



Retail Business Services

Viewpoint: Inclusive Leadership

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This viewpoint was contributed by Erin DeWaters, Director of Communications for Retail Business Services,



the services company of Ahold Delhaize USA.

Did you know that 98% of our thoughts are unconscious? No? I didn't either. This fact surprised both me and Steve DaSilva, Director of Strategic Constructions Projects. We both participated last week in a Leading Inclusively training, part of a new program Retail Business Services is rolling out for leaders beginning this year and continuing into 2022 as we pursue our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals.

"I had no idea it was such a high number and such an influence," Steve shared.

What it means, I learned, is that our thinking is usually fast, instinctive and emotional, as opposed to the flip side, which is slow, effortful and logical. That creates a lot of space for unconscious bias to creep in. And despite our best intentions, we've all got it. Over the course of two and a half hours we focused on the culture of inclusion we want to create in RBS and the role unconscious bias can play in derailing our efforts.

By being aware of our unconscious biases, we can take steps to mitigate them and better impact others. A big part of this for me is mindfulness. Sighing when someone else is speaking or checking emails or texting while someone is talking (guilty) can have a huge impact on whether a person feels included in that environment and in our culture.

Maintaining appropriate eye contact when listening, listening to opinions without judgment and letting someone speak without interrupting can create a completely different experience.

For me, none of those positive actions are hard. They take just a few more seconds of conscious thought.

I appreciate the reminder and the opportunity to work for a company that enables us to take time out to put some thought into the small part we each play in creating an inclusive workplace.