

TRACOM[®] GROUP

THE SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE COMPANY[®]

How Social Intelligence Impacts Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

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Introduction ▶

Current movements to address social inequalities are forcing many organizations to rethink their equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) efforts, for the right reasons: it's not only good policy, it's good business strategy. A recent McKinsey study¹ found that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians, and research by Bersin Deloitte shows that diverse companies have nearly two and a half times higher cash flow per employee over a three-year period than non-diverse companies.²



The Role of EDI Training ▶

As part of their EDI efforts, organizations naturally look to training programs. There are typically three goals that companies want to achieve with their EDI training. The first is to diversify across all levels of the organization. The second is to achieve a state of equity so that all members of the organization are free to work and develop professionally, based on their inherent human potential. The final goal has been the most elusive for organizations: to achieve an inclusive company where all individuals feel a sense of belonging in the company's collective purpose and processes.

While well-intentioned, many training programs fall short of expectations. Research on the effectiveness of EDI training has been mixed. A recent meta-analysis of 260 EDI training programs over 40 years found that many programs fail to achieve some of their important outcomes.³ In fact, many programs backfire by creating even more bias, often by reinforcing stereotypes. Many participants become resentful when they feel they're being forced to adopt new attitudes, and resist being told how to think and behave. However, the good news is that the same research found programs that are successful. EDI training was most effective when it was:

- complemented by other initiatives
- targeted to both awareness and skill development
- conducted over a significant period of time.

ESSENTIALLY, EFFECTIVE TRAINING IS ONGOING, PART OF A LARGER INITIATIVE, AND ABOUT BOTH ACQUIRING SKILLS IN WORKING WITH PEOPLE AND CHANGING ATTITUDES. SUCCESSFUL EDI PROGRAMS ARE NOT "CHECK BOX" TYPES OF TRAINING.

The most enlightening aspect of this research is that EDI goals can be achieved through multiple programs that have various other purposes. This holistic approach makes sense given that organizations try to create interdependent learning curriculums designed to achieve the organization's goals and values. One framework for considering programs that will affect EDI is through their ability to affect one of four aspects of performance: communicating, adapting, connecting, and innovating.



Communicating

EDI is about more than obvious attributes, like race and gender. It is about differences in people's thinking styles and ways of getting work done. The most progressive companies are shifting their focus around EDI by recognizing that the greatest benefits come from having teams of people with diverse behavioral and thinking styles who bring multiple perspectives and approaches to the table. Different styles have different methods to how they make decisions, use their time and approach tasks, and this diversity of approaches helps companies to be more effective.

Things you might hear from employees:



THERE'S TOO MUCH GROUP-THINK HERE.

WE DON'T GET INPUT FROM ENOUGH PEOPLE.

OUR CLIENTS ARE MORE DIVERSE NOW. WE NEED TO BETTER REFLECT THEIR INTERESTS AND PERSPECTIVE.

Research shows that people prefer others who are similar to themselves. This is an unconscious bias and is not intentional. Because of this, we don't seek out people different from ourselves and we don't adapt our behavior to work effectively with others. We expect them to do things according to our own needs and preferences, when we should be employing the platinum rule—do unto others as they want done unto them. In other words, work with people in ways that appeal to their natural behavioral styles and strengths. When we fail to do this, people can interpret our behavior to mean things that we don't intend—they can feel disrespected, confused, unheard, or frustrated.

TRACOM's SOCIAL STYLE® training helps people become aware of their own behavior and how they are perceived by others. Participants learn about their natural strengths and how this helps in teams. They also learn how their strengths can be shortcomings in certain situations, and how this can impede their performance and effectiveness with other team members. Critically, they learn how to recognize the behavioral styles and strengths of other team members, and how to communicate with them in ways that lead to understanding and acceptance. This helps teams to be more effective and ensures that all people are heard and respected. It opens the floor to diverse insights and perspectives that might otherwise be closed off. The real weakness of teams is when they don't have different styles represented and are not considering all opinions.



Adapting

When people feel unaccepted and like they don't belong, their negativity will soar. If left unaddressed this can lead to high turnover and emotional contagion where large groups of people become disaffected. It also results in an organization that fails to achieve its EDI goals.

Things you might hear from employees:



WE'VE DONE DIVERSITY TRAINING BUT IT DIDN'T REALLY WORK.

WE'RE GOING TO CHANGE THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO BE MORE EFFICIENT.

DON'T WORRY, ALL OF THESE CHANGES ARE NO BIG DEAL.

TRACOM's Adaptive Mindset for Resiliency® program works by helping people recognize and overcome their negativity bias. They do this by challenging their automatic negative thoughts and finding more productive ways to think and act during difficult times. This alters their mindset and behavior, helping them to maintain a sense of control over events. Instead of feeling paralyzed, they feel empowered and autonomous, regaining control over their mindsets and actions. The course is of additional benefit to leaders since it shows them strategies that help their team members to be more resilient, and how they can model resiliency.

Developing a resilient mindset helps people who are traditionally underrepresented, but it also helps others in the organization. For underrepresented groups, a resilient organization contributes to EDI by helping to create an atmosphere where people's opinions are heard and accepted, their beliefs are encouraged and accepted, their knowledge and contributions are valued and supported and professionalism is modeled and expected. Put simply, developing resilience helps people navigate adversity and manage their careers. Research shows that resilient people are more effective in their roles and are more committed to their organizations, all of which benefits the organization and the individual. Developing resilience helps ensure that a diverse and resilient group of individuals will stay with the organization and work to further its goals.



Connecting

Developing emotional intelligence helps individuals to empathize with others and show greater awareness of the value of people's differences. TRACOM's Behavioral EQ® program provides participants with extensive insight into themselves and others. It is this dual focus that makes it so powerful for affecting EDI. By practicing Behavioral EQ, people are creating an environment where everyone feels secure and safe to express themselves and be themselves.

Things you might hear from employees:



I GUESS SOME PEOPLE JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND OUR CULTURE.
THAT'S JUST NOT THE WAY WE DO THINGS HERE.
OUR LEADERS DON'T LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

The program is devoted to first understanding oneself—recognizing emotions and beliefs that affect behaviors, gaining self-insight and recognizing how one's own behaviors affect others' attitudes toward them. Second, the program helps people understand others more deeply, recognizing others' experiences, empathizing and being open to their experiences, and using this insight to develop more effective relationships. In short, it helps people move beyond their unconscious biases and be more open toward others, which leads to a psychologically safe environment where people are heard and accepted, which helps organizations to be more effective.

First, the program helps people recognize and mitigate their empathy gap, a bias that prevents them from understanding others' perspectives and experiences, as well as hindering their effectiveness with others. This bias affects everyone but is completely outside of awareness. Insight into this bias and how it affects thinking and behavior is invaluable, and it leads into the second phase of the program, skill development. Here, participants use their insight into their own and others' emotions and experiences to work on their behavior with others. They learn to examine experiences and situations from others' perspectives. They also learn and practice new strategies for working with others, such as active listening, paying attention and recognizing body language and facial expressions, how to develop relationships and influence others. When leaders and others practice Behavioral EQ, they are creating an environment where people feel psychologically safe. This creates a culture where people feel accepted and where they belong.



All modern organizations want to be more agile and innovative. To get new and disruptive ideas, you have to have an equal playing field where everyone can contribute; people need to feel like they belong and that they are safe to express themselves. People can feel like they don't belong at an organization when they are being excluded from opportunities, such as assignments that develop new skills, autonomy, and influence. When employees are not given these opportunities, they will cease to contribute meaningfully. This, in turn, hurts the organization since unique ideas will not emerge and employees will leave for better opportunities with organizations that value diverse input and creativity.

Things you might hear from employees:



THAT'S JUST HOW WE DO THINGS HERE.
THIS APPROACH HAS ALWAYS WORKED IN THE PAST.
WE SHOULDN'T MOVE TOO FAST.

TRACOM's Adaptive Mindset for Agility® program helps promote EDI by educating people to recognize and mitigate their status quo bias. This helps create an environment that is not weighted down by the past, where everybody has an equal footing. Teams can focus on common goals, using strategies that are new for everyone. These newly learned skills ensure that every team member can demonstrate their value by offering ideas, collaborating, and testing innovative approaches. In essence, the agility techniques help teams create an egalitarian system. Newly learned skills change the playing field and make it possible for everyone to be heard and have influence.

Developing an agile mindset results in people being open rather than closed—open to unique ideas and perspectives, to changing processes and procedures, to viewing markets and customers through different lenses. All of these things lead to an agile organization, one that can recognize and exploit unique opportunities. Different ideas are contributing to the teams' goals, which helps the organization achieve its objectives.





Summary

The research on how organizations can more effectively create cultures of equity, diversity, and inclusion is clear—it is an ongoing process that should be supported by multiple programs. By educating employees about the different types of biases that affect human performance, and how to recognize and mitigate those biases, organizations can further their ongoing efforts to meet their EDI goals. Implementing effective Social Intelligence training will develop an Equitable, Diverse, Inclusive and Successful workplace.

Learn more about this topic in a webinar hosted by Human Capital Institute titled *"Beyond Window Dressing: Diversity Training in the Wake of Changing Social Consciousness."*

About the Authors ▶



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Dan helps people around the world develop their emotional and social intelligence skills. He facilitates training programs designed to change people's behaviors, leading to organizational change. He is the author of two books about people and brands, as well as numerous articles for national publications. Dan was on the executive team at BI Worldwide when the company won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for excellence in organizational performance and is a former board member of the National Speakers Association.



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1- <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/ourinsights/why-diversity-matters#>

2- <https://www.edgepointlearning.com/blog/types-of-diversity-training/>

3- Bezrukova, K., Spell, C. S., Perry, J. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2016). A meta analytical integration of over 40 years of research on diversity training evaluation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 142(11), 1227-1274.