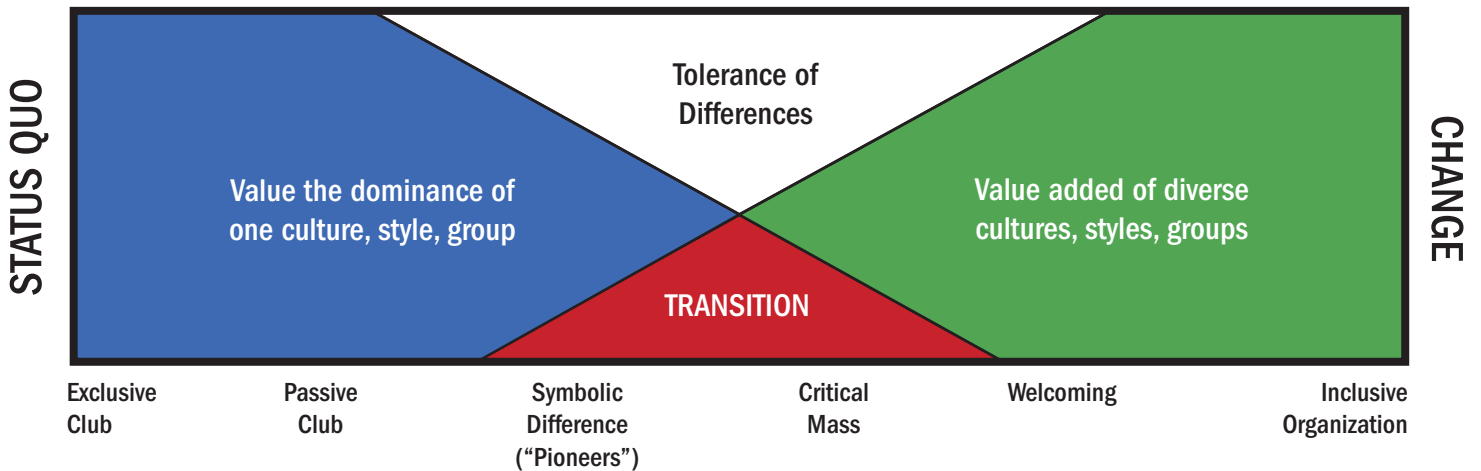


THE INCLUSION CONTINUUM

The Path from Exclusive Club to Inclusive Organization



Exclusive Club

- Explicit policies or by-laws exist to prevent certain people or groups from becoming members. The intent is to protect the needs and interests of the group in power.

Passive Club

- An exclusionary environment exists, even without explicit exclusionary policies.
- The verbal messages may be welcoming, but the reality is the opposite.
- Individuals who are viewed as different often see no place for people like themselves in the organization.
- Policies and procedures are designed by and for the primary benefit of the founders or leaders.

Symbolic Difference

- The doors may be open (literally or symbolically) to outsiders, but the norms, values and policies remain mono-cultural.
- A few “pioneers” are the first outsiders to join the organization. They may be seen as tokens of a change that is not yet embraced. They face significant challenges.
- Newcomers are expected to fit into the existing group culture and to leave their differences outside.
- The more people blend in, the more they are welcomed. The mindset is “we are all the same.”
- “Champions” support pioneers, break rules, challenge status quo.

Critical Mass

- As more people who are different from the status quo join the organization, many things begin to change.
- It is a turbulent time as old norms and stereotypes no longer fit, but new standards and procedures are slow to take their place.
- Capacities for tolerance seem to stretch toward the breaking point.

- The organization begins to realize that it needs to move beyond merely tolerating people to welcoming and including them in organizational discussions and decisions.
- Amid the conflict and upheaval of culture change, the “good old days” look particularly good. Diversity efforts may stall or suffer from backlash.
- Members of the traditional group(s) often feel most threatened. They may think they have fewer opportunities and resent that the rules are changing.

Welcoming

- It becomes apparent that “tolerance” for differences is counter productive, and the notion of tolerating people gives way to welcoming and actively accepting them.
- People find it safer to speak up about obstacles to inclusion, and the organization finds it easier to recognize and address these issues.
- A new mindset begins to develop—one that sees differences as normal and positive rather than something to be avoided or diminished.
- As differences are welcomed, people learn to see beyond them.

Inclusive Organization

- The organization encourages and welcomes people of all identity groups to contribute different opinions and points of view.
- The organization has an interactive culture, where an array of people and points of view come into contact with each other.
- Diversity is seen as a necessity, not as a luxury, and often leads to a greater range of creativity, as well as enhanced problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- People have the competencies and capabilities to adapt to different cultural contexts.

“Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.”
— Malcolm Forbes