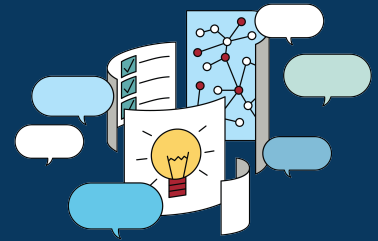


Leading Boards Engage With and Value Differences

Use this tool to foster respectful engagement and effective dissent.



This tool is part of the Inclusive Boards Playbooks. In collaboration with directors, national organizations, and leading thinkers, we have compiled these practices and tools to assess your board's practices and activities to create a leading board culture. For the complete playbook, go to inclusiveboards.stanford.edu.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Identify opportunities for growth and areas of strength for your board using the table on page 1.
- For further details and actionable items, refer to pages 2-3 for additional director-sourced and research-backed strategies and tips.

As boards become increasingly diverse, and societal issues impact businesses, boards must manage complex issues at the intersection of business and society. An increase of awareness and perspectives around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) generates greater value. Create space to allow for learning, mistakes and candid discussions without undue judgment or loss of affinity.

Self-Evaluation: Engage With and Value Difference

Check which areas you have practiced or engaged in having conversations across differences or on topics of DEIB.

Does your board:	Never					Always					To learn more, go to strategy:
Have a shared agreement to discuss and learn about and across differences.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<u>1</u>
Practice “perspective taking” or seeking to understand the perspective of views of others before jumping in.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<u>2</u>
Develop and use the skills and experience to facilitate through stuck or polarized conversations.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	<u>3</u>

Key: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Very Often, 5 = Always

Strategies for Engaging With and Valuing Differences

These ideas are gathered from board members who practice, and recognize the value of having candid conversations with and across differences, and on topics of DEIB. The goal is respectful engagement, effective dissent and inclusion of voices.

1 Learn, practice, and create norms with an inclusive lens

Set up your board to effectively talk about social shifts and DEIB, making space for different perspectives.

- Plan to have a conversation about how you intend to engage with these topics. You may want to set the expectation that everyone will participate, to meet people where they are, and to listen with curiosity.
- Share the responsibility to engage in challenging conversations and DEIB. Have everyone enter as a learner. Do not expect anybody to speak on behalf of others or shared experiences.
- Encourage self-learning on expansive topics that affect the company and wider community and could be advantageous for predicting future business challenges, including racial injustice, climate change, geopolitical tensions, etc.
- Support directors to develop an understanding of key DEIB topics through an expert or timely readings. When appropriate, participate in company DEIB training or activities.

2 Practice perspective-taking

You may sense that an interaction or experience was not as inclusive as it could have been. Instead of assuming how it went, ask questions to find out other's perspectives, and listen with curiosity and without judgment.

- Before engaging, you may want to take a pause. Instead of being in response mode, try curiosity.
- You may want to ask questions such as:
 - How did you experience the meeting/a particular interaction?
 - How can we create a better experience for you?
- Ask the person if they wish to speak about this one-on-one.
- Listen with an aim to fully understand their experience, without referencing or justifying your views or perspective.

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- Check to see if you can see their perspective clearly, with appreciation for what they shared.
- Show empathy while recognizing that each individual's experience or mindset is unique. For example, instead of saying *"I know how you feel"*, try *"Thank you for sharing how you experienced that. I appreciate your view. Is there anything else you'd like to share about that?"* or *"How can we support you and the group going forward?"*

3 Facilitate through differences

In the moment, notice when the conversation becomes polarized or stuck around different perspectives, and focus on norms that encourage productive dialogue.

- Pause and realign on shared values such as creating value to the company by raising and discussing critical issues, including all perspectives in the conversation, or expanding the board's understanding of such topics.
- Focus on dialogue, not debate.
- Depersonalize positions of disagreement. Scrutinize ideas, not individuals.
- Take a break if the situation warrants, or mark a topic to be revisited.
- Support reflection through cognitive struggle. Try perspective taking (above).
- Draw out common interests to re-orient discussion towards solutions.



Inclusive Boards
Playbooks

inclusiveboards.stanford.edu

Strategies in the Inclusive Board Playbook are:

- > Establish Inclusive Norms
- > Facilitate Effective Meetings
- > Build Strong Relationships
- > Mentor New Directors
- > Engage With and Value Differences