

How to transform
company culture
with DEI.

A MANAGER'S GUIDE TO

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

 **core**strengths®



The human case

for the benefits of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is clearly being made, the business case is sound, and much ink has been spilled on the topic of improving these three qualities at an organizational level.

But what can a manager do day-to-day on their team to address DEI productively?



Team engagement **determined solely by the manager**

It's in everyday workplace interactions that people do or don't feel that they're valued and belong. And managers have more influence on employees' engagement than anyone else in the workplace; as much as 70% of the variance in team engagement is determined solely by the manager, according to Gallup¹.

¹ Suellentrop, Austin, and E.Beth Bauman. "How Influential Is a Good Manager?" Gallup.com, Gallup, 20 May 2022, <https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/350423/influential-good-manager.aspx>.



Some managers feel nervous to talk openly about DEI topics on their team because they're afraid of emotional conflict, facing some difficult conversations, or addressing their own blind spots. We wrote this guide to give managers the tools and language to help team members find common ground, understand what each person values, and leverage each other's differences to do great work individually and collectively.

This guide doesn't address how to improve systemic issues in DEI within workplaces, but it addresses what's within a manager's control: creating a culture of appreciating the importance of difference and making others feel valued. Of course, if you're a manager, it's important to understand the opportunity and challenges of DEI when working with your peers and leaders: in hiring and onboarding, executive leadership, company values, etc.

But if you want to learn what you can do on a practical level to effect change, keep reading.
















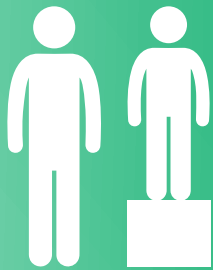
What are diversity, equity, and inclusion?

The three characteristics often referred to in one breath as 'D-E-and-I' are separate but interdependent players. A mistake people often make is thinking DEI is an end in itself, when in fact, it's the method by which we try to promote belonging and maximum opportunities for all.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

Diversity is the makeup of the workforce. It refers to individual characteristics, such as:

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Gender |  Ideology |
|  Race |  Cognitive ability |
|  Ethnicity |  Socioeconomic status |
|  Religion |  Life experiences |
|  Age |  Personality |
|  Sexual orientation |  And more |
|  Physical ability | |



WHAT IS EQUITY?

Equity is the playing field. In an ideal, equitable workplace, all employees will have fair, impartial opportunities to be successful, though it doesn't mean everyone will have the same opportunities.



WHAT IS INCLUSION?

Inclusion is acceptance within the community. In an ideal, inclusive workplace, employees feel welcome, bring their full selves to work, participate fully and use their voice, and don't feel like a token employee just hired to achieve surface-level diversity.



Why is DEI important in business?

Without diversity, you'll never be able to serve your diverse customer base authentically. Without inclusion, the people who represent diverse viewpoints will leave the company, or stay but shut down. Without equity, you'll miss out on innovation and great leaders.

With an effective approach to diversity, equity and inclusion, employees' sense of belonging will grow, increasing their commitment to the company, allowing each of them to contribute in a meaningful way, and making work a place that is creative and energizing for the individual, rather than draining.





How to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion as a manager.

We know that addressing DEI with quotas will not solve the problem. Those currently in power in an organization must work to develop a deep appreciation of the value of DEI.

This appreciation stems from an understanding that a commitment to effectively pursuing a strategy that leverages diversity, seeks to establish and maintain equity, and co-creates an inclusive community is a tremendous competitive advantage in a world where talent is difficult to find and even more difficult to retain.

And, as with many aspects of leadership, that starts with self-awareness.

KNOW YOURSELF.

The [SDI 2.0 Assessment](#) from Core Strengths is a reliable way to discover how you personally experience feelings of belonging in your relationships with others. It also shows the strengths that you are currently deploying in your role at work. Self-awareness can help expose biases, perspectives, and blind spots that, in turn, help you see people on your team more clearly.



The more resources you have to increase your understanding of your own lived experience, the better you can understand where other people are coming from.

START WITH INCLUSION.

The DEI acronym starts with diversity, but inclusion may actually be a place to begin this work with your team. Unless you manage a team of identical quintuplets, some diversity among the people who work for you is already guaranteed.

So, among those diverse people, start by looking for common ground. One powerful unifier is this fact, we all have three primary motives: people, performance, and process.

When you take the [SDI 2.0 assessment](#) mentioned above, you'll get a full portrait of how all three blend in your personality, but here's a quick overview. You'll probably recognize yourself primarily in one of the three colors.

People		People who are motivated by the protection, growth, and welfare of others. They have a strong desire to help others who can genuinely benefit.
Performance		People who are motivated by task accomplishment and achieving results. They have a strong desire to set goals, take decisive action, and claim earned rewards.
Process		People who are motivated by meaningful order and thinking things through. They have a strong desire to pursue independent interests, to be practical, and to be fair.



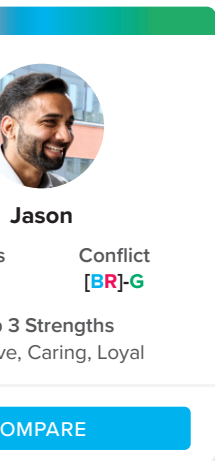
Once everyone on the team has taken the assessment and knows their primary motivation, they can start to find other team members who share the same motives and strengths. More likely than not, the people who are most similar on the level of motive will be quite different in other ways. People may even be surprised that they share similar motives with people who they thought they had nothing in common with because of other, more visible differences.

Recognizing and realizing commonality is actually key to appreciating difference. Being in a place of shared understanding and appreciation opens up curiosity about differences, and helps us see how differences can add value to the relationship, too.

Explore cognitive diversity.

What we've been talking about—our primary motives, values, and strengths—is known as cognitive diversity. Cognitive diversity is yet another kind of difference that exists alongside gender difference, race difference, and other kinds of differences that intersect to make each of us unique.

Discussions of cognitive diversity on your team should not preclude discussions of other kinds of diversity when so many groups have been, and continue to be, underrepresented in the workplace. But at Core Strengths, we find that people can talk about cognitive diversity



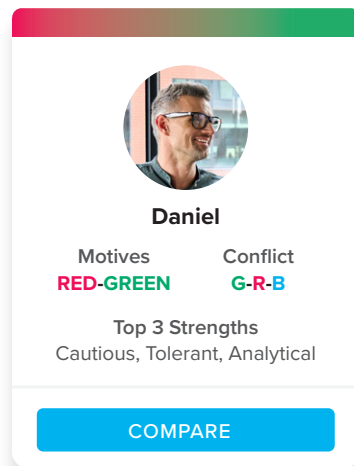
Jason

Motives
[BR]-G

Conflict
[BR]-G

Top 3 Strengths
Supportive, Caring, Loyal

COMPARE



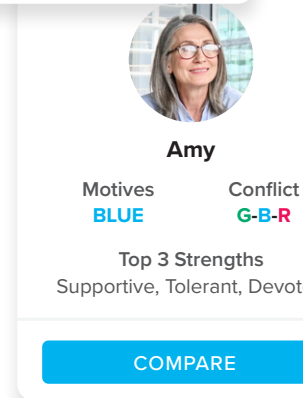
Daniel

Motives
RED-GREEN

Conflict
G-R-B

Top 3 Strengths
Cautious, Tolerant, Analytical

COMPARE



Amy

Motives
BLUE

Conflict
G-B-R

Top 3 Strengths
Supportive, Tolerant, Devoted

COMPARE



objectively, because there's no history of discriminating against people because they're motivated by concern for process, performance, or people.

On the contrary, we often *expect* these kinds of differences in the workplace and see them as an opportunity. If we're going to engage with a situation effectively and problem-solve, it makes sense to invite people who see the world differently into the conversation.

For example, Daniel (primary red (performance)/ green (process) motivations) was in charge of rolling out a new technology system. He laid out a roadmap, documented the new processes, and figured out how to transition to the new system without an interruption in service. But until he asked for Lisa's perspective (primary blue (people) motivation), he didn't think about the concerns the new system would cause for the people affected. Lisa helped him consider people's fears about change and being left behind, and together they came up with more robust and productive solutions.

Of course, there are situations at work where another person's perspective doesn't apply within your context.



Top 3 Strengths
Supportive, Persevering, Cautious

COMPARE



Someone’s perspective on East Coast cultural norms may not apply to customers on the West Coast. But it’s still valuable information, and you never know when it will become relevant.

Work toward equity.

Research has shown that diverse teams make better decisions, are more innovative and with less risk, and attract and retain a wider range of talent. So the data is clear that opportunity varies, and as managers, we should all be looking at our spheres of influence, however small, and trying to create greater equity.

When everyone has fair access to opportunities, the team can leverage each other’s differences to be more insightful and effective than anyone can be alone — creating a whole that’s greater than the sum of its parts.

To level the playing field within your own team, apply the four skills of **Relationship Intelligence**:

- **Positive regard**, or treating people with respect and assuming positive intentions
- **Service orientation**, or being curious to learn what people need and being willing to meet their needs



Jason

Motives
HUB

Conflict
[BR]-G



Evelyn

Motives
RED

Conflict
G-[BR]

Top 3 Strengths
Quick-to-Act, Fair, Forceful

COMPARE



Daniel

Motives
RED-GREEN

Conflict
G-R-B



- **Personal accountability**, or taking ownership and initiative, and being responsible for the results of your actions
- **Strengths-based agility**, or choosing the right strength for the desired outcome

Managers can tend to bond more with the people who are most like them. And the people closest to the manager are often in the best position for special projects and promotions. When most of the people currently in power are similar in terms of race, gender, nationality and/or sexual orientation, it takes intention and work not to perpetuate this cycle.

It's critical that managers see the positive intention in all employees' actions, even if you disagree with a choice. We do this naturally with people in our in-groups. If a fan of the same sports team stands up and pumps their fist in the air, they're being passionate. If a fan of the opposite sports team does that, they're being obnoxious and blocking your view.





Dehumanizing the fan of the opposite team makes you less curious about them and less accountable to them.

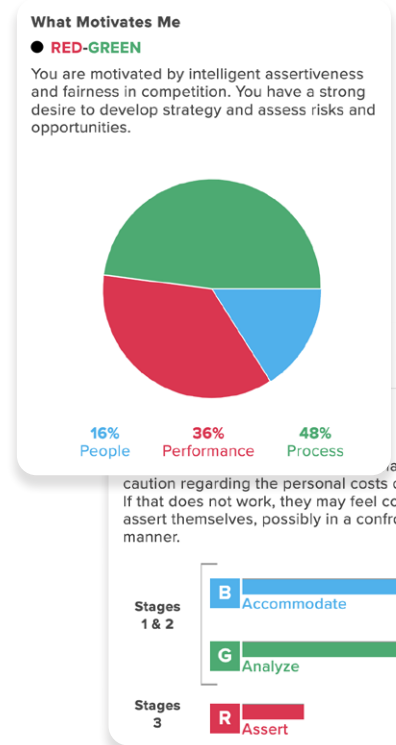
Use the skills of Relationship Intelligence to make everyone on your team your in-group, and to cultivate that strong sense of community among them.

Motive-based relationships and Relationship Intelligence skills will have a positive effect on your DEI initiatives, because you can always find common ground with the person's essence, and celebrate them for their differences.

Transform your organization with DEI tools

The **Core Strengths platform** is a powerful digital tool with many features, but one in particular that helps advance DEI: the compare feature.

One of the key behaviors of DEI is curiosity: wanting to know more about what others are thinking, feeling, and their core beliefs. And when people feel heard, they are five times more likely to feel empowered to do their best work. The compare feature on the platform is designed to encourage curiosity.





When two people are working together, they can compare their motivations, strengths, and values to find points of commonality and connection. Inevitably, using the Core Strengths platform, everyone will find some number of things in common—almost never zero. And if they're complete opposites in terms of cognitive diversity, they may see other similarities they share, or they may see how valuable it would be to share their different perspectives.

The platform's compare feature can open doors to discussion about other common touchpoints, leading to a greater sense of inclusion, appreciation of diversity, and equitable opportunities for all.

The screenshot displays the Core Strengths platform interface, showing a comparison between two users: Lisa (Customer Support) and Daniel (IT Director). The interface is divided into several sections:

- Profile Information:** Each user's profile includes a name, title, and a circular profile picture. Lisa is identified as "Lisa" (Customer Support) and Daniel as "Daniel" (IT Director). Both profiles have a "Change" button next to their profile picture.
- Motives and Conflict:** Below the profile information, there are two columns: "Motives" and "Conflict". Lisa's motives are "BLUE People" and her conflict is "G-B-R Analyze-Accommodate-Assert". Daniel's motives are "RED-GREEN Performance-Process" and his conflict is "G-R-B Analyze-Assert-Accommodate".
- Communication Tips:** A section titled "Communication Tips" asks "How are things in this relationship?". Below this question is a slider control with "Going Well" on the left and "Conflict" on the right.
- Content That Connects:** A section titled "Content That Connects" lists several bullet points: "Offer to review relevant information together.", "Ask about their feelings or reactions; openly express your feelings or concerns.", "Use a personal and sincere tone; express genuine concern for the needs of others.", "Explain how their actions will benefit others.", and "Point out the contributions of others; show appreciation."
- Quick Tips:** A section titled "Quick Tips" lists several bullet points: "Be realistic, factual, impartial, and strategic".
- Example Subject Lines:** A section titled "Example Subject Lines" lists several bullet points: "Need some insight on...", "Plan of action regarding...", "Please evaluate...", and "Plan of action regarding...".

Curious to learn more about
improving DEI on your team?

Get in touch

