1.
Title card

2.
Coming up in this session, we'll look at why it's important to think about your legacy throughout your leadership, tips for inclusive succession planning, and reviewing why networks should be the most sustainable structures in your organisation.

As ever, there is a worksheet, further reading, and interviews to accompany the session in your Materials tab. And to conclude you'll be asked to reflect on your learnings in the quiz below, before continuing with the course.

3.
We're going to begin this course by starting at the end, naturally. A great way to consider your legacy is to actually write it. Imagine what that statement would be, when you finally end your tenure as a network leader. Some of you may find it flows easily and is something you've done before, for others it might be the first time. Either way, it's not a one-time activity, because that would just be a vision. We need to put it into practice and treat it like a strategy - one that runs alongside our network strategy and reminds us that we have to make decisions about what legacy we want to leave with the time and resources we have. We might not achieve every aspect of that legacy intent, some things will be out of our control. But we can make conscious decisions about what we think is the most important, and likely to succeed. Here are some questions to get you started:

What values, behaviours, or traits would I like to be remembered for? You may list a series of a positive traits, but don't forget the specific behaviours, because this reputation only comes through repeated action. You may hold on to a time where you demonstrated authentic behaviour in the face of adversity, but did you do it often enough, and publically enough, to actually be known for it?

One of the main roles of a leader is to inspire and empower the people around them. Arguably it doesn't matter what skills the leader has on an individualistic basis, what matters is the actions they inspire from the people around them - that is the lasting effect. So what would you like to be known to have inspired other people to do?

What knowledge, skills or experience would you like to pass on? Some skills may be practical, like leading inclusive team meetings, some experiences will be more personal, like what your first month as a network leader felt like. How can you offer those in ways that are not incidental, but inclusive and lasting.

Go to your worksheet now and take some time to complete this statement before continuing. It will help you to centre yourself and make this session in particular an opportunity for reflection before we bring in more stakeholders and strategic thinking.

4.
Following your statement, it's a good idea to audit your actions. What have you done recently to get you closer to the truth of that legacy statement? No matter how small an action it is, you want to know you're moving in the right direction. Be specific. If you can't think of anything you

did with conscious effort then it suggest you could be trying harder.

Close the gap between the values you've written down and the behaviours you demonstrate; come up with a plan for it. You may seek the help of a trusted stakeholder to give you perspective on when you are meeting these expectations and when you could improve. You might also ask them to write a no-holds-barred legacy statement about you. It's likely you'll be most surprised by the positive traits and impact that other people see from you.

And this is especially true if your leadership has been focussed on serving others. This is much more challenging, but more rewarding, than simply raising your own profile. A charismatic leader can be known for anything if they work on their brand hard enough, but look to the people they've helped to get a true picture. When you ask people about great leaders they've known, it tends to be because of they way they interacted with that individual, rather than anything they did on their own terms.

5.

Succession planning is an important part of any leadership position, but especially within employee networks. As a force for inclusive change you need to demonstrate that you can practice what you preach, and a prevalent example of that would be in the recruitment of your leadership team. Too many networks are given to providing a platform for people who already possess a strong voice, or the confidence to step on stage. But we should challenge our assumptions of what makes a good leader, and what state of readiness a future leader should be in, before they begin transitioning into that role.

The structure of a network means that skills, ideas, and leadership can come from anywhere. As a leader you don't want to be the centre of power, you want to empower your network and connect as many people as possible to make that network more resilient. The work involved here is not just introductions and governance models, but transferring knowledge and skills on a regular basis, so that nobody is irreplaceable. This means you can achieve continuity of activities, strategy, and overall vision, reducing the need to refresh your approach every time there is new leadership. Thinking about your approach to finding future leaders is something that should happen throughout your tenure as leader, but if you haven't committed to a plan yet, then think of it as part of your ongoing development to find ever more inclusive ways of developing the network. And certainly don't retire from your role without a plan for succession, otherwise you may not achieve your goal of leaving the network in a better place than you found it.

6.

Let's look at some tips for succession planning so that you can build or refine your current approach.

First of all, establish the opportunity. Make sure it's well known that you have a set tenure, and there will be an opportunity for people to step into your role in the future. Be transparent about what exactly you do, what the role description entails, who you work with, how often, and establish whether there are any myths about the role that you realised were not the case once you started. Who is the role going to be open to? What paths can people take towards it if they are interested? Do they need to have experience in the core network team first, or are there open interviews, or elections?

Allow for phased development. This means having a long lead-in time before you make

decisions about who will take leadership positions, because you want to encourage candidates to develop the skills they may currently be lacking. What types of skills do you typically need for the role, and how can you make sure the support is there to develop them? Imagine this role was elsewhere in the company, a management position for example. If there were no training programmes to encourage internal promotions, you would only ever be looking from outside the organisation, or people who already had the opportunity for leadership development, and that would be discouraging. How can you show commitment to making employee network involvement about career progression.

Re-appraise the roles as you go along. While you don't want to refresh the network's identity and brand every time you have a change of leadership, you may find that there is a gradual shift in the skills needed to deliver on your strategy. You may be moving from a single chair to a co-chair, or you may redefine the time-commitment needed in accordance with greater D&I stakeholder buy-in.

Mentoring is one of the best ways to develop skills and learn from different perspectives. You may already have a programme in place for leadership development within the organisation, so think about how you can use, adapt, and improve upon that to offer your mentorship as a network leader demonstrating best practice for inclusion within that. For example, many mentoring partnerships are based on a familiarity of some kind, whether that's personality, characteristic, or skills. So think about how you can challenge that assumption and look for future leaders that challenge you.

Getting stakeholder buy-in will be important to anticipate any rejection of future leaders, or antagonism towards your process. In particular consider the D&I leads you interact with, to make sure that your process aligns with their expectations, and the practises of other networks. You will also want to have conversations with your network leadership team or committee - especially if you have opened up opportunities to the broader network or allies. Make sure to listen to any feedback and fears, and communicate what you're going to do about them.

What motivated you as a leader may not be the same for future leaders, so take time to understand whether there are any trends you need to take into account when re-appraising the role. In many ways leading a network is its own reward, but you also have every right to expect satisfaction in terms of executive recognition, time in your day to run the network, line-manager appraisals, or even monetary reward. Can you develop this to be even more motivating and rewarding for your successor? It's a nice parting gift.

7.
In these two examples we'll show how former network leaders have prepared their successors for the role.

First of all is a neurodiversity network within a tech company. Their leader identified that an ideal candidate was emerging based on the team meetings they were having - one member was particularly talented at crafting robust strategies based on data, but was very uncomfortable speaking in front of crowds. With occasional events such as inclusive coding camps, and panel discussions in the pipeline, their leader decided to offer a programme of shadowing, where the candidate could join them for public speaking occasions and see if they could find ways to make this a more comfortable experience. This began with the candidate simply sitting on stage while the leader delivered their talks, then built up to them introducing themselves as a co-chair before leaving the stage, to eventually giving the opening 5 minute speech about their current

activities and strategy - a subject area they were comfortable with. This alone took nearly a year. So while it was successful and led to the candidate accepting the leadership position, it demonstrates the need to have an open skills assessment, and plenty of time for phased development.

Secondly we heard from another network about how their usual stakeholder map wasn't detailed enough for their leadership handover, and required a more nuanced approach. The leader of an engineering firm's gender network, based in Germany, had become accustomed to working with the global network leader, based in the US, and developed an approach which allowed them to diverge somewhat from the global approach when it came to local events. Whereas the US, on a local basis, had a culture of celebration, their European colleagues preferred to tackle systemic problems in a way that they interpreted as positive and productive, but which to the US seemed like they were being overly critical and rejecting their good-will and optimism. It took some time for the leaders to reconcile their approaches, but by focussing on the outcomes and vision, rather than the execution, they had come to an understanding. As the German leader prepared to end their tenure, they needed to make sure that they got their successor, and the global network leader together to help them hit the ground running with this cross-cultural dynamic, and spare them the time that it took her to get to this point.

8.
What do we mean by sustainable networks? This is not to be confused with environmental sustainability, although many networks do now consider that a strategic pillar. This is about making sure your team can continue operating even in the face of a crisis, reduction in resources, uncertainty, and change of membership. By mapping out the roles, responsibilities, and skills of your team you can make sure that no single person is a source of unshared power. Ideally, everything should be at least doubled up, with open processes, and progress reports. A good network can still operate no matter who is removed from it.

As a leader, you should demonstrate the kind of inclusive behaviour which shows the team how important this is, and take every opportunity to share your learning and delegate responsibility and accountability. To make sure you have a balanced approach to this, you may consider using a Discretionary Leadership matrix, inspired by Apple's executive team, like the one seen here and in your workbook.

The two scales are expertise and involvement, leading to four quadrants covering Owning, Learning, Teaching, and Delegating. We've filled this out to show how it applies to network leadership.

In the OWNING section, this leader has devoted 40% of their time to strategic alignment, team development and public speaking. This means that they will be deeply involved with understanding the D&I and Organisational strategies to refine their own, communicate it, and make sure it's being executed. Team development is therefore a logical progression of that so they know their efforts are being properly resourced and measured. This particular leader also has skills in presentation and personal networking, so it makes sense for them to be the face of the network for the majority of the time.

This leads into their TEACHING segment where they use these skills to communicate the many stories that have come out of their network, and refining those into specific challenges that are faced in the workplace, with suggestions of how they may be overcome with more inclusive behaviours and processes.

One challenge of taking this responsibility is that the leader needs to make sure they are continually LEARNING, developing their understanding of membership insights - either through direct contact or looking at recorded data such as survey and focus group feedback. They also look externally for inclusion trends and cross-industry opportunities to see what similar challenges and approaches exist in other networks.

After understanding your own priorities as a leader, and how you will develop and share your expertise, what remains should be DELEGATED. This is your main opportunity to develop a sustainable team by understanding what you can let go, and trust to others. This leader has decided they will spend only 10% of their time checking in with communications, events, and membership engagement. This means they need to have a high level of trust, but also the transparency and culture of accountability to enable that to happen. Spending less time on the total range of network activities is key to building a sustainable team, in which you as a leader, are accountable for empowerment and direction, not execution.

9.

A sustainable community is about realising that your membership identity may evolve over time, and your original mission may no longer represent the full spectrum of community and member needs. We see this through the way people identify, how terms around diversity and inclusion change over time, through external forces such as protest groups, political and legal changes, and cultural movements. Networks often notice this first by monitoring their communications channels, like the online community groups and collaboration tools.

In these examples, a global company found a high level of activity on their Slack channel as employees were forced to work from home during the pandemic. Conversations were flowing more naturally and openly than before, and it was noticed in the LGBT+ network that the diminishing of trans rights was a hot topic that needed its own focus. With online communication platforms it's easy to create threaded conversations so that interested parties can join that specific thread, while business as usual can continue in the main channel. This naturally led to an offshoot group from the main network, and a new committee member was chosen from that group to link in with the leadership team. While this didn't lead to a seperate network, it did show that the network was willing to be flexible with their approach to member involvement, and go where the zeitgeist led them.

In another organisation, their wellbeing network found that conversations and events had become dominated by mental health, and while they believed that was important, there was little focus left on anything else. In this instance they did create a seperate network and rebranded both. The community was welcome to be part of both networks, but it was clearer where expertise and interest lay.

Networks who fail to respond to member needs can find that they persistently attract the same people, as only they feel represented. At Radius we are often asked for tips on engaging members, and a good place to start is to go where they already are. Use online communications tools and word of mouth to assess where there is a need for formalised network conversation. This should not be to control it, but to effectively monitor it, and create a strategy as a result. As a leader, it may be your responsibility to assess when informal networking and hot-topic conversations can and should be brought into your sphere. We'll return to the founding of umbrella networks and listening to member needs later in the programme.

10.

As we've said, sustainability is about seeing you through crisis and uncertainty. Many organisations had their strategies tested recently when the world was turned upside down in the pandemic. Successful strategies had to be flexible enough to rechannel resources, and communicate fast, empathetically, and honestly. An agile approach to strategy means you continually appraise your priority items, and don't get stuck in a 1 year plan which may become insurmountable. By diversifying your team's expertise, it also means that projects don't get dropped just because a person is not available. Agile teams look at their backlog of projects and select which ones they will work on in any given week not only based on what will have the most impact, but what resources, including team members, they have around.

You should decide as a team what is a yes and what is a no in terms of your activities, but you have a responsibility as a leader to demonstrate that this is the case. When it comes to inclusion, network volunteering, and informal mentoring in particular, some people can have a hard time saying no to requests, leaving them feeling overwhelmed and undervalued. Strategy should be used as a tool to give reasonable responses as to why an individual either can or cannot accept a request or new project.

As a leader you will want to have oversight on what is moving forward, and what might seem stuck, so you can either help unblock it, or remove it from the board and find other, more achievable projects. This has the knock on effect of keeping your team motivated, because they can achieve often, even if it's only a little, rather than feeling like they are "struggling through". We'll be looking at strategy more in the next session, including consulting on the D&I strategies and engaging external communities.

For now, make sure you reflect on your responsibilities as a leader to empower and future-proof your network, ensuring your legacy as an impactful and inspiring leader.

Video interviews Transcript

Names   **Commentary**

CH   Thinking about the future, have you developed any succession plans for the roles in your network?

GM   Yeah, I think succession planning is really important and I think with my history with the MBCPA over the years I've … because our network is over 20 years old and I've had different roles in the network. This is the first time I've been Chair and sometimes in networks you get a culture where people feel that they're the only safe pair of hands. You know when you've got the executive committee; you have the idea that only we can do it; only I can do it … but actually what I thought I'd brought to the network since I've become Chair is for them to understand that we have to pass the baton on. We need to make sure that our executive committee members' mindset is very clear about that. It could be very (laughs) because the culture that we had in our network was very different. I think it was very hard for people to hear those messages that, you know, people shouldn't be in a role for, you know, eight years. They should step back and give other people the opportunity so, for me,

I've tried to think of creative ways of getting members involved, getting members curious and encouraging them to see themselves as the next step to take the baton on. So we've done things like … I introduced a system of encouraging members to attend our executive committee member meetings … our executive committee meetings. I think, in the past, it was something almost like a closed shop. You know, the executive committee are meeting and it's all top secret but much to a lot of … some people feeling very nervous about it. I said let's open it up – if members want to come, they can come. They could come anyway under the constitution but we never actually encouraged it so what we did was invite members. If they wanted to come, we'd let them come. They'd be treated just like an ordinary executive committee member. They'd get the papers. They wouldn't be able to vote but they could participate and what I was trying to do was let them see there was no secret. You know, nothing secret was happening in the meetings and for them to understand that they can contribute the same way everybody else does; that we're all just ordinary members of staff like them. If they have an idea, they should put it on the table and run with it. And one of the things I did as well to encourage succession planning – I know it sounds a bit naughty – but I had to make my executive committee members understand that, just because you have a title of Treasurer or Events Officer, it doesn't make you the beginning and end of all that activity. So, if we had a new person come in to the meeting and they suddenly say Oh I want to do this, then they run with it and they would get full credit for that work which was never what happened in the past. In the past, you'd get a group of people doing something then one of the officers would take responsibility and credit for that. You know what I mean?

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FJ   Yeah, and you mentioned a few things there in terms of how your networks have grown and some of the support you may give them. What sort of things do you do in terms of training, support, budgets etc? How does that work there?

MM   Sure. So, at the end of every year going into the new calendar year, January to December, we call them communities so I keep stumbling on the word network, sorry about that, because we call them communities … and they all come up with a business plan and they are given a budget and the budget varies a little bit on the types of activities that they have planned. 2020 has been a very different year because we haven't needed budgets to the same way that we usually do but they do all definitely have a budget. They also, earlier this year for our EMEA co-leads we instituted a training, working with a third party vendor, bringing in soft skill development, leadership development, feedback, communication styles to actually do very targeted development just for them as a larger cohort together. So they, of course, always had access to our internal LMS type offerings that we packaged for them in terms of

what influencing without authority, building a network, but this training was done specifically for them but we partner with one of our existing partners to give them the soft skill training but to also recognise the great work that they're all doing already.

FJ   How do you work with governance? How do you select network chairs or do they select their own? You know, what sort of governance do you have around the structure of how networks work? How communities work, sorry, I'll use (laughs)

MM   That's perfectly OK. So, in the ideal world, there'll always be a succession plan. That's not necessarily always the case so it's actual a partnership between us and the communities understand that if there is a bench, for lack of a better word, of people that might be able to easily slide into the role … actually, let me back up for a second, Fiona. What we try to do is we try to stagger the two co-leads to that when one is there one year, when they go into their second year, the next person starts at the one year mark so that there's always someone there with experience before the next person rolls off. So that just allows for continuous … continuity – that's hard for me to say, sorry, but it allows for that touchpoint where people feel like they're always learning from somebody who's done the role. Then they feel comfortable and I think it takes time like you would in any role to get more comfortable in terms of running and being the face and, for the most part, people are very comfortable but it does take the experience of getting through a heritage month, getting through the first big ask that you might make of the company and things like that. So that's our model where it's a staggered leadership approach where somebody has been involved two years and somebody has been involved one year and then it changes. And so typically when we know that second person is stepping of, we start to allow for other people to take on different projects where they work more closely with the … they work more closely with the current leadership and allow for that knowledge transfer as well and that continuity. And then we do do an HR check in the background to make sure that the person is well regarded in their role because we do think that management support is really important for the co-leads so that, when we make the ask - because we make the ask to the manager and the manager's manager to make sure that pretty much that entire line is onboard with the selection criteria of the person – and so we do that, we start with a small group of people; we allow for some knowledge transfer and then we prioritise based on skillset to balance it out with the other co-lead and make the ask of management to allow for that person to spend time during the day as part of their job being a community leader.

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FD   Lovely. Thank you. And what would you say the impact has been on your organisation or network so far since you've been on the programme?

AP	So it comes back to that stakeholder engagement thing. So we went back and we really had a think about who were our stakeholders and what we needed to get out of senior leadership team and, before I came on the programme, we didn't have any facility time for network leads; we didn't have any committee roles or anything like that and that's what I took away that we needed those, we needed that time, we needed those other committee members in order to help me really because leading a network is hard on your own so we now have Co-Chair in place. We have 16 available … available for 16 different networks committee members, all of which get allocated time through the business so I get 30% of my time allocated to me and anyone who's a strand leader or network committee member has 10% of their time which has been a massive impact to the things we've been able to get done. And the conversations we can have and the things we can really sort of focus on now are a lot bigger because we actually have that time and that ability to be able to do it.

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FJ	So, in terms of when you've been working, let's explore a little bit more, first of all, what you've been doing with delegation and how you established and set up your network … and also in terms of sort of succession planning. Do you have any way of thinking about how succession planning works? Have you developed any ideas about that?

PA	So, do you mean sort of passing … in terms of passing it onto someone else?

FJ	Yeah

PA	So, the background is my Co-Chair, Poonam, and I … we just … we work in completely different areas of the business and we just met by chance during a networking event and, at that time, there was only one network in existence and that was the Pride network so we thought I think we need to do more when it comes to ethnicity and race. So, you know, we kind of just joined forces and it was just the two of us to start with. And we worked quite hard on putting it together in terms of our objectives, what … you know, how we wanted it to benefit the business, how we wanted to benefit our employees, getting all that feedback from employees themselves. Now the committee has changed over time. I think we do a review every six months so, you know, we do get committee members who voluntarily decide to step down allowing other people to then join in. We've had, you know, just naturally some people have just left the business or, you know … just for various reasons they might not be able to commit any more so we always then do a recruitment drive every six months and we do then get different people across the business. In the beginning, it was actually just Asians that were on the committee so we thought we're not being diverse enough (laughs) so … so since then I think now we've got white, we've got

black, we've got Asian, we've got Arab, we've got mixed, we've got Hispanics. I think that we've got quite a good mix and also different grades. And we're not doing it as a tick boxing exercise. It's just organically, as they network has gained momentum, people saw the value in it and naturally just attracted really great people so we would do a sort of recruitment process. We'd get application form, we would interview them … but in terms of me and Punim as Chairs, we've sort of stayed on and the committee … but we would put it to a vote to the committee whether they are happy for us to stay on and I think because we, sort of, know how it works and we've built a rapport with our group board sponsor and also our directors and CEO as well, I think it's sort of our baby and I know it sounds quite possessive but we sort of stuck with it. But I think when it gets to a really stable and sustainable place where we start to see some real changes in the business, and even in the construction industry, then we probably would be in a more comfortable position to handover to someone else.