

My Company Performed Diversity Training. Now What?

PUBLISHED ON
July 21, 2020

(This article originally appeared on the [Lancaster Chamber's website](#) as part of its "Words That Activate Change" series of articles. The series focuses on uplifting voices in our community that encourage dialogue, cultivate transformation, offer thought-provoking ideas and challenge all of us to be better, be stronger, and, most importantly, be advocates for systematic change within both our community and our workforce. The article also will be published in an upcoming edition of the chamber's [Thriving!](#) magazine.)

Training isn't enough.

Studies and reports have shown us that taking a day to make employees aware of important workplace issues such as diversity just isn't enough to solve all of a company's potential issues.

After training comes the hard part - culture change.

In my 27 years of practicing employment law, I have represented employers of all sizes and industries. Although much has changed over the years, I am constantly amazed and gratified that I live in a place where businesses are so heavily invested in community outcomes. Many of the clients I speak with on a regular basis I also cross paths with in the nonprofit sector, volunteering and serving on boards of charitable and community organizations.

I am a native of Lancaster County so I understand and appreciate the benefits of growing up in this community. My African-American father grew up as one of nine children on a tobacco farm in the segregated South and attended a segregated school through eighth grade. He never went to high school. He supported a family of four children as a sanitation worker. Although my father passed away a few months shy of my 10th birthday, I remember my father being fearless and not afraid to confront racism. I grew up with a belief that I could become anything I wanted. I had many great mentors throughout my schooling that supported that belief. That support and mentorship continued during my time at Millersville University.

I am also struck by the fact that regardless of political or social backgrounds, my clients want to do the right thing and, many strive to be more diverse and inclusive.

It's not just an ideological shift - it's a cultural and economic shift as well. Companies understand that if they want to compete for workers they must become more diverse. If you aren't good at attracting and retaining women and people of color, you're competing for an increasingly smaller talent pool.

In 2016, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued a report addressing workplace harassment. The report found that workplace training appeared to have no measurable outcome on workplace harassment, but the workplaces with the best outcomes focused on workplace civility. In other

words, how we treat each other matters. The same principles apply for workplace diversity.

Companies that want to be more diverse must focus on workplace civility and inclusion, examining unconscious bias and promoting a culture of civility. Employers must challenge the attitudes and stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. I often hear companies talk about someone not being the right "fit" in the hiring process. It's subconscious human nature that interviewers tend to favor individuals who are just like them - similar physical, professional and personal characteristics. Employers need to challenge those assumptions.

Workplace culture and civility won't change without buy-in from senior leadership. Diversity and inclusion cannot be viewed as a single initiative owned by human resources. Everyone in the organization needs to understand their role and be held accountable, from the top down, to promote a culture of empathy and welcoming of diverse perspectives and experiences. It's about moving from a corporate compliance mindset to a recognition of diversity and inclusion as value added and a source of competitive advantage.

Jennifer Craighead Carey is an employment attorney and partner at Barley Snyder. Any company seeking help with plans on workplace civility training can contact her at jcraighead@barley.com.

:



Jennifer Craighead Carey

Managing Partner

Tel: (717) 399-1523

Email: jcraighead@barley.com