

Diversity and Inclusion Fatigue

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HOSTILITY

Do we have to keep talking about this? Oh, a diversity workshop... why? You are ruining the workplace; we can't have any fun anymore!" Have you heard these wonderful, welcoming, open, pro-learning comments lately? I had one participant (in front of all of his buddies) recently comment – "This session will probably be about the KKK, right?!" Another participant in the same session said – "This is going to be a total waste of time (in front of HR)!" Another participant even said to me (walked right up to me) recently – "Good luck keeping me awake." My response to all of them – "Now I am fired up, all of you are in the right workshop! You have a bias about a workshop on bias? This Bud is for you today!" I just get fired up when I hear comments like these – like I am getting a shot of diversity steroids and nuclear waste mixed together. Hecklers, you have to love them. If I hate them – I am a huge hypocrite. Understand don't judge! I turn into the incredible diversity training hulk – ha, ha – when I hear these kinds of comments. Of course the easiest way to "push back against the hecklers" is to point blank ask them what they know about the workshop today that leads them to challenge me, the course content, the intentions of their employer, before the workshop has even started. I specialize in hostile audiences and lately I am seeing more hostility than usual.

UNDERLYING FACTORS

You just have to read the newspaper or listen to the radio or tune into the "angry talking heads" on television every night to see what I am talking about. Why are the "hecklers (hate mongers) coming out of the wood work?" Why so much hate, so much vitriol, so much disrespect and a total lack of civility in the workplace? – demographics are our destiny and 2010 Census Data is sobering – money problems make some people "turn ugly" – passions flare – school violence, hate crimes (always newsworthy), class issues – terrorism, Arab Spring, tribal and religious conflict, class warfare, war, strife, etc. t all over the world and finally,

WHY DIVERSITY FATIGUE

I think many people are tired of the diversity issues percolating and re-circulating in the workplace, marketplace, and society-at-large, but way too many people just don't realize that these diversity and inclusion issues are going unacknowledged, unresolved and "will come back over and over again." The question is not should we fear diversity fatigue but why are so many people so fatigued?

Because these real, major, emotionally-charged, historically relevant, underlying diversity issues are going unaddressed, unresolved and hence no change or improvement is apparent. People get frustrated, I see it in my workshops and consulting - especially those in the "out-group" feel frustrated. What kills me is when someone from the "in-group" with privilege and favoritism on their side express their diversity fatigue.

This can only exacerbate the fatigue felt by those in the out-group. Denial – "we don't have D & I issues" is a dish best served with information, knowledge and understanding – not ignorance.

You read about another organization that "does not get it" and allows diversity and inclusion issues to go unresolved for way too long and you ask – "How could that organization be so foolish?" Well, most individuals and organizations are conflict avoiders. Diversity consultants like DTG – are conflict confronters. I tell all of our clients – "I am not here to tell you what you want to hear – I am here to tell you what I see, what we found."

Diversity fatigue is a symptom of more systemic issues, organizational culture issues steeped in status quo and tradition. One of my clients called their diversity and inclusion efforts "benign neglect." They had no clear intention to ignore their diversity issues – "it just happened." Remember from my previous writings – having diversity and inclusion issues is not a bad thing – doing nothing about them is where organizations get in trouble. It is why DTG and our work have pushed us into the "sweet spot" or crossroads where...

- Diversity and Inclusion Issues
- Employee Engagement (Toxic Employee)
- Trust (or lack thereof)
- Being World Class (many of our clients are striving for this)
- Performing at a High Level

..... Collide, intersect or coming crashing into each other. Ignore your D & I issues and how can there be trust and without trust employee disengage and perform at "mediocre levels" at best and then forget about striving to be world class. I don't think this "diversity math" should be hard to grasp for most people but you would be surprised.

The comment that I heard recently sized it up – "They should just be happy to have a job." His explanation for not understanding or caring about their diversity issues and why maybe he was "not getting it." Wow! You should have seen the rest of the participants in that session look at him (their leader). I always say without followership there is no leadership. Do you think he has trust issues? He is wondering why his employees are actively disengaged and performance and morale is low?

One thing is to be unaware of your diversity issues, another is to be aware and not address them but the ultimate diversity crime organizations commit is to just not care and ignore the issues hoping they go away by themselves.

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Comments, reactions, more worst practices – please share with me!

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