

Five Ways to Evolve Your Diversity Training

By Daniel Y. Nicolas

Has diversity training in your organization evolved, or are you using a five-year-old PowerPoint presentation? Is diversity and inclusion woven throughout every facet of your organization, or is it seen as a check-the-box task to meet compliance obligations? Is conversation and dialogue around DEI on campus encouraged and facilitated, or does the discussion stop once the training session is complete? If there is robust, sustained dialogue, does that talk then move into action?

Compelling diversity and inclusion training is not only necessary and vital in today's increasingly multicultural, multiethnic, multigenerational workplace, but it's also good for the bottom line. Research has shown that organizations with robust diversity training programs have more engaged, innovative, committed employees. If you're looking for ways to reenergize or evolve your diversity and inclusion training, here are five easy-to-implement ideas.

Incorporate Diversity-Related TED Talks Into Your Training

Today's pertinent issues in diversity touch on sensitive topics in our society including racial injustice, generational disparities, hiring individuals with disabilities and rights for LGBT employees, and it can be difficult to find subject matter experts that can authentically speak to these issues.

That's where the popular TED Talks series can come into play, as organizations large and small can easily and inexpensively (read, for free!) incorporate TED Talks into their diversity training. A groundbreaking example was the State Street Corporation holding a viewing party onsite so that employees could watch a coworker give a TED talk about coming out (read the story and view the TED talk at blog.ted.com – search “Morgana Bailey”).

It's important to note that using TED Talks in diversity training is scalable. For large organizations such as State Street, an actual TED Institute event can be hosted with one of the speakers addressing a key issue in diversity. On a smaller scale, viewing a TED Talks diversity-related video during a lunch and learn can also have an impact by giving attendees an authentic perspective.

Be a Diversity Think Tank

Merriam-Webster defines a think tank as “an organization that consists of a group of people who think of new ideas on a particular subject or who give advice about what should be done.” Diversity training within your organization should always include time for participants to share new ideas on the issue or topic being presented. Employee ideas developed through these “think tanks” often lead to unique diversity programs, policies, reports and initiatives for the organization. Many organizations are also starting to publicly showcase on their websites their DEI best practices, so don't be afraid to share your own innovative programs and/or borrow from others.

Utilize Your Employee Resource Groups

With the onset of an increasingly diverse workforce, employers should look to their employees as a resource to conduct diversity training. Northrop Grumman has used its employee resource groups (ERGs) for individuals with disabilities and LGBT employees to conduct lunch and learns for the organization. This helps employees to make a personal connection with the topic at hand. It can also be helpful to vet diversity-related training programs through applicable ERGs in your organization, as doing so can add relevance and ensure credibility of the content. Smaller organizations that do not have employee resource groups can benefit from engaging DEI-related community organizations and volunteers.

Be Social

Diversity training and initiatives can be enhanced through social media campaigns. Most recently, the federal government launched the #ItsOnUs campaign to end sexual assault on college campuses. The campaign includes short awareness videos on YouTube and a website with tools and resources on dealing with sexual assault on campus. In this campaign, social media provided a unique platform to showcase a difficult-to-discuss topic. Organizations can use this same model to enact internal campaigns for diversity training. Examples would be the use of an internal intranet to share awareness videos on a certain topic or the use of a hashtag to highlight the theme of the training.

inclusion cultivates excellence

Use Technology to Your Advantage

As we all know, today's workforce is increasingly dynamic and mobile. According to the *Fortune* magazine article "Lessons Learned From 3 Companies That Have Long Embraced Remote Work," remote work continues to trend upward, with a 26 percent increase in remote job postings from 2013 to 2014. Moreover, 83 percent of hiring managers say telecommuting will be more prevalent in the next five years. Accordingly, diversity training programs must also be able to evolve in order to accommodate this new workforce.

Organizations can incorporate the use of web conferencing platforms for diversity training. These programs maximize the use of advanced sharing tools, chat features, screen sharing and virtual classrooms. To enhance impact, use live trainings via web conferencing instead of pre-recorded

webinars. The creation of a virtual environment with live interaction is critical for an engaging experience. And by diversifying your delivery approach, your DEI content will have a broader reach and a longer shelf life.

Are your organization's diversity training and DEI initiatives stuck in limbo, or are they ahead of the curve? Does your campus community walk away from DEI training with a "glad-that's-over" mentality, or are they energized by new insight and a resolve to continue the dialogue? If your diversity initiatives are falling flat, maybe it's time to rethink how, where and why you deliver the message. 

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THE STATS

FEWER THAN 1 IN 4
ORGANIZATIONS WITH LESS THAN
500 WORKERS
PROVIDED DIVERSITY
TRAINING IN 2012.



FEWER THAN 1 IN 8
HAD A DIVERSITY TRAINING BUDGET IN 2012,
LESS THAN IN 2011,
WHEN ABOUT 1 IN 6 HAD SUCH BUDGETS.



ABOUT 2 IN 3 (66 PERCENT)
HAD NO WAY TO MEASURE
THE IMPACT OF THEIR
DIVERSITY PRACTICES.



ANOTHER 16 PERCENT
WERE NOT SURE IF THEIR
COMPANIES MEASURED IMPACT.

MORE THAN 9 IN 10 (93 PERCENT)
DIDN'T MEASURE THE RETURN ON
INVESTMENT FOR THEIR
DIVERSITY INITIATIVES.



INNOVATIVE TRAINING IDEAS



IMPACT – MAKE IT MEAN SOMETHING



TIE DIVERSITY TRAINING TO A GOAL AND TRACK IT



TIE DIVERSITY TO EXECUTIVE PERFORMANCE



DIVERSITY SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE ORGANIZATION'S VISION OR GOAL STATEMENTS

SOURCE: SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SURVEY, APRIL 2014