5 Proven Strategies to Guarantee Your Diversity Initiative Produces Results

(That Matter!)

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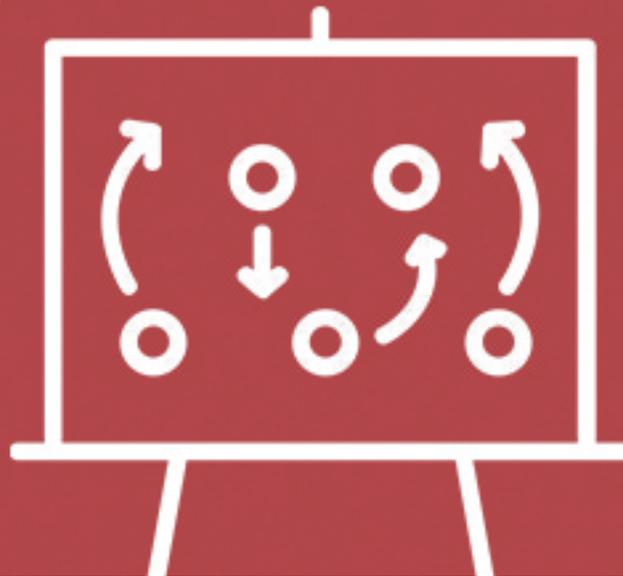
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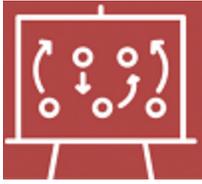
Strategy #5: Hire an Excellent Training Partner

Is this your problem?

- You've invested lots of money in training but seen low-to-no meaningful results or outcomes
- You've received feedback that training has led to confusion, even increased conflict, tension or problems
- There is a belief in your organization or leadership that diversity training doesn't work

Why is this a problem?

- It wastes money (which is limited)
- It wastes time (which is even more limited!)
- It damages the credibility of diversity & inclusion (D&I) and creates a chilling effect on all current and future D&I efforts

What's the solution?

Often the issue isn't that diversity training doesn't work, but that your organization selected a training partner that was inadequate, or not a good fit. Not all diversity training, nor diversity trainers, are alike, especially now that D&I is more common and sought-after than ever before. Ensure you're set up for success before making a game-changing investment in D&I training by answering the following questions:

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Ask yourself:

1. **Do we need training? Do we need it now?** Training is the solution only if lack of knowledge or skills is the *primary* problem. Choose a training partner with additional expertise in OD (organizational development) who will work with you to determine what your specific training needs are and whether or not this is the right time to embark on a training rollout. Be wary of a training partner that is quick to sign on without first doing adequate assessment *and* delivering expert recommendations.

2. **Who do we already have internally with expertise in training, OD, adult learning, instructional design and facilitation?** Ensure those key stakeholders are intimately involved in any D&I training planning and implementation. Not only will they ask questions, make suggestions and catch possible problems early that staff without this expertise will miss, they will share the burden of reinforcing and sustaining new knowledge and skills *after* training. It's efficient and vital to your long term success to ensure these critical internal partners are meaningfully involved from the very beginning.

Ask your potential training partner (or individual trainers):

1. What is your expertise in adult learning, instructional design and facilitation?
2. How is your training design effective for different learning styles, personality types, generational cultures, people with physical limitations or limited English proficiency?
3. How does this training program increase awareness, knowledge *and* skills? In what proportion?
4. What is your expertise in D&I? What have been your measurable successes?
5. What is your direct experience with managing or leading?
6. What is your experience with our organization, sector, or industry?
7. How do you handle tension, disagreement, or conflict during workshops?

Demonstrate the critical importance of D&I to obtaining results that matter by giving a commitment to D&I training the same scrutiny and insistence on fit, quality and value that you would to any other key strategic priority. This way you set yourself up for increased buy-in, a higher ROI (return on investment) and better results you – and everyone in your organization – care about!

Kick the "Old School" style, go #NewSchoolDandI
Read about the results I've equipped my clients to achieve.
Schedule a free 30-minute breakthrough session to explore solutions!

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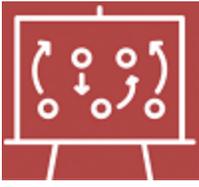
Strategy #4: Measure the *Meaningful* Impact of Training… And Reinforce It

Is this your problem?

- Your training got rave reviews, but you've seen no-to-low meaningful results
- Your training got rave reviews, but your culture and systems haven't changed
- Your training got rave reviews, but leaders' behaviors haven't changed
- There is a belief in your organization or leadership that diversity training doesn't work

Why is this a problem?

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What's the solution?

It's a false belief, even among some training professionals, that the effects of training can't be measured.   This belief undermines the credibility of D&I initiatives and professionals, and reflects poor stewardship of an organization's trust and investment of budget, time and talent. Ensure you're set up for success by answering the following questions *before* investing in training:

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Ask yourself:

1. **What are the <u>specific</u> goals, or learning objectives for the training?** What <u>exactly</u> should people *feel, think*, and/or be able to *do* differently by the end of a session?
2. **What is our baseline? Where are we now in relation to our training goals?** Assess individual participants using a pre-test or self-evaluation *before* training or at the beginning of a session. Assess the entire organization using relevant customer or employee satisfaction scores, quality metrics, market share and/or financial indicators.
3. **How will we know whether or not this training was a success?** This may be measured for individuals using a post-test and/or self-evaluation at the end of a training session. Use the *same* instrument pre- and post-training and compare results. To assess organizational impact, revisit the same metrics you used to identify your baseline.

To ensure long-term high return on training, ask:

1. Who will we train, and when? How will we manage lack of critical mass in the early stages of the rollout?
2. How are new awareness, knowledge and skills being <u>reinforced</u>?
3. What are the <u>obstacles</u> to this awareness, knowledge and skills being reinforced and embedded in our culture?

Ensure both training effectiveness *and* the return on your training investment are high through careful preparation before anyone attends a workshop. Take the time to put reinforcement structures and accountability systems in place, and communicate the plans to all involved before sending people to training. You'll be happy you did!

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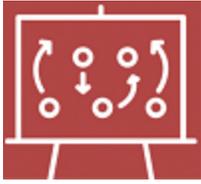
Strategy #3: Identify and Measure *Meaningful* Goals

Is this your problem?

- Your D&I goals are to recruit, retain and/or promote more people of color or women
- Your D&I goals are to increase the number of job candidates of color or women
- Your D&I goals are to start Employee Resource Groups
- Your D&I goals are to conduct diversity, unconscious bias or cultural competence training
- You don't know what your D&I goals are
- You don't have any D&I goals

Why is this a problem?

- It produces no meaningful, measurable business or mission-critical results
- It doesn't address a current pressing problem or take you from good to great
- It adds tasks and stress to leaders' and employees' already-overflowing plates
- It wastes money (which is limited)
- It wastes time (which is even more limited!)
- It damages the credibility of diversity & inclusion (D&I) and creates a chilling effect on all current and future D&I efforts

What's the solution?

Approaching your D&I initiative like a checklist of best practices from elsewhere without a solid business imperative *relevant and urgent* to your organization's success is just as ineffective as approaching any other strategic priority that way. Your goals, challenges and needs may not be

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the same as your competitors', or the rest of your industry. You must do adequate assessment and gap analysis before taking action to get better-than-OK results. Before acting too quickly to articulate D&I goals or take action, ask yourself the following questions:

Ask yourself:

1. How will a successful D&I initiative solve a problem we have right now? (How will it alleviate *existing* pain points?)
2. How will a successful D&I initiative move us from "good" to "great" in areas we *already* care about?
3. How will a successful D&I initiative help us avoid potential *future* pain points?

Only when you have clarity about how D&I is going to solve an important problem, take you from good to great or avoid future pain points will you know how to measure your success. Training might not even be necessary! Leadership coaching, team development, or changes to policies, processes, or systems might be your first step before pursuing a training program (if at all) to get excellent results you care about.

The core question is: What do you want more or less of? Identify those metrics, assess your baseline, set goals and a timeline, and gather data over that period. Some of the metrics you might consider are: improved employee engagement, better results or outcomes, higher customer satisfaction, greater market share, increased profit, higher productivity, greater efficiency, reduced error rate, or less complaints. Focusing on *just one or two* of these for 6-to 12-months will give you solid evidence your initiative is either working, or needing redirection. It will also bolster support for your initiative and create sustainability because you'll demonstrate that D&I isn't essential because it's "the right thing to do" but because it gets better *results*. And no one can argue with that.

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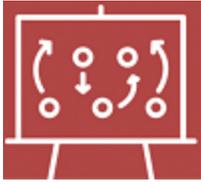
# Strategy #2: Address Your Culture's Toxicity to Excellence, Change & Inclusiveness

Is this your problem?

- You have meaningful, business-critical D&I goals, but you're falling short
- You rolled out high-quality, results-oriented training aligned with your business-critical D&I goals but you're seeing low-to-no desired change
- You have meaningful D&I goals and/or training, but poor employee engagement metrics or high turnover
- You haven't reviewed your employee engagement or turnover metrics for over 3 years
- You don't cut your engagement, turnover, or promotion data by demographics
- You don't assess employee satisfaction or engagement in any formal, consistent way

Why is this a problem?

- You're out of touch with your organization and out of alignment with your D&I goals
- Your leadership credibility and effectiveness are at stake
- It wastes money (which is limited)
- It wastes time (which is even more limited!)
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Culture eats strategy for breakfast
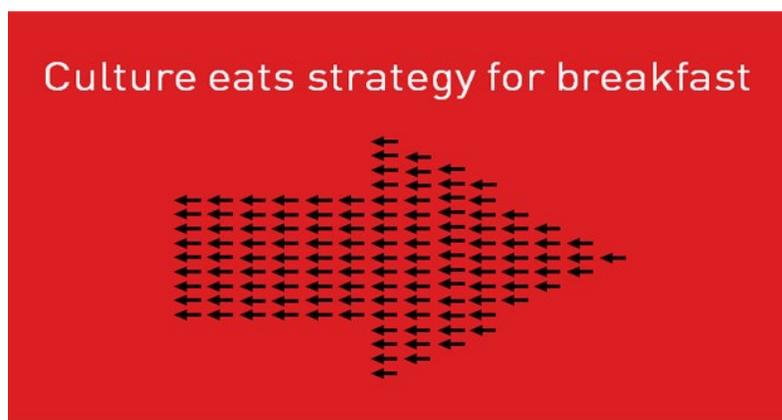
What's the solution?

Tying D&I initiatives to solving a pressing problem or going from good to great won't help you if your existing culture is unhealthy or toxic. Your training program will fall flat, and your investment wasted, if your culture doesn't support healthy change, equity, inclusion or general excellence. Your core issue might not be about diversity and inclusiveness at all, but rather lack of accountability or effective leadership, which are creating or exacerbating "diversity issues".

Here's how to start your "detox":

1. **Assess your culture for D&I toxicity.** I have a one-page assessment that accomplishes this for you.
2. **Clean up your structure.** Who reports to whom? Does that make sense? Is it clear to others? Is it effective? Is there sufficient equity in job positions, budget and respect across teams? Is each person in a role that's a good fit for them and the team? Where are the loopholes, complexities and gray areas that allow dysfunctional behavior to thrive?
3. **Ensure fair and equitable accountability across the board.**
4. **Ensure all leaders commit to excellence and take action to address lack of accountability, equity or inclusiveness.**
5. **Examine your mission, vision, goals, policies and objectives for elements that may contradict or undermine diversity, equity and inclusiveness.** Address this *after* tackling #1-4, above. If you don't see any issues, get feedback from a cross-section of diverse employees and customers to make sure.

Engaging an external professional to help you assess and reorient your team or organization, and help you hardwire new behaviors and processes, can save you tons of time, money and unnecessary anguish. **A "D&I detox" requires effort and commitment, but it's completely doable** with the right support and tools, and will be its own reward once you're restored to health!

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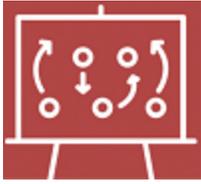
Strategy #1: "Do Diversity" For the *Results* (Not Because It's "The Right Thing To Do")

Is this your problem?

- You're not seeing meaningful, measurable results from your D&I initiatives
- Your D&I initiatives are poorly resourced
- Your D&I initiatives are downsized or eliminated when your organization faces major stressors
- You experience pushback from key stakeholders around D&I

Why is this a problem?

- **"Rightness and "goodness" are only beliefs based on certain values.** One's beliefs and values may be precious but they aren't facts or universal Truth. They may not provide value, results, or profit, which are important to groups and organizations.
- **Not everyone shares these values.** Expecting that everyone does is naïve, and believing everyone *should* reduces diversity.
- **It alienates and silences those who challenge or raise questions.** Those who raise concerns about D&I content or execution are framed (consciously or not) as "wrong" or "bad," because how else could they possibly argue with "doing good"? Their feedback, which may be insightful or key to building alliances and creating success, is ignored.
- **It's unsustainable.** Initiatives based only on beliefs and values, especially beliefs and values not everyone shares, tend not to last. Seen as "nice-to-haves," they get cut when leadership priorities shift, or resources become scarce.
- **Believing that "doing diversity" is right or good isn't required for it to work.** Just as one doesn't need to "believe" in internal combustion or the laws of physics to drive a car, the principles of diversity and inclusiveness work *regardless of the belief systems* of those involved.

What's the solution?

Diversity plus inclusiveness *gets superior results*, as shown by multiple studies, including from hard sciences like mathematics and economics.   **Diversity plus inclusiveness is an excellence multiplier.**

This doesn't require a belief that diversity is "good" or "right", it's just how the brain works. Also, diversity *without inclusiveness* often gets worse results than no diversity at all.

"Doing diversity" isn't about helping "them" (women, people of color, LGBT employees, people with disabilities, etc.). It's not about "doing the right thing", making others think you're "good people," or keeping up with your competitors. "Doing diversity" is about getting superior results in whatever critical, strategic priorities you already have. **It's about solving an urgent problem or going from good to great. It's about helping everyone bring their full brilliance and excellence to work. It's about getting out of each other's way, and our own way.**

No one can argue with that, because it's not based on beliefs or values. It's science.

This doesn't mean it's wrong or ineffective to believe that "doing diversity" is good, right, noble, or helpful! It's just incomplete and unsustainable. These beliefs take nothing away from the science – and the science takes nothing away from the beliefs! This isn't an "either-or" proposition, it's "both-and." Imagine what would be possible if you, your leaders and your organization *combined* compelling values with hard science and dedication to meaningful results! Not only would you be unstoppable – combining passion and integrity with a commitment to excellence – you'd render irrelevant the argument that "we don't have the time, money, people, etc. to 'do diversity' right now, because we have to focus on [insert other important stuff here]"!

The idea that one can *either* focus on quality and excellence *or* diversity and inclusiveness isn't only inaccurate (a false "either-or" binary), it implies that "diverse people" threaten to bring down quality or excellence, creating dangerous blindspots and stereotypes that interfere with excellence. (Get my free "Diversity ROI Resources" report for pages of statistics, articles, reports and anecdotes about the high Return on Investment gained by organizations who invest in D&I.)

"Doing D&I" may be right and good after all – because it gets better results we care about. And who can argue with better results, and a workplace that works better…for everyone?

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(Read MORE REASONS in my article
"Old School" Diversity Doesn't Work; "New School" Diversity Does)

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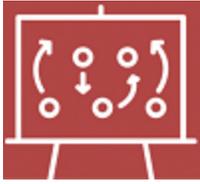
A Bonus for You!

5 MORE Reasons Your Diversity Initiative is Doomed
(You've Heard Before, but are Also Essential!)

1. You're only doing diversity, not inclusiveness. Your main focus is on numbers or representation of particular demographic groups (usually people of color and women).
2. You're not addressing unconscious bias.
3. You're not holding everyone (or anyone) accountable for D&I results.
4. The people leading your D&I effort have little to no power (or motivation) to lead meaningful, effective change. Your CEO, ED or President isn't driving the change or walking the talk.
5. D&I efforts are separate from normal business and human resources operations.

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