

masie presents  
**L&D and DEI Shifts**



**TO: Learning and Development Colleagues**

**FROM: Elliott Masie, MASIE Learning Foundation**

**DATE: January 31, 2025**

**RE: “L&D and DEI Shifts” Dialogue Summary**

On January 30, 2025 The MASIE Learning Foundation hosted an online Zoom gathering of over 275 Learning and Development leaders from corporations, government agencies and education institutions. **Here is a summary of the content of this session, anonymized to create a safe and non-partisan, non-political space. In addition, we told all participants that the recording of this event would not be published**

**Purpose of the Session:** To explore how various Learning Departments are reporting their approach to the news and policy shifts about DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion). It was NOT a discussion to oppose or support the DEI Shift. Rather it was a

rapidly organized session to share how L&D groups and professionals are responding in these disruptive times.

### **L&D Response Themes:**

1. **Clarity & Specifics:** Masie explains that while DEI-related discussions are currently under intense scrutiny, the focus should be on L&D professionals' responses rather than political debates. Chief Learning Officers reported that it is critical for organizations to add CLARITY and SPECIFICS on DEI shifts in their organizations, to manage confusion and stress, and maintain transparency about any potential changes.
2. **Values Focus:** Learning leaders are focusing on the **VALUES** of the organizational culture beyond the DEI actions and policies. One VP for Learning shared that her organization was and will be deeply committed to have, support and retain a diverse community of employees.
3. **Business Impacts:** The importance of considering the business impacts of DEI initiatives is stressed, as these changes can influence revenue, profitability, hiring, retention and brand value.
4. **Stress and Personal:** L&D leaders must recognize the stress impacts of the public or internal conversations and rapid policy shifts around DEI. L&D professionals should approach these challenges with empathy, understanding how personal the shifts can be for each individual employee.
5. **Spectrum of Views:** We must recognize that there is a broad spectrum of opinions and experiences about DEI within your workforce. One CLO shared that many employees support the commitment to diversity and inclusion, yet they found specific DEI actions from mandated trainings to challenging promotion opportunities, troubling and problematic.

6. **News/Politics Blends:** Elliott shared that many of the learning leaders reported that news reports about DEI announcements from the White House were confusing to employees in the corporate sector. Once again, Clarity and Specifics on your internal policy and shifts is massively needed as news reports flow.
7. **EMPATHY:** The MASIE Learning Foundation has been focusing on Empathy as a key force for Learning and Development organizations for years – including our Empathy Concerts during the Pandemic. **Empathy is not Therapy or Sympathy. Empathy is to listen and honor the reality of what employees are feeling, anticipating or confused about.**
8. **Retention and Career Impact:** As DEI shifts are implemented they can have a rapid impact on employee retention or continuation. Who will leave? Who will stay?
9. **Career Impacts:** What are the possible impacts of these changes on employee career plans? What happens to employee decisions and preferences about learning development in these changing times.
10. **Content, Program& Branding Changes:** Learning leaders highlighted the need to look at any mandates that would require Content, Program or Branding changes. A number of participants shared that the 3 letters of “DEI” had become a difficult phrase – while the values and realities of supporting Diversity, supporting Equity and Equality and supporting Inclusion had larger support than the actual phrase.

Elliott shared that while he was one of the folks to introduce the term eLearning decades ago, the use of technology to support learning was far greater than the use of the term eLearning –

including the virtual session that almost 300 colleagues were in right now.

**Comments & Questions:** Here are a few of the comments, questions or perspectives that were raised by the participants in the live comments or our chat discussion:

- **Political and Organizational Tension:** People emphasized that while DEI debates are heavily influenced by national politics, the focus in organizations should remain on their cultural values and creating inclusive, diverse workforces.
- **Certification and Standards:** A colleague asked about the lack of standardized DEI certifications, noting that many practitioners entered the field without proper training. There was agreement that groups including SHRM, ATD, i4CP could help with freshen DEI standards and certifications
- **Rebranding or True Change?:** A participant asked if intercultural training is becoming a rebranded form of DEI training.
- **Challenges in Public Institutions:** A leader shared their experience in a public library system where DEI-related efforts are still carried on, despite external pressure and changing terminology.
- **Impact of DEI Shifts on Learning Professional's Skills:** Several participants wondered about how we best prepare the teams of learning professionals in our organizations for coping with these shifts.
- **Frustration and Change Energy:** Many participants were frustrated with the way in which the DEI Shifts were occurring, without internal collaboration in finding ways of continually improving the process.

**Speed of Change & Wrap Up:** Elliott Masie provided an overview of the current challenges for Learning and Development as many things are changing rapidly, including DEI Shifts, AI Innovations and Fascinations, Skills Focus vs. Degrees and the Speed of Change.

The MASIE Learning Foundation is reaching out to other national and global learning, talent and human resource organizations to coordinate additional conversations, collaborations and actions to support the L&D field in these times.

With Many Thanks to our Learning Colleagues and Participants!

Yours in Learning,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elliott Masie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Elliott Masie

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