

CUES 126—Building Bold, Effective Black Leadership at PSCU—an Interview with Marvin York

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By Marvin York

Tony Covington 00:04

You're listening to the CUES Podcast episode 126. Thank you, CUES Podcast listeners, for tuning in to the CUES Podcast. As you know, on the CUES Podcast, you can hear from a wide range of cross-industry experts discussing trends and topics relevant to you. My name is Tony Covington, and I'm the Vice President of Business Development for TalentedED, powered by CUES. I'm also a former NFL player for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the Seattle Seahawks. I'm pleased to be your host for the show. At TalentedED and CUES, we are marking Black History Month by talking to black leaders about their path to leadership as well as how best to develop tomorrow's black leaders. You're going to really enjoy hearing from today's guest, Marvin York. Marvin is vice president of customer experience in the call center for CUESolutions provider PSCU, which is based in St. Petersburg, Florida. Marvin was the inspiration behind a recent CUES PSCU partnership for the development of African-American leaders at PSCU that leveraged CUES' talent development expertise and resources. In this show, you'll hear Marvin talk about how he got the idea that became PSCU Bold, Effective Leadership, a CUES Strategic Leadership Development Program. A dozen PSCU leaders participated in this development opportunity, including Marvin himself. The program included eCornell courses that are part of CUES' talent development offerings, plus the strategic execution course CUES members can access through their Harvard ManageMentor benefit, lots of valuable discussion, and a final presentation. During this show. Marvin talks about his year long program, and its significant impact plus gives a lot of great perspective on the importance of supporting and developing emerging black leaders. So without further ado, let's get started. Welcome to the show, Marvin and Happy Black History Month.

Marvin York 02:11

Thank you.

Tony Covington 02:13

Here at CUES, we want to celebrate Black History Month by identifying top African-American talent in the industry that are change-makers. You, Marvin my friend, are one of those individuals. And I'd like to help our listeners get to know you a little bit before we jump into talking about the PSCU Bold, Effective Leaders Program. To do that, I wanted to ask you if you had a professional mantra or quote that you live by.

Marvin York 02:37

Wake up mad every day. Okay, "make a difference."

Tony Covington 02:43

Okay. All right, I like it. You got it, you got to give me a little more. Come on. Where did that one come from?

Marvin York 02:49

So I say that because I've always been involved with the development of young professionals, making a difference, being able to open doors and pulling somebody else up, giving them the chance to spread their wings. As an African-American, we don't always get those chance, we don't get the opportunities. And so for me to be able to share that with a young person that's coming up, that's got energy, their knowledge, they're on fire, they want to set the world on fire, they don't get the opportunities and when you can see that in them and you can be able to be a stepping stone for them. And for them to come back and tell you later on down the years what you've done for them, it just lights me up. It puts me on fire. So wake up mad every day about making a difference in someone's life.

Tony Covington 03:39

I absolutely love it. It's it's it's kind of similar to lifting as we climb, you know. And so I'm all I'm about that life. So that's awesome, Marvin. Look, I am really glad to talk with you about the PSCU Bold, Effective Leaders program, CUES Strategic Leadership Development Program. Would you tell me about the initial idea for the program and the process of bringing it online and your involvement?

Marvin York 04:05

What happened, I actually was with my granddaughter at home, watching some videos with her and what came on on the video was some graduations at HBCUs. And I saw all of these professionals getting ready to launch there. And engineers, doctors lawyers ready to set themselves out. And I said, Wow, that is impressive. And what struck me was in this industry and I've been in the banking, the credit union business for a number of years, it was always told to me we just cannot find people of color to be in these leadership roles, in these key positions. And I'm watching this video and I said we got to do better. We do have the talent. And this is where Chuck came and said I'm going to open up the CUES training to everyone. And I said to him, we're gonna build this leadership for African-Americans, I also run the ERG, the African-American employee resources group. And so therefore, that group I lead and engage with, and try to mentor, do some mentoring with. So there were a team of folks that I've already been engaged with that needed opportunities when those arrived. And we want to make sure not only were the VPs trained, but managers were trained and the next one for a manager will be trained. So our future leaders. .Sankofa is the group, which is outlook, which is looking back of our history to move forward. So in that symbol, who take a look at it's a bird with an egg, the egg is on its back. And it's carrying it. So we say nurturing, are you maturing them, to grow? And to blossom?

Tony Covington 05:58

Wow. And could you tell us a little bit about Chuck and his role in it?

06:03

Chuck came to me a few years back, and asked me to develop the ERG. I had done that at a former company, JP Morgan Chase, and actually a leadership role at Citi Bank. So I told him, I could do it, but it wouldn't be just a figurehead. We had to have make some actions. If I saw something that needed to be done, I needed him to back me and he gave me 100%. Marvin, if there's something that's needed, can you need some support, you have it. The head of training and development, Lynn Heckler, also gave me that same support. So when I want to make an action, when we needed to make a change, if there was something strategic we need to do, this is one of those things, they supported me 100%. With that being said, developing the program, every one in the C-suite had the opportunity to be a part of this program. So seeing that commitment from them, and their vision of building this company, and the strategies that they are implementing, and how did we fit in the 12. There's 12 individuals going through that. And they are across the departments, multi department. The managers of those people actually funded this program. So the commitment was all the way through from the top to their manager. And that's the key, because these 12 figured out how they could fit into that structure of what this C-suite wanted to do, and how to make change in their coming year. So they would never have this opportunity to have a one-on-one conversations with those leaders normally. But in this form, they got to, and so the relationship gets built. They that identity gets formed on who they are, and what they're capable of.

Tony Covington 07:51

Wow. I mean, when you have the buy in from your CEO, it makes a major difference. And and kudos to Chuck Fagan, you see the CEO of PSCU for really stepping up and supporting the efforts made it. When you when you have that kind of buy in, you know, it's real, because it's coming from the top. Let's get a little granular. I'm interested to learn more about the specifics of the program. What I mean is, when did it run, and how long?

Marvin York 08:19

So it ran for 12 months. There were 12 participants that we selected across the company, different departments across that that funded it from their management team off their budget. So we used eCornell, our, our ... Harvard University, was actually the modules that we actually went on. We used the tools that they actually had there, took that built some models, actually shared it with our management teams, and different departments if they weren't stakeholders. And so it was very informative. Tools were there and accessible, and will be there for us to use in the future. So it was very, very hands on, and the instructors were actually available through the entire course. So we had the instructors courses, some videos that we could actually do at our own leisure in time, some self study, but it was definitely we had a lot of checking in with CUES to make sure that we were able to navigate and use those tools. And so there were several check-in points that we thought were very valuable to make sure we kept the entire team because I have one the project managers, Sheila Porter was actually the gatekeeper for us to make sure that everyone stayed in line, is on task.

Tony Covington 09:48

Excellent.

Marvin York 09:49

We actually started the course in January of last year, and we will graduate from this January.

Tony Covington 09:57

Outstanding. And then how to engage not only with the executives, but with the management team, your department and other departments, how you will engage who are the stakeholders that will be involved? And what value did it bring, and it should line up with at least one of the executives the way that they want to. That is excellent. So what are the program participants saying about the program now?

Marvin York 10:24

The relationship-building piece of it was key. These 12 work across different departments in may have never met on a working project together. But now, working together, building relationships, from IT to project management to learning and development to a contact center on process improvement and quality. We had those expertise across the architectural design on learning. They could pick up the phone and talk to each other, give each other advice, mentor each other. And that was paired. With that being said, common goals and alignment started to form. They're more likely to say we're more alike than we are different and then identify how to move collectively on a goal or mission.

Tony Covington 11:17

Wow. That's impressive. And that's exactly how it should be. So what are they doing in terms of their leadership now, now that they have the secret sauce? What are they doing in terms of leadership?

Marvin York 11:30

So all along during this journey, they've been engagements with their management teams and cross teams. With that being said, they're positioning themselves in a new light. They have used the tools of actually their discussion with their managers to give them insight on where they were, what they were thinking. And now it gives them another platform to say, Okay, I'm thinking this, and I'm thinking I can get to B, but I didn't realize that the budget didn't support that this year. So maybe I need to line that up. I agree with your management. I agree with management. But we can't do that until next year. So instead of being disappointed about not being able to act on what you were acting on, that it didn't, wasn't timing wasn't right. And the fit is there the following year, and just get prepared and prepare your organization to be on board and budget for that next year. So it gives you that type of thought process so you're not discouraged. It wasn't that you weren't a value, your value, but at a certain time that we were able to implement. And that alignment that actually comraderie actually gets built from that piece. The management team know they can count on them, know that thinking about it, and they're running in the direction that I need to run. And I don't have to coach or assign because it's running on its own.

Tony Covington 13:01

Wow. So it sounds like it really is a bridge to communication, open lines of communication, effective, comfortable communication, which is important, because sometimes you don't always feel comfortable talking to senior leaders. And so it's great that they now have an understanding that man, you know, we are all in this together. And so that line of communications definitely need to be open. So that's awesome. So you would agree that it had a positive impact then?

Marvin York 13:27

Absolutely.

Tony Covington 13:29

Excellent. What was the CUES-PSCU partnership like in terms of offering this program, and what were PSCU's specific goals in participating?

Marvin York 13:39

Working with CUES was great. It was it was awesome. Because they said, Marvin, what are you trying to build? And so I gave them my ideal of what we were trying to build is making sure that we can act on and make a difference. And several, we have to make a difference. If you continue to do the same old thing, same away, is the sign of insanity if you think there's gonna be something different come out of that. The two of us said, we got to do something different. And can you help me talk about what makes a difference? What can I shed light on to make this union I should say, union and relationship? Right, because you got employees that want to shine, they want to help, they want to be a part of the difference, to actually broaden their horizon, their education, their knowledge and grow. And if they can do that, then guess what? The company grows and having that mindset of I can help the company and the company helps me grow, we it's is a win win. It's amazing. So how did CUES do in supporting those goals and what made the relationship really go well? Because it was flexible. As we start talking about the modules and what folks needed, listening was key for me to understand what those modules were, and listening to the 12 about what they needed. That was key. Okay, so we had to talk about initiatives for the organization, PSCU has been growing and growing tremendous. Folks are in their, in their everyday job grinding to get things done. But the next step is about being in that leadership role, the next leadership role for you. How can you grow and how can you be seen? Sometimes African-Americans are not seen. And we call it the silent power, because they are silent, have a lot of power, but just not seen. So this is when we talk about being able to communicate in a way that is team-worthy, right? Because now they consider you a part of the team and your valued, and their hearing your thoughts. And your thoughts may not be so far different. It may be adjusted, in order for us to achieve our goal. And so to be flexible. Here, folks out, pace yourself, they'll pace, you guys will pace each other and arrive at the finish line the same time.

Tony Covington 16:20

Teamwork makes the dream work, say it all the time. I have an acronym for team: together, excellence always materializes, man, and maybe it's my years of playing sports. I'm just a team-oriented person. But I truly believe in the power of working together and it makes my heart smile that there was so much teamwork and camaraderie with the relationship. But you know, that's that's how we are CUES, you know, we we those team with a team good teammates. So what do you say, were the top three outcomes of the program?

Marvin York 16:51

Excellent. That's excellent. Marvin, before we get you out of here, I want to close with a segment we call message in a bottle. What that is, what is the message that you would leave to your younger self? I'm going to say that the C-team understands who we are, people of color in the positions that would put us in our by means are definitely in powerful positions, running the company, doing a stellar job. And the outcome of that is that they're being recognized. They're being recognized by being the

program, they're being recognized by the other, their peers, and the overall organization, about these are our leaders that are color, of color, and they will continue to strive for excellence. So they're really looking for PSCU is looking for how to continue to grow that. And for that growth, with the growth of PSCU should mirror each other, that we continue to see that young girl then blossom along with the company. I was talking to one of my mentee, that was probably in their late 20s. And they said to me, when talking to a billionaire, and they said, What would you do? What would you tell your younger self? And they said, to dream big, and say dreaming is while you are asleep I said. So while you are awake is where action happens. So make the action happen. Get it done. Start getting it done quicker. Make acknowledge what you want to get done, set that goal. Get it done. Wake up mad every day.

Tony Covington 18:42

Love it. Absolutely love it. I really appreciate your time today, Marvin. is there anything else you'd like our listeners to know before we wrap it up?

Marvin York 18:53

PSCU is a great place to work. And we love the partnership between CUES and PSCU. I see this being a program that will actually change the industry. And I'm happy to be a part of that with CUES. Thank you so much, Marvin, we really appreciate you being on this show. I have thoroughly, thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and in talking about this partnership, because it is important that the work that we all do, we need partners, we need great partnerships, and no one can do it all alone. So thank you so much for the partnership with PSCU in this particular program as well. Thank you so much. I did want to mention AACUC. I'm on the board of directors there. And that industry look gives me all of the the support that I have for them across the industry actually means a lot for me to be able to bring that back to PSCU and to cultivate the candidates that we actually have here. And going forward, making sure we have a pipeline to that African-American world and people of color and follow that back to PSCU to enrich them. So I just want to say that because that's important.

Tony Covington 20:10

Great. Thank you so much, Marvin, really appreciate you and the work you do.

Marvin York 20:15

Thank you.

Tony Covington 20:17

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to listen to today's episode of the CUES Podcast. And many thanks to Marvin York for sharing such great perspective on Black leadership, especially the details about the PSCU Bold Effective Leaders Program. You can find PSCU on the web at PSCU.com. PSCU is CUESolutions silver provider. If you'd like to learn about becoming a CUESolutions provider or a CUES Supplier member, or how to sponsor CUES content, please email westonk@cues.org. That's westonk@cues.org. If you would like to read the shownotes for this podcast and a full transcript, please visit CUmanagement.com/podcast 126 or look on the landing page for this show on the talentED.org blog. You can also find additional leadership development content on CUmanagement.com and talentED.org. Please check it out. If you're a CUES member, you have access to invaluable membership benefits to further enhance your development. Many CUES

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