

Unconscious Bias Awareness Training

Addressing biased beliefs through training

AMTA and Psychosocial Hazards

Alberta Motor Transport Association (AMTA) is working to draw attention to the problem of workplace psychosocial hazards in the trucking industry. We have published a [guide on addressing psychosocial hazards](#) meant to provide best practices small- and medium-sized carriers can put into place. This bulletin presents one of the best practices from the guide: unconscious bias awareness training.



Overview

We all have biases of one form or another. Sometimes, we are not aware of our biases even though they may impact our behaviours and thoughts. Unconscious bias awareness training sheds light on these biases so we may address them directly.

“Bias”, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is “inclination of prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.” [1] Bias means a person has a preferred way of behaving when presented with multiple options, and it’s not uncommon to hear some admit they are biased when providing an opinion. For example, someone might cite their experience as a reason why they prefer a particular type of food or a certain route for their drive home.

Unconscious bias means a bias someone has of which they are not aware but still affects their thoughts and actions. Someone would not admit to unconscious bias affecting their decision making simply because, by definition, they would not be aware of their unconscious biases. They might know they have unconscious biases, but as soon as they discover a specific unconscious bias and bring it into their awareness, it is no longer an unconscious bias and they can now choose to address it.

Organizations like the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) offer training on unconscious bias awareness [2]. The purpose of unconscious bias awareness training is to create an awareness in the participants of their unconscious biases so they may address them and monitor their thoughts and behaviours for signs of the bias’s influence [3].

Mental illness sufferers often face discrimination due to associated stigma [4]. Similarly, psychosocial hazards must contend with stigma as well; some people and organisations do not consider them equal to health and safety hazards that can result in physical injuries or illnesses. If an organisation has the will to address psychosocial hazards but struggles with taking them seriously or understanding them, unconscious bias awareness training provides one possible way to address these issues.

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If a company knows many of its staff make disparaging jokes about psychosocial hazards, it may not be able to successfully implement any meaningful measures to control these hazards until it has greater staff buy-in. Addressing biases against these hazards may be the first logical place for an organisation to start.

Benefits

Unconscious bias awareness training can be done through a variety of learning formats suitable to small- and medium-sized trucking companies. From short webinars to hiring consultants who possess the Canadian Certified Inclusion Professional (CCIP) designation through the CCDI [5], organisations are likely to find a training model that suits their unique operational demands and workforce.

Like some of the other best practices suggested in this paper, unconscious bias awareness training may help address other concerns within an organisation. For example, a carrier may need to address unconscious biases within their workforce and management before they are able to successfully retain a diverse workforce. In an article about this subject, Briana Perry writes “although unconscious bias is often hidden from one's own perception, it is still perceivable by others” [6]; this training could help organisations understand why some of their internal problems exist.

Challenges

Training in unconscious bias awareness will require active participation. If people are not willing to take the training seriously it will be of little value; if the company's leaders hint at the training not being worthwhile, staff will not find the training effort to be sincere and not feel as motivated to participate. A safe space for dialogue and different opinions is essential, so this best practice will be hard to implement if the carrier isn't confident, they can provide such an environment.

Unconscious bias awareness training in its simplest form sheds light on biases. Once a bias is identified, the person must then take action to confront it: a simple idea, but not necessarily easy [7]. Like a hazard assessment, once the concern has been identified, action is then required. Unconscious bias awareness training without a commitment to act will not bring about meaningful change, so while this training will be a part of psychosocial hazard prevention programs, it will likely not be the only part.

More Help

Service providers and consultants may form a significant part of an organisation's approach to unconscious bias awareness training. Organisations like the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) [8] and the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) [9] can provide guidance in this area.

Need Help? Contact

AMTA can provide carriers with guidance on the information presented in this bulletin. If you have any questions, please contact AMTA and our experienced staff will be happy to help. For your safety and compliance questions, please email Workplace Support Services (WSS) directly at wss@amta.ca.

For more updates like this on a variety of topics related to the trucking industry, please sign [up for our eNews](#).

References

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- 9 – Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion. 2022. “Contact Us.” Accessed December 7th, 2022, <https://ccdi.ca/general-inquiries/>