

# Postcard



## CHECK YOUR PRACTICE...

### What's Your People's DEI Story?

I am a storyteller—maddingly so for those who would much rather I "get to the point"! Of course, a cryptic response—preferably supported by data and statistics—is sometimes what's needed. Stories, some say, are for kids. And in the DEI world of *serious* challenges like dismantling racism; or of DEI strategies, plans and training; or where twice as many women are leaving directorships than joining, a story is the last way we think of as a path to serious work...Or is it?

Imagine this. You want to tell the world that your people live and breathe Company Values. So, you share the results of surveys, 360 evaluations and customer feedback. Or, if you're like one famous hotel chain, you tell the story of the elevator attendant who, overhearing a senior couple's dismay that the husband forgot his meds back at home, calls his brother who lives in that town to pick-up the meds. He then drives 8 hours there and back and delivers the meds to the couple.

What feeling, emotion or response does this story elicit in you about this hotel as a place to stay on your next trip?

How about this story. A CEO is making his farewell presentation to the organization as he hands over to his successor. The CEO looks at his charts, graphs and data showing how well the company is performing. Then he looks into eyes he knows will glaze over in exactly five minutes. He asks, "How many of you have seen the movie *Hidden Figures*?" (Its about the group of African American women who were the *computers* that charted John Glenn's first space flight.)

He zeroes in on the scene where one of the women, Dorothy Vaughan, realizes that automated computers will replace her and her colleagues. She borrows a library book on the computer language FORTRAN and studies it. She becomes the only person on the team equipped for that future.

The new CEO did present the data. But what do you think the buzz was for the rest of that day among staff—stats...or "What's our FORTRAN?" If you said the latter you're right.

What's the DEI story on your people's lips today? Is it your DEI vision statement...or their experience with managers not held accountable? Your pristine DEI Strategic Plan...or their excitement to champion the Plan—unsolicited—because they *know* the organization is serious? Your stats and data...or the care you took to ask them their thoughts then changed course when they told you?

Build your DEI story:

1. **Ask.** Find a way to gather people's true experience.
2. **Listen.** Your most powerful stories will come from unexpected places.
3. **Act.** Remember that having shared, people are asking "What will they do with what I said?"

More than any DEI statistic, strategy, or data, stories communicate your value for diversity. Facts inform the mind, but a story engages the heart. Your hiring goals say what you plan to do—and so they should. But a story...it says to your people, "You matter!"