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Special Meeting of the Council: Marketing Strategies and JEDI Conversation

March 22, 2021

5:30pm

Facilitator: Rae Carter

Note Taker: Rowan Sherwood

Present: Eva Schectman, Deb Robinson, Liv Dunton, Eric Jacobson, Rachel Andreyev, Catherine Lowther, RJ Adler, Jen Poirrier, Steven Farnham.

Guests: Scott Van Beck

Staff: Kari Bradley, Jay Wisner, Stephani Kononan

1. Welcome and agenda review.

Rae introduced herself to the group and asked that everyone do a round of introductions. There were no changes to the agenda.

2. Discussion of JEDI values and Marketing Goals.

Rae prefaced the discussion by stating that our behaviors are the backbone of cultural systems. Once we change our own views and behaviors, then we can begin to develop policies and plans that reflect those views. We need to practice equitable communication and foster alignment of JEDI perspectives into our organizational model. With that in mind, the group proceeded to two rounds of discussion.

First, feedback on the values statements.

Eva asked a series of questions: How would standards be different between co-op leaders, employees and vendors? What if standards were the same? Does everyone get training? Who sets the standards? Who enforces them?

Jen stated that the ultimate goal is growth, not punishment. Everyone should be held to the highest standard and we need to do the work ourselves. It is not the job of the BIPOC community to teach us.

Stephani expressed support for all of the statements.

RJ reiterated the importance of growth over punishment and taking a restorative approach.

Liv noted the complexity of monitoring public vs. private speech. She also favors a restorative approach and emphasized that the onus of forgiveness is not on marginalized people. Privileged people saying sorry is not enough.

Steven wondered how we will translate all of this into meaningful policies and practices. He also agreed that we need to take a growth not punishment approach.

To Eric, the most challenging piece of the statement was the free speech element. We need to be able to speak freely to bring about change, but this has been misused. And while the separation of public and private speech is important, it does not apply as neatly in issues of racism.

Deb wondered if the initial statement was broad enough. She likes that private speech is included – we don't want folks to be racist in any realm.

Catherine has experienced being a minority while she was in India. She suggested we add the word "Welcome" to the statement.

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Scott has lived and worked in Houston, where it is very diverse. He noted that most values statements talk about beliefs, but we also need to address behaviors.

From Kari's policy focused perspective, the trickiest part is differentiating between public and private speech. He suggested that we draw the line at doing harm. The most meaningful piece is the restorative element. We all have our biases, and we need to be willing to learn and grow.

Jay echoed Kari and suggested that we focus on impact over intent. Our acculturation predisposes us to racism and we need to become aware of when that is happening.

Round 2: Marketing goals connect to JEDI goals and overall organizational lens.

Eva liked the changes to the goals and asked how the council can support the goal of being an inclusive community.

Jen said that she likes Catherine's idea of adding welcoming language.

RJ thought these were good internal guideposts.

Liv thought they spoke well to the work we are doing. She wondered about the word "elevate" and asked what our priorities were.

Steven suggested we change "elevate" to "promote." He wondered how we translate the first and third goals into action.

Eric was not sure about promoting sales as a way to counter negative price perception. We can't compete on price and people come to the Co-op for different reasons. We could highlight those.

Deb agreed that we are never going to be the cheapest place in town. She took issue with the wording of being an inclusive community. If it were so we wouldn't be having this conversation.

Catherine wanted to add something about increasing our local offerings.

Scott said that "elevate" is aspirational language and we could consider using the word "success." He also wondered why we used the word "everyday" only for sales. Why not in other areas?

Jay liked the overlap of marketing and JEDI goals, especially the focus on savings as part of inclusivity. He also mentioned that we could emphasize our focus on safety and widen it to include the health of our food.

Stephani expressed appreciation for all the feedback.

Kari noted that the first two goals are largely unchanged. Mission and identity are our strengths and a differentiating feature. The inclusivity element is a new and exciting differentiator and we need to get clear on the real messages and practices that will reflect that. In order for marketing to be effective we have to do and embody JEDI work.

We then broke into small groups to discuss two questions:

1. What is our process/what is needed next in the justice realm?
2. How do we handle the public/private speech issue?

Jay reported for his group: next steps include more training for council members – implicit bias, micro-aggressions, interrupting bias. We had started this work and it was interrupted by the pandemic. He is looking into scheduling something with CQ strategies. He also wondered how the Co-op could play a role in educating the larger community on these issues. He also said we need to create opportunities to follow up after these trainings in order to grow the skills.

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Liv reported for her group: in regards to restorative justice we need to strike a balance between education and setting expectations for behavior. How do we drive folks toward education? When things go wrong are we sufficiently trained to deal with it in a restorative way? She also wondered who we can partner with in these goals?

Deb reported for her group: They thought that we should write something up addressing the free speech issue.

RJ reported for his group: We need to interpret our policies and flesh out what is meant by each one. We could promote conversation in the community. We could hire a “stupid questions” resource person. We need to help people understand what we think is right.

Rae synthesized the discussion as follows: Internal and external relationship building is important. We need to identify how to draw people in and who we need to be talking to. How does what we learn trickle down into what we offer? How do we message that the Co-op is a change agent? We do not know the answers, but we want to be better.

The retreat was adjourned at approximately 7:30pm.