

Gateways to Inclusion

Turning Tense Moments into Productive Conversations

by Sondra Thiederman

Produced & Distributed by SunShower Learning

Video Review by Gary Tomlinson

Have you or any members of your work team ever been embarrassed because you have inadvertently said something disrespectful, or got angry when you heard an offensive comment or become bewildered when falsely accused of bias? These are just a few of the types of events that can happen in the workplace today. Let's face it, even though we recognize the value of a diverse workplace, diverse workplaces can be minefields of potential misunderstandings, hurt feelings and even conflict.

Sondra Thiederman says it doesn't have to be that way. If handled properly, these uncomfortable moments can be transformed into productive conversations that serve as gateways to better working relationships, increased understanding and reduced tension. She calls these encounters, *Gateway Events*. Here are just a few examples:

- Perhaps you witness an inappropriate act or hear a joke or comment that is disrespectful.
- Maybe someone falsely accuses you of bias.
- Perhaps someone treats you in a way that appears to reflect a biased attitude.
- Perhaps you say or do something that inadvertently offends someone.
- Maybe you witness someone else being falsely accused of bias.
- Perhaps you're confused and uncomfortable because of the differences between you and someone else.
- Perhaps you say or do something involving diversity that you immediately regret.

The purpose of Gateways to Inclusion video, and the training it supports, is to provide the skills and knowledge needed to create truly respectful and inclusion workplaces. It includes a variety of training sessions such as:

1. *Diversity/Inclusion Training* that provides the skills for functioning successful in a diverse environment.
2. *Employee Orientation* to prepare team members for communicating effectively and to send the message that respect is a core value of the organization.
3. *Management/Leadership Training* to provide skills for, not only improving their own communication skills, but also coaching team members on how to do the same.
4. *Communication Training* to enable participants to reduce tension and communicate more effectively.

“A diverse and inclusive workforce is one of the most critical advantages and hidden secrets of today's truly effective leaders and organizations. *Diversity* and *inclusion* are concepts that have evolved from responsible business objectives and employee engagement goals to become the

essential ingredients for individual and organizational success today and in the future.” Thiederman’s video is designed to help every employee learn the four *Gateway Skills*:

1. Manage how you feel.
2. Set productive goals.
3. Assess intent cautiously.
4. Communicate in a way that demonstrates respect.

“The foundation of any successful inclusion and diversity effort lies in the ability of each leader and each team member to communicate respect for people different from him or herself.” Sondra Thiederman believes that; “diversity is not an imposition, it’s an advantage; Inclusion is not a problem, it’s a solution; Working together is more than a good idea, it’s essential to individual and organizational success.”

The quality of production and content of *Gateways to Inclusion: Turning Tense Moments into Productive Conversations* is outstanding. The Leader’s Guide is a great tool for both the experienced Trainer/Facilitator as well as the novice. The simple but effective participant’s quiz provides a quick check enabling organizations to know if your employees got the key messages from the video and training sessions. The handouts and key learning points are well designed and very professional. There is also a 45 minute refresher that is designed to help anchor this valuable education.

SunShower Learning is the producer and distributor of *Gateways to Inclusion*. For more information or to order the *Gateways to Inclusion* video and supported training guides go to www.gatewaystoinclude.com.

Gary Tomlinson is a business consultant and motivational speaker. As a business consultant he specializes in strategy execution management. He works with senior executives to help them clarify, deploy and achieve their organizational initiatives down to an individual level. As a motivational speaker, Gary’s favorite topics are the “Art of Telling,” “Making Change when Change is Hard” and “Top Ten Messages from Ten Top Books.” You can engage Gary at gary@gary-tomlinson.com. To see his other book reviews, book reports and educational videos visit his website at www.gary-tomlinson.com.