

HUMAN CAPITAL INSTITUTE

# Empowering the Moveable Middle

A person stands alone in a vast, empty, light-colored space, casting a long shadow. The person is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers. The shadow is cast to the left and slightly forward, indicating a light source from the upper right. The overall atmosphere is one of isolation and solitude.

# epidemic of loneliness

**1 in 2 American adults are reporting  
measurable levels of loneliness.**

**The epidemic of loneliness is  
impacting the workforce.**

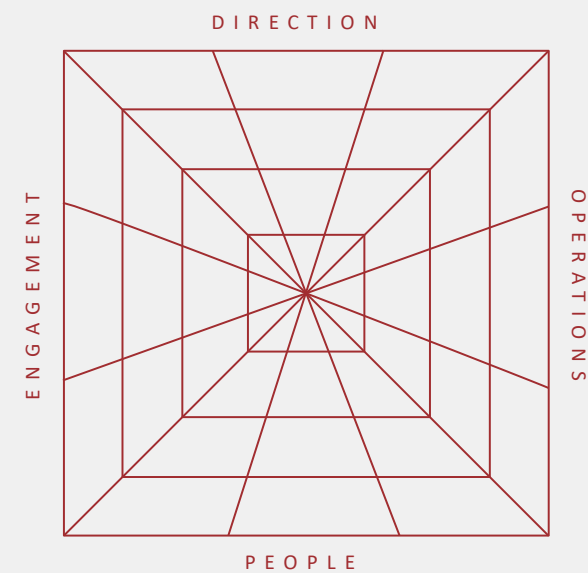
A person stands alone in a vast, empty, light blue space, casting a long shadow. The person is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The shadow is cast on the ground, extending towards the bottom left. The overall mood is one of isolation and loneliness.

Epidemic of Loneliness:  
The Middle hasn't been invited in.

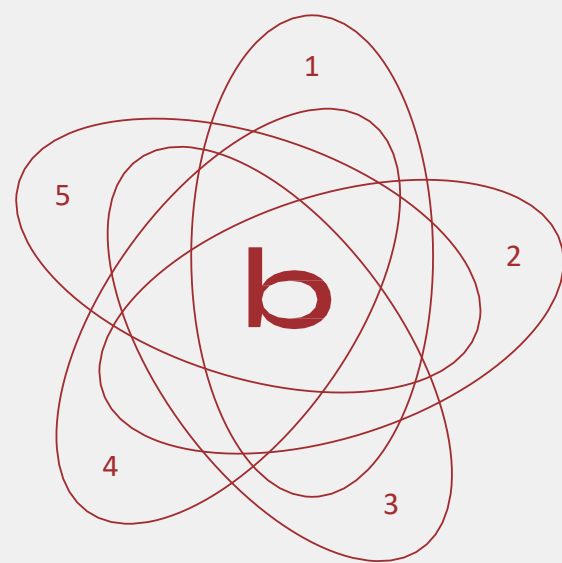
**The Middle must be understood  
in order to be activated.**

# Ways to Understand

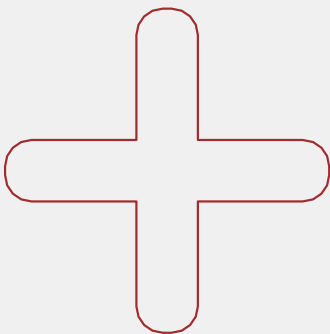
## Organizational Health Assessment



## Belonging Assessment



## Positivity Quotient



**The Moveable Middle is an  
untapped source of power  
and performance.**

# Polarization




The extremes  
are dominating the  
conversation and isolating the Middle.

# Polarization







Giving the Moveable Middle the  
courage, tools, and support to engage.

The power to the Middle comes from

belonging.

# Belonging

“Belonging is where we hold space for something of shared importance. It is where we come together on values, purpose, and identity; a space of acceptance where agreement is not required but a shared framework is understood; where there is an invitation into the space; an intentional choice to take part in; something vital to a sense of connection, security, and acceptance.”

— *Belonging Rules*

# Five Belonging Rules

1. Turn into the power
2. Listen without labels
3. Choose identity over purpose
4. Challenge everything
5. Demand 100% of the truth





## RULE #1

# Turn into the power

Meet the demand for direct and intentional forays into the heart of power structures, forces, and accepted traditions.

### TIPS

- Be conscious of the power structures in place, especially those that may make people feel overlooked or undervalued
- How can you use your position of power to make these employees feel connected and engaged?





## RULE #2

# Listen without labels

Hear what is spoken without judgment while engaging the unspoken with humanity and heart.

### TIPS

- Eliminate the Why
- Use active listening, paying attention to both verbal and nonverbal cues to hear what is both spoken and unspoken
- Are you oversimplifying people and their concerns by using labels? Is this contributing to people not feeling heard or understood?



choose  
**IDENTITY**  
over  
**PURPOSE**

### RULE #3

## Choose identity over purpose

Create an ecosystem that recognizes both the complexity as well as the wholeness of identity, which defines the space for inclusion.

### TIPS

- Important to be strong in your organizational identity and keep your people at the core
- Want those in the middle to feel they are being considered part of this identity – the people are what make the organization





## RULE #4

# Challenge everything

Promote an open environment for inquiry, free of conflict, devoid of oppositional energy, and driven by a positive spirit of curiosity.

### TIPS

- Engage in effective challenges in a way that brings connection and increases creativity
- Want moveable middle to feel like they can openly share their thoughts/opinions, especially when they don't agree



**DEMAND**  
**100%**  
*of the*  
**TRUTH**

## RULE #5

# Demand 100% of the truth

Reject the more typical 80% of the truth in modern business, and instead require 100% of the truth, 100% of the time.

### TIPS

- Fostering trust and openness is essential to making sure those in the moveable middle feel as though they belong
- Important to create an environment where employees feel comfortable sharing 100% of the truth, 100% of the time



# Research on Belonging

**STUDY 1:** 9 in 10 employees believe that belonging at work is important or extremely important.

**STUDY 2:** Belonging predicts satisfaction, engagement, and commitment to the organization over and above employees' views of the culture or strategy.

**STUDY 3:** Employees are more inclined to stay with the company, ands even willing to accept a lower salary in favor of working in a place with greater belonging.



By inviting people in and working to keep them there, we begin to change the loneliness epidemic.  
When we do this, we change the future, one employee, one group, one leader at a time.



What spaces will you create and  
invitations will you extend?