



Implementing Anti-racist/Racial Equity Strategies

Antiracism is the active dismantling of White supremacy and institutional racism. It requires intentional individual and institutional action and dismantling of privilege.

In our meeting on March 18, guided by the work of the work of Robin Diangelo, Glenn E. Singelton, Valerie Alexander and others, we began to engage the topic of antiracism in a full group discussion to get a better understanding of it, learn what different organizations can do to combat it, and some things we can do as individuals. We agreed that rather than jumping from topic to topic over the next few months, it would be better to devote the next several meetings to the subject of implementing anti-racist and racial equity strategies.

At our meeting on April 15, we revisited Alexander’s video, “Why Your Antiracist Training Won’t Work”, so we would all have the benefit of her experience and advice. Then, guided by a series of questions, we worked in small and large groups to learn what other organizations are doing to combat racism and how we can work more effectively together to implement needed strategies.

What is your organization doing to combat racism?

Organization A

- Not much, DEI has been addressed in a very basic and general level
- Ethnicity and diversity of thought need to be addressed.

Organization B

- I am the first leader appointment to lead our organization’s DEI strategy.
- I am currently revamping the DEI training curriculum.
- Leadership feelings towards DEI are a mix of patience and frustration recognizing, however, that DEI is going to take a lot of work.

Organization C

- There is a greater focus on equity.
- Conversations about race are happening at the senior level.

Organization D

- The pandemic has severely hampered our DEI efforts given the fact that we were shut down.
- Due to layoffs resulting from the pandemic our 25 member DEI team has been reduced to now 5.

WDN Meeting Notes – April 15, 2021

- Throughout the shutdown the remaining members of the DEI continued to have dialogue on what to do when we reopened. We were very frustrated that our DEI outreach was limited to messages of support via social media.
- We are now in a mode of reassessing and restarting where we left off 18 months ago and we are confident that we will be successful because the support from the senior management team never wavered and they too shared in our pain.

Some personal comments and observations regarding what organizations are doing included:

Relabeling our initiative as Culture and Inclusion instead of Diversity and Inclusion

The emphasis is being placed on continuing to change the culture of the organization.

Change needs to stem from personal transformation.

Numerous initiatives involve training, but short-term training, void of structural initiatives, is often sought and overvalued with limited impact. One hour training programs are a waste of time. Worse than that, not only are they ineffective, they give cover to leadership that holds them up as evidence they are doing something.

WDN is valuable as a support group for people doing DEI work.

The survey of area leaders conducted by WDN a few years ago, revealed that many initiatives were grounded in the business case regarding untapped markets and innovation, but social justice issues played a second or back seat.

The James Baldwin video that we watched really struck a chord and poignantly highlighted the lack of progress in our country since the 1950's.

There is value in a business approach to DEI to engage senior leaders.

One organization's board asked to run the numbers to see how they could move toward creating equity in pay structures.

It is hard for people who think they have not been affected by racial disparities to work to mitigate them.

Most initiatives fail because we have not really prepared for them to work.

If leaders do not care, things don't get done.

WDN Meeting Notes – April 15, 2021

Most initiatives are just performative.

We must stop acting like we have all the answers.

I have to look at a huge Confederate flag every day.

Why do I have to convince people that equity is important?

A big barrier to all of this is fear, but we cannot just jump over it. We need to listen to each other's stories.

We should use WDN as a forum to learn and hear from each other.

We cannot stick with our own groups and make progress. We need to engage other perspectives.

We have a new VP of D&I with a large team that spans several states. We are training top executives first and we are targeting racism.

What is the true buy in to this initiative?

Antiracism should be codified in our policies, procedures and actions with measurements and goals.

Start at the top, lay down expectations, hold people accountable, measure outcomes

How do we get comfortable sharing what we are doing in an authentic way – not performative.

How do we embed equity on an organization?

One organization has developed equity action plans.

2020 taught us a lot that we can apply going forward.

WDN should organize a CEO Roundtable on racial equity.

Our next meeting is scheduled for May 20, from 8:30 to 10:30am. Details to follow.