

# Belonging: Building the Bridge to a Successful Workplace Culture

**Presented by:  
Pam Thornton,  
Director of Strategic HR Services, EANE**



## **Activity: My Best Belonging Story in the Workplace**

Belonging is a fundamental human need, and the workplace is a key setting where we seek and experience it. Sharing stories of belonging can inspire, motivate, and help us understand diverse perspectives. This worksheet is designed to help you reflect on and articulate your best belonging story in the workplace and to share your experience with others to offer insights on building connections and bridges with others.

### **Individually: Respond to the questions below:**

- When did this story take place? Provide a brief context regarding the timeframe and setting of your story.
- Who were the main individuals involved? Mention the people who played a key role in this story without needing to use real names (e.g., a colleague, a manager).
- What was the situation? Describe the situation or challenge that sets the stage for your belonging story.
- What happened? How did the situation evolve? Include key moments that were significant to your sense of belonging.
- How did you feel? Share your emotions throughout the experience. How did these feelings change as the events unfolded?
- What actions were taken? Describe any actions by you or others that contributed to the sense of belonging. Were there any specific behaviors, words, or decisions that made a difference?
- What was the outcome? Explain how the situation was resolved and what the immediate outcomes were. How did this experience contribute to a sense of belonging for you and perhaps others?

Consider the lessons learned from this experience. How has it influenced your behavior or perspective in the workplace?

**Share Your Story!**

## **The Connection Between Culture and Belonging**

Culture and belonging are deeply interconnected concepts in the workplace, forming a symbiotic relationship that significantly impacts both organizational performance and individual satisfaction. Here's a closer examination of this connection:

### **Culture in the Workplace**

Workplace culture is the shared values, belief systems, attitudes, and the set of practices that characterizes an organization. It encompasses the way things are done within the workplace, including norms for behavior, communication styles, and the organization's vision and goals. Culture is often shaped by leadership but evolves with the contributions of every employee.

### **Belonging in the Workplace**

Belonging in the workplace refers to the experience of being personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others within the organizational context. It's about feeling valued for one's unique contributions, being part of a community, and having a sense of connection that transcends simple professional association.

## **The Connection Between Culture and Belonging**

- **Culture Shapes the Foundation for Belonging:** The culture of an organization creates the environment that can either foster or hinder a sense of belonging among its members. A culture that values diversity, inclusivity, and open communication cultivates a stronger sense of belonging by ensuring that all employees feel seen, heard, and valued.
- **Belonging Reinforces Cultural Values:** When individuals feel a strong sense of belonging, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that reinforce the organization's cultural values. This mutual reinforcement creates a virtuous cycle where culture fosters belonging, and belonging, in turn, strengthens the culture.
- **Impact on Engagement and Performance:** A culture that promotes belonging tends to see higher levels of employee engagement, satisfaction, and productivity. Employees who feel they belong are more motivated, contribute more actively to team and organizational goals, and are less likely to leave the organization.
- **Adaptation and Evolution:** As individuals feel they belong, they are more inclined to contribute their perspectives and ideas, which can help the culture to adapt and evolve in positive ways. This dynamic nature of culture, fueled by a sense of belonging, enables organizations to remain innovative and responsive to change.
- **Creating a Unified Identity:** Culture and belonging together help to forge a unified identity among employees, aligning personal and organizational values. This unity does not imply uniformity; rather, it celebrates diversity within a shared framework that everyone identifies with.

Culture and belonging are intertwined in the workplace, each influencing and enhancing the other. A healthy workplace culture nurtures a sense of belonging among its employees, which in turn, reinforces and evolves the culture, leading to a more dynamic, inclusive, and productive organization.