

# Food for Thought

## Diversity Training and Microinequities: Ensuring All Voices Are Valued

by Emily Hollis

Imagine you're on a project team, working on upgrading the organization's technology infrastructure. In meetings, you find you are often interrupted—you feel your voice isn't heard. You receive an e-mail about the project, and notice you've been left off of an e-mail chain that goes back weeks to the rest of the team. Then you notice the entire team has gone for lunch without you. You feel excluded, devalued. You are experiencing the impact of microinequities.

According to Brigid Moynahan, founder of the Next Level, a leadership training firm, microinequities are the small, subtle behaviors that devalue other people. "What's the difference between rude behavior and microinequities?" she asked. "They become microinequities when it happens consistently enough to start really walling the person out. They're subtle, and they're often semiconscious, which makes them unbelievably powerful because we often don't know why we're feeling that the climate we're in is cold or we're feeling demotivated, or we're feeling like we don't have any creativity. We're developing attitude problems, and we don't know that what's happening are subtle discounts that are building u ;inside and making us feel like we don't have value."

The term "microinequities" was originally coined by Mary Rowe, now ombuds-person and adjunct professor of Negotiation and Conflict Management at the MIT Sloan School of Management. She began her work on the subject in 1973, when she said she expected to find that the chief concerns in the workplace for people of color and for women would be big things—pension plans, dependent care support, etc. "Of course, those things all do matter, but I also heard from a great many visitors to my office about apparently little things—the kinds of things you could not take to a grievance procedure, and you maybe weren't sure it even had happened," Rowe said. "The classic example was having one's name left off a list or a supervisor that would go around the room giving out assignments who skipped the one nontraditional person in the room."

After collecting hundreds of examples of such incidents, Rowe said she began to imagine hypotheses about how together, these behaviors could damage people's goals and undermine their self-confidence. She collected them in a paper, which she revised numerous times. The first paper was written in 1973, but first published in 1991, she said.

While they are small and subtle behaviors, microinequities can have a macro impact on the business. Rowe said, "Theoretically speaking, a businessperson wants to organize a meritocracy so that people get rewarded for excellence. Favoritism obviously distorts a meritocracy, and micro-harassment, micro-aggressions and microinequities are a negative distortion. Anytime a very

Editor:  
Pat Onstott

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A bird doesn't sing  
because it has an  
answer, it sings be-  
cause it has a song.

— Maya Angelou

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## Microinequities, cont'd from page 1

good person is deflected or loses confidence or decides to leave or is just undermined, then, theoretically speaking, the business may lose.”

Moynahan said microinequities can have a number of business impacts. For organizations with diversity initiatives in place, there may be a lack of understanding of what is driving their diverse workforce to leave. “As human beings, we don’t really know how to value difference; we know how to reject it,” Moynahan said. “And we do it not by overt acts of discrimination, but by the subtle stuff that we may not even be conscious we’re doing. I just forget him or interrupt her, and it happens consistently enough so that it undermines the effort to value difference, and organizations are spending billions in this diversity industry to get people to start valuing each other, but our daily behaviors want to devalue and exclude—very subtly, but we do it all the time.”

These behaviors can have a major impact on productivity, Moynahan added. “If I do not feel that I’m being a valuable contributor, I’m going to stop coming up with ideas. I’m going to stop taking the risks. I’m going to stop giving my all,” she said. “In fact, the worst-case scenario is I’m just going to be taking up space.”

Learning executives are in the key position to stop microinequities from undermining their organizations’ goals. Companies like Chubb, JPMorgan Chase, Shell Oil and Johnson & Johnson have made microinequities training a central part of their diversity initiatives.

The first thing learning executives need to be aware of is that this is a human behavior, Moynahan said. “We’re not going to stop this stuff, but we have to understand the power of the impact of it and take responsibility to try to reduce it because of what it does to an organization,” she said. “But it will never go away because as human beings we’re going to continue to create insiders and outsiders.”

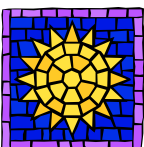
The key is awareness. “Remember that the phenomenon, if you believe it’s there, is subjective in its being, so it’s very hard to prove that anything ameliorates the problem of microinequities,” Rowe said. “But that said, lots of very good organizations have worked hard at this, partly by naming the phenomenon so that people will be on the lookout for it, and partly by setting up structures where people can talk with each other about what they see, either so they can act effectively on the spot or support each other after the fact.”

Part of acting effectively is taking a positive, valuing approach, rather than a negative approach, which can bring on defensiveness. “I have a program called ‘Count Me In,’ which says it’s also important to talk about the valuing behaviors we want to use with each other—not just the devaluing behaviors,” Moynahan said. For example, instead of pointing out to a colleague that he has interrupted a co-worker, you might suggest that the co-worker had a good point that no one heard yet and ask her to repeat it.

Learning to be a good bystander is vital. “When we do training, what matters?” Rowe asked. “I think it matters to teach us all how to be effective bystanders and peers. I think it’s helpful to learn how to interrupt unacceptable behavior, to role-model appropriate behavior rather than accuse people.”

Moynahan added that it begins with effective leadership. “Everyone is watching the leader to see who’s in and who’s out,” she said. “We want to know that—we look for it. The minute we see it, we start playing that game. So if the leader microinequities somebody and doesn’t value, then other people will stop listening to that person too.”

— by Emily Hollis, reprinted from Chief Learning Officer,  
Solutions for Enterprise Productivity,  
[www.the-next-level.com/culture\\_article.html](http://www.the-next-level.com/culture_article.html)



**People are like stained glass windows. They glow and sparkle when the sun is shining on them. But, if the sun goes down, their true beauty is revealed only if they have a light from within.**  
— Unknown

## Annual Enrollment

The July Annual Enrollment period is rapidly approaching. July 1-31 is your once-a-year opportunity to review your A&M System benefit programs and make any needed changes, which will become effective on September 1, 2008.

All active, benefit-eligible AgriLife Research, AgriLife Extension Service, and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences employees will receive their Annual Enrollment booklets and make enrollment changes electronically via HRConnect. Employees will receive an email letting them know when the new plan information is available. All retirees and COBRA participants will be mailed a paper Personal Benefit Summary letter and annual Enrollment booklet to their home address. Retirees also have the option of making their changes via HRConnect.

TTVN meetings to present group insurance plan information are scheduled for June 24, July 10, and July 16, 2008. Meeting times and locations will be listed in the meeting schedule guide found in the 2008 Annual Enrollment booklet.

Annual Enrollment booklets, the meeting schedule, and carrier PowerPoint presentations will be made available online in mid-June. Please call the AgriLife Human Resources benefit staff at 979-845-2423 if you have questions.

— Jan Kyles

*The best way to teach character is to live it. — Unknown*

## Benefit Briefs

The **Scott and White Health Plan** now contracts with over 160 independent physicians in the Bryan-College Station area who are not housed in the Scott and White College Station Clinic. These physicians have agreed to the fees and co-pays set by the Health Plan. You will not be required to pay any more for covered services by these providers than you would using a doctor at the Scott and White College Station Clinic. You can locate participating physicians, hospitals and pharmacies, through the on-line Provider Directory at [www.swhp.org](http://www.swhp.org). Remember, if you change doctors, you must first have him/her designated as your primary care physician.

Beginning with the new plan year (September 1, 2008) enrollees of the **A&M Care Dental-PPO**, administered by Delta Dental, are eligible for three cleanings per year as part of their preventive care. There is no cost for the three cleanings if the employee/retiree uses a network provider. However, non-network providers can "balance bill", which means that the provider can charge the patient the difference between what he/she charges and what the carrier is contracted to reimburse the dentist. The Delta HMO plan will continue to cover two cleanings per plan year.

The **PayFlex** flexible spending account will offer enrolled employees the ability to pay for eligible healthcare expenses using a debit card beginning September 1, 2008. Employees who choose to use the debit card will pay a one time \$9.00 administrative fee for the use of the card. Use of the card is optional and employees will still be able to fax or mail in claims.

Also, effective September 1<sup>st</sup>, the \$3.75 per month administrative fee currently paid by the employee will be absorbed by the TAMUS and no longer be deducted from the participant's payroll check.

-- Jan Kyles

## Employee Development — Where Do We Find the Time?

Take a poll and most people will agree that employee development is important. Most will also say it is essential to the future of a unit/department or agency. But where do we find the time to engage in professional development for ourselves or our employees? Taking a few hours away from our busy schedules can put us behind in our work day. Imagine the workload were we to take a whole day or a couple of days to attend a workshop or a conference!

Many who have taken the time will say that it was worth it; the break was not only enlightening, professionally, but also provided a regeneration of energy and new outlook ... so when the opportunity arises and budget permits, take advantage. But, in the meantime, here's a few tips and ideas for how to engage in professional development a little bit at a time.

Staff Meetings The agendas are full and people don't want to spend any more time in meetings than they have to but, why not consider inviting a guest speaker for a half hour session during your staff meetings? Or, if an employee did attend a workshop or conference which others might benefit from, why not invite that person to make a short presentation and display resources gathered at the event.



Lunch Breaks Oh no, please don't take our lunch breaks! Relax, think about one lunch hour a month or even bi-monthly where you can invite a guest speaker or show a video on a topic of interest to your employees. Make it an even better deal by providing the pizza or, if your unit/department budget is tight, make it a pot luck that everyone can share.



If you know for sure there is no way your department would participate in a lunch time training then move the schedule to one hour in the morning or afternoon. Arrange for some snacks – popcorn and pop if it's a video – and create a learning opportunity and a break that everyone can enjoy and appreciate.

Take a Look Back Centra Symposium and TTVN have numerous playback options available to employees that they can view from their desktop computers. Encourage employees to take advantage of the many choices available to them. Most are only an hour or so in length and can be viewed, paused, and rewound to suit the busiest employee's schedule.



Circulate & Share Remember that great article you read last week or that book somebody at the last manager's meeting recommended? Don't keep that information to yourself – send it around in an email or post the information on the bulletin board. Some units/departments might go one step further and have a circulation file or assign a designated location for leaving books/magazines to share.

The list can go on and on — opportunities for employee development are numerous — use workplace teams, peer counselling, mentoring, and coaching, to name just a few more.

For more information, contact:

Beverley Rose, Training & Development Specialist, barose@ag.tamu.edu , 979-458-3279

**Character is revealed in little things—like who you are when  
no one is watching.  
— Unknown**

## Helpful Websites

**Human Resources** - [aghr.tamu.edu/](http://aghr.tamu.edu/)

**Texas A&M AgriLife Directory** - [agdirectory.tamu.edu/](http://agdirectory.tamu.edu/)

**A&M System Online** - [tamus.edu/systemwide/](http://tamus.edu/systemwide/)

**Benefits** - [aghr.tamu.edu/benefits.htm](http://aghr.tamu.edu/benefits.htm)

**Dictionary** - [dictionary.reference.com/](http://dictionary.reference.com/)

**Employment Posters** - [hrtoolbox.tamu.edu/](http://hrtoolbox.tamu.edu/)

**GreatJobs** - [greatjobs.tamu.edu](http://greatjobs.tamu.edu) (Applicant site)  
[greatjobs.tamu.edu/hr](http://greatjobs.tamu.edu/hr) (Employee site)

**Food For Thought Archives** - [aghr.tamu.edu/food4thought.htm](http://aghr.tamu.edu/food4thought.htm)

**Forms (Alpha List)** - [agservices.tamu.edu/Forms/forms-alfa.htm](http://agservices.tamu.edu/Forms/forms-alfa.htm)

**Holiday Schedules** - [aghr.tamu.edu/holidays.htm](http://aghr.tamu.edu/holidays.htm)

**Maps** - [www.mapquest.com/](http://www.mapquest.com/)

**New Employee Processing** - [aghr.tamu.edu/processing.htm](http://aghr.tamu.edu/processing.htm)

**Postage Rate Calculator** - [postcalc.usps.gov/](http://postcalc.usps.gov/)

**Payroll** - [aghr.tamu.edu/pay.htm](http://aghr.tamu.edu/pay.htm)

**Policies, Procedures & Forms** - [aghr.tamu.edu/policies.htm](http://aghr.tamu.edu/policies.htm)

**Selective Service Registration Verification** - <https://www.sss.gov/RegVer/wfVerification.aspx>

**SSO (HR Connect, TimeTraq, LeaveTraq)** - <https://sso.tamus.edu>

**Zip Code Lookup** - [zip4.usps.com/zip4/welcome.jsp](http://zip4.usps.com/zip4/welcome.jsp)

## Did you know...?

According to one helpful-hint expert, you can use a drop of vinegar or vodka on each lens to clean eyeglasses without streaks.

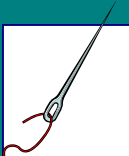


A good way to tell if aspirin has deteriorated is if it smells like vinegar.

One of the best ways to clean pewter pieces is to rub them with cabbage leaves.



An effective way to sharpen a sewing machine needle is to stitch through a piece of sandpaper.



Apparently, rain is good for wicker lawn furniture. Wicker lasts longer if it gets wet once in a while.

To clean tarnished copper bottoms of pots and pans, spread a little ketchup onto the bottom. Let it sit for about one minute. Wipe it clean and rinse.



Candles burn more slowly and evenly with minimum wax drippings if they are placed in the freezer for an hour before using.



*(These helpful hints were found on the Internet and have not been tested for accuracy.)*

## Five Things You Never Knew Your Cell Phone Could Do

There are a few things that can be done in times of grave emergencies.

Your mobile phone can actually be a life saver or an emergency tool for survival. Check out the things that you can do with it:

### **FIRST—Emergency**

The Emergency Number worldwide for Mobile is 112. If you find Yourself out of the coverage area of your mobile network and there is an Emergency, dial 112 and the mobile will search any existing network to establish the emergency number for you, and interestingly, this number 112 can be dialed even if the keypad is locked. Try it out.

### **SECOND—Have you locked your keys in the car?**

Does your car have remote keyless entry? This may come in handy someday. Good reason to own a cell phone: If you lock your keys in the car and the spare keys are at home, call someone at home on their cell phone from your cell phone. Hold your cell phone about a foot from your car door and have the person at your home press the unlock button, holding it near the mobile phone on their end. Your car will unlock. Saves someone from having to drive your keys to you. Distance is no object. You could be hundreds of miles away, and if you can reach someone who has the other 'remote' for your car, you can unlock the doors (or the trunk).

### **THIRD—Hidden Battery Power**

Imagine your cell battery is very low. To activate, press the keys \*3370#. Your cell phone will restart with this reserve and the instrument will show a 50% increase in battery. This reserve will get charged when you charge your cell phone next time.

### **FOURTH—How to disable a STOLEN mobile phone?**

To check your Mobile phone's serial number, key in the following digits on your phone: \*#06#. A 15-digit code will appear on the screen. This number is unique to your handset. Write it down and keep it somewhere safe.

When your phone gets stolen, you can phone your service provider and give them this code. They will then be able to block your handset so even if the thief changes the SIM card, your phone will be totally useless. You probably won't get your phone back, but at least you know that whoever stole it can't use/sell it either. If everybody does this, there would be no point in people stealing mobile phones.

### **FIFTH—Free Directory Service for Cells**

Cell phone companies are charging us \$1.00 to \$1.75 or more for 411 information calls when they don't have to. Most of us do not carry a telephone directory in our vehicle, which makes this situation even more of a problem. When you need to use the 411 information option, simply dial: (800)FREE411, or (800) 373-3411 without incurring any charge at all. Program this into your cell phone now.

**Always speak the truth, and you'll never have to be concerned about your memory.  
— Unknown**

## Hardship or Opportunity?

Lornah Kiplagat learned to run because she did not want to be late for school. Each morning, this little Kenyan girl would help her father milk the family cows as soon as there was enough light from the rising sun. Then she would run the 14 miles from her home to school – where she was an eager student, knowing education was her best option for a better future. At the time she did not realize that her running was laying the foundation for her world-class status as a long-distance runner. She ran because she was poor – but in the process she developed the discipline and stamina to rise above all competition in running.

Could it be that there is an opportunity in something you consider a hardship right now? Most inventions, great books, and leadership skills emerge from those tough times in our lives when we needed a solution or the fortitude to just survive. As I look back on my own early farming days – yes, those days of just looking forward to leaving the farm – I now realize the value of having significant carpentry, plumbing, electrical and mechanical skills. Those insights have saved me thousands of dollars over the years and also opened my eyes to innovative solutions in business. My writing draws from the challenges I've faced myself in career and business.

Is the “running” in your own life just a means to an end or is it teaching you and preparing you for something great? Maybe that long commute is giving you time to learn a new language or better parenting skills. Maybe the broken machinery at work is providing you the opportunity for the next great invention. Perhaps your constant struggle with fatigue is positioning you to discover a nutritional breakthrough.

Lornah, that little Kenyan girl is now 33 years old. She holds four world records. She has also established an academic foundation for other little girls in Kenya. They are trained in athletics but also in academics and personal development. Lornah is committed to putting an end to the enduring tradition of female subservience in Kenya and recognizes that her running has given her the opportunity to be that force for change.

— Reprinted from Dan Miller's Weekly  
E-newsletter, 48 Days, Business Source in  
Brentwood. [Www.48days.com](http://www.48days.com)

**All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything.  
What we think, we become. — Buddha**

## New Employee in Human Resources

Amanda Mendoza joined the staff of Human Resources on April 7. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M. She was recently employed by Aggieland Travel as a travel agent. In Human Resources, she will be providing assistance for the GreatJobs website, submitting background checks for employee applicants, and providing general clerical assistance. Amanda's husband is currently a student at Texas A&M and they have a 2 1/2 year old daughter.  
— Pat Onstott