Connecting Banks and Communities Through Cultural Agility

Workshop Facilitation & Discussion Guide

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The Workplace Attitudes Scale

5. Appreciation:

This rating means that you admire or look up to these people. While they may be different than you in some ways, you see these differences as positives that contribute to the team or organization. You feel very comfortable with these people and choose to spend time with them as co-workers or customers – largely because they possess traits, skills, or attitudes that you appreciate.

4. Acceptance:

This rating indicates that you find these people easy to accept as co-workers or customers. While they may be different than you in some ways, those differences are not significant and you find that you share many of the same values or attributes as they do. You are comfortable around these people, enjoy having them as coworkers or customers and find them easy to work with.

3. Ambivalence:

This rating means that you are uncertain about how you feel about these people. Something about them makes you feel less than fully comfortable. While you try to work with them, you minimize personal interactions and the amount of time that you spend together. If you could choose, you would prefer not have them as co-workers or customers.

2. Avoidance:

These people are different in ways that make you feel uncomfortable. You regard their differences as negatives that detract from the team or organization. You prefer to avoid them and do not want to work with them as colleagues or customers.

1. Animosity:

To you, these people are simply repugnant. They hold views or have attributes that you find offensive and which violate your core values. You believe they do not belong in your workplace, and you do not want them as customers. Working or coming in contact with them causes you a lot of discomfort.

Facilitating the Workplace Attitudes Scale & Behaviors Exercise

Review the Workplace Attitude Scale categories and definitions with the class.

Set-Up: before the class begins, you and your co-facilitator should prepare five sheets of newsprint. On each piece of flip-chart paper, list one of the five Workplace Attitude Scale categories (Appreciation, Acceptance, Ambivalence, Avoidance and Animosity) at the top as a heading. Then number the page from 1 to 5 down the left-side of the page leaving plenty of room between each numeral for the group to record their answers.

During the class: after reviewing the Workplace Attitude Scale, divide the class into five groups. Assign each of the five groups to one of the five categories on the Workplace Attitude Scale. Post or tape the pages on a wall in the training room. Have each group leave their seats and come stand in front of their category.

Instructions for Completing the Exercise: Tell the class that in the next few minutes you and your co-facilitator will take turns and will give them five scenarios. For each scenario, each group is supposed to discuss what behaviors might be exhibited towards a person in their category based on the given example. For example, if the first hypothetical example was that a new employee had just joined your organization in your department, what **verbal and non-verbal behaviors** might people exhibit towards this new employee – based on the Workplace Attitude Scale category that your group has been given? (Note: we're not asking people how they ***personally*** would treat a person in their Workplace Attitude Scale category, rather how would most people behave towards a person in that category …)

Here are the five scenarios: (After each scenario, give the class a few minutes to discuss and record their responses. Compare and contrast the answers of each group for all five Workplace Attitude Scale categories before moving on to the next scenario…)

1. It's a new employee's first day at your workplace (or in your department)…
2. The new employee has just had an incredible success…
3. The new employee has just made a major mistake…
4. The new employee has come to you for help or a favor…
5. Now, look at all of the answers and behaviors on your sheet. If a new employee was consistently treated this way each and every day, by everyone, how likely would they be to succeed at work (expressed in percentage terms…)?

Debriefing this Exercise... Questions to Ask, Points to Make

1. Ask the group what they learned or what insights they gained from this exercise.

2. Make the point that our attitudes towards peoples' differences show up in our behaviors. (Each of the five categories represents an attitude...)

3. **Ask the group which attitudes and behaviors should be acceptable in your workplace and which should be "out of bounds"**. For example, we could all readily agree that the categories of Appreciation and Acceptance should definitely be acceptable. On the other hand, the categories of avoidance and animosity should definitely be out of bounds or unacceptable. **The real question is: where does the category of Ambivalence belong? Should it and the behaviors associated with it be acceptable or unacceptable in your workplace?**

4. Before providing the answer to this question, ask the class if there is one factor that should be decisive or determinative in how we answer this question. (Hint: it's already listed on the participant's pieces of newsprint...) That's right. It's the likelihood of succeeding in your workplace (expressed in percentage terms). Notice that when employees are treated with Appreciation and Acceptance, their likelihood of success is likely to be 80 to 90 percent (or better). But typically, most groups say that that the likelihood of success decreases to just 50 percent when people are treated with Ambivalence...

5. **So, the key point from this exercise is that your workforce should create workforce and patient care environments characterized by Appreciation and Acceptance of diversity rather than a culture of Ambivalence...**

6. **Note: there is also another important diversity point to this exercise**. If we Ask ourselves who we are most likely to treat with Appreciation and Acceptance, the answer, if we are really honest, is people who look like us. People who looks like us, dress like us, speak English like we do. The behaviors that we exhibit towards these people represent our positive biases, unconscious perhaps but definitely welcoming and inclusive. Similarly, the people who we are most likely to treat with Ambivalence and the behaviors associated with it are those people who are likely to be least like us. They may not look like us, dress like us, speak English like we do. These Behaviors represent our negative biases. **The task then, for all of us, is to move those that we have in Ambivalence up into Appreciation and Acceptance**.

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7. **How do we do that? How do we move people that we have in Ambivalence into Appreciation or Acceptance?** There's at least two ways. One way is to think your way into a new way of behaving. The other way is to behave your way into a new way of thinking. Either way, we as humans do not like cognitive dissonance. We will either change our behavior to accord with new beliefs or change our beliefs to accord with our behaviors. But here's a critical point. People do not have to give up their most cherished beliefs or values in order to move people from Ambivalence to Acceptance – they only need change their behaviors. Employers have no right to require people to adopt a given set of beliefs. But employers have every right to insist upon a common set of respectful behaviors in the workplace.

8. Finally, there's a word for these subtle differences in treatment that either create a working environment characterized by welcomeness and inclusion or unwelcomeness and exclusion. That word is **microinequities.** First discussed by MIT professor Mary Rowe, microinequities are subtle differences in behavior or treatments that do not rise to the level of formal or legal discrimination but may, nevertheless, make all the difference between whether someone feels valued and accepted at work. Microinequities may also give rise to DRI's – diversity related incidents of disrespect that negatively impact employee productivity and engagement.

    For a White Paper by Professor Mary Rowe on "Microinequities and Microaffirmations" click here:
    http://www.wholecommunities.org/pdf/privilege/9_Micro-affirm-ineq_MaryRowe.pdf