

# New Research on Successful Tactics for Engaging White Men in Diversity and Inclusiveness Efforts

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## ***Cultivating Allies and Champions***

Organizations can play a significant role in cultivating allies and champions. Researchers have found that education increases individuals' commitment to ideals of fairness.<sup>1</sup> Catalyst recommends that organizations consider the following content and format tips when designing training to help augment men's commitment to fairness ideals:

"As you develop training content, remember to set learning objectives that help men recognize the personal costs they suffer due to ... bias. Previous research suggests that people's judgments about whether a situation is fair or not is influenced by whether they or others are disadvantaged by it.<sup>2</sup> People are more likely to judge a situation as unfair if they are personally disadvantaged by it. Conversely, they are less likely to make that judgment if someone else experiences the disadvantage. When men recognize that gender disparities cost men—not just women—they will be more motivated to correct them."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it is vitally important to create a strong case statement for diversity and inclusiveness that includes specific, personal costs to straight white men of not becoming a more diverse and inclusive organization. It might even be helpful to have white male "allies" conduct informational sessions with other white men in the organization to air concerns and educate them about the role of unconscious bias. No matter what the format, Catalyst recommends including frequent (not one-time) training opportunities for white men that involve:

- self-reflection – time to re-examine their own beliefs,
- experiential learning, and
- opportunities to practice newly learned skills in a real-world context.<sup>4</sup>

Catalyst published a new research study in 2012 that demonstrates that white men can become more aware of inequities in the workplace and then change their behaviors to be more inclusive. The study was conducted with employees at Rockwell Automation, a global engineering company dominated by white men. Catalyst measured attitudes and behaviors of participants before and after the intensive training. The key findings of the Catalyst study include:

- **"An increase in workplace civility and decline in gossip (e.g., snide remarks and behind-the-back comments).** In some workgroups, participants' colleagues rated the incidence of workplace gossip as much as 39 percent lower after the labs, signaling improved communication and respect.
- **Managers were more likely to acknowledge that inequities exist.** After the labs, there was a 17 percent increase in how much managers agreed that white men have greater advantages than women and racial/ethnic minorities.
- **Managers improved on five key behaviors for inclusion.** From seeking out varied perspectives to becoming more direct in addressing emotionally charged matters, managers improved on critical skills for leading in today's diverse marketplace.
- **Having cross-racial friendships mattered.** Managers without many prior cross-racial relationships changed the most after the labs when it came to thinking critically about different social groups—a 40 percent increase in ratings vs. a 9 percent increase for those with more of these relationships.
- **Those who cared the least about exhibiting prejudice changed the most.** After the labs, managers who initially were the *least* concerned about appearing prejudiced were the ones who registered the *most* significant change in taking personal responsibility for being inclusive, as evidenced by a 15 percent increase in ratings."<sup>5</sup>

This study clearly shows that inclusiveness efforts can have a transformational impact on individuals and organizations; that those in the majority can successfully increase their awareness of inequities with a concomitant change in attitudes and behaviors.



## **Concrete Steps for Engaging White Men**

The following is a summary of eight concrete steps that can help engage white men in an inclusiveness initiative:

### **1. Change the Discussion**

When you move toward inclusiveness, it's about not just numbers but also creating an inclusive organizational culture. Since inclusiveness is about everyone in the organization, white men feel like they are part of the process.

### **2. Cultivate white male allies and champions**

Recognize that allies for diversity come from diverse and non-diverse groups. Every organization includes some straight white men who are more open to recognizing unconscious bias and understanding the unearned advantages they enjoy by being in the majority.

As mentioned above, research by Catalyst, Inc. on men and gender bias (*Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know* – May 2009) concludes that potential allies have themselves, or someone important to them, experienced discrimination. Additionally, the study found that men mentored by women were more aware of gender bias. Thus, close work with people who are different, or mentor relationships "across difference," can also make men more open.

An effective way to educate more white male allies and champions is to meet with them one-on-one or in small groups. This messaging can sometimes be more impactful when it comes from other white men.

### **3. Leverage white males in influential or leadership positions**

If influential white men decide change must happen, it can happen swiftly. This is not to say that powerful diverse attorneys can't be equally as influential. But no matter who champions the issue, it is important that they use their positions as platforms to send regular messages about the importance of diversity and inclusiveness.

Be strategic by identifying leaders in the organization and others who are influential with their peers and considered "thought leaders." Once identified, select those individuals who would be willing to discuss the development of an inclusiveness initiative.

Leverage those positions of influence by including the potential change agents in diversity and inclusiveness efforts and ensuring they have important roles.

### **4. Include white male allies and champions on the Inclusiveness Committee**

Inclusiveness committees must include white men, especially since the perspectives of all groups in an organization are represented in an inclusiveness initiative. If you can persuade powerful white men to play an active role on the Inclusiveness Committee, that alone will send a strong message to the rest of the organization about the importance of diversity and inclusiveness.

### **5. Educate white male allies about why inclusiveness is a business imperative**

People are more apt to support change if they perceive a personal benefit in doing so. Increased diversity is not only a good thing but a business imperative. By creating a culture of inclusion, the revolving door for *all* attorneys, not just diverse ones, will be reduced. Studies place the cost of replacing one associate between \$250,000 and \$500,000, affecting the bottom line for everyone. Moreover, corporate clients are increasingly demanding that outside counsel make diversity and inclusiveness a priority.

Another compelling personal reason to support diversity and inclusiveness is that you aren't as smart or effective as you could be unless your thinking is informed by multiple perspectives and opinions. Dr. Arin Reeves' book on this topic – *The Next IQ: The Next Level of Intelligence for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders*<sup>6</sup> – explains why, in order to stay competitive, you must seek out difference and even embrace contrary opinions and ideas.

### **6. Include white men in the process of uncovering instances of hidden bias in the organization**

Organizations play a strong role in whether straight white men remain unaware of the role of bias and preferences in the workplace.

According to Catalyst's *Engaging Men* study, "Many organizations tout the idea that they are wholly meritocratic and that their human resource policies and practices are invulnerable to bias. By perpetuating this myth of meritocracy and failing to institute checks and balances to limit bias, organizations can inadvertently decrease men's sensitivity to ... inequalities."<sup>7</sup>

Once white men acknowledge there are inequities that unfairly inhibit productivity, return on investment, and especially the bottom line, they will be more open to needed changes.

### **7. Give white men a list of tasks and they will help**

Many straight white men in legal organizations would be more engaged in diversity and inclusiveness efforts if they just knew what they needed to do. A list of concrete tasks with deadlines and follow-up reporting requirements will get people mobilized.



Examples of discrete tasks include the following (these do not have to be limited just to white men in the organization):

- a) take a diverse (female, of color, LGBT) associate to an outside event that gives them access to new networks;
- b) attend one or more of the specialty bar dinners each year;
- c) mentor a diverse student;
- d) contact a client and sponsor a luncheon where all associates (not just the usual favorites) can socialize with inside counsel;
- e) serve on the organization's diversity/inclusiveness committee;
- f) attend a CLE on diversity and inclusiveness; particularly one that addresses unconscious bias in the workplace;
- g) add diversity and inclusiveness to the agenda of your team/practice group/department meetings;
- h) participate in social events where you develop relationships with people in your organization who are outside of your usual circle or comfort zone;
- i) ask a diverse attorney (where there's a trust relationship) how they experience the practice of law differently;
- j) ask a diverse attorney how you can help them in their career development;
- k) give a diverse attorney tips on networking, business development, and/or how to make partner in the firm; and
- l) analyze utilization statistics to evaluate whether you are fairly distributing work assignments.<sup>8</sup>

CLI created lists of action items that are part of a national grassroots campaign to make the legal profession more diverse and inclusive. The lists could have included hundreds of items but they were limited to one over-arching hidden barrier that limits the success of diverse law firm lawyers – access to clients and opportunity to develop business. **Step Up for Diversity: Take Action to Build an Inclusive Legal Profession** is a web-based interactive program allowing corporate counsel, supervisors, managers, and other attorneys to become actively involved in making real change happen. Attorneys can report their progress on action items CLI created to help diverse and female attorneys build relationships with corporate counsel to overcome hidden barriers and create a more diverse and inclusive legal profession overall. In 2012, CLI began a new phase of this grassroots campaign, focusing on corporate counsel and limiting the action items to five:

- Establish direct relationships with female/diverse associates and partners by: 1) meeting with them independently and/or 2) inviting them to attend outside counsel meetings along with the relationship partner (send invitations directly to them and copy the relationship partner).
- Assign meaningful work directly to female/diverse associates and partners to help

them build critical experience and skills, which will put them on the path to equity partnership.

- Help firms understand the value of female and diverse attorneys. Write a letter to the relationship partner praising their good work and copy them on the letter. If you want to give them their own cases, send them a letter asking them to take on the new work and copy the relationship partner.
- Ask relationship partners to personally attend diversity-related events so they can understand the issues that impact the careers of female and diverse attorneys and help them overcome the hidden barriers to success. Attend these events yourself with your outside counsel.
- Examine outside counsel's female/diverse attorney demographics for the past 5 years using the MCCA/Vault database to analyze trends in leadership and partner promotions, as well as attrition rates. Meet with outside counsel yearly to discuss this analysis and your expectations for progress.

## 8. Provide incentives to sustain diversity and inclusiveness efforts

Organizations that are serious about change and sustainability provide credit toward billable hour requirements, offer awards, bonuses, and/or include individual efforts into job duties and responsibilities, which factor into the compensation system. This provides needed internal motivators for needed behavior changes.

Learn more about this topic in CLI's *Inclusiveness Manual* – available at [www.legalinclusiveness.org](http://www.legalinclusiveness.org).

<sup>1</sup> Garmon, M. Arthur, *Six Key Factors for Changing Preservice Teachers' Attitudes/Beliefs about Diversity*, Educational Studies, vol. 38, no. 3, p. 275-286, Dec. 2005. (Available at: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content-db=all-content=a784753073-fm=abslink>).

<sup>2</sup> Ham, Jaap, and Kees van den Bos, "Not Fair for Me! The Influence of Personal Relevance on Social Justice Inferences", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 44, no. 3 (2008), pp. 699-705. (Available at: <http://www.mendeley.com/research/not-fair-me-influence-personal-relevance-social-justice-inferences/>).

<sup>3</sup> Catalyst's *Engaging White Men Study*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> "Calling All White Men! Catalyst Study Shows Training for White Men Key to Improving Workplace Culture." Catalyst, Inc. (July 18, 2012) (Available at: <http://www.catalyst.org/press-release/213/calling-all-white-men-catalyst-study-shows-training-for-white-men-key-to-improving-workplace-culture>).

<sup>6</sup> Reeves, A.N. *The Next IQ: The Next Level of Intelligence for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders* (American Bar Association, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Catalyst's *Engaging White Men Study*, p. 9, (citing "Trading Action for Access: The Myth of Meritocracy and the Failure to Remedy Structural Discrimination", *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 121, no. 8, pp. 2, 156-62, 177. (June 2008); See also Michael C. Hyter, "Meritocracy—Responding to the Myth," *The Handbook of Business Strategy*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 41-43 (2004).

<sup>8</sup> The Kansas City-based law firm of *Shook Hardy & Bacon LLP* created a list of action items related to diversity and inclusiveness that is more expansive. To help achieve the firm's diversity goals, all attorneys are required to complete five to 10 diversity action items from the checklist as part of the annual evaluation and compensation process.

