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Writing Sample Description Recap written after conducting an interview with a major client/SME.

Title Collaborative Leadership - A New Mindset for Tackling Global Issues

Length 2 pages

Audience HR professionals with interested in best practices for creating a civil and ethical workplace

Context The writing was posted on my employer's website

Collaborative Leadership - A New Mindset for Tackling Global Issues

Weyerhaeuser Chief Diversity Officer Discusses Respect, Diversity with UN General Assembly

Effenus Henderson, Chief Diversity Officer of Weyerhaeuser Company, shared his experience speaking before the United Nations General Assembly with Employment Learning Innovation's marketing coordinator Utoia Wooten.

Henderson and representatives from approximately 150 countries were invited by Assembly President Srgian Kerim to discuss the need for respect for a diversity of faiths and cultures. Representatives included leaders from various religious, governmental, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and experts from the private sector. Henderson participated in a discussion about best practices and strategies for fostering interreligious and intercultural cooperation in a corporate environment. Below are some comments Henderson shared about the experience.

General Observations

Having never presented at the UN before, Henderson shared that he was unsure of what to expect. He reported that the shared stories were moving, and it was an honor to share his insights on a global platform. Mr. Henderson said he was amazed that people from countries as diverse as Japan, Argentina, France, and Tanzania could relate to his personal experience. He also shared that the head of the delegation from The Philippines, one of the sponsoring nations, expressed how impressed he was that the remarks were personalized and powerfully relevant to the broader issue.

Key Excerpts From Henderson's Presentation

"The whole issue is that in our hands, we hold a lot of the knowledge and resources necessary to make change; the real challenge is how do you engage and invite folks to the table so that everyone's perspective is appreciated, embraced, and built into the decisions that are made..."

"Part of the whole inclusion strategy is allowing people to feel comfortable in bringing more of who they are to the table in such a way that you can relate to them on a personal level. In sharing a unique personal story, you will find that folks worldwide have had similar experiences. When you get down to the nucleus of who we are (family and human beings), there are many similarities in the way we approach life and our families..."

"In the US, we focus on traditional diversity topics around race and gender; however, if we are truly emerging into more of a global environment, we need to be mindful and respectful of what people from different cultural backgrounds and traditions bring to the table..."

"Major corporations are increasingly creating economies for many countries. Therefore, you can't solve global

issues with just government and NGOs; you have to bring in a "civil society," which includes the business sector, to solve issues inclusively. Historically the UN and NGOs have not had the best of relationships with the private sector. If problems are going to be solved, all parties involved must learn to work in more inclusive ways."

Tips for Building a Diverse, Inclusive Corporate Culture

When asked what advice he could share with other ELI clients about the process of building a diverse, inclusive culture, Henderson emphasized that, first and foremost, we must not just think of these topics as workplace issues.

"These issues should impact every aspect of our lives," he says. "I think part of the whole challenge is looking at educational strategies that seek not to impose a particular point of view or perspective, but instead begin as a dialogue where people can bring more of who they are in a way that is respectful and inclusive."

He further elaborated:

I see, as an example, an emerging trend in social responsibility and global sustainability. If we are committed to changing the earth, the way to address global issues is not prescribing a remedy that you, from your point of view have about how to solve a problem; instead, engage those who may, based on their traditions and history, have a different point of view. Collaboratively, you can create a shared mindset around things we all know we have to work together to solve – eliminating war, strategies to protect the earth, strategies specific to money and profitability, and so forth."

We know that people want to feel that their backgrounds, perspectives, and cultures are respected and valued. The process of building a diverse and inclusive corporate culture is about creating learning communities and ways to help people understand their biases (some of which are unconscious) in terms of how they react to those who happen to be different, in whatever form fashion that might come across. The goal is to think much more inclusively about strategies in our companies, communities, and society.

Henderson also shared some of the challenges Weyerhaeuser has faced in building and maintaining a civil workplace.

"My team and I are representative of many companies – we've not mastered this," he notes. "We are all students in this area; no one is an authority."

He also points out that it's an ongoing process: "The road to building and maintaining a civil workplace is a journey. You don't treat this as an event, an activity, or an initiative. It must be viewed as a social change and a process in organizational development. For the strategies to be effective [they] must be integrated into the company's fabric and its business strategies."

He emphasizes that: "The CEO and the leadership team must drive the process. The leaders have to embrace it; they have to understand it and be willing to step out on faith and take courageous steps to make changes necessary and treat it as a long-term process. "The real critical dimensions are leadership, role modeling the behavior, and treating this as an organizational development and change process."