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A Seven Step Solution for Successful Inclusive Leadership

By Simma Lieberman



Do Your Employees Know Your Name?

Do your employees know your name? Do they even know why your organization exists? If the answer to one or both of these questions is “no,” you cannot possibly have an inclusive culture in your organization. And if that’s the case, you are not optimizing your business results.

Two revealing interactions with employees in the last month caused me to ask these questions.

1 - I call a large hotel asking for the general manager by name. The person answering the phone responds, “I don’t show any guests registered by that name.”

When I tell him that the woman I’m asking for is the general manager of the hotel, he says, “Oh, I’ll look in the directory.”

2 - I try to reach a client who is the CEO of a Fortune 500 corporation. Since I didn’t have his direct number with me, I get the operator. I ask for the CEO by name and the operator asks me what department he works in. I tell her he is the CEO. She says he’s not at that location, and gives me a number at another location. The operator at the other location connects me to his assistant, who puts me right through. When I tell the CEO that the operator didn’t even know who he was, he’s surprised and says he had just assumed everyone in his company of 75,000 employees knows his name.

I ask him, “Why don’t they?”

Do your employees know your name? Do they know why your organization exists, and its values, or do they just know how to do “their jobs?” What else do they not know about where they work?

I tell my clients how important it is during this stressful economic period to be seen by their employees and to provide information and answer questions about the current state of their organizations. It’s not enough to simply come out of your silo and speak to senior level managers. You need to make sure that they are educating their directors and managers and that those directors and managers are educating their employees. Finally, you need a process that ensures everyone is passing on information that is accurate, complete, timely, and usable. That includes knowing the names of top leadership, and understanding the organization’s mission, vision and values.

Employees are more empowered and more productive when they feel included. People feel more included when they have information that helps them do their job. They are able to serve the needs of customers when someone asks to speak to the CEO, or General Manager.

People can't follow your lead and you can't influence them to excel if they don't know who you are. If employees don't know something as simple as the name of the CEO, there is probably a lot more they don't know about the organization. Without basic knowledge they won't be able to answer questions from customers or who to ask for the right information. They can only do their jobs and exist in their own silos.

As the leader you are responsible for providing information and tools to help employees do their jobs and make the organization a success. A good leader knows how to create environments where people are inspired to do their best work. They feel a connection with the mission of the organization and understand how their job contributes to that mission.

Here are seven steps to ensure that your employees have the information that they need to feel included and help you achieve success.

Simma's Seven Step Success Solution for *Inclusive Leadership*

- 1. Identify key information you want your employees to know.**
- 2. Review communication processes in your organization: how information is provided and how it is received.**
- 3. Assess the effectiveness of current communication processes in reaching all employee levels.**
- 4. If the assessment shows that information is getting stuck and not reaching the rest of the organization, identify the problem areas and fix them.**
- 5. Develop and implement a strategy for organizational communication that includes:**
 - New hires**
 - Current employees**
 - Employees who work remotely or at less populated sites**
- 6. Create a matrix of information accountability at each management level**
- 7. Review matrix to ensure information is reaching all employees**

If you follow these steps, you can create a more inclusive culture where everyone can do their best work, and enjoy what they do. You'll ensure that your employees know your name and the whole organization will benefit from your leadership.

About the author:

Simma helps organizations create more profitable cultures and improve individual and organizational performance. She is a consultant, speaker, and trainer. Simma is the co-author of Putting Diversity to Work (Crisp Publications, 2003), a guide for managers on leading a diverse workforce. To learn more about Simma's holistic approach to work/life balance visit her website at www.simmalieberman.com