

# In the Company of Different Leaders



23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010

Summary Report

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# In the Company of Different Leaders

## “Managing your Career in times of Transition and Turbulence”

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### Discussion Dinner 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010 Summary Report of Proceedings

#### Introduction

“In the Company of Different Leaders” is a forum for influential Senior Black and Minority Ethnic Leaders from across the private and public sectors to collectively address the critical leadership issues, opportunities and challenges of today's global and multicultural marketplace. Led by the Diversity Practice Ltd, the forum seeks to:

- Focus and exchange views on the leadership issues, opportunities and challenges of today's global and multicultural marketplace
- Engage in courageous strategic conversations with other Senior Leaders that will galvanise personal and collective action for change
- Create a tipping point for that change through open and constructive dialogue with key organisational leaders in global talent, diversity and HR
- Provide mutual support and networking with like minded Different Leaders
- Gain new insight and expertise and share strategies for leadership and career success

On the evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010, Credit Suisse hosted a Discussion Dinner for the forum focused on “Managing your career in times of Transition and Turbulence”. The thirty attendees engaged in a lively, stimulating debate and call to action centred on 4 critical questions:

1. What is going on in your organisation in these times of turbulence and transition, and how is it impacting on BME Different Leaders?
2. What are the innovative approaches that organisations are taking to retain diverse leaders and position them for success?
3. What do you need to do to survive and thrive as a Different Leader through these periods of turbulence and transition?
4. What is the strategic, inclusive, collective approach that Different Leaders can and should be adopting?

#### Key Themes

1. With estimates of 500,000 job cuts to come, the public sector downsizing and redundancies is well underway. One Government Department alone is set to shed 15,000 people in the next 2 years. However, for the private sector companies in the room, the cutbacks have been going on for the last 18 months and the worst is over. Indeed the good news is that many of these companies, particularly in professional services, legal sector and finance & banking, are experiencing renewed growth and are actively recruiting.

2. The turbulence in the public sector could have a disproportionate impact on some BME communities.
  - a. Historically, around 40% of Black African and Black Caribbean employees worked in the public sector, compared to around 30% of White employees, 25% of Indian employees and 20% of Pakistani employees.
  - b. The problem of attrition is a prevailing situation, and the current retention programmes in place do not fill the void left through the loss of BME leaders. In the Civil Service and in Higher Education, it was felt that there are few senior BME Managers, so downsizing only emphasises the point that when “you lose one senior BME person, you lose 100%”! The situation is further compounded by the perception that Management recruit and retain in their own image, and this is the message that cascades through the organisations.
  - c. In the NHS, like the Civil Service, BME staff at the lower levels are most affected by redundancies, and a previous study revealed that during recession BME staff were the first to go.
  - d. In addition, many BME public sector employees are making a conscious decision to accept the redundancy packages on offer and either seek to transition into private sector roles or set up their own businesses.
  
3. Nevertheless, this period is still a time of tremendous opportunities for BME leaders. In particular, the rise in the Emerging Economies and their continued high growth rates means companies are actively seeking individuals with the cultural capital<sup>1</sup> and bicultural competence<sup>2</sup> to be the bridge into these dynamic markets. As one of the banker’s in the room said, “My bank recognises that to retain a competitive edge in the global marketplace it is imperative to have diverse staff with the knowledge and experience of the local markets in Asia, the Middle East and Africa.”
  - a. The challenge especially for the UK born or raised BME leaders is to re-engage with and communicate to others, their cultural heritage and the values, skills, relationships and leadership attributes they bring, and leverage their difference as a distinctive leadership asset.
  
4. There are very few or no role models for aspiring BME leaders to look up to or turn to for support or guidance. This is particularly the case at the Executive Board level of organisations. Where they are present in any meaningful way, it tends to be in global firms who have brought in Black or Asian leaders from abroad.
  - a. Awareness of BME role models is an encouragement to others that it is possible to breakthrough to the top.
  
5. It was clear from the Discussion that while organisations are taking steps however tentative to retain diverse leaders and position them for success, there are few really new and

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<sup>1</sup> The capacity to accumulate non -monetary and relationship capital generated outside the workplace

<sup>2</sup> The ability to effectively function in and lead across more than one culture, switching and shifting seamlessly within different national contexts and across geographical boundaries

innovative approaches. The two interlinked and necessary tracks were organisational changes and individual actions.

- a. There was a clear sense that BME leaders must take charge of their own careers and destiny in order to be positioned for success – “Black leaders need to be more responsible for their own success, stop making excuses and do what needs to be done to succeed”.
  - Be more organisationally savvy. Understand how the organisation really works in order to effectively play and ultimately change the rules of the game.
  - Where appropriate confront those in authority to prevent discriminatory practices
  - Line managers have a powerful voice in career progression, and BME leaders need to get better at influencing their managers and leading up the management chain.
  - Individuals need to empower themselves to take action and move forward
  - There was widespread understanding that BME leaders have no choice but to work twice as hard as their white counterparts. A white participant contributed to the discussion by stating that he was not aware of the mentality amongst white colleagues of feeling the need to work twice as hard. Perhaps this is because their mindset is that of ‘a level- playing’ field.
  
- b. “A top down approach is required. The organisation and senior management have to provide opportunities, nurture and grow talent and help those that perform to progress forward”. Organisational changes either already underway or that need to be implemented include:
  - More dialogue to seek common understanding and way forward between BME leaders and White peers, and to get full engagement with senior management. Focus on the organisation’s principles and values, service delivery, and customer needs.
  - For the private sector, to put in place systems to measure and monitor career progression and satisfaction of BME staff.
  - Inclusive leadership and unconscious bias training, already in place in some organisations, need to be common across all. And then, leaders need to be held accountable for their behaviour and actions.
  - A root and branch examination and development of the organisation’s culture to make it more inclusive.
  - Use of leadership development programmes for BME leaders can inspire confidence, equip and position them for success, but critical that these programmes must be aligned with creating a more inclusive organisational culture. .
  - Employee networks can add value – but need to be positioned and run in an organisationally and politically savvy way.

## What needs to be done going forward?

- Different Leaders need to be and to feel empowered. “We need to find and use mentors from inside and outside our organisations. We need to get better at doing what we do.”
- Organisations need to do more to value, grow and retain their BME talent pipeline and to provide the opportunities for that talent to progress. Targeted development programmes can be a great support for this.
- Different Leaders need to get out into their communities and invest in the talent and future leadership. There should be a general call to action to influence the lives of the younger generation through volunteering and mentoring.
- We must consider the situation beyond ourselves, consider and support the future generations so they do not repeat the errors of the past. There is a need to document and communicate more widely the experiences, contributions and achievements that BME individuals have and continue to make to organisations.
- Networks have an important role to play. They can provide an outlet for BME leaders stressed from “a working twice as hard” mindset or who feel isolated in their working environments. They can also work to repositioning as partners with their organisations to ensure that they contribute strategically to minimise any adverse impact on their members
- Try and see the times of turbulence as an opportunity and go forward and exploit this.
- At a wider level, to change society BME communities need to increase their political awareness, involvement and influence, and use the power of their growing numbers and vote particularly in London to bring through the changes they want to see.

## Conclusion

What became clear, as the discussion and debate evolved, was the need and desire for collective informed purposeful leadership. In the Company of Different Leaders will continue to provide a forum for Different Leaders to come together to proactively address and take sustainable action in relation to the key issues, challenges and opportunities identified. The ambition is that the forum will move from discussion to collective, strategic, insightful and inclusive action with every expectation that the tipping point for change and growth will emerge from the unique insights, valuable expertise, and strong relational capital of Different Leaders.

We look forward to your continued support and contribution.  
The Diversity Practice Team

<b>DISCUSSION DINNER ATTENDEES</b>		
<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>
Danny Chesterman	Business Director	Ashridge Consulting
Alioune Camara	Co-Chair Multicultural Leadership Network	Bank of America Merrill Lynch
Isobel Acquah	VP, Senior Leading Sales Support, Global vendor Finance	Bank of America Merrill Lynch
Jemima Jefferson	Diversity manager	Credit Suisse
Selvin Brown	Deputy Head, Race, Equality & Diversity Division	Communities & Local Government
Amogene Parris	Network Chair	Communities & Local Government
Kulvinder Bassi	Chair of forum for all equality networks	Department for Transport
Sonia Bates	Senior Consultant	Diversity Practice
Sandra Johnson-Blake	Head of Enterprise and Regeneration	Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
Melanie Eusebe	Advisory Manager	Ernst & Young
Timi Okuwa	Campaign Leader	Ernst & Young
Rob Anarfi	Manager Internal Audit Div	FSA
Barbara Lindsay	Senior Policy Advisor	Government Equalities Office
Christine Yates	Equalities & Diversity Consultant	Imperial College of Science, Technology & Med
Kome Emuh	Project Analyst	JP Morgan
Carol Valentine	Community Delivery Manager,	Kent County Council
Michael Parker	Chairman	King's College Hospital
Tchi Mbouani Ngaliae	Managing Director	Kosia Ltd
Sarah Ebanja	Former Deputy Chief Executive	London Development Agency
Norma Gall	Executive Assistant	LSBU
Leroy Logan	Superintendent at Olympic Policing Co-ordination Team	Metropolitan Police Service
Michael Howard	Head of Equality & Diversity	Middlesex University
Rob Neil	Head of Engagement Networks	Ministry of Justice
Donald Simpson	Head of Group Tax	National Grid
Yvonne Coghill	National Programme Lead, Breaking Through	NHS Institute of Innovation and Improvement
Lawrence Kitaka	Sales Executive	Nomura
Bernell Bussue	Director	RCN
Rachel Osikoya	Head of Diversity, Inclusion & CSR	Standard Bank Plc
Carol Campayne	Executive Director	The Diversity Practice
Caroline Harper Jantuah	Executive Director	The Diversity Practice
Michelle Fanus	Conference & Events Manager	The Diversity Practice
Trudy Morgan	Associate Director	Turner & Townsend
Folabi Ogunlesi	Managing Partner	Vesta Healthcare Partners