Distance Bias: When Out of Sight Really Means Out of Mind
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YOUR JOB AID TO REDUCE DISTANCE BIAS

Inclusion professionals are well versed in all kinds of bias and how to help their organizations address the challenges and opportunities in this area. But with more and more employees moving to a remote work style, very few companies have thought to take the time to understand the impact that distance bias has on mobile and remote employees.

Distance bias is the tendency to favor people who are closer to us in time and space. This session will show how to identify distance bias not only in your organization, but in yourself as well, and how it can impact the employee experience.

Why is distance bias important today?

It’s the digital workplace
• Tech has dramatically changed how we work and live
• The Network is the Workplace, learning portal, and Connecting place
• From Silos to Networks and “Me” to “We” – Working in teams is here to stay
• “We” are multiple generations, culturally diverse, and independent creatures
• Relationships are still key to success
• Unconscious Distance Bias – Negatively impacts inclusion

Virtual teams are here to stay
• Virtual Work, among the non-self-employed population, up 115% since 2005, nearly 10x faster than the rest of the workforce
• In the U.S. alone, 43% of the workforce has spent at least some time working remotely
• SHRM survey - 46% of organizations use virtual teams
Current data

**Good news**
- 77% report greater productivity and 52% are less likely to take time off
- 82% of virtual workers report lower stress levels
- Reduced employee turnover by over 50%
- 68% of Millennials want option to work virtually

**Bad news**
- 52% of people who work remotely feel like their colleagues based in the office don’t treat them equally
- 65% of people who work remotely have experienced colleagues making changes to their projects without warning
- Reliance on mediated interactions and especially those that are text-based and asynchronous such as email have been seen to inhibit the development of strong, collaborative relationships

What is distance bias?
NeuroLeadership expert, David Rock, defined Distance Bias as a result of his two-and-a-half-year research study with University of California Los Angeles.

Distance Bias is defined as *a tendency to favor people who are closer to us in space and time*. The outcome is that people may unconsciously perceive someone that is not within close proximity to them is of a lesser value. Unfortunately, this perception can impact decision-making processes in the workplace as well as the employee experience. This outcome coupled with the fact that for many employees, both remote and traditional, communication is mediated via digital devices, creates additional risk to team trust and cooperation.

What is the impact?
- Individual
  - Isolation
  - Disengagement
  - Confusion
- Organization
  - Lost productivity
  - Loss of talent
  - Erosion of culture
- Who is affected?
  - Any employee who works away from their team virtually, whether it’s one day a week, 4 days a week or every day of the year.
Virtual Competencies that Reduce Distance Bias

Distance Competencies increase the capacity to influence and build relationships remotely, manage conflict, collaborate, build trust and communicate effectively through a variety of media including web-based meetings, telephone, email, and other technology. To increase virtual competencies, organizations should provide:

- HR policies, procedures and practices that are clear and support different workstyles (flexible work, telework, etc.) throughout the talent cycle.
- Training and resources that support different workstyles such as mobile, virtual and blended/dispersed teams.
- Manager training to create a strong virtual culture that aligns with the onsite culture.
- Engagement efforts that solicit ideas of all employees whether they are onsite or offsite.

For more on how to develop and sustain inclusive workplace relationship practices:

- Read Trina Hoefling’s *Working Virtually: Transforming the Mobile Workplace*
- Take Kathy Kacher’s 30-minute self-paced *Manager Kickstart* class
- Take Trina Hoefling’s 45-minute self-paced *The Powerful Role of the Virtual Manager*. It includes self-assessments!

**Why the Manager’s Role is Key to Success**

- Managers are the front line in almost all things related to how our organizations and teams function.
- Managers are in the right position to facilitate behavior changes.
- When teams are dispersed, managers are the main point of connection for the team experience.

**How Do We Develop a Virtually Inclusive Culture?**

*We Are Part of an Inclusive Virtual Culture When We*

- Feel Connected to Purpose and People
- Hear from Our Leader and Teammates
- Celebrate Successes Together
- Celebrate Life Events
- Hear about the New & Good
- Are Informed of Updates
- Flow with the Rhythms of the Team
The Three-Fold Path to High-Performance Teams

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<tr>
<th>Path 1</th>
<th>Path 2</th>
<th>Path 3</th>
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<td>Create Cohesive Team Culture (Team Assessment)</td>
<td>Support the Team Community (Leader Training)</td>
<td>Produce Successful Outcomes</td>
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<td>Create a Team Development Plan (Free Team Handbook)</td>
<td>Develop Emotional Intelligence and Assume Positive Intent (Free Assessment)</td>
<td>Establish Baseline Performance and Celebrate Success (Manager Training)</td>
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<td>Develop Structured Trust (Trust Assessment)</td>
<td>Supporting the Team is a Shared Responsibility</td>
<td>Focus on the ends before the means</td>
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Stop by our Booth in the Market Place!! Check out our Virtual Reality Experience from REM5 and learn more about Distance Bias.

Buy Trina’s book at Conference Discount through the bookstore!

Contact The SMART Workplace at info@thesmartworkplace.com to set up a complimentary 20-minute consultation with Kathy or Trina!