

## **8 Major Myths of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)** **– What Diversity and Inclusion Is Not**

By Mauricio Velásquez, MBA  
President, CEO – The Diversity Training Group

Having worked in the field nearly 25 years now and as President, CEO, of DTG for nearly 22 years, I have confronted these myths over and over and I am constantly debunking them. I often distribute this document prior to a diversity and inclusion-related conversation, forum or training to undo the bias about an upcoming workshop on bias (what I call bias squared).

**Myth 1: Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is a problem.** *No, it is an opportunity.* You can't understand and take advantage of something you don't know you don't know (something you don't understand). Your diversity strategy and plan is an opportunity to differentiate your organization from your competition – don't blow it. You often hear “we are in a war for talent” and being an organization that values diversity and is inclusive is an organization that is a “good place to work” for all talent and you will be winners of this war.

**Myth 2: D & I is our Human Resource Department's responsibility.** *No, it is my responsibility.* Too many people tell me “that's not my problem; our personnel people have to handle the diversity issues.” Wrong. We all (leaders, managers, supervisors and employees) play a significant role. We all have a “shared responsibility” to value the diversity of our talent staff and include all of them.

**Myth 3: D & I just about race and gender.** *No, it is much broader than that.* I used to be called a “Cultural Diversity Trainer” and then I was a Diversity Trainer and know the conversation is moving to “being more inclusive.” Like any field, the conversation, “diversity work” is evolving and advancing.

**Myth 4: D & I is about minorities and women in the workplace.** *No, diversity is about your internal (employees) and external (prospective clients) customers.* Understanding the diversity in your employee and customer ranks and anticipating their needs can make or break your organization (most likely break if you subscribe to this myth). Diversity marketing – marketing to new, increasingly diverse “emerging markets” is a hot new field.

**Myth 5: Diversity is about exclusivity.** *No, it is about inclusivity.* In other words, diversity is about all of us. If you feel diversity is about attacking the white male, you are mistaken, and the class you went through was poorly facilitated. Diversity is not about getting “them” into your corporate culture (assimilation). Diversity is about creating a culture where everyone (each individual) can thrive and contribute to your organization (integration/multiculturalism) and serve your ever more diverse customers.

**Myth 6: D & I is about lowering standards.** Be very careful with this notion. Many people I have worked with having taken great offense to this perception. My clients are not lowering standards but widening the net and sometimes raising standards or rewriting them.

**Myth 7: D & I is just another fad.** If you think it is, good luck. Look at your workforce and client marketplace today and compare it with five and ten years ago and try to look five and ten years into the future. Do the same analyses for your customer base. Have you seen the demographic projections for the future? It will blow your socks off! Census 2010 data is coming out and it appears the United States, our workforce, our marketplace is even more diverse now than anyone predicted.

**Myth 8: D & I is another version of Equal Employment Opportunity / Affirmative Action.** *No, it is very different from EEO/AA.* Diversity concerns all of your employees and your customers and is all-inclusive. Minorities and women are context for EEO/AA: Major differences between EEO/AA and Diversity are:

- EEO/AA is government-initiated while Diversity is voluntary and company-driven.
- EEO/AA is also legally-driven while Diversity is productivity-driven. EEO/AA is quantitative and Diversity is qualitative.
- EEO/AA is problem focused whereas Diversity focuses on opportunities.
- EEO/AA assumes assimilation among its participants but Diversity assumes integration.
- EEO/AA has a strictly internal focus where Diversity focuses on internal and external issues.
- EEO/AA is reactive but Diversity is proactive.

Well, there you have it – a whole lot to consider. The D & I journey is long and the destination is not a place your organization will get to in the short term. Remember, you need people, passion, purpose, and a plan – what we call at DTG the 4 P's. You have to have the best people, the best minds, and the best talent from all diverse backgrounds. You have to have a real passion for what products or services your organization offers to the marketplace. You have to have a purpose (a mission) and a plan to achieve your purpose – your D & I strategy and plan will do just that.

Last thought – Diversity and Inclusion is about creating and nurturing a workplace culture where all employees thrive and succeed. Where the tide rises and all the boats float up. We are all in this together!

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## **THE WINNING BALANCE**

So where do I stand? Where am I with respect to this topic? Respond to the questions below based on your behaviors.

<b>How often do I...</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Mostly</b>
1. Challenge others privately when they make racially, ethnically, or sexually offensive comments?	1	2	3	4
2. Challenge others publicly when they are making fun of others because of their race, gender, ethnic background, religion, appearance, disability, or sexual orientation?	1	2	3	4
3. Think about the impact of my comments and actions before I speak?	1	2	3	4
4. Refuse to tell jokes that are derogatory to any group, culture, or sex?	1	2	3	4
5. Refrain from repeating statements or rumors that reinforce prejudice or bias?	1	2	3	4
6. Avoid generalizing the behaviors or attitudes of one individual to an entire group (e.g.: "All blacks are...", "All disabled people are...", "All men are...")?	1	2	3	4
7. Accept that I am a biased person and understand that there will be times when my biases will come out in my actions or words?	1	2	3	4
8. Avoid using language that reinforces negative stereotypes (e.g.: "You're acting like a pack of wild Indians," "Jew them down," "White of you," "I'll get my girl to do it")?	1	2	3	4
9. Learn about people of different races and groups (through reading, attending voluntary seminars, watching television specials, listening to speakers)?	1	2	3	4

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**THE WINNING BALANCE (CONT'D)**

<b>How often do I...</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Mostly</b>
10. Get to know people of different races and groups and individuals (make the first effort to talk to them, invite them to socialize)?	1	2	3	4
11. Support and take responsibility for helping my organization meet EEO/AA guidelines?	1	2	3	4
12. Value people who are different from me as resources because of their unique skills, abilities, perspectives, and approaches?	1	2	3	4
13. Work to change policies that disregard different cultural beliefs or religious holidays?	1	2	3	4
14. Challenge the notion that individuals need to act or look a certain way to be successful or valuable to the organization?	1	2	3	4
15. Forgive people who make biased statements about me or others and allow them to regain my trust and respect?	1	2	3	4
16. Include and invite people different from myself into the decision-making process?	1	2	3	4
17. Provide timely and honest feedback to others, including those different from myself, even if it feels risky?	1	2	3	4
18. Share the formal and informal rules of my group with those different from myself?	1	2	3	4
19. Disregard physical characteristics (disability, attractiveness, height, weight, dress, etc.) when interacting with others and making decisions about their ability?	1	2	3	4
20. Support organizational policies regarding equal treatment by confronting people who violate those policies and reporting them if necessary?	1	2	3	4

**TOTAL SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## **INTENT versus IMPACT**

By Mauricio Velásquez, MBA  
President, CEO – The Diversity Training Group

### **Introduction**

This fundamental concept is one of the core principles of my work and integral to DTG's approach to dealing with diversity issues in the workplace and marketplace. Diversity issues or employee relation issues (among people who are different) typically involve two people. The perpetrator or the initiator of the behavior is one party and the target or the receiver of the behavior is the second party.

The diversity issue or incident (sometimes it is one "moment of truth") is defined as a behavior, an action, or a series of behaviors (a pathology or trend) that one party (the target) feels or concludes based on the behavior(s) was wrong, inappropriate, disrespectful, discriminatory or illegal.

### **First – We Don't Know the Intentions of Others**

We all mean well. I never question the intent of any person's actions. We actually don't know the intentions of the other person but we assume their intentions based on the behavior we see, how we react (our feelings) or the kind of relationship we have with the perpetrator. This is the first mistake. We should look at the behavior(s) in question and only the behavior(s). Looking just at the face value of the behavior is a good start.

I tend to focus on the actual behavior and how that behavior might affect or influence other people. In other words, I focus on the impact said behavior(s) has on other people. The consequences of any action, how the behavior might be received or perceived or experienced is what I tend to scrutinize.

### **Second – "I didn't Mean It"**

I find too many people will get defensive when the target confronts the perpetrator about the behavior(s). The perpetrator typically responds with, "I didn't mean it the way you took it." Often, in my travels, people don't want to be held accountable for their actions. Unfortunately, this does not take the "sting" out of the behavior(s). What matters is what you said, not what you meant.

### **What Is Appropriate**

Don't take it personally – apologize for your comment. Don't try to avoid your responsibility – step up to the plate. Don't focus on your intentions – no one knows your intentions. Try to put yourself in the target's shoes and understand their feelings. Put your feelings aside. This is not about you – the perpetrator – this is about the target. Try to empathize with the target. Apologize and ask the target to always come and share with this person their feelings whenever they feel wronged. You want to be perceived as humble, approachable and "bigger" than any one incident. What you don't want to do is seem defensive, stubborn, or stubborn. Reach out! This is a wake up call that you need

to improve this relationship. Misunderstandings are more likely to arise among strangers or people who have strained or weak relationships.

### **Most Common Mistakes**

“You people! What do your people think? You are so articulate for a (blank); I don’t see you as a (blank). Men/women, you can’t...” These are some of the most common mistakes people make. Stay away from these behaviors. Never see people as members of a group but rather focus on the person, the individual. If you do go here, apologize immediately and reach out and ask for help and coaching from the other person.

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# MEET MAURICIO VELÁSQUEZ, MBA

## PRESIDENT, THE DIVERSITY TRAINING GROUP



Mauricio Velásquez is the President of The Diversity Training Group (DTG) in Herndon, VA. Mauricio serves as a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategist, consultant, trainer, sexual harassment prevention trainer, respectful workplace/toxic employee trainer, employee engagement/trust trainer, executive coach, mentoring trainer, expert witness, and assists organizations with “winning the war for talent” and “being employers of choice.”

DTG’s clients include small and large, public and private organizations. A partial list includes Major League Soccer, Colliers, McGeorge Car Dealership Group, Williams & Connolly, Catapult Learning, Phillips Schools, Fannie Mae, Dominion Energy, Perdue, Public Sector Risk Management Professionals (PRIMA), Supreme Court, Congress, LOC (AOC), Habitat for Humanity (SHR), MBP, NIST, Harrity & Harrity, US Navy Support Command, Management Concepts, and US Postal Service. Past clients include The White House, HP, Black & Decker, BP, OMB, SSA, US Coast Guard, NASA, Ryland Homes, Visa USA and more.

### Mr. Velásquez is.....

- A graduate of the University of Virginia (B.A., Economics and Psychology – Double Major) and The George Washington University (M.B.A., Human Resource Management).
- An expert witness and risk manager, minimizer
- The first diversity consultant/trainer on the internet, reaching tens of millions with our website [diversitydtg.com](http://diversitydtg.com).
- An executive coach brought in to coach executives 1:1. 360 accelerated assessment and coaching – proactive and reactive.
- A nationally recognized author, consultant appearing in local, regional, and national publications including American Diversity Reporter, American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the Managing Diversity newsletter, Workforce Diversity Network, IPMA and Profiles in Diversity Journal.
- A past part-time faculty member with the Johns Hopkins University (5 years in PELP), past adjunct instructor at American University, visiting lecturer with The University of Virginia, The George Washington University, George Mason University, and Salisbury University, and an instructor for Howard Community, Wor-Wic, and Baltimore City Community Colleges.
- A guest commentator on nationally recognized Fox and Friends, Hispanic Today and dozens of radio stations.
- Featured all over the United States in magazines and newspapers from WSJ to NY Times, WBJ and Diversity Executive.
- A regular contributing author and speaker for Workforce Diversity Network, American Diversity Reporter
- A presenter at national diversity conferences sponsored by Workforce Diversity Network, IPMA, Society for Human Resource Management, International Quality and Productivity Center, Linkage International, and others.
- Son of immigrant parents, bilingual, Mauricio has lived abroad in several countries and traveled to over 70 countries.
- Author of over four dozen articles, D & I Starter and Maintenance Kit and guest written articles in other books.
- Mauricio and the DTG team, our focus, our work has moved DTG toward this nexus or “sweet spot” where valuing diversity in the workplace and marketplace intersects with respect, trust, employee engagement and higher performance.

Mauricio and his team believe if you respect all differences in your workplace, your people feel valued and respected and hence, they are more engaged and perform at a higher level. This is why a lot of our work is about respect, trust, and employee engagement.

Mauricio is a former human resource generalist and also served as a demographic researcher for the Internal Revenue Service where he first anticipated the rise of diversity inside and outside the workplace. He had the good fortune to work with Dr. W. Edwards Deming, Peter F. Drucker, Drs. Crosby, Jurand, and Jerry Harvey. Mauricio credits much of his interest in human resource management and the earning of his MBA at George Washington University to their influences.

Mauricio has trained and educated over 1 million employees, managers, and executives in the areas of diversity, gender equity, mentoring, respect, dignity in the workplace and marketplace, and trust, engagement in higher performance in every state but North Dakota and his work and life have taken him to more than 75 countries. Mauricio specializes in hostile or challenging audiences – disarming them and ensuring learning and development. From “Gitmo” to the White House to Law Enforcement to Military to Native American Tribes to Law Firms, Manufacturing, High-Tech, and Colleges - we have been there. From the “choir” to highly hostile audiences – we can add value! Mauricio “gives back” – Vice Chair, Elimination of Prejudice, Vice Chair, Institute for Conservation Leadership, Chair, Omega Alpha Chapter, Pi Lambda Phi – UVA (first non-sectarian fraternity.) and does pro-bono work for many.