

Diversity and Inclusion – The Ultimate Question, Time to Be Brutally Honest!

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Is what we are doing (those in the D&I field) really making a difference?

Well, unfortunately the answer depends. Let me “slice and dice” this question. I am tired of the literature opposed to our work and our field. As a diversity trainer, strategy consultant, harassment prevention trainer, investigator, expert witness, and D&I warrior (I train 18 days per month), who has been training all types of audiences - but my favorites are hostile and militant audiences for 20 years - I think I have some unique observations. First, I have two kinds of clients when you look at them through one particular lens – proactive and reactive.

Proactive Organizations

Have a bias for action
Admit they have issues
See the “Demographic Writing on the Wall”
Pro-change, want change
Have a budget
Understand D&I interventions are for the long term
Strategic
Have established metrics for everything
“Get it”
“Open audiences”
Have me focus on “usual suspects”
Hope for change and improvement
We will deal with him/her

Reactive Organizations

Overly cautious, prolonged, decision paralysis
In denial they have issues
Don’t see changes in workplace or marketplace
Status Quo, check the box
No budget until crisis
After crisis want immediate results
Tactical
Only want to measure D&I efforts
“No Clue”
“Hostile, militant audiences”
Protect the usual suspects
No hope – “more of the same”
“Don’t you know who that is?”

Who do you think I charge less? Who pays less? Who do you think is “more fun” to train? Who will listen to me? Now this is a critical point!

Another “lens” is to look specifically at the organization’s bias for action. I conduct “spot audits,” investigations, organization-wide assessments and the like and I bring to the attention of my clients:

- Horribly exclusive business practices
- Horribly exclusive managers, employees
- Destructive policies and procedures – sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit
- Long standing traditions and customs that undermine inclusion
- Assumptions, stereotypes, beliefs that are just plain wrong about diversity and inclusion

What do they do with my results, my report, and my findings? Again it depends. Two types of organizations. Some take action in response to my observations and recommendations. Some want to but can’t.

TRULY COMMITTED AND EMPOWERED

These organizations have the courage, the will, the power – the parties I am working with – to truly intervene; make changes and their people throughout the organization can visibly “see constructive and meaningful change.” They want a D&I strategy and plan and they will execute. These folks are truly change agents. They will go to the mat. I love working with these folks and quite frankly many are life-long friends.

NOT SO SURE, MEAN WELL, BUT CAN’T FINISH

I want to note there are “good people here as well” and many people “get it” but unfortunately these folks are not the right people. The in-group, the dominant group (often homogeneous), do not act upon what I find and present. Instead they bury it, sweep it under the rug and look the other way. How can you blame the D&I consultant and trainer for their “lack of action”. Mind you, if this organization does not “get it internally” believe me an external force (lawsuit, competition) will “brutally remind them later.” I have seen it all too often. I warn this client if they don’t “do something” their lack of action will be their demise (not doing something is negligence when you have prior knowledge of your issues). You hear in this organization – “But that is a ‘Senior VP’ or that is ‘The son or daughter of a Board Member’ or a longtime employee or ‘rainmaker’” or something to that effect and they are (the perpetrator) are untouchable.

ALWAYS A “RAISED SENSE OF HOPE”

Whenever an organization conducts an assessment or an audit they are telling their employees that “we aim to do something.” Why would we be asking you for your input otherwise? Oh, what a tough lesson for some organizations out there!

I tell all of my clients – “Now if we do this, whatever we find, we must acknowledge what we found and take action where appropriate!” Right? In closing, I just DO NOT WANT TO BE BLAMED for those organizations that go in with the right intentions but don’t have the stomach for what they find. Don’t blame the D&I field for the issues we find, point out, and our clients choose not to address.

Well, there you have it, from the heart, straight up. No sugar coating, no political correctness – which I am no fan of. I love what I do and I have been doing it for 20 years now and work is crazy busy.

Please call me “if you are ready to go all of the way!” I am not the “dip it in chocolate, check the box, and move on to the next fad diversity consultant and trainer.” You want to “really move the diversity needle?” Contact me.

I have trained more than 1 million people, in every state but North Dakota, from Guantanamo Bay to the White House to Native American Tribes to law enforcement to high tech, aerotech, military – you name it, I have done it. I say bring it on – I love the challenge! Don’t think you can move the “diversity needle?” Give me a call.

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