



# A SENSE OF BELONGING EQUALS BETTER BUSINESS

## VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

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One of the best parts of my job is connecting with CEOs. These days, hearing what's on their minds and in their hearts is incredibly encouraging. Why? Because the talks are most often focused on inclusion and diversity. And yes, that comes before we get into sales and profits.

These leaders' willingness to have honest and even uncomfortable conversations about equality signals progress and, from what I can see, the talk is starting to lead to actions that create better opportunities for more people—especially those shut out by the pandemic.

### Unlocking potential is good business

Evidence that values drive value is a good thing. Accenture's recent "Better to Belong" research shows that creating an inclusive environment where every person feels like they belong, every day, can unlock up to five times more human potential. A culture of belonging can inspire workers to make more meaningful contributions, improve retention, and build stronger bonds with customers.

When I think of how companies can rebuild, reskill, open a new world of opportunities, and address inequality—all at the same time—I think of apprenticeships. They are game changers for millions of people who have too often been left behind. We've helped more than 1,200 people through our Apprenticeship Program and over 1,000 more through our Apprentice Network. People like Tiffany Spraggins. Tiffany worked as a dispatcher and held other part-time roles until she became one of our apprentices. We helped

her get rigorous training in a hot career—application functionality testing—and now she works for us fulltime (see her story on PBS).

In addition to equipping people with the skills to succeed, rethinking traditional recruiting is very good for business and communities. By partnering with community colleges and universities—and collaborating with organizations that help veterans, people with disabilities, young adults who are at risk, and working mothers find jobs—companies create not just a more diverse workforce, but a more innovative one.

### Much more than numbers

It's great to see more companies set workforce equality goals, and some (including Accenture) publish their progress. Even more important than measurable milestones are the experiences businesses are creating for all people.

I'm talking about belonging.

We can recruit diverse talent, but if we're not changing mindsets and inspiring people to respect one another as equals, we can't get where we need to be as quickly as we need.

As Dallas Mavericks' CEO Cynthia "Cynt" Marshall explained in a podcast series I co-host with former NFL player and best-selling author Emmanuel Acho, "We count the numbers a lot, but inclusion is about making the numbers count." She stated publicly that the Mavs will set the global standard in inclusion and diversity.

Jenny Lay-Flurrie, Microsoft's chief accessibility



officer, reminded me in another episode that referring to someone as disabled is OK. But you need to focus on the “ability” not the “dis.” People with disabilities are the biggest untapped source of talent. She said supporting their needs can be so basic: Is your building really accessible? Make sure the interview process opens doors rather than closing them—literally. We have to make sure the right resources are available.

During Accenture’s International Women’s Day celebration this year, Best Buy CEO Corie Barry shared her recipe for creating a culture of belonging. She encourages inclusive leadership behaviors such as courage, empathy, vulnerability, and grace, which lead to being able to bring your whole self to work.

### **From optics to outcomes**

I feel accountable for the experiences our people have in North America. Nobody should ever have to “code switch” to be successful at work. While striving to make Accenture look like the communities in which we work and live, I try to create a culture of belonging, in which everyone feels seen, safe, connected, and courageous.

As more leaders commit to equality and to creating a sense of belonging in their businesses, it gives me hope that we are building momentum in a movement, not just a moment. And if we keep pulling together, we’ll push forward to a better place.

**END**