



Ten Point Plan for Changing the Diversity and Inclusion Landscape

Introduction

Minnesota—both metropolitan and rural areas—faces significant challenges relative to others who are considered “different” because of race, country of origin, religion, sexual or gender identity, and a host of other labelling or grouping that we collective utilize to marginalize people.

A big part of the problem is that the state (and individual cities and towns) lacks a comprehensive plan (or frankly, any kind of plan at all) to help persons think differently (and more inclusively) toward “different” people.

The following is just such a plan. While drafted with the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul in mind, the plan can be easily adapted to have state-wide application.

The Plan

For starters, each city should appoint a diversity and inclusion “Czar” (I suggest the title “Inclusion Czar” since “inclusion” is more to the point of what’s needed in our community) to work jointly to vision, facilitate, coordinate and carry out a Twin Cities-wide plan that has the following elements:

1. Facilitated community-wide neighborhood meetings (what I call “Change Sessions”) that focus on our commonalities rather than our differences and which educate on how to live with compassionate inclusivity. Translated: residents of South Minneapolis will travel to talk to residents of North Minneapolis and vice versa. Change Sessions will take place throughout both cities in multiple neighborhoods over a two to three year (or longer) period. In other words, the meetings won’t be a one-shot deal.
2. Creation of a “Core Values” community education program that covers the economic value of a diverse work force and which trains on unconscious bias, micro-inequities, and cultural humility. Critically, the training should also cover “trauma informed systems” (e.g. how growing up in dysfunctional family and cultural situations can create life-long acclimation problems). Additionally, the training must involve such basic things as how to talk to

people who are “different” and how to involve, promote and sponsor persons of color, persons with disabilities, foreign-born persons and women. The training should include *testing and certification* that the participant successfully understands these critical concepts, along with a *pledge* that the participant will actively work to make the Twin Cities more welcoming to people who are “different.” Anyone should be able to participate in Core Values training and certification.

3. Enlistment of each city's chamber of commerce to train business leaders on Core Values. The list of certified businesses and their trained leaders should be published and updated regularly.
4. With the certification process, an employer should pledge that its workforce will mirror the percentage of non-white Twin Cities residents (approximately 36%).
5. Similar to what's expected of the Twin Cities business community, each city's school system should undergo Core Values training and have the same minority workforce target expected of Twin Cities businesses. The names of Core Values-certified teachers and administrators should be published.
6. A condition of granting any city-based license should be Core Values training and certification, with the idea that if a company is going to be sanctioned by the city to do business, it should be required to understand the customers and work force with whom it will interact.
7. Creation of a “Change Force” (as contrasted with yet another ineffective “task force” to study the problem) comprised of representatives from organizations that have already demonstrated how to effect positive racial and socio-economic change. (Examples include the Jeremiah Program, Joyce Preschool, Achieve Minneapolis and the collaborative that ensured for a diverse Vikings Stadium construction work force.) Working hand in hand with the Inclusion Czars, Change Force members will identify and implement additional strategies for positive, impactful and permanent change.
8. Enlistment of various white majority power centers to engage in Core Values training. This list must include the Minneapolis Club, the University Club, the close-suburb county clubs, and social service groups like Rotary and Lions clubs. Until we have buy in from these white majority power centers, nothing will change for the better.
9. Obviously with developments of late, the two cities' police departments need Core Values training and an assortment of structural changes. This should be a priority of the Inclusion Czars.
10. Finally, there should be an annual report on the “State of Our Diverse Community” which tracks progress or non-progress toward making the Twin

Cities more welcoming and equal for all of its citizens. In the event of nonprogress, people and institutions should be held accountable.

Some of the above no doubt is unconventional—perhaps even “radical”—but the reality is that we need to address long-standing issues with new and innovative strategies. What we’ve done thus far hasn’t worked very well.

I welcome input and constructive action to change the diversity and inclusion landscape in our communities.

Respectfully submitted,

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