

Inclusion in the Modern Workplace

How Leaders Can Make an Impact in Any Work Setting

Many organizations today are struggling to decide whether it is best to have employees work on-site, work remotely or utilize a hybrid model. But regardless of which work model they select, organizations must also strive to create a culture of inclusion in order to provide a great employee experience (EX), increase engagement and drive productivity. While these may seem like separate business challenges, the reality

is one should not be considered independent of the other. To get the most out of either – desired work setting or inclusive culture – it is important to understand how the two intersect.

In a [global study](#) of 5,000 employees, we analyzed inclusion and exclusion across talent segments and found opportunities to create a culture of inclusion regardless of work setting.

Building a Culture of Inclusion Is a Business Imperative in Every Work Setting

Only **33%**

of employees report working in an inclusive culture.

A culture of inclusion is driven by impartial treatment, fair access to opportunities, psychological safety, the ability to speak up and a win-win mindset.

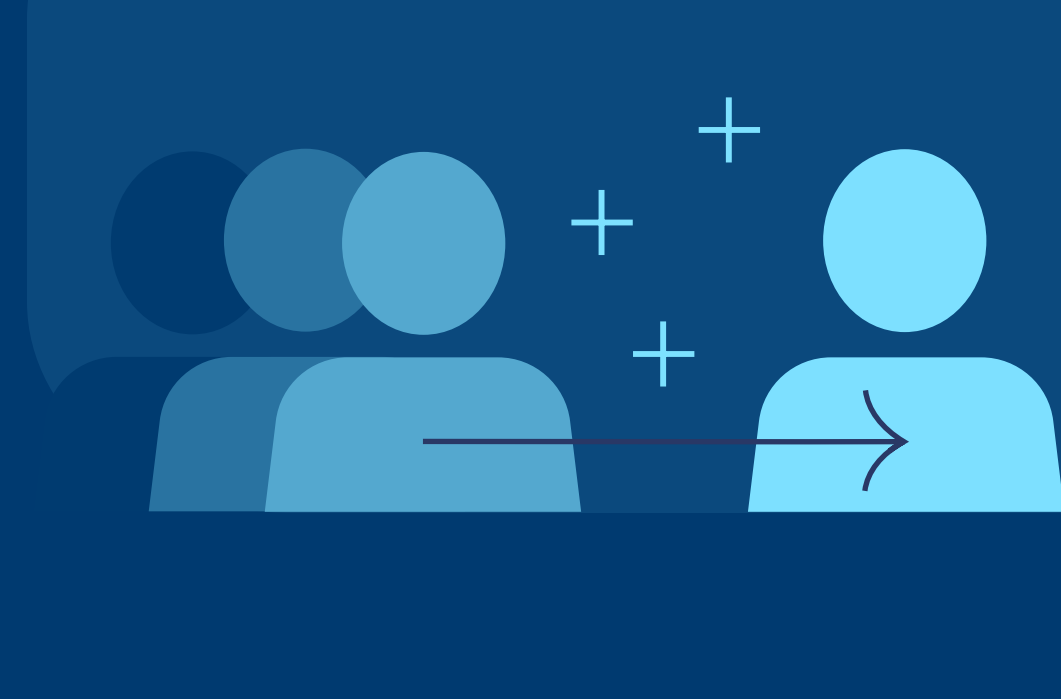
73%

have experienced being dismissed, overtly mistreated and devalued.

63%

have witnessed a co-worker have their ideas shot down, be demeaned or excluded from team activities.

Organizations should focus on fostering a culture of inclusion and addressing exclusion in any and every work setting. To do so, leaders must be attentive to their workers' needs and intentional around driving inclusion. But a one-size-fits-all approach will not work, as each work setting has its own particular challenges.



ON-SITE

CHALLENGE:

- On-site workers are oftentimes far removed from organizational leadership and decision makers.
- They also have less autonomy in their jobs and must deal with the day-to-day challenges of responding to the needs of those they serve.

STARTER ACTION:

Leaders can start by conducting a current state assessment to understand the unique barriers on-site workers experience rather than broad, enterprise-wide solutions built with knowledge workers in mind.

On-site workers experience the highest instances of exclusion and a low culture of inclusion.

Of those surveyed:



say they work in an inclusive culture.



have experienced an act of exclusion.

IN-OFFICE

Seven out of ten in-office employees have personally witnessed an act of exclusion within the last 12 months – the highest across all work settings.



CHALLENGE:

Daily in-person interaction accelerates social dynamics that expose people to behaviors, actions and biases that are exclusionary.

STARTER ACTION:

Recognize that exclusion can affect not only those who experience it. Everyone can be impacted – especially in face-to-face settings. Take stock of what's happening in your organization. Which forms of exclusion are running rampant?

REMOTE

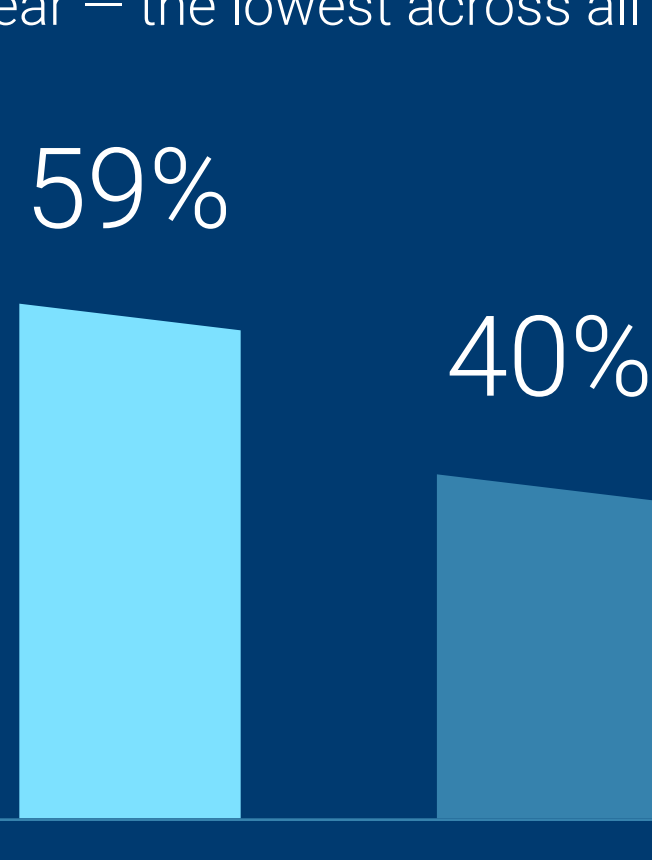
CHALLENGE:

- Although working remotely may reduce the likelihood of experiencing or witnessing acts of exclusion, many remote workers still feel they work in a non-inclusive culture.
- Remote workers often tend to communicate and collaborate primarily with specific individuals or team members, which may inadvertently result in exclusion from certain communications, decision-making processes, talent opportunities and other vital interactions.

STARTER ACTION:

Ensure programs and practices such as mentoring, networking, team development and all communications include remote workers. Develop a specific strategy for them if necessary.

Less than 60% of remote workers personally experienced exclusion and only 40% witnessed acts of exclusion in the last year – the lowest across all work settings.



Experienced exclusion Witnessed exclusion

31% say they work in an inclusive culture.

HYBRID

Being physically present in the workplace, even in a hybrid model, increases the likelihood of workers experiencing or witnessing acts of exclusion.



experience an act of exclusion.



witness an act of exclusion.

CHALLENGE:

- No unique challenges stand out for hybrid workers, as they face a mix of challenges that exist across all work settings.
- However, blending in-office/on-site and remote work may expose these workers to more exclusionary behaviors when working in person, while simultaneously distancing them from access to opportunities and information when working remotely.

STARTER ACTION:

Understand what gets in the way of inclusion for your hybrid workers. Are they experiencing more instances of exclusion? Are they receiving the same opportunities for growth and development that in-office workers receive? Use intentional listening strategies like surveys or focus groups and address gaps.

Leaders Must Act with Intention to Foster a Culture of Inclusion in Any Setting

Senior leaders set the tone for inclusive work cultures; inclusive people managers amplify the impact.

Employees are

8x

Employees are

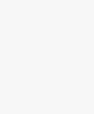
7x

Employees are

9x

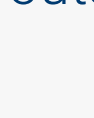
more likely to say their culture is inclusive when

their organization is making sincere efforts toward being inclusive



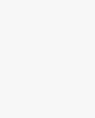
versus perceiving a lack of sincerity.

senior leaders seek out perspectives from people with different points of view to come up with an optimal solution



versus viewing senior leaders as being dismissive of perspectives outside their own.

managers send a clear signal that creating an inclusive team is a top priority for them personally



versus viewing managers as hesitant during conversations about inclusion.

How Leaders Can Take Action:

- Take charge with an unwavering commitment. Emphasize and prioritize a culture of inclusion in your organization's vision, values and talent development programs.
- Look for opportunities to create connections and learn from those with different perspectives, backgrounds, walks of life or cultures as part of your decision-making.
- Managers reinforce and amplify behavioral and senior leader behaviors. Empower managers to advocate for their growth as an inclusive leader and to align with senior leadership for consistency on inclusion priorities, preventing mixed messages.

Source: [Inclusion Study Report: Demystifying Inclusion – Rewards and realities of fostering an inclusive culture](#), Kincentric 2023.

Contacts

Sasha Iliev
Manager
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
sasha.iliev@kincentric.com

Dnika J. Travis, Ph.D.
Director
Research & Insights
dnika.travis@kincentric.com

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If you have any questions, please feel free to [contact us](#). To receive communication and content from us in the future, please [subscribe to our mailing list](#).