

Empower Pillar

Storytelling through role models

The Inclusive Employers Standard is built upon six pillars of inclusion, which serve as its framework. These pillars—Engage, Equip, Empower, Embed, Evaluate, and Evolve, determine the success and impact of inclusion efforts within the workplace.

To support organisations at all stages of their inclusion journey we host a panel event series focusing on one pillar at a time. Out of these events we have produced a suite of resources sharing insights and experiences on a specific topics.



The empower pillar explores how you inspire and empower all staff to get involved in suggesting and hosting inclusion activities, as well as proactively valuing and recognising their contributions. In the resource we explore storytelling through role model campaigns.

Visibly profiling people across your organisations who role model positive and inclusive behaviour and values is a great way to add a personal storytelling lens on your inclusion work. Storytelling shapes workplace behaviour by engaging emotions, reinforcing values, fostering unity, and providing relatable examples of how desired behaviours can be implemented in real-life contexts. Highlighting the successes of role models can help attract talent who align with the values and culture your company represents. It can also help retain current employees by demonstrating that you value inclusion, highlight

opportunities for valuable knowledge sharing, and encourage more supportive peer to peer development relationships (e.g. mentoring) at all levels of the organisation. Featuring leaders or high-performing employees as role models can further encourage others to develop leadership skills, as well as fostering a culture of mentorship and continuous development. This also helps prepare your next generation of leaders across the company. There are however some common pitfalls with role model campaigns that it is helpful to avoid. Below are some of these common pitfalls and suggests for how to proactively avoid them.

Lack of or disingenuous diversity

A role model campaign that lacks diversity often reveals an underlying issue, either a true lack of diverse representation within the organisation or, worse, a failure to recognise the value of diversity. However, it's equally harmful when diversity is included in a tokenistic or disingenuous way, as it can undermine the authenticity of the campaign and send the wrong message about inclusion. Presenting an accurate picture of your organisation and the people in it helps to avoid this.

Unrealistic portrayals

Sometimes, role model campaigns can paint an overly perfect or idealised picture of someone's success, setting unattainable standards that lead to disconnection and disengagement. It's important to humanise role models by showing their challenges, growth journeys, vulnerabilities, as well as their achievements and successes, this ensures they remain relatable.

Overlooking the 'Why'

If your campaign doesn't clearly explain why individuals were chosen as role models and what specific contributions or qualities they bring to the table, it can come across as superficial. Particularly if the selection feels based more on group identity than on actual achievements. Your campaign should focus on showcasing the actions and behaviours that make these individuals worthy of recognition, offering context for how they uphold organisational inclusion values. It's crucial to highlight role models at all levels of the organisation.

Oversimplification

A truly inclusive campaign should reflect the full range of diversity in terms of identity,

roles, experiences, and perspectives, and should showcase how people from different backgrounds contribute in unique ways. People don't belong to a single category. Ensure your campaign reflects how multiple aspects of identity intersect (e.g., race, gender, age, ability) to show the complexity of individual experiences.

One and done

Tokenism can occur when role model stories are shared as a one-off event. A true commitment to inclusion involves ongoing initiatives, support systems, and policies that empower marginalised groups year-round, not just when it's time for a campaign. Creating a year round connected campaign shared through corporate channels, that is closely linked with your strategic goals and other inclusion activities can help to avoid this.

No opportunities for growth

Ensure that you have the systems and processes to back up the interest your campaign will generate. You need to make sure individuals from diverse backgrounds have access to the growth opportunities that will allow them to achieve the expectations your campaign sets. Disengagement can often arise when people are held up as role models but there are no routes or support structures to help others achieve what they have.

Not measuring the impact

If there's no clear way to track the campaign's effectiveness, it's hard to know whether it's having the desired impact. Measuring how the campaign influences employee morale, engagement, retention, and even performance can help improve future campaigns and ensure they are meeting their objectives. A campaign should be part of a larger, ongoing inclusion effort, not just a tool for good publicity.

Kickstarting inclusion through role models



Terri Ritchie
Impact Manager

As a club we needed to recognise our own identity, we've constantly supported different inclusion campaigns such as Kick It Out, Level Playing Field, and Show Racism the Red Card, but we wanted that to be part of our own identity and be able to take staff and fans on that journey around equality, diversity and inclusion and that was Red Together.

Red Together is Liverpool FC's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. This encompasses everything that the club does internally and externally across this important area. Internally, this focuses on how we embed equality, diversity and inclusion into all that we do for our people, and externally, Red Together is about how Liverpool FC embraces its responsibilities to talk to the most important issues outlined within its strategy.

A big part of Red Together is having the privilege to work with the players and coaches. It is important that we lean on them as role models. If we can get them to talk about messages around D&I, a lot more people listen, but we need to make sure that it's authentic.

You may have seen our video for International Disability Day when Jürgen Klopp met Dáire.



Dáire came to our attention when our Liverpool Disabled Supporters Association brought him to his first-ever game, and the video of him experiencing 'You'll Never Walk Alone' was really special. Jürgen Klopp saw that and wanted to bring him back to Anfield again and meet him, and that was an authentic piece that was able to talk to our staff and fans about the importance of inclusion around disability but also ensuring that LFC is a club for absolutely everyone.

"I thought the Inclusive Employers Standard was very narrative-focused. Sometimes, it's really easy to say have you got this? Have you got that, and upload those things to show it. But that second question around the why I think is really important. I think that's why we enjoy doing it, and I enjoy reflecting on those things that we've done and looking at how we can develop further."

Terri Ritchie, Impact Manager
Liverpool Football Club



Want to learn more?

Email us at standard@inclusiveemployers.co.uk