

## **Busting Unconscious Bias--And Boosting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion**

*“If you have a brain, you are biased.”*

In Power Your Tribe chapter 8 we dive into the at times challenging topic of diversity and inclusion. Here are some additional thoughts on it.

One of the key topics I’m asked about these days is unconscious bias training. More and more studies come in every day that show diverse and inclusive teams (more on what that means later) consistently outperform teams made up of people who are very similar to each other. So it’s time to bust unconscious biases in business.

And that’s the tricky part.

While millions of training dollars have been spent over the past 30-plus years on diversity, there is surprisingly little proof of results. In fact, the gender and racial diversity training we might be familiar with from the late ‘80s and ‘90s was widely reported to have had an adverse effect! It raised awareness of people’s differences but didn’t provide behavioral change strategies.

**A study of 829 companies over 31 years showed that diversity training had “no positive effects in the average workplace.” Source:**

[http://scholar.harvard.edu/dobbin/files/2007\\_contexts\\_dobbin\\_kalev\\_kelly.pdf](http://scholar.harvard.edu/dobbin/files/2007_contexts_dobbin_kalev_kelly.pdf)

At best the study made some people more open to hiring those of other races, genders, and ethnicities, and at its worst it shamed people resulting in some leaders to band together and enforce their world view.

Fortunately, scientists have learned a lot over the years, and, especially in the past few years. Research based organizations like the NeuroLeadership Institute have been studying not only how the brain creates biases but also what strategies successfully mitigate them in organizations. One thing they have noticed is that while a group of similar people feels better for its members, a diverse group consistently performs better, making it clearly worth our while to figure out the bias conundrum.

So if you are going to launch a program for diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) please consider the below to maximize your success.

Unconscious bias is accidental, unintended, and subtle. It results in completely unconscious choices made by everyone, all the time.

Good intentions can't affect or reduce unconscious bias. But a plan, a process, and prevention can.

### **The Facts:**

Research from Harvard, Carnegie Mellon, Columbia, Rice, Yale, and more provide proof that:

- Lack of both diversity and inclusion has a significant performance cost to organizations
- Unconscious bias is the greatest barrier to creating diversity and inclusion
- Bias occurs as a result of the brain's inherent desire to be safe, belong, and matter by being with those that are "same as" us--*literally*
- Raising awareness of unconscious bias may feel good but it doesn't make a difference—only implementing strategies does

### **Why Teams Like Unconscious Bias Training:**

- It's honest to understand our brain's natural biases and why we have them—we de-mystify them and remove "making them wrong"
- It's empowering to see that we can change our behaviors and biases—and create beneficial diversity and inclusion
- It's motivating to see that our organization cares about diversity and inclusion and wants to remove exclusion and "in groups" to create a more pure meritocracy

### **In Our Program You'll Learn and Practice Applying (make sure the partner you pick, if not us, does the same):**

- How bias happens in our brain—and how it has helped us to survive
- The 4 triggers of unconscious bias: task, numbers, clarity, perceiver and how to recognize them, catch them, correct them
- The SEEDS model that predicts bias: similarity, expedience, experience, distance, safety and how to navigate and redefine it for your company
  - ✓ **Similarity:** *"People like me are better than others."*
  - ✓ **Expedience:** *"If it feels right, it must be true."*

- ✓ **Experience:** *“My perceptions are accurate.”*
- ✓ **Distance:** *“Closer is better than distant.”*
- ✓ **Safety:** *“Bad is stronger than good.”*

### Then We'll Workshop the Following:

The infrastructure to reduce and ultimately prevent future bias: The 3 P's: Plans, Processes, Prevention:

- ✓ Craft **Plans** to support new habits and to make the unbiased choice the default in everyday people and business decisions. This applies to meetings & collaborations; project, role, task assignments and minor investments.
- ✓ Create **Process** with standard criteria and operating procedures to provide a structure for making decisions where bias often occurs in hiring, promoting and major investments. These processes include gender-, race- and in some cases socio-economic-blinding.
- ✓ Refine **Prevention** models to remove triggers to keep biases from being activated.

### As a Result of This Training:

- ✓ A team will be identified that will create a 30 day agile sprint to craft the 3 P's and roll it out to the company.
- ✓ Ongoing and expanded education needs will be identified to break bias and enhance diversity and inclusion in your company.
- ✓ Success Metrics will be set and monitored to gauge the organization's progress in breaking bias and boosting inclusion and diversity.

We must measure success and make DEI a part of our workplace intentionally, daily.