A Modern-Day Approach to Better Diversity Outcomes

Technology-based, Just-in-time Solutions Can Reinforce Learning

CHICAGO, IL, USA, July 8, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- How is your organization approaching Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) education? Is it still operating within the context of the 1980's model of training, or has it adapted next generation practices in order to achieve better results?

The Society for Diversity recently held its annual Diversity 3.0 conference, themed "Innovations, Strategies & Skills for Intentional Outcomes", in Chicago, IL. At the event, speaker Monica Marcel, co-founder of LCW, shared insights, as well

Monica Marcel, LCW Co-Founder & Principal

as some of the next generation practices that her company has implemented in partnership with a few of the world's best employers.

Technology has revolutionized the way that LCW helps employers build inclusive organizations, through 3 essential components: access that is learner-centered, flexibility in how training is delivered, and the scale at which solutions can be rolled out enterprise-wide in a timely fashion. Many employers have found that with the money they would have historically spent to train 300 or so managers in facilitator-led workshops, you can now deploy powerful technology-based solutions across the whole organization.

"This has the dual benefit of empowering you to become more strategic in building common frameworks that everyone can use, and putting the responsibility for development in the hands of employees themselves," explains Monica Marcel, LCW Co-Founder and Principal. "Some clients call this 'democratizing learning'. I think that phrase really captures what we're doing."

LCW has been building Learning and Development (L&D) solutions for more than 15 years. Their best in class eLearning, workshops and videos tools are licensed by city governments, elite universities, and dozens of Fortune 500 companies. LCW's typical client will deploy an eLearning module for everyone, and leverage that or another follow-up module to supplement workshops facilitated onsite.

LCW has seen a trend among Employer of Choice organizations toward microlearning plans that are devised together with the organization's HR, L&D, D&I, and sometimes even communications teams. The microlearning plan might include a system of embedded email prompts, videos, discussion guides, and digital toolkits—which are best when tailored to the organizational culture, by language and role. These technology-enabled tools help sustain the learning and drive behavioral change

necessary to build inclusive cultures over time.

Says Marcel, "more and more, we have the opportunity to impact talent decisions on a just-in-time basis, such as with 3-5 minutes of laser-like focus on specific tasks by specific people. At Boston Scientific for example, LCW's de-biasing tools are embedded into the talent management systems in different languages—from English to Japanese. Let's say a manager is scheduled to do a candidate interview at Boston Scientific. She gets an email with a hyperlink to our 4-minute "Managing Bias in Hiring" video, with instructions to watch it on her smart phone or computer before her interview. This video builds on our Unconscious Bias eLearning—which she completed a few months earlier. Now as she heads into her interview, the video delivers a micro-lesson on the downsides of relying too much on "cultural fit" when screening candidates. She's also given a digital job aid with practical tips and a checklist to take into that interview with her, that she can use to mitigate biases known to occur when evaluating candidates."

And the impact can be immediate. After using LCW's "Managing Bias in Talent Review" tools to kick-off a succession planning discussion with senior marketing General Managers, a contact at Colgate sent this note to LCW: "I was really impressed that, in a short period of time, things they learned have positively impacted how they think, act and articulate their thoughts."

Armed with such tools, organizations are beginning to revolutionize their approach to inclusion and mitigating bias in structural ways. For example, LCW's "Evaluating Talent Inclusively" eLearning module lets managers identify biases they may unconsciously bring into performance management, and explore if—as research shows often is the case—they may reserve their strongest and unconditional endorsement language (e.g. "confident, "leader", "insightful") for some groups and weaker endorsement language (e.g. "works hard", "diligent", and "collaborative") for other groups.

Research shows that the strongest endorsements like "insightful" can show up disproportionately in evaluations of men, while terms like "works hard" can show up disproportionately in evaluations of women. Although "Works hard" is certainly not negative, the research clearly shows the term actually signifies weaker levels of praise and corresponding performance ratings than do superlatives like "insightful". An individual leader often has a major "a-ha" moment when on a personal level, they realize the subtle ways that biases can be embedded into organization-wide systems. That "a-ha" is the precursor to what comes next.

Marcel asserts, "This just happened recently. A client learned about how coded language can introduce subtle but compounding biases into performance management, and then asked me to help their IT department screen for it in their internal performance evaluations. The client then found that women were in fact more likely to be described with the term "works hard", and that the women who were described that way in their performance review were less likely to receive a top rating. This held true whether her manager was a male or female. Interestingly, the IT-department also found that the term 'aggressive' was used to indicate positive behaviors in some, but indicate negative behaviors in others. Their next step is cut the data by business unit and possibly race and ethnicity—to see if they can isolate any patterns or bias that might account for the discrepancy in why being "aggressive" is valued in some but held against others in the same organization."

Leah Smiley, President of the Society for Diversity says, "Organizations are struggling with diversity and inclusion interventions because training efforts have traditionally lacked the data to back-up assertions of bias, or support the business case for culture change. LCW is one of many organizations that have helped organizations transition to a data-driven approach, as well as explore eLearning and micro-learning to solve long-standing workplace issues."

Smiley adds, "Asking hard questions, customizing interventions throughout the enterprise, exploring

technology-centered solutions, and identifying real business impacts helps organizations modernize their approach to diversity and inclusion".

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