CONVERSATIONS TOWARDS AN EQUITABLE PRACTICE

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COMMON THEMES

- Recognizing and raising awareness of our own individual biases is an important first step to then being able to interrupt and counteract them.

- It's important to address bias and intercultural competence issues proactively instead of reactively. Incorporate training into the office orientation and onboarding process, create space and time for continued conversations to occur, and incorporate the ability to have difficult or uncomfortable conversations into the workplace culture.

- For whole office trainings, it is beneficial to bring in a third-party facilitator instead of self-facilitating from within the office.

- Ensure that office leadership reflects the diversity and inclusion initiatives that the office is working towards, and that the pathways to leadership are clearly outlined so that everyone has the same expectation for promotions.

- Be conscious of how the work culture and work expectations affect different people in the office. Evening meetings, weekend workshops, and happy hour work events can be exclusionary to many.

- Find ways for the dominant group to be strong allies for the non-dominant groups in the office and the industry.

NOTES BY GROUP

Group 1:

- Managing partner-initiated diversity and inclusion advocacy group with a cross section of the office at various levels, 4 people in Seattle office, 20 people office wide, and they meet quarterly

- Careers group in the office - focuses on workplace

- Diversity for better business performance

- Bias - being able to recognize in self and in others - how to provide feedback

- Recognizing majority role - broaden perspective

- Understanding position - testimonials - we should all contribute to conversation so people are freed up to advocate for other passions

- Firms reflecting client groups can build relationships for better business

- We are designers - we can be better designers by acknowledging bias

- Innovation happens where there are areas where there are dissimilarities

- Affinity bias - when you see yourself in favoritism, "fit"

- Why passed up for opportunity? Because I'm a woman, young, parent? Because I'm a man?

- At some point will old perspectives die? How quickly? What will it take?

- We carry the baggage of previous generations

- Changing to fit in - trying to fit in starting in school, famous architects, role models, and educators

- Parent hours may not fit into system expectations - how to maintain pathways to leadership?

- Unrealistic expectations for people who do not have dependents and can be more flexible

- Experience with meeting contractor when needing to pick up kids

- Formation of teams to reflect client? Skills-based or how I look? Feeling used

- Unwelcome by community because did not reflect people project served

- Visibility - how do you feel being visible? Do you have a shared experience?

- Bias training
    - Effective?
    - Surveys & 3rd party consultant
    - Leadership training
    - Part of on-boarding
    - Raising awareness
    - Better to do something that to just do training? Combination of both is best
    - Build diversity discussion into day to day activities (lunch & learn, etc.)

Group 2:

- Bias that language will be a barrier if not fluent

- Bias that a person is a "good person" if race is shared

- Bias is not a topic of conversation (small company) or only a topic when it "matters" (large company)
- We are all immigrants
- Ah ha moments when discover un-taught / the other side of history
- Training - two readings: (negative) sarcasm and (positive) correct themselves with awareness
- Interrupting bias
    - Be brave to be yourself
    - Share your unique culture
    - Correct language "guts"
    - Fear of speaking up due to…
    - To have no fear we need a person in authority to have our backs
- We believe it will change but it will take effort
- We need to be able to learn from each other

Group 3:
- Awareness of the differences (sets you a part in a good way) and that can be an advantage
- Empathy is important
- Having people in leadership that are like you
- Regional progressiveness in Seattle (more awareness here)
- Finding mentors that have the right fit professionally vs. those that "look like me"
- Cultural awareness needs to be discussed as a continually evolving subject
- Can become a buzzword - need changes to be genuine
- Have open discussions with people that are different from you - get to know each other and develop trust and mutual respect
- Top down approach to influence change - developing a framework for cultural diversity & hire for diversity
- Beware of implicit bias
- Resume without name (gender) no photo - remove chances for implicit bias
- Having leadership present at events like this
- How are equity policies developed at firms? Inclusionary?
- Go beyond the employee handbook

- Equal Opportunity Employer (required for 100+)
- Diversity - better product and more profitable (these firms may have a lot of other functional practices in place - investment in outreach and inclusion
- Understanding disparities in professional "styles" vs. skillset
- Visa challenges can make working with international talent difficult
- People need to feel invested - be included and to take ownership in influential cultural diversity
- How do you make culture conversations meaningful and productive
- Use a 3rd party - people will feel more comfortable speaking up and proper training to keep conversation on track /focused with outcomes

Group 4:
- Bias from people outside of industry, within relationships in the office social culture, and within meetings / on the job site
- EDI Plan - how do you start the conversation?
- JUST - pay equity
- What tools are available to measure diversity in your firm?
- Advocate / Sponsor / Coach
- Transparency regarding professional development
- Need for moderator, neutral party, human resources

Group 5:
- Not being aware of bias - eye opening
- Culture of the profession can be exclusive (i.e. quality of pens, handshake)
- If someone doesn't understand our culture than they are "less than"
- "White-splaining" makes news more palatable
- Capitalize on differences (don't focus on similarities / comfort zone)
- Skill that needs development - managing diverse people
- "Too nice" vs. too bitchy
- Build on your authentic strengths
- Official hiring goals (go to minority universities)
- Place that people want to be

- Recruits take behavioral assessment (use for team building)

- Strength finder

- Good annual review process is key

- Women gather together once a year to identify takeaways, brought in a facilitator

- Responsibility for advocating for minorities is on the dominant culture

- Create an environment where it is okay to have difficult conversations

- Managing through voice is a dying means

- Flexible schedule needed, traditional work schedules are changing

- Trust is important

- Make people feel comfortable by understanding the people you are working with

- When people are reduced to workers and don't share personal at work, can't have understanding

Group 6:
- Most people in group come from offices where the leadership is predominately white men at the top and there's a diversity of the bottom of the leadership

- Some firms are moving toward women leadership but struggles are there

- Business case - young and race inclusion is on the radar attracting new talents

- Couple agendas - Just + Inclusion

- Changing culture - at least three members of the new group to allow or increase comfort levels for all - the "in" group and the "out" group

- Example of a crisis event changing office culture - company was going to be sold - created more room for women in leadership - more women in the hire group

- Changing perceptions - roundtables identified abusive comments on computer after "me too"

- How to help others speak truth to power or a majority in the group - help others find their voice to stand up for themselves

- What is the path to leadership? Mentorship programs are not the norm in architecture

- "Just" program is a tool

- How to stand up to inappropriate behavior? In the moment - confidence, trust takes time, team

- Age, gender, difference creates problem (for standing up to inappropriate behavior)

- Mentorship programs? IDP? Outside your company, executive board/advisory board, AIA sponsored

Group 7:

- Firms represent some ethnic and gender diversity, but not necessarily at the leadership level

- Base level diversity - 60% men / 40% women enough?

- Social aspect at work - client meetings and employee bonding after hours (excludes parents)

- "Cool kids stay late" mentality - pervasive culture at school and at firms and is a failure at the management level (not interns fault)

- Under-bidding projects makes this a perpetual issue (if no one pushes back to unrealistic demands)

- Narrative regarding promotions for diversity vs. merit based

- Men in higher positions re-stating a design idea after it's already been said by a woman (or not listening to full idea, but formulating response)

- Building good teams based on skillsets (not just years of experience)

- Clear expectations for promotions

- Personality types - sales/outgoing (get projects) vs. detail oriented but quiet

Group 8:

- Discussion group was extremely diverse (geography, experience, culture, communication style)

- In what ways are we ourselves biased?

- How do other's biases show up?

- How does communication style factor in?

- What is Seattle culture?

- So what about being a woman?

- How can we become trained / train others?

- Awareness of ourselves and awareness of others is key

- We need to read out own and others biases (particularly as our cultural landscape shifts)

THANK YOU FROM YOUR SESSION LEADERS

Marijana Cvencek. Architect at **Schemata Workshop**

Margaret Knight. Architect at **Schemata Workshop**