

FLIP *the* script

LEAD OUTWARD TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

Sometimes, you may do things that are divisive, dismissive, or demoralizing without even realizing it. Though your intent may be positive, the outcome of your words and actions may be harmful. But by intentionally **leading outward** in these situations, you can better connect with team members, treat them fairly, and enable them to flourish.¹ Choose your words thoughtfully to build an inclusive work culture in which people are heard, valued, and connected—because change starts with you.²

ACCOUNTABILITY

You hold team members responsible for their behavior, development, and work processes.

UNACCOUNTABLE ←

→ ACCOUNTABLE

WHAT PEOPLE
THINK, SAY, OR DO

"THEY
SHOULD ALREADY
KNOW THIS."

HOW IT'S
NOT ACCOUNTABLE

People's different interpretations of situations and differing learning styles can get in the way of what you think someone *should* know. Ban the word "should," and suspend your judgments.

WHAT TO THINK,
SAY, OR DO INSTEAD

"I think we may be seeing things differently. I'd like to talk about what happened and get your thoughts on how we can handle this next time."

Explicitly discuss expectations, missteps, and what can be done to improve things in the future.

WHAT PEOPLE
THINK, SAY, OR DO

"IF THEY DON'T
CARE TO HEAR MY
FEEDBACK, I SIMPLY
WON'T GIVE ANY."

HOW IT'S
NOT ACCOUNTABLE

Don't assume people don't care. When you withhold constructive feedback, people cannot learn from mistakes and be accountable for achieving goals.³

WHAT TO THINK,
SAY, OR DO INSTEAD

"I care about your success. May I offer some feedback to help you achieve your goals? Some of it may be tough for me to say, and I appreciate it may be tough for you to hear."

Check your biases when you give feedback to make sure everyone gets the same depth of constructive and corrective feedback.

**WHAT PEOPLE
THINK, SAY, OR DO**

**"I ALREADY TOLD
THEM TO TAKE CARE
OF IT. THEY JUST NEED
TO FIGURE IT OUT."**

**HOW IT'S
NOT ACCOUNTABLE**

Beware of the "I said... now you do" trap—expecting instant understanding of your requests, priorities, rationales, or expected outcomes simply through your words. As the saying goes, "*Great leaders don't just tell you how it's done; they show you.*"

**WHAT TO THINK,
SAY, OR DO INSTEAD**

"I recognize we have had this conversation before. Help me understand the challenges you are facing. Let's set some specific goals and a concrete plan to follow up by ____ date."

Demonstrate **accountability** by modeling how to learn, set goals, and collaborate effectively.

OWNERSHIP

You guide team members to solve their own problems and make their own decisions.

DISMANTLING OWNERSHIP ←



ENABLING OWNERSHIP

**WHAT PEOPLE
THINK, SAY, OR DO**

**"THIS ISN'T
ABOUT YOU. JUST DO
WHAT I SAID."**

**HOW IT LACKS
OWNERSHIP**

Employees need to feel their voices are heard, even if their ideas are not ultimately enacted.⁴ Don't dismiss employees' ideas or solutions as unimportant or valueless because you think they are not aligned with your priorities or are self-promoting.

**WHAT TO THINK,
SAY, OR DO INSTEAD**

"I appreciate that not having more control over this project can be frustrating. Can you help me better understand what is going well already and where you may need extra support?"

Show authentic appreciation and ask supportive questions to help team members have ownership of their roles.

**WHAT PEOPLE
THINK, SAY, OR DO**

**"I AM HAVING
A HARD TIME FULLY
TRUSTING MY TEAM...
THIS PROJECT IS TOO
IMPORTANT."**

**HOW IT LACKS
OWNERSHIP**

Building trust is an ongoing process that requires involving your team members in decision-making.⁵ Create clear processes for how and when employees can contribute and grow their influence.

**WHAT TO THINK,
SAY, OR DO INSTEAD**

"For this project, I have some non-negotiables (e.g., guiding principles and expectations). Within that framework, how can we work together as a team?"

Help employees to take **ownership** by defining your expectations and outlining ways to approach and communicate missteps.

**WHAT PEOPLE
THINK, SAY, OR DO**

**"NEVER MIND;
I'LL JUST DO IT."**

**HOW IT LACKS
OWNERSHIP**

This conveys that you don't value your employee's contributions or believe in their ability to deliver, which can be demoralizing.

**WHAT TO THINK,
SAY, OR DO INSTEAD**

"What do you need to successfully deliver this on time? How do you best like to receive feedback? What do you think is working well here, and what do you need help with?"

Consider that your employee's way of solving a problem or taking action could be just as effective, or more effective, than your way.

ALLYSHIP

You actively support people from underrepresented groups.

NOT ALLYSHIP



ALLYSHIP

**WHAT PEOPLE
THINK, SAY, OR DO**

**"I HAD A WOMAN
MANAGER WHO
WAS GREAT."**

**HOW IT'S NOT
ALLYSHIP**

"Think leader, think male" stereotypes are still pervasive.⁶ Specifying or qualifying a manager as a woman reinforces this bias.

**WHAT TO THINK,
SAY, OR DO INSTEAD**

"I am grateful to have had opportunities to work with people who don't look like me, but I can do more to support those in non-dominant groups."

Practice **allyship** by learning more about gender stereotypes that confine our options for "acceptable" behavior.

**WHAT PEOPLE
THINK, SAY, OR DO**

**"I DON'T HAVE
A RACIST BONE IN
MY BODY."**

**HOW IT'S NOT
ALLYSHIP**

This denial shuts down candid conversation and says that you are unwilling to explore your potential blind spots.⁷ It also ignores the ways that unconscious bias affects us all, regardless of intent.⁸

**WHAT TO THINK,
SAY, OR DO INSTEAD**

"I strive to be inclusive and unbiased, but as a human I have blind spots. I welcome feedback about the things I may not see about myself and others so I can continue learning."

Be open to hearing how your words or ideas might be hurtful in ways you didn't intend.

**WHAT PEOPLE
THINK, SAY, OR DO**

**"THAT CANDIDATE IS
NOT THE RIGHT 'FIT.'"**

**HOW IT'S NOT
ALLYSHIP**

People tend to like others who are familiar and similar to themselves,⁹ and we often define those who "fit" as those who reflect our own image.¹⁰ In addition, the unconscious association of leadership behaviors with characteristics attributed to men can make it harder for others to be seen as "fitting"¹¹ and block their access to opportunities.

**WHAT TO THINK,
SAY, OR DO INSTEAD**

"Although this person doesn't fit the mold of what I am used to, let's talk about how we could leverage their differences as an added value to our team."

Participate in **unconscious bias training** for yourself and your team.

**OWN YOUR
INFLUENCE**

Acknowledge that as a leader, you are a role model. Create constructive processes to hold employees accountable, guide them in making their own decisions, and support their success equitably.

**OWN YOUR
IMPACT**

Hold yourself accountable for the impact of your attitudes, thoughts, and actions. When you make missteps, apologize and let team members know how you will act differently next time.

**TRUST YOUR
TEAM**

Involve employees in decision-making to enable them to feel influential in their roles. Displaying trust in this way is a hallmark of inclusion, which can foster engagement.¹²

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4. Dnika J. Travis, Rebecca J. Gomez, and Michàlle E. Mor Barak, "Speaking Up and Stepping Back: Examining the Link Between Employee Voice and Job Neglect," *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 33, no. 10 (2011): p. 1831-1841.
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12. Dnika J. Travis, Emily Shaffer, and Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, [Getting Real About Inclusive Leadership: Why Change Starts With You](#) (Catalyst, 2019).



CATALYST
 WORKPLACES THAT WORK FOR WOMEN



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created: 17 September 2020
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