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Topic: Diverse Workplace Communications

Subtopic: Workplace Diversity

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1. Disagreements will happen in the workplace; it is inevitable. When disagreements happen between ethnic, racial, religious, age, gender groups or any other group representing diversity they can threaten to become destructive to the workplace. What is the first step in resolving or at least de-escalating these kinds of disagreements?

- a. Put the subject of the disagreement aside until tempers cool off, do not engage until everyone can address the issue with a clear head.
- b. Look for areas of agreement or commonality and build on those.
- c. Immediately call a professional diversity coach before these disagreements go too far.
- d. Encourage your employees to embrace their differences and build on them.

Analysis:

- a. Incorrect. Putting the subject of the disagreement aside will not do anything to help resolve it; it is merely postponing the inevitable.
- b. Correct. Looking for the places where the disagreeing sides are in agreement will give you a strong place to start in helping them to resolve their differences. Use those commonalities to either come to a consensus, or find a third answer to the initial problem.
- c. Incorrect. A diversity coach can be helpful in the right situation, but in the moment of conflict, the conflict has to be negotiated and resolved first.
- d. Incorrect. Embracing differences will get combatting sides to become more entrenched if anything, this is not the right way to begin resolving there issues.

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2. Disagreements can happen in the workplace; but when disagreements happen in a diverse workplace, at what point should you contact a professional diversity coach?

- a. Seek out a professional when communications break down and you are unable to resolve the issues.
- b. Bring in a professional immediate, before communications can break down.
- c. No matter what the issue, there is nothing that cannot be amenablely resolved; handle it yourself you do not need a professional.

d. Contact a professional diversity coach as soon as you hear the first mention of people getting lawyers involved; that is the clue that you will not be able to solve this problem alone.

Analysis:

- a. Correct. You will be able to solve most problems on your own, but when communications break down and you find yourself unable to move forward in a positive way, bring in a professional diversity coach.
- b. Incorrect. Bringing in a professional diversity coach too early in the process is likely to escalate a situation that you might have been able to resolve much more simply on your own.
- c. Incorrect. Most minor cuts and scrapes can be fixed with some antiseptic spray and a bandage; but sometimes the damage is more severe and you need a doctor. In the same way, most communications problems in the diverse workplace can be resolved fairly easily, but there are times when the advice and guidance of a professional is called for.
- d. Incorrect. The strong preference is that communications problems in the diverse workplace never get to the point where anyone is even mentioning lawyers and legal action.

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3. Of the following, which is the best way to foster an open and communicative environment in a diverse workplace?

- a. Hold regular role-playing sessions, in which workers take turns playing at being each other.
- b. Encourage your workforce to only say good and positive things to each other, no matter what they feel or believe.
- c. Encourage your workforce to ignore their differences; it is their similarities that will help to bind them together as a cohesive unit..
- d. Encourage your workforce to value and embrace their differences; it is their diverse backgrounds and perspectives that will make them strong.

Analysis:

- a. Incorrect. This may be a tool used in therapy or to resolve ingrained disputes, but this is not a tool that will help build a strong and communicative team.
- b. Incorrect. Self-censorship is never a good idea when trying to create an open and communicative environment. Members of your teams should feel free to speak their minds, although it is always preferable to do so in a constructive way.
- c. Incorrect. Simply pretending that we are all the same blocks out the very differences that make diversity so important. Yes, we all share many things in common, but it is our differences that offer us so much richness as a team and inspires new ways of thinking in individuals.
- d. Correct. Embracing differences, sharing them openly, and celebrating them is the best way to foster an open and communicative environment in a diverse workplace.

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4. Your team has had an excellent calendar year. You would like to celebrate their achievements and so you are planning a Christmas party at a nice restaurant after office hours for them. Although you expected everyone to attend and to be appreciative, you have not received responses from some key members who you believe might not celebrate Christmas. What course of action should you choose?

- a. 71% of Americans are Christian; those who are not have to accept that they are in the minority. They should keep their mouths shut and attend the party, which they will probably enjoy anyway.
- b. Everyone is entitled to celebrate their holiday in their own way, those who choose are welcome to not attend. It is their loss, they will miss a good party.
- c. The focus of the party should be widened to include all of the various holidays that are being celebrated by your group and that might likely be celebrated by their spouses or significant others.
- d. It is best to avoid possibly upsetting anyone. Cancel the party and use divide the money you would have spent to add to everyone's holiday bonuses.

Analysis:

- a. Incorrect. Expecting people to attend an even that marginalizes them and makes them uncomfortable is not a good way to communicate how much you appreciate them and their work.
- b. Incorrect. Rewarding some workers and leaving others out based on their religious beliefs not only communicates a message that is antithetical to fostering diversity, it is also illegal.
- c. Correct. By including everyone's holidays and beliefs, not only do you make everyone feel included, but you are creating an environment in which coworkers are likely to learn about each other and develop their appreciations of each other..
- d. Incorrect. Avoidance is rarely an effective tactic. Among other things, it communicates to your workforce that they should avoid engaging with each other, which is the opposite of what you want to communicate to them.

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5. Former Reebok CEO Paul Fireman spoke about workers who bring diversity into the workplace. He said "you have to make real room for them, you have to learn to listen, to listen closely, to their stories." What does Fireman's comment mean?

- a. In order to avoid prosecution for discrimination you need to show good faith in encouraging diverse integration. Make sure you document these efforts.
- b. It is your responsibility to schedule one-on-one meetings with diverse workers so that if others do not fully accept them they know that they have an ally in you.
- c. You need to encourage everyone in the workplace to be open to really listening to diverse members of the team with the idea that understanding their perspectives will lead to greater acceptance of them and other diverse and divergent opinions.
- d. Fireman's comment was motivational, and motivational speeches are usually hyperbolic; they do not necessarily translate into actions in the real world.

Analysis:

- a. Incorrect. Fireman is not merely addressing legal requirements, his sights are set on developing strong integrated diverse teams.
- b. Incorrect. While one-on-one meetings may be a useful tool in different circumstances, Fireman is actually talking about bringing entire teams and workplaces together, not addressing issues of marginalization.
- c. Correct. Fireman is claiming that by making room for people and listening to the stories of their backgrounds and perspectives, the entire group will grow to appreciate and embrace the differences.
- d. Incorrect. First, Fireman's comment was not "merely" motivational; and second motivational speeches are not hyperbolic, they are frequently calls to direct action.

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6. Which of the following would NOT be a good idea in taking a widely diverse group of workers and attempting to create a well-integrated diverse team?
- a..
 - b..
 - c..
 - d..

Analysis:

- a. Correct. You will be able to solve most problems on your own, but when communications break down and you find yourself unable to move forward in a positive way, bring in a professional diversity coach.
- b. Incorrect. Bringing in a professional diversity coach too early in the process is likely to escalate a situation that you might have been able to resolve much more simply on your own.
- c. Incorrect. Most minor cuts and scrapes can be fixed with some antiseptic spray and a bandage; but sometimes the damage is more severe and you need a doctor. In the same way, most communications

problems in the diverse workplace can be resolved fairly easily, but there are times when the advice and guidance of a professional is called for.

d. Incorrect. The strong preference is that communications problems in the diverse workplace never get to the point where anyone is even mentioning lawyers and legal action.

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