

Global Inclusion toolkit

Inclusive global leadership: Succeeding in a complex and unpredictable world

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**Global
Inclusion Week**
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Introduction

When we think about inclusive leadership at a global level, there are both challenges and opportunities. While working across borders might appear to lend itself well to the opportunity of creating a diverse and therefore inclusive workforce, working globally adds another dimension to the complexity of identities, intersectionality and person-centred approaches. In this context it may also be worthwhile asking ourselves how we can create psychological safety that resonates across cultures.

This guide will introduce this extra dimension implied when delivering inclusive leadership globally and will help you to consider how key concepts of inclusive leadership can manifest when we approach global challenges.

It will outline the implications in terms of our responsibility to shift our mindset to be truly global versus being 'Western Outward' in an approach. By bringing forth the compounding layers of global inclusive leadership, this guide offers tools and tips to enable intentional and conscious inclusion to be championed in a global mindset.

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1. A global mindset

As highlighted in the Inclusive Employers resource, 'Global Inclusion Strategy: A Foundational Guide'^[1] starting a conversation with inclusion first (in a global context) can be very effective for inviting 'everyone to the conversation'.

In addition, a typical misconception in this area is that due to the lack of legal protection in many countries, the conversation is either not valid or not possible. This is where leaders play a critical role in leading from the front by being vocal and courageous and setting a high standard for inclusion that is relevant across different territories.

The Inclusive Employers model for Inclusive Leadership is highlighted below:



[1] Inclusive Employers – Global Inclusion Strategies guide

This model sets belonging, uniqueness and psychological safety as the foundation of inclusive leadership. These conditions are essential for the leaders and the organisations in which they work.

Built onto that foundation are the four behaviours of an inclusive leader:

- Courage
- Emotional intelligence
- Curiosity
- Self-awareness

It is important that when we look at the foundation of the Inclusive Leadership Model and the four key behaviours, we think about these in the context of a global workforce. While there are social and political events occurring in Europe and North America that have given birth to the movement for inclusion and diversity practices to take a bigger stage in workforces, people not living in Europe or North America will have their own perspective and possibly a different one.

This is where it is important to ask yourself as a global leader whether you have a good understanding of inequities that exist at a global level, and how those impact perceptions of culture, power and ultimately leadership. It is helpful to consider this to be a golden thread when thinking about inclusive leadership globally.

We often talk about ensuring that we are person-centred when we think about how we approach matters of diversity and inclusion. But we can also be culture-centred when we consider the various strands that create powerful Global Inclusive Leadership.

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2. Defining culture

As outlined in the Cultural Awareness Guide⁽²⁾ Culture is a concept in sociology and anthropology and there are many ways to define culture. It has evolved over time and there are many different theories that prevail today.

For this guide, it is helpful to consider the following points when thinking about the relationship between culture and leadership:

- Cultures are complex and go beyond religion, nationality, and folklore observed by outsiders.
- Culture is an expression of human societies across times and geographies. It is important to recognise that no one is ever only part of one culture. Culture is multi-dimensional and⁽³⁾ may offer individuals alternative or additional forms of identification and affiliation.
- Culture can be 'a system of behaviour that helps us act in an accepted or familiar way'.
- Shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations.⁽⁴⁾

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[2] IE Cultural Awareness Guide

[3] Pellegrino Riccardi <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMofREc5jk>

[4] https://www.globeproject.com/study_2004_2007

3. The global trends and challenges

In 2016 Deloitte published a report which outlined ‘The six signature traits of inclusive leadership’⁵. To create the report, they captured data from over 1,000 global leaders and defined four global ‘mega-trends’ that are more diverse than ever before.

These were highlighted as:

Diversity of markets	Demand is shifting to emerging markets. With their growing middle class, these new markets represent the single biggest growth opportunity in the portfolio of many companies around the world.
Diversity of customers	Customer demographics and attitudes are changing. Empowered through technology and with greater choice, an increasingly diverse customer base expects better personalisation of products and services.
Diversity of ideas	Digital technology, hyper-connectivity, and deregulation are disrupting business value chains and the nature of consumption and competition. Few would argue against the need for rapid innovation.
Diversity of talent	Shifts in age profiles, education, and migration flows, along with expectations of equality of opportunity and work/life balance, are all impacting employee populations.

Source: The six signature traits of inclusive leadership, Juliet Bourke, Deloitte Insights, 2016

⁵ <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html>

These trends are described as ‘simultaneous shifts’ in a ‘new context’ and while they may seem challenging, they are also opportunities to truly live and breathe benefits of a diverse and inclusive global organisation. Some theorists also use the term ‘VUCA World’ to describe contemporary challenges. It stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity, and represents an ever-changing and unpredictable world and business environment which leaders have to navigate in order to be successful.

When we think about these challenges in the context of the workplace, we can clearly see how these trends have a direct impact on what we do day-by-day whatever type of organisation we work in, whether we exist to sell products and drive profit, to deliver solutions, train or consult people or to support those in need (or perhaps all of these things at once).

So, what does this mean when we bring it back to the role of a globally inclusive leader in the workplace? Typically, we might see the following challenges play out in global organisations:

- Different cultures have different value systems which may conflict.
- There may be misunderstandings around decision-making and communication, not limited solely to language barriers.
- Historical power dynamics at play that are related to businesses and societies, such as imperialism and colonialism, the impact of which linger in today's societies in the different forms of inequalities we experience.
- New countries being formed. The newest was South Sudan in 2011, and before that Kosovo (2008) and Montenegro (2006).
- Different countries have unique regulatory and legal environments.
- Price fluctuations, including inflation and cost of living variations.
- Climate change and its impact on workers, be it means of travel, accessibility, or health.
- Risk of health crises: the COVID pandemic is one of the most recent global examples but there can be local and multi-local challenges too.
- Conflict and war impacting operations.

Some of the latter examples highlighted above really show us how crises can disproportionately affect the most vulnerable around the world – and many of these vulnerable people could be working in your organisation. Consider for example the COVID pandemic and how it has impacted more vulnerable communities, countries and societies in different ways.

As highlighted by the Centre for Creative Leadership, a major challenge for any global leader is ‘Managing the tension between global vs local approaches’:

‘A significant challenge for global leaders is to understand and manage the tensions between global headquarters and regional or local offices. When do local needs, customs, regulations, practices, or markets drive decisions? How do organisation-level expectations get infused at the local level? And how can leaders navigate the constant duality?’⁽⁶⁾

Often the term ‘Glocal’ (global + local) has been used to articulate a way of thinking or working that addresses the ‘tension’ between global and local. However, it may be pertinent to reflect on the origins of such a term and what it symbolises. For example, why does the word begin with ‘global’ as opposed to ‘local’? There is a risk that if misused, the term can become an excuse for mandating global requirements as opposed to working in a truly interconnected way.

An example of this could be: a global consumer goods advertising which are often created in a blanket fashion with non-local people represented and voice dubbing into local language. Is this a truly inclusive approach or a power dynamic at play?

So, when we think about being fully inclusive at a global level, it is not just about implanting ‘organisation-level’ or the ‘global’ expectations locally but about having a mindset and approach that allows for that infusion to take place both ways.

Think of it a little bit like ‘reverse mentorship’ but at an even more industrial level.

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⁽⁶⁾<https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/global-leaders-the-reality-of-multiple-complexities/>

End of preview document

Only Inclusive Employers members can access the complete guide.

To become an Inclusive Employer member and access the complete guide, which includes the following content:

- What is global inclusive leadership?
- The benefits and inspiration
- Conclusion

Please enquire about membership here:

www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/membership

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