

Settling the Diversity Training “Yeah or Nay” Debate

By Robert Principe, Ibis Consulting Group

To train or not to train? Is diversity training an effective way to build and sustain an inclusive and collaborative workplace culture? Does it move organizations closer to leveraging the value of the diversity that defines our ever growing [multi-generational workforce](#)? These remain valid questions that are part of what is actually an old [debate regarding diversity training](#), as organizations across all sectors continue to scrutinize allocation of training resources. Adding fuel to the fire of this debate is both a concern and confusion about which diversity training platform organizations should use: facilitator-led training, e-Learning, blended training, webinars?

It only gets more complicated. Training evaluation and an actual measuring of business impact has moved front and center in this debate. A [2014 survey of organizations learning and development \(L&D\) functions](#) found “a significant shift towards greater integration with the business and more awareness and recognition of the importance of evaluating business impact.” Yet the survey also showed that one of the strongest barriers to measuring and evaluating training effectiveness lies in the reality that all too often “managers and leaders don’t prioritize measuring L&D effectiveness.”

One of the greatest ironies complicating matters even further is that [predictions for 2015](#) state that engagement, retention, culture, diversity and inclusion have now become “front burner issues.”

The fact is that organizations continue to compete for skilled talent. Organizations across the globe still face significant challenges recruiting, retaining, developing, and promoting women and professionals of color. Take a look for example, at the [Tech industry’s recent diversity reports](#). Let’s be clear. Diversity training will remain a key response strategy for organizations. Diversity training will remain central to combating the consequences of conscious and unconscious biases in the workplace, as well the “second-hand smoke” of the biases that are entrenched in organizational culture.

Here’s what will also remain true. Diversity trainings, whether facilitator-led training, e-Learning, blended training, or webinars, that are poorly designed and delivered will yield poor results. This is true of any training, but especially true given the resistance that diversity initiatives often face.

There is plenty of information about the “Do’s and Don’ts” of effective diversity and inclusion (D&I) training. [The Importance of Training in Diversity Management](#) does a decent job of listing success and failure factors.

Successful diversity and inclusion training requires:

- participation of all employees (and can’t stand alone, nor be a “one time only” effort)
- commitment and involvement of leadership and management up to the highest level of the organization
- clearly defined understanding of workplace D&I expectations, and recognition and rewards for meeting and advancing these expectations
- outcomes that seek movement beyond simply raising awareness to a focus on skill development and changing behaviors

Diversity and inclusion training will fail if the training:

- design is not based on a needs assessment of D&I issues within the organization
- is not customized to be relevant to employee’s jobs, and does not address the D&I issues employees face on a daily basis
- is not coupled with providing the resources needed to implement changes
- is not tied directly to the mission and objectives of the organization, resulting in employees losing interest and becoming “non-responsive to changing their behaviour following training”

There is one more very important requirement for the design and delivery of successful diversity and inclusion training: it must be strongly interactive and engaging! Here’s an opportunity to learn more.

As part of its Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Seminar Series, NEHRA is partnering with [Ibis Consulting Group](#) to offer [The Power of Interactive Theatre and E-learning: How to Design and Deliver Diversity and Inclusion \(D&I\) Training that Drives Business Outcomes](#) on Wednesday, February 11, 2015.

Using examples from recent work with Microsoft and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care (HPHC), you will learn about:

- The three pillars of D&I: Workforce, Workplace, and Marketplace
- So many choices! Blended vs. stand alone, live vs. web-based, e-Learning vs. webinar: When to use what... and why
- Making it relevant: How to tune in to WIIFM ("What's In It For Me?"), everyone's favorite radio station
- What's new: Current trends in D&I training
- Gotta have it: Key components of effective e-Learning programs
- How do I know it's working: Key business metrics for measuring the impact of D&I training

You will also get a sampling of live interactive theater (using professional actors), e-Learning programs, webinars, and group discussion to stimulate your thinking about what would best serve your organization's culture, learning needs, and business goals.

[Register now](#) to participate in this dynamic, informative, and entertaining session!