

Prioritize Inclusivity in Your Training Sessions

Eliza Blanchard



PRIORITIZE INCLUSIVITY IN YOUR TRAINING SESSIONS

Cultural Awareness	2
Do Your Research.....	2
Create a Welcoming Environment	5
Eliminate Learning Barriers.....	6
Words Matter.....	8
Post-Training Reflection.....	10
Conclusion	11
References & Resources	12

JOB AID

Inclusivity Checklist	13
Participant Persona Template	14
Post-Session Reflection Questionnaire	15

Need a trainer's lifeline? Visit td.org/TDatWork.

Printed in the United States of America.

For help or inquiries about your subscription, please contact Customer Care at 800.628.2783/703.683.8100 (international).

TD at Work (ISSN 2373-5570, Electronic ISSN 2373-5589, ISBN 978-1-95049-6-938, Electronic eISBN 978-1-95049-6-945) is published monthly by the Association for Talent Development, 1640 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. *TD at Work* is available for subscription in print or digitally. The subscription rate for the Monthly All-Access (12 print and digital issues, plus archive access) is \$119 (ATD national members) and \$159 (nonmembers). The monthly digital subscription rate for 12 issues is \$69 (ATD national members) and \$99 (nonmembers). Periodicals postage paid at Alexandria, Virginia, and additional entries. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *TD at Work*, 1640 King Street Alexandria, VA 22314. Claims for replacement of subscription issues not received must be made within three months of the issue date. Copyright © April 2020 *TD at Work* and ATD. All rights reserved. No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or information storage and retrieval systems—without the express written permission of the publisher. For permission requests, please go to copyright.com, or contact Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923 (telephone: 978.750.8500, fax: 978.646.8600). ATD Press grants permission for the material on pages 13-15 to be reproduced for personal use.

AUTHOR

Eliza Blanchard

Eliza Blanchard, APTD, is the Association for Talent Development's L&D content manager. She creates and curates content and develops new products and services for ATD's audience. Prior to joining ATD, Blanchard worked at the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, where she designed and delivered training programs on diversity, inclusion, and identity through the lens of religion.

Content Manager, Training Delivery & Facilitation

Eliza Blanchard

Editor, TD at Work

Patty Gaul

Managing Editor

Joy Metcalf

Graphic Designer

Shirley E.M. Raybuck

Trainers, facilitators, and other talent development professionals have long recognized that the best learning occurs in environments where learners feel safe and respected. Trainers are often advised to create positive classrooms by arriving to the training facility early to greet learners, providing attendees with an overview of what the training program will entail and how the time will be structured, and planning activities where participants can share with a partner or smaller group if they are uncomfortable sharing with the larger group.

Those are helpful actions you should be sure to take. However, you can expand on them to create a learning environment that is truly safe and respectful for all learners, including individuals with disabilities, those who identify as LGBTQ+ or have diverse religious or cultural backgrounds, and participants from different generations.

Increased diversity—and employees' comfort level with sharing who they are and their needs—is the new reality in the workplace and will inevitably filter into the training room. Diversity in the US is expanding. According to the US Census Bureau, white people—a demographic term the bureau uses—are projected to comprise less than 50 percent of the US population by 2045. Meanwhile, the percentage of foreign-born individuals living in the US is rising. Societal attitudes around sexual orientation and disabilities are also changing, and people are becoming more open about those aspects of their identities in the workplace.

Singapore is another country with growing diversity. The 5 million-plus population is multicultural, with significant groups of varying religions—including Hindus, Christians, and Muslims. And according to the Pew Research Center, views on diversity and gender equality are likewise shifting globally.

That affects how you should think about your role as a trainer. In addition to creating respectful learning environments for learners in general, work toward creating learning environments that are respectful of each individual by considering learners' nuanced needs and preferences. Providing a safe environment requires a thoughtful, intentional approach to inclusion. In this issue of *TD at Work*, I will:

- Provide examples of learners' social identities you should be cognizant of in a classroom environment.
- Outline specific steps that trainers can take and language you can use before, during, and after a training session.
- Present learned lessons about establishing an inclusive environment.

Cultural Awareness

Before I delve into ways you can create a welcoming, safe, and inclusive training environment, it's important for you to first consider your audience and the location where your training session will take place. Use your judgment and understand your audience when following these guidelines. Avoid efforts to create an inclusive environment that only backfire because those intentions do not match accepted cultural norms in your current location.

If you facilitate internationally, keep in mind that countries have different views around dimensions of diversity, such as gender or sexual orientation. Mentioning inclusion for LGBTQ+ individuals may be discouraged or even illegal in some countries. In others, it is common for men to speak up more than women or for people from different genders to feel uncomfortable interacting in a small group.

Be mindful of those aspects and tailor your training session. The overall goal of creating a respectful and inclusive environment for your learners stays the same, but the specific way you demonstrate respect and inclusion may vary based on the country you are in.

These nuances can also exist in different regions of the US or even within specific organizations. As such, you may need to adapt some of these guidelines. Particularly if a company hires you as an external facilitator, discuss your inclusive approach with stakeholders while confirming other aspects of the training and ensure your approach is the right one for the client.

Do Your Research

Preparation can make or break a training session. The same principle holds true for creating a respectful and inclusive learning environment—much of your work will take place before learners arrive. Take steps to lay the groundwork for inclusion.

Research is critical to establishing a safe and inclusive environment. Fact-finding about your learners and their needs, as well as researching external factors that relate to the training day, can help you tailor your session to accommodate learners.

Learn Your Learners

Empathy has become a buzzword, thanks in part to its role in the design thinking process. International design and consulting firm IDEO's Human-Centered Design Toolkit describes empathy as a “deep understanding of the problems and realities of the people you are designing for.” Achieving this understanding is crucial to facilitating sessions for diverse learners.

Much of the empathizing process involves getting to know your learners, such as their roles, years with the

Demonstrate Respect: Beyond Political Correctness

If you are familiar with diversity and inclusion work, you may have experienced a backlash to the work, which often involves someone who believes that other people are being too sensitive or quick to take offense. The individual may make statements such as “You can’t say anything anymore without someone being offended” or “Everyone is so politically correct these days.”

It’s true that D&I initiatives have significantly evolved in a relatively short period of time, and language and behaviors that used to be acceptable in the workplace no longer are. Further, D&I often involves topics of social and political importance, and it can be difficult to separate some D&I initiatives from this broader context. D&I can be an emotionally charged topic for a variety of reasons; as such, you may be afraid to even broach the topic.

In the classroom training context, however, try to refocus the issue. Creating an inclusive environment shouldn’t be about political correctness. Avoid operating from a place where you are afraid of saying or doing something that causes offense.

Take a more proactive, less reactive approach to inclusion, with the goal of creating an environment

that is respectful of all learners. Instead of asking yourself, “Will someone be offended by this?” imagine a learner who differs from you in some way and ask yourself if the setup for your training course demonstrates respect for that person.

In my experience, people aren’t necessarily offended if they can’t eat the catered lunch because of a dietary restriction or can’t participate in some activities because of mobility issues. Rather, not accommodating diverse learners means the individuals will not get everything they can out of the training session—because they have to search nearby for a halal meal instead of eating and networking with other participants or because they can’t physically take part in one of the planned activities.

Being proactive about creating an inclusive learning environment increases the likelihood that all learners get 100 percent of the intended benefit of your training course. While some diversity initiatives may be controversial, the overall goal of demonstrating respect toward participants is one that any trainer should be able to support.

company, and possibly some demographic information like age and gender. You may find this information in the learning management system, or you could reach out to participants’ managers.

In the design thinking process, developing empathy involves creating personas. That may be a useful practice for you. However, while personas for marketing or product design often try to replicate a typical user, you should use personas to try and capture diverse learners’ feelings and perspectives. For example, create a persona of a learner who uses a wheelchair and then evaluate the training session through that individual’s perspective. Through this process, you will gain insights into whether your activities are accessible for people with mobility restrictions.

When crafting personas, think about different social, or group, identities learners may have, such as race, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status. Social identities

differ from personal identities, which are specific details about each person beyond social or group context, such as favorite hobby or number of siblings.

Social and personal identities are both important to who individuals are. However, social identity is typically the reason people are advantaged or disadvantaged in the workplace. Similarly, social identities may influence learners’ specific classroom needs. A job aid at the end of this issue details the process of creating learning personas based on social identities.

Check Inclusive Calendars

If you are responsible for scheduling the session, consult an inclusive, interfaith calendar to ensure potential dates don’t conflict with religious or cultural holidays. If you are asked to facilitate a training course on a specific date, check the calendar prior to accepting and ask if there is flexibility on the date if conflicts exist.

Subscribe to *TD at Work*

TD at Work gives seasoned and new talent development professionals a monthly deep dive into talent development. Each issue addresses a core L&D methodology or model or delves into a cutting-edge topic. You will gain:

- step-by-step processes
- practical guidance on how to implement a TD practice or model
- job aids, case studies, best practices, and visuals.

TD at Work is available through subscription or individual issue purchase.



BUY THIS ISSUE

Choose your subscription at td.org/td-at-work.

Monthly All-Access
Digital and Print
Subscriptions With
Archives Access

- **Member: \$119/year***
- **List: \$159/year***

Monthly All-Access
Digital Subscription
With Archives Access

- **Member: \$99/year**
- **List: \$139/year**

Monthly Digital-Only
Subscription

- **Member: \$69/year**
- **List: \$99/year**

*Add \$40 if shipping outside of the continental United States.

For details about ATD membership, visit td.org/members.

atd
191322-62410