

Fully Integrated Inclusive Organization: Beyond Accommodations

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Fully Integrated Inclusive Organization: Beyond Accommodations

ABSTRACT

Walgreens, the largest drug store chain in the United States, has created inclusive distribution centers in Anderson, South Carolina and Pendergrass, Georgia, where individuals with limited skills, cognitive and or physical limitations, are recruited for employment. Unexpectedly these individuals became a catalyst which dramatically altered the organizational culture of their units. Using the case study approach, the researchers interviewed 31 team managers, who are responsible for over 650 employees—247, or 38 percent of whom have limited skills. Because of the necessity of meeting high performance operational standards with limited skill team members, a substantive change in management leadership style became imperative. Our model displays the subsequent adaptation from an autocratic centric management process, to a *people centric management focus*. This successful leadership style recognizes the necessity to lead with humility—an understanding that the leader must adapt, and the corresponding building of authentic relationships with individual team members. In part, relationships allow members to diagnose and implement innovations to the work stations and tailor job position placement which transforms the workplace for all. Finally, we articulate the organizational transformation and resulting personal impact on both team members and managers resulting from the inclusive environment. The inclusive leadership style can best be described as "*relationship based leadership*".

Keywords:

Employees with limited skills; People with disability; Inclusive management; Inclusive organizational culture; Qualitative research; Relationship based leadership; Walgreens.

INTRODUCTION

Modern societies of Europe and America have long discussed how to integrate people with limited skills as productive members of society. These discussions in social work and special education have been important areas of debate and policy-making and have had significant impact on business—both through regulatory and voluntary measures. However fully integrating workers with limited skills is still not a reality. “In 2013, 17.6 percent of persons with a disability were employed... In contrast, the employment-population ratio for those without a disability was 64.0 percent” (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). This statistic shows that 82% of those with a disability are not in the workforce compared to only 36% of non-disabled citizens.

Citizens with limited skills have varying backgrounds. They are diverse in age, disability and severity. “Limited skills” refers to an impairment, restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity that is considered normal for an average person. Some disabilities occur with age, others from birth, while still others are received as a result of an accident or in the exercise of military duty. Disabilities can be physical, emotional or cognitive. Overall more than 15% of the world’s population has limited skills (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2014).

Due to the complexity of their challenges, employees with limited skills require a management style that differs from traditional styles. Typical management styles are often aligned primarily with a metrics focus at the expense of employee relations (Marion, 2008; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Very little research has been done on the management style needed to build effective inclusive teams.

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

Walgreens

Major networks, including CNN and NBC, have documented and recognized Walgreen's success in employing and retaining limited skills team members (Kosik, 2011; Brzezinski, 2010). Professional journals, such as Academy of Management, HR Magazine and Human Resource Management Review, have also published articles about their inclusive initiative (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2014; Ren, Paetzold and Colella, 2008; Wells, 2008). Two books have been published lauding the company. Walgreens, highlighted in the book "Good to Great", is one of eleven companies that had a tremendous transformation and set an exemplary financial track record (Collins, 2001). Lewis' (2014) book, "No greatness without goodness: How a father's love changed a company and sparked a movement," describes how the Walgreens distribution center in South Carolina has served as a model for diversity management for other companies, such as Best Buy, Lowe's and Costco. This senior VP of Operations began the "inclusion initiative" to ensure that at least one-third of the employees hired for the Anderson location have limited skills (Wells, 2008). As a result, limited skill employment became the *igniting catalyst* for a revitalized non-traditional organizational culture, as will be described herein.

Using the case study approach, 31 managers were interviewed using semi-structured interview questions at the two facilities. The resulting model depicts the radical transformation of culture from an autocratic and performance centric management, to a people centric management. Consequently, management training is queried extensively on alignment with limited skill, since both creative job accommodation and disability identification are continuously demanded to diagnose and place individuals in the appropriate job, considering the nature of the individual's production challenge. Leaders are put in a position of determining what the employee can do, as well as how to best create conditions and support the employee in

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

achievement of objectives. For example, an individual who is unable to read, write, count, speak, or hear, must be placed in a position that can be individually accommodated, given these or other restrictions. At the same time, these accommodations must contribute to employee success in meeting set production needs.

Our research attempts to shed light on the gift – *the catalyst* – that employees with limited skills are to the organization that employs them. The model we propose furthers the current discussion of inclusive management by presenting how relational based leadership, the inclusive management style, is actually executed and put into practice. This model has the potential of assisting managers in starting or increasing their inclusive effectiveness and transforming the organizational culture to become employee centric.

BACKGROUND

To understand the case study it is important to understand how disability and business interact as well as the interface between leadership and workforce challenges. Both of these aspects set the stage for the inclusive “relationship based leadership” management.

Disability and Business

The United States passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, which prohibits the discrimination in employment of people with disabilities (United States Department of Labor, 2014). In recent decades, discrimination suits regarding hiring, training, and accommodating employees with limited skills in both the public the private sectors have led to changing management practices. Unfortunately, the full cultural integration of people with limited skills has not yet occurred. Management research by Stanford’s Sara Värlander (2012) notes that limited inclusion has typically been in semi-skilled or unskilled positions. Only a very

small percentage of limited skills employees are employed in professional and managerial positions (Barnes & Mercer, 2005). Often employees with disabilities are perceived as having extra cost related to accommodations, training, and reduced efficiencies (Wells, 2008). People with limited skills are too different and too problematic to be included. Research points to three common barriers of employing people with limited skills (Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011). First is fear resulting from the lack of understanding of disability. Second, is the fear of costs associated with accommodation and loss of productivity. Finally, is the fear of legal liability for not accommodating the employee.

However, for some the challenge of including people with limited skills is perceived as a gift, not as a barrier to avoid. Värlander (2012) articulates that disability is a productive resource within an organization in fostering creativity, innovation and problem-solving skills, diversity promotion, positive energy, humbleness and a holistic view on employees. Other researchers point to the lower human resource costs (low absenteeism and low turnover rates), the new inclusive team culture transformation throughout the organization, creative adaptation skills learned by the team, and increased company profitability (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2014; Wells, 2008; Hartnett et al, 2011; Stone & Colella, 1996).

Leadership and Workplace Challenges

Recent studies have investigated Leader Member Exchange Theory (LMX), in the context of inclusive environments, to determine how the management relationships with limited skill team members have impacted performance expectations, team member performance, and various team member behaviors (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2014; Colella, DeNisi & Varma, 1997; Klimoski & Donahue, 1997; Stone & Colella, 1996). According to LMX, one assumption is that an in-group and an out-group exist among work team members depending on whether the team

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

member has a low or high quality relationship with the manager (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Some research (Dwertmann and Boehm, 2014; Ren, Paetzold & Colella, 2008; Colella & Varma, 2001) indicated that limited skill team members tend to have lower quality relationships with managers compared to other team members; however, Colella & Varma's (2001) research showed evidence that limited skill team members who employ ingratiation tactics reduce the probability of having significantly lower quality LMX relationships with managers than non-limited skill team members.

Research examining management behavior and management skills, styles, and strategies that promote a culture of high quality relationships with limited skill team members has been scarce. Dwertmann and Boehm (2014) acknowledged the scarcity of research on how to avert the management pitfalls of low quality LMX relationships with limited skill team members. The following case study examines how the management style and, specifically, *relationship-based management* practices influence manager interaction with limited skill team members.

Research Questions

The primary research question is “How does a company develop employees with limited skills?” Supporting questions are:

1. How is the managerial decision making accomplished in an inclusive environment?
2. What empowers managers to integrate and develop employees with limited skills?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Our research uses a qualitative design rooted in a constructionist epistemology. In this perspective, meaning is created collectively within a specific cultural context (Crotty, 2003).

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

The focus was on the interactions and perceptions of Walgreen managers and through data abstraction, the resulting “collective” truth. Management style was examined and its impact on managers, their team and the organization. A case study approach was used to construct a theory of management from emerging themes derived from their responses (Creswell, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989, 1991; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2003).

Research was conducted at two Walgreens distribution centers—one in South Carolina and the other in Georgia. Walgreen executives approved the research and efforts coordinated were with the corresponding human resource departments, as well as the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Table 1
Setting Demographics and Samples

Distribution Centers	South Carolina	Georgia	Totals
Setting	Rural – Anderson South Carolina	Urban - Atlanta Georgia area	
Facility automation	High automation	No automation	
Metrics	Company leader in low cost (outperforming other units by 20%)	Company leader in low cost	
Total number of managers	33 Managers	7 Managers	40
Number of managers responding	27 Managers	4 Managers	31
Total Employees	550	100	650
Limited Skill Employees	220 (40%)	27 (25%)	247 (38%)

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research trustworthiness is achieved by multiple ways of collection and analysis (Greckhamer & Koro-Ljungber, 2005). We relied on three methods to collect data, and three complementary procedures of analysis to achieve trustworthiness. Data was collected from manager interviews, observations in the distribution centers and information (artifacts) found on site and on the company's website. Second, we analyzed data relying field notes, coding notes, and member checks.

Data Collection

The sample criterion for the study was a full-time position as manager at the South Carolina or Georgia distribution centers. Collectively, just under 80% of the managers were interviewed. The human resource department sent the seven-question survey with a consent form and corporate approval to managers before the interviews took place. Corporate then indicated those willing to participate in the interview were welcomed to do so during work time.

Four researchers from Anderson University worked to conduct interviews on site. Prior to data collection, researchers met and discussed interview protocol, coding, and general research objectives. Over the course of three weeks, appointments were made through the human resource department to meet on first shift or third shift, depending on the availability of the manager. On site, before interviews, the methodology of the case study interview protocol was reviewed. Furthermore, we participated in a plant tour to interact and see first-hand the inclusive management style. The informal tour and other observations aided researchers in the coding process — understanding what managers were referring too in description of physical layout, cultural artifacts, composition of teams and the various employee tasks. For example logos,

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

inclusive messaging portrayed throughout the distribution center and accommodations of all types ranging from picture job aids to modified chairs and computer terminals were observed.

Interviews were conducted on-site in small meeting rooms. After greeting participants, we advised them of their rights and asked if they had any questions about the research. The interview instrument consisted of seven primary questions. Questions were semi-structured and open-ended, and researchers had the flexibility to pursue emerging topics that seemed important to the study. Interviews lasted from 20 to 40 minutes. Instrument questions can be found in the appendix.

Analysis

Once the data were collected, we met to work on coding the data. Individuals each coded part of the data and emailed the results to the team which then met and discussed the findings to date, came to consensus, and continued to work on coding. This process lasted six weeks. Finally, when the preliminary model was developed, two member-checks were completed to verify the accuracy of the model.

Coding consisted of three phases---open, axial, and selective (Straus & Corbin, 1990). Interview data were first broken into meaning units, and then categorized along a range of properties and dimensions. Categories or “themes” were further determined based upon similarities among data sets. As an iterative process, data were constantly re-sorted and categories revised until a solid understanding emerged. In the final phase of selective coding, a centralized theme was selected and the relationship among categories—and the process as a whole was theorized. The final categories are in Table 2.

Table 2

Emerging Categorical Relationships among Data

Themes	Management styles	Keys to success	Challenges	Impact
<i>Sub themes</i>	Focus on tasks & numbers	<i>Humility:</i> decreasing pride & decreasing fear	<i>Performance</i>	Job grows into a <i>passion</i> and new family.
	Focus on team members	<i>Authentic relationship:</i> friendship (respect, communicate, empathize, team as family), coaching (be positive, motivate, be patient, celebrate small successes), correction (accountable) <i>Innovative and adaptive problem solver:</i> performance standards, innovative out of the box solutions, adaptive, structure.	<i>Human struggle:</i> Employee physical challenge to be resolved, employee mental / cognitive challenge to be resolved, manager frustration. <i>Overcoming struggle:</i> manager transformation, counseling and guidance, adaptation.	<i>Rewarding</i> and fulfilling. <i>Manager self-development & moral development.</i>

FINDINGS

Our model describes the forces at work in an inclusive organization. The major force in a fully integrated inclusive organization is the organizational commitment to being people centric practicing *relationship based leadership*. It further supports that commitment by creating the organizational structure that supports manager initiatives and employee training. Employees engage the organization, develop and eventually lead the organization.

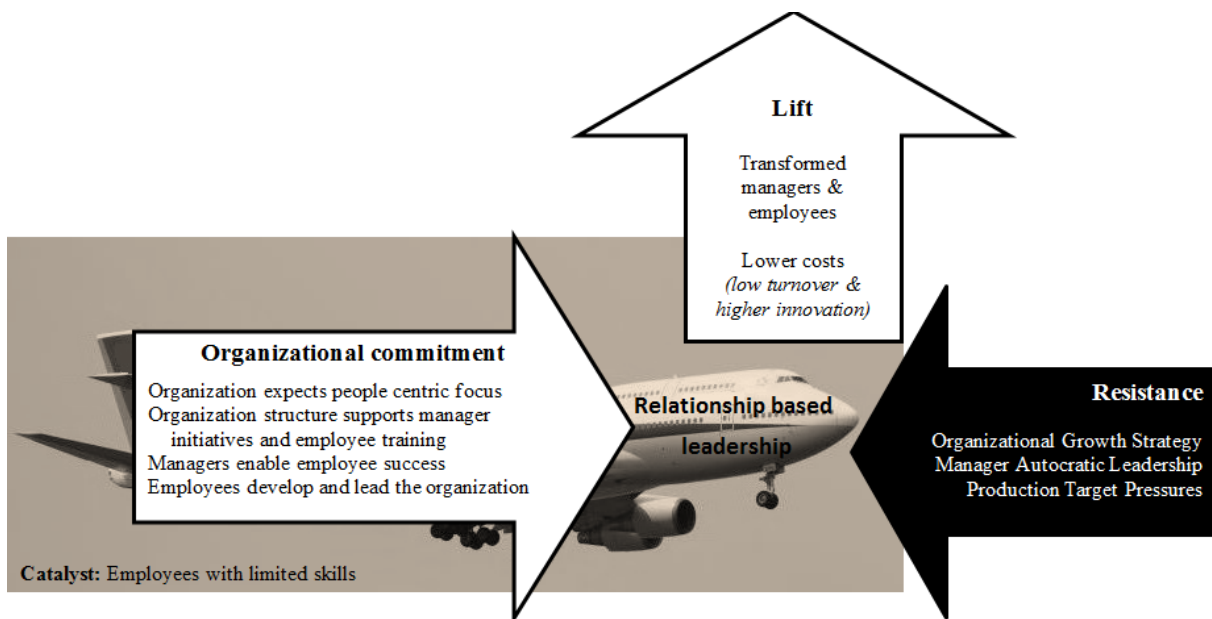
FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

The countering force is resistance in operational and leadership areas. Operationally the daily pressures to meet production targets pressure the organization not to be people centric but process focused. Managers under stress are tempted to revert back to autocratic leadership styles in order to gain short term speed to achieve production goals.

The struggle between these two forces creates a struggle within the organization which enables the organization to operate on a higher level. Managers and employees report being transformed into people who have a passion to serve others, who value their work and perceive it as intrinsically rewarding. Production metrics and profitability targets are exceeded as a result of the creativity and employee engagement created by this tension.

Figure 1

Forces at Work in a Fully Integrated Inclusive Organization



Note: Photo by Kiichan, (2013); Permission Granted Under the Terms GNU Free Documentation License.

Our findings look to understand these forces at work in the inclusive organization. These findings are organized into three meta-themes to answer the research question: how does a

company develop employees with limited skills? The first finding looks at the tension between two forces. The organizational commitment to relationship based leadership competes with an autocratic leadership style. We look at what management style is required for a successful inclusive manager. The second finding describes the relationship based leadership process which is the engine of the organizational commitment. We analyze the process of how managers adapt their management style to develop team members with limited skill. The third finding presents the transformation emanating from the tension described in our model. We examine how managing an inclusive team impacts the manager. Combined, these three meta-themes represent the unique management style needed to lead an effective inclusive team.

FINDING 1: Adaptive management style for inclusive managers

Managers repeatedly discussed their learning process over time. We identified two groups of managers. The first group consisted of managers who had started when the facility opened eight years ago. The second group was managers who had begun work after the start-up of the facility. The first group of inclusive managers received formal training at the beginning of the plant start-up. This involved sending managers to a five-day training at a resource center for people with disabilities in North Carolina which exposed them to people with disabilities in the workplace, in particular those with autism. Walgreen managers were initially unsure of this new initiative—fearing lost productivity, lost profitability, and their own inexperience in working with people with limited skills. These fears aligned with what other research has found are the main fears managers have in hiring people with limited skills (Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011).

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

In comparison, those managers hired after the start-up group had no entry-level training or introduction to disability in the workplace. Their primary training is “on the job training”. Experiential learning is a continual process for managers in the organization. As one manager explains:

“No formal training. But that has not been a barrier. The established culture of Walgreens makes the transition very easy. At the beginning the concept [it] was not well defined and required trial and error. You had to figure it out in the context of existing guidelines.”

The existing management style places the manager as the primary enabler to create a healthy creative, flexible work environment. Managers describe three stages in the learning process evolving from their past management style to the inclusive management style.

The **first stage** is their starting management style, which they self-describe as autocratic process oriented and top-down approach that typically is solely focused on metrics. This is a management style where managers have limited decision making rights and autonomy, they follow prescribed processes and expect the worker to make the necessary changes to produce or be fired. Managers described this style as “black/white management” summed up in the slogan: “my way or the highway”. Their past management style was opposite from the inclusive management style they experienced upon arriving..

The **second stage** is an uncomfortable transition phase where managers must learn how to solve team member challenges. Without a very structured process, but equipped with an experiential learning culture, managers learn that they can make mistakes and lead. This is a challenging phase where there is conflict and the manager has not developed the skills and

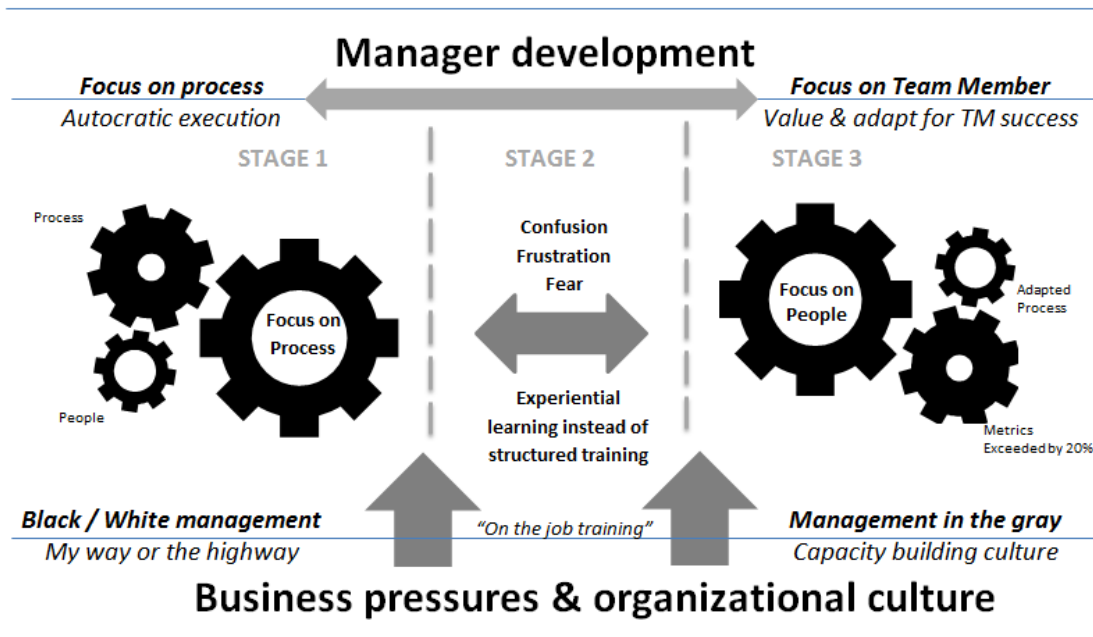
FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

mindset needed to make the employee successful. The manager is not yet confident enough to veer from policy, nor adjust to shared decision making, or group problem solving. Managers were asked what are the typical barriers for new managers leading teams with disabilities, they repeatedly said, “New managers need to develop a caring and authentic relationship with the team members by learning to communicate at the individual’s level and adapting the task so the individual can be successful.” This paradigm change must occur as the new manager moves from focus on achieving the team metrics to building the team member capacity. Many reported that in previous organizations the management style was to dismiss employees that could not meet the standard or understand what the manager wanted. In other organizations the manager made the employee adapt to his/her style of management. The inclusive manager learns, adapts and communicates to make the team member successful.

The third stage is achieved when the manager fully absorbs and incorporates the desired management style in their daily interaction and problem solving with team members. The inclusive management style was best characterized as managing in the gray, because of the absence of written directives and top-down management. The inclusive management style can be summarized as “a capacity building culture” because it is focused on valuing and adapting for team member success. Managers have the latitude to formulate innovative communication strategies best suited for individual needs, whether learning sign language, developing job aids, or demonstrating how to perform a job, without following prescribed methods. The employee centric paradigm change stems from developing team members’ skills and overall team capacity through coaching and training. One manager summarizes this culture by saying, “We are concerned about individual development even if in the short term, we sacrifice employee or department metrics, to gain long term employee success.”

Figure 2

Three Stages of Learning the Inclusive Management Style



This figure shows the three areas that are influencing each other. The bottom section of the figure identifies the business pressures within the company’s culture and strategy. Achieving team metrics and departmental goals are a constant reality. At the top of the figure is the manager’s leadership development continuum. Managers’ report that their default leadership style is an autocratic, top down approach, that focuses on the execution of defined processes. They also report changing to a leadership style that focuses on the team member. Managers in the member check explained that this is not a static progression but rather is dynamic. One manager said, “stages are not static but dynamic. Because of change in the organization and individual’s positions there can be a regression back to autocratic leadership.” The middle section of figure 2 shows the three main operational components discussed by managers as: people, processes and metrics. The focus changes from being mostly process / metrics centric to

people centric. Research showed that the Anderson facility is currently outperforming by 20% all of the other facilities in key company metrics (Wells, 2008).

FINDING 2: Inclusive management process

Institutional commitment and goals are a key part of setting the stage for nurturing the management skills that are effective in an inclusive team. The executive commitment is very clear, articulating that including employees with limited skills in the integral operations of the facility is the right thing to do.

Equal value: employees and production

We note that the management process used to build inclusive high impact teams is not difficult to understand or new to organizations and teams. *In an inclusive organizational culture, the employee is just as important as the production, they hold equal importance.* The difference in the starting point of skill level between an employee with limited skill and a manager is very large, which in this employee centric organization, forces the manager to develop higher leadership and management skills. In a non-inclusive organization, the manager makes assumptions about the abilities of the employee (makes hiring decisions based on employee skills) and focuses much of the efforts around production. Managers in a process focused culture force the employee to adapt to the manager's leadership and standards. However in an inclusive organization, employees can start with dramatically different skills and the manager must work to align and support employee capability to achieve production goals.

The inclusive management process can be divided into three parts. Figure 2 describes these parts: the foundational value, the key leadership principle and the action imperative.

Figure 3

Inclusive Management Process



The **foundational value** of the inclusive manager is humility. This is the opposite of being motivated by pride or fear. One manager explains: “Take your knowledge and sacrifice it (how you would do it). It pushes out our pride. I have drive (others don’t) so I have to sacrifice it to get the best out of others.” This internal maturity is essential to developing trust and patience with team members. A humble heart, the foundation for authentic relationship building, is seen as the catalyst to creating high impact teams.

Table 3

Step 1 - Individual Value of the Inclusive Manager

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Representative Quotes</i>
Humility	
Decreasing pride	“Take your knowledge and sacrifice it (how you would do it). It pushes out our pride. I have drive (others don’t) so I have to sacrifice it to get the best out of others.”
Decreasing fear	“Fear/uncertainty of whether disabled employees will be able to perform and meet performance standards.” “Not understanding nature of disabilities and how to work with disabled employees.”

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

Managers listed fear as one of the barriers to operating in humility. One manager explains: “Fear of employees’ psychological issues.” “Fear/uncertainty of whether disabled employees will be able to perform and meet performance standards.” Other fears were tied to the manager’s lack of knowledge: “Not understanding nature of disabilities and how to work with disabled employees.”

Learning about limited skills is vital to reducing the personal barriers of fear and lack of knowledge. In the distribution centers the training does not use a structured approach but rather uses an on-going “learning by doing” process. Managers are not told about the type of disability their team members have (employee information is protected under law). All of the current training for new managers is “on the job training” which is focused on learning the process of how to think, communicate, and resolve issues to make team members successful. Managers use this process to address and adapt to any situation. Adaptability for the manager did not include relying on set rules but rather on a leadership style, guided by principles. Furthermore, managers depend on other managers for support, ideas and participate in collective problem solving.

The second part of the inclusive management process is the **key leadership principle** of building an authentic relationship focused on understanding and developing the employee. Disability challenges require the managers to relate to each member equally and with respect. This includes communicating in a way appropriate to each individual, seeking to understand what motivates him or her, maintaining a positive approach, and being patient and empathetic which leads to accountability. Using these principles, a manager uses different roles to build authentic relationship which include: friendship, coaching and correction. These principles are founded in the value of humility – a management norm focusing on the success of the individual.

If the values of the manager are self-centered, the opposite of humility, then the principles and actions become biased and less effective not developing an inclusive leadership style.

Table 4

Step 2 - Build an Authentic Relationship – Principle of the Inclusive Manager

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Representative Quotes</i>
<u>Friendship:</u>	
<i>Respect</i>	“You are managing people who have their own experiences, talents, and backgrounds, so if you don’t treat as individuals, you will never improve. You get better improvement when you try continually.”
<i>Communicate</i>	“Learn type of communication that works best for each team member.” “Relate and explain details in whatever manner is necessary for the team member to understand what is required to perform the job duties.”
<i>Empathize</i>	“Knowing your people (treat them as individuals, each is different in their communication, on how they handle things).” “Put yourself in the shoes of disabled individuals.” “Compassion- look for the good in every situation.”
<i>Team family</i>	“Empathy –be knowledgeable so as to understand their problem.” “Those that help them learn to ask questions. We have some employees that are non-verbal, but our employees sit together (in break rooms and communicate, make friends, and work together.”
<u>Coaching:</u>	
<i>Be positive</i>	“Stay positive: the disabled are no less of a person just because they are disabled.” “Sometimes they have low self-esteem. We need to remind them they are capable.”
<i>Motivate</i>	“Identify what they are good at (it is a lot easier than initially thought).” “Money or threats as motivators do not always work with disabilities. You have to know why they want something and what they want.”
<i>Be patient</i>	“Patience - I do not see people as disabled or without disabilities.”
<i>Celebrate small successes</i>	“Learn what things mean the most to the team members and give positive feedback. Encourage them the way they like to be encouraged.” “Celebrate small accomplishments.”
<u>Correction:</u>	
<i>Accountable</i>	“Where [there] is entitlement, charity holds all workers accountable. First have to have relationships to have accountability.”

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

The third key in inclusive management is to understand what the **action expectation** is for the manager, which emerges from having humility and building authentic relationships. The organization expects managers to be innovative and adaptive problem solvers. Attention to crafting solutions builds employee capacity, and acts as a long term investment to employee skill development and retention. The manager adapts to the needs of the employee instead of making the employee conform to the style of the manager. Managers described previous places of employment which had a more authority-based focus where managers were given less leeway in decision making and veering from policy. In many instances, the paradigm change of moving from a process centric focus to an employee centric focus was difficult. An inclusive manager learns and adapts to the challenges facing employees thus learning how to lead and how to make the team member successful.

Table 5
Step 3 –Innovative & Adaptive Problem Solver – Actions of the Inclusive Manager

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Representative Quotes</i>
Performance standards:	“All team members must meet the performance standards required for each position. The manager should also perform the duties of each position so he is able to perform in the same manner that the TM’s (Team Member) are expected to perform. It demonstrates that the manager is no different than any other member on the team.”
Innovative out of the box solutions:	“Creative mind / adapt or simplify (solving problems to improve their performance). You develop and adaptation for their benefit, which in turn helps everyone on the team.” “Creativity-something to work for them (mechanically). For example create a button use fingers instead of palm of hand for employees with cerebral palsy.”
Adaptive:	“Learn to flex management style according to each disabled employees’ needs.” “Adapt your management - The way I motivate this guy X is different that person Y etc... [There is] no common method of engagement.. Some [of my employees have limited skills in] it’s with: Visual, Emotional, Analytic, Writing.”
Structure:	“Structure is even more important here...some autistic rely on structure ...any changes in schedule can be very disruptive and be both physical and emotion disturbing. Managers need to give them time—like advanced notice. One employee gets upset easily with change. He eats the same lunch every day... It is more work for managers and more physical and emotional for them.”

FINDING 3: Inclusive leadership style impact on employee and manager

Amazingly the managers repeatedly stated that the challenge of inclusion improves all of the employees in the organization, those with limited skill and those without limited skills. There were countless examples given of managers making task adjustments for disabled employees that also improved non-disabled employee production. The inclusive leadership style is applied to all employees equally. The inclusive leadership style requires managers to lead out of humility, building authentic relationships and solving problems through innovation and adaptability, in this context everyone benefits from adaptations and business innovations. Management solutions, in making the workplace simpler to operate and clearer to understand, improve everyone's performance. All employees in the organization benefit from the innovations and solutions generated by the inclusive teams.

Employee benefits

The individual employee benefits in several ways from a manager who uses relational based leadership. The employee is more engaged because of the care and attention given when the employee is valued. Problems are not situations to be feared but opportunities for learning, improvement and development.

The benefit goes beyond the individual employee and impacts the rest of the department and the whole organization. One manager in the member check stated, "We don't make reasonable accommodations; we make adaptations that apply to many." Clearly the focus is not on disability but on solving challenges to empower employee success that benefits others. Creative and new solutions for specific employees actually improve the work process for everyone. *Adaptation helps everyone:*

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

“Job aids help tremendously. Multiplication charts...for everyone! In one task, we have a recessed button. One of our autistic employees had difficulty pushing it. So we made an adjustment by attaching a large device on top so all she had to do was slap it. Her production improved.Not only that, it ended up helping everyone’s production rate!”

Internal development of the employee, not just the external production improvements can also be seen. Managers report that employees develop new visions and goals for themselves. Due to the caring environment and relationship based leadership the team member is not afraid of reaching for new goals. Fear has been minimized and team member vision has been enabled.

One manager explains: “[X] wanted to unload tractor. He said he needed to drive a lift. We were not sure about that at first. But we put him on the lift after training...We figured he drives to work...He wears an orange vest. The vest says I am a new driver. Others see a new driver they make comments to help employee make right decisions. He did well on test, on 45 day test, and now he does it [drives forklift]. Recently he had an accident—had to go through training. He was devastated. He was scared. But we told him he could do it again if he passed his training. He is excited to go through training. After four weeks he was OK.”

The organization is focused around the employee’s success. In this case, the orange vest helps others identify and assist if need be. The organizational culture is open to people making mistakes and focused on employee capacity building.

Manager Benefits

Managers change by becoming inclusive leaders and find in the long term that team engagement achieves higher effectiveness, innovation, productivity and employee loyalty. There

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

is, however, a deeper transformation that happens in the manager as he or she learns to be more sensitive, caring in developing the employee and competent at adapting the work environment for employee success. This employee care resonates with the managers as they are motivated and energized by doing what is morally right and good. One manager says, “[I] have a passion to help others.” Morally, they operate at a higher level where one not only looks out for one’s own needs but also for the needs of others. In many cases, managers now go beyond their own needs by putting in extra hours and helping employees outside the work place. Managers report being transformed in who they are. Table 6 provides examples of how managers perceive how they have changed.

Table 6

Impact of Managing an Inclusive Workforce

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Representative Quotes</i>
<i>Job grows into a passion and new family</i>	<p>“What you do matters – to be proud of what you do. Something meaningful.”</p> <p>“Now [limited skills team member] part of the family & team (now part of team leadership – leading team meeting at beginning of shift).”</p> <p>“...builds the work family closeness, since employees spend more time at work than at home.”</p>
<i>Rewarding and fulfilling</i>	<p>“Extremely gratifying. Great experience. Very rewarding.”</p>
<i>Manager self-development</i>	<p>“Makes me a better father, more caring, more nurturing, better husband.” “Improved communication with spouse. Improved patience with children and spouse. More humble.”</p> <p>“Learning to be creative in problem solving. This position has open[ed] my mind to push away past stereotypes on the limitations of limited skill individuals rather than what can be accomplished. There are many avenues open in job training and accommodation to make limited skill employees successful.”</p>
<i>Moral development</i>	<p>“Taught me to be more open-minded.” “I believe in it because it is personal, not just a job anymore. Part of who you are, and part of your life.” “From self-focus to focus on others.” “Learns leadership. Learns trust. Instill confidence.”</p>

The manager is clearly transformed by this experience and finds personal development and self-actualization. Transformation in the identity of the manager not only impacts their professional life but also their personal and civic lives.

Manager Challenges – Key To Manager Transformation

How does this transformation happen for the inclusive manager? Manager challenges are the catalyst to developing the manager. The struggle is for the manager to create solutions to

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

maximize team member success. These challenges are focused around helping team members achieve production success. These challenges actually activate the manager's learning and development. The manager following the inclusive leadership style has to become focused on the employee instead of trying to make the employee mold to his or her management style.

Table 7

Challenges of an Inclusive Manager

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Representative Quotes</i>
Performance	“Performance dropped.” “Struggling to meet performance standards.”
Human struggle	
<i>Employee physical challenge to be resolved</i>	“Severe physical disability.” “Use of only one hand.” “Motor skill issues limited.”
<i>Employee mental / cognitive challenge to be resolved</i>	“Limited cognitive comprehension.” “Aid needed to stay focused and calm.”
<i>Manager frustration</i>	“Struggle to build improvement plan.”
Overcoming struggle	
<i>Manager transformation</i>	“Learning to connect with employees.” “Team participation in problem solving.” “Different context – old ways won’t work.” “Respect and compassion.”
<i>Counseling and guidance</i>	“Refocused employee attention.” “Be consistent and state expectations.” “Use of a mentor.”
<i>Adaptation</i>	“Provided mouse track ball and keyboard with larger keys.” “Alter break schedule for makeup production.” “Employee life line (can request to move [jobs] – once).”

Internal Support for Management Struggle – Key Relationships

The employee and manager rely on internal support to improve and develop. The employees have an employee champion / mentor to help them develop authentic relationships. One manager said, “[We] created [a] buddy system; everyone has a mentor. The mentor

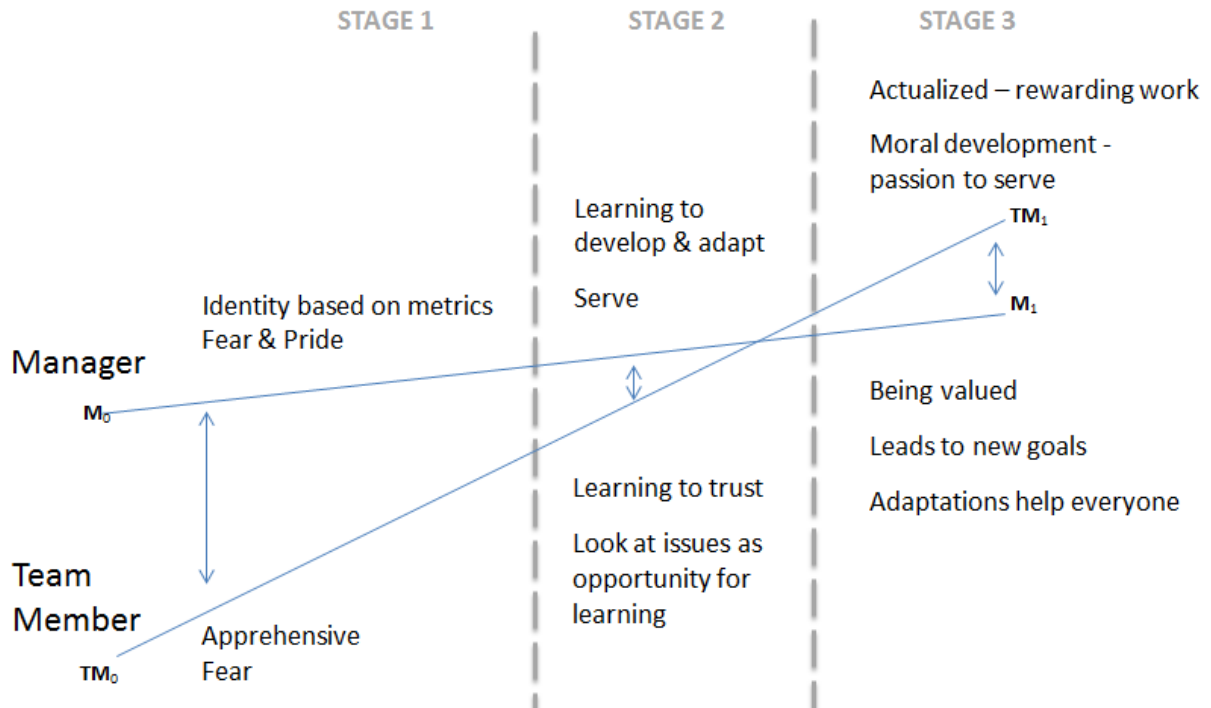
FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

introduces them to others; walks them to the bathroom; makes them feel comfortable so they don't feel alone. This is not a steadfast rule.”

Employees also have a job coach, a resource person that can help with specific skill challenges or job aid needs. “Put limited skilled employees with a mentor. If still struggling, then request a job aid to break through barriers. [x] is there to give us tips and get point of view from another member.” “Provide job coach to reevaluate the job. Job coach provides support and guidance for employees, as well as guidance for managers.” Another mentioned: “Creativity needs to be fostered; see examples here. When I first started, one team -member was autistic and he struggled. I saw someone make a poster/job aid, so I tried that. One visual that worked for this person was a poster of the President saying “I want to do a good job today.”

Figure 4

Impact on Employee and Manager from Relational Based Management



IMPLICATIONS

Four implications and areas of future research emerge from this study of inclusive management. First, from a strategic point of view, we must ask: what are the growth and capacity constraints of relationship based leadership? Secondly, how does one effectively apply the model? From a point of view of process and standardization of the model, we feel further understanding the role of experiential learning in a complex environment of the employees and managers needs to be explored. This might be done through a multiple case study, or other forms of research to test the proposals embedded within this model. Thirdly, how can the development of employees, managers and organizational cultures be replicated? Finally, is there a national culture influence on relational based leadership?

Growth and capacity constraints

In looking at the success of relationship based leadership in this single case study, one asks the following questions. How can this employee centric focus style be sustained when the organization grows? What are the capacity limitations in terms of organizational size? Can this model be effective in a smaller organization? In a larger one? Furthermore, can this model be effective in a service industry?

Replication

After the effective implementation of relational based leadership the question of replication arises. How do you replicate and adapt this model across locations? Two different scenarios present themselves. First, how do you replicate the model in a different location which has the same national culture? Second, how do you replicate the model in a different location which has a different national culture? This might mean replicating the model in a unit on the West coast of the United States or overseas in Europe.

Complexity

What is the balance between structure and flexibility necessary to enable manager adaptation and learning? How does one create and establish authentic leadership in an inclusive culture that is not policy driven. How does one intentionally develop employees as individuals, and the organization collectively?

Global perspective

What is the cross-cultural implication of this model? Is the inclusive leadership style more of a cultural centric style of leadership? Do we find that countries that are highly relational and less process focused mirror this leadership style?

CONCLUSION

Using the case study approach, 31 managers in two Walgreens distribution centers offered their perspective on what makes an inclusive leadership style work. These distribution centers are a model of inclusive management practice as 38% of the 650 employees have limited skills. Furthermore, the distribution centers actively recruit team members with limited skills for semi-skilled work as well as for management positions.

Our findings point to the radical transformation of an inclusive manager from a process focused and autocratic style of management, to a people focused and relationship based leadership style. The application of relationship based leadership has three necessary factors. It starts with a manager having a core value of humility, created in part by organizational expectation that managers will enable employees to produce, while at the same time creating a robust review process for managers to bring problems. Next, intentionally developing authentic one-on-one relationships with their team members creates a family like atmosphere of mutual support, with a group focus on challenges to be resolved. Finally, the team engages in problem solving to develop creative innovations to make the team and team member successful. The transformation is not only limited to the employee and manager in this relationship based leadership partnership but extends to the rest of the team members and permeates the organizational culture.

FULLY INTEGRATED INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION: BEYOND ACCOMMODATIONS

The employees with limited skills have become a catalyst for organizational change in an organization that has committed itself to reinvent its management style to enable inclusion. The organization changed the way it leads by directing managers not to use an autocratic style focused on strict execution of processes but use a management style that requires a manager to be committed to the team member's success. At the same time the organization allowed managers to make mistakes, seek peer support when needed, and to veer from policy if policy restrictions could not be justified.

This study suggests that future research should look at the capacity constraints of an organization using relationship based leadership. Furthermore, questions about how to replicate this model in different locations with different national or regional cultures would further this research.

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APPENDIX

Research Instrument

- Gender? Age?
 - What position as manager? How long in current position? How long at Walgreens?
 - Do you manage people with limited skills? (list of disabilities to check those that apply)
 - How many years have you managed an inclusive team?
 - Do you or someone in your family have a disability?
 - Have worked in a management position outside Walgreens (without disabilities) for at least 1 year?
-

1. Define the 3 top skills essential in leading employees with limited skills. Why?
2. What are your observations on the 3 key barriers new managers of an inclusive team would face?
3. What advice, training or skill helped you adapt to leading employees with limited skills?
4. What things (plan, policies, training, ..) in the organization help you stay/become an effective inclusive manager?
5. Describe a management inclusive challenge that you experienced and how did it got resolved? (define disability)
6. What are the services to employees with limited skills you are involved with?

 Institutionally promoted & required(define disability)

 Voluntary service initiative(define disability)
7. Why do you manage an inclusive team? What is the impact on you of this work?