

Dr. James Rodgers, The Highly Acclaimed Diversity Coach, Proposes a Unifying Principle for Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is a relationship discipline. That is the conclusion by pioneer, researcher, and thought leader, Dr. James Rodgers.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, February 28, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Diversity and Inclusion work has a long and deep history. Starting with the work of Dr. R. Thomas (diversity) and Dr. J. Howard (inclusion), the field has been accelerated greatly by the emergence of an ever-increasing diverse mix of human types entering the workplace and the marketplace. Diversity and inclusion are complementary concepts intended to equip individuals, organizations, and societies for the reality of living in a multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic world. A key principle for success at D&I is building and maintaining effective relationships amid the new reality.

“In my latest research project, I talked to nearly 300 diversity advocates who I contacted through LinkedIn and asked one simple question, “what do we need to do to make D&I more accessible and acceptable to more people?”, Dr. James Rodgers reports. By a large margin, the answer revolved around a need for a common language (definition) and a common understanding (intent) for D&I work. There was general agreement that what we are doing currently is not sustainable as a movement or as a change effort. As one respondent said, “we need to agree on something – a definition, a principle, or an intention that could propel all our efforts regardless of our interest (race, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.).”

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Dr. James O. Rodgers Ph.D., FIMC

“For over twenty-five years I have been trying to bring

some discipline to the field of D&I,” says James Rodgers, the Diversity Coach, and a pioneer in

the field. It was clear to Rodgers that the simple conception of diversity management proposed by Dr. Roosevelt Thomas and the complementary conception of inclusion proposed by Dr. Jeff Howard represented a winning formula for individuals, teams, enterprises, and society. It was also clear that the attractive language of diversity and inclusion would lead to cooption and distraction. Rodgers knew that diversion and distraction could be a recipe for the decline in the effective execution of those simple principles. Rodgers had seen how TQM and Six-Sigma gained traction by establishing a disciplined set of principles and practices that were accepted by everyone in the field. That same level of discipline is needed for D&I to deliver on its promise.

Rodgers continues, "Over the years, that simple, clear, and logical conception of D&I has been co-opted and diluted as people and groups with a broad range of interests have adopted the language of D&I. The result is an overly complex, disjointed, undisciplined set of definitions, approaches, and word salad that almost ensures there will be no progress. We need a unifying theme."

In the process of writing his new book "Diversity Training That Generates Real Change" (with co-author Laura Kangas), Rodgers details that he was forced to reflect on the actual outcome of the training and advice he had offered over the years. It came down to creating more and better human-to-human relationships. Rodgers recalled stories of how people had overcome their natural reaction to differences and had developed deep, comfortable, productive relationships that benefitted all the parties. "My conclusion: D&I is a relationship discipline. I began sharing that insight with those I interviewed. It was almost universally saluted as a valid and reasonable unifying principle for D&I work of all kinds," states Rodgers.

"I have seen interest in the field rise and fall, primarily based on social unrest rather than strategic intent. With the current wave of hyper interest in D&I, we have a chance to finally converge on a sustainable and beneficial approach to D&I based on a unifying principle. That will allow everyone to sing from the same sheet of music so to speak. Right now, new practitioners are left to make up their own meaning and approach to D&I with a predictable outcome of chaos and confusion. We need to do better, and we can," concludes Rodgers.

Aurora DeRose
Boundless Media Inc.
+1 951-870-0099
[email us here](#)

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