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CASE STUDY:

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
IN COMMUNITIES OF
COLOR - CEO COACHING

A non-profit CEO reached out to Uplifting Impact for individual coaching. The CEO was concerned that he, a white man, was not approaching community partners of color in effective ways. As a non-profit leader who relied heavily on building community relations with organizations, he was concerned about his approach and wanted guidance on how to build better relationships.

The first thing that we did was lead him through an honest assessment of his strengths and identified areas of opportunity. For example, we realized immediately that while he was good at building relationships, a vast majority of his relationships were with other people that were just like him--middle class, white, and male. We also realized that while he had done work around the community, he had not spent much time in the community he was now hoping to serve alongside.

Next, we reviewed his microactions and dialogue to see how he might be inadvertently pushing people away when he was trying to pull them in. Through some guided reflection, he realized that much of what he knew and therefore was saying about the community was based off of things that he read or saw on tv and not from real, authentic engagement. So, we put together a list of things that he could do to build up his first-hand knowledge of the community. We also put together a script that he could use to start conversations with some of the community members. With those two things, he began to engage differently than before and saw an immediate change to how the community received him.

Finally, we put together an internal group that consisted of two other senior leaders from his team to help with ongoing accountability. The group met on a regular basis to talk exclusively about their diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy so that they could celebrate successes and identify ways to continuously improve. The leader also asked the group to help keep him in check as he progressed. This willingness to be vulnerable and to create ongoing systems for accountability helped the rest of the team realize just how seriously the CEO wanted to change.

Within six months of going through this process, the CEO reported that he substantially grew his community network with other leaders of color and also made internal changes to be more inclusive. A satisfied customer, he has referred other leaders who face similar challenges to us for individual coaching.

"I knew that I was doing something wrong—but I would not have been able to figure out how to change it without your support. Our organization is stronger and I am a better leader and human being."

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