

Interculturally Competent Leadership

The behaviour of leaders sets the tone in any organization that aims to be more inclusive. Leadership is not only a function, it's a practice. All employees should play a leadership role in the effort, but those designated as "leaders" have a particular and importantly role to play. Diversity Leaders challenge practices that are outdated or ineffective; they inspire a shared vision; they encourage and enable others to act; they set examples for others through their actions and they "encourage the heart". The Members of one organization's Diversity Leadership Council identified the following behaviours of an interculturally competent leader and described their own leaders' behaviours. Here is what they told DiversiPro:

HOW TO KNOW THAT A LEADER IS BEING INTERCULTURALLY COMPETENT

1. When they openly share their knowledge to help others.
2. When they are comfortable admitting that they lack knowledge:
 - a. Allow themselves to be vulnerable; willing to makemistakes
 - b. Comfortable with knowing that they don't know
 - c. Curious and not afraid of their own curiosity
 - d. Always learning and challenging themselves; guard against assumptions; ask questions
 - e. Open to feedback from others; invite discussions on diversity and inclusion
3. When they go beyond tolerance to inclusion
4. When they are willing to make changes on a systemic level to help the organization as a whole
5. When they are transparent and open in communications, but also respect confidentially in what is disclosed to them by others
6. When they participate in cultural functions and encourage their teams to participate in committees such as PRIDE, Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month, Indigenous Peoples Day, and others.
7. Leaders who have a commitment to the journey (not just seeing diversity as the flavour of the month).
8. When their values and communication are consistent with each other.
9. When both employee engagement survey and client feedback survey give the organization a high rating as respectful and inclusive – an indication that leaders must be doing something right.
10. From routine employee feedback – when staff routinely says that this is a respectful and caring environment – leaders must be doing something right.

OUR LEADERS ARE MAKING A GENUINE EFFORT TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE WHEN:

1. Many leaders are walking the (diversity) talk; they're modeling inclusive behaviour.
2. They are taking part in both formal and informal processes that support the development of an inclusive organization.
3. Leaders establish a Diversity Leadership Council with cross-sectional membership. The DLC in turn provides leadership to the organization on diversity and inclusion.
4. Leaders are participating on committees to address the needs of under-represented clients and staff groups.
5. Leaders are better at understanding community expectations and holding their staff accountable for meeting those needs.
6. Leaders are currently providing opportunities in programs and social events that leverage diversity and help staff to learn more about our diverse communities.
7. Leaders include clients in what the organization does; and will:
 - a. Go that extra mile for the client.
 - b. Be willing to reconsider how resources may be allocated to serve a group/sector that has been under-served.
8. They are being purposeful about using a diversity lens in specific processes such as recruitment.
9. They are supporting diversity and inclusion by developing members of their team on merit and being more transparent about assignments and promotions
10. Leaders encourage and develop inclusion in their teams:
 - a. They are working to create environments that are respectful
 - b. They allow challenges to be considered
 - c. They aim for integrity between the organization's diversity policies and its practices. For example, leaders are creating a "safe space for dialogue". This is done by being respectful and inclusive within their teams, which is the vision of the organization.
11. Leaders are currently leading by influence, not authority (they take a more inclusive and democratic approach).
12. Leaders are bringing knowledge and raising awareness in the organization. E.g.:
 - a. Through an internal Diversity Newsletter
 - b. Diversity is on the agenda for team meetings: It's valued.



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