

Do your Team Members feel like they Belong?



To belong: "To be proper, appropriate, or suitable"
"To be in an appropriate situation or environment"
"To be a member of a group, such as a club"
"To fit into a group naturally"
"To be a part of something else"
From The Free Dictionary - <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/belong>

The sense of belonging is one of our fundamental human needs. The American psychologist, Abraham Maslow, is widely known for creating his model of Hierarchy of Needs in which the 3rd level of the hierarchy is **Belongingness & Love Needs** (family, friends, relationships, affection and work groups).

Maslow's premise is that innate human needs must be fulfilled in order of the hierarchy (needs at the 3rd level can't be met until needs in the 2nd level have been met, and level 2 needs can't be met unless those at level 1 have been fulfilled).

That's good news for most leaders in our business world.

Level 1 (basic life needs such as Air, Food, Drink, Shelter, Warmth and Sleep) and Level 2 (Physical Safety, Protection, Stability and Order) tend to be met for the vast majority of our team members.

So that takes us to Level 3 - belonging.

If we look at the definitions above, this means that as a leader, part of your job is to ensure each and every staff member needs to feel / experience ...

1. that they are suitable and appropriate in your team
2. that they fit into the team naturally
3. that they are actually a part of something else, and not merely operating in isolation

Want some tips on how to do this?

1. Tell them regularly and informally they are doing a great job. Let them know their contribution is valued.
2. Build a culture of acceptance of differences in your team. Speak openly and frequently about the natural, yet differing gifts, that each member brings to the table that ultimately creates synergy and the best possible outcomes.
3. Ensure team members fully understand what piece of the puzzle they are and where they fit in the big picture. (If you've ever done a jigsaw puzzle, you know how frustrating it is to look at the almost completed picture that's missing one single piece.) Let your team know their piece is important and the team simply wouldn't be complete without them.

Why the theme of belonging this month?

On January 26th (Australia Day), my husband is becoming an Australian citizen. (Our son is plotting to have a bunch of his university mates there, all dressed up in Aussie gear, sporting red, white and blue face paint, carrying inflatable kangaroos and shouting "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie ... Oi, Oi, Oi! But that's another story ...)

Alan has lived here since 5 years of age, having migrated from the UK with his dad and brother. He's paid taxes and voted here all his adult life. Yet when he went to apply for a passport, he was told he wasn't a citizen. In a strange sort of way, this conveys a message of 'you don't really belong here - you're not none of us'. (Jesse and I joked about the possibility of Alan getting deported after all these years. Thankfully he passed the exam and the interview, so our family can remain in tact!)

Imagine one of your team asking to attend a meeting, join a particular project, requesting additional responsibility of some sort, applying for a promotion ...

Might a negative reply to any of these convey a message of not really and truly belonging? Might it leave them with the thought of 'what else do I need to do around here to be accepted?'

Naturally, there are going to be times when our staff receive a negative response to a request they make.

And that's all the more reason we need to ensure they've experienced plenty of **belongingness** in their working world to leave them feeling valued and secure.

On a scale of 10 (10 being tops!), what score would you give for the sense of belonging in your team? And what rating would your team members give?)

Want more help with creating cohesion and belongingness in your team?

I'm here to help - give me a call and let's chat.