

PUBLICATION

Diversity Matters: Note from the Editor - Implicit Bias Training

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Freudian slips are commonplace mistakes in speech which are believed to reveal underlying, unconscious thoughts. Neuroscientists have shown that the unconscious mind is in control of decisions, actions and emotions 95 percent of the time, and that the conscious mind is only in control of cognitive or conscious decisions five percent of the time. The unconscious mind is generally on auto-pilot, creating shortcuts and categories to help a person get through each day without belaboring the consciousness. Some shortcuts, like tying one's shoes without thought, are very helpful. Other shortcuts, like automatically categorizing co-workers based upon their appearance, background, position and/or demographic, can lead to unintended bias (positive or negative) in the workplace.

Approximately 20 percent of large U.S. companies with diversity programs have implemented unconscious bias training. Baker Donelson has just completed its "implicit bias" training for the majority of our more than 1,300 employees across 19 offices. The training included a presentation and discussion that demonstrated how everyone has implicit or unconscious biases, and that those biases are usually a function of personal experiences. The training provided mechanisms to facilitate checking employment decisions and workplace actions for bias. It also emphasized the importance of making employment decisions based upon objective requirements and avoiding knee-jerk or impulsive decisions.

The Firm invested in implicit bias training as one way to ensure that it remains a best place to work for everyone. In May 2015, we were named among the "50 Best Places to Work for New Dads" in a report compiled by *Fatherly*, a lifestyle guide. Earlier this year, the Firm earned its sixth consecutive ranking on *Fortune's* "100 Best Companies to Work For®" list, ranking 30th, the Firm's highest ranking yet. This also marks the Firm's second consecutive year as the highest ranked law firm on this list. While Freudian slips are not easy to avoid, the implicit bias training aims to ensure mindful interactions within the Firm and has further solidified its foundations as a diverse and inclusive workplace.