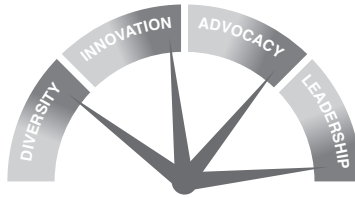


CHAPTER 20 DRAFT BLUEPRINT: DIAL UP

Diversity is not static; its dimensions are ever-evolving. I hope this perspective provides a fresh view of a fairly fatigued topic and encourages everyone to dial into their sense of purpose.



DIVERSITY AS A STRATEGIC ASSET:

- How can you use diversity to fuel innovation, catalyze creativity, foster adaptability, and build resilience?
- What are ways to tap into the myriad of viewpoints that challenge the status quo and enable organizations to approach problems from different angles to discover innovative solutions?

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Diversity transcends mere differences. It is not just a reflection of different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences – it is also a representation of the customer base. This makes it a powerful driver of competitive differentiation. In essence, diversity isn't just about acknowledging distinctions, it's about effectively harnessing them to gain a competitive edge in an ever-changing world.

INNOVATION AS AN IMPERATIVE:

- How can you help to drive the science-based, scalable, sustainable innovation that the world needs?
- What innovation opportunities arise as a result of megatrends such as climate change, health care challenges, changing demographics, or changes brought about by technology?

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Organizations must continually adapt, evolve, and explore new horizons for disruptive innovation to remain relevant. Innovation has become a necessity given the megatrends shaping our future and the challenges they bring. Embracing innovation is key to unlocking the secrets to a sustainable future for all through groundbreaking solutions that address complex global challenges.

ADVOCACY AS A DYNAMIC FORCE:

- How can you actively tap into your own sense of advocacy that is intrinsically motivated and can help to champion issues that matter?
- In what areas do you have genuine passion that can become a catalyst for transformation and a force driving positive change in our world?

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Authentic advocacy goes beyond voicing concerns or promoting a cause – it’s an unwavering commitment that fuels action. True advocates are driven by a deep and sincere belief in the change they seek. Their passion ignites conversations, mobilizes communities, and challenges the status quo to bring about change.

LEADERSHIP – NOT ABOUT A TITLE OR POSITION:

- How have you committed to the continuous journey of growth, characterized by a commitment to lifelong learning and a dedication to self-improvement?
- How can you bring positive change to individuals, teams, and organizations despite not having an overt leadership role?

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‘Leadership’ is the ability to inform, influence, and inspire others to power up their empowerment. It’s a qualification that is earned through experience, resilience, and dedication – through a proven track record of integrity and vision. True leaders emerge from crucible experiences of challenges and setbacks, gaining wisdom and resilience along the way.

PURPOSE REFLECTION

I continue to learn a lot in my own advocacy journey. But this much I know: Advocacy can be the glue that holds the three-legged stool of diversity, innovation, and leadership together while passion and a sense of purpose help combat fatigue. I recently talked about the following 3 questions one can ask to connect one’s passion and purpose to advocacy in my TEDx talk titled Why I reframed my “Why” – The context of purpose:

- Have you ever thought, things should be different, easier, or better for those who are coming after me?
- Have you ever shown up, spoken up, or stood up, for someone or something?
- Have you ever said, “Somebody, somewhere, somehow should fix this system?”

Chances are the answer is yes! If so, dial into your sense of advocacy and give it some agency.

Give it the legitimacy of purpose.

Give it the primacy of passion.

ON ADVOCATING FOR DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

In 2022, when I had the opportunity to attend the White House STEMM Equity Summit, I was struck by a deeper appreciation for the word allyship – the central idea that you can advocate, support, and show solidarity for a group that you are not a member of. It has elements of leadership, relationship, and partnership rolled into it – the leadership of proactive action, not just thoughts, prayers, or words – but action.

The actions involve educating oneself, recognizing one’s own privilege and bias, and then exercising that awareness to advocate and act for equity. It is the realization that partnerships for a common purpose make us powerful,

they help dismantle the power dynamics that may disadvantage or advantage others.

It may seem like a tough ask – to acknowledge a power structure and give up power. But true allies drive lasting change. In this section, we discussed ways to think about the allyship journey through commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) – especially in STEM fields, whether you are a student, young professional, parent or educator, member of an affinity network, an aspiring advocate, or seasoned leader. Everything we talked about in Section 1 can help in developing effective advocacy skills as well.

There is a heightened recognition of the importance of including diverse perspectives in STEM, and in many ways, the realization that science can be most impactful if diversity is reflected in those who learn, teach, and practice science. Diversity helps to ensure a wider lens on problems to solve, a more comprehensive reflection, and a better view of the solution set.

A more diverse science community makes for better science, and a more diverse workforce fuels better innovation. And that behooves us all in STEM fields to be allies and advocates.

True allies know that showing up does help, speaking up helps more, and standing up in action really matters. Specifically, there is a lot of discourse on the need for men to be allies for the cause of gender equity. Men in leadership positions need to recognize that there can be more discrimination, harassment, disparity in pay, and social isolation for women in STEM and act to change it. Moreover, social justice and sustainability are tightly linked with science when we think about DE&I at a global level.

We need more individual advocates who are compelled to take action – those who feel the injustice and have the strong desire to change things for themselves and for future generations. They do it through grassroots efforts or affinity groups or forcing action through leadership hierarchy.

My own commitment helps me to persist when progress is slow and the process is fatigued. The desire to be an ally also forces me to reflect upon my own privilege, in all its intersectionality, and continue to progress in the journey of allyship across the spectrum – gender and gender expression, race and ethnicity, orientation, ability, age, and all the qualities that make us who we are.

Understanding my own capacity to use time, talent, money, and heart has allowed me to share from my pockets of privilege to advance equity in STEM. I hope it will make me a better ally for other causes as well, which in turn I can use to impact organizational change and contribute to collective action.