

Inclusive Leadership Has An Ugly Stepsister

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Traditionally, leadership has been envisaged around the idea of one person (the archetype *boss*) firmly in charge while the rest are simply followers (an approach termed vertical leadership).

However, one boss cannot be solely responsible for the team's success. Not only is it impractical, but it's also one-sided. If the leader is the only one praising or critiquing, group dynamics suffer.

Every member should be held accountable for mobilising the team and should be allowed to claim the team's victories.

The Evolution – Inclusive Leadership

Enter, Inclusive Leadership.

Inclusive Leadership seems to be the logical shift in attitude. Harvard Business Review [says](#) that teams with inclusive leaders are:

- 17% more likely to report that they are high performing.
- About 20% are more likely to say they make high-quality decisions.
- 29% are more likely to report collaborative behaviour.

However, the Inclusive Leadership model has an Achilles heel: the idea of [Heroic Leaders](#).

Inclusive Leadership's Ugly Stepsister

The narrative of Heroic Leadership states that the drivers of change are an elite guiding coalition. The coalition consists of committed leaders with enough institutional power to force change through the organisation.

Heroic leaders inspire followers by the power of their vision, and they reinforce conformity by rewarding those who adopt desired behaviours.

Conformity is the precursor to [groupthink](#). With groupthink in action, teams make decisions in favour of the lowest common denominator.

Groupthink makes for lack of originality and is risk-averse. As George Patterson said, if everyone is thinking alike, then somebody isn't thinking.

The Revolution - Shared Leadership

There is a better way. The Academy of Management Perspectives [encourages](#) Shared Leadership as one of the distinguishing factors that differentiate a well-functioning team from a [high-performing – or Elite – team](#).

In fact, research specifies that under-performing teams tend to be dominated by the team leader, while Elite Teams naturally display dispersed leadership (or Shared Leadership) patterns.

Shared Leadership is a collaborative leadership practice involving members of the same team (and members of cross-functional teams) that mutually influence one another. They collectively share duties and responsibilities otherwise relegated to a single, central leader.

Shared Leadership occurs when:

- All members of the teams are fully engaged in the leadership function of the unit.
- Colleagues are not hesitant to influence and guide their peers to maximise the team's potential as a system.
- The group benefits from all members' different leadership capabilities.
- The team understands leading as a dynamic and multi-directional group process rather than a function operated by an elite few at the top.

As such, the shared leadership model is ideal for enabling continuous and inclusive organisational change.

The post "Inclusive Leadership Has An Ugly Stepsister" was first published by Janko Kotze [here](#)

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