



The Authenticity Gap

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What Does It Mean to Belong?

- Feeling safe and secure
- Feeling supported
- Accepted and included
- For people to feel like they belong two things must be in place:
 - A diverse workforce
 - Psychological Safety
- *Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)*





Psychological Safety

- Psychological Safety – the belief that you won't be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas questions, concerns, or mistakes **(Center for Creative Leadership)**
- Psychological Safety at Work – It's the shared belief help by members of a team that others on the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish you for speaking up. **(Center for Creative Leadership)**
- The idea of psychological safety is that people feel comfortable in the workplace. Being safe allows employees to bring their full selves to work and to embrace vulnerability.
 - Psychological safety does not mean everyone agrees all the time
 - Psychological safety means that people embrace conflict and feel that regardless of the outcome that relationships will be maintained, and that reprisal will not occur.



Vulnerability

- In order to belong you must be able to feel vulnerable
- What does vulnerability mean?
 - Dr. Brené Brown defines vulnerability as “**uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure.**”
 - What does vulnerability look like?
 - Admitting when you are overwhelmed
 - Admitting when you do not have a solution

Being vulnerable is the ability to show people you’re not perfect, that you make mistakes, and you don’t have all the answers. ***In other words, it’s showing people that you’re human.***

And that can be seriously uncomfortable for a lot of people.



My Story – Authenticity Gap

- My Stories
- Position of privilege
- Fear of being discovered
- Loneliness and isolation
- Discovery can be liberating or isolating
- Fear of tokenism

Authenticity Gaps – Impacts

Coded language

Networks and relationships are superficial or not formed

Employers do not get the benefit of the “full-employee” – the employer receives what the employee feels safe in providing based on the connection to the organization

Retention of talent can be challenging – people will not stay where they do not feel welcomed or accepted

Unconscious Messages Impacting Authenticity

- Messages that counter authenticity
 - Telling employees that mental health is important, but not offering specific mental health days-or managers failing to promote the use of PTO for a mental health day.
 - Allowing employees who have children unwritten benefits over employees who do not have children
 - Arriving Late / Leaving Early
 - An organization citing equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) as a strategic goal, but failing to have women, BIOPC, or LGBTQIA representation in senior level management.
 - An organization citing the value of religious diversity, but only offering time off for Christian holidays.
 - Organizations who support “family friendly” environments, but do not offer acknowledgment of significant events
 - Miscarriage
 - The passing of a beloved pet

How to Be More Authentic

- Diversity and Inclusion statements will not make the organization “authentic”
 - Statements of intention are only as good as the impact – if there is no impact the intention falls short
- Put people first:
 - Organizations state they put people first, but observe the actions of the organization
 - Are employees offered grace when situations arise?
 - Are learning opportunities for employees created?
 - Are employees allowed “fail” without fear of reprisal?
 - Are people unfairly spoken about or characterized?
 - Older workers have a tough time with technology
 - She just had a baby; she probably doesn’t want more responsibility.

How to Be More Authentic

- Create an environment that allows for the organization to challenge the status quo
 - This process can be scary because it may require for leaders to turn the mirror on themselves
 - Has the organization created or stifled challenges to organizational culture
 - Doing nothing with suggestions or ideas that are offered is taking “action.”
- Does the organization create an environment of psychological safety
 - Is it encouraged to speak up?
 - Are ideas regarding change invited?
 - Are suggestions acted upon?
 - Do leaders take an opportunity to ask curious questions and engage in meaningful conversations?

How to Be More Authentic

- Does the organization make space to celebrate non-Christian holidays?
 - Are other faiths celebrated?
 - Are employees who have non-Christian faiths allowed to take religious holidays off from work without using PTO or vacation time (Examples: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur(Jewish holidays), or Vesak for Buddhist holidays).
- Pets as Family
 - Does the organization recognize when pets are adopted or pass way?
 - When children or born or adopted acknowledgement is given to the parents by the organization
 - When a pet passes away do we provide bereavement leave?
- Acknowledge things that are meaningful to the employee – not what the organization deems as meaningful

How to Be More Authentic

- Are men treated equally to women when they have children either through surrogacy or adoption?
 - Typically, the birth or adoption is female centric event, and the fathers are typically ignored or treated as peripheral characters.
 - Ignoring significant life events simply because of gender defeats the idea of authentic organizations and lays the foundation for employees to disconnect.
- Trans employees who experience trauma from co-workers or leaders when their true identify and pronouns are either ignored or denied.
 - Authentic organizations create environments of psychological and physical safety
 - Authentic organizations allow for people to be who they are without fear of being ostracized or terminated.

How Employees Drive Authenticity

- Question policies and procedures.
 - Many times things are not changed until an issue is brought to someone's attention
 - Holidays
 - Paid Leave
 - Working conditions
- Work within the system to change things
 - What is the mission and vision of the organization?
 - Look to the organization's core values
 - What do the values support cite as important? (Integrity, Honesty, Respect)
 - Values can create the stepping-stones for change if policies and procedures are misaligned
- Ask for a seat at the table
 - Express your interest and ask to be involved in policy/procedure changes
 - Recognize you may need to move slowly at first to change hearts and minds
 - Celebrate incremental wins
 - Speak for the need for change not just the desire for change.

Steps to Getting to Authenticity

Do the work

- If you are unsure where to begin seek out expertise with organizations who specialize in Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB).
- Connect with employees – a one size fits all approach does not work.
- Be curious
- Create a psychologically safe organization.
- Honor people – treat them as they want to be treated
- Create meaningful opportunities for those who want to engage in EDIB to work and volunteer on projects and programs.

Realize the work will never be done

Thank you!

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Reference Page

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