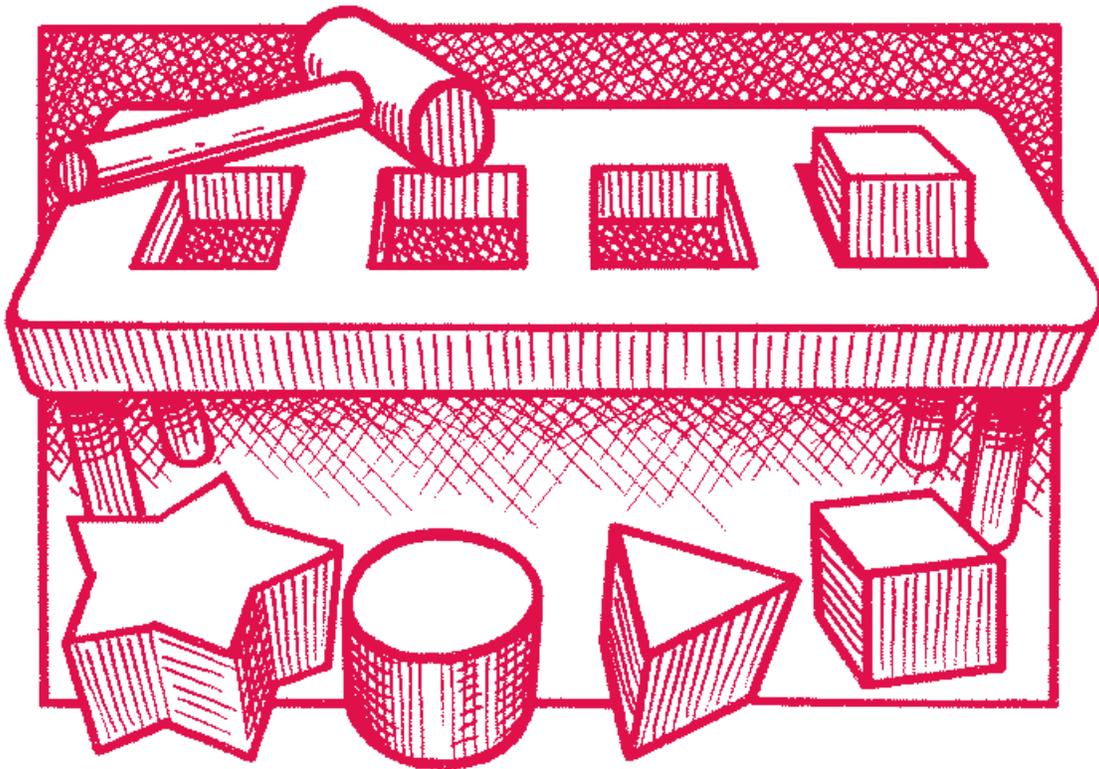


Designing Effective Workforce Diversity Training Programs



A PACT Training Resource Guide

Designing Effective Workforce Diversity Training Programs

Before the Training:

- ✓ Obtain a commitment from executive management to actively support the training. Invite a senior member to introduce the training program in person or by video.
- ✓ Review the organization's goals, objectives and policies to identify how they support or inhibit workforce diversity.
- ✓ Review recruitment and retention, incentives and recognition, development and promotion, performance management, and EEO policies.
- ✓ Complete a cultural audit of the organization to assess current strengths and concerns regarding the changing workforce.
- ✓ Assess the changing customer base and its relationship to workforce diversity.

Workforce diversity refers to changes in America's labor force and in the ways we work together. Managing workforce diversity effectively is about creating a climate in which everyone's unique qualities are viewed as assets that can help move an organization closer toward its business goals and vision.

Workforce diversity training is an initial step to introduce the topic throughout an organization. It usually provides historical context about changing demographics and offers a forum in which participants can heighten their understanding of skills in valuing human differences.

During its emergence in the 1980s, diversity training focused primarily on increasing understanding the impact of the influx of women, people of color and new immigrant groups into the workforce. By the early 1990s, diversity training emphasized creating an inclusive workplace, where all dimensions of human differences were respected. Today, organizations are learning the limits of merely raising awareness and are realizing that training needs to build skills, moving participants beyond just learning about assumptions around human differences to examining the behaviors that influence how people interact.

In today's polarized atmosphere, diversity training must also address the new dimensions of political and religious differences. Emotions stir at training sessions as participants confront different perspectives on such issues as terrorism, religion and current military actions. More than ever, participants must learn how to listen to divergent views and to address them constructively. Therefore, it is essential that the design of diversity training programs emphasize open, honest and safe discussions and experiential exercises.

To ensure the greatest opportunity for such interactions, training programs must be founded on principles like:

- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Dignity
- ✓ Openness
- ✓ Humility
- ✓ Acknowledgement of bias and prejudice
- ✓ Inclusion
- ✓ Active adult learning methodology

Planning the Program

- ✓ Integrate training into organizational practices and goals.
- ✓ Adopt specific definitions for workforce diversity, affirmative action, and equal employment opportunity.
- ✓ Obtain current workforce diversity policies.
- ✓ Gather the most recent statistics on the labor market both nationally and in your organization's specific locality.
- ✓ Research current thinking and best practices on workforce diversity.
- ✓ Establish a resource library to aid in your curriculum design and for participants to use following the training.
- ✓ Incorporate diversity-related news items into the program content.
- ✓ Establish evaluation tools for the training before designing the program.
- ✓ Identify non-training activities that will support lessons learned from the training, including posters, staff meetings, newsletters, informational brochures and videos.

Selection of Trainers

Who is delivering the training is as important as *what* is being delivered. Because diversity training involves how we feel about human differences, emotions can run high among participants. Trainers must be skilled and experienced facilitators who can establish and maintain a safe and supportive setting while promoting open and honest discussions and exercises. Because discussions about differences can spark conflict within the training group, trainers must also be skilled in managing and resolving diversity-related conflicts.

Effective diversity training should be highly experiential, so trainers need strong skills in providing hands-on interactive training exercises that allow participants to safely take risks and learn through self-discovery. We recommend team training for workforce diversity classes, using a diverse team that represents different ages, genders, functions, cultures, and experience. However, the trainer's skills are more important than being a member of any particular group.

Besides being skilled in facilitation, conflict resolution and training delivery, trainers must:

- ✓ have an active interest in the topic
- ✓ be willing to read and research related materials, as well as attend training and education sessions on workforce diversity
- ✓ be recognized by peers and leaders as open to different perspectives
- ✓ possess skills in managing emotionally sensitive interactions
- ✓ be humble about their own knowledge of the subject

The Training Program

Training is divided between:

- ✓ the **content** (*what* the training is about)
- ✓ the **process** (*how* the training will be delivered)

Training Content

Content for the program can be organized on four levels, including workforce diversity as it relates to:

1. The individual
2. The group
3. The organization
4. The external environment

On the individual level, training:

- ✓ increases awareness of one's beliefs about oneself and others
- ✓ focuses on beliefs, assumptions, behaviors and consequences
- ✓ addresses conscious and unconscious bias
- ✓ examines patterns of behavior and their consequences
- ✓ increases skills in managing relationships within the changing workforce and customer base

A + B = C

Assumptions

+

Behaviors

=

Consequences

On the group level, training:

- ✓ increases understanding of the influence of diversity on human dynamics, including verbal and non-verbal communication
- ✓ identifies different beliefs and behavior patterns regarding time management, work ethics, work-life balance, conflict resolution, and group harmony versus individual contribution
- ✓ discusses issues around loyalty to racial, ethnic or religious groups, and the family versus the work group
- ✓ practices conflict resolution skills to reduce diversity-related conflict

On the organizational level, training:

- ✓ offers an inclusive definition of workforce diversity that expands understanding beyond race and gender and eliminates the notion of diverse versus non-diverse individuals
- ✓ addresses the business imperative of workforce diversity
- ✓ connects specific business goals and objectives to workforce diversity
- ✓ increases understanding of the relationship between workforce diversity and quality improvement, performance management, marketing, customer service and other aspects of business
- ✓ reviews and reinforces organizational principles, policies and practices to tap the assets of the changing workforce
- ✓ addresses recruitment and retention
- ✓ addresses developmental and promotional opportunities within the context of a changing workforce

On the external level, training:

- ✓ provides a brief historical overview to serve as a context for the training
- ✓ draws distinctions among affirmative action, EEO laws, workforce diversity and managing diversity
- ✓ addresses the relationship between a diverse workforce and changing customer base
- ✓ explores best practices from other organizations

The Training Process

How we learn is as important as *what* we learn. Effective diversity training must connect to skills and not just awareness. Programs need to incorporate training methods that promote self-discovery and hands-on experiential learning. Experiential training methods should:

- ✓ be realistic, practical and relevant to the audience
- ✓ be job and site-specific
- ✓ reflect the current climate of organization
- ✓ be interesting to the audience
- ✓ reflect the behaviors, attitudes and interests being taught
- ✓ avoid minimizing issues of concern
- ✓ represent various perspectives, styles and cultures
- ✓ be respectful of individuals and avoid having them represent any particular group
- ✓ be supportive in non-confrontational ways
- ✓ avoid forcing individuals into humiliating or compromising experiences
- ✓ have open, honest and safe discussions, facilitated by skilled trainers
- ✓ support multiple learning styles and shared experiences
- ✓ be fun

Types of Experiential Exercises for Workforce Diversity Training

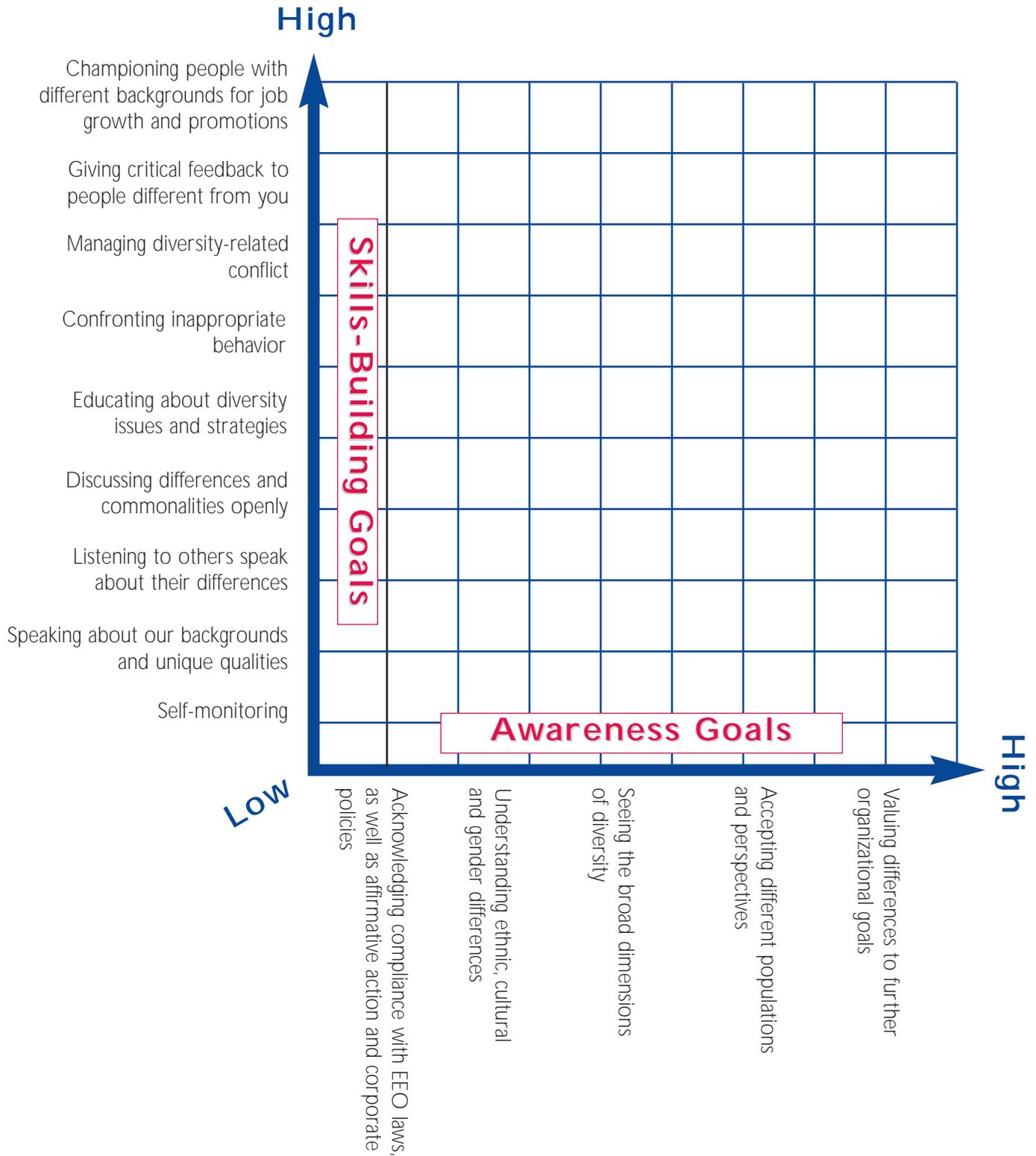
Experiential training exercises need to be focused on specific goals, such as:

- ✓ Enhancing understanding of human differences
- ✓ Increasing awareness of cultural differences and commonalities
- ✓ Building skills in confronting inappropriate language and behavior
- ✓ Heightening abilities to coach and mentor individuals of different backgrounds and skills levels

The goals of any experiential exercise are dictated by many factors, including the needs of the organization, the skills of the trainers, the time allotted for training, and the number of participants. The exercise's goals can also be impacted by the political climate within the organization or the nation.

Match Your Exercises With Your Training Goals

Experiential exercises should be selected for their impact on participants. The model below illustrates training goals that focus on increasing awareness and on building skills, ranging in participant impact from low to high.



The Impact of Experiential Exercises

Experiential exercises can be classified by their impact upon participants into low, moderate and high-impact levels:

Low Impact Exercises

Low impact activities promote understanding of the changing demographics of the labor force, increase awareness of human differences, and provide information on workforce diversity. This information-sharing level of experiential activity usually involves minimal participant interaction. Low impact exercises include:

- ✓ True-false diversity facts quizzes
- ✓ Diversity icebreakers
- ✓ Diversity games like “Diversity Bingo” or “Diversity Jeopardy”
- ✓ Cultural awareness discussions, luncheons and festivals
- ✓ Training videos

Moderate Impact Exercises

This level of training expands awareness and asks participants to take responsibility for their views and practices regarding the changing workforce. Moderate impact activities focus on increasing consciousness while introducing general communication skills that provide greater abilities to interact in a diverse environment. Moderate impact activities include:

- ✓ “Early Messages” exercises
- ✓ “The Blue Eye – Brown Eye Experience”
- ✓ “What Did I Bring – What Did I Give Up” small group exercise
- ✓ PACT’s *Drawing Conclusions*[™] exercise
- ✓ Role-playing activities
- ✓ Dramatizations followed by general discussions with actors

High Impact Exercises

High impact exercises focus on providing opportunities for participants to move beyond general awareness to build complex skills needed to manage the dynamics of workforce diversity. High impact experiential exercises include:

- ✓ Encounter Sessions: intensive, facilitated group encounters involving participants of different backgrounds who spend time together to learn to value diversity and increase skills in discussing differences
- ✓ *Structured Improvisations*[™]: PACT’s exclusive life-like training simulations of work-related events in which participants are immersed to practice skills in managing complex human interactions

PACT's High Impact Drama-Based Exercise:

The Structured Improvisation™

PACT's Structured Improvisations™ are specially designed high impact drama-based training exercises specifically developed for human dynamics training. The goal of these exercises is to provide training that is real, relevant, practical and lasting. Structured Improvisations™:

- ✓ include dramatic replications based upon assessment findings (replicating the issues involved but changing details to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of actual cases)
- ✓ reflect the work setting and functions of audience participants
- ✓ highlight particular issues and theories presented in the module
- ✓ integrate specific training objectives
- ✓ eliminate assumptions to free participants to concentrate on skills development

Structured Improvisations™ are staged by experienced trainers with acting skills and guided by a facilitator to ensure integrity, quality and safety. Participants enter these staged scenarios as themselves, in their professional capacities. They practice managing sensitive interactions within a supportive yet challenging environment that fosters risk taking, self-assessment and peer intervention. The result is an experience in which trainees hold the power to train themselves in a positive learning environment.

About PACT Training:

Training has to be real and relevant in order to make a lasting impression. PACT programs address *how* people learn as well as *what* they learn. For over twenty years, PACT has combined the use of drama and facilitation techniques to create a unique *living laboratory* for effective human dynamics training. Our programs bridge the gap between training and work performance by combining interactive exercises with state-of-the-art course material, giving participants powerful insights into the impact they make in the workforce when critical issues arise.

PACT trains in many human dynamics areas, including:

- ✓ Workforce Diversity Management
- ✓ Leadership and Supervisory Skills
- ✓ Workplace Violence Prevention
- ✓ Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce
- ✓ Cultural Competence in Healthcare
- ✓ Negotiation and Partnership Skills
- ✓ Conflict Resolution
- ✓ Crisis Intervention
- ✓ Service Excellence

PACT's direct services to clients include:

- ✓ Mediation and Workforce Dispute Resolution
- ✓ Crisis Intervention and Preparedness Planning
- ✓ Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
- ✓ Staff Development and Team-Building
- ✓ Organizational Assessments
- ✓ Executive Coaching
- ✓ Organizational Development Consulting