

DIVERSITY: TRANSFORMING DIVERSE GROUPS

CASE STUDY: 'DIVERSITY IS NOT ABOUT HOW WE DIFFER. DIVERSITY IS ABOUT EMBRACING ONE ANOTHER'S UNIQUENESS.' — OLA JOSEPH

'NAMASTE!
'I SEE YOU
(YOUR HEART)!'

The success of any company's BEE programme lies not in meeting quotas but in reaching, challenging and changing the hearts and minds of employees. This is where an effective BEE programme or deal (or any merger and acquisition) will succeed or fail.

Our client in this case study is a professional services firm who ostensibly sells knowledge and expertise. Due to the nature of their business, senior management spends a lot of time together and have over the years built strong relationships despite obvious differences in history, culture, generational groups etc. They realised, however, that the same could not be said for the levels below them.

Realising the importance of a strong coherent workforce they instructed us to design and implement an appropriate intervention to address the diversity issues identified.

Participants' responses when learning to 'see' a fellow employee for who they really are was a refrain of 'I never knew ... you had such a beautiful heart' and 'I didn't realise she struggled with the same issues as I do.'

'DE-RACIALISING'
DIVERSITY

Rather than focusing on racial issues we designed a two day Diversity Workshop that set out to:

- Focus on identifying similarities instead of differences;
- Focus on valuing the richness diversity adds and the energy it can unlock;
- Focus on better understanding and appreciating others, and really 'seeing them';
- Explain the ability to value and optimise diversity as an EQ competence that can be cultivated;
- Focus on individual and group introspection and personal growth;
- Give an intellectual and physiological understanding of how thinking paradigms and prejudices are created; and
- Create opportunities for people to get to know each other, see each others' hearts, and in so doing create new bonds and emotional allegiances with each other and thus to the organisation.

THE WORKSHOP CONTENT

THE TOPICS COVERED INCLUDED:

- What is diversity?
- The power of paradigms and prejudices, and how they are created.
- How my referent groups have influenced my world-view.
- Diversity as an EQ competence.
- Diversity questionnaire: what do I have in common with you culturally?
- The facets of diversity, including: gender, culture, sexual orientation, religious persuasion etc.
- Generational diversity.
- Communication: a tool kit for empathetic listening.

EXERCISES INCLUDED:

- Learning to trust another.
- Depicting 'my world' visually.
- Walking in another's moccasins.
- Storytelling around a campfire.
- Analysing a case study (movie).

GROUP PROJECTS INCLUDED:

- Depicting diversity in my workplace.
- Drafting a code of diversity conduct for my company.
- Creating games and competitions we can use to get to know each other better.

THE ATTENDEES SAID...

'The workshop was great fun, yet an eye opener and learning experience. If I could I'd do it all over again. I wouldn't change a thing, [it was] most perfect'

'The workshop changed the way I look at things. This should be done by every member of the company.'

'Thank you for this opportunity! I want to challenge myself not to cling to the past, but grab hold of the present and future.'

'It was an amazing and revealing experience. I came with no expectations and will go home with amazing insight into diversity. Brilliant! Aha!!'

'Contrary to expectation, I enjoyed it thoroughly. Salute to Danie. Thanks!'

{Attendees rated all aspects of the workshop between 90 and 100%}



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