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NANCI'S LISTENING

"Guiding Principles for Diversity and Inclusion: Why the "Business Case" Is Limited"

by Nanci Luna Jimenez



This month we are delighted to highlight another dynamic LJS Associate, Shoshanna Cogan. Shoshanna is a phenomenal trainer and facilitator with a deep skill set and a broad range of national and international facilitation experience.

Shoshanna met Nanci at an IAF conference where she was immediately drawn to Nanci's approach. "Nanci's work is very powerful and very transformative," says Shoshanna, who was struck by how well Nanci's style aligned with her own passion for building bridges between people to help transform their lives, their communities, and the world. "I personally fell in love with how [Nanci] works with people, she's deeply

Over the years I have attended and spoken at countless diversity conferences and events. I've been gently "coached" to stress the "business case" for diversity-to highlight how it: impacts the bottom-line, affects recruitment and talent management, shapes team effectiveness, and influences decision-making at every level of the organization. Even though it is clear that the "business case" for having programs, staff, and resources to support organizational diversity and inclusion efforts can appear strong, it is also true that **if the guiding principle is "improving the bottom line," the implementation and results of these programs will fundamentally miss the intended mark.**

Even though we may not always recognize them, individuals, organizations and societies have a set of guiding principles that determine appropriate actions and interactions. **These principles provide a testing ground to determine whether our actions are in alignment with our values.** If your rationale for having a recruitment program is one of compliance without an internal understanding and valuing of creating a diverse workforce, you will have a meager or haphazard effort with minimal results or high turnover. If your underlying value for creating a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) position is to increase profitability and the position does not demonstrate a clear connection to improving the bottom-line or if greater economic conditions prevent the organization from being profitable regardless of having the CDO in place, then the position will disappear, lose funding or be viewed as "nice, extra thing we do even when we can't afford other nice, extra things." This last attitude leads to resentment within the organization even as the CDO is ineffective in achieving success.

During this challenging economic time it is more important than ever to be clear why you as an individual, leader in your organization, or your organization as a whole is committed to diversity and inclusion. **If this commitment is tied to a guiding principle of profit, it is likely your commitment will shrink along with your bottom-line.** It's easier to increase a commitment when there are more resources to spread around. It's when we have fewer resources that our fundamental values are tested.

present and is a model for how we can get and stay there - she helps make it sustainable."

Soon after that initial meeting, Nanci offered Shoshanna the opportunity to become an Associate with LJS. Since then, Shoshanna has co-facilitated workshops with Nanci in the US, Canada, the Netherlands, and most recently at the IAF conference in Barbados. Shoshanna's 25 years of experience with facilitation and training is a fantastic addition to LJS's technical capacity and her vibrant dedication to the people she works with is unmistakable. "I have an enormous amount of passion and a holistic focus for transferring capability," says Shoshanna, "I support people in transforming their worlds - both personal and professional."

Shoshanna is committed to giving back and does a significant amount of pro-bono work with international communities including Indonesia and Central America. She points to her own experiences with difficult life situations and being the recipient of social services as the catalysts for her desire to help the people who are responsible for coordinating those services. "One of my favorite quotes," say Shoshanna, "is 'Bliss is when your greatest gift meets the world's greatest need,' that's when we're living our dream - mixing our spiritual, personal, professional, and global passion."

With her extremely full travel schedule, Shoshanna turns to nature and meditating to help fortify her. From hiking in her home state of Vermont to snorkeling in warm waters, appreciating the natural world "refills my fountain" says Shoshanna. She also shares

For example, as a parent perhaps you have a guiding principle to provide safety and security for your child. One way you choose to uphold this principle is by putting your child to bed by a certain time every night. By providing this structure you communicate dependability, consistency, and reliability. This **one action represents a variety of implicit values that also communicate unspoken volumes** to your child about who you are as a parent and who your child is to you-and maybe even who your child is to the world!

What happens if your child fights going to bed at the same time every night and your guiding principle gets tested? Will you decide to coerce, bribe, or threaten the child in order to get him or her to comply with your bedtime goal? Will you invoke your power as a parent to "force" the child to follow the bedtime rule? Will other values or guiding principles, perhaps for order, obedience, or regular sleep for yourself trump the guiding principle for safety and security? **It is during these tests that what's really important to us becomes clearer and it is also when we have the biggest struggles to stay in integrity with our core values.**

By developing self-awareness about your guiding principles, you can become more flexible in your actions while staying true to your core values. There are countless ways to communicate "safety and security" to your child in addition to a regular bedtime. Once you are clear about the underlying value that motivates a certain behavior, a million creative solutions can appear, and you can let go of rigidly implementing just one option.

The same holds true for organizations. If the guiding principle for your diversity and inclusion program is profitability, then compromises that negatively impact human beings, relationships, community and the environment will be made to uphold profitability.

I would ask you to **look closely at not only the limits, but also the inevitable pitfalls, of the "business case" for diversity.** What other sustaining principles could underlie a diversity and inclusion effort in your organization; principles that are not vulnerable to market share and bottom-line numbers? What are your personal guiding principles when it comes to diversity?

In the next series of Nanci's Listening columns, I'll delve further into guiding principles that I think promote diversity and inclusion in our personal, professional, and community endeavors. I look forward to deepening this conversation with all of you via email, coaching or on our blog. I hope you will join me on this journey!

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Visit the LJS Calendar for more information!

Nanci's passion for physical activity and at 51 just completed her third sprint triathlon.

At LJS, we are so glad to continue our collaboration with Shoshanna and look forward to sharing her skills, energy, and years of experience with all of you.

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