Framework for Addressing DEI Resistance in Organizations

DeYoung Consulting Services reviewed three models/approaches to implementing organizational change and addressing employee resistance to organizational DEI efforts. They were sourced from the University of Minnesota's "Police and Black Men Minneapolis," Living Room Conversations, and Prosci's ADKAR model. As a result of the review, four key components emerged. These four components should not be seen as chronological steps; most or all can, and probably should, be done concurrently. There is no "final" step, as these four components can be done for as long as addressing resistance is needed.

1- Clear and Ongoing Organizational Communications about DEI Efforts As is the case for any organizational change, communicating about DEI efforts is vital, ensuring that employees have a clear understanding of what the organization intends to do, why it intends to do it, and how the change affects them personally.		
Communications planning	**High-level alignment of communications**	**Engagement of employees**
• Identify different audiences and design messaging targeting each one. • Enlist individuals who have high credibility to convey messages. • Determine the appropriate timing and channels for these communications, including email, newsletter, video, meetings, check-ins, etc. If possible, face to face communication is likely the most effective. • Continue ongoing communications and make messaging readily accessible.	• Tie the DEI efforts to the organization's mission and viability. • Ensure that leadership's buy-in and sponsorship of DEI efforts is regularly visible.	• Support managers first in understanding and buying into the change, as they are in charge of translating the message from the top to their employees. • Allow ample opportunity for two-way communications. Hold honest, straightforward and confidential discussions that help to correct misunderstandings and allow employees to give feedback, raise concerns, and engage in the process of change. Continually check for understanding and buy-in. • Offer and encourage one-on-one conversations that detail the purpose and elements of DEI efforts, and how they may affect an employee's job duties. These conversations are best used for answering the question, "what's in it for me?"[1]

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[1] Prosci ADKAR model

2- Building Empathy
Communicating about DEI efforts is vital but not enough. Resistance can be rooted in deep-seated beliefs, and it is important to provide opportunities for employees to build empathy with those who hold beliefs that are different from their own. In these conversations, employees can hear what others' hopes and concerns are, and what gives them a sense of purpose.

- Build empathy and understanding of other perspectives by holding a number of structured conversations and storytelling (see Living Room Conversation's Empathy Conversation Guide).[2]
- Begin initial conversations with lighter topics, moving onto more difficult topics in subsequent conversations.
- If DEI education occurs concurrently, allow conversations to reflect on what was learned in the workshops or other learning opportunities (see below). Additional conversations might reflect on current events or to support a certain group member who is struggling.
- Continue to meet for a period of time, with no pressure in the beginning to come to consensus around action. Displays of strong emotions during the conversations does not mean they have derailed.
- Only when the group has built trust over time, reflect together on the journey they have made so far. They may want to collectively create a narrative document that describes their journey and possible action steps.

3 - Education on DEI Related Topics
Building empathy lays a foundation for understanding, but to make traction in DEI, it is also important to educate employees about important DEI-specific topics. Making these education opportunities voluntary will increase buy-in, and can help avoid resentment that is difficult to overcome.

DEI education topics	Support for learning outside formal settings
Offer formal learning opportunities such as workshops or structured conversations about topics that build upon each other (see Living Room Conversations[3]), and if possible, engage a skilled facilitator to present. Topics may include: • Microaggressions • Implicit bias, affinity bias • Race and faith communities • Faith and the LGBTQ+ community • Gender • History of racism • Anti-racism movement, social justice	• Because employees will only retain a portion of what is covered in formal learning opportunities, allow additional reflection time (see section above about building empathy), and ensure hands-on application of what employees learn. Application activities could be identified at the end of each formal learning opportunity. • Support DEI champions with resources (including, if possible, compensation and training) to be able to coach employees through their learning and understanding of the DEI efforts.

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[2] https://livingroomconversations.org/topics/empathy/
[3] https://livingroomconversations.org/topics/

4 - Accountability for Clear Competencies and Behaviors
The previous three sections are efforts to build employee awareness and desire to change. But without holding employees and leaders accountable, that awareness and desire may not be enough to ensure they take action.

Communicate performance expectations	Integrate DEI competencies into performance evaluations
Communicate clearly and early what is expected of employees and leaders, as it relates to the organization's DEI efforts. In communicating these expectations, ensure employees and leaders are supported in their growth by tying performance expectations to the education opportunities available (see above).	Define DEI competencies that align with the organization's mission and values. Revise leadership competencies with a DEI lens. DEI competencies may include[4]: • **Knowledge and awareness of DEI topics**: Exposure to and understanding of the language and concepts of DEI • **Commitment to DEI efforts**: Commitment to being part of creating, maintaining, and improving a diverse, equitable, respectful, inclusive workplace. • **Self-awareness and commitment to personal growth**: Engaging in self-reflection, lifelong learning, and growth. • **Cultivating mutually beneficial and trusting strategic partnerships**: Conducting oneself in a manner that builds trust and enhances work relationships, and meaningfully engaging with those they serve. • **Inclusive excellence and allyship**: Demonstrating that all people are valued and engaged as members of the group, team, organization, or community through equitable, inclusive, and respectful behavior • **Measuring success and improvement**: Developing, implementing, evaluating, and continually improving strategies that promote equity and inclusion in their organization and with the communities they serve

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[4] State of Washington:
https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/shr/Diversity/SubCommit/DEI%20Competencies%20Wrkgrp%20All%20Employees%20Final%20Draft%20Accessible%2011-18-19.pdf)