

November 18, 2021, WDN Member Meeting Notes

The meeting started with a brief update from Terry Platt on the progress of the WDN Recruitment Team in its search for a new Executive Director. The group is in the early stages of the process and is developing a posting document that details the role and responsibilities of the position along with the qualifications. The objective at this point is to begin the interview process by the end of January. More details will follow at the December meeting.

The focus of the remainder of the meeting was to view and evaluate videos by Emmanuel Acho, author of the book, “Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man”. The purpose was to determine how they could be used as racism and diversity tools in our organizations and allow the group to vet how they could be presented.

The videos we chose for the meeting were the “Inaugural Video” in his series, one that discussed “Reverse Racism” and a third that dealt with the topic of “White Allergies”.

After viewing the videos, we broke into four groups to discuss them.

Breakout Group Notes for the “Inaugural Video” and “Reverse Racism Video” – Michael D., Olga M., Devin B., Mike S.

There was general agreement that the videos were worthwhile, but that a number of Emmanuel’s observations were his experience, and he could not speak for all Black people. His observations were based on his experiences, and while relevant/articulate, there were many other perspectives and experiences from others that might be different.

Critical factors when deciding if/when to show these videos, singularly or as a series:

- Timing (when during the day, when in relation to the development of the sponsoring office).
- Framework: helping workers to vet what were comments for personal growth v. organizational issues.
 - The videos could be used as great conversation starters.
- Culture of the organization
 - Two factors emerged:
 - Readiness of the organization and its leadership
 - You should be certain of what goals you want to accomplish with these videos and clarify before presenting
 - Safety (could people feel free to debrief and ask questions without judgment).

It is important to understand the role of the office that is presenting.

- One person indicated that they were developing the role of “Connector” among different diverse populations, but that role should be well-established within the organization and among supervisors.

Breakout Group notes for the “Inaugural Video” – Cheryl H., Susanne C., Terrell S., Sara M.

These notes are a stream of conversation from the group:

break it up

provide facilitated guided facilitation and do a deep dive into each piece

Lead up to it

Create some difficult discussions first

provide context and create an establishment

Use facilitator with professional experience

Just because Emmanuel is discussing, it’s not the only narrative

This is some of the issues, but a lot more discussion and dialogue to occur

Gotta do more than 30 min session w/video

Doesn't speak for all (own story and experience)

Accountability

Audience, facilitator, personal experience

Don't want anyone to feel defensive

Who is your audience?

How does it apply to current events?

Strategic

At what point do you present a video like this

This may not be the first thing to start with

Professional facilitator who can handle any audience, any situation, being able to control the entire presentation/workshop

Accountability

What are you trying to accomplish?

Skill set, tool set?

What are the outcomes?

Influences what and how we would evaluate for?

If had to do an assessment, get open ended responses to get a sense what people took away

Breakout Group Notes for the “White Allergies” video.

- The content didn’t connect as much for some people.
- “White Allergies” was a concept with which people were unfamiliar – and it seemed difficult to draw analogies.
 - Perhaps it is a synonym for White privilege, or Blind Spot.
- The dialogue felt disingenuous – too rehearsed (reading questions off note cards).
- Role Modeling of the White and Black men dialoguing together was helpful, but it should be emphasized that such conversations should not be viewed as everyday casual opportunities (i.e., “Hey, let’s talk about race differences. What do you think....?”). These conversations require more intentionality, purpose, and sensitivity.

Large Group Notes for “White Allergies”

- Mixed responses continued.
- The video emphasized equality instead of equity.
- The analogies of the ‘Woke’ concept and ‘starting late in the game’ were helpful.
- Re-emphasized:
 - These conversations should not be viewed as everyday casual opportunities (i.e., “Hey, let’s talk about race differences. What do you think....?”). These conversations require more intentionality, purpose, and sensitivity.

Our next WDN member meeting will be on Zoom, December 16, 8:30 – 10:30am. Details to follow.