

gives a man a low, no-haggle price for a new car but gives a woman a much higher price. "The men in the session were so stunned that women were sometimes treated that way," says Vallot.

But not all diversity training sessions use external examples to talk about internal issues. Some trainers choose to go right to the core. In Waite's session, the facilitators presented actual case studies of diversity insensitivity in the firm. In one case, upper management had denied a qualified Asian analyst a promotion because English was not his first language. "The training let people know that these things do happen. If you haven't had personal experience with [discrimination], you might think diversity training is hogwash," she says.

The lecture component of the sessions can vary considerably, from spelling out general diversity do's and don'ts, like avoiding racial jokes and insensitive statements, to giving diversity trainers a chance to share personal anecdotes. Texaco's lectures stress the importance of embracing diversity and difference as a competitive advantage. Lindy Korn, president and CEO of Williamsville, New York's Diversity Training Workplace Solutions has developed a "psycho-legal" approach to her lectures that teaches employees not just the legal ramifications of racial and gender bias, but also the emotional effects of a hostile work environment.

Although participants think that certain aspects of the training are particularly effective, their opinions are mixed on the sessions' overall impact on their companies. Nunes and Jones feel their training neglected their company's most pressing issues of gender inequity and career mobility. Williams believes his training, and

diversity training as a whole, are irrelevant in a largely homogenous workplace. "Diversity starts with hiring," he says. Nevertheless, some people, like Ray, see tangible benefits. "Diversity helps the company because you get different ideas and perspectives distributed through the group," says Ray. "The more diverse a company, the greater competitive advantage it has."

Velásquez tells of one participant who was quite outspoken about his aversion to the training, but because the class was mandatory, Velásquez insisted the man remain. "The first third of the class he was blocking me, but by the last third he was participating. As he walked out, he said,

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'I'm glad you made me stay.' That's a small statement, but a huge breakthrough," he says. Such breakthroughs seem to come with diversity training that includes components—be they films, personal stories, or exercises—that impel people to evaluate their current perceptions and actions and even consider changing them. Being open to such changes—and to the very idea of diversity training—helps ensure that each of us is comfortable being our most brilliant, productive, and diverse self. ◀

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**Names have been changed.*

diversityIQ: did you know...?

- 1 In 2001, the **BUYING POWER OF U.S. MINORITY GROUPS WILL EXCEED ITS 1990 LEVEL BY 95 PERCENT**, totaling \$860 billion. African-Americans will control \$570 billion of that.
- 2 The Statue of Liberty has seven points on her crown, symbolizing that **IMMIGRANTS FROM ALL SEVEN CONTINENTS** are welcome in the United States.
- 3 By the year 2004, the Census Bureau predicts that the Hispanic population will surpass the African-American population as the largest U.S. minority group, with **37 MILLION PEOPLE OF HISPANIC DESCENT LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES**.
- 4 It is estimated that **ONE IN 10 ADULTS IN THE UNITED STATES IS GAY**.
- 5 The toys and sporting goods industry has the **HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF BOARD SEATS HELD BY WOMEN** (26.9 percent), followed by the soaps/cosmetics, savings, and publishing industries.

SOURCES: AUGUST 2000 REPORT FROM THE SELIG CENTER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, THE DIVERSITY TRAINING GROUP AND CATALYST.COM