

“You Can Bank On It!” with Pam Confer, Ph.D.

Fostering a Climate of Inclusion, Sensitivity, and Respect

Learning Summary

Diversity

Diversity training has evolved from focusing solely on eliminating discrimination to proactively seeking inclusion. In the end, diversity is about cultivating meaningful relationships.

Aspects of Inclusive Workplace

- ✓ Everyone is valued and treated with respect.
- ✓ Everyone feels listened to.
- ✓ Every employee at every level practices the behaviors that support an inclusive environment.
- ✓ Potential or actual tensions are actively addressed.
- ✓ The makeup of the workforce represents the local community and its customers.

Understanding Bias

- **Fundamental attribution error:** Explaining someone’s behavior based on inherent personality traits rather than external circumstances.
- **Subtle stereotyping:** Characterizing people in terms of high or low warmth and high or low competence based on their “type” or “profile.”

Rather than thinking we can eliminate bias, a better approach is to consciously address it by questioning the validity of our assumptions and choosing behaviors that support fairness and equity.

Virtually Imperceptible Inequities

Micro-inequities are small, subconscious behaviors that when repeated, result in separation or unfair treatment. Some examples:

- ✓ Giving feedback to one employee more frequently than to others.
- ✓ Always eating lunch with the same group of people.
- ✓ Habitual seating arrangements in a meeting that don’t allow others to sit close to the leader.
- ✓ Assuming a female employee doesn’t want to work with a client requiring conference calls at odd hours because she is a new mother.

Framework for Organizational Inclusion

- Demonstrate a desire to seek diverse perspectives at all levels.
- Find and capitalize on the unique skills of each individual.
- Establish a buddy system that connects each new employee with a veteran employee to “show them the ropes.”
- Find non-bureaucratic ways of challenging the status quo.
- Foster an atmosphere of flexibility and learning.
- Admit mistakes, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities.

Different Ways of Conveying Respect

- ✓ **Direct vs. Indirect** eye contact and communication
- ✓ **Time:** Value of punctuality or relationships
- ✓ **Individual vs. Group** achievement and recognition
- ✓ **Hierarchy:** Value of position and status or accomplishment based on skill
- ✓ **Reserved vs. Emotional** demeanor

Productive Conflict Resolution

- Discuss the issue and determine how it is perceived by both parties involved.
- Act in good faith.
- Share observations with openness and curiosity.
- Separate substantive issues from “style” differences.
- Decide how to approach the resolution process.
- Consider possible causes.
- Identify the needs of each side and find common ground.
- Consider “achieving disagreement.”

Be Part of the Solution

Every person has the ability to lead by example and influence other individuals and the organization.

- ✓ Don’t look to be offended.
- ✓ Respond with grace while setting the record straight.
- ✓ Speak up if you experience or notice truly offensive behavior.
- ✓ Treat others with respect.