

FREE TO GROW

Building Bridges

The reality in many organisations is that the workforce will continually become more diverse. Although it is generally accepted that **diversity is a gift to be treasured and valued**, many organisations do not experience this in practise.

For many organisations, diversity has become a burden that drives people into different camps and destroys harmony. When this happens, commitment and productivity are lost because employees feel disregarded, time is wasted with conflicts and misunderstandings and money is spent on legal fees and settlements. An environment where all employees feel included and valued yields commitment and motivation. It also enables your organisation to draw on the multiplicities of talents and strengths of all your people.

To have lasting impact, a diversity strategy should be holistic and inclusive and have a dual focus:

*** Structural:**

Creating employment policies and practices that support the organisation's commitment to diversity, integrating workforce diversity goals with all organisational design activities and creating an organisational structure to support the company's commitment to diversity.

*** Personal and interpersonal:**

Providing staff and managers with an opportunity to become more aware of and sensitive to diversity issues and to develop the skills to operate effectively in a diverse environment.

While it is important to note that training alone cannot resolve other diversity-related challenges that may exist in your organisation, effective, company-wide diversity training does play a vital role in the success or failure of your overall diversity initiative.

The challenge with traditional diversity training is that it often focuses largely on cultural diversity. After having attended such training (which people generally perceive as being 'interesting') many organisations experience that the newly obtained cultural awareness does not positively impact on the way people look at and relate to each other – the area where the change is most needed.

Understanding why people from another culture do not for example make eye contact with you can help you handle this better. But it does not encourage you to want to develop a deeper level of understanding of the people involved, nor does it give you the practical skills to build and maintain a more positive relationship with them.

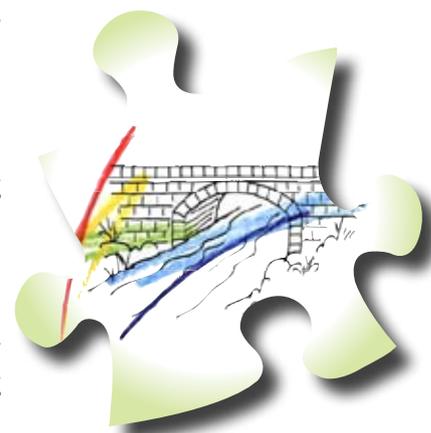
Free To Grow therefore uses our tried and tested 'inside-out' approach to first address the below the surface competencies required for effective self management and then focusses on understanding diversity, relating effectively to others and building relationships.

"The programme really worked well for us. I think it made a huge contribution to help people become more self-aware and aware of others and to create a more emotionally intelligent workforce. Someone in my office raved for days afterwards about the new worlds this programme has opened to her."

Peter van Eerden
HR Manager, DataCash

"There has been a lot of richness coming out of the sessions in terms of understanding the impact the past has on our current relationships. I strongly believe this was the best intervention that the company has chosen due to the skills and knowledge the participants are afforded and the fact that in the long run, it can have a positive impact on our organisational effectiveness."

Fikile Gumada,
Training & Development
Manager, Golden Arrow Bus
Services



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Objectives

Building Bridges is designed to go beyond traditional diversity training by:

- * Addressing the underlying values and beliefs that shape behaviours. It challenges people to reflect on their own identity, the stereotypes they hold and the long and short term cost of this.
- * Creating a safe and open climate where people feel free to share with each other what is important to them and develop the foundation for more open and honest communication.
- * Developing tangible skills to create a more positive and productive working environment for all members of the organisation.

Programme overview

1. Introduction to diversity

- * Why building bridges between people is important
- * The ideal organisation vs. what is currently the reality in terms of relationships.

2. My personal journey

- * Self-esteem: Your brake or your petrol pedal.
- * Healing the pain of the past.
- * Personality: Assessing own strengths and development areas.
- * Setting and achieving meaningful personal goals.
- * Developing a positive attitude.

3. Understanding diversity

- * Exploring the nature of the differences between people: Going beyond race, gender and culture.
- * What makes each person unique.
- * Your individual and group identity and where it comes from.
- * Your culture: how it is different and similar to that of others.
- * The diversity dartboard.
- * The core of who you are: Your personality and values.
- * The inner and outer layers of diversity and how they shape your views and perceptions.

4. You and others

- * Different ways to approach diversity (fight, ignore, accept and embrace) and the impact of each on yourself, the other person involved and the organisation.
- * Exploring the difference between beliefs, assumptions, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.
- * How the above form barriers between people.
- * Mental models and how they affect the way you look at other people.

5. Building Relationships

- * How to build more positive relationships with diverse people.
- * Working from being a 'breaker' to becoming a 'builder'
- * Increasing respect: the doorway through which you enter the relationship – how to show it verbally and non verbally.
- * Creating better understanding through open communication
- * Keys to handling conflict so that it addresses problems and increases understanding instead of further polarising people.

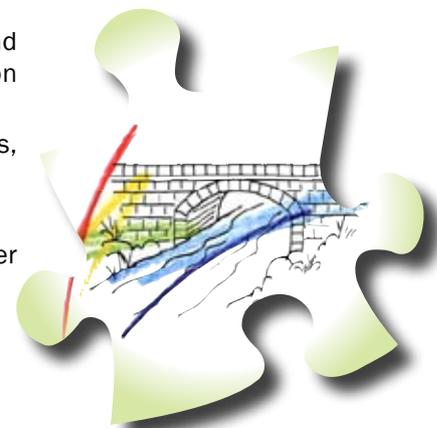
Our Approach

Our approach is not one of casting some people in the role of perpetrators and others in that of victims, but one of creating openness and building trust and better understanding amongst people. Participants are encouraged to express how they see things and how they feel about comments that are being made, within the boundaries of good group dynamic principles. In this way, the programme helps participants look at specific behaviours that cause pain or problems and find ways to avoid them.

Our focus in the programme is not on the past. Though we help people reflect on the past and how this shaped us, we challenge them to move beyond this to create the kind of organisation they want to be part of.

Duration and Group Size

Two days. Ideally 16 people, but maximum 20.



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