



TOOLKIT

Measuring Belonging in the Workplace

Tools and Tactics to Create an Inclusive Workplace

The Importance of Belonging in the Workplace

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) defines belonging as “how individuals feel as they engage with the rest of the organization,” a step beyond the typical facets of DEI. Great Places to Work explains this as an [employee’s belief that their unique contributions are accepted and valued](#) within their organization.

Research found many US workers equate belonging with respect and fair treatment, and believe it leads to better results for employees and workplaces.

88%

of US workers strongly or somewhat agree that a sense of belonging leads to higher productivity at work

76%

of US workers say having a sense of belonging at work means being treated fairly and respectfully

64%

of US workers say a sense of belonging at work means having their perspective and/or contributions valued by their colleagues and superiors

64%

of US workers say a sense of belonging at work means working in an environment where they feel accepted

Several sources point to the organizational benefits of belonging. McKinsey and Company found that [belonging is a top indicator of employee retention](#). Harvard Business Review found [high belonging was linked to](#) a **56 percent** increase in job performance, a **50 percent** drop in turnover risk, and a **75 percent** reduction in sick days. Great Place to Work found workers who feel a sense of belonging in their workplace are [3 times more likely to feel people look forward to coming to work](#) and 5 times more likely to want to stay at their company a long time.

SHRM notes the following [ways belonging is fostered](#) in the workplace:



Employees are able to share individual perspectives and ideas, are encouraged to do so, and their contributions are recognized



Employees feel they can be authentic at work without negative consequences and don't feel the need to hide any part of themselves to fit in



Employees develop meaningful relationships with colleagues, creating trust and a sense of caring

“

“Without a championed sense of belonging within a workforce, employees may feel hesitant to be authentic or may even fear being ostracized by their colleagues.”

-Monique McDonough, Chief Operational Officer, Kazoo and WorkTango

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Measuring Belonging in the Workplace



How companies measure, define, and foster belonging in the workplace:

SALLYBEAUTY.

Sally Beauty measures belonging through their annual employee engagement surveys. According to the [survey results on their DEI website](#), 87 percent of associates believe people of all backgrounds and perspectives are valued on their team, 88 percent of associates feel they are treated with dignity and respect at work, and 86 percent of associates feel like they can be themselves at work.



PetSmart [measures belonging](#) through the company's annual engagement survey. In 2023, the company notes that scores for, "I feel like I truly belong at PetSmart," increased for their associate population. Learn more about their belonging initiatives [here](#).



PwC incorporates belonging into their DEI workplace pillars. The company defines belonging as, "Establishing and maintaining a fair, equitable and welcoming environment for all people requires a shift from awareness to empathy—while demonstrating inclusive leadership that cultivates trust among our people and our clients." The company plans to cultivate a culture belonging by focusing on inclusive talent recruitment and redesigning the employee onboarding experience to ensure employees receive a fair and equitable experience that can help them build a career within the organization. For more details, see [section one](#) of their 2022 Purpose and Inclusion report, "Building a Culture of Belonging."



Google defines belonging as, "Making sure every Googler feels seen, connected, supported, and empowered in everything they do." Google hopes to further [cultivate a culture of belonging](#) through three areas: their workplace, product offerings, and in society. These [areas focus on](#) representation goals for historically excluded talent (such as people with disabilities and veterans), racial equity, philanthropic efforts related to women in tech, and more accessible product designs.

Measuring Belonging in the Workplace



In 2020, the company conducted a DEI assessment and determined several [areas of growth to increase belonging](#) within the organization. To improve, the company took the following steps.

- Documented culture roots and behaviors that support core values
- Incorporated DEI perspective and training into the onboarding process
- Implemented annual stay interviews
- Revamped welcome lunches for new hires, encouraging them to share their stories and their diverse backgrounds
- Developed a social and community plan inclusive of all interests
- Updated website with their perspectives on diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Revised official company holiday calendar to include additional holidays such as Martin Luther King Day and Juneteenth

These actions resulted in increased sense of belonging among employees, increased retention, and increased social engagement according to their annual survey findings. Read more about the company's belonging framework [here](#).

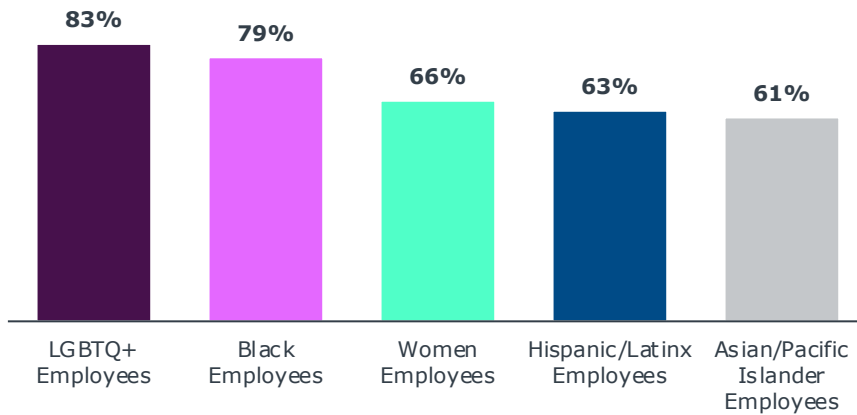


N-Able [defines belonging](#) as, "When everyone feels included, valued, and celebrated for who they are and what they bring to the table...to feel like an integral part of our culture and like your voice and work makes a difference." The company has taken [three steps to foster a sense of belonging](#) in the workplace which includes establishing employee resources groups, creating learning sessions, and partnering with external diversity champions to serve underrepresented communities.

Ways to Quantify Belonging Beyond Surveys

Examine the Level of Psychological Safety in the Workplace

While many workplaces attempt to foster belonging, employees may not feel safe being authentic and vulnerable enough in the workplace to feel they belong. Harvard Business Review found **61 percent** of employees "[feel pressure to "cover" some part of their identity](#) at work.



Pressure to hide their identity was especially high among historically excluded talent. The study found even heterosexual, white men (**45 percent**) felt they need to cover their age, disabilities, or mental health.

Additionally, a number of employees do not feel their managers promote behaviors that encourage belonging. A 2021 SHRM [belonging survey](#) found that:

25%

of employees reported not trusting their manager to treat them fairly

26%

of employees did not feel emotionally safe at work

27%

of employees said their workplace does not clearly provide opportunities to openly discuss issues without fear of penalty, punishment, and retaliation

27%

of employees did not think their manager encouraged a culture of open and transparent communication

Ways to Quantify Belonging Beyond Surveys

Examine the Level of Psychological Safety in the Workplace

The 2023 Work in America Survey found **92 percent** of workers said it is very (**57 percent**) or somewhat (**35 percent**) important to them to work for an organization that [values their emotional and psychological well-being](#). Fostering psychological safety is essential to creating a culture of belonging.

Psychological safety in the workplace is the idea that all employees feel comfortable expressing their identities and ideas without fear of repercussion or consequences. If employees feel they cannot express themselves in the workplace, then they may have trouble believing they fit or belong.

Here are four steps your organization can take to begin fostering psychological safety:

1



Communicate with Care

Take a collaborative and compassionate approach to communicating problems, so employees do not feel blamed or singled out for making a mistake. Try to understand the cause of a mistake or misunderstanding to determine how to minimize issues in the future.

2



Interact with Mutual Respect

Remember to keep mutual respect top of mind when interacting with employees or clients. Paul Santagata, Head of Industry at Google, encourages his team members to remember [other people are "just like me"](#) when interacting.

3



Advocate for Inclusion

Creating psychological safety may require individuals to address aspects of workplace inclusion issues such as bias, cultural competency, discrimination, or accountability. Encourage leaders to be upstanders and call out any exclusionary behavior they may witness in the workplace.

4



Measure Employee Sentiment

Collect feedback from employees to understand what sentiments workers may have about the level of psychological safety within your organization. Surveying employees can ensure that employers are taking the right steps to address the needs and wellbeing of their workforce.

Ways to Quantify Belonging in the Workplace

Gauge the Level of Allyship in the Workplace

A lack of belonging in the workplace can lead to feelings of exclusion. However, [promoting allyship behaviors](#) in the workplace may be one way to promote inclusion and help foster belonging.

What is an Ally?

Seramount [defines an ally](#) as, "Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and to [work in solidarity](#) with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice."

Find more definitions and terms in our [DEI Glossary](#)



An ally recognizes that, though they are not a member of a marginalized group(s) they support, they make a concentrated effort to better understand the struggle of another's circumstances. An ally may have more privilege and recognize that privilege in society."

Research has found that employees at [companies with high levels of allyship](#) are:

50%

less likely to **leave**

56%

more likely to **improve their performance**

75%

less likely to take a **sick day**

167%

more likely to recommend their organization as a **great place to work**



Consider creating opportunities for employees to learn more about the importance and benefits of allyship.

How Seramount Can Help

Solutions to Help You Create an Inclusive and Engaging Employee Experience

Capture unparalleled and unfiltered insight into the perceptions of your workforce to identify levers for building a culture of trust and transparency.

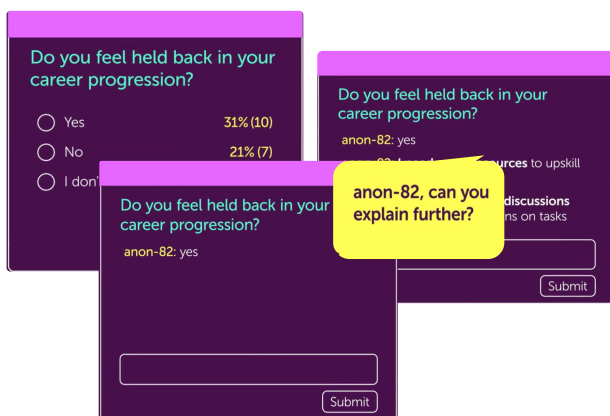
Translating Employee Data Into An Action Plan

Assess360 is this three-part solution to sustainable culture change. An expert consultant focuses on tactical logistics and data analysis, extending the capabilities of HR and Talent teams throughout the multi-year journey.



What are Employee Voice Sessions?

To Uncover Frequently Missed Talent Intelligence—Listen Differently



60–90-minute anonymous, online focus groups



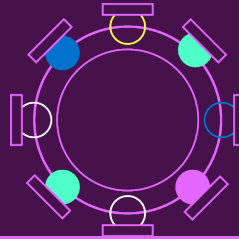
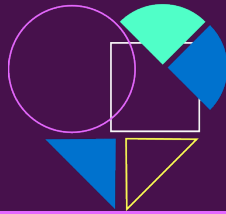
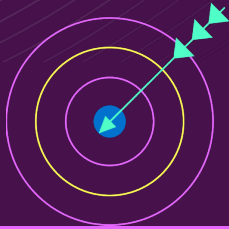
Gather rich data in an engaging, safe, and solutions-oriented forum



Deliver an authentic portrait of employees' experiences

"Holding one Employee Voice Session is **like conducting sixty one-on-one interviews at once**. I've never seen another tool that can gather employee insights in such an engaging way."

-Chief Culture Officer, Global Insurance Company



Insight-Powered Solutions Trusted by Talent and HR Leaders

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and Hire Top
Early Career
Talent**

Branding and recruiting platform that surfaces engaged, prepared candidates more efficiently, effectively, and at scale

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Engagement**

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Foundations and
Build Adaptable
Roadmaps**

Expert guidance rooted in research and experience to support and advance your strategic talent and DEI priorities in every environment

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More Resilient,
Connected
Workforce**

Impactful content designed and delivered to deflect productivity and positive behavior change at every level

We partner with **600+** corporations,
government entities,
and nonprofits **globally**.

Including **~50%** of the
Fortune 100 and
~25% of the Fortune 500.

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seramount.com/contact-us

About Seramount

Seramount is a strategic professional services and research firm dedicated to supporting high-performing, inclusive workplaces. Over four decades, we've established a strong, data-driven understanding of the employee experience, which lays the groundwork for everything we do. Seramount partners with over 450 of the world's most influential companies, large and small, to offer pragmatic solutions including best practice DEI research, workplace assessment, employee learning and development, and talent sourcing. These offerings empower organizations to navigate a dynamic corporate environment and to cultivate a resilient, connected workforce that achieves extraordinary outcomes.

