

# People First: Fostering a Culture of Inclusion and Belonging

Q&A with Yolanda L. Chase, SHRM-SCP, CPM, CM

Executive Inclusion, Diversity, and Belonging Way-Maker

*Q. What leadership qualities are effective in shepherding culture change, particularly in leading inclusion and diversity efforts?*

**A.** Leadership requires being relentlessly obedient to the call on their life to be an example of caring and a voice for the silent. One who believes that efforts in the diversity and inclusion space are equally as important to the profitability of an organization as getting products and services out to customers.

It can't just be a job; it has to be your passion and life's work. We don't realize equity and belonging gains if we ourselves do not possess empathy and compassion. We must be ready to take on the unconventional and the unorthodox. This is when change occurs, because long-lasting sustainable change is grounded from doing revolutionary things.

*Q. In your opinion, what should leaders pay attention to in terms of strengthening employee engagement?*

**A.** Many systems fail to institute a values "check and balance" system, coupled with accountability measures. Leaders must live and work by their organization's core values, and reward employees whose actions and behaviors contribute to upholding those values.

Leaders must actively create a culture of belonging with a solid commitment to equity and inclusion. I recall reading Jim Collins' *Good to Great* in 2004 and learning about the hedgehog concept. Reflecting on my responsibility as a leader, the Venn diagram showing the circles of the hedgehog concept center around an unwavering commitment to people:

- What are you deeply passionate about? The answer should be people.
- What can you be best in the world at? Again, caring for people.
- What drives your economic engine? People.

I've yet to see a billionaire run a company alone. How leaders treat, engage, honor, respect and care for their employees: all of these will determine the success and sustainability of the business for years to come. Promoting an inclusive and equitable culture helps to attract and retain employees who are highly engaged and motivated to do their best work and to bring their best selves to work, everyday.



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Looking for actionable strategies to center people in your organization's human resources operations?

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