

Creating the Framework for the D&I Fractioned

By Steve Hanamura

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Expert Forum



The diversity and inclusion field has become a full blown profession consisting of internal and external practitioners. Due to the complexities of meeting individual and organizational needs it may sometimes be hard to determine what standards or boundaries are necessary to meet client needs. I have found that working from three basic assumptions helps create a framework for my clients to have breakthroughs.

We are more alike than we are different. Many people do not want to be involved in the diversity conversation until they learn how we as individuals, though different, also have things in common with one another. Take time to examine shared experiences (both good and bad), passions, hobbies, beliefs, etc to realize the extent of our commonness.

Each person has something unique to offer the workplace. The more we discuss diversity and inclusion, the more we realize that what was once considered a stereotype is now recognized as a unique characteristic worth prizing.

We must celebrate the diversity in others. This assumption is far reaching and probably won't be apparent in the initial phases of D&I work but it creates a long term vision of possibility thinking.

So, what is the bottom line connection? Frankly, the client is not necessarily going to see these assumptions as bottom line, but as a professional I need to make sure that I am grounded, believe in the potential of others, and that I am constantly working on diffusing my own prejudices and biases so I can be effective in our work. These are some of the intangibles of helping to distinguish one practitioner from another.

As the field of diversity and inclusion has evolved, I tell people that there are three reasons why organizations began addressing this topic.

The first is **compliance**. Many organizations think of diversity in the context of a box to check off. "Okay, we've done our diversity workshop; we're in compliance with the government requirements." Under this reasoning diversity and inclusion activities are limiting in nature because they do not cover the full impact of how broad and wide this topic really is.

The second reason is **to do the right thing**. People begin to feel convicted that not only is diversity and inclusion the right thing to do but it may help them look at

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issues of fulfillment, productivity and in some cases promote social justice (i.e. everyone should be treated fairly).

And third, **diversity is good for business**. Organizations see the connection of how diversity and inclusion affect productivity so want to fold it into other business imperatives.

Many practitioners in the field of D&I are concerned about our industry not having clear boundaries, guidelines or standards from which to practice; I think there is confusion in how we hold it. If we think of D&I as a program, then we are striving for defined outcomes. But D&I can also be thought of as an action. The late Roosevelt Thomas said, "Diversity is a journey not a destination." This implies that we will always be involved in doing some kind of diversity work while assisting the organization to accomplish their business objectives.

Organizations struggle to be in compliance, to do the right thing, to recognize that diversity is good for business because they don't understand how to weave in and out of these different constructs. A successful D&I practitioner must develop their own framework before assisting the client in the diversity journey.