

The Path to Inclusion

Inclusion as the *HOW*®

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In today's world—with its constant change, intense competition, global reach, and innumerable unknowns—no individual or team, acting alone, can possibly guide an organization to success. More than ever, organizations must unleash the thinking and perspectives of most people—some would say *all* people—to thrive: not just people individually, but people collectively, enhancing their interactions so they can connect and co-create. In other words, organizational success depends on people *Joining* with one another.

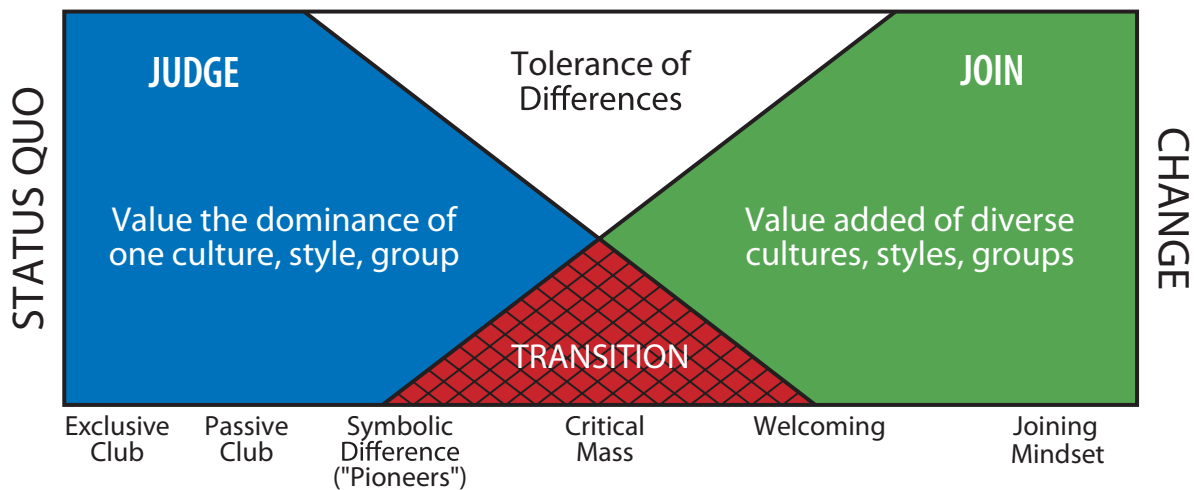
All too often, however, organizations and the people who work in them start not from a *Joining* mindset, but from the opposite position: a *Judging* mindset. Judging inhibits the acceptance of new street corners (or perspectives) and ideas—often the very street corners and ideas that could move the organization toward higher performance. This is why, as organizations move from a fixed, controlled, few-included, conformity-based monoculture to an **Inclusion as the *HOW*** culture, it is not enough simply to *say* that everybody is important and has a voice; it is not enough simply to hire

a diverse group of people in the hope of gaining different perspectives. The *Judging* mindset will ensure that their street corners will not be heard or seen as clearly or strongly as possible, and the organization will not be able to capitalize on the value they could bring.

In short, there must be a shift in mindset from *Judging* to *Joining*. While the shift takes place within individuals, organizations must reorient, reset, and redesign their systems to reinforce the *Joining* mindset.

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This move cannot happen by edict—by turning on a light switch, as it were. Rather, it requires a strategic process that changes interactions by changing people’s mindsets toward Joining and their behaviors into Inclusive Behaviors. In the Path Model to **Inclusion as the *HOW***, we have identified five basic stages through which organizations typically move in their journey from exclusive monoculture club to **Inclusion as the *HOW*** organization:

- **Exclusive Monoculture Club – Passive Club.** Most of today’s large organizations started as small, monocultural clubs because the founders hired people with whom they felt comfortable. As these organizations grew, their policies and culture tended to reflect the initial people’s needs and experiences. Living in this same culture day after day, with others who (within a certain range) thought and did things similarly, people all too easily assumed that their street corner was “the way things are,” “the only way,” or “the one right way.” They Judged other approaches as inferior to theirs or just not as informed as theirs.

In most organizations today, the exclusion may be “passive” (there are no exclusionary statements in their bylaws or policies), but the Judging mindset is the same. So is the impact: only the “true club members” are heard, and sameness—in expression, language, behaviors, and interactions—is valued. All others are Judged as not measuring up or needing to figure out how to be more like the traditional group.

- **Symbolic Difference.** Here a handful of people who are different from the traditional group are accepted into the workforce; as they perform well, and as people in the traditional group interact with them, leaders begin to see their value *as people*, as “club worthy,” but still with a caveat: “you are not us.” That valuing, in other words, still does not extend to the differences they bring. In this phase, differences are not so much Judged as ignored—people act as though they do not notice the differences—and people are still implicitly asked to “fit in.”

- **Critical Mass.** At this point, people clearly see the Judging mindset as no longer effective, but they may not trust others sufficiently to Join with them. Tolerance—which can be seen as a midpoint between Judging and Joining—is touted as a virtue at the same time that people begin recognizing the need to move beyond Tolerance. In fact, Tolerance only means that people are holding their breath and not really Joining with others.

- **Welcoming.** This is a truly transformative place in which all people begin to shift toward seeing the need to Join others. It means *not* bringing a Judging mindset to each initial interaction. It also means letting go of mistrust—and the past—to build a new future together. During this phase, people more actively welcome other street corners and differences, and they begin to create the systems and structures that will enable individuals and groups to bring their differences *and* their similarities. Individually people are curious about others’ perspectives and seek them out to ensure they are seeing the full 360-degree view of the issue or opportunity at hand.

- **Inclusion as the *HOW* Organization.** Here people, organizations, and the systems that support them embrace the paramount importance

What is Inclusion as the *HOW*?

Inclusion as the *HOW* leverages inclusion as a means for achieving higher operational performance and accelerating bottom-line results. It is a way of life that underpins everything the organization does: how it develops strategy, sets goals, makes decisions, runs meetings, solves problems, and engages people, and how people interact.

of Joining as a fundamental *HOW* for every interaction and activity in the organization. Differences in title, function, style, background, age, nationality, location, and level, among others, are sought out to ensure that all the views needed to solve problems and address key organizational objectives are heard. Systems and policies support the differences that people bring: these systems and policies might include the rewarding and recognizing of teamwork and collaboration (which honors the ability of people to Join together to achieve goals) and promotional criteria (which spell out and incentivize *HOW* individuals and teams get results: through the joining of individual and collective effort).

Reaching this last stage is transformational for the organization. As people fully embrace the Joining mindset, they collaborate and co-create across departments, teams, and functions. Knowledge flows back and forth. The focus is on gathering the Right People for the Right Work at the Right Time. Waste in interactions is minimized, and the unknowns that the organization faces become known. At this stage, the organization has unleashed the vast range of talents, skills, and experiences of all people. It has, in short, positioned itself to thrive in the new marketplace.