

CHECKLIST FOR INCLUSIVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Every single employee brings a unique set of identities, traits, and preferences to every interaction. Use this checklist to round out your approach in creating more inclusive spaces, either in-person or virtually.

Do your meetings and other practices regularly provide multiple modes or opportunities for:

Preparation and processing?

Allowing teams to only receive content or information in the moment, then asking them to immediately absorb and add to the discussion, is not the best way to set everyone up for success. Be mindful of specific agenda items or activities that some people might prefer to process (even at a high-level) in advance, and send it out with at least a few days of processing time. A few tips: in your message, you should 1) encourage people to identify and regularly communicate what works best for them, and 2) give the optional instructions to reflect on topics in advance and bring any notes to the meeting time. You might even ask people to complete light prep work, like reviewing a slide deck, reading a related article, etc. This even works well in one-to-one meetings, particularly if power dynamics are at play—like between managers and those they supervise. For recurring meetings, utilizing a standard, shared meeting agenda template can be super helpful, and [here's a solid place to start](#).

Learning and listening?

During the meeting or activity, ensure you're communicating in a few ways to account for [different learning styles](#). Have you considered any [virtual accessibility considerations](#) across the range of disabilities that might be present within the group? (Related, be sure you're addressing physical space needs for any that are in person.) Are there visuals that support the voiceover the speaker is sharing? Are key points being underscored, and are there checks for understanding being leveraged? These methods can enhance the absorption of content, and feeling that your personal needs and styles are being considered can also help boost the desire to contribute and engage. Speaking of. . .

Contributing and engaging?

Look at your planned agenda holistically. Where are the pockets of time that allow for interaction or contribution? Are they only framed or requested by speaking, or are you reminding people they can weigh in non-verbally too, like using the chat function or a whiteboard? Are the only times you plan to ask people what they think in front of a larger group? Create spaces where engagement can take different forms. Utilize digital tools like [Google Jamboards](#) or [Mural](#) where people can drop notes during work sessions. You can also be intentional about using "pair shares" or small group breakouts, allowing for dialogue in more comfortable silos before asking the group to come back together and share key highlights or takeaways from their time together. It does take extra coordination, but you can even utilize this method in hybrid workplaces by setting up and assigning people to separate virtual meeting links that they can jump into from the main session link, then back again, regardless of where they are working from.

□ Leading and facilitating?

This one is critical for building equity in shared spaces: whose voice is “on the mic” and how often? In smaller, regular meetings, leverage rotating meeting roles (including facilitation) so that all members of the group take turns managing the agenda beforehand and leading during. This also helps build empathy for positions as both facilitator and attendee. In all staff meetings or retreats, empower non-supervisory staff—particularly those from historically excluded groups—to play a role in planning or facilitating blocks of time. The key here is to give people the option to step up, provide them support if needed, and generate excitement around shared ownership. On the flip side, it’s equally as critical not to burden staff if they don’t have the bandwidth or genuine desire to take this on. This might sound like an all-staff email that says, “We want to be even more intentional and inclusive in planning the upcoming XYZ event. To that end, we’d love to hear and see a range of perspectives represented in the agenda. If you’re interested in weighing in on content beforehand and/or facilitating a portion of our time together, reach out to Lee at lee@company.com.”

□ Joy and connection?

I gained so many valuable insights throughout my career, and one of the most important is #5 on this list—that there’s always joy to be had. Connection is equally as important, whether it’s connection to each other or to your team’s mission and purpose. So how can you be thoughtful about joy and connection? First, making space for short but intentional spurts is helpful. No need to wait until that annual retreat, holiday party, or quarterly in-person happy hour to have fun and get to know each other. Take a comprehensive look at all of your regular touchpoints and see how you can strategically add “joy + connection sparks” to these. Next, be sure not to impose a few people’s ideas of joy onto others. Consider empowering a small, diverse, cross-functional team with owning these “sparks” over the course of the year. Lastly, you can also add a question to your regular employee engagement survey that asks employees to share their ideas and hopes for joy in the workplace.



ABOUT VIVA ASMELASH

Inclusion Strategist & Consultant

Viva's professional purpose is to create strategies and environments where people feel truly seen and are inspired to be their best, most innovative selves.

She brings this to life through her work as a values-based, intuitive inclusion and branding leader with 10+ years of experience in: career-focused marketing, leadership training + development, DEI strategy + project management, internal/external communications, hiring processes + diversified applicant sourcing, and partnership management.