

# How a Counseling Culture Can Help Leaders Lead with Empathy

By Jennifer Cameron and Kaleem Clarkson

*Human Resources Today:  
Inclusivity in 2020 and Beyond  
Webinar Series*

<https://www.humanresourcestoday.com/frs/14798041/how-a-counseling-culture-can-help-leaders-lead-with-empathy>  
<https://www.recruitingbrief.com/frs/14798041/how-a-counseling-culture-can-help-leaders-lead-with-empathy>

# About Us

**We help onboard and engage remote teams.**

Founded in 2013, Blend Me, Inc. consults with startups and small businesses to improve the remote employee experience.

Our services range from Onboarding Strategy and Design, Inclusion and Diversity, Employee Research and Engagement, Internal Marketing and Communications.



Jennifer Cameron

Chief Executive Officer



Kaleem Clarkson

Chief Operating Officer

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# Today's Roadmap

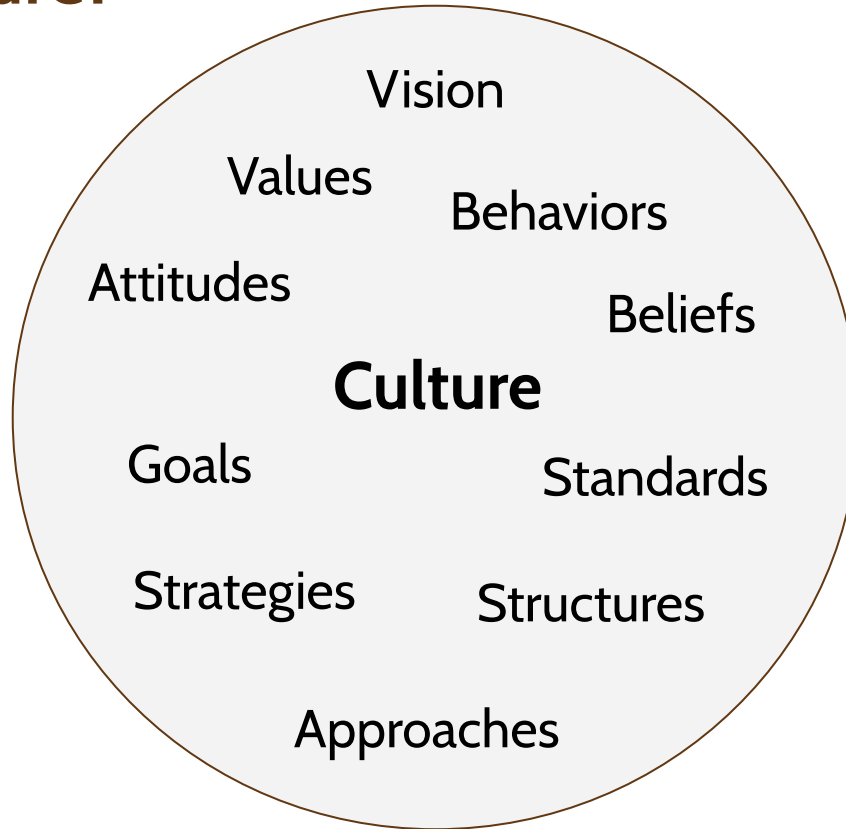
- Understanding a Counseling Culture
- Impacts of Loneliness in the Workplace
- Inclusion and Diversity as a Strategic Advantage





# Understanding a Counseling Culture

# What is Culture?



# Questions you can ask to help determine the culture

- What 10 words would you use to describe your company?
- What's really important, gets valued?
- What qualities get people promoted?
- What behaviors get rewarded?
- What personal characteristics fit/don't fit?
- What areas are lacking that could add to the culture?

# Counselor

Traits that inspire leadership



# What kind of roles or jobs would you consider a counselor?

- School Counselor
- Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Lawyer

# What kind of words would you use to describe the traits of a counselor?

- *Listening*
- Guidance
- *Empathy*
- Instruction
- Understanding
- *Feedback*
- *Safety*

How often do you associate the idea  
of counseling with the workplace?

Great leaders intuitively know how to listen. They use empathy and mindfulness to be present during every interaction. Their focus and commitment to the goal let them shelve their egos and receive feedback with grace, inspiring innovation at every level.

# Safety

An environment at which leaders must create

# Psychological Safety

"A climate in which people are comfortable being (and expressing) themselves."

Gallup, 2017

# Why Does Psychological Safety Matter?

1

## **Establishes Trust**

Trust between leaders and coworkers contributes to the feeling of safety; trust is the feeling of security and confidence in others behaviors.

2

## **Ability To Take Risks**

Allowing one to take risks without fear of judgement is critical for innovation. "In Google's fast-paced, highly demanding environment, our success hinges on the ability to take risks and be vulnerable in front of peers"

3

## **Maintaining and Increasing Diversity**

Ensuring your diverse population feels included is the first step to maintaining diversity. When inclusion becomes a priority you can now attract a more diverse population.

4

## **Increased Productivity**

Employees should be able to bring their organic self to work each day. When people can be what is natural to them they are happier, healthier, and more productive.





# Psychological Safety

## Empathy

Mindful  
Listening

Feedback

# Empathy

Establishing and maintaining psychological safety

“Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.”

Oprah Winfrey

# What is Empathy?

Empathy is the ability to recognize emotions in others, and to understand other people's perspectives on a situation; **put yourself in their shoes.**



# How Does Empathy Help?

Empathy enables you to gain insight to improve someone else's mood and to support them through challenging situations. It involves not only having concern for another person, and sharing their emotional pain, but also taking practical steps to reduce it.



# Practicing Empathy through Mindful Listening

“Mindful listening is a way of listening without judgment, criticism or interruption, while being aware of internal thoughts and reactions that may get in the way of people communicating with you effectively.”



# On an Interpersonal Level, Listening Helps

- Strengthen relationships
- Build trust
- Improve teamwork
- Enhance credibility
- Increase loyalty
- Show employees that you care

# How to Be a Mindful Listener

1

## Be Fully Present. Clear Your Mind

Be fully present by clearing your mind of personal distractions so personal judgments, thoughts, and reactions don't get in the way.

2

## Listen Empathetically

Be attentive by observing body language and by the types of words being used. Let others know that you heard them and understand how they feel.

3

## Ask Questions

Periodically asking questions that promote discovery and insight not only shows interest but allows for deeper conversation.

4

## Reflection

Reflect back to them by confirming what you've heard, using the other person's words if you can.

# Practicing Empathy through Feedback

# Giving Feedback as a Leader

Employees are empowered when they know they are making a difference. Productive feedback will instruct on areas for improvement and illustrate how employees are making contributions to the big picture.

## Key Points

- Employees Understand their Organizational Impact
- Learning Opportunity
- Employees Crave Feedback



# Receiving Feedback as a Leader

Leaders who are willing to *be the student* build trust among their workforce, gain understanding around employee motivations and frustrations, and increase engagement by involving employees in the process.

## Key Points

- Employees Feel Included
- Reinforces Transparency
- Encourages Continuous Improvement



# How to Solicit Feedback

1

## Employee Resource Groups

ERG's are voluntary, employee-led groups based on common interests, backgrounds or demographic factors such as gender, race, or ethnicity; these groups can provide insight around populations they serve as well as internal initiatives.

2

## Switch Jobs for a Day

It is very informative to actually walk in another's shoes. Switching jobs for a day serves to educate each other on the needs and experiences of all positions in the company.

3

## Open Forums

A more formal way to exchange information is a forum delivered by leadership with live participation from employees to be given opportunity to ask questions around the specific topic.

4

## Create an Employee Moth Series

The power of storytelling helps coworkers practice active listening while learning more about their coworkers origin stories in an effort to be more empathic of their views.

5

## One-on-one Check-in's

As a more casual and frequent method for collecting feedback, check-ins are great for building trust and keep each other in the loop.

6

## Survey

A traditional yet always useful tool for collecting feedback around any topic.

# Impacts of Loneliness in the Workplace





“When we're lonely, we feel invisible. One of the most powerful ways to fight it is to help others feel seen.”

Adam Grant  
Wharton School of Business

# What is Loneliness?

... is a complex set of feelings that occur when intimate and social needs are not adequately met.

# Physical Impacts of Loneliness and Isolation

1

As bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day

2

As dangerous as being an alcoholic

3

As harmful as never exercising

4

Twice as dangerous as obesity

# Loneliness' Impact on the Workplace

1

## **Lonely employees take 2X more sick days**

Lonely workers take double the number of sick days in a year compared with non-lonely workers.

2

## **Reduces job performance**

Lonely employees feel alienated and less committed which causes them to not work as hard and so performance suffers.

3

## **Reduces executive functions**

Chronic stress causes decline in executive functions such as reasoning and decision making.

4

## **A best friend at work Increases engagement by 7X**

Employees with best friends at work are seven times as likely to be engaged in their jobs.

5

## **Loneliness also impacts C-Suite executives**

61 percent of all CEO's and nearly 70% of first time CEO's believe loneliness hinders their performance.

6

## **Decreased engagement**

Due to the lack of trust a decrease in the willingness to communicate and collaborate with team members; A degree of engagement goes down.

# What is an Engaged Employee?

An engaged employee “shows up,” physically, emotionally, and cognitively.

# Why Engagement Matters?

An engaged employee “shows up,” physically, emotionally, and cognitively.

**\$550 B**

Disengaged employees cost US companies approx. \$550 billion a year.

**21%**

Highly engaged teams show 21% greater profitability.

**10%**

Highly engaged business units achieve a 10% increase in customer ratings.



# Inclusion & Diversity as a Strategic Advantage



“We made diversity a market-based issue....It’s about understanding our markets, which are diverse and multicultural.”

Lou Gerstner  
CEO, IBM (93’ -02)

**In What Ways Would you Consider  
Inclusion & Diversity a Strategic  
Advantage?**

# How Diverse Perspectives Impact Business

Diverse teams have their own unique skill sets and capabilities. Inclusion is the active engagement of the contributions and participation of all people. By bringing diverse individuals together, the collective efforts make teams more effective.

## Key Points

- Improved Financial Performance
- Increased Innovation
- Smarter Teams



# Improved Financial Performance

Through Increased Inclusion and Diversity

# Inclusion and Diversity Impacts on Financial Performance

- Cash flow return on investment
- Earnings Before Interests and Taxes (EBIT) margins
- Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization (EBITDA) margins
- Gross and net margins
- Internal rate of return
- Investment performance
- Market value
- Operating profit margin
- Return on Assets (ROA)
- Return on Equity (ROE)
- Return on Sales (ROS)
- Revenue
- Sales performance
- Stock returns
- Tobin's Q

# Improved Financial Performance

Some notable highlights on how inclusion and diversity can improve financial performance.

## \$300 M

In 2001, IBM's inclusion and diversity activities accounted for more than \$300 million in revenue compared with \$10 million in 1998

## 35%

Companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their national industry medians

## 19%

Gender-diverse business units in the hospitality industry show 19% higher average quarterly profit than less-diverse business units

# Increased Innovation

Through Increased Inclusion and Diversity

“Having well-rounded staff from diverse backgrounds means our employees have broad global perspectives — and these perspectives show up in a stronger product.”

Frances Dewing  
CEO, Rubica Cybersecurity



# Increased Innovation

Some notable highlights on how inclusion and diversity can increase innovation.

152%

A team with a member who shares a client's ethnicity is 152% likelier than another team to understand that client.

70%

Employees at companies with higher diversity are 70% likelier to report that the firm captured a new market

45%

Organizations with above average diversity found that 45% of their revenue was attributed to innovation. That's 19% more than organizations with below average diversity.

# Smarter Teams

Through Increased Inclusion and Diversity



# + FIGS



**Lolwa Al-Obaid, MD** | د. لولوة العبيد

@LolwaAlObaidMD

I keep thinking about how this ad made it through an entire approval process and everyone thought "this is a great idea". It's extremely disappointing for @wearfigs to buy into this narrative and so blatantly disrespect female physicians.



**Jessica K. Willett, MD**

@jkwillettmd

As women physicians in 2020, we still struggle to be taken seriously compared to our male counterparts, as we battle stereotypes like THIS EXACT ONE. We expect the brands we support to reflect the badassess we are. @wearfigs - women physicians are disappointed in you. Do better.



**FIGS** @wearfigs · Oct 12

Replying to @jkwillettmd

Thank you so much for the feedback! Totally not our intent — we're taking down both the men's and women's versions of this ASAP! I really appreciate you taking the time to share this.

75



8



181



**Dr. Angela Skrzynski**

@DrSkrzynski

Replying to @wearfigs and @thestyleclique

You ran an ad that depicts a woman holding a "medical terminology for dummies" book upside down while wearing a badge that reads DO immediately following a public national controversy surrounding the legitimacy of osteopathic physicians. What exactly was your intent?

2:26 AM · Oct 13, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone



**Brave Enough MD**

@RUBraveEnough

🙄 @wearfigs: Pls explain how as a physician, I am supposed to be INSPIRED to wear FIGS by this biased ad of a woman DO reading a dummy doctoring book upside down?

Tenured Professor ✓  
Author, Founder, Researcher ✓  
Saves lives ✓  
Battles bias on the daily ✓  
Wears pink ✓✓✓

Waiting-





# Are diverse teams actually smarter?

# Making the Case: Diverse Teams Are in Fact Smarter



In the April, 2005 edition of the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, a study published by Dr. Samuel Sommers of Tufts University, examined the racial effects of group diversity on decision making. A total 200 participants were selected to be a part of a mock trial.

## Key Points

- Participants were asked to provide a verdict individually
- Then seated together in groups with varying degrees of racial composition for 60 minutes to discuss the case.

# Inclusion & Diversity Creates Smarter Teams

## Group-Level Analyses of Deliberation Content

Measure	Diverse Group	All-White Group
Deliberation in Length, in minutes	50.67	38.49
Number of case facts discussed	30.48	25.93
Number of factual inaccuracies	4.14	7.28
Number of uncorrected inaccurate statements	1.36	2.49
Amount of “missing” evidence cited	1.87	1.07



# Session Wrap Up



# Key Takeaways

- Creating a psychologically safe environment through counseling is important for employees.
- Practicing empathy through listening and feedback is critical for effective leadership.
- Loneliness can have severe impacts on physical and mental health resulting in the lack of productivity in the workplace.
- Inclusion & Diversity can improve financial performance, increases innovation, and create smarter teams.



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# Thank you for attending.

## Let's do some Q&A

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