

Inclusion - A Corporate Business Imperative

Eric Schultz, President and CEO of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care

On Thursday, December 3rd many healthcare leaders drove to the Mass Hospital Association in Burlington to hear Eric Schultz discuss how his company took on the challenge of inclusion at Harvard Pilgrim Health Care. As I drove in I heard a discussion of the issue of Islamophobia in the wake of the shooting in San Bernardino, CA. Eric started his talk by noting the shooting from the day before, then walked us through the journey he and Harvard Pilgrim took with addressing the value of inclusion. He noted that until he had joined Harvard Pilgrim he had done nothing around race and gender.

He was sent down this path by being invited to meet with the Black Forum at Harvard Pilgrim. This meeting opened his eyes to a need to address inclusion in a meaningful way. His company took on the topic by involving a consultant group, GVS, to evaluate their readiness for addressing the issue of diversity. They defined inclusion as “valuing the difference and creating value through difference each day.” Eric described piece by piece how they went through both their internal efforts to address inclusion as a company and their external product design to meet the needs of diverse populations, such as in their Eastern Harmony Product. By doing this they both addressed the value of inclusion and created an opportunity to improve the bottom line.

I found Eric’s description of how he approached the value of inclusion as a company mission, which ended up also netting a better financial situation, refreshing. He provided evidence that building a value centered company can open many opportunities both for engaging the workforce and becoming more competitive in the market. But the tough part is that doing this requires the strength to be bold and to face the risk of losing other parties.

Even now as we continue to hear the many opinions around race, religion and equality in the news, we as leaders will define ourselves and our company by taking bold positions regarding values. And as we stand for ideals, such those of inclusion we will need to continue to be ready for the work and face the challenges this will create. Ultimately, Eric’s talk outlined how his company pushed forward, but in the end he acknowledged that it requires continuing to engage your team. I personally found it very timely and now ask how I can bring these ideas into my own work.

Patrick McCabe, Practice Administrator, Boston Children's Hospital