

“ Running inclusive meetings

- Consider having a neutral observer in meetings. Look at whose ideas are acknowledged, built on and adopted, and whose are ignored or appropriated by someone else. Do certain people consistently take over the conversation? Are there patterns by gender, race etc.?
- Actively draw into the discussion introverts or people who don't tend to say very much, people whose native language is not English or whose culture respects reticence.
- Look through the eyes of introverts at how work gets done – is it predominantly in large meetings where only those with the largest personalities are heard? Do you select based on how well someone performs in interview, which can favour extroverts? Amazon begins some meetings by requiring attendees to read a memo on the subject of the meeting before anyone can talk. This shifts the emphasis towards more detailed discussion of the memo's contents, and is designed to prime introverts to make a greater contribution.
- Have a 'no interruption rule' so each person completes what they want to say without being cut off.
- Have people take turns at chairing a regular meeting. Make sure the 'out-group' people go first.
- Make sure you summarise all the points you've heard – including the divergent ones.
- Take a moment at the start or end of a meeting to reflect on the inclusion implications of what is about to be discussed or what has been agreed. Some organisations begin meetings with an 'inclusion moment' to reinforce corporate values around inclusion, and to set the tone for the conversation.
- 'Prime' the conversation by discussing a real-life case study. Estelle Hollingsworth, HR Director – Talent, Learning & Organisational Development at BAE Systems, is working to introduce this approach at meetings in 2017 where people issues are discussed. At the start of the meeting, participants read and briefly discuss a story about a real event that involved some form of bias. Discussing what can be learned from the experience often unconsciously nudges people into a different frame of mind in the ensuing discussions.”