Accelerate Your Culture Shift.

A Step-by-Step Guide
to Integrating
Leadership Training and
Inclusion Training

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Leadership training and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training are top priorities for most organizations today. But in many cases the status quo is to treat them as completely separate initiatives. DEI training is often housed within HR or a standalone DEI function and paired with compliance training. Leadership training often sits within a formal learning & development (L&D) group. This is a huge, missed opportunity for organizations, especially when you narrow in on the "I" or "inclusion" training within DEI. HR departments can implement hiring practices and policies to increase diversity and equity, but **who is laying the groundwork to foster inclusive work environments? The leaders.**

Formal leadership training was introduced in the 1960s when changing views on leadership increased awareness about the need and opportunities.[i] Methods and results have varied throughout the years, but the business case for investing in leadership training remains constant – especially in today's ever-changing, complex work environment. Leadership training helps employees reach their full potential. It increases engagement, decreases turnover, drives strategy execution, and helps maximize performance.[ii] Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training was also introduced in the 1960s with the emergence of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action laws.[iii] DEI training has seen a significant rise in popularity in more recent years. The need has always been present, but societal shifts and increases in globalization have exponentially increased demand. And organizations today are finally recognizing and appreciating the value of creating more equitable, inclusive environments where employees from all backgrounds can thrive.

Investments in leadership and DEI training are critical to success, but to maximize the impact of their training dollars, organizations need to recognize that the practice of inclusion is a key leadership capability.[iv] **Our goal with this guide is to give organizations the steps to break down the silos between leadership training and inclusion training to better leverage internal leaders as drivers of their DEI initiatives.**

Step 1:
Identify Shared Goals

Both leadership and inclusion training share an investment in helping employees manage diverse relationships and rapid change in ways that contribute to a positive and productive workplace culture. To successfully navigate change, leaders need the ability to influence and engage a rapidly diversifying workforce. They must translate vision, mission, and strategic plans in a way that everyone can understand and embrace.[v] Similarly, inclusion training focuses on facilitating more positive interactions between employees.[vi] This facilitation often involves nurturing the learners' skills, knowledge, and motivation to interact with a diverse workforce.

A closer look at topical trends in leadership training and inclusion training also reveal many overlaps. Skills and capabilities such as authenticity, emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, cross-cultural communication, and psychological safety are all commonly addressed in both leadership and inclusion training.[vii]

It's clear that leadership training and inclusion training enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship. Effective leadership development can bring positive inclusion outcomes, and successful inclusion training builds an environment for leadership success.

Given these overlaps, L&D leaders should carefully consider how their current leadership training and inclusion training initiatives are both similar and different. If there are any overlaps in current programming, are they intentional?

In the reflection below, keep in mind that the similarities between the two programs do not mean rendering these programs obsolete. Instead, any overlaps pinpoint areas where leadership and inclusion training can be better integrated to maximize their value.

Reflection Questions:

1. What are the key learning outcomes (i.e., concepts, capabilities, etc.) of your current leadership training programs?

2. What are the key learning outcomes (i.e., concepts, capabilities, etc.) of your current inclusion training programs?

3. How are the two programs' learning outcomes similar and different?

4. What are the shared concepts and capabilities?

5. What are ways that the two programs can better support each other?

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Step 2:
Create a Blended L&D Framework

Research[viii] and experience have taught us there are key factors that must be in place for any type of employee training to be effective. Learners need to understand:

1. The purpose of the training. How does it fit within their broader organizational context?
2. That their bosses have "bought in" and are supportive of the training.
3. The benefits of transferring the learning back to their day-to-day work environment.
4. How to practice and apply their new skills and knowledge in their day-to-day work environment.

An L&D framework can help organizations clarify their training and development strategy and communicate L&D goals and initiatives to employees. Though we're focusing primarily on leadership and inclusion training, an ideal L&D framework is inclusive of all learning and development needs throughout the organization: DEI-related development goals, leadership development needs, compliance training, and beyond.

To develop an integrated framework, or to update an existing framework, begin by developing an overarching vision for your L&D initiatives. Look at your human capital priorities and identify where you have gaps. Align your priorities with market demand so you can focus training and development where it's needed most rather than getting swept away by L&D trends. Ask yourself: how do market demands currently show up in my organization? What aspects of these demands impact our employees, consumers, and stakeholders? What roles do leadership and inclusion need to play independently and together to respond to these demands? What other priorities do we need to consider?

Next, design and implement impact-measurement strategies to track and communicate how individual employees' learning and actions impact your leadership and inclusion outcomes. These strategies should be relevant to your L&D vision as well as to each employees' roles, responsibilities, and abilities. This process can clarify the value of leadership and inclusion development for both the learners and stakeholders and pinpoint areas for skills practice within the organization. Adopting a systematic measure for evaluating the effects of training can improve both organization-wide coordination and buy-in.[ix]

In all stages of creating an overarching L&D framework, the most important focus should be communication. By clarifying the organization's vision, framework, and evaluation strategies, all learners and stakeholders should understand and be able to articulate the value of training.

Reflection Questions:

1. Who owns the leadership training strategy in your organization?

2. Who owns the inclusion training strategy in your organization?

3. Is there currently a clear vision for each of the leadership training and inclusion training programs? If so, what are they? Is this vision communicated to the learners and stakeholders?

4. Is there an overarching vision for your L&D initiatives (including but not limited to leadership and inclusion programs)? If not, what is this vision based on your organization's key demands?

5. How can employees practice their leadership and inclusion learning? What is the strategy for evaluation and measurement?

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Step 3:
Reshape Learners' Perceptions

Finally, the impact of training is affected by learner's perceptions. Learners may have pre-existing biases or beliefs about their organization's programs and how effectively they can apply the learning. Pre-existing perceptions can also be shaped by the history of training programs within the organization and by the corporate learning landscape in general.

Organizations should pay attention to their employees' current perceptions of training programs and determine areas where perceptions may be distorted or inaccurate. Reshaping learners' perceptions can help them better understand or accept the goals of training and increase their buy-in.

Many learners and stakeholders have developed biases against inclusion training in particular. Only in recent years has inclusion become accepted as a core competency and key driver of business success.

Inclusion training curriculum, design, and methods have evolved as organizations explore this new terrain and search for the most effective methods. Some approaches have been more effective than others. This has led to some questions about the efficacy and impact of inclusion training, whereas more established leadership training methods are widely accepted.

When building and implementing employee L&D initiatives, leaders should be aware of how the history and perceptions of training programs may affect the learners' beliefs and attitudes about the training.
To accurately assess the current perceptions of training programs and reshape them as necessary, L&D leaders should engage in a comprehensive discussion with the potential learners, program stakeholders, and senior leadership.

Prepare for these discussions by answering the questions below.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do employees currently enjoy participating in your leadership training and inclusion training programs? Do they find the learning impactful?

2. What are the employees' attitudes toward the leadership and inclusion training programs prior to training? Do they have any preexisting beliefs about the program? Are these beliefs accurate or conducive to learning?

3. Where do the employees' preexisting attitudes and beliefs about the leadership training and inclusion training programs come from?

4. How do the employees' pre-existing attitudes/beliefs regarding leadership training and inclusion training compare? If there are any differences, where do these differences come from?

5. What strategies/approaches are needed to reshape the employees' perceptions, if necessary? Who needs to be involved?

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Conclusion

Although leadership training and inclusion training have evolved separately in the corporate L&D landscape, the demands for combined approaches to these programs are increasing. Leaders are beginning to recognize that inclusion drives leadership and business success, while effective leadership can build and sustain inclusion. A combined approach can accelerate your organization's culture shift to becoming a more inclusive organization where leaders are equally passionate about driving results and creating an environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

To get started:

/ **Identify the shared goals between inclusion training and leadership training.**

/ **Develop an integrated L&D framework to clarify your development strategy and communicate goals and initaitives to your employees.**

/ **Reshape learners' perceptions so they approach training with an open mind, ready for growth.**

At **The Humphrey Group,** we have been at the forefront of integrating leadership and inclusion in our leadership and DEI communication training solutions. For more insights on these topics or to explore Inclusive Leadership, a proven learning experience that successfully blends leadership and inclusion training, visit our website: thehumphreygroup.com.

About The Humphrey Group

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For over 35 years, The Humphrey Group has developed leaders to be better, more inspiring communicators, increasing their ability to drive results, increase engagement, foster inclusion, and elevate organizational success. We are passionate about our purpose to create a more human workplace and a more human world through communication training. We design our solutions with the learner at the core, ensuring relevant and meaningful development.

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