FASTINFO STUDY MATERIAL

10 Tops Tips on Using Inclusive Language – What Not to Say

In our evolving world, the importance of inclusive language cannot be overstated. As an executive wellbeing coach, I recognise the significance of fostering environments where psychologically safety is evident that are respectful, welcoming and considerate of diverse perspectives. To cultivate a genuinely inclusive culture, it is imperative to thoroughly examine the language employed by individuals across all sectors of your organisation and ensure your communication promotes a culture of inclusivity.

Overview of Inclusive Language:

Inclusive language goes beyond mere words; it reflects a mindset of respect and recognition for all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities. Its about creating an environment where everyone feels valued and included, regardless of their background, gender, ability, or other characteristics.

By using language that embraces diversity, we create a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere, both personally and professionally.

10 Top Tips for Using Inclusive Language:

1. Avoid Gendered Language:

Refrain from using gender-specific terms when addressing mixed-

gender groups. Instead of " **guys**," opt for neutral alternatives like " **everyone**" or " **folks**."

2. Be Mindful of Pronouns:

Respect individuals pronouns and use them consistently. If unsure, ask for preferred pronouns, demonstrating a commitment to acknowledging and honouring personal identity.

- **What not to say**: " He or she should submit his or her report."

- **Instead, say:** " They should submit their report."

3. Consider Cultural Sensitivities:

Be aware of cultural nuances and avoid stereotypes. Familiarise yourself with diverse cultural norms to ensure your language is inclusive and respectful.

- **What not to say:** " Why dont you celebrate holidays like everyone else?

- **Instead, say:** " Tell me more about the holidays you celebrate.

4. Use Person-First Language:

Put the person before their condition or identity. For instance, say " **a person with a disability**" rather than " **disabled person.**"

5. Embrace Neutral Terminology:

Choose words that are neutral and inclusive. Replace terms that may carry negative connotations or assumptions with more universally accepted language.

- **What not to say**: " Thats so lame."

- **Instead, say**: " Thats not my preference."

6. Steer Clear of Ableist Language:

Eliminate language that may perpetuate ableism. Be mindful of phrases that stigmatise or marginalise individuals with disabilities.

- **What not to say:** " That idea is insane; no one would ever go for it.

- **Instead, say:** " That idea is unconventional; lets explore its potential.

7. Include Everyone in Addressing Groups:

Instead of assuming a shared characteristic, address groups in a way that includes everyone. For example, " professionals" instead of " young professionals."

Or

- **What not to say**: " Ladies and gentlemen, welcome."

- **Instead, say:** " Welcome, everyone."

8. Mind Your Tone:

Pay attention to the tone of your communication. Ensure it is respectful, open, and free from any unintentional bias or exclusionary language.

- **What not to say:** " You're being too sensitive."

- **Instead, say:** " I appreciate your perspective; lets discuss it further."

9. Educate Yourself:

Continuously educate yourself on evolving language norms and inclusivity. Stay informed about emerging terms and best practices to remain a champion of inclusivity.

10. Seek Feedback:

Encourage open dialogue and feedback from your peers. This creates an environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing their needs and concerns regarding language use.

- **What not to say:** " I didnt mean it that way; you re overreacting."

- **Instead, say**: " I value your feedback; help me understand better."

Creating a healthy workplace environment and building an inclusive brand for your customers isnt just an optional practice to target specific audiences.

Here are some common examples:

- Guys → People, folks

- Wife/Husband → Spouse

- Girlfriend/Boyfriend → Partner

- Chairman → Chairperson

- She/hers/her and he/his/him → They/them/their

Here's a list that highlights some examples of inclusive language by providing alternatives to certain phrases or terms that may be considered outdated or exclusive:

- Instead of saying "**mankind**" or "**man-made**," say "**humanity**" or **"human-made**."

- Instead of saying "**fireman"** or "**policeman**," say **"firefighter**" or

"**police officer**."

- Instead of saying **"chairman**," say "**chairperson**" or "**chair.**"

- Instead of saying "**stewardess**" or "**flight attendant** (female)," say "**flight attendant**."

- Instead of saying "**businessman**," say "**businessperson**" or "**entrepreneur.**"

- Instead of saying "**waitress**" or "**waiter**," say "**server**" or "**waitstaff**."

- Instead of saying "**mailman**," say "**mail carrier**" **or "postal worker.**"

- Instead of saying "**policeman**" or "**policewoman**," say "**police officer.**"

- Instead of saying "**spokesman**," say "spokesperson" or **"representative**."

- Instead of saying "**disabled person**" or "handicapped person," say "**person with a disability**."

- Instead of saying **"normal" or "abnormal**," say "**typical" or "atypical.**"

- Instead of saying "**mentally handicapped**," say "**person with an intellectual disability.**"

- Instead of saying "**illegal immigrant**," say "**undocumented immigrant" or "person without legal status.**"

- Instead of saying "**he**" or "**she**" in a gender-neutral context, use "**they**" or "**their**."

- Instead of assuming someone's marital status by using "**Mrs." or**

"Miss," use "Ms." as a neutral option.

Remember, using inclusive language is about respecting and acknowledging the diversity and dignity of all individuals. It's important to be mindful of the words we use to ensure inclusivity and promote equality.

Additional examples of inclusive language specifically applicable to professional settings:

- Instead of saying "**businessman**" or "**businesswoman**," say "**business professional**" or "**business executive**."

- Instead of saying "**salesman**" or "**saleswoman**," say "**sales representative**" or "**sales associate**."

- Instead of saying "**chairman**" or "**chairwoman**," say "**chair**" or "**chairperson.**"

- Instead of saying "**manpower**" or "**man hours**," say "**workforce**" or "**person hours**."

- Instead of saying "**foreman**" or "**supervisor (male)**," say "**team leader**" or "**supervisor.**"

- Instead of saying "**his or her**" or "**he/she**," use gender-neutral pronouns like "**they" or "their.**"

- Instead of saying "**guys**" or "**you guys**" when referring to a mixed-gender group, say "**folks**," "**team**," or "**everyone**."

- Instead of saying "**ladies and gentlemen**," say "**distinguished guests,**" "**esteemed colleagues**," or "**everyone.**"

- Instead of assuming marital status by using "**Mrs." or "Miss**," use "**Ms.**" for women as a neutral option.

- Instead of using gender-specific job titles like "**stewardess**" or

"policeman," use gender-neutral terms like **"flight attendant"** or **"police officer."**

- Instead of assuming gender roles in descriptions, focus on the skills and qualifications required for the job. For example, use "**nurse**" instead of "**female nurse**" or "**male nurse**."

- Instead of assuming gender when addressing a group, use gender-neutral terms like "**team**," "**colleagues**," or "**everyone present."**

- Instead of using terms like "**able-bodied**," use "**individuals without disabilities**" or "**people of all abilities**."

- Instead of assuming heterosexuality, use gender-neutral terms like "**partner**" or "**significant other**" instead of "**husband" or "wife."**

- Instead of using the term "**minority**" to describe underrepresented groups, use more specific and respectful terms like "underrepresented communities" or "diverse populations."

In the past, it was not uncommon to use male pronouns to refer to a person of unknown gender. To avoid this male pronoun default and the awkward use of ˘ he or she�, some languages allow to use the plural form.

- **Dont say:** Each student must complete his homework.

- **Dont say:** Each student must complete his or her homework.

But say: All students must complete their homework.

But sometimes, using the plural form just doesn˙t make sense. In that case the use of ˘ they˙ as a generic third-person singular pronoun has become more common in English, because it is inclusive of all

people and helps writers avoid making assumptions about gender.

- **Dont say:** Everyone has to bring his or her own drinks to the party.

- **But say:** Everyone has to bring their own drinks to the party.

2. Adopt gender-neutral words

To avoid gender stereotypes, we also advise against the use of gender-specific terms or the generic use of ˇ man˳ . Usually, good alternatives are available, for example in English you can say ˇ police officer˳ instead of ˇ policeman˳ and ˇ working hours˳ instead of ˇ man hours.˳

3. Omit the gendered word

Sometimes its even possible to omit the gendered word altogether. In English for instance, pronouns can often be dropped from a sentence without changing the meaning.

Dont say: We requested the coordinator to continue his/her efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

But say: We requested the coordinator to continue efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

Rethink classic phrases

So, we ve compiled a list of phrases you might inherently use that need rethinking to foster a more inclusive environment. For example:

Instead of saying ˟ Thank you, ma˳ am/sir,˟ just say ˟ Thank you.˟

˟ Welcome, ladies and gentlemen˟ could simply be ˟ Welcome, guests!˟

Why say ˟ lady boss˟ when you could just say ˟ boss.˟

Instead of saying ˟ husbands and wives are invited,˟ say

" families/spouses are invited."

Instead of " hi guys," say " hi, everyone/all."

Instead of saying a job title like chairman, say chairperson.

Challenge gender stereotypes

Many common expressions perpetuate outdated gender stereotypes, justify unacceptable behavior, or diminish sincere emotions based on gender expectations. Try actively rethinking and replacing such phrases. For instance:

Say " **be brave**" instead of " **man up**"

Say " **attention seeker**," not " **drama queen**"

These changes might seem small, but they help to create a more inclusive environment by not making gender a focal point when its not needed.

4. Use the passive voice

The passive voice may not always be the most stylistic option, but it can serve as a useful alternative for gendered constructions.

Dont say: The author must have reliable evidence of the situation he is describing.

But say: The author must have reliable evidence of the situation being described.