



DiversityInc

MEETING IN A BOX

This Meeting in a Box tool is designed for distribution to ALL your employees. You may use portions of it or all of it. Each section is available as a separate PDF; you can forward the entire document or link to it on DiversityIncBestPractices.com; or you can print it out for employees who do not have Internet access.

This month's topic is how to include white men in your diversity efforts and get their buy-in to the business value of inclusion. We will discuss getting senior-management support, successful strategies for reaching middle managers, and how to refute negative arguments.

White Men & Diversity

For All Employees



1 GETTING SENIOR MANAGEMENT BUY-IN

➔ Make It Personal

PricewaterhouseCoopers (No. 2 in [The 2013 DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity](#)) has had a concerted effort to involve white men in diversity. It must **start at the to with the partners**, says Chris Brassell, Director, National Office of Diversity. He says: “We have 90-minute conversations with groups of 10 to 15 for a sense of intimacy. It’s a safe environment where candid conversations can take place. We need to hear their personal stories, to understand the intelligence of those in the room. Does he have a gay brother? Is he married to an Asian woman?”

Altria Group, one of [DiversityInc’s 25 Noteworthy Companies](#), holds a two-day executive-leadership summit each year, with a half day dedicated to diversity and inclusion. CEO and Chairman Marty Barrington kicked off this year’s session with a personal story about his immigrant grandparents and his own experiences being welcomed by people from different backgrounds at law school. “I want every single employee in our company to feel welcomed like that,” he said.

➔ Make the Business Case

CEOs and senior leaders “get it” more quickly when they see how diversity and inclusion helps them realize their business goals. Those who have the opportunity to come before senior leaders should always link diversity efforts to improved recruitment, retention and talent development, and to better customer/client relationships.

➔ Involve Them as [Mentors](#) and [Resource-Group Sponsors](#)

When senior executives are directly involved with helping people from underrepresented groups succeed, they often learn what it’s like “to walk in someone else’s shoes” and become much more involved in other diversity initiatives.

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Guided Questions for Employees

» Have your senior managers demonstrated a visible support for diversity and inclusion?

Are there quotes on your website and content on your intranet from them showing their support?

» Do you think it’s important for them to be diversity leaders?

Have they ever shared personal stories about their connection to the subject? How did that make you feel?

» Have you had a mentor?

If so, what did you and the mentor learn about each other and each other’s backgrounds? Did it change the way either of you behaved in the organization?



Chris Brassell, Director, National Office of Diversity, PricewaterhouseCoopers

“We need to hear their personal stories, to understand the intelligence of those in the room. Does he have a gay brother? Is he married to an Asian woman?”

2 REACHING MIDDLE MANAGERS

We have been told by [many companies](#) that the most difficult group to get on board with diversity-and-inclusion initiatives is middle managers, especially straight, white men. As Altria Group's Nancy Adams, Senior Manager, HR Client Services/Diversity/AAP, puts it: "Folks in the middle see themselves as having the most to lose. Their concern is that the middle-aged white guy is a dinosaur. I don't know what to do with people who think of it as a zero-sum game—if I'm up, your down."

For many companies, the most effective way to reach middle managers is through [training](#) that focuses on hidden biases and gets to the heart of why they don't feel or act inclusive. It's particularly important to train recruiters and line supervisors and to involve resource groups as much as possible in designing and implementing the training.

For these managers, making the business case is also important so they can understand why expanding the pie will lead to more opportunity and greater benefit to everyone, rather than taking something away from them.

Sharon Harvey Davis, Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer at Ameren (one of [DiversityInc's Top 7 Regional Utilities](#)), says her company "always assumes that white men want to be involved." This includes frequently highlighting supportive white men at all levels in the bimonthly diversity newsletter.

Guided Questions for Employees

- » **Are there middle managers in your organization who don't seem to understand how diversity and inclusion helps everyone?**
What would you tell them in your efforts to convince them? What would help you to know before talking to them?
- » **What type of training works best in your company (in-person, virtual, group) and how can you help teach others about their own hidden biases?**
- » **What business goals in your own department could be related to diversity initiatives to convince managers of the value of inclusion?**



Nancy Adams, Senior Manager, HR Client Services/Diversity/AAP, Altria Group

"Folks in the middle see themselves as having the most to lose. ... I don't know what to do with people who think of it as a zero-sum game—if I'm up, your down."

3 REFUTING NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

What should you say when you get pushback from white men on their involvement in and/or the benefits of diversity and inclusion? Michele C. Meyer-Shipp, Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer at [Prudential Financial](#) (No. 8 in the DiversityInc Top 50), advises you to do your homework. “We have to be really careful and thoughtful in communications. We tell them we do want a diverse workforce that includes everyone, but that does not mean it’s just people of color or women.”

Brassell says arguments that this doesn’t include them or that there’s no value in it for them or the organization can be countered with the business case. And he advises companies to challenge assumptions by “seeing our blind spots and the opportunity white men have to create and sustain inclusive environments.”

Guided Questions for Employees

- » What would you say if a white, male employee told you he didn’t understand why diversity matters to your company?
- » What would you tell him if he stated that he felt that if a person from an underrepresented group were hired or promoted, it would take something away from him?



Michele C. Meyer-Shipp,
Vice President and Chief Diversity
Officer, Prudential Financial

“We tell them we do want a diverse workforce that includes everyone, but that does not mean it’s just people of color or women.”

NEXT MONTH

Hispanic Heritage Month (for all employees)

DiversityInc Top 50 Best Practices (for diversity-department staff, resource groups, executive diversity councils, HR and communications staff)

White Male Executives on Diversity



George Chavel
President and CEO,
Sodexo

"When the **riots hit Detroit** in those horrible turbulent times in the 1960s, my dad's business was on Mack Avenue, the heart of where the riots had begun. We were **worried** that the **business was gone**. Finally, after about three days, my dad drove down to the business, and his entire **business was standing** as it was. The businesses around him were burned and gone, but his business was there. Years later, I realized it was because **of his reputation**, because of his own **commitment** and because of the type of person he was in the **community** that his business was safe and untouched."



Randall Stephenson
Chairman and CEO, AT&T

"I actually grew up in **Moor, Okla.**, which is just south of Oklahoma City, a **dirty little oil town**, right in the middle of tornado alley. It was a **very undiversified community**. So, I go off to **college**, in my freshman year, and my dad walks me in and I meet my roommate. My **roommate** was the first **African American I ever met** and I was kind of taken aback. I had never actually spent much time with an African American, but Willie and I became the best of friends, and suddenly, I realized there was a **whole breadth of experience and talent and capabilities** that I **had never been exposed to**, and it was a very eye-opening experience."



John Stumpf
Chairman, President and CEO, Wells Fargo

"I grew up in a **small town in central Minnesota**. I didn't meet a non-German Catholic until I went to college. I then had a chance to move our family to San Antonio, Texas, which we just loved. In San Antonio, about **two-thirds of the population was Latino**. I learned what it was like not to have the unearned **advantage of the majority**. The schools we went to were largely Latino. It was a powerful example for our family to learn another culture. ... Today, I have 33 nieces and nephews on my side of the family. And of those 33, 11 are adopted. Five are African-American and three are Latino. These **children have opened the eyes of our family** and have enriched our experiences and have helped us become a better family. If it could **do that** for a **large family** in a small community, think **what it can do for corporations**."



John Lechleiter
Chairman, President and CEO, Eli Lilly and Company

"When I was in my **first executive management job**, I **had lunch** with a group of **gay and lesbian employees** who happened to work in the area that I was responsible for. ... It really **opened my eyes**, and opened my ears as well, to listen better, to try to figuratively, if not literally, put myself in people's shoes to try to **understand their stories** and their journey more completely, and then to try to deal with some of the things that represented obstacles for them, that **kept them from realizing their potential**, that made them feel maybe just a little less significant in the scheme of things because of the ways they might be treated or things that were said, opportunities that didn't open up for them."



Jon Campbell
Executive Vice President,
Director of Government and Community Relations, Wells Fargo

"It's really important to have a **genuine curiosity** if you really want to learn about something that you don't know about. I had a chance that very few people will ever have—to really **get close to the leadership of a community [Navajo Nation]**, much less a community that you aren't a part of. So I quickly began to realize that this was an **amazing opportunity**. And I did have a genuine curiosity. At first I was kind of timid to ask questions, but as time went by, I would ask what was ever on my mind. I'd go, 'I don't know any better, but I'd really like to understand this.' **And I listened**. And many times I had **to have my mind changed** from what I thought my perception was going to be."

Ask the White Guy: Can a White Man Speak With Authority on Diversity?

BY LUKE VISCONTI

Q Upon returning to my office, reenergized by the DiversityInc event, I shared the information you addressed during your talk when you spoke about DiversityInc and mentioned your Ask the White Guy feature. When mentioning your feature to a group of white female colleagues, one responded by saying, What does he (a white guy) have to do with diversity? How does he create something like DiversityInc and how could he possibly speak with authority about diversity?

A I created DiversityInc as a consequence of having my consciousness raised by a friend, Tony Cato—at the time, a fellow Naval Aviator. He helped me start the thought process that led me to where I am today. He didn't have an agenda; we were simply swapping stories as we worked together, a consequence of his volunteering to help me when I was assigned to be the Minority Officer Recruiter in Naval Recruiting District New Jersey. Tony is not a go-along-to-get-along guy; he's tough, disciplined and very smart. He told me stories of being denied fair treatment because he's Black. It took me a while to understand how profound those stories are, but it did sink in eventually. I learned to share his indignation at poor treatment meted out as a result of discrimination—and the damage it does to our country.

White men are a part of diversity and there is a great deal of diversity among white men. I recently spoke to a group of 900 police and fire chiefs in Oregon—97 percent white men. I made the point that they might not think they have diversity as they sit around the firehouse or police station and see nothing but white men. But some of those white men grew up in single-parent households, some grew up in large families, some went to college on athletic scholarships, some worked their way through—and some didn't go at all. Some have a gay brother, some are gay themselves (and perhaps closeted). I told the chiefs that they could utilize the diversity they already have to gain new perspective on problems and in doing so would better fulfill their missions: to save lives. My point is that it is not skin color, gender or orientation that makes one

Watch Wells Fargo CEO John Stumpf discuss his personal commitment to diversity and how he holds his leaders accountable for diversity goals.

“good at” managing diversity, but mindset.

This mindset for majority-culture people requires an epiphany or an evolution in thinking that brings one to understand the extent of the discrimination around all of us that is perpetrated mostly by the majority culture.

Anyone can become “authoritative” about diversity. Nobody comes to the table that way. How you get there, in my opinion, starts with understanding history. I've gained a lot of perspective by reading books like Beverly Tatum's *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, Iris Chang's *The Chinese in America*, Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*, Douglas Blackmon's *Slavery By Another Name*, Ira Katznelson's *When Affirmative Action Was White* and Taylor Branch's trilogy on the civil-rights era.



Luke Visconti's Ask the White Guy column is a top draw on DiversityInc.com. Visconti, the founder and CEO of DiversityInc, is a nationally recognized leader in diversity management. In his popular column, readers who ask Visconti tough questions about race/culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability and age can expect smart, direct and disarmingly frank answers.

I will note that people who are not in the majority culture must deal with the majority culture as they try to retain their own identity, but those in the majority culture do not really have to deal with anything BUT the majority culture (doesn't make it right, but this is the reality). In this country, the majority culture is defined as white, male, heterosexual, Christian and not having an ADA-defined disability. But just because a person in the majority culture starts out with a much wider “blind spot” than people not in the majority culture doesn't mean it's impossible for white men to become open advocates for diversity and inclusion. It also doesn't mean that a Black woman (for example) comes with an automatic Ph.D. in diversity management (it's just a lot easier for the Black woman to see the problem in the first place). We must all come to the realization that, as a reader put it nicely, “I am not different from you, I am different like you.”