

DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS

Stories by contributing writer Pat Kossan • Photos by Jim Poulin and Tim Koors

Joel Martin: Diversity training was inspiration for making a difference

Joel Martin owned a New York advertising agency, but she opted to start over as a management coach and diversity trainer.

"I had to ask myself what I wanted to do with the rest of my life: Make a difference to a human being, or sell another bottle of beer," she said.

Martin was inspired to make the change after she participated in diversity training and recognized its value to individuals and businesses. She started a Scottsdale business called Triad West Inc. in 1997. Since then, she has designed training programs, coached managers and taught employees for large and small companies and agencies around the world.

Her company's training evolves as needs change.

"When we first started in diversity training, my industry was more about compliance," Martin said. Corporations were hiring more Hispanics, blacks and women, and they feared untrained employees could trigger sexual harass-

ment lawsuits or federal discrimination complaints.

While working with these businesses, she learned an important lesson: "Just because an organization is diverse doesn't mean it's inclusive." A company might hire Latinos, blacks and women, but if no one is interested in their work or their ideas, if no one invites them to brainstorming sessions or out for coffee, then the company is not making the best of all of its employees' assets, she said.

That insight prompted growth in what Martin calls her transformational training model.

"Do you do your best work when you're excluded? No, you don't," she said. "There are statistics that prove the value of training, development and inclusion in the workforce. Performance goes up; conflict goes down."

Today, Martin uses research to reveal management practices that harm the bottom line, but are not apparent to the managers. For example, thin women tend to fare better in the workplace

than heavier women, and women with Afro hairstyles tend to be viewed as less professional than women with straight hair.

"They are issues that can be factors and not appreciated by those consciously looking to increase inclusion and equity," Martin said. "They are unconscious decisions that we make."

Those decisions can lead managers to ignore certain employees' talents. This can harm organizations that have a more diverse workforce than ever, including a wide difference of ages.

"We're at a rare time in our American history where we can conceivably have five generations working together in the workplace at the same time," Martin said. "How do you manage that as a leader?"

JOEL MARTIN

WORK: President, Triad West Inc.; director of training and education, George Fraser's annual PowerNetworking Conference; board member, American Baptist Homes of the West; member, Scottsdale Human Relations Commission

HISTORY: Martin was named the National Alliance of Market Developers Entrepreneur of the Year and Greater Phoenix Black Chamber of Commerce Community Advocate of the Year. She also produces the annual Positively Powerful Woman Awards, which honor outstanding leaders.



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