

True HR Leadership: Standing Firmly In The Right Place

By Peter A. Steinmeyer

Abraham Lincoln once said, “All through life, be sure and put your feet in the right place, and then stand firm.” While his advice was certainly not directed to a multitasking, BlackBerry-wielding, PowerPointing modern HR professional, Lincoln’s words nevertheless summarize what the best HR leadership is about: defining, exemplifying, and applying a company’s core values.

Even a full-time employment lawyer will struggle to stay on top of the latest laws and regulations, but an HR professional who follows an inherent sense of fairness will instinctively do the right thing. And by consistently doing the right thing, and teaching others to do the same, he or she will help to create a trusting environment where people want to work, succeed, and help others do the same.

Not every HR professional operates by this principle, but those who ignore it are making a serious and very damaging mistake. It is far better to put your feet in the right place, and stand firm. That is true HR leadership.

Peter A. Steinmeyer is the Managing Shareholder of Epstein, Becker & Green, P.C.’s Chicago office, where he represents employers in all aspects of employment law.

Inclusion is Activism

By Joe Gerstandt

Organizational and community inclusion is not simply about what you do *not do*, though that is often what I hear about. When talking about issues related to diversity and inclusion, people regularly tell me about how they do *not discriminate*, do *not judge*, do *not exclude*, etc. Admirable aspirations certainly, and I hope that we can expect our organizations and leaders today to be serious toward those goals.

But those things do not equal inclusion. Not discriminating is not discriminating. Inclusion requires something more. It is not rocket science; it is far more complex than rocket science. There are messy, bizarre, unpredictable, beautiful, and unique human beings involved.

And being human gets in the way of inclusion.

Good intentions aside, open-mindedness aside, and level of education aside, human nature is always at work, and it nudges us and nudges us. We tend to be more comfortable with people that we see as being like us. We tend to avoid tension. We tend to be more comfortable in situations that are known and safe than situations that are unknown. Regardless of how “open minded” or “non-judgmental” we like to think we are, things like labels, assumptions, stereotypes, attribution errors, cognitive biases, and implicit associations are always pushing on our decisions about people.

It has always amused me that diversity and inclusion work is thought of as this warm, fuzzy body of work that consists of a lot of hugging and dancing around the campfire. Hardly. There is a reason that most people and most organizations and most communities avoid this work: it is incredibly hard.

Inclusion requires action. If we are not intentional, proactive, and deliberate about inclusion we will always unintentionally exclude; that is the role that human nature plays.

What is your organization doing? What is being done intentionally and deliberately to reach out and include different people, practices, and perspectives right now? Are you creating intersections or avoiding them?

Be good to each other.

Joe Gerstandt is a keynote speaker and a Workshop Facilitator. www.joegerstandt.com.

EPSTEIN BECKER GREEN

Congratulates and Recognizes the

Illinois State Council of SHRM

and all

HR Leaders in Illinois

ATLANTA | BOSTON | CHICAGO | HOUSTON | LOS ANGELES
NEW YORK | NEWARK | SAN FRANCISCO | STAMFORD | WASHINGTON, DC

www.ebglaw.com

EBG
EPSTEIN BECKER & GREEN, P.C.