

Chapter Twenty-Two

INCLUSION: THE HOW FOR THE NEXT ORGANIZATIONAL BREAKTHROUGH

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Every organization is looking for an edge. Regardless of industry or market, we live in an age where competitive advantage is always shifting and the need for improvement is continuous. Smart leaders are the ones who realize: newer-better-faster is essential for success; change is either an organization's best friend or worst enemy; organizational performance always must be climbing higher; and today's exceptional achievement is tomorrow's baseline.

What has shifted from the past is that there are more unknowns and unknowables in achieving sustained results. As enterprises expand globally, they are challenged with the complexity of doing business in an environment where one size no longer fits all. Most significantly, we have shifted from an industrial-based economy focused primarily on production, in which people had routine and steady tasks and standardization was the priority, to a highly competitive knowledge economy requiring innovation, in which the need to unleash people's ideas, thinking, and creativity are keys to success. In this new knowledge economy, all people are needed to contribute their thinking and abilities. Structural changes, such as Lean or Quality initiatives, have reshaped organizational processes and reduced waste, but they can only move the organization so far. The next transformation is the interaction between people—HOW they connect as they do their work and achieve results.

In this chapter we will discuss a methodology for transformation to create inclusive cultures that enable greater connection as an essential element to HOW people relate to one another in order to achieve higher levels of performance.

THE POWER OF AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

One of the fundamental elements for sustainable change and transformation that must be addressed is organizational culture: how people interact with each other, the dominant styles that are reinforced in a million informal ways each day, and the mindsets and behaviors that drive people. Culture gives leadership to an organization and defines how it functions. No matter how much a new program or procedure is reinforced, it won't succeed if it is at odds with the organization's culture. Culture trumps policy and strategy every time.

Culture is transferred from generation to generation. It is comprised of the oral histories that are shared about what and who is valued. People learn much more about an organization's culture by walking through the halls than through formal policies or onboarding programs. It is the general "vibe" one gets after spending time in an organization.

An inclusive culture is a critical ingredient for organizational breakthroughs that foster higher levels of performance. Our definition of inclusion is: *A sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued, and seen for who we are as individuals; and a level of supportive energy and commitment from leaders, colleagues, and others so that we—individually and collectively—can do our best work.*

An inclusive culture is one that enables ideas, perspectives, and experiences to be fully leveraged, creating a wide bandwidth for problem solving and innovation. In the past, people were rewarded for getting business results by any means; in contrast, an inclusive organization recognizes that one must get results through people. There is an acknowledgment that the more

people are engaged, the more they will contribute not only their primary energy, but their discretionary energy and ideas. In the past, it was acceptable to utilize and “go to” the top 20 to 25 percent of people, while in an inclusive organization there is a recognition that talent and ideas reside at all levels and within all people. The challenge is how to tap into the wisdom that resides throughout the organization. By overutilizing some and underutilizing others, organizations fail to tap into all existing talent, wasting some people’s talent and overburdening others. The result is that some people never receive opportunities to grow and develop, while others “burn out” or leave.

What most prevents people from being able to do their best work, both individually and collectively, is a sense of not being included in the flow of the organization. They feel their ideas and perspectives do not matter and are not particularly wanted. They experience pressure to not express differing points of view, to simply do what one is told, to leave the thinking and decision making to those at the top. At a time when organizations need everyone’s ideas to address complex problems, where there are many unknowns and unknowables, that mindset and culture is at odds with what is needed for success.

There are several important hallmarks that distinguish an inclusive culture as a place where people can bring their thinking and contribute their best work:

- People are respected. Regardless of job title, seniority, identity, or other characteristics, everyone in the organization is treated with dignity and honor. There is respect for people’s time, talents, needs, and life outside the organization.
- People are valued. All people are important members of the organization, whose contributions are essential for overall success.

- People are seen. There is no need to hide certain elements of one’s identity in order to “fit in” or “climb the ladder.” An inclusive culture acknowledges and values who people are, and sees their background and experiences as providing organizational capability.
- People speak up. People feel safe to share their ideas. Contributing ideas and perspectives is expected—it is seen as essential for leveraging the talents of all members of the organization.
- People offer peer-to-peer leadership. While a managerial hierarchy may still be in place, it is understood that leaders and expertise exist at every level in the organization—titled or not—and that each member has influence and knowledge to bring to her or his work teams and day-to-day interactions.
- People are willing to Be BIG, step out, and be bold. Individuals are no longer hiding out and waiting for others to initiate. They take leadership where and how they can.

BREAKING THROUGH: INCLUSION AS THE HOW FOR HIGHER PERFORMANCE

A result of an inclusive culture is that breakthroughs in operations and individual and team performance occur daily. Inclusion is not an endpoint in itself; it is a means to an end. It is how organizations can continually raise the bar on performance and perpetuate an environment that is as limitless and resourceful as the members themselves. It establishes new mindsets and expectations for how people treat each other, operate within the enterprise, and get results. A key outcome of inclusive mindsets, behaviors, and practices is the creation of a more connected workforce—specifically, the creation of a Connected Organization.

The Connected Organization

The Connected Organization is one in which people focus on the work to be done and the partnerships necessary to achieve collective goals. Rather than focusing primarily on reporting relationships as the cornerstone of who and what matters, the Connected Organization is built upon identifying individuals who need to inform and partner with others to do their work and who needs to inform and partner with them. Thus, a Connected Organization flows across traditional organizational boundaries and establishes more holistic work interactions. People are connected to each other and recognize they need others in order to achieve their goals. They value how their work connects to others and others' work connects to theirs. Individuals are more concerned with what it takes to get the work done than in managing their boss' expectations. A Connected Organization is about partnership (individual-to-individual), collaboration (team-to-team), and an inclusive mindset (the way the processes operate).

Inclusion is a necessary condition for the Connected Organization, breaking down the silos that so often divide individuals and groups and breaking down the walls that limit people's ability to engage effectively with others. People and groups partnering effectively with each other can only take hold when trust, value, and respect are a part of everyday mindsets and behaviors. Without a sense of belonging and a feeling that each person matters and makes a difference, connections cannot be formed and collaboration and idea sharing are hampered.

Knowledge Transfer

Historically, organizations have fostered the idea that operational and organizational knowledge is entrusted to a select group of people, typically highly tenured senior leaders. They are the carriers who keep, store, and dispense information as needed. Technical information, financial

realities, organizational history, etc. may be entrusted in turn to various subsets of people—typically on a “need-to-know” basis—but the overall philosophy is that knowledge is power, and only the most “important” people in the organization have a right to know.

This antiquated paradigm gets one thing right: knowledge is power. But given the complexity of the challenges facing organizations today and the need for constant improvement, it makes no sense to restrict this power (the power to contribute new ideas and perspectives, the power to generate solutions, the power of knowing) to a select few. As organizations are learning through social media and the Internet, it is harder to keep secrets and tightly control information than it once was. Organizations need to work toward a new model in which knowledge is available to everyone and is freely shared so that breakthroughs and new opportunities can arise from every corner of the organization.

The ability to share knowledge needs to become a core individual competency and organizational capability. How quickly can an organization transfer knowledge, from individual to individual, across teams, and throughout the organization? How quickly can that knowledge be applied, acted on, expanded, and adapted to challenges and opportunities the organization is facing day to day? These are the metrics that will determine an organization’s success.

On one level, this is a question of communications systems. A variety of formal and informal means for exchanging ideas and information are needed. But on a more fundamental level, this is a matter of partnership, collaboration, inclusion, and trust. For transfer of knowledge and speed of application to take place certain conditions are necessary.

The first is that people trust each other enough to share their knowledge/power. This is not a casual expectation, particularly in organizations where hoarding knowledge historically has been

the means to individual success. It requires a new definition of partnership and a thorough buy-in to inclusion as a Way of Life.

Another is a mindset shift from knowledge as a zero-sum game to knowledge as an infinite resource that grows and replenishes itself when more people are involved. This makes sharing information an obvious goal, even when doing so requires an additional investment in time and resources.

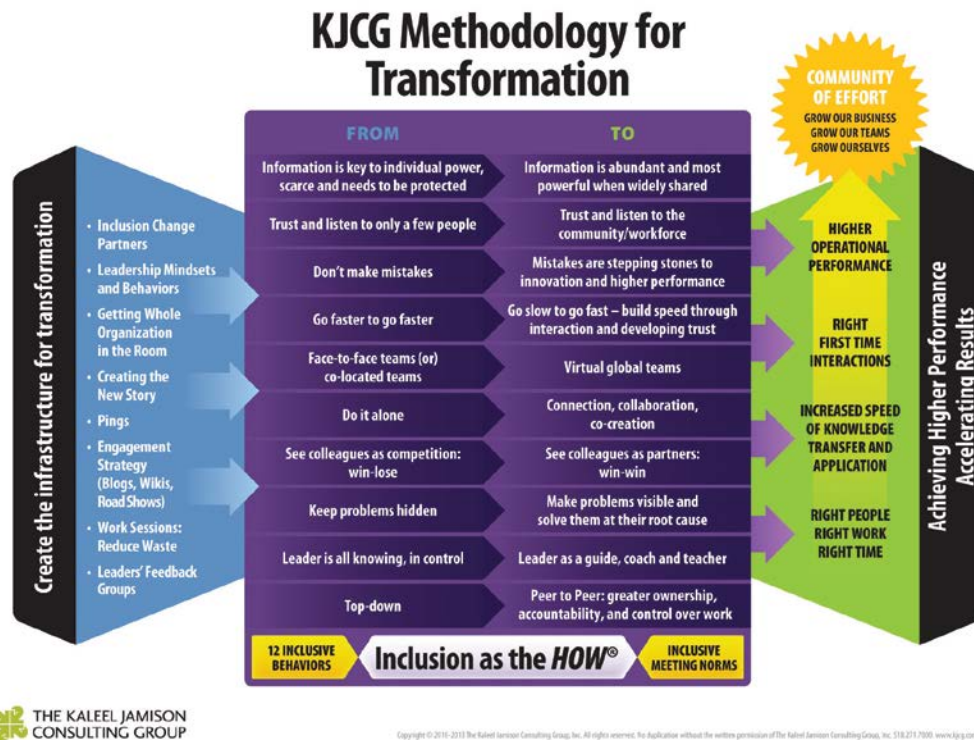
SIDEBAR

Eight Critical Mindsets

Through our work with our clients we have identified Eight Critical Mindsets for the Connected Organization:

1. Working in collaboration is essential. It is the new approach for power and results.
2. There needs to be constant challenging of and pushing on “what is.”
3. All teams, units, and structures are temporary and must be built for constant transformation.
4. Waste must be eliminated—waste of people’s energies and waste in processes.
5. The ability and willingness to change mindsets quickly is an organizational imperative.
6. Adding value and making things better than they were before you touched them, and conscious improvement is everyone’s key responsibility.
7. Having an open mind that invites and embraces differences is a business asset.
8. Partnership and connection built on trust, mutual learning, and inclusion is the responsibility of each person in the organization.

GRAPHIC 22.1



GETTING THERE: A METHODOLOGY FOR CULTURE TRANSFORMATION

So how can leaders and OD Practitioners go about facilitating inclusion as a means for organizational breakthroughs and creating the Connected Organization? In our work, we have leveraged the following methods and strategies to create organizational transformation.

- **Shift mindsets about how to achieve culture transformation.**
 - *from* training programs.....*to* interventions
 - *from* senior leaders acting alone.....*to* engaging everyone
 - *from* edicts and speeches..... *to* collective input of all people
 - *from* incremental change.....*to* bold leaps

- **Connect to the business imperative.** Culture change cannot be disconnected from the operations of the organization. It cannot be positioned as something “nice to do,” but instead must be seen as essential for organizational success. Its impact on the bottom line must be explicit. The desired culture must be seen as the HOW for achieving operational results.
- **Create the organizational infrastructure for transformation.** Few significant change efforts ever occurred through the current organizational chart. Similarly, with an inclusion transformation, the organization needs to create a temporary, enabling infrastructure necessary to lead and implement the change effort. This includes the appropriate level of leadership and resources to shepherd and infuse the effort.
- **Identify the current state through a process of discovery.** Critical to the success of the effort is to have a solid diagnosis of the current state of the culture and to establish appropriate metrics. The implementation of a discovery process that includes interviews (face-to-face as well as via telephone where needed) and the use of a quantitative survey provide the foundation for the effort and for establishing a FROM→TO culture vision. The discovery process itself is an intervention that begins to engage people in the effort and can identify early adopters. The discovery data must be shared with the senior leadership team as a way to create buy-in and identify the aspirational culture that the organization needs to move TO. This is critical for mapping out strategy and establishing a baseline against which to measure.
- **Create the New Story.** Culture is passed down as legacy—in the stories, mythologies, and histories that carry from generation to generation. The change effort has to generate new stories, with new messages that become a part of the new culture.

The organization also needs to get creative in how it proliferates new stories. Critical to success is highlighting how inclusion is impacting results and making visible what is often invisible. It is essential to highlight both small and big successes in moving to the TO state. Communication channels might include wikis and blogs that enable co-creation of various elements of the message by everyone.

- **Utilize the FROM→TO culture vision to provide a gap analysis.** All interventions need to be targeted to close the gap between the FROM→TO (for example, FROM a relationship culture TO a performance culture). A list of 6-10 FROM→TO items needs to be developed with the input of senior leaders and then enhanced by the larger organization as the intervention rolls out. This creates the first clear understanding of the work at hand—how far the organization needs to travel along the change path to achieve its goals. Some examples of a FROM→TO culture vision are:

From	To
Too little acceptance of differences	Global mindset and skillset to effectively engage differences
Command and control culture that causes people to wait for direction	Empower people to make decisions, take action, and be accountable
Working and thinking in silos	Cross-divisional, cross-functional, cross-regional, high performing teams
Individual competing “against”	Individuals and teams competing “with” colleagues
Information is protected and only shared with certain people and groups	Information is openly shared and team members are more informed

- **Align senior leaders.** Though the effort will need to engage people at all levels, getting senior leaders on board and on the same page is an essential early step.

Leaders themselves cannot make change happen, but their buy-in, early adoption of the needed mindsets and behaviors, and support for the effort as it moves forward is critical. Leaders must also understand and connect how a more inclusive culture and Connected Organization are critical to achieving business results and how they must grow themselves as leaders.

- **Identify the mindsets and behaviors necessary for the new culture.** Mindsets are one of the key underpinnings to the transformation process. Often, interventions have focused only on behaviors, thereby limiting their success because the foundational mindsets have not shifted. Explicitly identifying the new mindsets is critical for creating a breakthrough, since moving to the TO state will not happen without the conscious shift of mindsets, e.g., “we compete individually” vs. “we compete together.” In many organizations, mindsets have coalesced over the years without anyone paying attention to them. By identifying the cognitive cornerstones of the organization, and the behaviors that flow from them, the organization can begin to move forward.
- **Find the self-interest for change.** Everyone has something to gain in the new culture, even those who thrived in the old one and may feel threatened by change, because everyone is valued and respected in it. And everyone benefits from increased performance and organizational success. Identifying and getting people to buy into the “what’s in it for me” component of a more inclusive culture is a crucial step in reaching critical mass for change.
- **Educate and disseminate the change through peer-to-peer leadership.** To create critical mass for change, 10-15 percent of the organization needs to be engaged,

creating advocates for change who can exert peer-to-peer leadership and enroll their colleagues in the effort. Of that 10-15 percent, a small group needs to be educated in an intense, multi-part, multi-day education series to enable them to develop the new mindsets and learn and practice “real time” the behaviors needed for transformation. Part of the role of Core Inclusion PartnersSM is to reach out to colleagues with whom they work (a pod of 6 to 10 people—Inclusion Change AlliesSM) to begin bringing inclusion into the day-to-day operations and interactions of the organization. Pod members then similarly engage their colleagues, using peer-to-peer leadership as a way to create waves of change. Core Inclusion PartnersSM and Inclusion Change AlliesSM are not expected to become trainers. Rather, they bring new mindsets and behaviors into day-to-day operations so that inclusion becomes the HOW for doing business. At the same time, education sessions need to be held to bring the entire organization together to provide information about why the change is needed (business imperative) and where the organization needs to go (culture vision and FROM→TO), to hear their thinking about what needs to change in their areas of responsibility, and to create buy-in to the effort and shared accountability.

- **Conduct ping surveys.** These are brief (typically 5-8 questions) electronic surveys that allow quick feedback from a large range of people to not only monitor progress, but help shape strategies going forward. They also demonstrate inclusion by soliciting the voices and opinions of people throughout the organization on substantial issues. Pings are conducted weekly or monthly and provide valuable real-time data to adjust and shift the change strategy more rapidly.

- **Model and promote conscious inclusion by living the 12 Inclusive Behaviors:** The following behaviors should be promoted as the “ground rules for interactions” that everyone in the organization is expected to model to create inclusion and the Connected Organization.
 1. Greet people authentically—say “hello.”
 2. Create a sense of safety for yourself and your team members.
 3. Work for the common good and shared success.
 4. Listen as an ally—listen, listen, listen, and engage.
 5. Be BIG: Lean into discomfort—be willing to challenge self and others.
 6. Put your stake in the ground and be willing, eager, and able to move it.
 7. Link to others’ ideas, thoughts, and feelings—give energy back.
 8. Create 360° vision: Ask others to share their street corner/perspective and accept their frame of reference as true for them.
 9. Address misunderstandings and resolve disagreements—work “pinches.”
 10. Speak up when people are being made “small” or excluded.
 11. Ask who else needs to be involved to understand the whole situation to ensure right people, right work, right time.
 12. Build *TRUST*: Do what you say you will do and honor confidentiality.

SUMMARY

The kind of organizational transformation we have identified takes committed leaders who understand the goals of the effort and, most importantly, the business payoff for change. It needs people at all levels of the organization who are willing to change and grow themselves into new kinds of leaders. It also takes committed followership.

One of the central tenets of inclusion is the importance and competitive advantage of all people in the organization being able to contribute their best, to create a whole much greater than the sum of its parts. It will take peer-to-peer leadership to create a truly collaborative, co-owned culture in which all people are respected, seen, and heard. The crucial sense of belonging has to come from within the organization, not from above.

Creating a sense of belonging and a culture of inclusion starts with trust and that is the necessary ingredient for achieving breakthroughs like knowledge transfer, adopting new mindsets, and building a Connected Organization. With these elements in place, and inclusion as a Way of Life, organizations can start to achieve the breakthroughs necessary for success in an ever-changing workplace and marketplace.

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