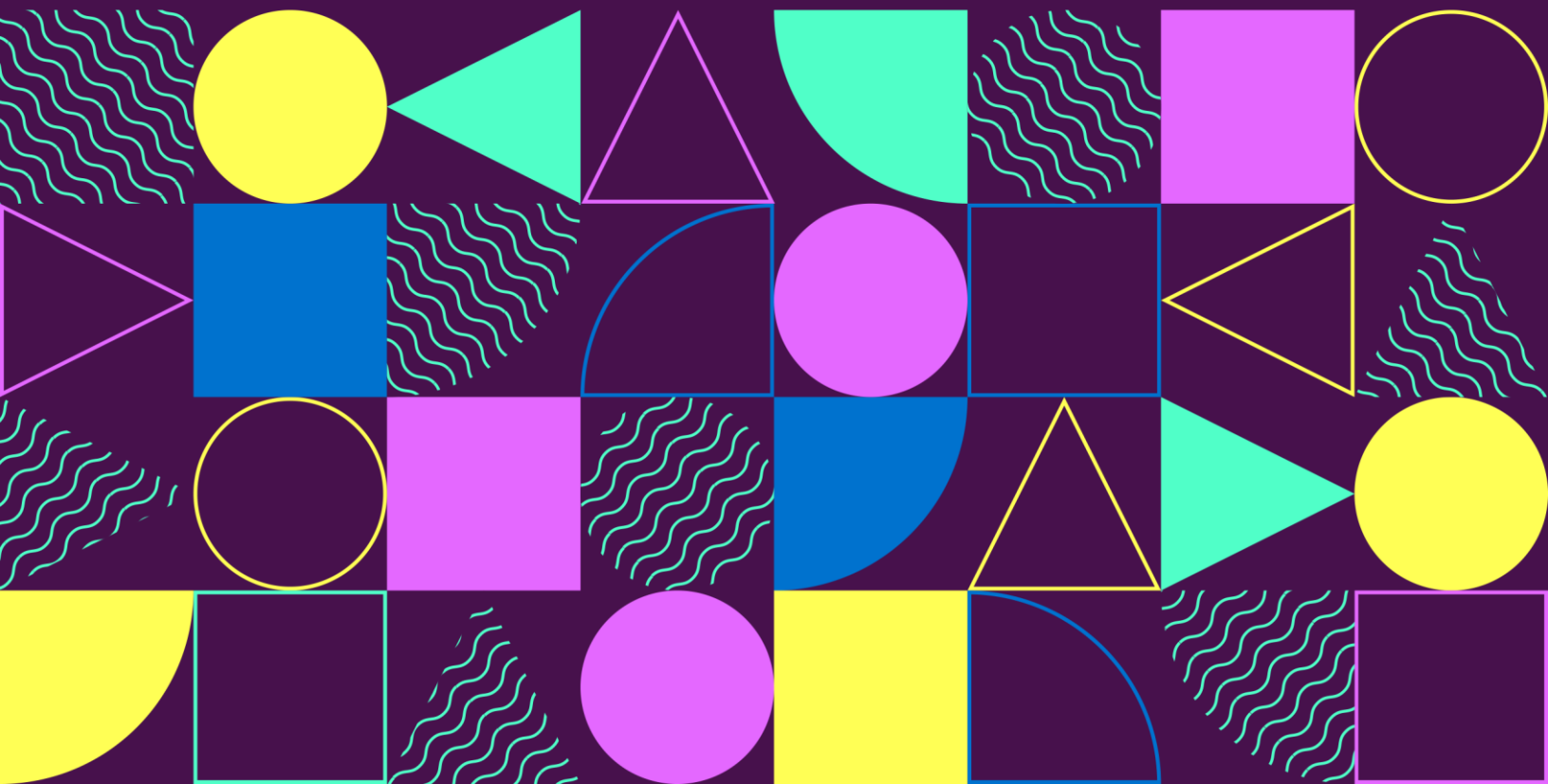




WORKBOOK

# Transforming Workplace Culture

A 2025 Roadmap to Inclusion and Belonging



# The State of Workplace in 2025

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Today's workplaces are at a crossroads. The data tells a stark story.

**Inclusion is slipping.** [Seramount research](#) shows that multiracial employees, in particular, have experienced a steep decline in perceptions of inclusion—from 66 percent in 2021 to 54 percent in 2024. Even among White employees, only 58 percent believe senior leaders are effectively engaging with diverse individuals, down from 70 percent in 2021.

**Bias is on the rise.** Reports of workplace bias have [increased across nearly all racial groups](#), reflecting a broader trend consistent with EEOC data showing bias-related charges jumping from [61,331 in 2021 to 81,055 in 2023](#).

**Polarization is amplifying workplace tensions.** Incivility in the workplace grew by [27% in just a few months](#) in 2024, with nearly half of employees attributing conflicts to political differences.

These trends have real consequences. Employees who feel excluded or experience bias are more likely to disengage, reduce their productivity, or leave their jobs altogether—at a time when retention and engagement are already critical challenges for HR leaders.

## The Path Forward

These troubling trends leave many employers at a loss for how to respond. But the solution often boils down to rethinking one critical factor: culture.

With these challenges on the rise, it's no surprise that [35 percent of workers](#) today describe their company culture as "toxic." Building a culture on a foundation of inclusion can break this cycle. When fairness, respect, and belonging are prioritized, workplaces become less vulnerable to the divisive effects of bias and exclusion.

Creating such a culture isn't easy, but it is achievable. By addressing critical areas such as **unconscious bias**, **incivility**, and **psychological safety**, organizations can foster environments where employees feel valued and empowered—and where toxic dynamics are far less likely to take root.

## Address Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias is a silent disruptor in many workplaces, subtly influencing decisions, relationships, and opportunities. Nearly [66 percent of employees](#) report experiencing at least one microaggression at work—ranging from assumptions about their seniority to surprise over their qualifications.

These experiences compound over time, causing far-reaching impact, from disengagement and a lack of trust in the organization to loss of productivity or even attrition. In fact, experiencing—or even just witnessing—bias, discrimination, or microaggressions makes employees [1.4 times more likely](#) to quit their jobs.

Getting Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Create Structures and Processes</b></p> <p>Standardize and document key processes to reduce the influence of bias in decisions such as hiring, promotions, and performance reviews. Clear, measurable criteria rooted in role-specific competencies make decisions more objective and fairer.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Implement Secondary Reviews</b></p> <p>Introduce a “second pair of eyes” for decisions where unconscious bias might creep in, such as hiring or promotions. Secondary reviews force decision-makers to justify their reasoning, providing an additional layer of accountability and fairness.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Foster Personal Connections Across Teams</b></p> <p>Encourage employees to build authentic relationships with colleagues on their teams or even in other departments. Cross-functional projects, mentorship programs, and social events can help build meaningful personal connections that break down stereotypes, build empathy, and reduce bias.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Offer Targeted Bias Training</b></p> <p>Equip employees with tools to identify and address bias, both in themselves and in others. Practical training should go beyond awareness, teaching participants how to challenge microaggressions, respond to biased comments constructively, and create a more inclusive environment.</p>

### Reflection Questions

- ▶ What unconscious biases might you hold, and how might they influence your interactions or decisions at work?
- ▶ Which processes in your organization are most vulnerable to unconscious bias? What steps can you take to begin to address them?

## Promote Civility

Workplace incivility—rude, disrespectful, or insensitive behavior—is more common than many organizations realize. In fact, [nearly two-thirds of workers](#) have witnessed or experienced incivility in the past month.

This pervasive behavior can have [sweeping consequences](#): Employees who experience incivility are three times more likely to feel dissatisfied with their job and twice as likely to leave the organization within the year. Left unchecked, incivility breeds disengagement, reduces productivity, and damages overall team cohesion.

Getting Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Establish a Clear Code of Conduct</b></p> <p>Ensure all employees understand what behaviors are unacceptable and the consequences for violating this standard, including a zero-tolerance policy for incivility. Make sure the code is visible, easily accessible, and referenced during onboarding and training.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Create an Open-Door Policy</b></p> <p>An open-door policy fosters trust and ensures that employees don't feel they have to tolerate unacceptable behavior. HR should be ready to listen, investigate, and take action swiftly when necessary.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Implement Conflict Resolution Processes</b></p> <p>Provide employees with structured processes for addressing conflict in a respectful and effective manner. Offer clear steps on how to involve HR or trained mediators if needed to resolve the conflict. This helps employees feel they have a reliable system in place to handle sensitive situations.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Offer Training on Conflict Management and Communication</b></p> <p>Encourage employees to view civility as a shared responsibility through focused training. Equip them to recognize and address issues early, handle conflicts effectively, communicate respectfully, and manage incivility in daily interactions.</p>

### Reflection Questions

- ▶ Think back to the last few months: Have you heard of any instances of incivility in your organization? If not, do you think employees felt safe bringing these concerns forward?
- ▶ Reflect on how your top leaders model civility in the workplace. Do they consistently model respectful behavior, or is there room for improvement?

## Foster Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is crucial to team success. In fact, a Google case study found it to be the [single biggest predictor of team performance](#). When present, employees are [more motivated](#), [more likely to reach their full potential](#), and [more likely to stay in their role](#).

In today's polarized landscape, employees may be more likely to feel excluded or unsafe, impacting not only team culture but also employee engagement, productivity, and overall performance. That's why fostering a psychologically safe environment, where individuals feel comfortable sharing ideas and voicing concerns, is more important than ever.

### Getting Started



#### Approach Conflict with the Intent to Problem-Solve

When conflict arises, approach it collaboratively. Prioritize finding mutually beneficial solutions rather than escalating tensions. This helps avoid a fight-or-flight reaction and encourages constructive dialogue that moves the team forward.



#### Create Safe Spaces for Conversation

Employees need a space where they feel comfortable discussing challenges, asking questions, and offering feedback without fear of judgment. Foster open communication channels that encourage honest, constructive dialogue among teammates, managers, or cross-functional colleagues on any issue.



#### Model Psychological Safety

A single instance of a leader dismissing a team member's question or concern can damage the entire team's perception of safety. Leaders should model openness by acknowledging their own fallibility, asking for feedback, and responding with curiosity rather than blame.



#### Sponsor Training on Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is a collective responsibility. Offer training that helps employees recognize how their actions can impact the safety of others, including practicing real-world scenarios to understand how everyday interactions can foster or undermine psychological safety.

### Reflection Questions

- ▶ Consider how you feel at your organization—do you feel comfortable speaking up about sensitive issues, or are there barriers that prevent open dialogue?
- ▶ How can you collaborate with people managers and leaders to foster a culture of open communication and support?

# The Role of Training in an Inclusive Workplace

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You may have noticed a common thread running through the strategies we've discussed: training. This is no coincidence. Education serves as the foundation for transforming negative behaviors and building a more inclusive workplace.

Creating an inclusive environment requires consistent effort, and training provides employees with a structured approach to develop the competencies they need to thrive.

While many unproductive patterns are learned, they can also be unlearned. Training equips employees with the essential skills to recognize and address harmful patterns before they escalate. Awareness fosters more intentional behavior, which leads to meaningful change.

**Seramount's Learning & Development** sessions dive deep into the strategies outlined in this workbook, offering your entire team the knowledge and insights necessary to navigate the evolving nature of bias and inclusion.

While these sessions lay the groundwork for understanding inclusion, we recognize that the landscape of inclusion and belonging is constantly evolving—as we've seen firsthand in recent years. That's why our expert advisors are available to provide ongoing support as new challenges arise, armed with decades of practical experience.

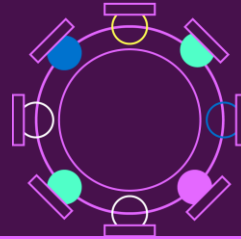
**Contact Seramount** to learn more about our Learning & Development program and the many other benefits offered to members, from expert guidance and cutting-edge research to a library of resources and tools to help your organization thrive.

## Explore More Resources

- Guide: [Fostering Psychological Safety in Teams](#)
- Tool: [Civility in Workplace Conversations](#)
- Best Practice: [Eliminating Bias in the Hiring Process with a Focus on Blind Resumes](#)

### Seramount Learning & Development 2025 Series

- Neurodivergent Inclusion, January 2025
- Intercultural Competence, February 2025
- Psychological Safety, March 2025
- Civility in the Workplace, April 2025
- Unconscious Bias, May 2025



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