

Talent Development 7 – Cultural Awareness and Inclusion

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The topics of cultural awareness and inclusion are part of the ATD CPTD Certification model. Basically, this involves skill in integrating diversity and inclusion principles in talent development strategies and initiatives.

I had a recent wake up call on this topic because I had just finished a leadership course but failed to create significant discussion on the social unrest that has occurred in the summer of 2020. I received a comment to that effect on a

feedback report.

Since then I have gone back and modified my course in several ways to elevate the topics of equity and inclusion. Here are six of the points I have added.

Point 1 - Diversity is an Asset

When you have a mixture of cultures and differing opinions, the team can come up with more creative solutions to problems. The ability to see issues from different angles enhances the quality of dialog as long as all individuals show respect for each other.

In nature, a monoculture is a weakened state. If you plant the same crop on a plot of land year after year, it will become susceptible to disease and produce lower yields.

Point 2 – Silence is being Complicit

Discussions that include individual differences can become uncomfortable, so many leaders tend to avoid them. That is a mistake. If you try to ignore the topics of equity and inclusion, you actually become part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

Dialog is essential because it leads to higher levels of awareness. The most dangerous part of bias is unconscious bias, so it is essential to discuss differences, and be receptive when others point out how you are showing bias.

Point 3 - There is no Fence Anymore

You must take a stand and declare your posture on fairness and equity. It is not possible to sit on the fence and let others argue the fine points of racial injustice, or any other form of prejudice.

Point 4 – Do not say “I Understand”

There is no way that a person from a privileged class can understand what it is like to be from a disadvantaged group. The person from a disadvantaged segment will have endured far more pain and feelings of inadequacy every day of his or her life than you can possibly imagine.

Recognize the emotional load that others carry, but do not patronize by saying “I understand.” You don’t.

Point 5 – Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable

Many of the discussions on equity and inclusion will be challenging and difficult. Both sides of any issue will make false steps along the journey to understanding.

Recognize and factor in the difficulty of the challenge.

Point 6 – Don’t Hire with the Idea of Getting Someone to “Fit In.”

It is a mistake to bring in people who are just like the rest of us. Always seek to hire people with differing points of view and backgrounds. Note: that does not mean you should seek to hire people who will be disruptive or abrasive. Rather seek to diversify the points of view for various people on the team.

These are just six points out of thousands that could be discussed, but they do demonstrate that I am trying to address the issue of cultural awareness, equality, and inclusion more consciously in my leadership work.

*Robert Whipple is also the author of **The TRUST Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals, Leading with Trust is like Sailing Downwind, and Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change**. Bob consults and speaks on these and other leadership topics. He is CEO of Leadergrow Inc., a company dedicated to growing leaders.*