

# Inclusive Leadership—People, Engagement, and Performance

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## Introduction

*Inclusive Leadership* has been a continually evolving approach to facilitating the achievement of organizational inclusion. There are literally as many definitions of inclusion as there are organizations researching and executing it. Some organizations with a serious intent to *integrate* inclusion as an embedded part of their culture, but most, falling short; primarily because of unwillingness to seriously experience personal and organizational transformation.

At Innovations International, we have always believed that there are two key elements in the serious implementation and achievement of inclusion, *cultural transformation* and *cultural integration*. Transformation involves an “irreversible change” in the dominant individual and organizational mind-set from *human superiority* to *human equality*. Integration involves the systematic process of instituting policies, practices, and procedures which create a holistic culture of inclusion. Cultural integration is not possible without personal and organizational transformation. Inclusion is an environment where:

1. *An experienced sense of equality* exists between and among *all* employees,
2. *Equitable opportunity* for success exists among *all* employees, and
3. *An integrated, evolving culture* reflects a continually changing workforce driven by the values of Generations X, Y, and next generation born after 2012.

*An experienced sense of equality* is an environment where *all* employees are:

1. *Wanted* for their diverse membership
2. *Valued* for the unique, creative perspective they bring
3. *Respected* as a person and for their unique cultural contribution

*Equitable opportunity* for success means that inclusion is an interwoven part of the culture, in terms of:

1. Mentoring, coaching, and career development
2. Visible opportunities, continuous learning, and advancement
3. Education, training, and the expectation of exceptional workplace performance

*An integrated, evolving culture* is the recognition that the U.S. 2020 Generation (Gen Z) is the most diverse (45% persons of color) of the generational groups and most educated. Therefore:

1. Technology integration is a way of life for these digital natives
2. Radically changing beliefs and expectations with respect to leadership will continue to evolve, based upon the five principles of Engagement [1 ], and
3. A culture where inclusion evolves into *compatibility* will be essential for attracting future generations.

*Compatibility* is an environment of mutually supportive relationships wherein *differences* are viewed as the “creative tension” necessary for breakthrough innovation of new products and services, and modes of operation in behalf of customers and performance, respectively. Compatibility evolves from and builds upon inclusion. It is the next organizational paradigm for exceptional performance. A clear understanding of the growing diverse workforce, evolving generational compositions, and the present and future cultural paradigms provides the basis for a holistic discussion of inclusive leadership.

## **Inclusive Leadership**

*Inclusive leadership* is the ability and intention to facilitate the achievement of an inclusive culture—or inclusion. In this discourse, intention is confirmed as the *irreversible achievement* of cultural transformation and integration. Mastery of inclusive leadership is achieved by:

- *Exploring* one’s inner self to continually acquire greater awareness, knowledge, and

wisdom. (*Self-Mastery*)

- *Influencing* others in accepting and valuing differences in people, thinking, and cultures. (*Develops Others*)

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- *Ensuring a culture of equality, equitable access and opportunity for mainstream participation and success.* (*Drives Inclusion*)
- *Managing and Engaging* a wide array of people, competencies, and styles for exceptional performance. (*Manages Performance*)
- *Producing* business and performance results by utilizing the full participation and contribution of all employees. (*Delivers Business Results*)

The following sequential model illustrates the competencies of inclusive leadership for leading and managing a (global), diverse, multicultural high-performance workforce in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Demonstrates Develops Drives Inclusion & Delivers Business Self-Mastery People Manages Performance Results**

This sequence covers the range from relationship-orientation (on the left side) to task orientation (on the right side). The corresponding critical competencies to master, in terms of skill-sets, include:

1. Self-Mastery—through personal exploration, introspection, and awareness.
2. Develops People—through teaching, coaching, and mentoring a diverse workforce.
3. Drives Inclusion & Manages Performance—through creating an engaging and inclusive environment.
4. Delivers Business Results—through creating a culture of creativity, innovation, and exceptional performance.

The focus of achieving inclusive leadership is on People, Engagement, and Performance.

## **People**

### **Demographics**

The first place to begin, in terms of people, is a brief discussion of those who are led, whether it involves the public, private, or academic sector. One of the most influential

demographics with respect to leadership is Generations. There is general agreement by most demographers and those involved in cultural transformation that the various generational categories include the following approximate time frames:

1. The Traditionalists or “Wisdom Carriers” (before 1946)

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2. The Baby Boomers (1945 – 1964)

3. Generation X (1965 – 1975)

4. Generation Y or Millennials (1976 – 1996)

5. Generation Z or 2020 Generation (1997 – 2010)

Although the various time frames are variable and somewhat arbitrary, it is generally agreed that a major change in trust of political leadership began during the Generation X era. This shift was strongly influenced by the inconsistency—truth telling—of the accounts and the decisions relating to the Vietnam War (1954–1975). This mistrust further permeated the societal and corporate worlds. In corporations, Millennials began to associate leadership with competency and the five principles of Engagement rather than position and/or title—and correspondingly, *influence* rather than *power*.

Presently, this conception of leadership is beginning to influence *all* sectors of the corporate world. It is reflected in the present and projected 2020 workforce composition.

1. Traditionalists 2%

2. Baby Boomers 21%

3. Generation X 20%

4. Generation Y 50%

5. Generation Z 7%

It is important to note that Generations X, Y, and Z will comprise 77% of the U.S. workforce by 2020 and are highly aligned in terms of organizational governance. In addition, many of them will have moved into highly influential leadership and management positions. Most of the Millennials have also been educated in racially and ethnically mixed grammar and college school systems. The point is any leadership program designed to *influence* the emerging generations must take into account not only the cultural diversity of their composition, but also the population demographics of the constituent groups. They will undoubtedly have a significant influence over the emerging

organizational culture of the coming generations.

The 2018 U.S. population was:

1. 61.3% White, Non-Hispanic Americans
2. 17.8% Hispanic Americans
3. 13.3% African Americans

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4. 3.5% Asian Americans

5. 4.1% Other

This distribution closely mirrors the 2018 U.S. workforce. For example, the population projection for 2020 is approximately 60% white, non-Hispanic and 40% non-white—excluding recent immigrants who declare as white.

The most important demographics where engagement and performance involve the greatest number of people through underutilization are women, who comprise 47% of the workforce and persons of color, who will comprise 40% by 2020. These two areas, alone, represent a major challenge to creating an inclusive culture.

## **Culture**

The U.S. is the most ethnically and culturally diverse *developed* country on the planet. It is the “great experiment” with respect to the true integration of such a wide variety of people in learning how to compatibly live and work together. The most fundamental barriers to cultural compatibility, by sheer number of people affected, are *ethnocentrism*, *racism*, and *sexism*. Ethnocentrism is the comprehensive belief that one’s culture and way of life is superior to all existent forms. Comprehensive, because ethnocentrism is inclusive of language, religion, values, race/ethnicity, sex, and customs. The result is not only a superior attitude relative to others and their way of life, but also a driving desire to convert others to their way of thinking and living.

Whereas true *inclusion* is, first and foremost, incorporating a process of achieving an “experienced” environment of human equality, which is followed by reinforcing policies, procedures, and behaviors for ensuring equitable opportunity—not simply mixing people together with a *presumed* hope that somehow a miracle will occur resulting in personal and organizational transformation and compatibility.

The most dominant form of ethnocentrism, globally, is Eurocentrism; particularly among former colonies derived from England and Western Europe. The most prominent examples where ethnocentrism was imposed upon the existent populations are the U.S.,

Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Eurocentrism is practicing a worldview from a European cultural perspective. It is based upon an implied and practiced belief in the preeminence of basic European cultural values. [2] These include:

Individualism Standard British English  
Competition Judeo-Christian Beliefs  
Dualistic Thinking Task-Orientation

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Rigid Time Orientation Objective/Rational Thinking  
Hierarchical Thinking Control of Feelings/Emotions  
Newtonian-Cartesian View Patriarchy

In contrast, the historical values of non-Eurocentric countries include:

Group Teamwork  
Interpersonal Compatibility Expressed Feelings/Emotions  
Inclusive Viewpoints Holistic, Context-Thinking  
Empowerment through People People-Oriented  
Relationship-Oriented Experiential Learning  
Collaboration Flexible Time Orientation

The distribution of values of women and people of color in Eurocentric cultures is strongly inclusive of those from non-Eurocentric cultures. In spite of the global dominance of Eurocentric practices and wealth, the population of Eurocentric cultures, globally, is less than 10% of the world's population.

The crucial point of these discussions relating to culture is that today's leaders and managers must have the knowledge, experience, and skills to manage the complete spectrum of values inclusive of Eurocentric (task-oriented) and Non-Eurocentric (relationship-oriented) cultures; often referred to as cultural competency. This ability is significantly more challenging for global leaders and managers who have to acclimate to radically different cultures relative to their own.

## **Information Technology and Generations**

One of the continuing challenges for leadership in today's workplace is bridging the gap between younger and more mature workers in terms of information technology. This is a critical area that leadership must bridge in an inclusive way as we progress through the coming decade. There is little doubt that the advances in technological devices and

instrumentation are essential for improved workplace functioning, such as new software programs, smart phones, social networking and media, and storage and retrieval of large databases, to name a few. Many of the advances are operated from smartphones, laptops, and desktop computers. Facility with a personal computing system is an *essential* tool for functioning in today's workplace—anytime and anyplace.

We have learned from our leadership courses that the major difficulty which maintains this divide is not employees' ability to learn to use such technology, but a *mind-set* which is based upon the *fear of change*—and often transformation—of how things are done. This fear is anchored by a deeper realization that the mastery of one

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device is simply the “doorway” into a whole new reality of future workplace functioning at an incredible rate of speed. For example, communication using texting simply because it is popular is preferred, even if a telephone conversation is more efficient and effective in getting work done. Bridging the mind-set gap will, of necessity, have to begin by establishing constructive human relationship and communication to set the new rules for the way things are done based upon efficiency and effectiveness of operation; in essence, productivity.

In our courses, we begin with establishing the experiential process of identifying barriers across generations, not only with respect to technology, but of basically working together in a constructive way. What has emerged is the major “Clashpoints” across generations. [3] These include:

1. Thinking Styles—old way *and* new of doing things
2. Communication Styles—verbal, interpersonal *and* social networking, IT
3. Technology Integration—technology averse *and* digital natives
4. Learning Styles—classroom, interpersonal *and* social learning, IT
5. Decision Making—hierarchical, position *and* democratic, consensus
6. Management Styles—hierarchical *and* democratic
7. Workplace Etiquette—work ethic, communication, dress, personal appearance, serving customers, etc.

Notice in our descriptions we identify the conjunction “and” with the assumption that nothing is automatically thrown away. We also observe that technology integration is related to practically all of the clashpoints identified. Resolving the barriers to relationship and communication creates a process for establishing the most important criteria for exceptional performance. These criteria are simply the most *efficient use of resources*,

*e.g., people, money, time, or technology* and the most *effective system of operation, e.g., collaboration, empowerment, or self-management*, which maximize performance and productivity. When these criteria are applied to the use of a smartphone, where a verbal exchange of five minutes can avoid 15 to 20 minutes of texting, it's obvious what should be the most productive mode of communication. I emphasize here that a mind-set resistant to change is irrespective of age or generation—although, as a group, there *are* generational trends with respect to age.

A few of the technological trends that must be managed for greater effectiveness include communications, virtual teams, analytical skills, and presentation formats. Speed of communications and information dissemination is one of the essential factors for

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productive business operation, and made possible through technology integration. The most important point to be made in this section is that *people* are the most important factor in technology integration. That is, until robotics and artificial intelligence begin to comprehensively replace them, hopefully, in primarily human-directed functions.

## **Engagement**

### **Performance-Oriented Inclusion Survey Analysis**

Innovations International has been conducting performance-oriented cultural surveys for more than 25 years. A few of our clients have included Kellogg, Genentech, Merck & Company, Brambles of Australia, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (Canada), NASA, and more than 150 other organizations over that 25-year period. When engagement began to emerge, we decided to reexamine our most recent surveys based upon this high-employee involvement initiative, which we noticed was very similar to the basics of empowerment. We had written a very popular book on that subject in 1995—*Empowerment for High Performing Organization*. [4]

Instead of focusing mainly on the survey questions, we decided to closely examine the more than 5,000 comments, accumulated for each of the questions on a survey as well as two open-ended questions, by demographic age breakdown. More specifically, we decided to focus on the Millennials because we believed that their comments and expectations were the forerunner of today's emerging workplace culture; particularly, since their workforce composition, at that time, was projected to be 50% by 2020. As such, it was expected, and presently confirmed, that their "imprint" would strongly influence present workplace trends.

As we began our analysis, we noticed that most of the comments fell into five major categories having the following themes:



1. Performance of work, with the least oversight and management
2. Extensive involvement of employees in workplace governance
3. Open relationships and communication
4. Work which creates passion, creativity, and meaning
5. An engaging and inclusive environment

We assumed—like the discovery of Post-it Notes by the 3M Corporation [5], from chemical reaction residue—the harbinger of the future workplace culture was the written

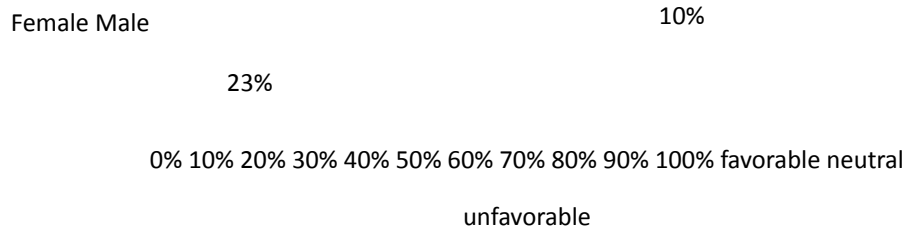
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comments and suggestions of the Millennials. *Democracy* and *Transparency* were terms they suggested throughout their written comments.

An additional component of the Innovations’ analysis of the survey data is the fact that we were also able to measure organizational inclusion. We applied several demographic breakdowns to *every* question on a survey. The most popular demographics selected by most organization were race/ethnicity, sex/gender, and generations. Hence the composite overall survey result, using a Likert-type scale, in terms of strongly agree/agree for positively stated questions, is a measure of performance and the various disparities for *each* question as a function of dimension is a measure of inclusion. Thus, only *one* well-designed performance-oriented inclusion survey is able to comprehensively measure both performance and inclusion. Two self-explanatory examples are shown below.

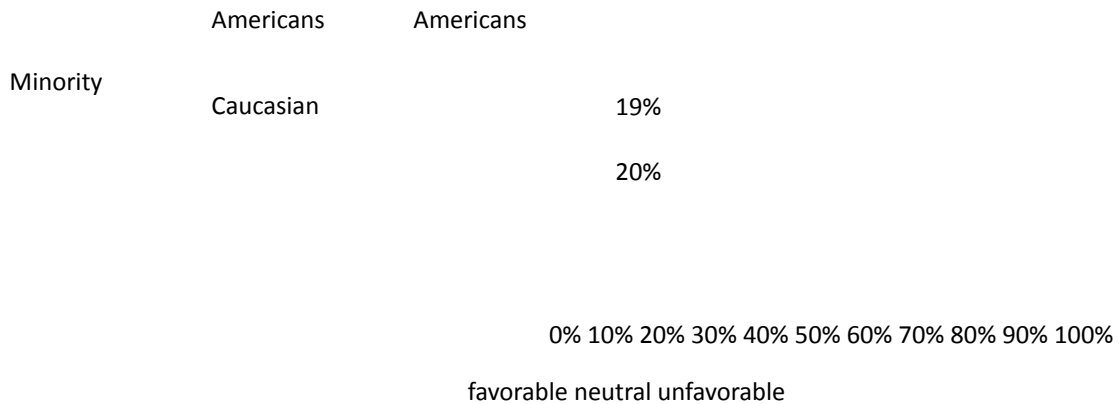
### **Visible/High Profile/Leadership Opportunities**

*In this organization, the perception exists that women are equally competent as men.*



### **Managing Performance**

*I receive sufficient coaching and mentoring for my career development.*



The most important requirements of this process are *knowledge* and *experience-based questions* about the initiatives being measured—inclusion and performance in this case. In the case of inclusion, disparities are measured for every question on a survey rather than four or five questions described as an “inclusion index.” The reason the latter

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measurement is meaningless is that inclusion must be comprehensively embedded into every aspect of organizational functioning, or every question on a survey. It must be an inseparable part of the “promoted *and* practiced culture” in order to become a reality.

## Defining the Principles of Engagement

It is fairly obvious from the results of the previous section that the five themes correspond to the five major Principles of Engagement listed below:

1. **Empowerment**—the capacity to perform; inclusive of an individual’s present and potential capability.
2. **Democracy**—the proactive involvement of employees in policies, decisions, and practices that affect them and the organization’s operation.
3. **Transparency**—an open, honest, and shared system of communication which engenders trust, confidence, and commitment of employees.
4. **Innovation & Corporate Responsibility**—the creation of cutting-edge processes, products, and services that *anticipate* the expectations of internal and external customers; as well as the *impact* on people and locales of operation.
5. **Inclusion**—an employee-supportive workplace environment where equitable opportunity exists for all employees to experience personal success and fully contribute to the organization’s success.

It is commonly assumed, by most organizations implementing high-employee

involvement initiatives, that there is a common definition of important terms such as those listed above. This assumption is not valid.. Therefore, I'd like to clearly define three of the terms which comprise the engagement principles as suggested by the millennial comments: Empowerment, Democracy, and Transparency.

*Empowerment is the capacity to perform.* It is not the act of delegation. An individual is not empowered because he or she “showed up” or “declares it to be so.” Empowerment, as a noun, is performance-oriented. As such, delegation or to empower (as a verb) someone is granted in proportion to an evaluation of his or her competency, demonstrated performance, and potential. Two measurements of performance are the present “ability” one demonstrates on a given project and the “capability” one displays at full potential. And finally, it is *not* possible to empower or enable someone with competence. Competence is acquired by an experiential learning process resulting in expanded performance potential.

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*Democracy is the proactive involvement of employees in the assignment of work projects and the degree of unmanaged operation.* Thus, establishing a balance between independence and interdependence in team assignments as well as agreed upon coaching for assignments which exceed an employee’s proven capability. Most challenging of this high-involvement mode of operation is the necessity for personal growth in terms of ensuring constructive interpersonal relationships. Required courses on Emotional Intelligence, Mindfulness, and personal counseling are designed to balance task-oriented mastery with mastery of relationship-orientation.

*Transparency is an open, honest, and mutually supportive system of operation which engenders trust, confidence, and commitment of employees.* It is probably strongly influenced by the popularity of the various social networking sites. The effect of open communication has not only created the expectation of open relationships and decision making processes but to some extent the necessity for professional trust. The essence of these expectations is really the establishment of open and honest channels of communication relating to promotions, advancement, and visible opportunities; particularly, by employees who have been traditionally overlooked by group identity.

The Principles of Engagement appear to fit perfectly the stated definition by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board—a Federal agency established to protect an effective Federal workforce free of Prohibited Personnel Practices.

***“Engagement refers to a high level of motivation, commitment, and passion for one’s work in***

*collaboration with others.”*

—Managing for Engagement  
U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

### **The Engagement Agreement**

*The Engagement Agreement is a mutual agreement between leadership and employees to create an environment where passion, innovation, and exceptional performance prevail. First and foremost, the agreement establishes the fact that conceiving and achieving engagement—as an initiative—is a joint effort involving both leadership and the workforce. It is not an agreement where leadership solely establishes an environment which is conducive and acceptable for high-employee involvement. There is a specific role for each component.*

The excerpted phrase from the Engagement definition above, “...passion for one’s work...” implies the necessity for employees to discover and communicate their passion to their managers in order to actively set the process into motion. In response, managers

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must understand the changing nature and expectations of the younger driving generations. In truth, engagement can only be successful where there is a realization of the necessity of a mutual agreement, setting aside position, title, and presumed authority.

This agreement gives rise to the roles of Leadership/Management and Employees, respectively, as outlined below.

### **The Role of Leadership/Management**

1. *Empower* employees in proportion to competency, demonstrated performance, and potential.
2. *Establish*, by example, an open and honest environment for dialogue and transformation among all employees.
3. *Provide* mentoring and coaching based upon an employee’s career development and workplace responsibilities.
4. *Learn* the backgrounds and professional aspirations of those you manage in order to engage their passion, creativity and innovation, and commitment.
5. *Establish* an inclusive workplace based upon a cultural measurement instrument, employee feedback, and equitable opportunity for success.

### **The Role of Employees/Individual Contributors**

1. *Acquire* the skills and competencies necessary to be empowered based upon performance and potential.
2. *Learn* the interpersonal skills necessary to engage in challenging dialogue and feedback for professional development and success.
3. *Design and proactively implement* a career development plan inclusive of critical learning experiences.
4. *Request, design, and ensure* engaging work that requires creativity, innovation, and meaning.
5. *Establish inclusive relationships* among co-workers based upon trust, acceptance, and mutual support.

## **Performance**

Performance is the final *measurable output* for which one can apply a judgment of its value. The most obvious judgment in the business world is monetary profit. (In other areas of activity, it is aesthetics, learning, and just personal satisfaction, to name a few.)

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The process of creating high performance in the business world might be modeled as the confluence of empowerment, inclusion, and engagement—all integrating to synergize the outcome from each contribution. What they all have in common are people who are *different* in every conceivable way: human, cultural, and systems dimensions, reflected by race, sex, and generations; language, religion, and work style; and teamwork, empowerment, and quality, respectively. So that diversity is an inherent part of anything people attempt to accomplish together; it is a common ingredient of the confluent initiatives.

The *pièce de résistance*, or masterpiece, is the creative artistry of the conductor who brings together the various initiatives in a symphony of harmony resulting in inclusive leadership. It is the driving force that resolves the resistance to the harmony necessary for high or exceptional performance. The major resistances are commonly differences in human perceptions, such as resistance to *transformation* (mind-set) and *change* (the way things are organized and done). Leadership's ability and intention are the key (cognitive) competencies in prevailing for success.

Workshop experience has shown that diversity and inclusion are the most challenging initiatives in this capacity. After all, diversity's official entre was in 1985, almost 35 years ago with the publication Workforce 2000 [6] and inclusion circa, 2000. They are probably the reason very few, if any, organizations, have transitioned from high to

exceptional performance—where both monetary success *and* people-wellbeing have been preserved and enhanced in the process of achieving inclusion.

An overall model of high-performance and its various constituents are shown below.

### A Model of High Performance



← Surface

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The foundation components of this model are the basic necessities for *any* high-employee involvement initiative and *assumed* to exist. Most of these initiatives have never reached their potential in organizational performance because a critical mass of the foundation components have *not* been dominantly accepted by the workforce and embedded into the organization’s culture—particularly, a very high degree of responsibility and accountability. All four of the foundation components are cognitive predispositions programmed individually and collectively within an organization’s culture.

The present challenge of inclusive leadership is transitioning from high to exceptional performance. The next organizational paradigm for exceptional performance is *Compatibility*, the evolution from inclusion, as defined on page 2 of this chapter. This paradigm also provides an environment for *synergism* and *synchronicity* to occur as natural components of exceptional performance. Compatibility is characterized by the following working principles of operation:

1. **Collaboration**—working with others in a mutually respectful, trusting, and supportive way.
2. **Reconciliation**—working with others to amicably resolve and synergize differences.
3. **Receptiveness**—working with others with openness, transparency, and the creative

exchange of ideas.

4. **Resilience**—working with others to proactively respond to conflict, adversity, and change as learning experiences.
5. **Cohesiveness**—working with others as a connected, united, and aligned organization of One.

*Synergism* is the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations or individuals (of a team) to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their individual effects. An example is the spontaneous realization of a transcendent solution of a dichotomy, such as superior/inferior individuals, by personhood. The transcendent resolution is the *self-realization* of one's inherent equality and the simultaneous falsity of the dichotomy.

*Synchronicity* is the simultaneous occurrence of events which appear to have no discernable causal relationship; such as the simultaneous imagination of similar or connected thoughts or images by two different individuals, commonly in totally different locations. An example is the simultaneous discovery of a scientific proposition, such as the debate over the Origin of the Species between Darwin and contemporaries.

## Conclusion

Leadership takes on a completely different meaning when modified by the adjective inclusive. Most of all, leadership, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is not simply a process of designing traditional generic skills for the presentation to a practically homogeneous group with common values. Then adding a module about diversity at the completion to acknowledge that it might have some impact on implementation. The entire conceptual framework, principles of operation, and implementation process takes on a much more complex nature when differences are an integral part of every module of a leadership learning experience for a diverse, multicultural, and global workforce. An example of synergism is the design of a case study exercise where the characters are different by sex, race, culture, and work styles. Then have them organized as a team to design an implementation plan for Compatibility to be integrated into their existing culture of inclusion. The resulting plan, by nature, will be inseparable from their integrated human and cognitive differences. Conclusion: *Diversity is an inherent part of the human experience.*

This chapter has shown how such differences are involved with the transition of Inclusive Leadership, with present emphasis on inclusion, to the next organizational paradigm of compatibility. The achievement of compatibility will require the mastery of expanded skills focused equally on relationship and task orientation. The major elements

for integration include People, Engagement, and Performance.

The prominent relationship-oriented differences include race/ethnicity, sex/gender, culture/ethnocentrism and a variety of other dimensions in order to effectively lead and manage today's highly diverse workforce. Leadership requires mastery of Self, Unconscious Bias, Cultural Competence, Mindfulness, and Emotional Intelligence in addition to mastery of the implementation skills associated with the five Principles of Engagement and Compatibility.

## References

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