

# RUNNING INCLUSIVE MEETINGS



# Why this session?

Have you ever thought about what it would take for everyone to feel a sense of belonging in a meeting? To participate without fear of retribution? To communicate using accents, twangs and drawls from different backgrounds with comfort and ease?

This session aims to explore how we can start building our toolkit for inclusive meetings. We can start by making the effort to run inclusive meetings as we navigate the diversity of our members' different backgrounds and identities.



# Outline for Session

- Introduction to the session
- Why should we care?
- What is an inclusive meeting?
- How to build allies with your meetings
- Why is it important to know about inclusive ways of doing the Union's work?



# Recent Findings

A Harvard business study review found that only 35% of employees surveyed felt consistently comfortable contributing in meetings.

In meetings of five to ten people, that's only two to three people who feel empowered to contribute.

Why do you think this is so? What can you do to change this?

What do you think are some things to consider when creating an inclusive meeting?



# What creates the imbalance?

Who are the interrupters at meetings?

Men (especially white men), extroverts, those people in the room.

What do they do?

They over contribute leaving BIPOC members no time to get a word in.



# The Gender Imbalance

What do you think about these findings?

Men talk 75% of the time at all meetings.

Men interrupt women 33% more than they interrupt men.

What can you do to balance this inequity in your meetings?

How would a BIPOC member feel in this situation?



# The Gender Issue Fix

- Set your ground rules on how the meeting will progress.
- Keep a roster of your speakers.
- Encourage BIPOC members to speak on their issues.
- Ask to hear from anyone you have not heard from before.
- If interruptions are frequent, call it.
- Ensure you say you want to hear from everyone.
- Remember that men and women have different meeting styles, especially those from different cultures.



# Who are the ones overlooked?

These segments of a workforce are generally overlooked at meetings:

- The introvert
- The remote worker
- Women
- Black Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC)

Why do you think this happens? Could it be our own bias? How do we overcome our own bias?





# Our Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias, is the act of judging people based on our unconscious thoughts, beliefs, or feelings.

This happens when your background, personal experiences, societal stereotypes and cultural context impact your decisions and actions without you realizing.

This is when our brains make incredibly quick judgments and assessments of people and situations.



# Unconscious Bias

Example:

Unconscious bias can influence the way we think, and therefore affect the way we run meetings:

- **The unconscious bias:** Smart people think on their feet.
- **The unconscious bias:** Out of sight, out of mind.
- **The unconscious bias:** Men have more to contribute.
- **The unconscious bias:** Non-whites do not have anything to contribute.



# How Biases Affect Us

Our perception – how we see people and perceive reality.

Our attitude – how we react towards certain people.

Our behaviours – how receptive/friendly we are towards certain people.

Our attention – which aspects of a person we pay most attention to.

Our listening skills – how much we actively listen to what certain people say.

Our micro-affirmations – how much or how little we comfort certain people in certain situations.

Our food order – catering to our own needs or likes.



# Working on Our Own Bias

- See people as individuals. Instead of using stereotypes to define people, spend time considering them on a more personal, individual level.
- Change your stereotypes. Make an effort to consciously adjust your response.
- Take time to pause and reflect. Take time to reflect on potential biases and replace them with positive examples of the stereotyped group.



# Working on Our Own Bias

- Adjust your perspective. Try to see the other person's point of view. How would you respond if you were in the same position?
- Increase your exposure. Spend more time with people of different racial backgrounds. Learn about cultural differences by attending community events or exhibits.
- Practice mindfulness. Try meditation, yoga, or focused breathing to increase mindfulness and become more aware of your thoughts and actions.



# Creating an Inclusive Space

In an inclusive meeting:

- A sense of emotional safety is built and ensured.
- Space is created to make the meeting welcoming.
- All attendees get the chance to participate.
- Diverse points of view are encouraged.
- People think together to reach new insights.
- Interruptions are minimal.
- Devices and distractions are limited.
- Attention is paid to body language.
- Language used is inclusive.



# Building Inclusive Spaces

- Be understanding e.g. if someone is late
- Make sure people of all cultural backgrounds can freely express who they are
- Ensure all opinions and points of view are acknowledged and accepted
- Encourage everyone's full participation
- Create a space where people feel safe from abuse, harassment or unfair criticism.



# Running an Inclusive Meeting

## Before the meeting:

- Clearly state the the purpose of the meeting
- Ensure you invite everyone
- Set the agenda in an inclusive manner by poll or survey
- Make sure the venue is easily accessible to all
- Make sure the time will work for all (part-time and full-time)
- Provide data to be discussed ahead of time
- List the discussion questions you hope to have answered





# Running an Inclusive Meeting

## At the meeting:

Use equal seating to suggest equal value.

Instructional communication theory suggests that seating arrangements can impact how people communicate and interact with each other.

Equal seating creates room for engagement, motivation, and focus. It also makes people feel comfortable enough to participate in the conversation. After all, they are at eye level.



# Running an Inclusive Meeting

## During the meeting:

- Make good use of introductions, ask names (even if they sound difficult to remember)
- Ask the disrupter (if there is one) to be the scribe
- Be clear and transparent on expectations from everyone
- Set the tone on what is acceptable
- Model the behavior you will like to see
- Act as a conductor for flow and sequence



# How to Run an Inclusive Meeting

## During the meeting (Video conferencing):

- If video conferencing is your option, use it wisely.
- Ask remote participants to use the chat feature so the group will know they have a contribution to make.
- Ask participants to raise their virtual hand and make sure you recognize them and give them the opportunity.
- Do regular check-ins to ensure participants are able to hear, can follow the flow and make contributions.



# How to Run an Inclusive Meeting

## As people leave the meeting:

- Acknowledge the effort everyone made to attend.
- Stand at the door and thank each participant for coming.
- Have an Indigenous member sing the Travelling Song.



# How to Run an Inclusive Meeting

## After the meeting:

- Ensure you prepare a short report that captures the key insights.
- Highlight any conclusions and decisions made.
- Point out follow-up actions that need to be taken.
- Ask people to send suggestions that they think of after the meeting to put on the next agenda.



# Good Listening Skills

What do you think are some good listening skills?

Why do we need to listen?



# Boost Your Listening Skills

- Limit distractions. Avoid electronic gadgets.
- Pay attention to what is being said, not what you want to say.
- Be okay with silence.
- Encourage the other person to offer ideas and solutions before you give yours.
- Practice doing 80% of the listening and 20% of the talking.
- Restate key points you heard and ask whether they are accurate.
- Listening is important to inclusivity so make sure all voices are heard.



# Good Listening Skills

- Face the speaker and maintain eye contact.
- Be attentive, but relaxed.
- Keep an open mind.
- Don't interrupt and don't impose your "solutions."
- Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.
- Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions.
- Ask questions only to ensure understanding.
- Try to feel what the speaker is feeling.
- Give the speaker regular feedback.
- Pay attention to what *isn't* said—to nonverbal cues.





# Building Allies for BIPOC Members

Why do we need to build allies for BIPOC members in the work we do?

How do we go about doing this?



# Building Allies for BIPOC Members

- Make space for BIPOC voices to be heard.
- Speak up if you see something that needs addressing.
- If someone is trying to say something but getting cut-off, open up the conversation to them. Give airtime equitably.
- When someone gets interrupted, give them back the floor.
- If someone hasn't spoken yet, ask them what they think.
- Act as a facilitator.



# Feedback

We hope you have found this session meaningful.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to send us an email at [education@opseu.org](mailto:education@opseu.org)





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