

Unconscious Bias Training For Managers

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OVERVIEW

In 2015, the Vancouver Airport Authority (YVR) conducted a needs assessment during their Employment Systems review. One of the recommendations presented was delivering Unconscious Bias training to their management team. They rolled out training for their managers and senior leaders and learned a great deal throughout the process.

OBJECTIVES

YVR's objectives for Unconscious Bias training were as follows:

- To better understand and describe unconscious bias
- Tying unconscious bias to the employment process
- Developing internal awareness around how unconscious bias is created
- Discussing the impact of bias at YVR
- Discussing concrete opportunities to minimize unconscious bias

APPROACH

As part of an Employment Systems Review, YVR worked with an external consultant to review everything related to Employment Equity (training, recruitment, career's website, internal processes, etc.) and determined that Unconscious Bias training for management level and above would be valuable.

Their approach to rolling out Unconscious Bias training included the following steps:

- YVR searched for an external facilitator to develop and deliver the training.
- YVR worked with the trainer to ensure they understood YVR as an organization, and understood YVR's approach to diversity.
- The trainer and YVR worked together to customize the training, personalize case studies, and ensure the content was relevant to YVR staff.
- YVR sent out an invite, followed by their President and CEO sending an email encouraging attendance.
- The half-day in person course was offered three times to maximize participation.
- A learning survey was distributed afterwards to attendees to gather feedback.

Finding the Right Training Provider

YVR worked to try and find a local facilitator and training provider. However, at the time of the search in early 2015, there were not any local trainers that met their needs. They found an organization in Toronto offering a customizable course and they came to Vancouver to deliver multiple sessions. Finding a trainer that fit with their organization's vision and understood YVR as a business was key to ensuring the training was successful. YVR shared their Employment Equity Plan and ensured that the training provider understood their business before the training was developed.

Customizing the Content

YVR worked with the training provider to ensure the content was customized to YVR's context. An example of this was working to ensure the case studies used in the training were specific to YVR. This helped contextualize the content – and as a result many attendees noted the training was applicable to their work.

Getting People to the Session

YVR found that even though people were really interested in the training, everyone is busy and efforts needed to be made to ensure people were aware and attended the session. They utilized a calendar invite, an email from the CEO, and other e-follow up to ensure people signed up and attended. Getting the invite into manager's calendars early helped allow manager's to plan in advance to attend.

Training Survey

YVR sent a training survey out after the course to understand feedback on what worked, and what could have been done differently. The feedback provided valuable insight into lesson's learned.

LESSONS LEARNED

There were many lessons learned in the process of developing and implementing the training.

Considering How the Training Overlaps with the Overall Learning & Development Strategy

Some employees cited a model used in the course overlapped with one found in other management training they had received in the past. Making connections between Unconscious Bias training and the overall learning and development strategy is useful in connecting together the overall big picture and objectives.

Finding a Local Facilitator

YVR looked for a local training provider but was challenged to find someone who could deliver the training they were looking for. While they found a facilitator in Toronto, they would encourage organizations to try and find a local facilitator if possible. The advantages of someone local is that they can do multiple sessions to ensure everyone is trained, and it is easier to call them back in future years. They are also able to ground the training in the local BC context.

Online vs. In-Person

YVR opted for in-person training, which has many benefits including quality control of the experience, and having a forum for people to come together to experience it. It also allowed for dialogue and a more in depth session. The pros to having the training online however, are that it can be more manageable from a resource perspective (people can take it at any time, and it is usually less time intensive). YVR would encourage other organizations to consider which option best suits business needs.

Resource Implications

Unconscious bias training can be expensive, even though it is worth the investment. Some strategies for smaller organizations, or organizations with smaller budgets for training might consider: free resources such as Facebook's online training, developing the course in house, working with an organization to develop training but then have the organization train someone in house to deliver subsequent sessions, or combine budgets with another organization and run it together.