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Improving Your DE&I Practices

Approximately \$8 billion per year is invested into DE&I (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) training, yet [studies show](#) that the needle of behavior change is not moving in a positive direction.

Behavior change requires several levels of development: The first level is awareness that bias exists and that we all have implicit biases, the second is a change of mindset and the motivation to create change when we see bias at play, and the third is the skill to influence behavior changes in ourselves and/or in others. Research shows that the majority of current DE&I training builds awareness but stops short of generating the motivation and skill to create change.

Research also shows that a change of mindset and motivation can occur when people acknowledge their own biases in the workplace and begin to understand how they benefit from their identity. Mindsets evolve when people put themselves in the shoes of those who do not benefit as much within the same system. In other words, DE&I training needs to integrate a more personal approach.

I first became aware of bias when I was young. My adoptive father had dark skin and deep brown eyes. My mother, myself and my brother were fair skinned, blue/green eyed, blonde haired people. When we walked into restaurants, people would stare. I remember asking my mom “Why do people stare at us when we walk into places?” and without hesitation, she simply said “because we are beautiful”. As an 8 year old, that response put me at ease and

instead of feeling afraid or embarrassed, it made me feel special and good. It was a few more years before I realized the real reason for their stares and when I did, I felt a surge of anger and defensiveness. This fed the initial formation of my value for fairness and equity.

My father was a physical education teacher and on weekends he drove to an inner city school in Chicago where he coached and refereed intramural basketball. Sometimes, my brother and I would get to go with him. Everyone on and off the courts were people of color, except for my brother and I. I began to recognize how it felt to be part of the out group, and I remember thinking, “I want to make things fair and equal”. Given these early life experiences and the values they formed, I was shocked when I took the [Implicit Bias Test](#) and discovered I had a bias toward people of color. My experiences, while notable for me, did not outweigh the hundreds of other experiences I had growing up. Implicit Bias is deeply rooted and powerful and we often fail to see it in ourselves.



So going back to the formula that is needed for change:

- **Awareness**
- **Motivation to Change**
- **Skill to Change Behavior**

I am Aware of my biases and am motivated to change, but I need to surround myself with people who are comfortable influencing me when they see what I don't see. I need to surround myself with people that have the courage and skill to Educate and Engage in a way that influences me to adjust my behavior.

What if we created opportunities in our training solutions for people to “tell their stories” so that others could empathize and feel motivated to create change? What if we taught people how to educate and engage in a way that influences behavior change in others when they see bias at play? Perhaps we could start to see the behavior change that DE&I seeks to promote.

One way to create a personalized bias training experience is to involve storytelling in as many ways as possible. Effective training should be informative and educational while also telling stories that promote empathetic feelings in the learner. Stories should be personal, emotional, and encourage the participant to put themselves in another person's shoes. We all have more in common than we often realize and the more people can relate to a story, the more likely it will influence their mindset. The more people empathize with a story, the more they will be motivated to create positive change that can make the world a better place for others.



My **Influencing with Story** and **Breaking Thru Bias** programs go into greater detail on this approach. Reach out to learn more about our program offerings.

For additional examples of how to improve DE&I training, check out these articles by [Forbes](#) and [The Guardian](#).

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