



LEFT: HAVE YOU CONSIDERED CHARLES? COLLEAGUES DISCUSS A TEAM APPOINTMENT IN ONE OF THE INTERACTIVE DRAMA SCENARIOS DEVISED FOR THE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING DVD

How unconscious bias catches you unawares

Training to tackle issues that can affect careers, for better or for worse

Diversity and Inclusion

To be truly successful as an organisation, BAE Systems needs your support to continue to develop a fully diverse and inclusive working environment, which harnesses the talent, commitment and pride from our employees to deliver our strategy.

You have a key role to play in fostering a more inclusive culture and we recognise how important it is for us to support you with the knowledge and skills to help you do this.

The concept of unconscious bias is an important component of an inclusive culture because it alters the way we think, both positively and negatively, and how we view and evaluate others. When inclusion or exclusion occur, it's often as a result of automatic decisions made beyond our conscious awareness.

Andrea Lewis, Inc. Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, says we need



DONNA HALKYARD ABOVE, AND ANDREA LEWIS



to actively address those unconscious assumptions we make.

“Our decision-making is often compromised by these assumptions and biases, and so the better we are able to work through them, the better decisions we can make for the business,” she said.

“Everyone has bias, but it can be managed very well with awareness and commitment.”

Bias is not caused by the characteristics or behaviour of the other person, but by how we see them, instantly and unconsciously, in relation to ourselves, explained Donna Halkyard, Head of Diversity and Inclusion. And it's more prevalent in specific business situations.

“Bias is more likely to occur when we are under pressure in different ways,” she said. “It could be time pressure due to the length of a meeting, business pressure over whether to retain or move a person,

making an important decision about any individual in relation to their ambitions or salary, or in a disagreement between parties and the need to reach closure.”

Both Andrea and Donna recognised that the effects of unconscious bias can shape a career, for better or for worse, and have their personal experiences to draw on.

“At times during my career I have become aware that, as a mother, certain assumptions were being made about which opportunities I would and wouldn't be interested in, based on things like the need for travel,” said Donna. “These assumptions said more about the experiences of the individual making them than about my real career plans or my ability to meet the job requirements.”

“My advice is to have an open and honest conversation as early on in a situation as possible, try to understand where each individual

“EVERYONE HAS BIAS, BUT IT CAN BE MANAGED VERY WELL WITH AWARENESS AND COMMITMENT”

person is coming from and what they are looking for. This approach is more likely to lead to a win-win situation.”

Andrea recognised that being aware of how these assumptions affect you can open you up to new opportunities and to recognising people's potential.

“I have really grown personally since becoming an advocate of managing unconscious bias,” she said. “The more I work on it, the more I realise how many assumptions I've been making that often are not borne out in reality.”

“For instance, at work, I am aware that I sometimes draw conclusions about someone's ability or motivation based on how they are dressed, their accent, or where they might mention they have gone to school. I've learned to reserve judgment, especially when meeting new people. It has really opened up possibilities for me to get to know people in a new way.”

Everyone can benefit from learning about the impact of unconscious bias, whether it's with business leaders widening their circles of “go-to” people, diversifying their project team compositions, or simply being more open about discussing bias which we know exists but was previously considered “undiscussable”.

Within a team, having an awareness of cultural differences can also enable colleagues to use the best of the



Training holds up a mirror to life

The training DVD for UK employees uses interactive drama to help them to understand the need to recognise unconscious biases in themselves.

Involving a large cast of all ages and ethnicities, ten scripted scenarios were filmed at several locations to reflect real issues that are “live”

within businesses across BAE Systems to ensure that delegates understand what inclusion means for them.

Simon Thomson, programme leader at Steps Drama which made the DVD, said: “Carefully researched drama effectively holds up a mirror to life at BAE Systems. It allows a safe, inclusive opportunity for people

to look at the culture they inhabit, and to see the part they and others play in setting the tone of that culture. Successful drama should allow delegates to see themselves as others see them. It should illicit responses like ‘oh my goodness, I do that all the time!’ and ‘I see those kinds of behaviours everywhere!’”

different cultural norms that may be displayed.

To help to tackle the issues surrounding the topic, BAE Systems is rolling out a programme on unconscious bias. Across the UK, employees will receive a DVD and prompt cards, with the goal of training all the leaders and aspiring leaders under the Total Performance Leadership (TPL) framework by the end of the year. There will be three



ABOVE: UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING IS BEING ROLLED OUT ACROSS THE COMPANY UNDER THE TOTAL PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

online learning modules to test knowledge, with one being mandated.

Inc. is also taking a blended approach to the training. Last year it trained internal human resources and other employees to deliver live training modules to their TPL population, using the e-learning as pre-work, with the same goal of reaching all TPL people by the end of the year. The e-learning portion is available to all employees.

“On-going learning and development opportunities enhance our personal skill-sets and help us to contribute more effectively to business goals,” said Donna. “The unconscious bias training programme provides a safe space for employees and teams to come together to explore bias and to identify ways to manage it effectively for personal and business benefits.”

Andrea concluded: “We have a lot more education and awareness to provide, a lot more people to reach, and a lot more shifts to make. We are planning more comprehensive communications, education sessions, and most importantly, opportunities for people to engage in dialogue around their differences and how to create inclusion.”



LEFT: WILL THEY BE LISTENED TO? ONE OF THE FILMED SCENES INVOLVES A TEAM LEADER SEEKING FEEDBACK FROM TWO OF HIS TEAM MEMBERS