

**Leading with Purpose:
Building Cultures Where Everyone Belongs**

THE BELONGING BLUEPRINT WORKBOOK

CAMERON CURTIS, CMM, CAE
Founder & CEO, C2 Association Strategies
ccurtis@c2associationstrategies.com
<https://c2associationstrategies.com>



SESSION OUTCOMES

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- ❖ Define belonging as a leadership discipline with measurable organizational impact
- ❖ Identify specific behaviors that build or erode psychological safety on your team
- ❖ Apply the Belonging Blueprint framework to diagnose your team's culture
- ❖ Commit to one actionable behavior change you can implement this week

AGENDA

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Welcome & Context | Why belonging matters; session objectives |
| Fitting In vs. Belonging | The critical distinction; personal reflection and pair share |
| The Belonging Blueprint | Four pillars framework: SEEN, HEARD, VALUED, SAFE |
| Self-Assessment | Individual reflection: rate your team culture on each pillar |
| Scenario Analysis | Table discussion: apply the Blueprint to real workplace situations |
| Personal Commitment | Choose one pillar; commit to one specific behavior change |
| Closing & Challenge | Key takeaways: your challenge starts today |



FITTING IN vs. BELONGING

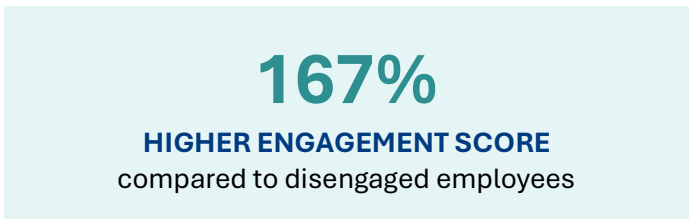
| FITTING IN | BELONGING |
|--|--|
| Assessing and acclimating Changing yourself to be accepted Hiding parts of yourself Exhausting and unsustainable Conditional acceptance Performing a role | Being accepted for who you are Bringing your whole self Feeling free to be authentic Energizing and sustainable Secure in your place Contributing authentically |

REFLECTION

Think of a time when you truly belonged on a team. What did the leader or team members do that created that feeling?

Now think of a time you were fitting in but not truly belonging. What was different?

WHY BELONGING MATTERS



Source: Carr, E.W., Reece, A., Kellerman, G.R., & Robichaux, A. (2019). "The Value of Belonging at Work." Harvard Business Review, December 2019. Based on BetterUp research of 1,789 full-time employees.

THE KEY INSIGHT

Belonging is not a "nice to have." It's a leadership discipline with measurable business impact.

You can't mandate belonging. But you can create conditions where it thrives through consistent, intentional leadership behaviors.



The **BELONGING BLUEPRINT** is a practical framework for assessing and improving team culture. The Blueprint identifies four essential pillars: **SEEN**, **HEARD**, **VALUED**, and **SAFE** and within each pillar, there are “builders,” behaviors that strengthen the pillar, and “eroders,” behaviors that weaken the pillar.

The four pillars are mutually reinforcing. When people feel **SEEN**, they are more likely to speak up (**HEARD**). When their contributions are **VALUED**, they feel **SAFE** taking bigger risks. Conversely, weakness in one pillar undermines the others. When leaders assess all four pillars as an integrated system, not isolated elements, they create environments where people don't just fit in, they truly belong and thrive.

PILLAR 1: SEEN

Definition: Team members feel recognized as complete individuals with unique strengths, experiences, and aspirations, and not just as job titles or functions.

Builders (behaviors that strengthen this pillar):

- Learning and using people's preferred names and pronouns
- Remembering personal details and following up on them
- Acknowledging individual contributions in group settings
- Making eye contact and giving full attention in conversations
- Recognizing when someone is struggling or disengaged and checking in

Eroders (behaviors that weaken this pillar):

- Consistently mispronouncing or forgetting names
- Multitasking during conversations or meetings
- Taking credit for the ideas or work of others
- Treating people as interchangeable resources
- Ignoring or excluding people in meetings or communications

PILLAR 2: HEARD

Definition: Ideas, perspectives, and concerns are actively sought, genuinely considered, and visibly influence decisions and direction.

Builders:

- Asking open-ended questions and waiting for responses
- Actively soliciting input from quieter team members
- Paraphrasing to confirm understanding before responding
- Explaining how input influenced a decision (or why it could not)
- Creating multiple channels for feedback (1:1s, anonymous surveys, open forums)

Eroders:

- Interrupting or talking over people
- Dismissing ideas without genuine consideration
- Making decisions without seeking relevant input
- Asking for feedback but never acting on it
- Allowing a few voices to dominate every conversation



PILLAR 3: VALUED

Definition: Contributions are appreciated, fairly recognized, and rewarded. People understand how their work matters to the larger mission.

Builders:

- Providing specific, timely recognition (not just "good job")
- Connecting individual work to organizational impact and mission
- Offering growth opportunities and stretch assignments equitably
- Advocating for team members' advancement and visibility
- Ensuring fair and transparent processes for recognition and rewards

Eroders:

- Inconsistent or biased recognition practices
- Recognizing only final outcomes, not effort or learning
- Playing favorites with opportunities
- Failing to defend or advocate for team members
- Taking team accomplishments for granted

PILLAR 4: SAFE

Definition: Team members can take interpersonal risks, e.g., asking questions, admitting mistakes, proposing new ideas, challenging the status quo, without fear of embarrassment, punishment, or marginalization.

Builders:

- Modeling vulnerability by admitting your own mistakes and uncertainties
- Responding constructively to bad news and honest feedback
- Framing failures as learning opportunities
- Shutting down blame, gossip, and public shaming
- Consistently enforcing respect in all interactions

Eroders:

- Punishing or embarrassing people for mistakes
- Shooting down ideas aggressively in public
- Tolerating disrespect, bullying, or microaggressions
- Retaliating against those who raise concerns
- Creating an environment where perfection is expected



BELONGING BLUEPRINT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Rate your current team/organization culture on each pillar. Circle the number that best represents your honest assessment.

Scale: 1 = Rarely/Never | 2 = Sometimes | 3 = Often | 4 = Almost Always

SEEN: People feel recognized as individuals

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Leaders know team members as individuals beyond their job roles | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Individual contributions are acknowledged publicly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| People receive full attention in conversations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

SEEN Subtotal: ____ / 12

HEARD: Ideas and perspectives are sought and valued

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Leaders actively solicit input before making decisions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| All team members have equal opportunity to contribute | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Feedback is explained and visibly influences decisions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

HEARD Subtotal: ____ / 12

VALUED: Contributions are appreciated and recognized

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Recognition is specific, timely, and meaningful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Growth opportunities are distributed equitably | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| People understand how their work connects to the mission | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

VALUED Subtotal: ____ / 12

SAFE: People can take risks without fear

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| People can challenge ideas without fear of retaliation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Leaders model vulnerability and admit their own errors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

SAFE Subtotal: ____ / 12

TOTAL SCORE: ____/48

My Strongest Pillar: _____

My Greatest Opportunity: _____



SCENARIO DISCUSSION NOTES

Scenario: _____

Which pillar(s) of the Belonging Blueprint is most at risk in this scenario?

SEEN HEARD VALUED SAFE

Why?

What specific leadership behaviors could address this situation?

What might be the consequences if this situation is not addressed?

Key insight our table will share:

How does this scenario connect to something I've seen in my own department?



INSIGHTS



THE INSIGHT:

THIS CONNECTS TO MY EXPERIENCE WHEN...

I'LL APPLY THIS BY...



THE INSIGHT:

THIS CONNECTS TO MY EXPERIENCE WHEN...

I'LL APPLY THIS BY...



THE INSIGHT:

THIS CONNECTS TO MY EXPERIENCE WHEN...

I'LL APPLY THIS BY...



SEEN: People feel recognized as individuals, not just role fillers

One behavior I already do well:

One behavior I want to START:

One behavior I need to STOP:

Someone on my team who might not feel fully SEEN right now:

HEARD: Ideas and perspectives are sought and valued

One behavior I already do well:

One behavior I want to START:

One behavior I need to STOP:

Someone on my team whose voice I might be missing:



VALUED: Contributions are appreciated and recognized

One behavior I already do well:

One behavior I want to START:

One behavior I need to STOP:

Someone whose contributions I should recognize more:

SAFE: People can take risks without fear

One behavior I already do well:

One behavior I want to START:

One behavior I need to STOP:

What might be keeping someone on my team from speaking up:



RECOMMENDED READING

The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth

Amy C. Edmondson (2018)

THE foundational text on psychological safety. Edmondson's Harvard research revealed that the highest-performing teams aren't those who make the fewest mistakes, they're the ones who feel safe enough to admit and correct them. This book explains why fear stifles innovation and what leaders can do to replace fear with trust. Essential reading for any leader serious about building inclusive cultures.

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable

Patrick Lencioni (2002)

A business classic that presents team challenges as a pyramid: Absence of Trust → Fear of Conflict → Lack of Commitment → Avoidance of Accountability → Inattention to Results. Written as an engaging fable, it shows how trust is the foundation of all effective teamwork.

The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups

Daniel Coyle (2018)

Coyle studied high-performing organizations from Navy SEAL teams to Pixar and uncovered that safety doesn't come from sweeping policies, it comes from everyday behaviors like listening closely, admitting weaknesses, and reacting supportively when people take risks. Excellent for understanding the "micro-moments" that build belonging.

The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation

Timothy R. Clark (2020)

Clark's framework shows how psychological safety develops progressively: Inclusion Safety → Learner Safety → Contributor Safety → Challenger Safety. Highly practical with reflection questions and exercises. The four stages closely parallel the Belonging Blueprint pillars used in our session.



STAY CONNECTED



Cameron Curtis, CMM, CAE

Founder & CEO, C2 Association Strategies



ccurtis@c2associationstrategies.com



www.linkedin.com/in/cunzcurtis



<https://c2associationstrategies.com>

HOW CAN I HELP

- ❖ Bring this session to your team or state association
- ❖ Customize the Belonging Blueprint for your organization
- ❖ Leadership development workshops and coaching
- ❖ Team culture assessments and strategic planning
- ❖ Keynotes and breakout sessions for conferences

YOUR CHALLENGE STARTS TODAY

Notice one moment today where you can help someone feel **SEEN, HEARD, VALUED, or SAFE.**
Small, consistent behaviors create cultures where everyone belongs.