptive times often breed uncertainty and a scaling back of investments and workforce talent, research has found that companies that are resilient and renew their commitment to employee development in a downturn recover more quickly."

Three categories of practices: mentoring and sponsorship, managerial involvement and workplace policies, are the primary drivers for feelings of belonging. 42% of belonging is accounted for by having access to mentors and sponsors. 35% of belonging is related to having a manager that regularly checks in and talks about diversity, equity and inclusion. 33% of belonging is having access to workplace policies such as flexible work arrangements.

I'd like you to think of a time when you felt real belonging? Why did you feel belonging then? What did that experience invite in you?

What will you do to foster belonging today? Think of these four words - Welcome, Include, Value, Connect. It is our collective responsibility as a lab community to create a welcoming and psychologically safe space, an inviting organizational culture for everyone. Check in with people, include other's voices and talents and value what they bring to the table. Lastly, connect and create bonds with each other.

Resources:

Stephanie Creary, PhD, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
Arbinger Institute
DiversityInc Best Practices