

5 Steps for a High-Nutrient, Lean D&I Training Program

Training is usually a staple in an organization's diversity and inclusiveness diet. However, many fill their plates with generous servings of training that are nutrient-poor and high in empty calories. Ensure your organization feasts upon high-nutrient, lean training programs that provide an excellent return on investment by following these critical steps.

Be results-oriented: Be clear about what *problem* the training is intended to solve, or what *goals* it is intended to meet. Training is only a solution when a lack of knowledge or skills is the problem. Ensure you or an external expert take adequate time assessing what your root problems really are. If employees or leaders possess needed knowledge or skills, but are not using them, training will not solve the problem. Training is a waste of time and money when it is not part of a broader, more comprehensive strategy to obtain a certain *result*.

Be data-oriented: Gather evidence of training effectiveness. Identify good quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (words) measures of where you are now. Determine where you want to be, why you want to be there and by when. Gather new data continuously (not just training session pre- and post-tests) to assess whether you are solving your identified root problems or meeting the intended goals. If you are, you're building credibility and a case for further investment. If you're not, change your strategy or tactics to increase the organization's ROI.

Be comprehensive and focused on sustainability: Ensure that the climate outside the training room matches the climate inside. Even when training is needed, new knowledge and skills can't be sustained when the organization's culture, systems, processes and policies remain the same, or are contradictory or toxic to what is developed in the training room. As Peter Drucker famously quipped, "culture eats strategy for breakfast." Ensure you have a comprehensive approach to change that includes key stakeholder buy-in, ongoing learning and support, and consistent accountability.

Identify a training partner that is a good fit for your organization's culture, values and goals. Outsourcing training can be an advantage because this eliminates the pressure to tow the party line or maintain the status quo that internal training staff experience. If what you need is culture change and solutions to problems, a fresh perspective is often the best bet. Don't rule out smaller training companies – some may be a better fit for you, or give better service, than the giant firms. Regardless, ensure your training partner:

- Understands, or spends adequate time getting to know your organization — its leaders, history, values and culture.
- Spends adequate time assessing the root causes of the problem you want solved, or identifying your training goals.
- Is committed to step No. 2 and not only has suggestions about how to gather and analyze data on effectiveness, but is committed to being held accountable for results.
- Uses their expertise to advise you on training content, design, timing and even its appropriateness.
- Creates a program that is tailored to your organization's culture, values and training goals.

Ensure some training is focused on unconscious biases and power inequities. Few training programs incorporate these two elements, a glaring omission that hampers the effectiveness of D&I-focused training programs and culture change. Despite our good intentions, unconscious biases and power inequities interfere with effective communication, effective leadership and decision-making, and creating truly inclusive environments where brilliance and excellence flourish.

Let's talk about how to set you up for success! susana@susanarinderle.com