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WEBB Advisory Group

Framing Equity Conversations in the Workplace

As many of us across the country begin to bring an equity lens to our workplace, how do we also build an understanding of the ways in which to build buy-in and support from our team?

It starts with framing these conversations. But how do you frame these conversations? Starting these conversations can cause anger, and passive-aggressive behaviors. We all have different points of view, making it sometimes harder for us to even begin to have these conversations. The key is to take time to understand the underlying reasons for behaviors, while also helping employees see how it affects others to have courageous conversations.

So where do we begin? Let us start with the Word Equity:

E = The first step in approaching any difficult conversation is to Empower and Engage Stakeholders, Staff and Customers. This first step in preparation is where you get ready for the conversation and set the stage. Proper preparation in this empowering and engaging step will make these conversations less intimidating and much more effective.

An important step here is to schedule meetings to have courageous conversations about equity far enough in advance so that everyone can prepare their own thoughts. Do not surprise people with these difficult conversations. Having these conversations without preparation can lead to staff being defensive.

Frame equity conversation in positive tones and not as must 'do's'. The point is to not make people feel like they must agree.



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Q = Quantify the level of inequities in the business. How? Ask good questions. Conduct anonymous assessments. Survey questions should ask for their point of view. Assessments and questions should show empathy and grace. We have all experienced the world differently and therefore do not all think the same way. In your assessments or surveys stick to open-ended questions (why, what, how) to encourage thinking and lead to inclusive discussion.

U = Understand the barriers to equitable access. Understanding does not mean agreement. It is okay to view barriers as opportunities. You can recognize these different perspectives and work towards solutions.

I = Integrate equity goals, approaches, and indicators into policies, plans and all meeting agendas. This is where your leadership will come into play. Do not be afraid to be vulnerable. Nothing will get solved if you bury these next steps forward and being vulnerable might inspire your staff to have courageous conversations when equity is integrated into all policies plans and meeting agendas.

T = Target resources. Targeting resources without an action plan is like preparing cookies without putting them in the oven. We need to work to build sustainable, long-term solutions based on understanding and trust. Having a clear plan to target resources ensures accountability.

Y = Yield outdated policies and processes that no longer serve the common good or are not inclusive or equitable. You got this! The more you address equity through crucial conversations with a positive and solution-oriented approach, the better your work environment, employee morale, retention, hiring and customer service will be.