

Video Transcript Kim Sponem CEO Pledge DEI

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By Kim Sponem

Kim Sponem 00:14

The action pledge is a national pledge of CEOs of companies around the United States that are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. And the number of companies in Wisconsin that has signed onto the pledge so far is about 50, including Summit Credit Union.

Kim Sponem 00:41

One of the things that I think is important about signing a pledge is that a pledge puts in writing that you are committed to something. And it makes a public statement about that not just publicly, but also to your employees that you're serious about the pledge, that you're serious about DEI efforts and working toward that and then support of the efforts that your staff and the overall company is making.

Kim Sponem 01:12

With anything, diversity, equity and inclusion has to start at the top and the values around that, and the commitment around that has to be seen throughout the organization. And we as leaders need to make sure that we're learning and growing in this area as well. The pledge itself isn't the end, it's actually the very beginning. Summit has been working on diversity, equity inclusion efforts for many years now. And actually started with, with women back in the 2005-2006 timeframe, and has been working on broader diversity, equity and inclusion for about eight years now. So when our diversity, equity and inclusion manager brought this pledge to my attention, it was a very easy natural extension of what we are doing. And what I loved about it was that it was making such a public statement, externally and internally.

Kim Sponem 02:17

There's really four, maybe five pieces to the pledge. One of the pieces is that organizations create a trusted environment to talk about the many challenges of what's happening with the barriers to equity to inclusion, and, and have those tough conversations because sometimes they can be very tough and very emotional, and in creating that type of environment where we talk about that and also learn from one another.

Kim Sponem 02:52

The second is that we really pay attention to unconscious bias. And a lot has been written on that. So there's a lot of education sessions around unconscious bias. So you know, we're learning and recognizing unconscious biases with ourselves is where it kind of starts. And and so the pledge really brings attention to that.

Kim Sponem 03:17

The pledge also says that we will share successful things that we're doing, but also unsuccessful, so best practices and unsuccessful practices along the way, so that we can learn from one another because not everything is going to work. Not everybody has everything figured out. So the ability to share that, you know, in a way, with other committed organizations to this effort is, is really helpful.

Kim Sponem 03:45

There's also wanting to make sure that, that we're sharing information about our efforts on this, I'm making a more inclusive and diverse environment and company with our board of directors, making sure that we have the proper metrics in place. One of the things that we added last year was to put bonus goals for our leadership teams around diversity, equity and inclusion. So we started measuring a few years back different aspects of diversity and, and, and our inclusion and retention areas. And we're the exciting part, especially in 2021 was to see some really significant progress in that area.

Kim Sponem 04:34

So you know, one of the things that we've really started to pay more attention to and work toward is that while we might have a diverse staff or more diverse staff than we did 5-10 years ago, what about from a management perspective, and focusing in on management and leadership positions to include more diversity within those is something that we've really started to make bigger strides in, I think. As I mentioned, being part of the learning has to start at the top. And so there is a, there is a history class that an organization in Madison called Nehemiah put on. It's completely virtual. And it was a commitment of 35 of our leaders this last fall to learn Black history for a new day so we can understand how systemic racism has come into and permeated so many different aspects of our lives that we probably haven't many of us thought about before. And a lot of that is understanding from the beginning of, of, you know, the early portions of slavery and how how things developed over time. And Nehemiah uses different professors on this topic as they go through, and then this kind of discussion sessions with the participants after after the lecture. So it's a nine-week commitment, two hours a week, and it was so eye-opening. I think it's important that leaders take the time to do that, to learn more and to understand that we, what we learned in history class, is not what is not the whole story and some of it might not even be accurate. We had all all of us saying that as we as we went through the class.

Kim Sponem 06:40

So I believe that pledges bring about a higher level of commitment to change, and it certainly is a is something that says, you know, we're going to raise the bar, and we're going to continue to raise the bar. And we also are going to hold ourselves and each other accountable.