

Belonging is key: 4 personas for your belonging journey

When it comes to building a sense of belonging within your organisation, it's important to know who you're building it for. Today's businesses have the potential to recruit from a huge range of mindsets, so the sooner they ditch the one-size-fits-all approach, the better.

Temps de lecture : minute

3 August 2023

But according to McKinsey & Co.'s Great Attrition Survey, over half (51%) of employees say they lack a sense of belonging at their organisation – something Randstad's Workmonitor 2023 says would lead 54% of employees to quit.

Whether it comes down to retention or the rise in performance and employee net promoter score belonging is associated with, forward-facing leaders can't afford to get belonging wrong, and while a good strategy and supporting materials are critical – too often leaders fail to consider how these are absorbed.

The journey to understanding, and communicating, belonging

For Pleo, we define belonging as anything related to definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion or belonging itself. It might sound like a meaty subject, but really it comes down to many contributing factors that ask one simple question – do your employees feel they belong?

A realisation that came to us early into our own belonging journey is that not everybody thinks about it in the same way. This threw an instant curveball our way – how could we expect to create an effective strategy if we weren't plugged in to our workforce enough to make ourselves heard? Believe us, the irony of having a belonging strategy that lacked inclusive engagement was not lost on us.

To help ensure our strategy and its assets appealed to the entire organisation, we created four persona types we knew we'd have to communicate effectively with. We don't expect these personas to do all the work. Instead, these are ways of linking those who learn, are empowered or become demotivated, etc. in similar ways. Anyone can be any of these personas, even switching between them depending on the topic we're communicating.

Ensuring we were speaking to each of these personas kick started our own belonging journey, and in sharing them below, we hope they do the same for you.

1. Changemakers

Changemakers are some of the most active employees in your belonging space. They are often inherently motivated to contribute towards belonging as it aligns with their values. When it comes to motivating them, it's all about empowerment. Leaders should give them the freedom, autonomy and responsibility to run projects, while ensuring they back this up with resource groups, platforms, budget and time.

Creating a space where your changemakers can create change, challenge you, and stress-test your strategy is key. While if you become a roadblock to their plans or move too slowly to implement them, chances are they'll move on. Crucially, you also have to go beyond talk and ensure you're investing in belonging for the right reasons, and not just to look good.

2. Lifelong learners

Often self-educated on the subject and looking to learn and grow in all directions, lifelong learners are those who, if you give them the tools, will put them to good use. This makes it essential that you remove any barriers to them learning about your belonging journey and feeding into it.

Be wary of overloading them with too much content, as it can make it hard to know where to start. While giving them too little can have the same effect. Belonging work requires education and you should contextualise everything you give them by explaining the “why” behind it. Webinars, training sessions and workshops are all great fits for this persona.

3. Busy bees

It’s all in the name! Busy bees are those who have a lot of priorities on their to-do list, and belonging might not be at the top. For them, the assets you create should be designed to fit into a busy schedule, action-packed and to the point. The value should be obvious, relevant and engaging, and bring about an action.

Content that is too long or relies on too much persuasion won’t do the job here – you need to get practical and drive engagement through things like TikToks, tips and tricks and digestible one-pagers – think short and snappy, but still relevant.

4. Rookies

These newcomers will just be starting their belonging journey. Nevertheless, they’re enthusiastic which means you need to make sure their first steps into the belonging space are the right ones and they’re

not jaded early on.

Key to this is making their journey as accessible as possible, avoiding or explaining confusing acronyms and terms, and connecting the dots between the smallest actions and the overarching mission. This can help employees understand the value of everything they do and experience greater purpose as a result. Belonging can be an intimidating place to find your feet, so ensure you make yourself available to answer any questions

Belonging is a marathon, not a sprint

When it comes to their belonging strategy, every business should bring some much-needed urgency. But leaders must also invest in robust upfront planning to ensure that they eventually achieve the results they want.

This means ensuring you're speaking to people in the right ways. The greatest belonging strategy in the world won't work unless it's built to click with those in your company who are responsible for getting behind it and creating the change.

Not many people know we chose the name Pleo because it means "more than expected". This means that making an active commitment towards helping people belong is a logical problem for us to solve. But for every business, we strongly believe that one of the most forward-thinking things you can do is build a workplace and environment where every employee – no matter their background or identity – feels they can show up as their whole self and belong, every day. The first step towards doing this is learning how to speak so others can listen.

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