

# **TELEMACHUS TECHNOLOGY**

## **A DIVERSITY EXERCISE FOR MENTORS, MANAGERS AND MENTEES**

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### **FACILITATOR'S INSTRUCTIONS**

Telemachus Technology is a diversity exercise for mentors, managers and mentees designed to address issues in diversity, negotiation and formalized mentorship programs. Each role provides the person playing it with a difficult situation to navigate. Both the exercise and your discussion following it are opportune times for participants to reflect about the issues - especially those related to diversity - they may face as mentors, managers and mentees. Some of the issues are especially sensitive, so handle your discussion with care.

### **MATERIALS**

You should have five separate documents, including four sets of instructions, in order to properly administer this simulation. Check to see that you have:

- 1) General Instructions
- 2) Secret Instructions for Bill Meese - The Mentor
- 3) Secret Instructions for Jack Youngblood - The Mentee's Manager
- 4) Secret Instructions for Shataya Davis - The Mentee
- 5) Facilitator's Instructions

### **STEPS**

There are many ways that you can administer this exercise. Assuming the participants have time to prepare beforehand, we suggest these steps:

- 1) Divide the participants into three groups of equal size.
- 2) Hand out the General Instructions to all participants.
- 3) Hand out one set of Secret Instructions to each participant in each group. For example, designate one group as the mentors and give each participant the Secret Instructions for Bill Meese -- The Mentor.
- 4) Ask participants to prepare for their role.
- 5) Create triads by taking one participant from each group.
- 6) Give each triad approximately thirty minutes to complete the exercise.
- 7) Reconvene all of the participants for a debriefing of the exercise.
- 8) Refer to the issues listed below as needed.

## **ISSUES**

This exercise likely will surface a number of issues in diversity, negotiation and formalized mentorship programs. Thus, your debriefing could move in any number of directions. In general, we suggest that you allow participants to describe their feelings and thoughts as they played a role. Refer to this list of issues to guide your discussion in a particular direction, or to go more in-depth in a given area. Lastly, tread carefully - some of the issues may strike a very emotional chord for some participants. In each of the following sections, you will find the issues that we think the exercise highlights.

### **Diversity**

- 1) Individual identity is central to the topic of diversity.
- 2) The reason(s) a company embraces diversity programs impact their effectiveness.
- 3) Diversity affects everyone's role in an organization.
- 4) The greater the diversity, the greater the chance for misunderstanding.
- 5) Miscommunication is often the origin of misunderstandings.

### **Negotiation**

- 1) Preparation is crucial.
- 2) A negotiating party's issues and interests are not always known beforehand.
- 3) Various sources of power, such as legitimate authority and commitment, are available to each actor.
- 4) Integrative solutions require the sharing of information that may take some time and a reasonable level of trust for the parties to feel comfortable revealing.
- 5) No party has complete information, but the one with the most complete information will often be at the greatest advantage.

### **Formalized Mentorship Programs**

- 1) The "matching process," if any, of mentors and mentees is important to the success of the relationship.
- 2) All participants need training to understand their roles.
- 3) Mentors and mentees should commit to an agreed upon understanding of the relationship.
- 4) Mentors need to be careful how they involve themselves in the relationship between the mentee and her/his immediate supervisor.
- 5) Ideally, mentees should drive the skills development process, not the mentor.

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

If you are in search of any additional information on diversity, negotiation and/or formalized mentorship programs, we recommend the following reading materials:

Kram, Kathy, *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life*, University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, 1988.

Lewicki, Roy J., and Litterer, Joseph A., *Negotiation*, Irwin, Homewood, Illinois, 1994.

Nelson, Jill, *Volunteer Slavery, My Authentic Negro Experience*, Penguin Books, N.Y., N.Y., 1994.

Thomas, David A., "Racial Dynamics in Cross-race Developmental Relationships," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1993, 38, pp. 169-194.