

Recent Training Made Me Reflect

- Observations and Tips from recent training in the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) trenches (especially hostile or militant audiences)

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CURRENT EVENTS – Current events are just “upping the volume, the passion, the conversation in the workshop.” Do not shy away from current events. I do not answer “what do you think about...” questions at first, I deflect to rest of room to get them talking. Do your homework, stay up to date on current events – be ready! Address vacuum, hearsay and gossip with facts. You might have to revisit ground rules more than once.

Between Trump, Confederate Flag, Terrorism (domestic and international), Law Enforcement News, shootings, etc., – who can keep up? Well, you have to. I read multiple newspapers and watch multiple news hours every night (I watch all sides, all perspectives). You have to be a historian to do this work correctly.

COME ANGRY - Some of my participants are coming angry to my sessions. They are toxic about topic(s) and you have to address them right away, ignoring these toxic individuals (trying to ignore them) only “feeds them” – makes them stronger. Disarm them right up front. I talk about toxic participants and what happens when we “silently go along as participants” right up front – early in the workshop.

BIAS SQUARED - Plenty of people are still **coming to workshops with pre-conceived notions** about a workshop on preconceived notions, biases or prejudices. I said this before – many participants come to our kinds of workshops with bias on a workshop on bias or “**they are bias squared.**” I send ahead to participants our Myths of Diversity Article to minimize the bias squared. Anticipate said dynamics and deal with it head on.

DISARM THEM - So many toxic participants just hate all training, regardless of the topic (in the most toxic, dysfunctional organizations). Remind them they are paid to be there, you are paid to be there (instructor), and they are not back at their office doing their work. This is a triple investment, their employer is investing in them, enjoy, relax, learn, and grow. By addressing the bully right up front – all the other participants see you role model appropriate behavior.

SFP – Self-fulfilling prophecies are “alive and kicking.” As a hiring authority, manager, someone with discretionary power, if I don’t trust you because you are different (you are a new, diverse hire), and I treat you differently (less than) because I don’t trust you – well, you will become, you will eventually act like a person not to be trusted and then the manager can say “I told you so!” when this person leaves the organization. You would think this is a basic concept, but so many participants do not understand “you create what it is you believe about other people.”

RESPOND DON'T REACT – Too much emotion, not enough reason, and little or no common sense. We are teaching our participants to take a deep breath, respond, don't react – keep your emotions in check. There is a lot of vitriol, negativity, emotion in the workshop right now and we have to “calm it down” and let cool heads prevail. Easier said than done.

LINK FIELDS – there is this nexus, this overlap, this intersection, this connection between healthy organizations, being treated with respect, trust, engagement, morale, and higher performance. Make those connections. There are measurable (metrics) dynamics here – measure the connection between healthy in-tact work groups (understand the nexus I just mentioned) and retention, turnover, etc.

NOT SELF AWARE - I am less and less surprised when I see managers who can barely manage people like themselves treat their subordinates “who are different” so horribly and then wonder why their “diverse direct reports aren’t giving 110%!?” (Why our field will not go away, right?) Comments from a Manager (participant in my session) like – “**You should just be happy you have a job**” or “**You have not been here long enough for me to care about your opinion,**” and yet the Manager laments to me that “my people are just not giving it their all” or “I knew this ‘diverse person’ was not going to be good fit.” We have to point out your comments, your actions – have consequences. Allow the whole class to kick the comments around. The naïve manager needs to hear it from everyone in the room.

NEVERS / PREFERS - A good conversation about “Nevers” and “Prefers.” What are the actions, the comments that are inclusive, welcoming? What are the actions, the comments that are exclusive, insensitive, and not welcoming? Sometimes we have to spell it out because again, some people are naïve, not self-aware, or are mean-spirited or hide behind “I did not mean it” when that is not acceptable. Intent versus impact – what matters is not what you meant (no one can read your mind) but what you said, how you treat people!

PROVIDE TIPS, TECHNIQUES – You must provide participants with the tools, the tips, the methods, the techniques to resolve the diversity-related conflict. Coaching, problem-solving – conflict resolution techniques. In other words, your training must be skill-based, not just awareness based (waste of time and money).

DTG is in our 20th year of operations. We are celebrating 20 years – unbelievable. I understand that the diversity training group field or herd has been consolidating, laying-off, thinning, don't lose your faith, stick to your guns, keep up the good fight. At DTG, we are busier than ever. Current events continue to remind all of us that there is much work to be done, still a great deal of work ahead for all us practitioners. We are doing more trust work, more employee engagement work, toxic employee work, executive coaching, organizational health – all parts of the whole D & I strategic conversation. Fighting every day in the D&I consulting and training trenches,

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