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Soliciting Feedback During Crisis—Part I

Hosted by The Belonging Project—Bringing the power of **ubuntu** to inclusion and diversity in the profession.

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What is Feedback?

Feedback is any information your environment gives you about how you are interacting with it. Feedback can also be seen as information on how an individual is doing in efforts to achieve a goal. In our work places, we receive feedback from colleagues and supervisors on our progress on projects, the quality of our work, and whether or not we are meeting expectations. Feedback can be formal or informal. Feedback can also be written, verbal and non-verbal.

Why is Feedback Important?

Feedback is essential to team building, work relationships, career progression and to achieve high performance as teams. Effective feedback boosts productivity and engagement, creates healthy environments, and leads to better business results. Feedback is an essential tool for teaching and developing skill sets, motivating employees, keeping projects on task, developing talent in the workplace, promoting professional growth and leveraging talents and skills of employees.

Ways in Which Feedback Fails

There are many ways in which feedback is ineffective. In this session we will explore four frequent scenarios individuals find themselves in:

- Soft feedback and evaluations.

- Vague and broad feedback.

- No feedback.

- Feedback first learned in a formal evaluation.

The Intersection of Feedback with Inclusion and Diversity

Ineffective feedback or absent feedback often come up in discussions of retention and advancement of diverse talent. Whether it is attorneys of color not receiving feedback and, therefore, not having an opportunity to improve their skills and grow, or soft evaluations where women and racial minorities are not told honestly how they are doing the result is the same—stagnation, loss of engagement, unpreparedness for promotion opportunities and ultimately, loss of diverse talent.

While the skills to give effective feedback are widely lacking, not just in the legal profession, an additional dimension exists when the feedback is ineffective as a result of cultural differences, bias, and/or systemic and structural diversity obstacles. Ideally, organizations would have identified blind spots around implicit bias and cultural competency and tweaked the feedback and evaluation systems to minimize the impact on diverse talent, and also equipped all to mitigate bias and be culturally fluent. The reality is, majority do not work in those kind of ideal environments and so while we equip supervisors to give feedback more effectively, we must also equip diverse talent to get the information they need to succeed.

Advancement of diverse talent requires an understanding of how to effectively give feedback, and for feedback systems and delivery to be inclusive and cognizant of diversity.

Seven Strategies to Get Feedback When It Is Not Given

It is essential that leaders give effective feedback. When they do not, individuals can take ownership of seeking and soliciting the feedback they need. While this can be hard because straightforward requests may be met with ambiguity, we are invited to be creative in getting the information we need to improve our skill set and continue to meet professional benchmarks. These strategies include:

- Ask for feedback.

- Do a comparison analysis.

- Be an investigator.

- Make your supervisor a strategic advisor.

- Clarify, clarify, clarify.

- Find translators.

- Remember, it starts with you.

Conclusion