

Part 6



Module 3: Inclusive Talent Management for SMEs

Part 6: Succession Planning For Leadership Development



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Discover the DARE Modules Learning Pathway:

Enjoy our learning blocks designed to help SMEs build diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces. Unlock the power of how DEI to drive the sustainable success of your company. Our practical and interactive Modules deliver real life insights and case studies from a European perspective – Join us in creating workplaces and communities where everyone can thrive!

MODULE 1

Introduction: Diversities Reviving European Enterprises

Key Features: Overview and definitions of D&I in SMEs. 12 Dimensions of Diversity. Learning key competencies for business case delivery.

Part 1: Why D&I Matters for SMEs.
Part 2: Building D&I Competencies for SMEs.

MODULE 2

Inclusive Leadership Skills

Key Features: Develop inclusive leadership skills (e.g., Bias awareness and mitigation). Tap into the power of neurodiversity. Measure impact and build resilience.

Part 1: Prepare for Inclusive Change Through Leadership.
Part 2: Unlock Inclusive Leadership & Neurodiversity.
Part 3: Measure Leadership Impact & Build Resilience.

MODULE 3

Inclusive Talent Management for SMEs

Key Features: Inclusive advertising, recruitment and retention. Performance management and leadership succession planning.

Part 1: Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Diverse Talent.
Part 2: Creating Inclusive Job Descriptions & Adverts.
Part 3: Inclusive Selection, Interviewing, and Offer Strategies.
Part 4: Employee Talent Development and Retention.
Part 5: Performance Management and Feedback.
Part 6: Succession Planning and Leadership Development.

MODULE 6

Inclusive Community Engagement for SMEs

Key Features: Learn the six core principles of inclusive community engagement. Understand the four layers to community context and prepare an effective Engagement Framework and Action Plan.

Part 1: Foundations of Inclusive Community Engagement.
Part 2: Understand & Engage Your Community.
Part 3: Ensuring Inclusive Engagement through Shared Value.
Part 4: Prepare for an Effective Community Engagement Framework.
Part 5: Create a Community Engagement Framework & Action Plan.

MODULE 5

Inclusive Marketing For SMEs

Key Features: Embed inclusivity into branding. Understand the needs of diverse audiences. Craft strategic inclusive marketing campaigns.

Part 1: The Power of Inclusive Marketing for SME Brands.
Part 2: Understand Your Customers and Overcome Marketing Barriers.
Part 3: Crafting Inclusive Marketing Campaigns.

MODULE 4

Building an Inclusive Company Culture in SMEs

Key Features: Build an inclusive company culture. Design and deliver a strategic cultural change audit, review policies and practices and empower teams through reward and recognition.

Part 1: Understand and Build an Inclusive Company Culture.
Part 2: Design and Deliver a Strategic Cultural Change Audit.
Part 3: Support Management in Creating a Workplace of Belonging.
Part 4: From Policies to Practice: Cultivating a Culture of Inclusion.
Part 5: Empower Teams Through DEI Collaboration, ERGs, and Recognition.



Introduction DARE to Module 3

In today’s evolving business landscape, diversity and inclusion are more than just values—they are key drivers of innovation, productivity, and long-term success. This module equips European SMEs with the essential knowledge and tools to build a truly inclusive workplace.

From conducting inclusive audits and crafting equitable recruitment strategies to refining selection, interviewing, and onboarding practices, you will learn how to attract, support, and retain diverse talent.

Additionally, this module explores employee development, performance management, and leadership succession planning, ensuring that inclusivity becomes a sustainable and integral part of your organization’s growth.

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Section 6

Inclusive Talent Management for SMEs

Becoming an Inclusive European SME Employer

Creating Inclusive Job Descriptions & Adverts

Inclusive Selection, Interviewing and Offer Strategies

Employee Talent Development and Retention

Performance Management and Feedback

Succession Planning and Leadership Development



Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Part 4

Part 5

Part 6

Part 6

Succession Planning For Leadership Development

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- ❑ Explore strategies to build a diverse and sustainable leadership pipeline within your company.
- ❑ Learn how to identify and nurture high-potential talent
- ❑ Learn how to prepare employees to transition into leadership roles effectively.
- ❑ Learn how to create structured programs, mentorship opportunities, and development plans that empower diverse employees to advance and succeed as leaders.

Step 10: Succession Planning For Leadership Development

Create a diverse employee talent pipeline so they can advance and move onto leadership roles. Develop programs to prepare and support diverse employees for successful leadership.

Case Studies: Slide 14 – 15

Case Studies: Slide 33 - 34

Learning Objectives

- ☐ Learn how to **build a diverse talent pipeline** that supports the progression of employees into leadership roles.
- ☐ Explore strategies for **identifying high-potential talent** and nurturing their growth within the organization.
- ☐ Understand how to **create leadership development programs** that prepare diverse employees for future leadership positions.
- ☐ Learn to **develop mentorship opportunities** and structured development plans that empower employees to succeed as leaders.
- ☐ Discover best practices for **preparing employees to transition into leadership** roles effectively and sustainably.



14 Step 10

Succession Planning For Leadership Development

Identifying and preparing
employees to fill leadership roles

»» Step 10 Succession Planning For Leadership Development



The purpose of succession planning for leadership development is to identify and prepare employees for key leadership roles through structured programs, mentorship, and growth opportunities. This creates a pipeline of diverse talent ready to step into leadership positions, ensuring company continuity and sustained success.

Build a Diverse Talent Pipeline

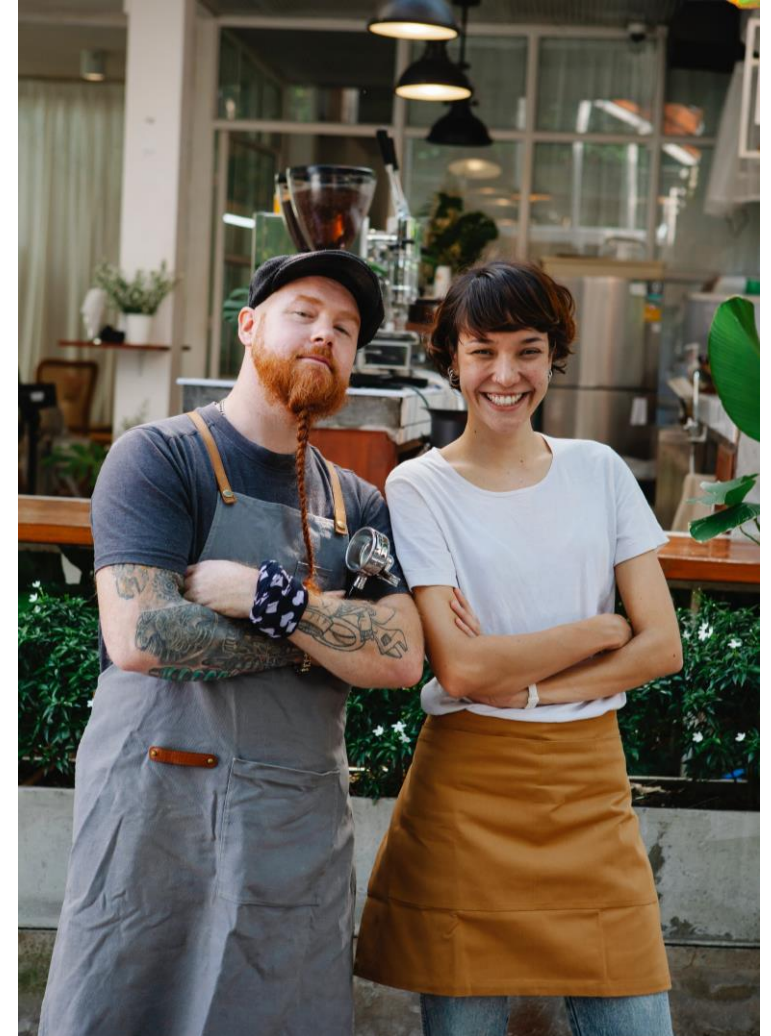
Creating a talent pipeline that reflects the diversity of the company is essential for leadership roles and succession planning. European SMEs should ensure that employees from all backgrounds have equal access to leadership opportunities.



Succession Planning: Bolster Talent & Cultivate Teams

Diversity and inclusion play a pivotal role in bolstering talent retention through cultivating inclusive cultures, providing career advancement opportunities, and mitigating biases.

In the context of succession planning, they guarantee the existence of a diverse leadership pipeline, encompassing a wide range of skill sets and promoting adaptability. These practices significantly contribute to the resilience of companies, enable employee engagement, and effectively prepare for forthcoming challenges and opportunities.
<https://engagedly.com/blog/the-role-of-diversity-and-inclusion-in-talent-management/>



Build a Diverse Talent Pipeline

What Does it Mean?

- ❖ **Proactive Inclusion:** Actively seeking and developing talent from underrepresented groups within the company.
- ❖ **Equal Access:** Ensuring all employees have fair opportunities for promotions, leadership roles, and professional development.
- ❖ **Removing Barriers:** Identifying and mitigating unconscious bias, structural inequities, and discriminatory practices in recruitment and development processes.
- ❖ **Long-term Strategy:** Building a sustainable system that cultivates diverse leadership by nurturing talent over time.



Build a Diverse Talent Pipeline:.

Why it Matters for SMEs.

- ❖ **Reflecting Society and Markets:** A diverse leadership team mirrors the demographics of customers and clients, making the company more relatable and competitive. It enables innovation and adaptability by bringing varied perspectives into decision-making.
- ❖ **Tackling Skills Shortages:** SMEs often face talent shortages. SMEs can access a broader range of skills and experiences by broadening their talent to include people from all backgrounds.
- ❖ **Boosting Business Performance:** Research shows that diverse teams outperform homogeneous ones regarding creativity, problem-solving, and financial performance.
- ❖ **Enhancing Employer Branding:** SMEs that champion diversity are more attractive to top talent, especially younger generations who prioritise inclusive and socially responsible workplaces.
- ❖ **Meeting Regulatory and Ethical Expectations:** Many European countries have introduced policies or guidelines to promote workplace diversity and inclusion. Building a diverse talent pipeline aligns with these frameworks and demonstrates corporate responsibility.
- ❖ **Sustainable Growth and Succession Planning:** A diverse talent ensures a steady supply of leaders with unique perspectives who can navigate the complexities of different markets.



Build a Diverse Talent Pipeline

How to Build a Diverse Talent Pipeline?

- ❖ **Diversify Recruitment Channels:** Partner with companies that support underrepresented groups.
- ❖ **Mentorship and Training Programs:** Create initiatives that prepare employees from diverse backgrounds for leadership roles.
- ❖ **Inclusive Leadership Training:** Train current leaders to recognise and eliminate biases in their teams.
- ❖ **Measure Progress:** Set diversity goals and track progress through regular assessments and reporting.



Step 1

Identify Diverse Talent Early

- ✓ **Transparent Talent Identification:** Develop clear criteria for identifying potential leaders based on performance, skills, and leadership potential. Make sure the criteria do not inadvertently favour specific groups.
- ✓ **Inclusive Talent Reviews:** Ensure that talent reviews include employees from underrepresented backgrounds, focusing on their development and future roles within the company.
- ✓ **Monitor Diversity Gaps:** Regularly analyse leadership demographics to identify diversity gaps and develop strategies to close them
- ✓ **External Sourcing for Diverse Candidates:** Look beyond internal candidates to find diverse leadership talent in the broader market if internal representation lacks diversity.
- ✓ **Internal Mentoring Programs:** Develop mentoring programs to prepare internal candidates from underrepresented groups for leadership roles, thus ensuring the next generation of leaders is prepared and diverse.



Case Study

Talent Identification Program

SME (Switzerland): Created a talent identification program that actively sought to include women and employees from minority groups, ensuring a balanced leadership pipeline.

How? The SME established transparent guidelines to evaluate potential leaders, ensuring women and minority groups were actively included in the process. Rather than subjective biases, they focused on skills, performance, and leadership potential. Mentorship and coaching programs were created specifically to support underrepresented groups in building confidence and leadership skills. Key performance indicators (KPIs) were set to measure improvements in diversity and representation at leadership levels.

Results: Women and minority groups gained equal opportunities for leadership roles, promoting a balanced leadership pipeline. Diverse teams introduced varied perspectives, leading to improved company problem-solving and innovation. The program unlocked talent that may have otherwise been overlooked, addressing skills shortages.

Case Study

AI-Driven Talent Management

SME (Germany): Implemented an AI-driven system to identify high-potential employees for leadership roles, ensuring balanced representation across gender and ethnic groups

How? It used an AI driven talent management tool or software program. Here are some examples of such tools: SAP SuccessFactors, IBM Watson Talent Frameworks, Workday Adaptive Insights, Cornerstone OnDemand, and HireVue AI Assessment Tools. The company gathered historical and real-time employee data such as performance reviews, project success rates, skill assessments, and peer feedback. The AI tool was integrated with existing HR systems for a seamless flow of data. HR underwent training to understand AI recommendations and align decisions with human judgment.

Results: The SME achieved balanced representation across gender and ethnic groups in leadership roles. AI removed human bias, ensuring fair assessment and identification of talent. Faster identification of high-potential employees with predictive analytics improved succession planning. The AI tool provided clear metrics and justifications for leadership candidate selection.

Step 1

Supports

Reading

- ❖ The European Commission's "[Inclusive Talent Identification Practices](#)" discusses methods for building inclusive pipelines across EU-based companies.
- ❖ "[The Role of AI in Inclusive Succession Planning](#)" by the European Business Review offers insights into the advantages of using technology in diverse talent tracking.
- ❖ "[External Sourcing for Diverse Talent in SMEs](#)" by the European Diversity Forum provides actionable strategies for sourcing leadership candidates.

Tools

Use data-driven succession planning tools like [PerformYard](#) or [BambooHR](#) which use analytics to track employee performance, potential, and readiness for leadership roles, ensuring that the process is fair and inclusive.



Step 2

Provide Leadership Development Programs

It's important to have structured programs that develop leadership skills and prepare diverse employees for leadership challenges. European SMEs can enable leadership readiness in their diverse workforce by providing the right resources and support.

- ✓ **Tailored Leadership Training:** Develop training programs that are tailored to the unique challenges faced by diverse employees, ensuring they are prepared for leadership roles.
- ✓ **Soft and Hard Skills Training:** Balance leadership programs with training on both technical competencies and essential soft skills like communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution.
- ✓ **Pair Diverse Employees with Sponsors:** Create sponsorship programs that match high-potential employees with senior leaders who can advocate for their advancement.
- ✓ **Peer Mentoring Programs:** Establish peer-to-peer mentoring systems where diverse employees can receive guidance from those with similar backgrounds.



Step 2

Provide Leadership Development Programs

- ✓ **Leadership Job Rotations:** Give employees from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to experience different leadership roles through job rotations, exposing them to varied functions and decision-making environments.
- ✓ **Leadership Simulation Exercises:** Provide immersive simulations where diverse employees can practice leadership decision-making in realistic scenarios.



Case Study

Leadership Program

SME (Ireland): Launched an internal leadership program focusing on building leadership and decision-making skills among women and minority employees.

How? The company developed a structured leadership program tailored to women and minority employees, focusing on leadership and decision-making skills. Training modules included mentorship, practical workshops, case studies, and real-world leadership scenarios. Senior leaders and executives served as mentors to offer guidance and career development support. Networking sessions enabled participants to build relationships with peers and role models within the company.

Results: More women and minority employees transitioned into leadership roles, improving diversity in managerial positions. Participants gained more decisive leadership and decision-making competencies, empowering them to excel in their careers.



Case Study

Pair Employees with Sponsors

SME (Poland): Implemented a sponsorship initiative where senior leaders mentor high-potential diverse employees, fast-tracking their leadership development.

How? Senior leaders were paired with these high-potential employees as sponsors, not just mentors. Sponsors actively participated in Advocating for their mentees during leadership discussions. Assigning high-visibility projects to accelerate their development. Providing regular guidance and feedback. Each participant received a tailored leadership development plan, including targeted skills training, networking opportunities, and exposure to senior management.

Results: High-potential employees experienced faster career progression into leadership roles due to advocacy and support from senior sponsors. The initiative significantly increased the representation of diverse talent (gender and ethnic groups) in mid-to-senior leadership positions. Participants reported higher job satisfaction, engagement, and a stronger sense of inclusion within the company. The program promoted and enabled meaningful relationships, improved knowledge transfer, and built a culture of mentorship.

Case Study

Leadership Rotation

SME (Denmark): Launched a job rotation program across their European offices, giving high-potential diverse employees a chance to experience leadership in different functions and countries.

How? The company identified high-potential diverse employees (women and underrepresented groups) through leadership potential assessments, performance reviews, and manager recommendations. The job rotation program was structured to include opportunities across different functions (e.g., operations, marketing, finance). Rotations were set for 6–12 months, allowing participants to gain in-depth experience. Program managers tracked participants' growth, key learnings, and contributions throughout the rotations.

Results: Participants developed multidimensional skills by gaining experience across functions and adapting to various leadership challenges in new countries. Participants reported increased motivation and job satisfaction due to their career growth opportunities and exposure to leadership challenges. The rotations enabled cross-functional collaboration, breaking silos and encouraging knowledge sharing.

Step 2

Supports

Reading

- ❖ "Leadership Development for a Diverse Workforce" by the EU Commission's Diversity Directorate offers templates and best practices for leadership development programs.
- ❖ "Mentoring for Diverse Talent in Europe" by EURES provides a step-by-step guide for SMEs to set up mentorship programs focused on diverse talent.
- ❖ "Job Rotations for Leadership Development in SMEs" by European Business Review outlines the benefits and best practices for implementing such programs.



Step 3

Address Barriers to Leadership for Diverse Employees

Understanding and addressing the unique barriers underrepresented employees face in leadership development ensures that succession planning processes are truly inclusive.

- ✓ **Survey Diverse Employees:** Conduct internal surveys to identify common barriers to leadership roles for diverse employees, such as lack of mentorship, visibility, or bias in promotion processes.
- ✓ **Focus Groups:** Organize focus groups to gather insights from employees who belong to underrepresented groups about the challenges they face in advancing to leadership roles.
- ✓ **Bias Awareness Training:** Offer leadership bias training for managers involved in succession planning, helping them recognise and mitigate bias in talent identification and promotions.
- ✓ **Diverse Succession Committees:** Form diverse succession committees to oversee leadership promotions and ensure that diverse employees are given fair consideration for roles.



Step 3

Address Barriers to Leadership for Diverse Employees

- **Alternative Leadership Tracks:** Design alternative leadership development paths for employees who may not follow the traditional route to leadership but demonstrate potential in other areas like innovation or teamwork.
- **Leadership for Remote Workers:** With the rise of hybrid work, provide leadership development opportunities tailored to remote and hybrid employees, ensuring they are not excluded from the leadership pipeline.



DHR Communications, Ireland

Based in The Liberties area of Dublin, DHR is a diverse team of experienced communications consultants from political, journalism and digital media backgrounds.

DHR invest time in understanding its clients, the external environment in which they operate, and the issues and opportunities facing them. This level of analysis allows them to deliver targeted communications and strategic advice to ensure clients get the best results.

<https://www.dhr.ie/csr-commitment/>

DHR
COMMUNICATIONS



<https://www.dhr.ie/>

CSR Strategy https://www.dhr.ie/?s=CSR&post_type=post

- ❖ **Staff Community Engagement:** From account manager level, we encourage staff to join the boards of non-profit organisations, and to incorporate their support for those organisations into their day-to-day workload at DHR. As a result, organisations like Show Racism the Red Card or D8CEC can be treated as clients. Often, joining a board presents staff-members with an opportunity to project-manage different aspects of that organisation's work, or to develop new skills, which in turn benefits their own professional development.
- ❖ **Community Internships:** We've always had a diverse workforce. We work on projects that promote diversity and interculturalism - like Africa Day - and often take on interns from the communities we're working with. Also, we've always had someone from another nationality on our staff - German, Canadian, Malaysian, Swedish



Leading Inclusivity From the Top

Our Managing Director chairs a new structure in the area, currently called the Liberties Business Forum. It's the brainchild of Dublin City Council and is aimed at bringing together the key stakeholders in this area to make the Liberties a better place in which to work and invest. Participating in these groups is a way for us to give back to our community.

Pro Bono Services

Another way we give back is through providing pro bono services for local events. We have provided support for a number of events run by local schools and community groups down through the years, and we also use our website and social media channels to engage with the local community and promote events and activities in Dublin 8.



DHR Communications: Inclusive Workplaces

Their employees are the heart of the company, and DHR are committed to supporting them in the following ways:

- ✓ Provide a range of **continuous training** and professional development opportunities.
- ✓ Provide a weekly **healthy fruit basket** and breakfast items free of charge.
- ✓ Provide opportunities to engage in **skills-based volunteer activities** and the ability to use work time to volunteer.
- ✓ Create a **culture of openness**, transparency and equal opportunity.



Community is important to us and we strongly encourage all staff-members to engage with the community in which we are based.

- ✓ **Rewarding excellent performance** with positive recognition and remuneration.
- ✓ Encourage employees to **develop new skills**, meet new people and work on projects outside of their comfort zone.
- ✓ **Look for opportunities** to allows them to facilitate collaboration and networking between clients from different sectors.
- ✓ Ensure **employees know they can provide support to charities**, organisations and individuals to which DHR are deeply committed. One of our staff members is a voluntary board member of a local community education centre, D8CEC (Dublin 8 Community Education Centre).



“We support senior and long-term staff in achieving their personal development goals”

- ❖ **Discrimination policies:** The PR industry is female-dominated, but - as with many industries - most senior roles are held by men. At DHR, we are bucking this trend: we have a high proportion of female employees, and our management team is led by women. This is something that distinguishes us in the public affairs space, in particular, where the majority of firms are led by men.
- ❖ **Retention Strategies:** We ensure our employees are facilitated to grow within our organization by meeting every six months to review and appraise their progress, agree areas for improvement and attribute new responsibilities.



- ❖ **Inclusive Succession Planning:** To help us empower our staff, we are moving towards a new system through which people will identify their own objectives and develop metrics with which to measure progress.
- ❖ **Look for New Opportunities:** We also have a staff meeting every month, where we talk about business development and upcoming campaigns and projects. Everyone takes a degree of responsibility for looking at new opportunities.
- ❖ **Professional Development:** Recently, we made the decision to establish a professional development fund within our organisation. This investment will enable all staff members to apply to do short-term/part-time courses to benefit their own careers while also improving the company's service offering.



- ❖ **Work-life balance:** Achieving an optimal work-life balance can be an issue and the nature of the business means that sometimes we have early morning meetings and late evenings at the office. It can be intense. That's why we're flexible - we ask our staff to be flexible with us in how they give their time, so it's only fair that we're flexible with them. We ask them to take time in lieu when they can, and to make the most of the quieter summer months.
- ❖ **Personal development:** We facilitate career breaks to support senior and long-term staff in achieving their personal goals. One staff member recently spent a month volunteering in Nepal. Opportunities like this can benefit the company in the long run.



Case Study

Bias Surveys

SME (France): Conducted internal surveys to uncover barriers preventing women and minority employees from advancing to leadership positions, resulting in revamped promotion criteria.

How? Anonymous surveys were conducted across all levels of the company to identify barriers preventing women and minority employees from advancing. The surveys covered topics such as Perceived fairness in promotion processes. Biases experienced in career progression. Access to leadership opportunities and development programs. The company analysed survey results to identify patterns and recurring themes, such as Biases in the promotion evaluation criteria. Lack of access to mentorship and sponsorship programs. Limited opportunities for leadership training among minority and female employees.

Results: Promotions to leadership roles became more transparent and objective, addressing previous barriers for women and minority employees. Employees felt heard and valued, leading to greater trust in the company's leadership and career development processes. The initiatives improved employee satisfaction and reduced turnover, particularly among underrepresented groups.

Case Study

Succession Committee

SME (Ireland): Formed a diverse succession planning committee that reviewed leadership candidate lists to ensure a diverse range of employees were considered.

How? The company established a cross-functional committee composed of senior leaders and HR representatives from diverse backgrounds, including different genders, ethnicities, and regions. This diversity in the committee ensured that decisions incorporated multiple perspectives and mitigated unconscious biases. Committee members underwent unconscious bias training to ensure fair evaluations.

Results: The company saw a broader, more inclusive candidate pool being considered for leadership succession. This helped increase the representation of women, minorities, and other underrepresented groups in leadership pipelines. Employees recognised the effort to ensure leadership development opportunities were fair and equitable. By formalising the process, the company embedded diversity and inclusion into its leadership development strategy.

Step 3

Supports

Reading

- ❖ "**Breaking Barriers to Leadership**" by EU Diversity Network offers in-depth insights into barriers and solutions for diverse leadership advancement in Europe.
- ❖ "**Leadership Bias Awareness Training**" by Forbes Europe details how to implement training programs in small to mid-sized enterprises.
- ❖ "**Leadership Development in the Remote Work Era**" by the European Remote Work Institute offers guidance on leadership programs for SMEs with remote teams.
- ❖ "**Measuring Diversity in Leadership for SMEs**" by the European Leadership Institute outlines steps for tracking diversity in leadership positions.
- ❖ "**Feedback Mechanisms for Diverse Leadership**" by EURES offers strategies for obtaining feedback on diversity initiatives from employees.



Learning Outcomes

☐ **Develop a Diverse Leadership Pipeline**

Learned how to identify and nurture high-potential talent to build a sustainable and diverse pool of future leaders that aligns with company goals.

☐ **Design Inclusive Leadership Development Programs**

Create structured development programs to prepare diverse employees for leadership roles, including mentorship, training, and growth opportunities.

☐ **Implement Fair and Objective Performance Evaluations**

Conduct unbiased assessments of leadership potential using measurable outcomes and tools that mitigate performance rating biases.

☐ **Enable Continuous Growth through Constructive Feedback**

Establish effective feedback channels to support employee development, enabling diverse talent to grow into confident and capable leaders.



Thank you

Any questions?

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