Leading Consciously and Beyond Bias – Takeaways

The Unconscious Mind

The Role of the Unconscious Mind
- The human brain can take in 11 million pieces of information in any one moment
- We’re only consciously aware of maybe 40 of these - at best.
- Only 2% of emotional cognition is available to us consciously
- Racial bias tends to reside in the unconscious network
- Messages can be framed to speak to our unconscious

Why is this Important?
- Understanding bias opens the door to combating bias
- Understanding the brain’s functions creates strategic advantages in our work
- Cognitive science and implicit bias can open the door to more inclusive policies and a just society

Pay Attention to Task and Context
- How the brain operates is driven by task and context
- It will process information differently depending on the task:
  - Completing a form
  - Telling a story
- The brain has a fundamentally different process for each task

How We Process Information
- The subconscious makes sense of what we perceive by:
  - Filling gaps
  - Sorting into categories
  - Creating associations
  - Together these processes create shortcuts which can become habits
- Your brain will automatically provide missing information based upon past experience
- This will occur in the milliseconds between perception and cognition
- Information is drawn from your memory and driven by your history (but what if your history with people of other races or cultures is limited?)

Implicit Bias - Takeaways
- We all use categories to process information
- Most decisions are unconscious
- Attitudes are reflections of filters used to process information
  - Many are benign
  - Some are negative e.g. Racial stereotyping
  - We can discover what they are
- Your brain sees what you are looking for, but not always the obvious
• Perception is often driven by task
• We all have implicit bias that can affect our behaviors and understanding
• Because these attitudes – unrecognized on the conscious level but powerful at the unconscious level – influence our choices and decisions
• We’ve created through biased filters:
  o Large and small institutions
  o Societal structures
  o Laws and regulations
  o Policies and procedures

What Can We Do About Bias?
1. Awareness combats bias
2. Take and discuss the Implicit Association Test (IAT): https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/
3. Exposure to counter-stereotypical people
4. Expand your associations (personally and professionally)
5. "De-bias" your work processes
6. "De-bias" your environment

Develop and Nurture a Culture that Builds Belonging
Othering
• Othering is a set of dynamics, processes and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities
Belonging
• Means more than being seen
• Is having a meaningful voice and opportunity to participate in the design of social and cultural structures
• Provides the right to contribute and make demands on society and political institutions
Bridging
• Relating to other groups based on deep listening, empathetic space, and recognition of suffering.
• Rejects that there is a “them” while recognizing our unique differences.
• A strategic or intentional response to reject Othering.
• Like a bridge, it connects communities.
• Bridging creates a “we”.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity are Not a Single Concept
• Diversity is the quantity of different identities and cultures.
• Inclusion is the quality of participation across identities and cultures.
• Equity provides the opportunity for justice policies and practices that ensure equitable outcomes.