Are You the DEI Consultant Your Industry Needs?

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As a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) consultant for corporations and organizations, times have been busierthan ever. My workload has drastically increased in response to the current protests and global conversations over racial inequity.

Right now businesses, organizations, entrepreneurs, and corporations are trying to figure out how to a) get the right messaging and marketing in regards to DEI and b) incorporate more inclusivity into their businesses with high regard to racial equity.

Since I've been having so many conversations around DEI, I've noticed an important opportunity and form of business differentiation for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial thinking business professionals. I believe that right now, there are incredible opportunities in the marketplace for people to integrate DEI into their work in very interesting ways.

For example, a consultant partner with my firm, Lori, has done design management for some big name businesses and startups. Lori realized that the spaces she worked in would benefit from having DEI infused into the discipline in a more intentional way, so she left her executive corporate job to form a practice where she specifically consults on DEI in design management process. Her expertise at the intersection of both design management and DEI helps her to recognize more

meaningful solutions.

Creating new opportunities by infusing DEI work into your offerings

Although everything seems shaky and uncertain right now, it is still a great time to create new offerings and do good work in the world.

If you're looking to gain a competitive edge and stand out from others by adding value, I encourage you to take the time to look across your organization, your startup, or your business and see where the lens of DEI can be strategically integrated.

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As a DEI practitioner and consultant, the value I offer clients is not only helping people to make organizations better, more diverse, and more equitable – it's also expertise on how to market DEI as an essential opportunity. Creating spaces of belonging requires just as much strategy as it does proper

messaging and education. A significant portion of the work of inclusion is clear communication of the DEI agenda.

Here are a few questions professionals in marketing communications should be asking:

"How should brands be thinking of diverse representation and social justice?"

"Why should brands be turning towards equity and how do we do this effectively?"

"What is optimal marketing for business from a DEI

perspective?”

“How can I best ensure this brand message resonates with XYZ population?”

These are questions that DEI practitioners can help creative directors and marketing communications professionals think through. But what if the DEI lens was directly infused into the marketing discipline? How much more valuable would those professionals and businesses be to their clients?

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DEI consultants are adept, skilled, and passionate about deriving solutions that people can infuse into their offerings. But I see other people taking their primary knowledge base and layering DEI on top of that.

So the question is…

How do we integrate DEI into everyday disciplines, departments, and leadership?

Entrepreneurs thrive off of innovation, taking risks, and identifying points of competitive distinction from other brands. Whether you are an entrepreneur or someone who is part of an organization, you can find ways to differentiate, evolve, and integrate DEI practices.

Here are some ways you can step up your DEI knowledge and authority:

- Get a certification and study DEI professionally (Cornell Diversity and Inclusion, Diversity Executive Leadership Academy, Society for Diversity, Institute for

Diversity Certification, Georgetown University—all offer DEI certifications).

- Become a general student of DEI and audit how that work and discipline can make the most sense intersecting with what you do (whether it's in marketing, risk management, corporate responsiblity, HR, etc.).
- Attend DEI expert Zoom calls, webinars, conferences, and presentations to increase your cultural competency and expand your vocabulary and knowledge. It's important to learn and understand DEI in both theory and in practice. Resources abound right now as a result of the racial inequity crisis – books, podcasts, white papers, etc. If you want to understand it, you can.
- Simply ask for this type of opportunity, or decide to create the opportunity. At this time, it may be required to take action and help other partners, colleagues, and clients to see the benefit of this infusion of DEI. By deciding to create the opportunity, you are creating the action and momentum to push this work forward.

As an entrepreneur or business owner, why not try to nurture and intentionally fuse DEI into your business? Whether that involves more training or doing work and research on your own, you can better impact your's or your client's business.

Innovation occurs at the intersections

By fusing DEI into your own expertise and discipline, this can help you to break out of your current network and circles. And this is especially valuable in these socially distant and disconnected times.

I encourage you to engage with other circles of consultants,

thought leaders, and business owners. Ask them, “How would you intersect this with this your work?”

Fresh ideas and insights occur at the intersection of disciplines and cultures. Research shows over and over that diversity of thought is what breeds high levels of innovation. So it makes sense that people would see this as an underlying opportunity to enter new marketplaces, new products, and new services.

Start with a clean slate and reimagine your discipline, your career, or department with DEI as being a superpower. Begin to have these deep conversations, asking, “How can we impact the outcome?”

If there is anything we’ve learned in these current times, it’s that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is not just a nice to have but integral to the sustainability and progress of our society.

And not only that, but DEI can be used to help entrepreneurs, business owners, and consultants stand out in the market, offer unique services, and create opportunities to better change the world. So I encourage you to reflect upon your own work and ask yourself, “Are there ways I can get more involved with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to grow my business or support the businesses I work with?”

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