

Group Activity – Case Studies

Practicing Building Relationships Across Difference

NW Diversity Learning Series, Sept. 20, 2016

Case #1: Black Lives Matter

#Black Lives Matter group has petitioned your organization to come and talk with your leadership team about your company's support for their agenda. One employee's relative was killed in a recent police action. The leadership team has asked the Diversity Council to make recommendations to them about this request. This is a meeting of the Diversity Council, of which one member has been an outspoken critic of the #Black Lives Matter movement and believes it is racist and has no place in your organization's discourse. This is the first meeting of the Diversity Council to discuss this matter.

Roles:

- Leader of the Diversity Council
- Diversity Council members with diverse identities (you can choose your real one or make one up)
- One DC member who is outspoken critic of #BLM
- The employee whose relative was killed is not a member of the DC
- One observer
- Person to fill out Case Study Worksheet at the end

Case #2: Transgender employee

A female employee announces to the manager that they are going to start a gender transition. The work environment is conservative with many members uncomfortable with the issue of transgender people. The manager calls together a group of employees to begin talking about how to navigate this process and keep this employee engaged and respected. You are the group your manager has called together; the manager is meeting with you.

Roles:

- Manager
- Members of the Group who are more conservative
- Members who are less conservative
- One observer
- Person to fill out Case Study Worksheet at the end

Case #3: Building the Wall

The Latino Employee Resource Group of a large construction firm has requested that management not participate in or support any building of a large wall along the border with Mexico. You are the management team discussing this request and how to respond. One of your executives is the sponsor for the Latino Employee Resource Group, another of your leaders is Hispanic, and one of your leaders is a staunch supporter of Mr. Trump, who has pledged to build a high wall along the U.S. - Mexican border.

Roles:

- One leader who is the sponsor for the Latino ERG
- One leader who is Hispanic
- One leader who staunchly supports Mr. Trump
- Other members of management team
- One observer
- Person to fill out Case Study Worksheet at the end

Case #4: Higher Leadership Among Asian American Employees

The Asian American Employee Resource Group has not seen any traction in promoting Asian American employees to higher leadership levels in the organization. They have been raising the issue for the last five years and have not seen much progress or get very patronizing responses. Asian Americans are significantly underrepresented at these higher levels. Several high potential members of the group have expressed concern that challenging senior leadership is high risk and could affect their own personal professional development. The Leadership Committee of the employee group has convened to craft a new strategy for approaching senior leadership.

Roles:

- Head of the Leadership Committee
- At least one member who represents the high potentials view
- Other members of the Leadership Committee
- One observer
- Person to fill out Case Study Worksheet at the end

Case #5: Sexual Harassment Charges

The recent public conversation about sexual harassment at Fox News reminds the woman manager, who heads up the Women's Employee Resource Group, of some of the inappropriate behavior she has continued to observe in the organization.

She decides to write a letter to the senior leadership team advocating for a much more comprehensive educational program on sexual harassment. Her belief is that the on-line training is very elementary, not very effective and that the company is just trying to check the box as opposed to demonstrating a commitment to changing behavior.

She was upset when she shared her observations with the Sr. VP of HR who said, "You're just being too politically correct—there's nothing really going on that warrants additional education."

Nevertheless, the senior leadership team decided to call a meeting to discuss the issue. Attendees include the Senior Leader, the Sr. VP of HR (mentioned above), the only woman leader on the team, other leaders, and the woman manager who wrote the letter. Everyone attending knows the content of the letter. The woman from the Women's ERG is hoping to have a meaningful dialogue; she does not know how the only woman on the senior leadership team feels about her proposal.

Roles:

- Senior Executive of the Leadership Team
- Sr. VP of HR
- Only woman on the Senior Leadership Team
- Woman manager who wrote the letter
- Other members of the Senior Leadership Team
- One observer
- Person to fill out Case Study Worksheet at the end