

## Components of and Audience for Corporate Diversity and Inclusion Training

By Stan Kimer



Expert Forum



When asked to submit a bid to a Fortune 500 firm for design and delivery of a one-day diversity and inclusion workshop for middle managers, I studied my past material, prepared my bid, and concluded that successful and compelling diversity training needs to contain three major components that I call heart, mind and action.

First, an organization's leaders and employees need to be inwardly and sincerely convinced (in their **hearts**) of the importance of diversity and inclusion, and how critical it is to their enterprise's success. Unless people internalize this topic and are truly committed and passionate, they may just half-heartedly go through diversity motions. Eventually this will show through in mediocre execution and performance. True commitment and passion will lead to excellence in execution.

Second, leaders and employees need to be given the content knowledge that speaks to their **minds**. In addition to inward passion, the intelligent and analytical mind needs to be provided compelling logic, business case information, principles and useable tools. People need to see the direct link between corporate values, strategy and goals. See my Workforce Diversity Networking Expert Forum resource titled ["The Strategic and Financial Business Case for Diversity."](#)

Most companies, non-profits and governmental agencies have web pages that espouse corporate core values such as focusing on all customers or clients, valuing all employees, contributing to the community, respecting all cultures, etc. It should be very easy to connect this diversity content training to corporate information. Finally, all employees should see the direct tie between embracing diversity and inclusion to corporate profitability and hence to their own job security and compensation.

Basically content knowledge adds the structure around the base of passion and commitment.

Third, any successful training must also end with a call to **action** where all attendees of the training put in place ongoing plans to apply what they have learned. So often one day workshops conclude and after a week or two everyone is back to the "same old, same old." I recommend brief accountability sessions where those trained document their execution and development plans around diversity, and then share in pairs or small groups for even 10 minutes once a quarter. Passion and knowledge combined with deliberate action will lead to the best results.

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So now, **who** within an organization need diversity and inclusion training? Many companies start with top and middle management, roll out training to first line managers and then stop there. What about all the rank and file employees?

Multiple studies on workplace engagement focusing on who impacts how a person feels in their place of employment are split between two conclusions. One set of studies conclude that a person's immediate supervisor has the most impact on how they feel about their work and the strongest tie to their engagement and/or decision to leave. A second set of studies conclude that a person's co-workers and team members have the strongest tie to workplace engagement and impact of departing. In both studies, other groups like corporate human resources departments, senior executives and customers have significantly less impact.

Therefore diversity and inclusion training needs to be rolled out to **all employees**. Even if the management team "gets it" and espouses inclusion of all people, co-workers and team members who do not value and include everyone on their team can lead to an oppressive work environment that can destroy morale and productivity. And particularly in retail and service environments, it is most often the non-managers who directly interact with the customers and clients. These employees do need to be constantly trained on how to respectfully interact with the full diversity of the people they are serving.

In summary, strong and impactful diversity and inclusion training needs to incorporate the heart, the mind and action, and needs to be deployed to everyone from the senior leadership to the rank and file employees.