



8 TACTICS FOR COURAGEOUS WORKPLACE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE

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01

Why These
Conversations
Matter

02

Preparing for the
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04

Avoiding **Pitfalls**



01 WHY COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS MATTER

- Significant, long lasting organizational change is typically bottom up
- Racism operates 24/7 – impacts are personal and professional
- Everyone benefits when we bring our authentic selves to an organization
- Silence changes nothing
- Discomfort yields progress (it's a feature, not a bug in the process)

*“Not everything that is **faced** can be **changed**, but nothing can be **changed** until **it is faced**.”*

James Baldwin



WHAT DO YOU SEE?





02 PREPARING FOR THE CONVERSATION

1. Pick the right setting

Consider time, location, groups vs. individual discussion, etc.

2. Do your research

Research relevant facts (e.g. industry stats, internal diversity data, relevant metrics)

3. Analyze stakeholders and find allies

- Who is your audience and what might be most persuasive to them?
- Are there others who share your viewpoint who would be willing to chime in?

03 FACILITATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

4. Use provocative questions to make difficult points or surface issues initially

- Questions are inherently less threatening and tend to land differently
- Questions can be a great way to spur discussion on a difficult topic

“Jeff, I’m noticing that we don’t have any speakers of color on our panel thus far. Given our commitment to inclusion and diversity, does anyone have concerns about the message that might send?”

5. Use “we” vs. “I” language

- “We language” reinforces common goals and assumes positive intentions
- Assume positive intent (remember different perspectives)

“I’m sure we all want to create an inclusive environment so we should probably give additional thought to the diversity of our speaker panel.”



04 AVOID PITFALLS

6. Be authentic and clear

- Don't feel bad about addressing microaggressions, discriminatory practices or other injustices – organizations don't improve on their own
- Show up as your authentic self
- Don't suppress emotions; instead, manage and leverage them appropriately

7. Stay focused

- Anticipate defensiveness (again, research is key)
- Anticipate topic avoidance and guide conversation back on topic (as needed)
- Use clear, precise questions - *“How many Blacks are represented on the executive leadership team?”* vs. *“How is our company doing on diversity and inclusion?”*

8. Be action oriented

- Be prepared to suggest potential actions, solutions or next steps to enable forward progress
- Doesn't mean that your raising a concern or making a point implies that the solution now becomes your responsibility



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Workplace Anti-Racism Presentations

- Antiracism 101 – Demystifying Terms and Concepts For Improved Collective Understanding
- 5 Uncomfortable Truths Colleagues Of Color Need You To Know
- 10 Ways To Promote Racial Justice In The Workplace
- 5 Disturbing Signs That You Might Not Be An Antiracist After All
- 8 Tactics For Courageous Workplace Conversations About Race

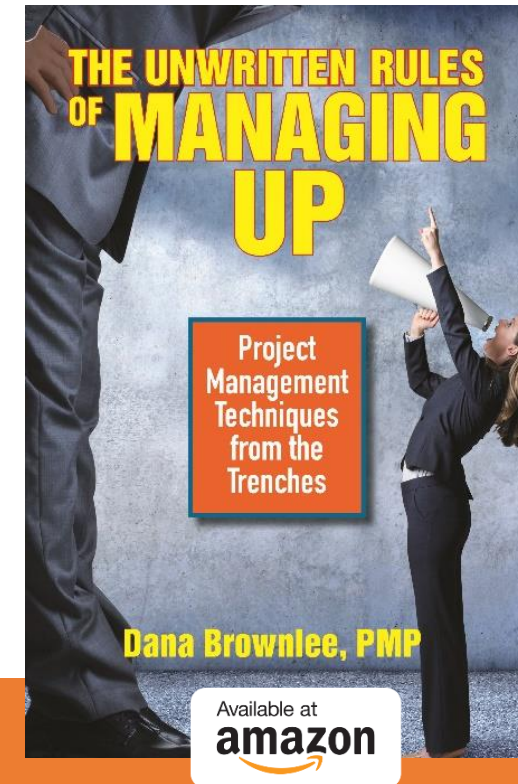
About Dana Brownlee

If you're seeking a DEI academician, Dana Brownlee may not be for you. Her focus isn't DEI theory. Instead she blends 18 years of experience as a sought-after leadership expert and team building facilitator with three decades of personal experience as a Black woman working in and around corporate America to provide an engaging experience that's down to earth and relatable while insightful and profound. Author of *The Unwritten Rules of Managing Up* (Berrett-Koehler, 2019), Ms. Brownlee is an acclaimed thought leader around managing difficult personalities, navigating challenging situations and speaking truth to power. If you're ready to take small steps towards big progress, Dana can help.

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