

The Benefits of Belonging

By Lisa Harvey Roach, PMP

What does it mean to belong to an organization, group, or team? Being a member in or belonging to certain organizations or groups typically comes with certain benefits and usually gives one a feeling of being part of something bigger. You know you truly belong when you can show up as your authentic self, be accepted for who you are, and reap the same benefits as all other members. Membership and belonging are really about inclusion. Do you feel you belong at your job, place of worship, or PMI Chapter?

The Need to Belong

The need to belong starts at birth. We come into the world tethered to another human and that connection is part of our survival per Amelia Franck Meyer. We also know, according to Abraham Maslow that social belonging is a critical human need, following physiological and safety needs. Some argue that belongingness is such a fundamental human motivation that we feel severe consequences for not belonging.

Increasing a Sense of Belonging

What happens when you are “the only one?” For example, if you are the only Black female in the project management meeting, how do you feel? From my own experience, there have been times when I have felt challenged and dismayed and other times when I have felt empowered and welcomed.

Because belonging is subjective and impacts everyone differently, there is no “one size fits all” solution. However, following are a few ideas to try:

- a. To increase your own sense of belonging:
 - i. Be confident and advocate for your needs
 - ii. Be willing to have challenging yet constructive conversations
- b. To increase others’ sense of belonging:
 - i. Listen with empathy
 - ii. Be curious, not judgmental
- c. To increase a sense of belonging in organizations:
 - i. Create an environment of collaboration and trust
 - ii. Track your progress through Member/Employee Engagement Surveys

PMI Great Lakes Chapter recently sent a request to all chapter members to complete a member engagement/satisfaction survey. This was a great opportunity for members to express what’s going well and what needs to be improved upon to increase engagement (and a sense of belonging). I do hope you completed your survey. Everyone’s input is important.

The Benefits of Belonging

The benefits of belonging are many. When people feel they belong in a team, group, or organization, they will be more engaged, perform better, and be more resilient. People will feel seen, supported, and connected and want to remain associated with that entity.

In a future article I will explore more specifics of belonging in project teams. In the meantime, I encourage you to start acknowledging what's needed from you or your organization to make members feel as though they are truly included and belong.

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