

The DNA of Culture Change

New Seminars Bring Powerful Communication Skills to Professionals Across the U.S.



Profiles in Diversity Journal and Insight Education Systems team up to present **MicroInequities: The Power of Small**

“After watching Stephen’s seminar I realized this is the missing link for diversity.”

*Joyce Tucker
VP Global Diversity,
Compliance & Policy Administration
Boeing Corporation*

Chasing that elusive goal of “workplace inclusion” continues to be an ever-amorphous pursuit. Many employees for whom so many inclusionary efforts are designed talk about experiencing an ever-increasing volume of programs and activities but perceive only minimal real behavioral change in their work environment. Corporate diversity teams are vibrant with an impressive array of “stuff,” yet employees say, “I see all the activity but it just doesn’t feel different for me.”

For years, organizations have flooded their environments with a broad array of initiatives, yet it’s hard to find a company that doesn’t find itself repeating the mantra “We’re just not there yet.” So, what’s really keeping them from getting there?

The answer may well be the need to address the underlying, subtle behaviors that reveal our true opinions. Not what we say (the words), but rather what we genuinely believe (micro-messages).

Diversity initiatives have focused primarily on a set of idealistic goals. Little has been done, however, to really identify the underlying specific knowledge and skills needed to reach those goals. Mastering the ability to identify micro-messages and

developing the skill to send them constructively may truly be the new paradigm that will shift the whole diversity game into turbo boost.

For decades, diversity initiatives have concentrated on the most prevalent behaviors that cause workplace exclusion. These tend to be the things we can most readily see or define. Far more pervasive are the virtually invisible behaviors that are, in orders of magnitude, more damaging. Organizations have done a great job at controlling the big, easily seen offensive behaviors but have been somewhat blind to what is rarely observed. Organizations have done great work at controlling the few elephants, while being overrun by a phalanx of ants.

Listening with your arms folded, losing eye contact with the person you’re speaking with, or even how you move your lips to shape a smile—in any given conversation, we may send hundreds of messages, often without even saying a word. Just as television or radio waves surround us yet we never see them, these micro-messages are just as pervasive and nearly as difficult to discern. Positive micro-messages (MicroAdvantages) can spark creativity,

leadership and exceptional performance. Negative micro-messages (Micro-Inequities) often cause employees to withdraw, complain, or question their own abilities, resulting in lackluster performance and, as a result, little movement upward. They have been referred to as the “invisible force” that drives the high turnover of women and people of color that so many corporations struggle to analyze and explain. Clearly, there’s a compelling business case for managing effective micro-messages.

In his program **MicroInequities: The Power of Small**, Stephen Young seeks to effect major changes in the cultural landscape of an organization by addressing the small, yet powerful, biases communicated in the workforce. **MicroInequities: The Power of Small** has been delivered to thousands of people globally. Reactions from the organizations who have attended this program have been overwhelmingly positive. Many say that **The Power of Small** has revolutionized the way they think about and interact with others.

“I was first introduced to the concept of **MicroInequities** by a Wall Street colleague in the mid 1990s,” says Young. “We both were experiencing routine, subtle discrimination from our manager but just couldn’t put our finger on exactly why we felt the way we did. At one point she whispered, ‘Will these micro-inequities ever stop?’ We discussed how the term so perfectly described our experiences. She told me about Professor Mary Rowe from MIT, who conceived the term and authored the original scholarly writing on the topic. The wisdom of Professor Rowe’s work was the basis for the development of a workplace program to help others respond to these issues.”

With the launch of **Insight Education**, the program has undergone an impressive overhaul, generating widespread endorsement from a broad array of senior leaders. Now, through an arrangement with *Profiles in Diversity Journal*, professionals in all walks of life can learn to manage effective micro-messages when **MicroInequities:**

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The Power of Small is presented in cities across the U.S.

“These powerful half-day sessions will provide leaders with the tools to hot-wire their communications,” says publisher James Rector. “Understanding the impact of micro-inequities is a significant part of successfully building and sustaining a strong and diverse workforce.”

“Micro-messages are rooted in the foundation of human communication, which has less to do with the mechanics of speech and more to do with the complex ways that people communicate,” says Young.

Beyond Diversity Management, the Key to Effective Leadership

Although this program falls within the realm of diversity management, it aligns closely with the foundation of leadership. Participating leaders see the impact of their actions—conscious and unconscious—that motivate or de-motivate people.

Gaining control of micro-messages becomes a leadership imperative if we are going to create environments that will attract and retain talent. For example, at Unilever, CEO John Rice saw **The Power of Small** program as an opportunity to bring this point home in his organization. “Steve’s program is unique in that it takes diversity down to how we treat each other

“Steve Young is one of the most effective corporate workforce diversity executives in the field today. He is good at focusing on the blend of workforce and marketplace issues; his work demonstrates this reality.”

*Ted Childs
Vice President, Global Workforce Diversity
IBM*

“Young provides useful and profound insights as to how subtle communication patterns can significantly impact business performance and employee morale.”

*Raymond V. Gilmartin
Chairman, President and
Chief Executive Officer
Merck*

“Managers and employees alike will become more aware of their own and others’ methods of relating, and will be more aware of the implications of their words and actions.”

*Rosalind Hudnell
Director of Diversity
Intel*

Micronequities: The Power of Small Interactive Workshop Agenda

• Overview

- Micronequities defined.
- Recent research.
- Critical skills that you will take back to the workplace.

• Workplace Scenarios

- The pervasiveness of Micronequities.
- How Micronequities erode workforce effectiveness and productivity.
- MicroAdvantages.

• Awareness-building Exercises

- “Catch Me If You Can”—a unique exercise that turns the tables on the facilitator by analyzing and catching the Micronequities he exhibits in his interaction with participants.

• Self-Assessment

- Participants learn to identify where, when and how they engage in micro-messaging—particularly in the workplace.

• Video Scenarios

• Skills for Driving Change

- Provides the tools you need to change your own behavior and influence the behavior of others.

“Stephen’s approach with Micronequities exactly describes the core challenges of inclusion that face us all. Basically, Steve has really nailed the central diversity issues facing organizations today.”

*Sheila Wellington
Former President, Catalyst
Clinical Professor of Management,
Stern School of Business, NYU*

“At Raytheon, we seek to expand our diversity awareness and learn from the experiences of people outside our industry. Steve Young is one of those people.”

*William H. Swanson
Chairman and CEO
Raytheon Company*

day-to-day, how important this is, and how important it is in relation to team performance and business results.”

Rice’s assessment of the need for this type of program is not unique. According to Merck Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer Raymond V. Gilmartin, “The MicroInequities program provided useful and profound insights as to how subtle communication patterns can significantly impact business performance and employee morale. The program was effective—the examples provided not only made the learning enjoyable, but increased the probability that participants will put the training principles into practice.”

Says Pat Coll, CEO of Fleet Bank Credit Card, “Steve engages his audience with relevant examples and hits a chord with them. I’ve listened to his approach twice myself and personally recommend him highly.”

Immediate Results

One of the most striking features of the MicroInequities program is how quickly behavior change occurs. It’s virtually impossible to leave the session and not immediately start seeing every interaction differently. It’s not at all usual for

participants to return to their offices and instantly observe messages they never noticed before and, more importantly, engage and challenge those sending the micro-messages in a well-crafted, comfortable and constructive fashion.

Typically, we send between 2,000 and 4,000 positive and negative micro-messages to our colleagues every day. These messages have a powerful influence on driving the performance of all those with whom we interact. Certainly, everyone knows that subtle messages exist, but most of us go through the day oblivious to the overwhelming majority of these. This program provides the skill to detect them, analyze their meaning and craft an effective strategy to transform the workplace experience.

How does an organization’s investment in this program pay off? Phyliss Piano, VP, Corporate Affairs at Raytheon, believes that the improvement in the yearly opinion survey related to increasing understanding of commitment towards diversity is a direct result of the 8,000 employees at Raytheon who attended the program. Merck has undertaken a longitudinal study, and will measure every six months how employees are applying the learning and minimizing MicroInequities. Deborah Daggit, Executive Director, Diversity and Workplace Environment at Merck, says, based on what she has seen and heard to date, she can already report the positive results her CEO had anticipated. Likewise, Coll commented that many of the managers, directors and EVPs “resolved to adopt the interpersonal practices right away, and our employee feedback suggests some of them have.”

“Our company—any successful company—must be able to retain the best talent and recruit from the greatest pool of talent if we are to compete and win,” says William H. Swanson, Chairman and CEO of Raytheon Company. “Innovation today is more likely to be the product of teamwork fueled by diverse perspectives than individual achievement pursued in

isolation. Sharing the theories on micro-inequities at Raytheon has helped us to create an environment where all people can contribute at their highest levels.

Easy To Relate To

One of the many things that make this program different from other diversity and leadership programs is that the program quickly gets at inclusive or exclusive behaviors in the workplace that every person can relate to, and has experienced. It is something we've always intuitively felt but, until now, we've never had the language around it. We can now understand the impact this has on individual and organizational performance," says Danny Best, Director of Corporate Diversity at Fleet Bank.

"The concepts contain levity and are not heavy—people can comfortably open the door to talk about micro-inequities and comfortably receive feedback when it occurs," says Daggit. Participants of the program instantly become aware of the subconscious messages they send that can value or devalue the performance and self-esteem of others, and go back and do something about it.

Apryll Adams, Compliance Analyst at Fleet Bank, changed her own behavior immediately after the program. "There I was talking with someone and found myself drifting off. I immediately caught myself and brought the micro-inequity out

on the table and talked about how this behavior was sending a message that you are not important. I have since stopped doing this behavior, and find that communication has opened up for me." According to Michel Landel, CEO of Sodexo North America, when his senior managers and executives saw the presentation, "I think all of us were struck by the concept of micro-inequities and how they can impact how we work together and interact with our colleagues. We were presented with focused strategies for helping our managers become more effective in managing our increasingly diverse employee base."

What also makes this program different from others is its practical aspect. Many participants believe this three-hour program had as much or even more impact than the longer diversity programs they currently offer in their organizations. According to Kay Hoogland, Diversity Manager at Motorola, "This program is so powerful and engaging that it will be selling itself." Says Deborah Daggit of Merck, "The enthusiasm and buy-in for the program is coming from the senior levels and grassroots of our organization because they can really see the impact of micro-inequities towards self-esteem and performance. These two groups, in particular, are often the hardest to engage in these types of programs." PDJ

“Part of what divides corporate America from achieving its greatest growth potential is based upon our own cultural blinders.

We miss the potential to truly expand our marketplace by not understanding how our differences can help us grow to greater profitability.

Hopefully, initiatives such as Steve’s MicroInequities program will help us not only bridge this growth gap but take diversity planning to an entirely new level.”

*Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.
President & Founder
Rainbow/PUSH
Wall Street Project*