Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Please expand on SDMS 360's missions and objectives as it relates to Diversity and Inclusion.**

   Our goal is to help individuals, organizations, and communities around the world develop the capability to manage the diversity challenges they encounter at work, home, and play.

   Over the years, we have seen many diversity firms and practitioners jump on and off the "topic de jour" training bandwagon because it was financially profitable. We have remained resolute and committed to the understanding that awareness training without the development of diversity management *capability* and a requisite examination of organizational culture is not a sustainable solution.

   Our goal is to work with organizations that are willing to go beyond awareness training and do the heavy lifting of examining their culture to truly take "disruption" of the *status quo* beyond just a buzzword. We desire to partner with organizations that recognize that if they truly want to be on the cutting edge in their industry, their responsibility is not only to provide training but also to design an environment that enables all participants to contribute to organizational objectives.

2. **Please explain the features of your diversity and inclusion training that you feel differentiate you from those of your competitors.**

   Capability vs. a list of "Dos and Don'ts"
   We view diversity management as a capability that individuals and organizations can develop to strengthen the impact of tactics used as part of their strategic plan. We understand that diversity management goes beyond race, gender, and all people demographics. It includes any dimensions that may create challenges for individuals or organizations, such as, talent, functions, lines of business, customers, communities, global partners, and competitors.

   These dimensions surface in all strategic decisions an organization must make about its workforce, workplace, culture, business, and greater community. The development of a diversity management capability by all members throughout all levels of the organization is necessary to find effective solutions to these complexities.

   On the other hand, Traditional Diversity Training has led to a "legislation of tactics." Just as policymakers have legislated rules around Affirmative Action, so too have practitioners and organizations created "how to's" or rules that instruct people on how to respond to specific diversity challenges - in essence, a list of dos and don'ts.

   The limitation of this approach is that while awareness is necessary and a list of possible responses is helpful, there's little room for people to think critically and discover and draw upon a wider array of alternative actions that address a diversity challenge. They have static lists for

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very dynamic life situations. When practitioners present such training, they are not training people to manage diversity. They are training them to follow instructions. This does not provide the knowledge and skills necessary to make quality decisions when life is predictably unpredictable and veers from the script of the "how-to" instruction sheet.

Skills vs. "Woo Woo"
Our approach equips participants with a set of principles, tools, skills, and knowledge necessary to address any diversity challenge they encounter, even ones that have yet to be identified or recognized as a challenge.

By this we mean the following: today, Unconscious Bias is all the rage. Many companies are seeking to be on the cutting edge and identify what the next hot topic will be. If you have a diversity management capability, you are already equipped to handle whatever that next "diversity wave" will be, even though it's still not identified. Diversity all boils down to differences and similarities and a diversity management capability equips you to navigate differences and similarities effectively in any context.

However, let's contrast our approach with the "woo-woo", emotionally triggering yet substantively empty content, that is often delivered in traditional diversity training. Such training definitely increases the awareness of individuals about the differences and similarities that exist, typically limited along people demographics, but it does not provide participants with actionable skills or tools to help them navigate the broad range of differences and similarities we encounter every day.

Singular Universal Approach vs. limited in scope and application
We believe in "One Approach, Multiple applications." This means that the Strategic Diversity Management Process™ is our singular comprehensive approach that can be applied to multiple contexts. By seeing "diversity" as a mixture of similarities and differences as opposed to a narrower definition based on demographic differences (both inherent and acquired), our framework can be applied to address any challenge, in any organization, in any country. The concepts and skills remain the same, but the applications vary depending on the needs of the organization.

It also allows for the universal application of the same diversity management skills – among all members, at every level, and across all areas of your organization. This provides a cohesive, organizational-wide unified approach to managing differences. Organizations don't implement multiple approaches when it comes to financial, risk, or safety management. Why do we accept such a disconnect in diversity & inclusion and Diversity Management and expect to achieve sustainable and effective results? We won't.

3. Who are SDMS 360's top three competitors and how you differentiate from them in the diversity and inclusion training marketplace.

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Group #1: Large conglomerate firms
- What differentiates us: Our strategic approach which can be applied universally to any context and situation, and tailored to fit the needs of any business unit, team, or organization.

Group #2: Small Boutique Firms
- These organizations have strong programs but they tend to be focused on the Social Justice/Make Amends aspect of D&I/Diversity Management. How can we all get along? Make amends for past wrongs? While those are key components of any D&I approach, there are **additional** key questions to ask and steps to take. The D&I industry as a whole has been asking these same questions for the past 50 years, and the social dynamics we have today are the results.
- What differentiates us: we offer a holistic approach to diversity management that incorporates these questions AND explores the role and responsibility organizational culture has in creating and sustaining an environment that works for all participants.

Group #3: Firms that specialize in specific dimensions of diversity
- These firms have a focus on the D&I "flavor of the day", address a targeted/specific topic, strong awareness tool, very effective in helping individuals become more conscious of their behavior in a certain area. But what do you do with that increased awareness? Contrary to what some may believe, Unconscious Bias and Cultural Competency are not new. D&I firms were looking at bias back in the '80s.
- What differentiates us: we help harness that awareness and provide tools for participants to make better decisions that are informed by that awareness.

4. Most employees in our organization have foundational awareness of Unconscious Bias (UB). What are the next steps in the diversity and inclusion training world from the training organization perspective?

Moving from Awareness to Application to increasing Diversity Maturity (the ability to understand and act upon diversity management concepts with wisdom, experience, and good judgment). Just because we're aware of something doesn't mean we are going to act on that awareness. Most people know that smoking is bad for you, but that doesn't always deter people from smoking. In order to move from Awareness to Application to increasing Diversity Maturity means adding skills to our awareness and then practicing and applying those skills to address real-time, day-to-day challenges.

5. How can our organization apply your training tactically and overcome and mitigate Unconscious Bias?

Frequently Asked Questions

We don't believe Unconscious Bias (UB) is a challenge to be "overcome." Everyone has biases regarding one thing or another. They may sometimes be time-saving decision-making instincts (grocery shopping) and sometimes discriminatory responses (racism) that interfere with sound decision-making.

Unconscious Bias training helps people become aware of this reality and identifies some of its manifestations. Awareness training can help inform in the same way that increasing awareness about making smart financial choices elevates one's consciousness about money. It will offer some information about the differences between one's current money decisions and wise money decisions, and the consequences of unwise money decisions. But, knowing about something and doing it are very different things.

Our training introduces participants to the understanding of and processes for employing diversity management skills. Like the first lesson in any skill, the learner can build on the understanding of the skills demonstrated through practice and feedback.

For example, after a first tennis lesson, a player can practice the different strokes introduced. However, a single practice session does not enable one to play a whole game with any degree of skill. More importantly, practice without feedback is not sufficient for developing increased effectiveness. Our processes give participants multiple opportunities to apply the skills initially learned to address real-time issues, and get useful feedback to help improve their overall diversity management capability, so that they may 'play the game' with some level of skill and confidence that increases over time. (Think multiple practice tennis games with coaching and encouragement.)

Ultimately, the skill level achieved is a factor of the participants' goals, feedback, preference, and most importantly, support. We offer the opportunity to learn, practice, and improve diversity management capability. The better you are at managing diversity, the more capable you are of precluding unconscious bias tendencies and/or rectifying the negative impacts of unconscious (and conscious) bias.

6. Do you offer anything systematic in your diversity and inclusion training that could help leaders check-in during the talent review process? Please describe.

The My Diversity Manager™ (MDM™), a decision-making tool, could help leaders check-in during the talent review process. Users learn a deliberate and reasoned approach to make decisions by prioritizing "requirements" over corporate or individual biases.

7. How would your training help our organization mitigate bias in our talent review processes? How would our organization embed your training in those reviews?

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Strategic Diversity Management Solutions

In the short term, the My Diversity Manager™ would provide a step-by-step process to think through the decision-making process using requirements as the foundation for a decision vs. our bias (our preferences, traditions and/or conveniences).

In the long term, continued practice with the MDM™ over time supports the development of a diversity management capability, so that individuals are no longer just following a check-list of questions to consider, but they are able to view any process critically because of a deeper, more ingrained understanding of the cost of operating by biases vs. requirements.

But as with all training, the benefit comes only with regular intentional use. If your organization offers training but does not identify the systems, policies, practices, and behavioral expectations necessary to support practicing the new training, no amount of training, no matter how great in the class, will mitigate bias in any of its organizational processes.

8. **Does your training include tactical ways for people leaders to continue to mitigate bias in their day to day leadership? Please describe.**

Our MDM™ provides a framework that supports mitigating bias in people leaders. However "mitigating" bias is a process. Your people leaders' biases were not developed overnight, and they won't be mitigated because they were simply *introduced* to the MDM™.

In order for bias to truly be mitigated, individuals need both a tool *and an organizational culture* that supports their learning and practicing that tool. Support from the organization means that the culture grants them permission (via its systems, policies, practices, and behaviors) to acknowledge their biases in the first place without fear of condemnation or reprisal; grants them permission and encourages them to use the new tools, not just by providing training on the tool, but by also providing the requisite reinforcement and feedback (positive consequences, modeling) and visible application of that tool throughout the organization.

Without that organizational support, mitigating biases will continue to allude individuals and organizations.

9. **How can your programs be seamlessly incorporated into our leadership programs?**

Because of the universal application of our content to any diversity issue, it is relatively easy for our content to be incorporated into existing leadership programs. Clients have used our content to craft modules they incorporate into their Emerging Leaders programs. They also use our eLearning content as pre-work for some courses.

10. Does your training have phases? Does your company offer a program that we can build upon in the long term?

Our approach is called 'Strategic' because it includes phases that apply the understanding of effective diversity management provided in the training to the larger objective of increasing operational effectiveness.

The goal of the process is to "create an environment that naturally enables everyone to fully contribute to the organization's objectives." The phases provide a critical path along which the organization examines its organizational culture, identifies the supports for, and barriers to increasing diversity management capability, and identifying and taking the actions needed to ensure the sustainability of its investment in diversity management training.

We believe any effort to educate the organization's population that is not connected to a sustainable process is a waste of money and time and perpetuates a "training program du jour" attitude that deflates enthusiasm, interest, creativity, and innovation.

11. Describe how you would assist our organization in incorporating your training program seamlessly and how it can be successfully integrated.

Sustainability requires a process for the integration of diversity management capability into the fabric of how the organization normally functions. This has always been the goal of our process. To achieve sustainability, it is necessary to include the examination of organizational culture, its supports and barriers to increasing diversity management capability, the commitment of leadership, the understanding and involvement of all organizational members, the mechanisms for measuring the progress and effectiveness of the process, and the willingness to make necessary (even if uncomfortable) changes.

This again, speaks to the fact that while our approach is leading with training in this instance, it is not solely the program that would be incorporated seamlessly. The training is the program that provides the knowledge skills and tools. Integration requires the process.

12. We don't believe one size fits all regarding our Diversity and Inclusion Training. Can you describe how your company is prepared to address and accommodate this?

"One size does not fit all" is what diversity management capability is designed to address. Identifying the 'size' that fits the client may be discovered through a needs analysis, employee survey data, stated objectives, desired outcomes, organizational culture, identified scope, issues to be addressed, time constraints, former experience, level of support, etc.

We consult with the client to identify the key (specific) factors that the training component of the strategic process is designed to address. If the discovery phase of preparation reveals that the client is interested in a program rather than a process, we caution the client that they are embarking on a never-ending cycle of investment with no sustainable return.

13. What other diversity and inclusion training (beyond Unconscious Bias) do you have, if any (i.e., gender, generations, pay gap, how AI comes into play, etc.)? Please describe those offerings.

This question presumes a definition of diversity that is limited to issues of human demographics and training as the solution.

Our approach to "diversity" is the presumption that the word is simply a description of any two or more entities with differences and similarities, and therefore encompasses an infinite number of dimensions. This presumption is why we consider our approach universal. This understanding is the basis of the principles, knowledge, and skills that we have provided for our clients. Once they learn to apply the process to one dimension, they can apply it to any dimension, in the same way that you can use the one set of golf clubs to play on multiple courses.

Clients learn to employ the process to address any dimension of diversity they encounter at work, at home, or at play. Thus we do not have separate programs for each dimension of human demographics. Our training addresses human demographics as well as business dimensions such as cross-functionality, hierarchical tension, mergers and acquisitions, organizational levels, locations, lines of business, product lines, customers, suppliers, all stakeholders, etc. as dimensions of diversity which create challenges to the organization.

The focus is determined by the needs and interests of the client. We understand that each dimension has its own set of issues, so just as you would scope out a new golf course before you begin to apply your tools, part of our process is to identify what those issues are and enable the client to gain the knowledge and skills to find solutions and viable actions based on the factors they uncover.