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e-book

Belonging: The Third Piece of the Diversity & Inclusion Puzzle

A Guide for CSR Leaders

Everyone deserves to feel like they *belong*

Every week, it's not unusual to see a headline about diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the workplace—whether it's because a company is making strides in this area or they're discovering an opportunity to do more. Business is increasingly focused on embracing D&I because they know that when they get it right, they'll reap rewards like a better employer brand that attracts and retains high-performing people, improved performance and productivity, and even higher profits[1].

While many companies execute their D&I initiatives through their corporate strategies, we've learned there's a crucial factor that, when taken into consideration, helps their efforts become a true culture and performance driver: belonging.

Why belonging matters at work

Belonging is that feeling of being accepted as one's authentic self without fear of different treatment or punishment, and studies show that it leads to more than just good vibes and friendships in the workplace. In fact, one study proved that

when steps were taken to mitigate threats to a sense of belonging in minority groups, their stress levels were reduced, which in turn promoted their physical and emotional health, and their performance.[2] And while a sense of belonging improves employee retention and pride, it can even be a more powerful motivator for some people than money[3].

Conversely, when a workplace doesn't foster a sense of belonging, employee engagement suffers by up to 30%[4], with negative trickle-down effects in other areas. This is particularly difficult for minority groups who often have to expend significant mental and emotional energy trying to "fit in," which is magnified in unwelcoming work environments.

It's a scene we've all experienced—you step into an office for your first day on the job, and questions flood your mind:

> *Will I fit with my new coworkers?*
> *Is it ok for me to be myself here?*
> *Will I belong?*

This experience is quintessentially human—the innate desire to be accepted and included.
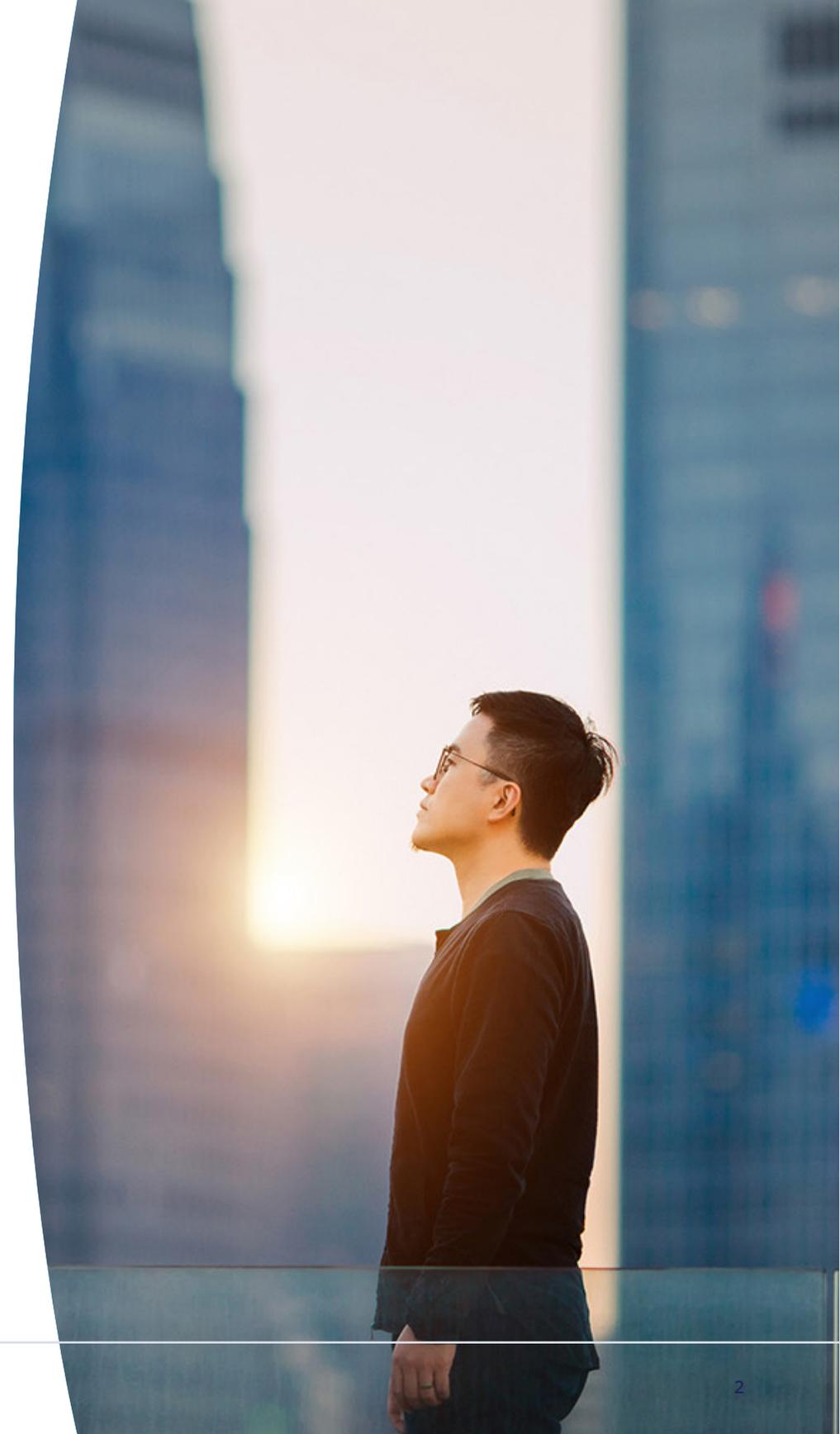
The third crucial piece of the D&I puzzle

Belonging is so important that it's long been identified as one of the five fundamental human needs, third only to our physiological (food, water, shelter) and safety needs. In fact, if you want to encourage better collaboration and problem solving, consider that supportive environments even trigger different physiological responses in the brain than unsupportive ones (with social recognition causing the brain's reward system to react as strongly as it does to money, and exclusion provoking the regions of the brain that are associated with pain[5]).

Yet surprisingly, belonging in the workplace remains a relatively groundbreaking concept. The need to belong doesn't stop at the bounds of our personal lives. The desire for belonging is equally as strong in the workplace—but it's only recently being recognized and embraced as a foundational component of culture that helps businesses and their employees thrive.

And the need for belonging doesn't just lie with new hires. Whether a person has been in a job for 10 days or 10 years, the need to belong persists throughout their work lifecycle as individuals continuously evolve and grow. As LinkedIn's former Senior Vice President Global Talent Organization, Pat Wadors, shares, belonging is necessary alongside D&I if you want to cultivate a healthy workplace culture that engages everyone[6]. And by approaching things from the perspective of belonging, inclusion naturally becomes an essential part of your culture and diversity flourishes.

But perhaps you're wondering what, exactly, are the differences between diversity, inclusion and belonging?

> *When we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become a wiser, more inclusive, and better organization.*
>
> **— Pat Wadors**

Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging:

3 distinct parts of a holistic workplace culture

Diversity

refers to any dimension that can differentiate groups and people from one another—be it ethnicity, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, education, religion, etc.—and the appreciation of those differences. No single person is diverse on their own!

Inclusion

is about focusing on the needs of every individual and ensuring the right conditions are in place for them to have a "seat at the table" and achieve their full potential.

Belonging

is the feeling of security, support and "psychological safety" that comes when there is a sense of acceptance for a member of a particular group. It's the drive to form and maintain lasting, positive relationships with others and, in the workplace, these relationships can be extended to the company, its values and the work itself.

Your CSR program as a belonging catalyst

D&I are important mandates that come from the top, but if you want to achieve belonging, you have to foster it from the bottom-up in a way that embraces every person's whole, unique self. And creating an environment where everyone feels welcome to show up as their authentic selves doesn't happen by accident.

There are a number of solutions to help your employees thrive so that your organization can experience all of the benefits of a culture of belonging. If D&I is a part of your CSR and corporate strategic initiatives, consider these tried-and-true strategies that high-performing companies are using to create a true sense of belonging at work:

1 Offer an open-choice giving and volunteering program

A powerful way to build a foundation for belonging is to provide employees with the option to give and volunteer with causes that matter to them on a personal level.

Why does this make a difference? Because when you empower employees to participate in your giving or volunteering program—what we call "Goodness" program—in the ways that are most meaningful to them, it communicates that the company cares about what they care about (even more so if donation matching is offered!)

For instance, Total Quality Logistics (TQL), the second-largest freight brokerage in North America, transitioned their program from a traditional once-a-year campaign to a year-round, open-choice approach that allowed team members to give and volunteer with any charity they desired. Their program—and their company culture—saw big results. Not only did they experience a 33% increase in year-over-year donation dollars, a record 75% employee participation in their fall giving campaign and a significant decrease in administrative time demands, they also saw big shifts in their employees' experiences at work. With an open-choice program, TQL was able to better engage their growing workforce, which had quickly spread across 5 offices, by facilitating giving and volunteering opportunities that were relevant locally, versus ones that only resonated with headquartered employees.

2 Tie in your company's giving pillars to causes that embrace diversity, inclusion and belonging

Highlighting chosen charities and causes that serve your diverse community (while filtering out those that use discriminatory operational or hiring practices) is a proactive way for your business to help employees feel like they belong. It's also an opportunity to garner support for your company's pillar initiatives while simultaneously highlighting causes that resonate with employees—and make a big difference in their lives and communities.

One company that epitomizes this idea is Sephora. One of their four main cause pillars is supporting "people facing major life transitions." In June 201, Sephora launched Bold Beauty Classes for Confidence[7] to help meet the needs of the transgender and non-binary community. Bold Beauty curriculum was developed with input by Sephora employees who are part of that community in addition to LGBTQ community partners[8]. Sephora's goal is to create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive experience where attendees can discover techniques and products that empower their beauty. These free classes take place in Sephora stores and are open to all gender expressions, and friends and family allies are welcome to join.

To support the in-store classes, Sephora created a series of Bold Beauty video tutorials featuring Sephora employees who are part of the transgender community. These videos support people who want to learn more, or may not have a Sephora store location nearby.

Corrie Conrad, Vice President of Social Impact, Sustainability, and Diversity & Inclusion at Sephora shared how they approached the new initiative: "We held focus groups and worked with our employees experiencing their own gender journeys to help determine class content [and] sensitivity training procedures... the trans and nonbinary community is a beloved part of our community, and we want to be allies."

By enlisting team members to create and facilitate these classes, the company is not only furthering a key cause pillar, they're connecting on a very personal level with their employees around an issue that matters deeply to them.

? Did You Know?

Small, positive actions can add up to a big impact! We saw that in action when employees at Google led a grassroots movement that raised

$2m

for refugee support in less than

24 hrs

(and was matched 100% by the company)

Google

3 Encourage employees to co-create content and provide meaningful experiences for everyone

Another way to nurture belonging is to let your employees create giving or volunteering opportunities with causes that are important to them. This allows them to showcase their interests and passions at work, while making the experiences for their colleagues more genuine, authentic and accessible. It also provides the chance for employees to build new relationships, to express creativity and, ultimately, to connect on a more meaningful level with the company and the people.

And what if you want to identify team members who are passionate about particular causes so they can help you create content? Dig into your Goodness program data! Does an employee repeatedly donate to a specific charity? Does someone regularly volunteer with organizations that support similar causes? This information is gold when it comes to determining who on your team may be willing and excited about becoming an ambassador for your program.

Another way to encourage employees to lead the content creation for your program is through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)—groups of employees who join together in their workplace based on shared characteristics or life experiences. Empowering ERGs to help drive local community initiatives allows employees to make a hands-on difference for local causes in a way that's personally meaningful to them, while simultaneously making the biggest impact for their cause. Ultimately, the more you can empower your team members in highlighting the causes that matter to them personally, the more they'll feel a sense of ownership, inclusion and—you guessed it—belonging!

? Did You Know?

When it comes to fostering belonging in your company, Benevity's new purpose-driven engagement module, Missions, is a perfect way to encourage your people to take small, meaningful actions. It can amplify and involve them in any of your CSR initiatives or it can be used by ERGs to create a grassroots movement for any cause that's personal to them. And later this year, it will have a content library full of activities to help you build a culture where all employees feel like they belong from the bottom up!

CURRENT MISSION
A Place For All
2/10 Missions Completed

- ☑ Discover the Best Version of You 👁
- ☑ Document the Journey 👁
- ☐ Establish Trust so Everyone Can Succeed 👁
- ☐ Find the Authentic Self 👁
- ☐ Help Others to Be More Confident and... 👁

View All Tasks ⌄
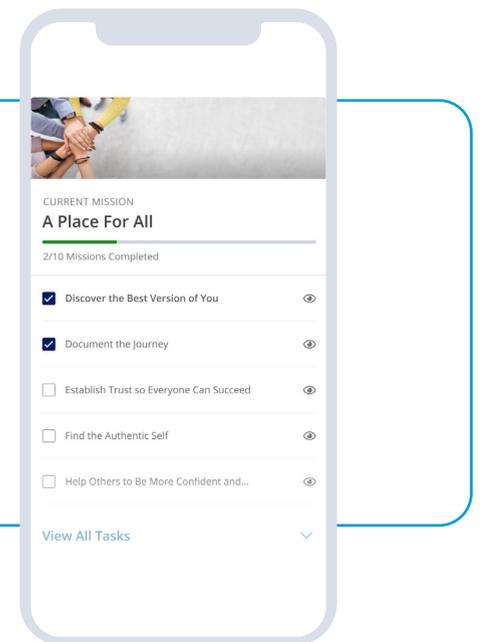
4 Highlight awareness dates that promote diversity, inclusion and belonging

Awareness dates—like Pride, International Women's Day, Black History Month, National Aboriginal Awareness Week, Movember, Veterans Day and the like—are great starting points for fostering a sense of belonging among your team members. You can use these occasions to offer learning opportunities, action-based campaigns, volunteer events or donation campaigns, demonstrating the company's support for a wide range of important causes that directly impact your employees.

Awareness dates are an ideal time to bring attention to important causes, but they don't have to be the only time you promote them. You can promote belonging with your Goodness program by continuing to demonstrate your company's commitment to issues that matter to employees on a consistent basis all year long. Remember, it can be an "and", not an "or"!

Accenture is a company that truly understands the importance of belonging as the third piece of the puzzle. They strategically highlight initiatives and implement campaigns during awareness dates and have created a culture that supports belonging 365 days a year.

Zoya Zayler, Accenture, Canada Inclusion and Diversity Lead, shares that "At Accenture, inclusion and diversity are fundamental to our culture and embedded in our core values. We're committed to creating an environment where our people can feel comfortable, be themselves and contribute. Fostering a sense of belonging is a business imperative for us that starts at the top. We believe that awareness and understanding are key ingredients for belonging and we promote them through various programs and initiatives."

"As an example, [for] Pride Month we're celebrating the LGBT community by continuing to support and empower people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions through awareness campaigns and multiple national and local events. Our campaigns and events include a Canada-wide Pride webcast dedicated to building awareness about the LGBT community, Facebook Live and Instagram Live discussions, a fireside chat with our CIO and global Pride at Accenture executive sponsor, a 'Trans-talk' focusing on gender authenticity, as well as various other local office networking events and celebrations."

5 Choose software that includes everyone

If you want to use your Goodness program to foster a culture of inclusion, it's imperative that you ensure everyone has equal access to it. So, when you're looking for software, be sure to choose a solution that can be accessed by all of your employees, including those who use screen readers or keyboard navigation. Offering accessible technology ensures that you do more than simply meet legislative requirements—you're empowering everyone to take part in pro-social actions like giving, volunteering or anything else you would want to track and measure.

Benevity is proud to offer the most accessible solution in the industry for workplace giving, matching, volunteering or other positive actions. Because our software meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA standards, it ensures a delightful experience for all users, including those with visual impairments.
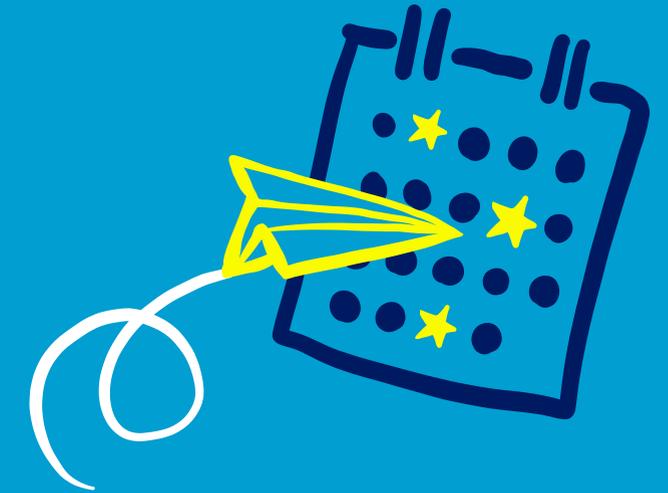
Benevity provides ready-made content to help your program promote diversity, inclusion and belonging all year long! Our comprehensive Goodness Calendar makes it easy to know what's coming up and prep your communications for a steady stream of positive impact every day of the year!

Download the Goodness Calendar

Bringing it all *together*

We hope you're inspired to try some (or all!) of these strategies to help everyone in your workplace feel a sense of belonging through your Goodness program. Your company may already have existing D&I efforts, and these suggestions are by no means meant to replace them. Like many of the strategies themselves, it's all about "and" rather than "or"!

When you engage your people in Goodness and empower them to upport their passions, you'll see belonging flourish in your culture. And with that third piece of the puzzle in place, your D&I efforts are sure to be stronger than ever—with the ensuing benefits to your employees and your business.

Learn more about how you can power an inclusive corporate culture with your CSR program at the Benevity Resource Centre

Request a demo

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Benevity, Inc., a certified B Corporation, is the global leader in corporate social responsibility and employee engagement software, including online giving, matching, volunteering, community investment and purpose-driven actions. Many of the world's most iconic brands rely on Benevity's award-winning cloud solutions to power corporate "Goodness" programs that attract, retain and engage today's diverse workforce by connecting people to the causes that matter to them. With software that is available in 20 languages, to a client community of 18 million people around the world, Benevity has processed more than $5 billion in donations and 32 million hours of volunteering time and awarded over one million grants to 251,000 nonprofits worldwide.

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[1]Katharine Earley, "The business benefits of promoting diversity and inclusion," August 22, 2017

[2]Gregory M. Walton et al, "Two Brief Interventions to Mitigate a "Chilly Climate" Transform Women's Experience, Relationships, and Achievement in Engineering," 2014

[3]Hyon S Chu, "New Technology Industry Diversity & Inclusion Report 2017"

[4]Human Rights Campaign, "The Cost of the Closet."

[5]Dr. Matthew Lieberman and Dr. Naomi Eisenberger, "The pains and pleasures of social life: a social cognitive neuroscience approach"

[6]Kate Reilly, "How LinkedIn's HR Chief is Changing the Diversity Conversation with 'Belonging'," January 9, 2017

[7]Sephora Stands Classes for Confidence: Bold Beauty for the Transgender Community

[8]Arabelle Sicardi, "Sephora Is Launching In-Store Beauty Classes for Trans People," May 22, 201