



Brandon Hall Group
**EXCELLENCE
AT WORK**

Executive Interview

with **Stacey Helstrom**,
M.A., GPHR, Global Enterprise,
Learning and Leadership Development Leader
Eastman Chemical Company

Eastman Chemical Shares Their Award-Winning
Program on How to Mitigate Unconscious Bias

About Eastman Chemical Company

Founded in 1920, Eastman is a global specialty materials company that produces a broad range of products found in items people use every day. With the purpose of enhancing the quality of life in a material way, Eastman works with customers to deliver innovative products and solutions while maintaining a commitment to safety and sustainability.

As a globally inclusive and diverse company, Eastman employs approximately 14,000 people around the world and serves customers in more than 100 countries. The company had 2021 revenues of approximately \$10.5 billion and is headquartered in Kingsport, Tenn.

Recognition

Eastman Chemical won two Gold Brandon Hall Group HCM Excellence Awards in 2022.

EXCELLENCE IN HCM AWARDS



Learning and Development

1 Gold Award

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

1 Gold Award

The Brandon Hall Group Preferred Provider Program is specifically designed as a single source of truth that can validate your technology selection decisions.

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About Stacey Helstrom



Stacey Helstrom joined Eastman to lead the enterprise's Learning and Leadership Development function in the fall of 2016. She works with organizational leaders and teams to analyze business objectives and align organization development strategies and espoused values to accelerate performance and success. She also advises the company's Latinx employee resource group and leads the global cadre of senior coaches who are strategically leveraged to support talent development and change initiatives across the enterprise. In 2022, she won the Brandon Hall Group Gold Award for Best Learning Program for Unconscious Bias. Stacey and her husband, Dean, have two grown children and enjoy time together with family, hiking, cooking and relaxing on their boat.



About Rachel Cooke

Rachel Cooke is Brandon Hall Group's Chief Operating Officer and Principal HCM Analyst. She is responsible for business operations, including client and member advisory services, marketing design, annual awards programs, conferences and the company's project management functions. She also leads Advancing Women in the Workplace and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, research and events. Rachel worked in the HCM research industry for 20+ years and held several key management and executive positions within the Talent and Learning Research, and Performance Improvement industries.

RACHEL

Stacey, how did you become a learning leader?

STACEY

I began my career as a speech-language pathologist. I had the opportunity after a few years to lead teams and that was a great experience for me. I enjoyed watching people grow and find their best selves and finding those unique ways to help each individual shine. I ended up working for a global human resources consulting firm several years ago and have had great opportunities just to build on my experiences. For the past 12 or 15 years, I've been primarily focused on leadership development, of which inclusion and diversity are important parts.

RACHEL

Can you describe the design of your award-winning program — *Inclusive Leadership Training Empowers Eastman Leaders to Recognize and Mitigate Unconscious Bias to Drive High Performance*?

STACEY

At Eastman, we address inclusion and diversity through four pillars. One of those pillars is mitigating unconscious bias. The second pillar is fostering an inclusive culture. The third pillar is building inclusive teams, which brings us back to the team aspect. Finally, there's accelerating diversity and leadership.

The mitigating unconscious bias and accelerating diversity and leadership pillars are both squarely addressed by our inclusive leadership program. Inclusive leadership was designed with the individual leader in mind. Before launching the program in 2021, we had established two other programs that were filling a couple of needs. One was just helping individuals understand what their life experience has been for them and how it has shaped them and their worldview so that they are better positioned to see the views of others. What has my life's privilege really looked like? And, yes, I have had privilege, regardless of who I am.

Another program focused on intact teams and discovering opportunities to be more inclusive within that team. What we're missing was something that an individual leader could participate in, do a deep dive — a diagnosis for themselves on where unconscious bias is showing up in day-to-day decisions. Who gets the stretch assignments? Who am I considering or advocating for promotion? What does my team tend to look and sound like? Do they look and sound like me to a large degree? What might I do differently so that I can create more diversity and a greater breadth of thought and creativity in my team?

(continued)

When we advertise a program and invite people to engage in it, we tell them we're not here to change their beliefs. That's not our job. What we are here to do is to open the door to seeing things differently so that you might make some choices that have a better impact than what you're able to have today. The topic of changing my beliefs is really important because that's a core part of how any one of us identifies ourselves and it would not be fair for an employer to suggest that I'm here to change your core beliefs. I do have a fair stand to make in asking for each of us to show up a certain way so that we can bring our full selves and maximize our opportunities in terms of our business strategy.

map to open their thinking and try something different on for size. That challenge was voiced on the front end and I'm grateful for that because it helped me understand in real-time where I had some opportunities to make some tweaks. The important thing in topic areas such as this is to meet people where they are so that you can take them where they need to go. As the program has gotten more popular and more people have experienced it in full and have deployed their conscious inclusion plans and see they're seeing differences, we don't find ourselves needing to have that kind of dialogue on the front end.



RACHEL

Did you face challenges or obstacles that you had to overcome?



RACHEL

What are some of your success stories? What kind of impact did you have and how did you get people to take action with what they learned?



STACEY

Where we're located and where the bulk of our employees are based is in Tennessee. Our religion and my beliefs that are related to what I've been taught in church over my lifetime are important considerations. The challenge we faced on the front end was thinking ahead as to how we can offer deep respect for the beliefs that are a part of a lot of our employees' lives while at the same time giving them a road



STACEY

One of the things that's unique about this program is the conscious inclusion plan. We're walking our participants through some material that helps them understand how we got here. Unconscious bias is a part of our hard-wiring; it's our easy button, it's the piece of our brain that tells us what is safe and what we should pay attention to.

(continued)

The purpose of this program is to help us find the necessary override buttons. The process of doing that is creating a greater understanding of what important terms mean, and how they impact different groups of people and people around each of us on any given day. Things like microaggressions; what is that? How does it show up? We go a little deeper into gender and racial biases because they're more visible and more prevalent, and they're touchier topics. What better way to create a shared language and a broader point of view around what we can do differently and better in that space than to talk about it?

We invite ERG leadership team members to co-facilitate those sessions with us. They're able to bring real stories that our participants can react to. We've created a safe space. I am thrilled and amazed that every time we run a session at the candor and the tenderness, too, that's exhibited in the kinds of questions that get asked and discussed in the session. What we're working toward is the conscious inclusion plan where they're able to make plans for activating what they've learned about how I can address microaggressions within my space.

For example, we use a process called Map-Bridge-Integrate to get them prepared. What that exercise does is offer our participants the opportunity to think about each of the individual team members they have and ask, "What do I think I know about their life experience that they're bringing to the table each day? And as I think about that, then what questions are coming to mind where I might need to go a little bit deeper to better understand them?" That's the Mapping piece. The Bridging piece is thinking about the group members in whole, where might there be some opportunities to create better bridges so that we're tapping into the

uniquenesses and building connection points between people who might seem really disparate in their perspective or the set of experiences they're bringing. The Integrated piece is creating more specific plans for acting on what you've uncovered in those first two steps.

Then it just becomes a process of making a specific plan for myself. What objectives do I want to accomplish? Maybe I want to increase the diversity of hires that I am making. What are some things that I can do in that space? Give me a timeframe. We ask for near-term and longer-term goals — 30-, 60- and 90-day goals. How will you recognize that you're making progress and what will be the signals that tell you, "Maybe I need to rethink this or ask for advice?" Then we ask them to do that same exercise for their individual team members and finally, think about the team as a whole. We're not advocating boiling the ocean, we advocating steps that one can easily commit to, measure and grow from.

The way it's set up now — and probably will be for the foreseeable future — is that it's attached to our flagship first-time leader program. Inclusive leadership is the final module of the program. The first module is self-awareness, then coaching, then leading change and high-performing teams. We wrap up the program with inclusive leadership because we feel it includes all of the previous content areas. Just the other week, we ran a standalone offering of inclusive leadership for leaders who would not have had access to it as part of their front-line leadership program. That's one "catch-up" mechanism we have available. We would like to offer it much more broadly but given our capacity, it's our strong belief that simply giving people a tool to create a plan isn't useful without the context that gets you in the right spaces.

Q

RACHEL

What are some lessons learned and advice/recommendations you can offer to learning leaders?

A

STACEY

We all live our lives in very connected ways, so when we're thinking about content or learning experiences that are meant to shift behaviors, we're most successful when what we think about and what we're working toward are integrated into the full fabric of our learners' lives. They're whole people, not just widget makers in a plant somewhere. They're also mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons and daughters, community members, volunteers, etc. It's really valuable to make as many of those connections for them as possible.

Not all change opportunities are created equal. It's important to understand what is really getting in people's way. That's how we learned and are pretty clear about church and religion for a number of our participants. The front-end work we did to gauge people's interest, and where things were getting in the way, was valuable because it affords the opportunity to meet others head-on, put a name on it and work through it together.

Here are some ways to listen to the interview on Brandon Hall Group's Excellence at Work Podcast:



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EXCELLENCE
AT WORK**

About Brandon Hall Group

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 28 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

Professional Certifications

Self-paced certification programs. Virtual group sessions for companies. In-person conferences and summits.

Membership

Individual and Enterprise Membership Options: Includes research assets, advisory support, a client success plan and more.

Advisory Offerings

Custom Research Projects, including surveys, focus group interviews and Organization Needs Assessment for Transformation, Technology Selection and Strategy.

Excellence Awards

Two annual programs recognize the best organizations that have successfully deployed programs to achieve measurable results.

SOME WAYS
WE CAN HELP

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

recognizes world-class HCM programs that transform their organization and achieve breakthrough results. This designation is the next step beyond the HCM Excellence Awards, which focus on a single program, and looks at the department as a whole.

SMARTCHOICE® PREFERRED PROVIDER PROGRAM

uniquely places HCM service and technology companies at the top of organizations' consideration list of vendors. It adds an unmatched level of credibility based on BHG's twenty-eight-plus years of experience in evaluating and selecting the best solution providers for leading organizations around the world.