

BetterUp

Five ways to *boldly embrace* inclusive leadership

ICYMI: Takeaways from BetterUp's live event with Laura Fuentes, EVP and CHRO of Hilton, and Luvvie Ajayi Jones, author, speaker, and blogger

1. Share your ideas, even when the room might disagree

Luvvie Ajayi Jones suggests that leaders share ideas fearlessly and thoughtfully to set an example for your team, but perform these three self-checks before you speak up:

1. Check your motive. Do you mean what you're saying? Don't speak just to be a contrarian.
2. Do your research. Be prepared to defend your stance with data, facts, and personal experiences.
3. People will likely get upset when you challenge existing systems. Explain your idea thoughtfully and in a sensitive manner to mitigate the risk of matters going wrong.

2. Educate yourself on diverse experiences

Laura pointed out that we cannot justify our silence around inclusion just because the pandemic has put businesses in turmoil. "If the world is having a conversation that deeply impacts our culture, we can't delay this work." She advised leaders to lean in with these three actions:

1. Reflect on your "current" understanding of matters of systemic racism or the LGBTQ experience. Be real and honest with where you stand.
2. Make an effort to learn about how language can include microaggressions. Instead of "they were slaves," say, "they were enslaved." Instead of "they are poor," say, "they live in poverty."
3. Make it clear to your team that you're open to feedback about their experiences and your impact on them.

3. Share stories about real people and situations

Use the power of storytelling instead of jargon and statistics. People don't connect with words like "paradigm shift practices" and "framework" when talking about diversity. Luvvie called on leaders to not "intellectualize struggle because it locks people out." Tell the story of someone living in a car rather than citing data about the number of people experiencing homelessness.

4. Make diversity your business model

Build inclusion into your business model and a sense of belonging in employees will follow. Laura pointed to Hilton as an example: "With 350,000 team members around the world and operations in over a hundred countries, we are diverse by nature. By allowing members to live out their full potential, we understand that it is the diversity of their backgrounds that makes our business power and grow and deliver a better service to our guests."

5. Use expert coaching to identify and challenge unfair systems, people, and ideas

Laura recommended BetterUp's one-on-one expert coaching, which helps leaders (and teams) identify when they are not showing up well with regard to diversity. "We don't want to shame people on this journey but help them make progress," she said. Luvvie encouraged people to make "good trouble" — to push back against the way things have been done to create a better work environment for all. In her own company, as CEO, she asks her team to challenge her in meetings, especially those who are quiet.

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