

Are you high on empathy?

Nine questions to sense check your answer.

We shared our recent Belonging Project findings that diverse leaders accelerate the development of diverse teams. But what if you are at the start of the process of finding or hiring more diversity?

The key question many of us face: how do we ensure people 'who aren't like me' thrive?

Our research delivers the answer:

Empathy.

Empathy can be referred to as perspective taking, or the ability to sense others' feelings – 'EQ' or emotional intelligence. Empathy fuels connection: it is about feeling with people. It is the behavior, more than any response we give, that helps our team members feel they Belong.

How do we know if our team trusts us to lead empathetically?

You can find the full research to answer this question in 'How to unlock the potential of people not like me'. In the meantime, here are nine questions to sense-check your answer

Key:



Are you active listening?



Are you showing vulnerability?



Are you empowering, with encouragement?

- How frequently do team members, particularly diverse team members, come to **share issues**, challenges or ideas, outside of tasks?
- What tactics are you using to sense check that you **understand** other people's perspective, rather than assuming you do?
- How often are you **surprised** by issues arising in the team, versus anticipating them?
- How often am I sharing **personal insights**? What picture might I be portraying and how authentic is this?
- Are the team **aware** of what my (personal and professional) challenges are, and how are they responding?
- What do I notice about my team's **ability to deal with crises** or change? What might this tell me about the levels of empathy in the team?
- Do I have a **forum** (e.g. company survey, 360 reviews etc.) that specifically asks about my empathy, empowerment, and encouragement?
- What aspect of our **company values** embraces empathetic behavior and how am I amplifying it?
- How frequently/successfully do I encourage **wider business recognition** for my team members?

It is our view at Hedley May that the most successful leaders over this next decade will rely on the vital leadership behavior of empathy. It will be the difference between those who build diverse cultures that deliver superior all-round performance, and those who do not.

It is not a soft behavior; it is a hard one.