Include Is a Verb: Moving From Talk to Action on Diversity and Inclusion

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Inclusion at Work

When she walked into the offices of the Generic Membership Association (GMA) on Monday morning, the first thing Joan noticed was the receptionist's hair. In addition to the usual hot pink streak running from the part to his right ear, he had added smaller streaks in bright blue and purple. The effect was striking and suited him.

"Good morning, Samir," she said.

"Mornin' boss," he replied.

"I see the Eagles won yesterday," she remarked, noticing that he was wearing his favorite team's jersey, as was his custom after a winning game.

"It's extra sweet when you beat the Cowboys in Dallas," he replied.

On her way to grab a cup of coffee, Joan ran into Imani, the conference director.

"Do you have a minute?" asked Imani.

"Sure," said Joan. "How did the site visit go?"

"Things are looking good overall. The good news is there are plenty of gender-neutral bathrooms. When I walked the site and meeting spaces with the stroller to check accessibility, I noticed a few trouble spots, but the venue is working with us to address those."

Imani continued: "We still have some issues to work out around sign language interpretation and closed-captioning. We're set for the general sessions, but we may have to ask deaf virtual attendees to register for breakout sessions in advance to make sure we have the right tech and the right people in the right rooms at the right times."

"We're all set for closed-captioning of the session recordings, though, right?" asked Joan.

"Oh yeah," said Imani. "We just need to make sure we're all set for our real-time virtual attendees, too."

Waiting in Joan's in-box was the most recent report from her membership engagement team. As the association's CEO, Joan was well aware that GMA membership numbers had, after several years of decline, finally begun to improve. Now the questions were,

- What were new members trying to accomplish?
- What problems were they trying to solve?
- How could GMA become a vital partner in their success?

She knew that one key piece of the puzzle was GMA's dated image, which had long remained stuck in the 1950s of its founding. Despite the increasing diversity of people entering the profession and joining GMA in the past 20 years, her organization's image and culture had not kept up. When Joan replaced the retiring CEO in 2012, she found a workplace and volunteer culture that assumed that everyone was a straight white man with a stay-at-home spouse, which was reflected in GMA's personnel policies, expectations of volunteers, conferences, and other programming. GMA members had resorted to forming "caucuses" and "interest groups" in an attempt to diversify programs, but volunteer interest in maintaining those groups, and thus their effectiveness, waxed and waned over the years.

Working with the board of directors, Joan determined that increasing the diversity of GMA staff, leadership, and members would be her top priority as the new CEO. She quickly realized that simply adding a few women, people of color, and LGBTQ people to the staff and board would not be sufficient; GMA would also need to commit to creating a culture of inclusion.

What does GMA look like five years later?

For her staff, the first thing to go was the office dress code. The new code had two simple rules: "No nudity" and "Dress in a way that optimizes your performance of your job."

"No more khakis and polo shirts!" exulted Samir.

Still, that second rule generated a lot of discussion. How did what you wore to work affect your results? How far could you go in defying the expectations of what a professional looks like and still be effective in your job? Those conversations continued, but most of the staff had settled into the knowledge that they could come to work dressed as themselves without risking their jobs.

Joan also knew the rules around time and place had to change. She'd already heard complaints about the "flextime" policy that required everyone to be in the office during "core hours." Telecommuting was viewed as a privilege doled out by supervisors, resulting in grumbling about favoritism and unfair advantages. Now, staff was managed based on the work they accomplished, not the time they spent in the office.

Everyone worked at times and in places where they knew they could be most productive, and cross-departmental teams worked together to ensure that work was done well, on time, and within budget. No one ever again had to miss a kid's dance recital or standing in line to score tickets to the only local appearance of the top hip-hop act of the moment just because those events happened during "core hours" on weekdays.

As a result, work was getting done faster and at a higher level of quality. Customer service improved noticeably as well, board and committee members told Joan. She attributed that to improved staff autonomy, productivity, and morale.

Joan encouraged each person on staff to bring their whole selves to work, after which one person created a large central calendar that showed religious holidays and festivals celebrated by staff members. Then another staff member "came out" as a devout Pagan and delighted in sharing her seasonal celebrations. Joan worked with building management to designate some of the restrooms as "gender-neutral." Then an ad hoc staff team took over the office "Christmas party" and transformed it into potluck celebration of regional and national cuisines.

Changing GMA's governance was a slower and more-challenging process. Early on, Joan made the business case to her board for increasing diversity among volunteer leaders, pointing to the numerous studies that demonstrate that increased diversity produces better decisions, better outcomes, and an improved bottom line. The board voted to form a task force to create a statement of commitment to diversity and inclusion (D+I) and asked Joan to reach out to active members of the Women's Caucus, the Black Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, the LGBTQ Allies, and other identity groups among the membership to identify candidates for board service.

After receiving unanimous board approval, the D+I statement became one of the pillars of GMA member outreach and service. Several caucus members were now serving on the board and more were being groomed for leadership positions. At the request of two of the new board members, the board had recently participated in unconscious bias and ally trainings. As a result, changes to board processes that could be exclusionary were in the works.

GMA's most-recent D+I efforts were focused on the annual meeting. Imani started by surveying attendees and the larger membership, asking questions designed to help association leaders and staff understand how welcome and safe women, people of color, LGBTQ people, and people living with disabilities felt at past meetings. Armed with the survey results, Imani and her team worked with the program committee and the various caucuses to create a code of conduct that explicitly prohibited harassment at GMA meetings and related events and detailed a process for dealing with any incidents that did occur. GMA also modified session formats to make events more accessible to people with disabilities; provided ally training for speakers and session moderators; and, with board support, set rules regarding the proportion of speakers who would be women, people of color, or members of other underrepresented groups.

These and other changes contributed to the good news Joan saw in that morning's engagement report. Membership numbers were up, submissions for presentations at the annual meeting had increased, and the diversity of membership on committees and in the leadership pipeline had improved. Even more rewarding for Joan and her staff were the results of a new member survey showing that the changes GMA had made were having a real impact on the engagement and satisfaction of all their members.

One survey comment particularly caught her eye: "When I joined GMA 10 years ago, it was because my boss made me do it. He told me it would be 'good for your career.' For the first few years, I couldn't see the point. GMA didn't seem to be for people like me—there wasn't anyone who looked like me on the board or speaking at the conference. Now, I see people like me everywhere: on the board, on the stage, and on staff. I just volunteered for a task force for the first time, and I'm really excited to serve."

While we'd like to tell you the real name of GMA, we can't. It doesn't exist. Yet.

Our goal for this whitepaper is to help associations chart a course for moving beyond talking the talk of diversity by walking the walk of genuine inclusion. ☀

Key Concepts in Diversity and Inclusion (D+I)

What is diversity? What is inclusion? How do they relate to each other?

"Diversity" simply means "difference." It encompasses all the ways people can be different from each other, which extends to both protected class characteristics like race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and veteran status and to things like socioeconomic class, level of education attained, urban/rural background, and family structure and composition.

Inclusion occurs when all people, be they staff, volunteers, or association members, have equal and meaningful opportunities to participate and contribute regardless of their differences and without having to hide those differences or conform to the norms of the dominant culture or way of being—that is, without having to assimilate or pretend to be someone or something one isn't. As D+I trainer Joe Gerstandt points out: "…as human beings, two of our strongest needs are 1) the need to be unique in some way, and 2) the need to belong. Inclusion happens when a place or a space prioritizes both uniqueness and belongingness, both differences and similarities…"[1]

Diversity is required for inclusion, but it is not, by itself, sufficient. Diversity is being invited to the table. Inclusion is being asked to plan the event. To quote Jeffrey Leiter, Nicholas Solebello, and Mary Tschirhart from ASAE's 2011 *Enhancing Diversity and Inclusion in Membership Associations: An Interview Study*:

> Other [associations] distinguished between diversity as capturing the numbers of different types of individuals while inclusion was how different types of individuals were involved in the organization. In other words, they looked at the composition of their membership, board, committee leadership, or staff to judge its diversity, and looked at the culture, processes, and practices to judge inclusion.[2]

Another concept we want to address before diving into the meat of this whitepaper is determining what "counts" as diversity and inclusion.

Research demonstrates that millennials think about and define diversity in significantly different ways than members of previous generations. Baby Boomers and Gen Xers tend to think of diversity in terms of protected classes. Millennials are more focused on "cognitive diversity, or diversity of thoughts, ideas, and philosophies."[3]

In either worldview, as Joe Gerstandt points out: "We can be different from each other in many ways, but the key words here are 'from each other.'"[4] This is leading many organizations to try to think about diversity more broadly than protected class. Gerstandt emphasizes that diversity is not—or not *just*—race or gender relations, affirmative action, compliance, or sensitivity. Diversity is contextual. For instance, in a teaching association, diversity in volunteer leadership could mean recruiting K-12 teachers into leadership roles traditionally held by college professors.

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1. http://www.joegerstandt.com/2015/02/assimilation-vs-inclusion/
2. *Enhancing Diversity and Inclusion in Membership Associations: An Interview Study,* Jeffrey Leiter, Nicholas Solebello, and Mary Tschirhart, pg. 10
3. *The Radical Transformation of Diversity and Inclusion: The Millennial Influence,* Christie Smith and Stephanie Turner, pg. 5
4. http://www.joegerstandt.com/downloads/JoeGertstandt-ASAEArticle-010611.pdf?ItemNumber=168476

There is a flip side to this, though. As everyone becomes increasingly aware of all the ways that people can be different from each other, it is important to remember that not all types of diversity have an equal history or impact.

D&I advocates with more of a social justice perspective caution on expanding diversity's definition too far. 'Diversity becomes defined so broadly that using diversity programs or affirmative action as a way of remedying ongoing historical inequalities can easily become overlooked and dismissed,' cautioned Adria H. Wingfield, a university professor who studies the impact of race, class, and gender on the workplace. 'People become focused on having diversity for the sake of diversity, and it loses the power to address existing inequalities'. (White, 2015; Wilkie, 2015) [5]

It is also the case that our identities are not unitary. People are not just their race or gender or sexual orientation or religion or socioeconomic class or age. Each person is a combination of all those things and more. That's intersectionality, and every person embodies it. This compounds issues of diversity and inclusion, with perhaps the most well-known example being the double bind of race and gender discrimination that women of color face.

Intersectionality also deals with privilege, those areas in which we all experience unearned benefits just by virtue of the social groups to which we belong.[6] In our previous example, an African-American woman might be disadvantaged by her gender and race while also being advantaged by having a college degree, having been raised in a two-parent middle class home, and speaking English as her primary language. That's intersectionality.

As each association thinks through what diversity and inclusion look like in its particular environment, these are all topics to consider.

The aim of this whitepaper is not to make the business case for diversity and inclusion, which has been done convincingly elsewhere. A simple Google search returns more than 12 million results that demonstrate that increased D+I leads to increased innovation, better decision-making, faster and more creative problem-solving, better outcomes, and an improved bottom line. If thousands of *Harvard Business Review*, *Fast Company*, and *Forbes* articles and a raft of academic studies haven't convinced you of this, a 20-page whitepaper won't, either.

This whitepaper is intended for association leaders who know that D+I initiatives make good "doing the right thing" and business sense, but who struggle to align their walk with their talk by setting up processes and procedures that create the culture change required to turn beautiful D+I statements into effective action.

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5. Making Diversity and Inclusion Relevant in an Evolving Profession, Cie Armstead, pg. 7

6. http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/09/what-is-privilege/

What Makes Association D+I Efforts Unique?

Our first contention is that the association environment is more complex and challenging than the business environment with regards to D+I work. We also believe associations have the potential to have a much greater impact on the professions and industries they serve and on society as a whole.

Why is that?

Relationships.

Business D+I efforts focus on staffing and boards of directors, in part because those are the only groups with which for-profit organizations have ongoing, deep relationships. Associations also have ongoing, deep relationships with staff members and boards of directors. However, associations also have these types of relationships with members and, we argue, have a role to play in increasing diversity and supporting inclusion efforts across entire professions and industries.

How does that play out?

The issues associations face around staffing are similar to those that for-profits face. Both struggle with practical considerations around protected classes, human resources law, and compliance. Both also share the need to create a positive, creative, innovating, engaging, inspiring workplace that effectively manages the business of the organization.

It's when we move beyond staffing that things get more complex and all those terrific articles in the *MIT Sloan Management Review* are less helpful to association management. Compared to for-profits, associations have much more complex relationships with their boards of directors. Board members are volunteer leaders, rank-and-file members of the association, and members of the profession or industry the association serves.

"How can ASAE ensure that the association industry's work and conversation about D+I is evolving appropriately?"
A Conversation About ASAE's D+I Work with Cie Armstead

We recently had the opportunity to interview Cie Armstead, the 2017-2018 Chair of ASAE's Diversity + Inclusion Committee, about ASAE's ongoing efforts to track and promote D+I both within ASAE itself and within the larger association industry. We spoke with Armstead shortly after she'd assumed the chair role.

A major ongoing focus of the committee's work is to promote the key goals of ASAE's 2015-2017 D+I Strategic Plan,[7] which include

- **Resources and Recognition:** Define and implement a strategy to establish a "Center of Excellence for D+I" for the association community.
- **Reach and Relevance:** Achieve seamless integration of D+I content and diversity of content leaders into ASAE meetings and events.
- **Talent Development:** Define and implement a strategy to increase diversity in ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation within CEO pipeline and volunteer leadership pipeline that reflects the changing demographics of the U.S. and our global society.
- **Relationship Development:** Define and implement a strategy to recruit and retain a membership base that reflects the changing demographics of the U.S. and our global society.

Although the work of the current committee was just beginning when we spoke, Armstead identified a number of trends and goals the committee is considering as a focus in its coming term.

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7. http://bit.ly/2ojvOQX

In our experience, as association boards begin to diversify, they immediately run into problems with tokenism, which involves adding a "token" person (i.e., woman, racial minority, young professional) solely to create the appearance of diversity. Tokenism leads to a number of negative outcomes. The "diverse" person is often asked or expected to represent their entire group. That is, the lone Asian-American board member is, implicitly or explicitly, tasked with representing the perspective of all Asian-American members of the association despite the fact that it's highly unlikely that Asian-American members are a monolithic group that all face identical challenges or wish to achieve the same ends, regardless of what their connection to the industry is or what stage their career is in.

Tokenism can also lead to territoriality. The one young professional board member will notice pretty quickly that he's the only young professional in the room. If that continues to be the case, he'll likely conclude that there is only room for one young professional at the table. And that creates a strong disincentive for him or anyone else to sponsor other young professionals for leadership roles.

Tokenism is also, obviously, not true diversity and does not bring with it all the business benefits of diverse boards (to repeat: better decision-making, better problem-solving, better outcomes, and an improved bottom line). Thus, tokenism actively discourages continuing efforts at diversity and inclusion. "Well, we added one woman to our board and nothing changed," association leaders are apt to rationalize, "so why should we continue to bother with this diversity stuff?"

One was the lack of reliable statistics to answer questions like

- How many associations have a formal D+I statement?
- How many associations have staff positions dedicated to D+I?
- How many associations have and enforce a meeting harassment policy?

The D+I committee is in discussions with the ASAE Research Committee and the ASAE Foundation about how the Foundation might access or collect this type of information.

Some of the trends the committee is tracking include

- Increasing the diversity of people who are on the platform (i.e., speakers at ASAE meetings and events).
- Increasing the diversity of candidates who are in the "CEO pipeline," which involves leadership and talent development. One particular area of inquiry has to do with association size. There's a perception that smaller associations are more likely to promote people from underrepresented groups into the C-suite. Is that accurate, and if so, why is that the case?
- Tracking associations with dedicated D+I staff. Are those numbers increasing, flat, or decreasing, and what does that mean?
- Dimensions of diversity. How does the association industry broaden its definition of diversity without losing sight of the unfinished business with traditionally excluded groups?
- Understandings of diversity and inclusion are constantly evolving. How can ASAE ensure that the association industry's work and conversation about D+I are evolving appropriately?

For more information about ASAE's D+I efforts and the work of the D+I Committee, visit ***https://www.asaecenter.org/about-us/diversity-and-inclusion***.

Boards of directors that have moved past tokenism into genuine diversity aren't out of the woods, though. This is where inclusion comes into play. Many boards are diverse without being inclusive. The board photo may look like a Benetton ad, but the board culture is still very traditional: "Diverse" people are welcome as long as they dress, wear their hair, speak, and behave in certain ways. The term for this is "covering," which happens when people cover parts of their authentic identities in order to fit in to the dominant culture.[8]

A good example of covering in practice, if not by name, and one that many people are familiar with, is code-switching. According to a 2013 web post introducing the NPR CodeSwitch Podcast, code-switching plays out this way:

> So you're at work one day and you're talking to your colleagues in that professional, polite, kind of buttoned-up voice that people use when they're doing professional work stuff.
>
> Your mom or your friend or your partner calls on the phone and you answer. And without thinking, you start talking to them in an entirely different voice — still distinctly *your voice*, but a certain kind of *your voice* less suited for the office. You drop the g's at the end of your verbs. Your previously undetectable accent — your easy Southern drawl or your sing-songy Caribbean lilt or your Spanish-inflected vowels or your New Yawker — is suddenly turned way, way up. You rush your mom or whomever off the phone in some less formal syntax ("Yo, I'mma holler at you later,"), hang up and get back to work.
>
> Then you look up and you see your co-workers looking at you and wondering who the hell you'd morphed into for the last few minutes. That right there? That's what it means to code-switch.[9]

The concept of code-switching originated in linguistics to describe people who are multilingual changing languages depending on whom they're talking to. To a certain degree, we all code switch. You probably don't talk to your boss—or your board chair—the same way you talk to your partner, basketball or softball teammates, kid, or best friend. But being compelled to constantly monitor the way one is expressing oneself constrains what one says and how one thinks, which limits creativity. When board members have to code switch or practice other ways of covering to belong, the association misses the benefits of those directors bringing their whole selves to the organization.[10]

The Association for Women in Science (AWIS) shows how one association has successfully navigated the transition from a largely homogenous board of directors to one that is truly inclusive. AWIS's experience, described in a case study later in this whitepaper, also highlights the tactical and strategic benefits that accrue from making honest D+I efforts.

When it comes to members, a major D+I issue many associations face is meeting harassment. Association conferences and other events can be fraught situations. Bringing large groups together in semi-professional, semi-social situations sets the stage for potential bad conduct. Participation in conferences is often critical to professional advancement, but also provides ample opportunity for ill-intentioned people to harass other attendees, most frequently (but not always) based on their race/ethnicity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.

This is an area where associations are frequently guilty of adopting the ostrich mentality of "No one's complaining, so we must not have any problems." If your association, as is common in many industries, is struggling to attract and retain women, LGBTQ people, and racial and ethnic minorities, you may want to ask yourself if a threatening meeting environment is contributing to attrition among those groups.

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8. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/15/magazine/the-pressure-to-cover.html

9. http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/04/08/176064688/how-code-switching-explains-the-world

10. http://www.joegerstandt.com/2009/12/the-whole-truth/

As you'll see in the story of the Entomological Society of America (ESA), meeting harassment is a common problem, but there are recognized good practices for reducing instances of harassment and dealing with them appropriately when they do occur.

Associations also contend with the fact that membership is a privilege rather than a right. Members earn the privilege of joining by dint of their training, education, employment, identification with the profession or industry, and, of course, paying membership fees. Historically, when women and racial and ethnic minorities first entered different professions, they weren't always welcomed or accorded the privilege of membership in professional associations. This led to the establishment of "interest group" associations, many of which continue today. A quick Google search returned a list of 98 organizations of or for women, African-Americans, Hispanics, and LGBTQ people in various professions. Until associations are willing to acknowledge this aspect of their history, achieving full inclusion among members may prove elusive.

Associations also have a role to play in increasing D+I throughout the professions and industries they serve beyond just those practitioners who've chosen to be members. Scientific societies in particular have been leading the way on the issue of diversifying their professions, in part because we generally need more scientists, and as our population grows more diverse, it's obvious that they can't all be white men. This same observation holds true for pretty much every industry you can name.

A Note on the Case Studies

The alert reader will notice that all the case studies presented in this paper are from scientific societies. This is, in part, because your authors are personally and professionally familiar with that world. However, we did issue an open call for stories and still found ourselves profiling three science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) associations.

One likely reason for this is that STEM associations have been working on D+I for a relatively long time. That work started in the early 1970s as the realization that ensuring diversity was important for ensuring a robust workforce coincided with a federal government focus, primarily through Title IX, on women in education and science. What began as a push for gender equity quickly spread to other topics in D+I.

Since that time, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine have produced a plethora of reports on diversity and inclusion. Large research funding sources, including the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, have established divisions, offices, and programs to address D+I. And, under President Barack Obama, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy issued *Raising the Floor: Sharing What Works in Workplace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.*[11]

Although Spark collaborative whitepapers generally present stories from a variety of association types, it may be that the STEM associations are leading the way on D+I for our industry.

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11. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/11/28/raising-floor-sharing-what-works-workplace-diversity-equity-and-inclusion

Government agencies like the National Science Foundation and nonprofits like the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation have provided some of the funding for D+I work in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) world, primarily by asking, "What is the unique role that we as a society can play to increase D+I in our area of science that universities, research institutions, and research funders can't or won't?" We think this is an important question for all professions to consider.

The Geological Society of America's (GSA) story illustrates one way an association is responding to the dual imperatives to recruit more people into the field and to increase the diversity of those recruits. The case study presented later highlights where the GSA experienced challenges and how it is meeting those challenges on the way to creating a geological sciences profession that is more representative of society as a whole.

Continuum of Gender-Based Harassment and Bullying

Not Serious		Serious		Extremely Serious	
Mutually respectful, safe interactions.	**Mutually flirtatious, playful interactions.**	**Nonmutual, unwanted, inappropriate** conversation, comments, or attempts at humor. Objectifying looks, leering, staring.	**Verbal harassment** such as name-calling, comments on appearance, sexually objectifying comments, and obscene language, gestures, or noises.	**Physical harassment** such as unwanted touching, "accidental" brushing against or rubbing, and pinning, isolating, or blocking the target's path of travel.	**Criminal harassment** such as groping, grabbing, hitting, exposing genitals, masturbating, stalking, assault, or rape.
No intervention needed.	No intervention needed.	1. Interrupt the perpetrator. 2. Name the behavior, label it, and ask the perpetrator to stop. 3. Provide needed education or training on appropriate conduct.	1. Assess the situation and make sure the target is safe. 2. Name the behavior, label it, and insist that the perpetrator stop. 3. Report the behavior.	1. Assess the situation and make sure the target is safe. 2. Name the behavior, label it, and insist that the perpetrator stop. 3. Report the behavior.	1. Assess the situation and make sure the target is safe. 2. Determine if there is a general threat to safety and call security or police if there is. 3. Report the behavior.

Adapted from Joan Trabachnik, *Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Violence Prevention.*[12]

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12. http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications/engaging-bystanders-sexual-violence-prevention

The solution to all the issues we've raised above seems simple: Create a D+I program, train everyone, and, voilà, problem solved!

Unfortunately, it's not that easy.

Why not?

Programs tend not to work the way they're designed or intended to, and training frequently backfires, producing outcomes that are the exact opposite of the ones intended.

Diversity programs are launched with good intentions. Someone—the CEO, board members, other volunteer leaders, senior staff—notices a problem. Maybe they read an article about the linear relationship between increased diversity and improved financial performance.[13] Maybe they notice that while the industry the association serves is getting more diverse as Millennials enter and Baby Boomers retire,[14] association leadership doesn't reflect that. Maybe they see a need to diversify the profession as a whole in order to successfully recruit young people in the first place, as GSA did. Maybe they're motivated by "doing the right thing."

What happens next?

The association forms a diversity committee and recruits underrepresented people to serve on it. That committee creates a D+I statement that talks about valuing diversity and promoting access. The D+I statement is reviewed and approved by the board of directors. The association allocates funds for event travel scholarships and a minority awards program, and a handful of young professionals from underrepresented groups are able to attend the annual meeting.

Five years later, the demographic makeup of the membership and the larger profession has not really changed. The board of directors is still mostly white men, the "diverse" people are all segregated into the diversity committee, and minorities win the minority awards but not the "regular" association awards.

What went wrong?

Beautiful statements and a handful of ghettoized programs don't fundamentally change behavior.

We've all seen this problem with other unrealized strategic organizational goals, and it's often because we've failed to answer the four key questions necessary for strategic success:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to go?
3. How will we get there?
4. How will we know if we've arrived?

That requires measurement. You have to gather and analyze data to know where you are now. You have to set a concrete goal to know where you want to go. You need a detailed, specific plan to get there. And you need to gather and analyze data again to know whether you achieved your goal.

Now is when you ask, "Wait. Are we talking about quotas here?"

And this is where we answer, "Well, yes."

Understand that "We value diversity" is not actionable. "We will create a leadership development program and fund ten people from underrepresented groups to participate in it in the first year increasing that to 20 people participating by year five" is.

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13. http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters
14. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-113.html

Likewise, "We promote access" is not actionable. "This year, we will require that half of the breakout sessions at our conference include at least one speaker from underrepresented groups, increasing to 80% of sessions by year five" is.

By year five, you will know definitively whether you have 20 people in your leadership program and whether 80% of your breakout sessions include at least one speaker from an underrepresented group.

There's a deeper problem, too, and it concerns diversity training. If diversity training is not required, the only people likely to attend will be those who are already "on the bus." That is, generally speaking, your diversity trainer will merely preach to the choir of the already converted.

On the other hand, when diversity training is required, the program often has an effect that is the reverse of the one intended. Consider this:

> Firms have long relied on diversity training to reduce bias on the job, hiring tests and performance ratings to limit it in recruitment and promotions, and grievance systems to give employees a way to challenge managers. Those tools are designed to preempt lawsuits by policing managers' thoughts and actions. Yet laboratory studies show that this kind of force-feeding can activate bias rather than stamp it out. As social scientists have found, people often rebel against rules to assert their autonomy. Try to coerce me to do X, Y, or Z, and I'll do the opposite just to prove that I'm my own person.[15]

Training, in short, often doesn't work. Participants can learn the "right" answers, but they quickly forget them and, in fact, can find their biases reinforced by what they hear in the training. This is similar to the process by which debunking lies backfires and reinforces false beliefs in people's minds: People remember the broad outlines of the topic, but not the specifics and context. The forced aspect of diversity training compounds that by bringing out the misanthropic teenager in trainees, the inner child who yells, "You're not the boss of me!"

It's not that statements and committees and programs and training aren't important. They are. It's just that, by themselves, they aren't sufficient. A big part of the reason is something called implicit bias.

According to the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University,

> Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.[16]

Saying that someone has implicit bias is not an insult. In fact, every single person has implicit bias. As a recent *New York Times* article points out, this even has a useful function: "Implicit bias is the mind's way of making uncontrolled and automatic associations between two concepts very quickly. In many forms, implicit bias is a healthy human adaptation—it's among the mental tools that help you mindlessly navigate your commute each morning."[17]

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15. https://hbr.org/2016/07/why-diversity-programs-fail
16. http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/
17. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/07/upshot/were-all-a-little-biased-even-if-we-dont-know-it.html

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www.smartsconsulting.com

Implicit biases, then, are part of the automatic processing systems in our brains that allow humans to function in a complex world without being constantly baffled or overwhelmed. But how does implicit bias work? According to the Kirwan Institute:

- Implicit biases are pervasive. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.

- Implicit and explicit biases are related but distinct mental constructs. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.

- The implicit associations we hold do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.

- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that favor our own ingroup, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.

- Implicit biases are malleable. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.[18]

In other words, some implicit biases are directly counter to an individual's conscious, declared beliefs and may even be against one's own identity groups.[19]

Before you say, "Not me! I have no implicit bias!" we urge you to visit Harvard University's Project Implicit website[20] and take one of their implicit bias tests. Acknowledging your implicit biases does not mean that you're a racist or a sexist or any other -ist; it means you're human.

One of the biggest barriers standing in the way of inclusion is the human mind. It has evolved to seek out the familiar. Anything new and different, anything that doesn't look or sound like what one already knows, is perceived by the most primitive parts of the brain as a threat. Similarly, anything that challenges deeply held beliefs triggers a response in the brain's fight-or-flight circuits. Given that most of us were raised in a culture in which straight (or closeted) white men were in charge and everyone else was regarded as "other," inclusion of people from underrepresented groups such as women, people of color, and LGBTQ people can trigger strong, unconscious reactions even from members of those very groups.[21]

This doesn't, however, let anyone off the hook. Implicit bias is about the first reaction or instinct, which is not under conscious control. What someone chooses to do in response to that first thought is under conscious control. And that's what matters in combatting bias—the second, conscious thought and the actions that spring from it.

As Joe Gerstandt puts it:

> We do judge, and we do make assumptions and this is as natural and automatic as our heart beat. Being confused about this makes it really easy to hide behind our good intentions and do nothing.
>
> We are not responsible for our first thought, but we are responsible for our second thought and our first action. A lot of our personal power can be found in that space between our first and second thought.
>
> **What are you doing with your power?**[22] *(emphasis in the original)*

Again, we're not saying that it's futile to craft a D+I statement or provide training, although you should think carefully about the kind of training you provide and how you frame it. We're just pointing out that those things are about your talk. What do you need to do to align your walk?

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18. http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/

19. https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/background/faqs.html#faq19

20. https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/

21. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-happens-to-the-brain-during-cognitive-dissonance1/

22. http://www.joegerstandt.com/2015/03/first-second/

The good news is that individuals and organizations have the ability to consciously create change in themselves and in their surroundings, and those better, conscious choices can gradually become familiar, deeply held beliefs. In other words, people can change their brains deliberately. They can make the choice to respond, rather than merely react, to differences that make them uncomfortable, provided, of course, they are willing to be uncomfortable and work through that discomfort.

For this to happen, the work of D+I has to occur at several different levels. If you are convinced that your association could be doing more and better work on D+I, where do you begin?

The first step is to undertake the work individuals must do on themselves.

Start with the implicit biases all people hold and make an ongoing personal commitment to uncovering your own implicit biases and how they express themselves in your day-to-day life. Harvard University's Project Implicit, mentioned above, is an outstanding resource for learning how to recognize implicit biases when they show up in your thoughts, beliefs, behaviors, and interactions.

Commit to counteracting implicit biases with your second thought and first action whenever possible. Make conscious decisions about what you want to do differently. Enlist others to help you recognize how your biases express themselves while remaining aware that educating yourself about how to change them is your job. Willingly choose to participate in anti-bias training, and learn how to be an ally, and maybe even an advocate for change.

If you haven't already, make an effort to become familiar with the concept of privilege and to understand where you do and don't have it. Privilege—or lack of privilege—accrues from all sorts of things like race, gender identity, social or economic class, level of education, ability/disability, religion, sexual orientation, and one's ability to "pass" as a member of a privileged group. Notice how privilege affects you every day, which can be difficult because it's hard to step outside the way you experience the world to see how people who are not like you experience it. Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*[23] provides a useful list of ways to see past the blinders of one's own experiences.

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23. https://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack

Becoming an Ally: Creating Better Connections Across Difference

Jessica Pettitt, Not Your Typical Diversity Educator, http://goodenoughnow.com

Before we can become allies, we have to answer the questions, "What is an ally?" and "How does being an ally relate to and differ from being an advocate or an agent?" According to Toby Jenkins, Ph.D., assistant professor at George Mason University:

- **An ally** supports the struggles of a historically underrepresented group even though she is not personally a member of that group.

- **An advocate** gives voice to the need for change. Serving as an advocate involves taking a public stand and speaking out for an oppressed group which one may or may not be a member of.

- **An agent** takes action from a position of power or privilege to create societal change for an oppressed group.[24]

Because our own lived experiences and personal identities inform how we show up on a daily basis, we may be more comfortable providing support for, speaking up about, or taking action around certain injustices while others remain too personal or generate real or perceived fear, danger, or risk. And that's OK. Being an ally, advocate, or agent starts with developing self-awareness of our own advantages and the "tables" we're already sitting at, where we have the ability to create change. Sometimes, it's appropriate to stand up. At other times, we need to step back. There are even times where we all need someone to support us.

Where do we start?

Step One: Do Self Work

- Feeling good about your own social group membership and being comfortable and proud of your own identity.

- Taking responsibility for learning about your own heritage, culture, and experiences in society and the cultures and experiences of oppressed groups.

- Learning how oppression works in everyday life.

- Listening to and respecting the perspectives and experiences of members of oppressed groups.

- Acknowledging unearned privileges that were received as a result of your status in society and working to earn these privileges for oppressed groups.

- Recognizing that unlearning oppressive beliefs is a lifelong process.

- Being willing to take risks and try new behaviors.

- Acting in spite of your own fear and/or the resistance of others.

- Being willing to be confronted about your own behavior and to consider changing it.

- Committing yourself to take action against social injustice in settings and situations where you have influence.

- Understanding the connections among all forms of social injustice.

- Believing you can make a difference by acting and speaking out against social injustice.

- Knowing how to cultivate support from other allies.

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24. http://iamsocialjustice.com/images/A_Seat_At_The_Table.pdf

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(Jessica Pettitt continued.)

Step Two: Engage in Advocacy and Agency

- Learn from someone who is different from you or read books or articles by or about people who are different from you.

- Don't deny your privileges; rather, seek to understand where you do and don't have privilege and to acknowledge the advantages bestowed upon you based on your social group memberships.

- Don't pity people. Empathize rather than sympathizing.

- Don't get stuck feeling guilty for oppression in the past.

- Take ownership of your own conscious and unconscious participation in oppression now. The past is not your fault, but the present and future are your responsibility.

- Speak from your own experience, not someone else's. Don't try to represent—or expect someone else to represent—an entire social group.

- Recognize that no one form of oppression is more significant than another. As Audre Lourde wrote, "There is no hierarchy of oppressions."

- Be kind, including to yourself. This is a process that will never be 100 percent complete, and that's OK.

- Be willing to take risks.

- Do the best you can with what you have at least some of the time.

- Walk your talk.

As the Reverend Dr. Jamie Washington, president of the Washington Consulting Group and co-founder of the Social Justice Training Institute, is fond of remarking, "To truly talk about inclusion, we must first look at who we are excluding." For associations to matter to the communities they serve, association leaders have to start with understanding themselves and how they "show up." Doing that makes it possible to create better connections across differences.

As you develop your ability to notice privilege, think about ways you can use your privilege to help other people. For example, if you're white, speak up the next time someone makes a racist joke. Instead of responding with uncomfortable laughter or stone-faced silence, tell the person you don't want to hear that kind of joke even if there are no people of color present.

Once you become aware of your implicit biases and the ways privilege exists and shapes your daily life, it's common to feel guilty. Don't. You didn't specifically seek out your privilege. You only have it because of the social, economic, and political system you were born into. You didn't actively acquire your implicit biases, either, and having biases is not a personal failure of character or will. The real question is, "Now that I know, what will I do?" That is, how will you move from unconscious reaction to conscious responsibility? How will you use your privileges to help others and, at the same time, let them use theirs to help you in areas where you lack privilege?

The next step is to consider your association as a workplace.

Ask yourself what real inclusion would look and feel like at your association. What would your association be like if everyone brought all of themselves to work, no covering or code-switching required? Using the opening story of this whitepaper as an example, work with your team to write your association's vision of genuine inclusion. Write it in the present tense as if it were already true. Then read it regularly until you are completely familiar with the details.

Pretty soon you'll begin to notice ways in which your workplace could be more inclusive by not just inviting everyone to the table, but asking them to help plan the party. While you're writing your D+I vision, questions like the following will probably occur to you, and you should seek to answer them in your vision statement.

Inclusion: Seek Clarity First

Joe Gerstandt, Speaker, Author, Advisor, http://www.joegerstandt.com

Within only the past few years, the concept of "inclusion" has gone from relative obscurity to becoming as ubiquitous in the workplace as "innovation," "engagement," or "strategy." Associations craft powerful, even poetic statements of commitment to diversity and inclusion for their websites and annual reports. Leaders assert that inclusion is a top priority and brag about how inclusive their associations are.

Actual efforts towards inclusion are another matter. They often consist of little more than hanging up the appropriate monthly awareness poster, lining up an ethnic food festival around the holidays, and reviewing harassment policies during onboarding.

While the *idea* of inclusion has become very popular, it remains abstract, involving similarly vague notions of "respect" and "tolerance," rather than a concrete set of everyday practices.

So much rhetorical effort for such little real progress.

Maybe your association is the exception, but experience tells me that if I walk in your front door tomorrow morning and ask 10 random staff members what inclusion is, why it is valuable, and how your organization pursues that value, I will get 10 different answers. And most of the answers will not make any sense.

Start there. If your stakeholders can use the word "inclusion" and actually all be talking about the same thing, you're on the right track. Focus less on beautiful, bold statements of commitment and more on concise, clear, actionable language. While there will always be some who resist diversity and inclusion efforts, there is also an entire ocean of people who would eagerly support your inclusion work if only they knew what you were talking about. Make it easy for them.

Before rushing to proclaim your inclusiveness to the world, spend some time wrestling with these questions:

- What is inclusion?
- What does it mean to be included?
- How do I know when I am or am not fully included?
- Included in what?
- Who are we including?
- Why is inclusion valuable to me and us?

Powerful statements of commitment to diversity and inclusion matter. But without a clear understanding of what we mean when we say "diversity" or "inclusion," widespread agreement on how that will affect our daily actions, and a shared sense of responsibility for taking those actions, such statements are ultimately meaningless.

Why does everyone have to be in the same place at the same time to be considered to be "working?"
Applying Industrial Age rules to knowledge work is nonsensical and reduces productivity, employee engagement, and retention of your best employees. Even turn-of-the-21st-century-era flextime, work-at-home, and parental leave policies can foil efforts to create an inclusive workplace, as those who take advantage of such policies are punished with reduced responsibilities and limited opportunities for advancement because they're considered to be less committed to their jobs.[25]

The most forward-thinking, innovative workplaces are dispensing with fixed work hours, and even physical office space, in favor of work arrangements that better fit employees' lives. The best-known of these approaches is the Results-Only Work Environment described by Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson in *Why Work Sucks and How to*

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25. https://hbr.org/2017/02/everyone-likes-flex-time-but-we-punish-women-who-use-it

Fix It. While this way of working requires rethinking how work is managed, how results are defined and measured, and how employees are evaluated, it leads to increased productivity, satisfaction, and retention. It also removes the stigma of taking advantage of "special" arrangements that stymies careers.

Why is our D+I officer the only person of color in a leadership position while all other minority staff members are relegated to junior or entry-level positions?
Too often, organizations are wedded to the belief that their pathways to leadership are clear and open to all, and that the best performers will always rise to the top. Those beliefs may be directly preventing real inclusion among those in leadership. Writing for *The Atlantic*, sociologist Marianne Cooper highlights research showing that "meritocracy can exacerbate inequality—because being committed to meritocratic principles makes people think that they actually are making correct evaluations and behaving fairly. Organizations that emphasize meritocratic ideals serve to reinforce an employee's belief that they are impartial, which creates the exact conditions under which implicit and explicit biases are unleashed."[26]

Having a formal program of mentorship and sponsorship helps counteract this. It's important to note that mentorship and sponsorship are complementary but not the same. Mentors act as sounding boards, providing guidance for their protégé. Sponsorship is more active and potentially more impactful. Sponsors identify, groom, and actively promote more junior people for positions of leadership.[27] When you combine the two, mentorship provides learning and development opportunities, and sponsorship neutralizes the negative consequences that can result when employees, particularly those from underrepresented groups, self-promote.

It's also important to examine your performance evaluation process and criteria for promotion for bias. Your review process should be structured to counteract bias by requiring concrete evidence of achievement from all candidates and by separating personality issues from skills evaluations. Specific tools to accomplish these goals are available at *biasinterrupters.org*.

Why do the same people keep opting out of our team-building retreats and social events?
What do employees need to be able to do to participate in team-building exercises, workplace social events, or charity fundraising efforts? Too often, the choice of activities assumes a level of physical ability that some employees may not have. Claiming that this doesn't matter because an activity is optional or voluntary doesn't negate the exclusion inherent in the choice. Keep in mind, too, that many disabilities that are invisible in the workplace may prevent participation in nonwork activities.

Instead of writing off people who avoid retreats and outings, schedule nonwork activities in which all employees can participate. Be aware of the cultural context of "fun" events as well; some faiths prohibit the celebration of birthdays, for example. Schedule social events for times other than the end of the business day so employees with child or pet care responsibilities can attend without shirking other commitments.

26. https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/12/meritocracy/418074/

27. https://www.geteverwise.com/career-success/mentorship-and-sponsorship-why-both-are-crucial-for-womens-success/

Why don't women speak up more during staff meetings?
In their book *What Works for Women at Work*, Joan Williams and Rachel Dempsey identify something called "tightrope bias." The term references the tightrope women need to walk in order to be seen as assertive enough without being aggressive. One element of this is that in meetings, women tend to get interrupted, talked over, and ignored far more frequently than men, particularly when bringing up ideas. What happens frequently is that a woman shares her idea in a meeting, and it is ignored when she shares it only to be considered and discussed when a man restates it a few minutes later. The tightrope women walk spans the horns of the dilemma between saying, "Hey, that was my idea!" and being viewed as a bitch on one end and saying nothing, being viewed as a doormat, and not getting credit for the idea on the other end.

As employees advance into management positions, inclusive meeting facilitation is one of the skills association managers should be assessing. If an otherwise excellent candidate for promotion is lacking in this skill, offer the person training.

Other places implicit biases tend to surface include:

- Job descriptions and advertisements[28]

- Employee evaluations and the implicit acceptance of the "ideal worker" stereotype

- How, and by whom, decisions are made regarding flextime, telecommuting, dress codes, and paid time off

- Who sets meeting agendas and who takes the notes

- Who leads teams and how leaders are chosen

As you recognize barriers to inclusion in your workplace, start conversations about those barriers and find ways to introduce changes—big or small—that will bring your reality more in line with your vision. Pay attention to unspoken rules of behavior, appearance, or demeanor that may reinforce stereotypes or require people to cover to fit in. Notice what sorts of behaviors by which individuals are rewarded or punished and think about how those align with or contradict that vision of real inclusion we asked you to create.[29]

The next layer of inclusion concerns your volunteer leadership.

The same implicit biases that create issues in the association workplace can also impact the advancement and selection of volunteer leaders. Cognitive dissonance can become particularly problematic here. In professions traditionally dominated by men, putting the concept of "leader" together with "woman" can trigger momentary confusion. Similarly, in professions traditionally dominated by white people, joining the concepts of "leader" and "person of color" can trigger momentary confusion. Overcoming cognitive dissonance takes conscious, deliberate effort that starts with diversifying the pool of volunteer leader candidates. As demonstrated by AWIS, this may require changing the association's processes for identifying, developing, and electing leaders.

While you're doing this, beware of tokenism, particularly early in the process. Someone is going to have to be the first woman, person of color, LGBTQ person, person with a disability, or whomever to lead a committee or serve on your board of directors. That pioneer shouldn't be the last or only. Treat the person as an individual who has her own perspective rather than as "The Voice of [Her Group]." Also, don't expect him to cover to fit in by explicitly or tacitly requiring him to look, sound, and act just like your more-traditional volunteer leaders.

Implementing targeted programs like ASAE's DELP initiative for mentoring and sponsoring future leaders from underrepresented groups is one way associations have successfully moved to more inclusive leadership.

28. https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=gendered-wording-in-job-adverts.pdf&site=7

29. https://hbr.org/2016/07/why-diversity-programs-fail

"We Are Going to Make Major Strides in the Association Industry"
ASAE's Diversity Executive Leadership Program

First launched in 2000, ASAE's Diversity Executive Leadership Program (DELP) "seeks to advance the careers of program scholars, help associations develop motivated leaders to fuel organizational success, and enhance the effectiveness of the wider association community." As stated on the DELP website, the goals are

- To provide individuals from identified under-represented groups in the association community (i.e., people of color, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender people, people with disabilities) with support, access, and opportunities for leadership.

- To provide the association community with increased access to a diverse pool of talented leaders.[30]

We recently interviewed a DELP scholar-mentor team about their experiences. Shawn Boynes, CAE, executive director of the American Association of Anatomists (AAA), was a 2008-2009 DELP scholar and now mentors other scholars in the program. Desirée Knight, CMP, director of education and meetings for the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association, is a scholar in the 2016-2018 class.

For Knight, it all started with a familiarization trip in 2008 during which she met a woman who was planning to apply to DELP. "I knew then that this was something I wanted to be a part of," she said. Although it took a few years, she eventually succeeded in getting leadership at her association to support her application. "I was worried I didn't have the skillset they were looking for to be a scholar, but I knew I had the drive to learn everything DELP could teach me."

For Boynes, after having been a DELP scholar during a "critical point" in his career, becoming a DELP mentor was a natural fit. He said, "DELP changed my life, by providing access to people who could support me because they'd experienced similar professional challenges to what I was facing and would face. I wanted to give back."

Both agreed that DELP has been an extremely positive experience. Boynes noted, "Thanks to DELP, when I landed my first executive director position at the AAA, I already had my 'kitchen cabinet' of other CEOs who could advise me."

Knight said, "DELP connects you to people and experiences you otherwise wouldn't have had access to. I'm pretty well-known in the meeting planning industry, but DELP has made me reach beyond my comfort zone to network with people outside the meetings industry, which has developed my ability to think strategically."

DELP's benefits extend beyond the scholars and mentors who participate directly, reaching the association industry as a whole. As Boynes said, "DELP is a great example of what inclusion looks like. It positions underrepresented groups—people of color, LGBT people, people with disabilities—to be on the ASAE board of directors, to serve as committee chairs, to become ASAE Fellows, and to be on the platform as event speakers. The program connects the 'D' to the 'I' in diversity and inclusion. DELP shows what can happen when there is a real focus on inclusion."

Knight agreed, saying, "DELP demonstrates that ASAE invites everyone to participate, and that they're not just saying it. They mean it."

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30. https://www.asaecenter.org/programs/professional-development/diversity-executive-leadership-program

(ASAE continued)

For those considering the DELP program, both cautioned that potential scholars need to think carefully about not just what they'll get out of the program, but also what they plan to contribute. As Boynes pointed out, "ASAE makes opportunities available, but you have to rise to the occasion to take advantage of them."

Knight added, "You also have to be willing to take what you learn and pass it on to someone else, otherwise you are missing the most important part of the program: the ability to help the next scholar."

Reflecting on her experiences in the program, Knight concluded, "My DELP family makes my heart lighter. I'm part of something extremely important. We are going to make major strides in the association industry."

Since its inception, more than 170 DELP scholars, including 31 CEOs, have participated in the program. Information about applying can be found at *https://www.asaecenter.org/programs/professional-development/diversity-executive-leadership-program*.

Diversity in association members is, of course, a prerequisite for diversity in association leadership.

Look for ways to make inclusion a priority in all your interactions with members. Obviously, your conferences and other in-person events are a major source of interactions with members and provide rich opportunities to increase your association's inclusiveness.

Start with examining how you select the dates and locations for meetings and other events. Pay attention to conflicts with all major religious holidays, not just Christian ones. Choose meeting venues that provide disability accommodations that go beyond the minimum of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Think about how your choice of geographic location does or does not mesh with your official statement on D+I. ASAE is an exemplar in this area, as demonstrated by its work in actively lobbying against discriminatory "bathroom bills" in desirable meeting locations.[31]

Details matter. The images and themes of your marketing materials, the availability of gender-neutral restrooms, the provision of food choices that accommodate the needs of people with allergies or who observe other dietary restrictions, and holding social and networking events that don't involve alcohol all contribute to whether a prospective association event attendee feels safe and included. As illustrated in the ESA case study, your association also needs a code of conduct that clearly defines acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and that is both widely publicized and consistently enforced. For more on this topic, see Sherry A. Marts' recently released *Open Secrets and Missing Stairs: Sexual and Gender–Based Harassment at Scientific Meetings*.[32]

31. http://associationsnow.com/2017/01/asae-joins-business-hospitality-groups-oppose-texas-bathroom-bill/
32. http://bit.ly/osmspdf

Your awards program is another area in which you can consciously work to increase inclusion within your membership. Providing scholarships and other means of financial support for students and young professionals from underrepresented groups helps attract, reward, and retain talent in the profession. The GSA case study demonstrates one way to successfully use scholarships and travel awards to reach out to underrepresented young professionals as part of your larger D+I strategy.

Pay attention, too, to who receives which awards. Obviously your association's reserved-category awards for students, young professionals, women, people of color, and other groups are going to go to people in those categories. But what about your non-reserved awards? Are all the excellence in education award winners women and all the leadership award winners men? Are all the excellence in mentoring award winners people of color and all the lifetime achievement winners white people? Also think through how nomination processes work and be aware that many groups are, for cultural reasons, uncomfortable with self-nomination.

Finally, there's the profession or industry you serve.

Addressing all the barriers to inclusion in your profession is a tall order. Frankly, you can't tackle it alone. One way to respond is building coalitions of organizations. Associations can convene a variety of players in the professions and industries they serve to share experiences, data, and information on what has been tried, what has and hasn't worked, and ideas for future efforts. Partners can also act as catalysts for inclusion throughout the profession or industry as a whole.

Using Q-Storming® to Create More Inclusive Meetings
Joan Eisenstodt, Eisenstodt Associates, LLC
http://eisenstodt.com

Q-Storming®, or question thinking, is "based on the premise that 'every question missed is a crisis waiting to happen.'" Similar to brainstorming, this more-formal process asks participants to focus on discovering questions, which opens up thinking, rather than on coming to answers, which tends to shut down conversations too quickly and blocks people from reaching truly novel solutions.[33]

If you want to host an inclusive meeting—and research by the Meeting Professionals International Foundation demonstrates that, for bottom line reasons, you do[34]—you need to ask some Q-Storming®-style questions during your planning and execution process. Examples follow.

Is the destination under consideration inclusive?

- Has the city, state, or country passed or are they considering exclusionary laws like North Carolina's anti-LGBT HB2 or Arizona's SB 1070, the "Papers Please" law? Will that prevent people who want to attend from attending?

- How accessible is the destination? Does the city you are considering have an office that monitors Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, as Boston does? Are public transportation and cabs accessible for attendees with disabilities, including those who use mobility devices?

33. http://inquiryinstitute.com/resources/q-storming/
34. http://www.mpiweb.org/CMS/uploadedFiles/Advocacy/mmw2.pdf

(Eisenstodt continued)

What are the hotel and convention center policies and practices?

- Is the facility genuinely accessible? You can find out more about what's involved and how you can determine that at this site maintained by the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division: *http://www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm*.

- How many meeting rooms, restrooms, or other rooms open to the public have no doors or push-panel door openers for ease of access?

- What are the venue's policies about hiring and supporting people with disabilities? People of different faiths?

- How will the venue accommodate deaf attendees? Do at least some staff members know American Sign Language?

- Are menus and other print materials available in Braille?

How will you market your event?

- What images and language will you use? Are those images and language inclusive of all potential participants? Do they reflect those you hope to attract or only your usual audience?

- Is your event website accessible? To find out more about what's involved in that, go to *https://www. w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility*.

- Are the colors you've chosen appropriate for all audiences, including your international participants?

- Is information about expected attire clear?

- Do you have a meeting harassment policy? Are attendees and potential attendees informed of it?

How will you select and prepare your speakers, entertainers, activities, and spaces?

- Do your speakers, learning facilitators, and entertainers reflect both your current audience and those you want to attract? Are the people who will be on the platform diverse? Do you have different age groups, genders, races/ethnicities, religious traditions, and people of different abilities and viewpoints represented?

- How will you educate your speakers and entertainers about your audience to ensure that they will address or play to people in ways that include everyone?

- Are your planned activities accessible to and appropriate for all?

- How will you ensure that your room setups, lighting, and audiovisual presentations are audience-centric? Paul Radde's *Seating Matters* is a helpful guide to audience-centric room setups.

What are people going to eat and drink?

- How do you capture information about and accommodate attendees' dietary needs? Beyond allergies or medical restrictions, ask about kosher, halal, and other food needs related to religious practices, particularly for meetings scheduled around religious holidays.

- Are venue staffers trained appropriately in how to avoid cross-contamination of preparation and serving pieces (e.g., separating meats and cheeses for attendees who keep kosher)?

- If your meeting is over Ramadan or another period of religious fasting, how will you accommodate attendees' related needs?

Obviously, this list is far from comprehensive. Rather, it's designed to help you start Q-storming® about the kinds of issues you need to address and conversations you need to have in order to make your meetings truly inclusive for all.

We encourage you to think as broadly as possible when considering partners for this work. Reach out to the institutions and groups that train people entering your profession, employers, suppliers, unions, other collaborator or competitor associations, nonprofit and for-profit providers of continuing education, certifying and accrediting bodies, government funders, and NGOs. One example of an association that did this successfully is the American Geophysical Union.

The AGU recently convened a workshop with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Chemical Society, the American Geosciences Institute, the Association for Women Geoscientists, and the Earth Science Women's Network to address sexual and gender-based harassment in the geosciences. The workshop, which was sponsored by the National Science Foundation, challenged scientific societies to take an active role in ending harassment in workplaces, on campuses, in field research, and at scientific meetings.[35]

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35. https://news.agu.org/press-release/scientific-societies-speak-out-against-sexual-harassment/

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CASE STUDY
The Association for Women in Science: Creating an Inclusive Board of Directors

"Relationship-building is the key to our success. We have lots of one-on-one conversations, particularly with our new board members each year, focused around AWIS's strategic priorities and how they can best contribute."

Janet Bandows Koster, Executive Director & CEO

The Association for Women in Science (AWIS) had a slight advantage when it came to diversifying its board of directors. AWIS was founded in 1971 to support the advancement of women in careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), so diversity has always been at the heart of the organization's mission.

Despite that, 30-plus years after it was founded, the AWIS board was 100 percent women, 100 percent white, and 100 percent academicians, with most directors working in the life sciences. Meanwhile, the membership of AWIS had become increasingly diverse, with men joining and more members coming from outside academia. Janet Bandows Koster, who became executive director of AWIS in 2006, quickly recognized the need to diversify the board. "AWIS is the only society focused on the issues facing women in all STEM disciplines, so in addition to the usual categories of gender, race and ethnicity, and geographic location, diversity of disciplines was an important consideration," said Koster.

"We started this process with a conversation about our need to shift from a tactically focused 'working board' to a skill-based board of directors that provides strategic oversight for the work of the association," said Koster.

The first step was conducting a thorough governance review that included looking at the organization's bylaws, which had swollen to a 21-page document by the time Koster arrived. This comprehensive revision took two years, and it reduced the bylaws to a more-manageable three pages. Other results included reducing the number of standing committees and moving the board selection process from a contested election to the election of a slate proposed by the nominating committee.

The transition wasn't completely smooth. Koster noted, "There was some pushback from longtime volunteers and chapter leaders, so the staff and board had to work hard to communicate the rationale for the bylaws revisions and the changes to our election process."

Their efforts included emphasizing the differences in skills needed for a board working at the national level, compared to the volunteer leadership running local chapters and affiliates. "We sponsored a series of town hall meetings and conversations with chapters to help generate the support we needed for successful change," Koster said.

Once the new bylaws were in place, members of the nominating committee used a matrix to identify the skills needed to increase the effectiveness of the board, and began to recruit members who could fulfill those needs. In addition to matching skills like a background in finance with roles like treasurer, the nominating committee considers diversity of scientific discipline, employment sector (i.e., academia, corporate, government, nonprofit), race/ethnicity, geography, and sex/gender—not necessarily in that order.

Koster joked, "When I arrived, AWIS was still using an abacus to do the financial reports, and we obsessed over discrepancies of a few pennies. Now the board's focus is at a much higher and more strategic level."

CASE STUDY
The Association for Women in Science:
Creating an Inclusive Board of Directors

One of the key challenges in moving to a skills-based board is that the directors don't "come up through the ranks," so they may not be fully aware of AWIS's strategic plan and priorities, the organization's structure, the role chapters and affiliates play, and the differences between for-profit and tax-exempt organizations. Koster explained that the association addresses this directly: "It starts with our nominating committee, whose members conduct initial outreach to candidates, and the presence of our past and incoming presidents on the committee provides continuity. Then our senior staff does personalized outreach to the one-third of our board members who are new each year. We have a clear set of expectations for board members, which we communicate to them, and we focus on keeping our board members engaged between meetings through things like phone calls, lunches, and visits."

Ten year after starting this process, the board has been transformed. The current president is head of Medimmune and executive vice president at AstraZeneca. The treasurer is a serial entrepreneur who has taken a company public. The finance committee chair is managing director of an investment company, and AWIS's advocacy efforts are led by the founder of a legislative and regulatory advisory company. Three of the 14 board members are men, five are people of color, and the academicians on the board have expertise in chemistry, engineering, biological sciences, and psychology.

Board diversification has benefitted AWIS in concrete ways. The organization's finances and investments are in "great shape," according to Koster. The portfolio of grant funding has become more diverse, and AWIS is starting to pursue corporate sponsorship for the first time. "Having a diverse board has opened up connections with influential people in corporations, research funding agencies, and national laboratories, which has been hugely beneficial," said Koster.

She also attributes AWIS's successful transformation to the leadership skills of AWIS's board presidents. "The nominating committee specifically recruits for the ability to facilitate meetings in a way that ensures that everyone's voice is heard, everyone is engaged, and everyone feels welcome and valued for their contributions," said Koster. "That's something we continue to work to develop throughout their terms of service."

Asked about evidence of tokenism or lack of inclusion, Koster reflected on the first time a man was elected to the AWIS board. The nominating committee was both strategic and thoughtful about whom to invite, and the nominee was someone who knew AWIS well, had worked with the organization on several grant-funded projects, and was already familiar with the organization's culture. His inclusion on the board was, Koster said, "seamless."

For other association CEOs starting down this path, Koster advised: "Think through why you want to diversify your board. How does board diversity align with and advance your association's strategic plan? How does it advance the work of your association and your engagement with your members? Develop a deep understanding of why you are doing it, and make a long-term commitment. Don't just jump on this because it's trendy. To be successful, you need to consciously align your diversity efforts with the culture and strategic focus of your organization."

CASE STUDY
The Entomological Society of America (ESA): Preventing Meeting Harassment

"It's just common sense. ESA's annual meeting should be free of harassment for all our attendees."

C. David Gammel, CAE, Executive Director

It all started with a question from a member on Twitter: "If Comic-Con [a multi-genre entertainment and comics convention held annually in San Diego] has a meeting code of conduct, why don't we?"

"That was an excellent question, which helped us realize we should," said ESA executive director C. David Gammel.

So, in 2013, a team consisting of ESA's meetings staff and the volunteer meeting co-chairs took on the responsibility of drafting the association's first meeting code of conduct, using the Comic-Con code as a guide. The draft was swiftly approved by the ESA board of directors and went into effect for ESA's 2014 annual meeting.

We asked Gammel if there was any pushback from staff, members, or volunteer leaders. "We had broad support from the start to implement a policy," he responded. "It helped that ESA had already done a lot of foundational work in this area. It's also clear that the scientific community is done putting up with bad behavior in the workplace, and they're appropriately demanding attention to issues of diversity and inclusion from their societies."

In that first year, there was an incident. At the time, ESA's process was completely managed by staff. "We don't feel it is appropriate to engage volunteer leaders in investigating complaints, mostly because entomology is a small world, and we don't want victims of harassment to avoid coming forward due to concerns about confidentiality," Gammel said.

The downside to that, of course, is that association staff members tend to be fully booked during their conferences, and ESA is no exception. "It took about a half-day of my time at the meeting, which was really disruptive," noted Gammel.

ESA staff quickly realized they needed to hire an outside ombudsman to handle any incidents that might arise. "I would strongly encourage other associations to do the same," said Gammel. "That way, you have a dedicated resource who has the background, training, and experience to provide a prompt and professional response to any incidents that occur, and you're not drawing staff members away from their other significant responsibilities at the meeting."

The current version of ESA's code of conduct is available at *http://www.entsoc.org/code-conduct*. Meeting attendees are notified of the code and required to formally agree to abide by it either when they submit paper proposals or when they register. The full code is also published in the meeting book, and an abbreviated version is posted on signs throughout the meeting venue.

Onsite, the first priority is to ensure the person who's been harassed feels safe. "We've had hotels offer escorts, convention centers offer the services of their security team, etc., and we have all of that ready to go in advance," said Gammel.

The investigation happens after the event. "When we get a complaint, our first step is to allow the complainant to decide whether they want us to pursue an investigation. Assuming they do, we then interview witnesses, if there are any, and gather information. We write up an incident report that is reviewed by both senior staff and legal counsel. We then give the alleged harasser the opportunity to respond, which is also reviewed by senior staff and legal counsel. Then we decide what, if any, sanctions are appropriate, which can range from a warning to a lifetime ban from our conference. An appeal process is available, as well, after any sanctions are imposed."

Tracking sanctioned individuals in your systems is an easy-to-overlook item, according to Gammel. "As we have gone through this process a few times, we've had to adapt our systems and workflow to help us make sure sanctions are enforced."

ESA's ultimate goal is to resolve issues and deal with anyone who violates the meeting code of conduct in such a way as to make sure targets of harassment know they are welcome and that ESA is doing its best to make the annual meeting a safe place. According to Gammel, it seems to be working.

"People who have filed complaints in the past three years since we implemented the code have said they were satisfied with our code and the actions we took, and that they will come back to another ESA meeting," he said. "Our intention is to create a safe and welcoming place for people to present their science."

CASE STUDY
The Geological Society of America (GSA): Increasing Diversity in the Profession of Geology

"D+I policies are good, but if you're not tracking the results over time, you have no way to really see the impact."

Tahlia Bear, Diversity and Careers Officer

The Geological Society of America (GSA) has a commitment to diversity and inclusion that reaches beyond the typical D+I statement. GSA has an affirmative commitment to "maintaining an organizational climate where differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds, and needs are fostered with opportunities for members from divergent experiences to participate and contribute" through membership and volunteer leadership.[36]

Looking beyond its membership, GSA's Council adopted a position statement on Diversity in the Geosciences Community in 2010. Revised in 2013 and 2016, the statement describes how the association "encourages geoscientists to participate in implementing suitable diversity practices at local, regional, state, and national levels."[37] It also includes recommendations for actions individual geoscientists, geoscience educators, parents, students, and public officials should take to further diversity and inclusion.

Tahlia Bear, GSA's diversity and careers officer, and Pat Kilner, director of membership development, traced this commitment to diversity back to 1970, when the first GSA Committee on Minorities in the Geosciences was formed on an ad hoc basis. By 1992, recognizing that additional key groups were underrepresented, the group evolved into a standing Committee on Women and Minorities in Geosciences.

Since then, the Diversity in the Geosciences Committee has broadened its work "to stimulate recruitment and promote positive career development of ethnic minorities and women and persons with disabilities in the geoscience professions." The committee's charge also encompasses working with staff to assess diversity in GSA membership and the profession, advising the GSA Council on diversity issues, developing collaborations within and outside GSA to address diversity and inclusion, and initiating programs to provide opportunities to underrepresented groups. [38]

The current focus of the Committee on Diversity in the Geosciences is on diversity activities at the GSA annual meeting. GSA recently approved an events code of conduct for their annual meeting,[39] and the 2017 meeting will feature a general session panel discussion about diversity and inclusion in the geosciences. The session will focus on the need for, and strategies for creating, a diverse workforce in the geosciences, and will include the experiences of geoscientists from diverse backgrounds. The meeting will also feature a diversity exhibit that includes a series of posters showing what geoscience research field camps looked like in the 1970s compared to today and and an interactive installation showing GSA members' responses to a recent survey on the importance of diversity and inclusion.

GSA also sponsors a number of awards programs for historically underrepresented groups:

- The Randolph W. "Bill" and Cecile T. Bromery Award for Minorities, which is presented to those minorities, preferably African-Americans, "who have made significant contributions to research in the geological sciences, or those who have been instrumental in opening the geoscience field to other minorities."

36. http://www.geosociety.org/GSA/About/Diversity/GSA/About/Diversity.aspx
37. http://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Science_Policy/Position_Statements/gsa/positions/position15.aspx
38. http://www.geosociety.org/GSA/About/Committees.aspx
39. http://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Membership/Code_of_Conduct/GSA/Membership/Code_of_Conduct.aspx

- The Doris M. Curtis Woman in Science Award, which goes to "a woman that has impacted the field of the geosciences in a major way based on their Ph.D. research." To be eligible, the awardee must be within three years of completing her degree.

- The On To the Future program, which was launched in 2013 and has provided more than 430 partial travel scholarships to attend the GSA annual meeting to undergraduates, graduate students, and recent graduates in the geosciences. The travel grants are funded through grassroots fundraising among GSA members, corporate donors, and GSA's Sections, Divisions, and Associated Societies. GSA encourages applications from students who are from underrepresented groups, which includes gender, race/ethnicity, veteran status, disability status, geographic area, non-traditional students, and students who are the first in their family to attend college.

- Minority Student Scholarships, which are annual $1,500 awards to six minority students who are studying geosciences at accredited universities or colleges. One award is offered for each of the GSA sections. Each scholarship includes registration for the annual meeting, and a student awards reception is part of the program at the meeting. Funding for the scholarships typically comes from corporate donations.

In addition to these awards, the 18 specialty divisions of the GSA, which are primarily volunteer-run, sponsor their own award programs and diversity initiatives.

GSA actively engages volunteers at minority-serving institutions through its Campus Reps program. These volunteers serve as sources of information about GSA membership, meetings, and professional opportunities. Bear also connects with other organizations and programs that support GSA's efforts. In 2015, she obtained funding to support students attendance at the annual meetings of both the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science and the

GSA, which were held consecutively in the Washington, DC, metro area. She has also obtained funding from the National Science Foundation to organize a workshop aimed at opening dialogue, leveraging strengths and partnerships, and identifying best practices for inter-organizational collaboration in order to stimulate diversity and broaden participation among the historically most underrepresented groups in the geological sciences, African Americans and Native Americans/Alaska Natives. "We want GSA to be the leader in diversity initiatives in the geosciences, and in science as a whole," said Bear. "Diversity used to be much less visible. It was just one part of our education and communications efforts. Now, with dedicated staff and a reenergized committee, we can build on our past successes and move forward more quickly."

Bear's advice for associations that want to move their diversity efforts out into the profession or industry they represent is to obtain reliable, useful data on the current state of diversity in the field and to identify good metrics for tracking the results of diversity initiatives. "Policies are good," she said. "But if you're not tracking the results over time, you have no way to really see the impact."

GSA has historically tracked data on its members' gender, and it began tracking data on ethnic diversity in the geosciences and among its membership in 2013. The association will update its findings as the society begins work to update its strategic plan.

Kilner noted that paid and volunteer leadership support is essential for diversity efforts to succeed. GSA's governing council is diverse, the result of a conscious effort to ensure that the council and committee membership reflects the diversity of the geoscience community as a whole. Bear and Kilner also recommend that associations take an honest look at their commitments of financial and staff resources to diversity initiatives, and ask, "Does this align with our stated commitment to diversity and inclusion among our members and in the profession?"

Conclusion: Becoming a Truly Inclusive Association

We hope that, as a result of reading this whitepaper, you've identified some areas in yourself and your association where you're doing well in D+I, as well as some areas where you'd like to do better.

As you think about ways to improve, remember that you're not going to be able to change everything overnight. Even in the idealized story that opened this whitepaper, it took Joan five years to transform GMA. What we're talking about here is culture change, and that takes time.

As with any culture change, active support from both your association's paid and volunteer leadership is critical. D+I is only a priority if your CEO and board of directors make it so and back that up with their behavior and with resources. Because D+I topics can make people uncomfortable and bring up painful experiences and feelings, it can be helpful to bring in an outsider to work through these issues with you.

One of the first items your leadership is likely to address is policy. Creating a strong, inspiring statement of commitment to D+I is an important place to start, but as Joe Gerstandt points out in his sidebar titled "Inclusion: Seek Clarity First," that is only a start. Without clarity about what you mean when you talk about these issues, without supporting procedures behind your policies, and without clear ways to make those policies and procedures real, they're just words. Include is a verb; being inclusive requires taking action.

There's a poem that begins, "When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world." As the man relating the parable lives his life, he realizes that was too grand a goal. He scales back to changing his nation, only to recognize that, too, as too grand a project. So he decides to focus on his town, and then his family. By the time he's an old man, he realizes that the only thing he can change, the only thing he can control, is himself, but that when you change yourself, that impacts the people around you, and the people around them, and through that, you can change your nation and the world.

Start there. Pick one thing to change in yourself. Then think about one thing you can work on in your workplace with your colleagues. Then identify one program your association offers that you can enlist your volunteers and members to help you transform. Small steps will add up to big shifts over time.

Returning to the theme of relationship we introduced at the beginning of this whitepaper, we believe that associations, because of the network of relationships they create and maintain, are uniquely positioned to build and support a full ecosystem of diversity and inclusion, reaching from their own workplaces into the workplaces of their members, and to the future of the professions and industries they represent.

Questions for Reflection

- How do you personally define diversity? Inclusion? How does your association define these terms? How are those definitions alike? Where do they differ?

- What is your vision of genuine inclusion? What about your team's vision? Where are they alike and different? What can you do to bring them into alignment?

- What does diversity look like in the profession or industry your association serves?

- Where are the gaps between your association's vision of real inclusion and your day-to-day reality? What can you do to bridge them?

- What are the main barriers to D+I facing your association? The profession or industry you serve? What can you do to begin overcoming them?

- What topics in this whitepaper made you uncomfortable? Why do you think that is?

- What ideas in this whitepaper excited or inspired you? What can you do to translate those ideas into actions?

- What topics in this whitepaper were new to you? What is your plan to learn more about them?

- Are your staff team-building activities inclusive? If not, what will you do to change that?

- Are the social events and activities at your annual meeting inclusive? If not, what will you do to change that?

- What is one action you can take to combat in yourself the implicit biases we all share?

Additional Resources

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About Sherry Marts

Sherry A. Marts, Ph.D., CEO of S*Marts Consulting LLC, is a skilled workshop leader, facilitator, writer, and speaker with a lively personality and a wicked sense of humor. A former association CEO with a wide-ranging background in biomedical research, nonprofit management, public education, and research advocacy, Sherry provides expert consulting services to nonprofits and academic institutions on diversity and inclusion, harassment and bullying, and interpersonal communication. She also offers executive and career coaching with an emphasis on career and leadership development for women. Her interest in the issue of harassment and bullying lies at the intersection of her professional life as a woman in science and her previous experience as a women's self-defense instructor.

Dr. Marts is the author of "Open Secrets and Missing Stairs: Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment at Scientific Meetings" and is co-author (with Raven Dana) of *The Book of How: Answers to Life's Most Important Question.*

Dr. Marts received her B.Sc. (Hons.) in Applied Biology from the University of Hertfordshire and her Ph.D. in Physiology from Duke University.

About Elizabeth Weaver Engel

Elizabeth Weaver Engel, M.A., CAE, CEO and chief strategist at Spark Consulting LLC, has nearly 20 years of experience in association management. Although her primary focus has been in membership, marketing, and communications, her work has been wide-ranging, including corporate sponsorship and fundraising, technology planning and implementation, social media and internet strategy, budgeting, volunteer management, publications, and governance.

Spark provides strategic membership and marketing advice and assistance to associations that have the willingness and capacity at both the staff and board levels to ask themselves tough questions and take some risks in service of reaching for big goals. Forget settling for incremental growth by making minor changes to what you're doing—we're going to uncover and solve the root problems that are holding your association back!

Elizabeth combines a focus on asking the right questions and finding and implementing creative solutions with a broad understanding of the association sphere. Throughout her career, she has excelled at increasing membership, revenue, public presence, and member satisfaction while decreasing costs through a focus on the efficient and effective use of data, staff, and technology to serve organizational goals and constituents.

Prior to launching Spark, Elizabeth consulted in online campaigns and marketing and internet and social media strategy for Beaconfire Consulting and in a wide range of subject areas in association management in the not-for-profit consulting practice at RSM McGladrey, Inc. She has also served associations directly in a variety of positions, including director of member services and IT, director of marketing and sponsorship, vice president of marketing, and acting CEO.

Elizabeth is a certified association executive (CAE) and holds a master's degree in government and foreign affairs from the University of Virginia.