Chapter 9

Training and Education

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Just as diversity-specific training cannot thrive in a vacuum absent of a comprehensive diversity and inclusion strategy, diversity and inclusion training too will fail to be effective if it is not an integral part of a broader corporate training process. In establishing a D&I training strategy, a company should first examine how corporate learning happens today. Secondly, it should consider different types of deliver vehicles and how they impact corporate performance objective learning.

Whatever the method used in diversity and inclusion training, the primary goal is to create an ongoing awareness and understanding of human diversity as a corporate asset. However, awareness and understanding is not enough. For diversity and inclusion training to be truly effective, it must also teach employees how to leverage their own diversity and the diversity of others to support the success of the company through inclusion.

In this chapter, we will explore the following questions:

• What are the current challenges and obstacles to diversity and inclusion training?
• How has globalization impacted diversity and inclusion training?
• What are the various types of diversity and inclusion training?
• What are the characteristics of effective diversity and inclusion training programs?
• What content should be included in diversity and inclusion training?
Challenges, Barriers, and Trends

Many of the challenges facing diversity training programs are not unique to diversity. It is important to be aware of them as not to misdiagnose them as diversity-specific issues. Indeed, it is interesting to see that training in general faces the challenge of business alignment, much like Diversity & Inclusion initiatives in general.

The most prevalent obstacle to diversity training is time, and when coupled with organizational right-sizing, workloads, etc., this can become even more pronounced. Lack of time may not necessarily be main culprit, but rather a lack of demonstrating the importance of diversity training and how it ties to business objectives. When individuals are not ready for change they often view the associated costs of time and effort as greater than the benefits. Thus, linking diversity training to the organization's business goals and the corporate D&I strategy are important to diffuse this issue. The following list shows the top challenges facing today's organizations taken from 786 companies. According to researchers, six reasons organizations resist D&I training:

1. Employees are unclear about the changes and what to expect.
2. Different people see different meanings in the proposed changes.
3. Managers and supervisors are torn between the pressures of making change and strong opposing forces preferring things remain the way they have always been.
4. Employees who feel pressured to change resist more so than if they are involved somehow in the planning process.
5. Resistance rises when changes are made based on personal reasons as oppose to impersonal ones.
6. The organizational culture is not taken into consideration.

Additionally, the following miscues can happen during training that will create barriers:

- Trainers are not competent and fluent at facilitating and presenting
- Trainers use their own psychological issues, like trust or group affiliation, as templates for training
- Trainers have political agendas
- Training is not integrated into the organization's overall approach to D&I
- Training is too brief, too late, or too reactive to a bad situation like legal action
- Training does not distinguish among the different meanings of valuing D&I, pluralism, EEO, Affirmative Action, and communicating across cultures
- Training uses a limited definition of whose differences should be valued
- Training is based on a philosophy of political correctness or moral obligation
• Training forces people to reveal their feelings about their colleagues or participate in activities that do not respect one’s dignity or differences

• Individual styles or participation is not respected

• Only one group is pressured to change

• Resource material is used referencing outdated views

• Trainers do not model the skills or philosophy parallel with valuing D&I

• Content covers an insufficient number of issues and does not engage people on an individual basis

• The curriculum is not tailored to attendees’ needs or is not matched to the skills and experience of the trainer

• Trainers are chosen because they represent or are advocates for a minority group

• Training does not make the link between stereotyping behavior and personal or organizational effectiveness

• Trainers are insensitive, have no credibility, and do not engender trust

• Training is presented as remedial and the attendees as individuals with problems

• Training is too shallow or too deep

• The discussion of the tough issues like transgenderism, spirituality, and reverse discrimination are prohibited

• Trainers are usually women or ethnic minorities

• Emphasis is on sensitizing white males

• Awareness is the sole objective

• Programs are guilt-driven

• Trainers focus on the how of communication versus what is said or intended

• Orientation is toward the past and the future while ignoring the present where the change of action must transpire

In order to compete and gain a competitive advantage, today’s organizations must remain on the cutting edge of innovation, products, services, and training. We must find a way to update our inventory of skills and competencies so that we become as fluent in the new order of things as we have been in the past.

Globalization and Diversity Training

Today, globalization touches all areas of an organization’s operation and structure, including D&I. Global diversity is causing our society to move from a homogenous to a heterogeneous one. This can lead to a combination of challenges like confusion, increased complexity,
ambiguity, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and cultural bias. Organizations now need not just
a new set of interpersonal and communication skills but fluency in them to succeed in this
global climate. Many agree that a key component of diversity is not only our similarities and
differences but equally the anxieties and tensions that naturally accompany them. Diversity
practitioners’ challenge is to provide a framework through training for organizations to
positively and proactively manage these anxieties while leading to productive business
outcomes.

Best Practices and Strategies

Types of Diversity Training

Diversity training generally falls into three categories: awareness-based, skills-based,
and integration-based. Evidence supports a combined approach, but one must employ
these schemes based on the intimate knowledge, understanding, and uniqueness of one’s
organization to maximize their effectiveness and business impact.

Awareness-based training programs are the most popular of the three approaches. The
primary objectives are to provide information about diversity in general, heighten awareness
and sensitivity through uncovering hidden assumptions and biases, assess attitudes and
values, correct myths and stereotypes, and foster individual and group sharing. Additionally,
some programs focus on providing demographic data and demonstrating the benefits to the
workforce. They may also touch on barriers that employees encounter and use the training
to demonstrate the organization’s commitment to diversity. And lastly, and perhaps most
relevant today, is making and reinforcing the business case for D&I.

Awareness is the beginning of framing a common understanding and some expectations
so when organizations discuss D&I everyone has a common reference point. This does not
mean there is universal acceptance and agreement, but that the context in which these issues
are discussed or applied is moving forward. This aspect of diversity training is critical to the
bigger picture, but one should understand that it alone is not the answer and in some cases
may cause more problems than it resolves if done in isolation. Employees need a toolbox of
skills to implement in order to increase their productivity and effectiveness.

Skills-based training moves to action from awareness. It should provide individuals with
an actionable framework in which to address the day-to-day challenges in a proactive and
effective way so as to drive the organization’s business forward. While these challenges and
issues may have a diversity overtone to them, they are not black and white but rather varying
shades of gray. Therefore, this cannot be a rigid checklist of steps to take or it becomes like
putting a round peg into a square hole, and does not lead to the successful outcomes required
in today’s ever-changing business environment. Individuals must understand the context,
content, and use of these learned skills. There are three key factors to consider in skills-based

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training, including: building new diversity-interaction skills, reinforcing existing skills, and inventory skill-building methodologies.

The third approach is integration-based training. While this is a separate approach, it touches on the awareness- and skills-based approaches previously discussed. There are many benefits to this approach, especially if one of the goals is integrating your Diversity & Inclusion strategy into the organization’s existing training framework. This requires one to work in a close, collaborative way with the existing training department or team. This collaboration may help dampen some of the resistance individuals have based on their personal biases or prior experiences.

Given the challenges of time away from work and being overwhelmed with too many programs or initiatives at once, among other perceived drawbacks, integration-based training can increase the frequency with which D&I learning occurs. Furthermore, it allows one to see the broader application and how it relates to other relevant areas and complimentary programs within the organization. Again, it contributes to providing a process or framework so employees may consciously draw upon and apply these skills in the day-to-day context of doing business. This can help one to see where the diversity implications are both overt and implied.

**Characteristics of Effective Diversity Training Programs**

While one size does not fit all, there is some empirical evidence of what works. Following are 15 recommendations for creating an effective diversity training initiative from The Conference Board, a New York-based non-profit organization that studies management trends.

- **Create a supportive infrastructure.** Executive support is critical.
- **Provide clear communication about the training and how it relates to the overarching D&I corporate strategy.**
- **Create inclusive programs and processes.** It must be clear that D&I is about everyone and involves everyone. This should ideally have been addressed in your D&I vision, mission, and already established definitions of Diversity, etc.
- **Create flexibility and tailor to internal needs.** This is especially critical if your organization is spread over multiple geographies and has several independent business operating units.
- **Conduct train-the-trainer sessions.** This builds internal change agents that can continually support and help legitimize the initiative on a sustained basis. It will also provide additional avenues for maximizing impact and effectiveness.
- **Include senior management in training and require attendance.** They too help legitimize the importance of training and demonstrate that it is not merely the latest passing fad.
• **Enroll all employees.** This way, it is transparent to all and there is consistency in the messages conveyed. If, pending on how your organization has defined diversity, it involves everyone, then why wouldn’t everyone be trained? You cannot hold people accountable for things which they do not know.

• **Train business units together.** All work is a collaborative team effort directly or indirectly. This team approach should be emphasized in training as well.

• **Provide trust and confidentiality.** Remember, you are taking people where they may not have been, and the unknown creates a certain amount of trepidation. That fear must be proactively managed up front or participants will not get the maximum, if any, benefits from the training.

• **Set clear training session ground rules.**

• **Co-facilitate sessions.** Take advantage of gender, ethnicity and having someone from the training team or HR.

• **Ensure diverse attendance.** If the departments split their attendance into groups ensure that each group has a representative mix of race, gender, age, and experience, etc.

• **Establish action plans.** This is the ultimate reason for implementing the skills-based approach. Inform participants upfront that they will be asked to ‘act’ on what they learn during the training. At the end of the session, spend some time brainstorming “action” steps while referencing specifics from the session.

• **Provide follow-up.** Not much is internalized after one occurrence. Constant and routine reminders, along with application, will lead to developing and sustaining the new behaviors.

• **Create accountability.** Consider having the attendees pair up for follow-up dialogue or to discuss fulfillment of the action plans.

### Components of Effective Diversity Training Programs

• **Training for the sake of training provides no real benefits.** Training has a fundamental importance as one of the many facets of a comprehensive diversity strategy. Almost every functional aspect of a diversity initiative requires some type of training, education, or preparation on the part of the organization in order to help drive the organization’s business objectives.

• **Training programs should be tailored to meet unique and individual needs of the organization.** Conduct a needs assessment before conducting training. This ensures critical areas of concern are addressed appropriately. Additionally, the training should compliment the organizational culture and climate.

• **Integrate with other initiatives.** There may be complimentary programs currently established where aspects of diversity training have a natural fit. This is not to dilute
or soft step diversity, but, rather, a way to enhance the overall impact and facilitate internalization.

Managers and supervisors increase their effectiveness by improved recruiting and reducing turnover costs through decreased absenteeism. Perhaps most importantly, they provide a work environment that more closely reflects the organization’s values and beliefs around its employees. They respect and recognize individuals in proportion to their contribution and treat them as unique individuals rather than stereotyping them. Employees who are sufficiently motivated to work can focus on accomplishing the business objectives and goals. They become more productive and successful—and success breeds success.

In the end, the organization as a whole improves in terms of collective teamwork, improved customer service, and effective communication. Reductions in training and employee turnover costs are realized, which impacts the bottom line.

Creating Training Programs

The Conference Board recommends asking the following questions when considering what to include in a diversity training program:

- How does diversity link to the business case?
- Is it awareness based?
- Is it about race, gender, or age?
- What’s the current employee knowledge base surrounding diversity?
- Who will be your audience?

Research shows that most organizations focus first on programs that will improve interpersonal skills, followed by multicultural literacy. Next, the focus is on technical skills, and, lastly, sessions that emphasize corporate acculturation.

The type of employees to be trained should be examined as well. As you move through the organizational structure, priorities and business focus change, and it is important to deliver the training in an effective and relevant way so each and every person can individually acquire what they need in order to maximize their performance and impact.

The number of employees to be trained is equally an important consideration, especially where dialogue and group interaction is involved. While all employees should be trained, it is of value to examine how the basic components of training may be emphasized when training managers. Knowledge is a intellectual component that helps managers focus on developing the business case.

Regurgitating factoids and figures requires no great skill. Given the potential volatility and emotional connection that employees bring to the session, the trainer must be very adept at navigating these issues if and when they occur. They must diffuse those issues and maintain
a positive and safe learning environment. This is not to dismiss the various other skills and competencies of subject matter expertise that also contribute to successful learning outcomes.

Trainers can be internal employees, external consultants, or a combination of both. There are pros and cons to each. An assessment and working knowledge of your organization and its culture—including size of the workforce, timetable, complexity of issues, employee receptivity, and budget—will help in determining which approach suits your company.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we:

- Assessed the current challenges and obstacles to diversity and inclusion training,
- Investigated how globalization has impacted diversity and inclusion training,
- Reviewed various types of diversity and inclusion training,
- Outlined the characteristics of effective diversity and inclusion training programs.
- Determined what content should be included in diversity and inclusion training.

Diversity and inclusion training has had its naysayers over the years who assert that D&I training can actually do more harm than good. But as with anything, a poorly planned and executed program will typically produce poor results, while a quality program will typically produce quality results.

For diversity and inclusion training to be effective, the right factors have to be present. To the greatest extent possible, diversity and inclusion training should be presented to employees in a way that makes them want to participate as opposed to making them feel forced. A truly comprehensive training program should also offer a wide variety of topics throughout the year and be provided on an ongoing basis. And finally, all training programs should appeal to different learning styles. The ultimate thing to keep in mind is that corporate diversity and inclusion is a journey. This chapter presented a framework for each organization to initiate the diversity and inclusion training process with a strong foundation of understanding.
Case Study: Target Corporation

Diversity and inclusion may begin with hiring the right people, but endurance and support requires training and education. This creates a safe and productive environment in which people thrive, and clients recognize this and vendors appreciate it. As globalization and diversity continue to grow, it is imperative that employees and senior management receive accurate and thorough training and education to acquire and practice necessary diversity and inclusion skills. Target Corporation works hard to stay one step ahead of its competition, and it does this effectively by recognizing the importance of diversity and education. The diversity of its employees reflects the diversity of its communities. However, once employed, employees learn the best methods for utilizing and taking advantage of diversity.

Target is dedicated to creating and maintaining a high-performing team with a wide array of strengths, backgrounds, and lifestyles. It defines diversity as individuality: age, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, family, and education. Forty-two percent of Target team members are ethnic minorities and 59 percent are women. These numbers are both much higher than the national average. Target brings out the full potential of every individual through training, which enhances awareness of diversity in the workplace and builds the environment necessary for promoting diversity.

Target offers a series of classes, from “Appreciating Differences” to “Communication Styles.” Each one not only teaches team members how to value diversity, but also promotes understanding of one another. Target employees can also choose from other classes in public speaking, time management, and communication skills. Within each class area, the individual courses are tailored to use various personality preference instruments to address style differences. Team members at the supervisory level also have leadership development classes. New team members are required to participate in training and education about the Corporate Diversity Mission. Target also offers more than 50 training items in Spanish, with all basic training materials published in both English and Spanish. Furthermore, when new employees begin at Target, they are given an individualized, detailed training and development plan that is applicable for the first 90 days of the new position. This ensures that diversity training and inclusion education is an integral part of all employee development.

The benefits of diversity training are twofold. They can be seen in the corporate world, affecting the bottom line. Diversity training improves recruitment efforts, increases employee retention rates, and reduces employee turnover. It leads to higher performance and productivity, both from individuals and the team. And it directly benefits employees by helping them build the skills and knowledge to function effectively in a multicultural environment. Through a conscious effort to implement diversity training, Target is experiencing these positive effects. It is working to combat racism, sustain an inclusive attitude, and improve the overall Target image and reputation.