EY
Building a better working world

Creating a strong sense of belonging for all

Think of your experiences at work or in your personal life where you felt fully valued, understood and seen for all you bring to the table – your background, experiences and skills. What was it about the situation, the environment, the people that created your experience? How did this impact your sense of competence, confidence and success? … Now, think of a time when you did not feel valued, understood or seen for who you are and what you can contribute. How is that experience and its impact on you different?
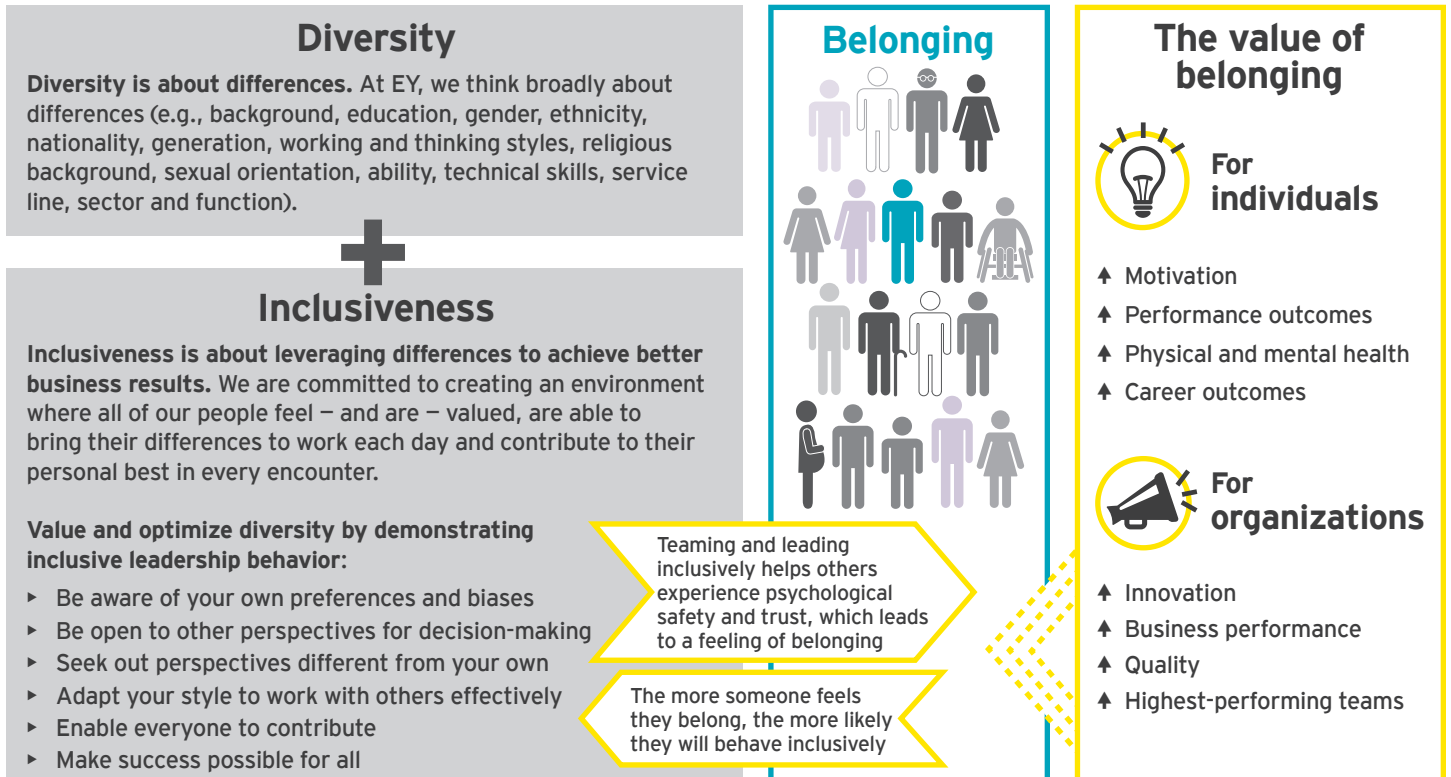
Through this simple reflection, we remind ourselves how significant the sense of belonging is and what a powerful influence on performance it can be. When we feel a strong sense of belonging, we feel free to be ourselves and safe to offer different points of view and dissenting opinions, and we believe that our contributions mattered. We feel like "insiders," a trusted integral part of a team, network or community. In contrast, when our sense of belonging is low, we feel like "outsiders." We feel vulnerable and guarded, we don't speak up easily or offer alternative perspectives and we contribute less, as it is not appreciated or does not seem to matter. The degree to which we feel we belong (or don't belong) can vary from one person to another, one team to another, or even from one meeting to the next.

Given the increasing diversity of our teams, we cannot take a sense of belonging for granted. That is why we, as leaders, colleagues and team members, need to be purposeful and deliberate in cultivating a sense of belonging for all, to harness its benefits for us as individuals, for highest-performing teams and for our organizations. Everyone has opportunities every day to shape the belonging experience for ourselves and others. This requires applying inclusive behaviors and norms, to make it clear to each person that their differences matter and that they are an "insider" of the group and not an "outsider."

This guide is for individuals and teams to learn more about the value of belonging at work, and how to team and lead in ways that create a positive belonging experience for ourselves and our colleagues:

Optimizing belonging increases the value of Diversity & Inclusiveness

Diversity

Diversity is about differences. At EY, we think broadly about differences (e.g., background, education, gender, ethnicity, nationality, generation, working and thinking styles, religious background, sexual orientation, ability, technical skills, service line, sector and function).

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Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness is about leveraging differences to achieve better business results. We are committed to creating an environment where all of our people feel – and are – valued, are able to bring their differences to work each day and contribute to their personal best in every encounter.

Value and optimize diversity by demonstrating inclusive leadership behavior:

▸ Be aware of your own preferences and biases
▸ Be open to other perspectives for decision-making
▸ Seek out perspectives different from your own
▸ Adapt your style to work with others effectively
▸ Enable everyone to contribute
▸ Make success possible for all

Belonging

Teaming and leading inclusively helps others experience psychological safety and trust, which leads to a feeling of belonging

The more someone feels they belong, the more likely they will behave inclusively

The value of belonging

For individuals

▲ Motivation
▲ Performance outcomes
▲ Physical and mental health
▲ Career outcomes

For organizations

▲ Innovation
▲ Business performance
▲ Quality
▲ Highest-performing teams

Personal and business benefits of belonging

A strong sense of belonging can lead to better collaboration, retention and business performance. When we feel we belong, we are more motivated and engaged. It significantly reduces stress levels and improves physical health, emotional well-being and performance.

80% favorable

"The people I work with make me feel like I belong to a team(s)."

This newly added *EY Global People Survey* (GPS) question revealed that the majority of our people globally experience a sense of belonging on their team(s). This is a positive result and will serve as our baseline. However, because our goal is to have a fully inclusive culture where all EY people feel that they belong to a team(s), we have an opportunity to improve. GPS results also show some differences and less-favorable responses for some underrepresented demographic groups, including those who identify as having a different cultural background than others on their teams. This tells us that some groups of people are having less positive experiences at EY.

Source: EY Global People Survey, 2017

Highest-performing teams are diverse and inclusive groups of committed, passionate people, brought together by a shared vision and deeply invested in each other's success. As individuals, they bring their unique experiences, backgrounds and perspectives. As a group, they form the right mix of talent. **Inclusive teams build a sense of belonging for all members, elevate a high-trust culture and provide psychological safety** by encouraging members to voice diverse opinions, share nontraditional views and ask better questions.

People at high-trust companies report:

74% less stress

40% less burnout

106% more energy

76% more engagement

resulting in **50%** higher productivity

Source: "The Neuroscience of Trust" by Paul J. Zak, Harvard Business Review, January 2017

Psychological safety is **80% higher**

among employees who perceived their leaders demonstrated **empowerment**, **accountability**, **courage** and **humility** behaviors most often.

Source: Catalyst research, 2015

Diversity & Inclusiveness drives performance

Teaming and leading inclusively helps create environments where people are likely to feel they belong. When people feel they belong, they are more likely to model inclusive behaviors. This "virtuous" cycle optimizes the business benefits of D&I:

Business performance

6 points higher gross margin

10 points higher revenue growth

Source: EY Business Linkage Research, based on the Global People Survey results, 2013

Team collaboration

57% better

Source: Driving Retention and Performance Through Employee Engagement, Corporate Leadership Council, 2008

Innovation

3.5x *more likely* to contribute to their full innovative potential

Source: Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Melinda Marshall & Laura Sherbin with Tara Gonsalves, Innovation, Diversity & Market Growth, Center for Talent Innovation, 2013

Potential barriers to belonging

Like an iceberg, many aspects of our identity may not be visible to others. To be recognized, valued and appreciated for who we are and how we see ourselves, consider the following.

We each have multiple aspects of our identity. Our differences matter and make us unique.

For example, someone's identity may include being a man, father, artist, accountant, immigrant and introvert. Distinct aspects of our identity may become more relevant in different circumstances.

How much we share of our personal lives, and when and how we do it, may differ from one individual to another.

For some markets, an appropriate personal interaction can include laughing with people and understanding their home situation or their history from their childhoods. This may vary in different markets, as cultural differences, personality traits (introverts/extroverts) and identity impact how we communicate. Sharing signals that we care and are open is key to elevate less-visible attributes, strengths and experience to the surface.

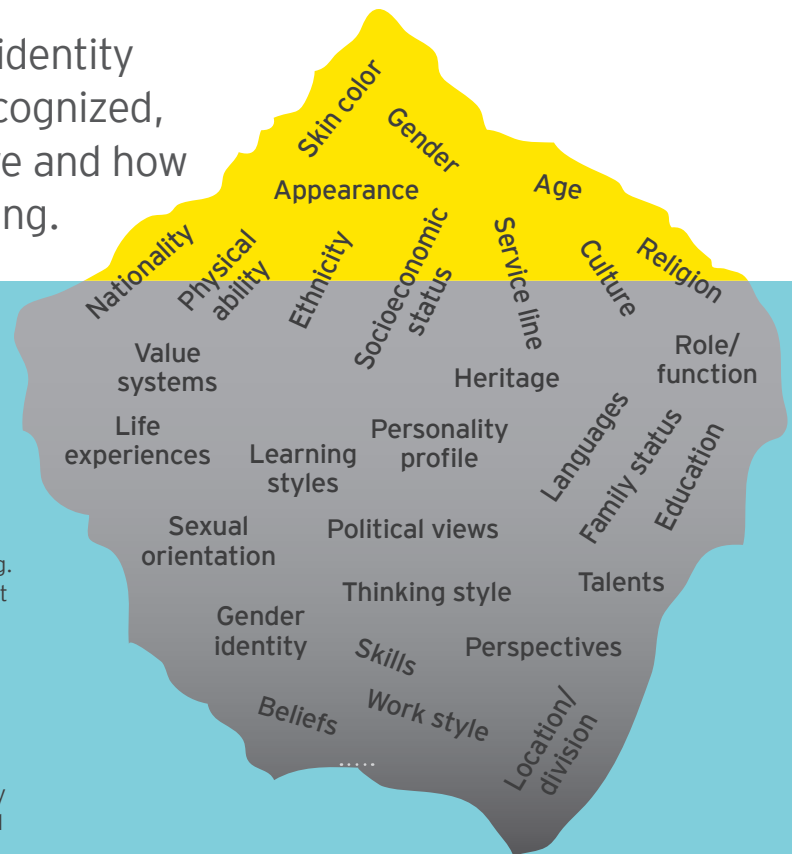## Sometimes we can feel uncertain about belonging.

Individuals who identify as members of groups that are underrepresented in teams or organizations (e.g., women in senior ranks, those of a different cultural background than the majority of a team, LGBT, foreign nationals, experienced hires) may question whether their differences are valued and if they belong. This can result in people feeling additional stress and using their energy to fit in with dominant norms and cover up their differences, and can lead to perspectives that prevent people, teams and organizations from realizing the benefits of belonging. This can be particularly significant for members of historically marginalized and/or stereotyped groups, where trust of a majority group should not be taken for granted. Trust in a supportive environment needs to be developed over time and explicitly demonstrated and communicated consistently.

The experience of belonging isn't static. Our environment matters.

The environment we experience on our teams and in meetings can make us feel more or less like we belong. Consider when you are invited to share your views, or when people support your flexibility needs. Compare this to a meeting where your ideas are ignored, or where only some people are afforded flexibility. Through our actions, we can shape our environment for ourselves and others by building trust and psychological safety on our teams – making fewer assumptions about people based on what is visible to us, and helping reveal more of what is "beneath the waterline" for ourselves and others.

Check out the following pages for practical tips to boost belonging!

"It's important to be yourself because being anybody else is a lot harder work, and you're going to use up a lot of bandwidth to do it. When you actually begin to be yourself and uncover that to others, you plug yourself into a power source that hugely benefits both you and your organization."

– Kenji Yoshino
Chief Justice Earl Warren Professor of Constitutional Law, New York University School of Law

Practical tips and suggested actions to strengthen the experience of belonging for yourself and others

With focused intention, openness and some specific actions, we can help create positive experiences of belonging for ourselves and others. Your teaming and leadership matter!

"Creating space to unearth the multiple identities (someone has) is one of the tasks of leaders and creates the sense of belonging."

– **Dr. Valerie Purdie-Vaughns**
Professor in the Department of Psychology, Columbia University and Columbia Business School

How I feel when I belong

Welcomed, valued, understood	Safe	Connected
▸ I'm onboarded in a thoughtful way. ▸ My team engages me in discussions and decisions. ▸ My opinion matters.	▸ I can be myself. ▸ Differences in my experience, background and point of view are valued. ▸ My colleagues care about me.	▸ I have a network that supports me professionally and personally. ▸ I feel genuinely connected with members of my team. ▸ I feel invested and purposeful at work, which makes me also feel willing and motivated to contribute above and beyond, both professionally and personally.

How I can create a stronger sense of belonging for others and myself

What I can do for others: ▸ Check in on new members of my team. ▸ Be open to, recognize and incorporate new approaches and ideas. ▸ Encourage people to offer diverse or dissenting opinions. Ask, "What points of view have I not yet considered?"	**What I can do for others:** ▸ Be an active ally. Identify and address – with permission – the behaviors that make people feel that they are not valued, dismissed, interrupted or overlooked in team settings. ▸ Be explicit about the importance of understanding and valuing cultural and stylistic differences.	**What I can do for others:** ▸ Look for ways the team can support each individual's personal and career aspirations, needs, interests and styles. ▸ Pay attention to how people build relationships, and help expand their connections by sharing my networks. ▸ Look out for those who may feel left out or like an "outsider." Give them the opportunity to lead on an engagement and to share their views.
What I can do for myself: Set up time to connect with individuals on my team. Be open about why this is important to me. I may want to share my background and experiences.	**What I can do for myself:** Ask for perspectives from multiple team members and share my thoughts during meetings, even if they differ from other opinions.	**What I can do for myself:** Be clear that differences are an asset, openly share and leverage them on my projects.

How I feel when I belong

Trusted	Inspired	Supported to achieve my aspirations	Elevated
▸ I'm given opportunities to challenge myself and gain more visibility. ▸ Decision-making processes are open for my input and understanding.	▸ I see role models around me. ▸ The purpose of my work and challenging projects motivate me.	▸ My team understands and supports my aspirations. ▸ I have the flexibility I need to achieve professional and personal growth.	▸ I have a sponsor who advocates for me. ▸ I experience engaging, challenging work. I learn new things that are stimulating and useful for my career. ▸ I see a promising future at EY.

How I can create a stronger sense of belonging for others and myself

What I can do for others:

▸ Engage personally and align expectations early on in relationships: be present, curious and seize daily opportunities to communicate that I value and care about others.

▸ Be open and transparent about the reasons for my decisions, and be transparent with what I prioritize.

▸ Be consistent and accountable: maintain consistent behavior, even under pressure; model inclusive behaviors; and reinforce and reward the accountability of others.

What I can do for myself:

To increase the trust that others have in me, deliver on my promises and regularly engage in transparent, open dialogue.

What I can do for others:

▸ Observe and ask what motivates a person (what motivates me might not motivate someone else.)

▸ Provide "gold standard" feedback to each person on my team.

▸ Communicate my support: "I believe in you and trust that you can achieve your career and personal aspirations."

▸ Show support through actions (e.g., invite to join a project, give a challenging assignment, offer regular touch points to encourage questions).

What I can do for myself:

Reflect on aspects of my role that I appreciate, and consider ways to do more things that motivate me. Embody the leadership characteristics that I admire.

What I can do for others:

▸ Role model by sharing my own flexibility stories, not just business results and metrics.

▸ Openly address discomfort and stigmas about working flexibly, and challenge the status quo; ask whether preferences or traditions keep us from being flexible in our ways of working; define what is actually required to better inform decisions about what could be changed.

What I can do for myself:

When joining a team or starting a new project, communicate my two to three areas of project focus to a senior person on the team and ask what they expect me to contribute.

What I can do for others:

▸ Information is power; make sure I share with all members of the team (not only a select few).

▸ Look for opportunities to position new team members for high-profile projects.

▸ Rotate team members to lead, and bring them to meetings for exposure to senior executives or key clients.

▸ Visibly sponsor people who are different from me, and set expectations for others to do the same. Be transparent about why I am advocating for their development and advancement.

What I can do for myself:

Perform at a high level, contribute a distinct personal brand and add value to my sponsor's network.

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Find out more

Visit the EY Diversity & Inclusiveness microsite at ey.com/differencesmatter

Additional resources are on SharePoint at Global Diversity & Inclusiveness