

Becoming a Way-Maker: Diversity, Inclusion, Equity & Belonging

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Leading change requires fearless, brave and courageous individuals who must also keep in front of them the human behavior element – like the psychological version of Mount Everest they must climb and conquer. Edwin Hollander, behavioral scientist, provides this definition of “idiosyncrasy,” what I deem as the mountain to be overcome:

“an accumulation of positively disposed impressions residing in perceptions of relevant others; it is the degree to which an individual may deviate from the common expectancies of the group.”

If there is a behavioral unspoken norm in the group whereby all are expected to comply, this element is a barrier to overcoming fear and courage. In certain environments, someone who possesses non-conforming character attributes may be seen as less credible. Creativity and innovation are lost, and the cost of inauthenticity and profound passion goes with it, thwarting one’s ability to recommend unique and groundbreaking solutions.

For difficult yet life-changing work, we need more who are willing to offer their weird habit of expressing care for humanity, to provide a peculiar or quirky expression of how essential inclusion, diversity, belonging and equity is to all of us, our businesses, employees and the communities we serve. Someone who can be obedient to the call for uncomfortable conversations that sometimes lead to deafening silence at the executive meeting and in the boardroom. Actively choosing to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden perceptions, improve situations, celebrate achievements, and expanding the definition of diversity to include and uplift the underrepresented and marginalized.

Way-Makers are the leaders and enthusiasts in the areas of diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging who advocate for right action in the organizations and communities they serve. They fearlessly and tirelessly challenge the status quo to implement actions that drive systemic change. Way-Makers position themselves, and are viewed as, trusted advisors, thought leaders, innovators, and keepers of the non-conventional.

When I dream about organizational impacts in the purposeful and essential space of inclusion, belonging, equity, and equality, I dream of a corporate world where Way-Makers are viewed as essential to the business. We can ignite the deep sustainable change we seek if we abandon the fear of doing something that’s never been done before, in a way no one has ever done it. After all, isn’t inclusion and belonging founded on the premise that great outcomes are realized when we fully embrace difference?

