



Bridging Difference

A series of inclusivity workshops we need right now

The Center for Women and Business at Bentley University partners with over 100 organizations to provide counsel and high-impact programming in their diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Our work includes delivery of interactive workshops that inform and motivate, providing participants with a road map to create real change. The four workshops described below are powerful *virtual offerings*, typically 1.5 to 2 hours long, that are particularly relevant to the urgent racial justice and intersectional challenges impacting organizations right now. If your organization is looking for support in creating a more inclusive culture, we would be honored to connect with you. Please contact Melissa Spiers, mspiers@bentley.edu for more information.

Harnessing the Power of Inclusivity

This program provides a unique and cutting-edge exploration of unconscious bias, incorporating understanding across racial difference and active support for racial justice. The goal is to educate attendees in a psychologically safe space about the imperative for inclusive workplaces and the power of individuals to make a difference. Participants learn about underlying equity and inclusion issues, increase their understanding and empathy, and become equipped to serve as more inclusive, active advocates for those who are underrepresented.

We share often-surprising data about underrepresented groups and explore the role of intersectionality. Attendees unpack micro-inequities that exist in their own workplaces – highlighting the unique challenges that people of color face – and discuss the direct impact they have on co-workers. As facilitators, we identify numerous individual and organizational remedies for positive change, digging deeply into those most relevant to participants. A particularly moving and engaging remedy that we model in real time is *courageous conversations*. Attendees leave this workshop with greater sensitivity to others' workplace experiences, and the ability to utilize numerous individual and organizational interventions to make positive change.

Creating an Anti-Racist Culture

This program is intended for individuals who possess basic understanding of inclusivity for all underrepresented groups and an explicit commitment to addressing race disparities within their organizations (either because they have participated in our *Harnessing the Power of Inclusivity* workshop or completed their own work).

During this session, participants learn about the different levels of racism and how they impact employees of all different backgrounds. Attendees have opportunities to reflect on their early learnings about race and racism, and specifically about blackness and African Americans, and they also begin to identify how racism shows up in their day-to-day work and organizational life. Attendees increase their awareness about race and anti-racism through interactive activities and compassionate, meaningful discussion. Guided by our facilitators, attendees explore and identify specific strategies to better incorporate and embed anti-racist practices throughout their organization and in their day to day lives.

Courageous Conversations

Organizations focused on diversity, inclusion, and racial injustice – all in the context of a new virtual environment – are recognizing the powerful role courageous conversations can play in building bridges across difference.

A courageous conversation is a tool to engage in challenging workplace conversations. Dialogue is reciprocal, respectful, and compassionate, and most often related to race, gender, or power. Such conversations require honesty, openness, and vulnerability.

Our workshop on courageous conversations nurtures a culture that is rich in constructive, authentic feedback. Participants leave this session prepared to engage in difficult conversations across identity differences, roles, and functions. In this workshop, we:

1. Explore the variables that impact the success of a conversation. These include cultural competence, power dynamics, and conflict styles.
2. Provide demonstrations, allowing attendees to critique and question our approach in real time.
3. Guide participants in practicing conversations together. We share a framework with clear guidelines and realistic workplace scenarios, and also provide in-the-moment feedback.

Allyship Across Difference

The need for individuals and organizations to address allyship across difference – especially race – is urgent, and the positive impact that knowledgeable, authentic workplace advocates can make is well-documented. We offer powerful virtual sessions that fully prepare individuals and organizations to become allies for each other. Although we customize these programs for each client, all workshops focus on:

1. Increasing awareness and understanding of the complex, sensitive issues required to become an ally. We explore current incidents of social injustice, unconscious bias, micro-inequities, social privilege, intersectionality, group dynamics, and more.
2. Empowering attendees to become effective advocates for change by providing specific tools and strategies. We utilize real workplace scenarios and examples as we offer tools and demonstrate strategies.
3. Holding and modeling courageous conversations across difference – often racial. Attendees observe, participate in, and critique our demonstration. This allows them to more fully understand the need for such conversations and how they play out, either successfully or unsuccessfully.

Our workshop incorporates: compassionate, authentic discussion; engaging, meaningful exercises; and goal setting. We work with attendees to establish and maintain a safe and respectful environment for sharing and learning.