

FROM GASLIGHTING TO TRUTHLIGHTING

**A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR
ADVANCING FAIR OPPORTUNITIES
FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE**

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TRUTHLIGHTING

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Inclusive Leadership Development Framework

Purpose: Train leaders and managers to foster equitable workplace cultures by addressing bias, promoting inclusion, and supporting diverse talent. This framework provides a structured approach to developing inclusive leadership behaviors and creating an environment where all employees can thrive.

1. Build Self-Awareness and Self-Reflection

Leaders must first understand their biases and recognize how they influence decision-making, team dynamics, and workplace culture.

Key Actions:

- Conduct regular training on unconscious bias, micro-aggressions, and privilege awareness.
- Use self-assessment tools to help leaders identify and acknowledge personal biases.
- Create an open dialogue where employees can share their experiences with bias and exclusion.
- Encourage leaders to seek feedback from diverse team members to gain insight into their blind spots.

Example:

A health center CEO takes unconscious bias training and realizes their hiring patterns favor candidates from narrow backgrounds. They commit to expanding their talent pipeline to include HBCUs, Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and community-based job programs.

2. Set Clear Expectations for Inclusive Leadership

Inclusion should be a core leadership competency, with clear expectations and accountability built into performance evaluations.

Key Actions:

- Define what inclusive leadership looks like, including active listening, empathy, equitable decision-making, and fostering diverse perspectives.
- Train leaders on inclusive communication skills, such as avoiding assumptions, validating employee experiences, and engaging in meaningful dialogue.
- Provide leadership coaching that focuses on inclusive behaviors and cultural competency.
- Recognize and reward leaders who demonstrate advocacy for fair policies and practices.

Example:

A COO receives DEI coaching after learning that diverse staff feel unheard, leading them to implement a Shared Voices

Initiative with structured team check-ins, rotating facilitators, and anonymous feedback tools. Within three months, staff engagement scores rise by 30 percent, turnover among underrepresented employees drops by 20 percent, and participation in leadership discussions increases. Seeing the success, the COO commits to ongoing coaching and inspires other leaders to adopt inclusive leadership practices, strengthening workplace culture and patient care.

4. Create a Culture of Belonging

Inclusive leaders create an environment where all employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute.

Key Actions:

- Establish employee resource groups (ERGs) and affinity networks to support underrepresented employees and create voices for their ideas and perspectives.
- Promote psychological safety by ensuring employees feel comfortable speaking up without fear of retaliation through one-on-one meetings and anonymous feedback.
- Develop mentorship and sponsorship programs to support the career growth of diverse talent.
- Encourage leaders to celebrate cultural diversity through workplace initiatives and take time to understand the unique challenges different individuals face.

Example:

A clinic supervisor notices that some staff feel hesitant to speak in meetings. They implement a round-robin discussion method, ensuring that everyone can share insights.

3. Inclusive Decision-Making and Collaboration

Leaders are crucial in ensuring fairness in hiring, promotions, and project assignments. Decision-making processes must be transparent and free from bias.

Key Actions:

- Standardize interview and evaluation criteria to minimize subjective judgment.
- Diversity interview panels and hiring committees are required to increase fairness in candidate selection.
- Regularly review promotion and pay equity data to identify disparities and address systemic issues.
- Empower others by sharing leadership opportunities and responsibilities.

Example:

HR receives feedback that leadership roles lack diversity, so they implement a policy requiring diverse interview panels and hiring committees. The clinic sees an increase in diverse hires, with improved retention and engagement among under-represented staff. This shift leads to better patient-provider representation, enhancing trust and culturally competent care.

7. Commit to Continuous Learning and Advocacy

Inclusion is an ongoing process that requires continuous learning and adaptation as workplaces evolve.

Key Actions:

- Provide ongoing leadership training that evolves with emerging DEI challenges and best practices.
- Encourage leaders to stay informed on social and cultural issues that impact workplace dynamics.
- Foster cross-cultural learning by being a mentor and supporting individuals from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Encourage leaders to advocate for underrepresented employees by providing sponsorship and career development opportunities.

Example:

A CEO commits to fostering cross-cultural learning by mentoring emerging leaders from underrepresented backgrounds. Through structured mentorship and sponsorship, several mentees gain promotions into leadership roles, increasing diversity at the executive level. As a result, the organization benefits from more inclusive decision-making, improved employee morale, and stronger connections with diverse patient communities.

6. Hold Leaders Accountable for Inclusion Efforts

Sustained progress in workplace inclusion requires accountability at all levels of leadership.

Key Actions:

- Implement regular diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) assessments to measure leadership effectiveness in fostering inclusivity.
- Integrate inclusion-related goals into leadership performance reviews and feedback cycles, such as taking action to address systemic inequities.
- Tie inclusive leadership performance to executive and managerial compensation or incentive programs.
- Establish clear escalation pathways for employees to report concerns about bias or exclusionary behavior.
- Encourage peer accountability, where leaders hold each other responsible for upholding inclusive practices.

Example:

A management consulting firm implements annual DEI assessments to evaluate leadership effectiveness in fostering inclusivity, tying results to performance reviews. After the first assessment reveals gaps in staff belonging and equitable promotions, leaders must complete DEI training and action plans to address these issues. Within a year, employee engagement scores improved by 35 percent, promotions among underrepresented staff increased, and patient satisfaction rose, demonstrating stronger inclusivity at all levels.

Final Thoughts

Developing inclusive leaders is not a one-time initiative but an ongoing commitment to fostering workplace equity, respect, and belonging. By following this framework, organizations can equip their leaders with the skills and mindset necessary to effectively create lasting change and support diverse talent.

