

## TOOL #11



# Amplification of Less Heard Voices

*This tool enables your team to take proactive steps to ensure all voices are being heard and given credit for their ideas.*

**APPLICATION:** In the next two weeks, set up a meeting with your staff and go through the following activity. Then complete the Tool Application Memo (TAM) to keep track of your team's progress.

## STEPS

**Step 1.** Bring your team together, and breakout into small groups of 3-5. Ask everyone to share a time where they didn't feel heard or didn't receive credit for something they offered and how that impacted them. (Give 7-10 minutes for this conversation.)

**Step 2.** When done, ask the question: how might the following biases have an impact on which voices and ideas get heard in a professional context? (Give another 7-10 minutes)

- **Affinity Bias:** The tendency to place more value on the voices and ideas of those who look and think like us.
- **Confirmation Bias:** The tendency to look for facts or interpret data in ways that support what we already believed.
- **Halo Horns Effect:** The tendency to only see the negative in those we have had negative experiences with in the past (Horns). And only see the positive with those we have positive associations with (Halo).
- **Conformity Bias/Groupthink:** The tendency to form our opinions of what is 'correct' and good, based on what others in our group believe.

### Step 3:

Bring the whole team together and share the story below with your staff.

*The amplification strategy was made popular by then sitting President Barack Obama's female staff. Their experiences of bias in the White House had taught them that because of implicit biases such as affinity bias, groupthink, halo/horns effect and confirmation bias, it was sometimes hard to have their voices heard and get credit for ideas they brought to the table.*

*While it was completely unconscious, there were many meetings where men with more aggressive and dominant voices would suggest ideas that were actually said by the women, earlier in the meeting. Yet the women didn't get credit for it. Obama's female aides decided to subvert this tendency with a simple, yet stunningly effective strategy they referred to as amplification.*

*The female aides came together and agreed that whenever one of them had a good idea in a meeting, the others would repeat the idea and give them credit for it. For example, "As Monique suggested earlier on..." or "Building on Jasmine's idea which was to..."*

*The strategy worked! The simple act of reminding leaders where ideas were coming from was enough to help the neural pathways of those in charge give credit where credit was due. They reported that the strategy led Barack, and other leaders, to start calling on women more often in meetings, and led to a lot more ideas being credited to the women who offered the idea in the first place.*

#### **Step 4.** Discuss the implications

Ask the team if they want to participate in trying out an amplification strategy, where everyone is supporting each other in helping ideas get heard and credited to the right people.

If the group is interested in implementing the strategy, discuss what that might look like on your team.

- What would people feel comfortable saying?
- What might get in the way of saying something? What can be done to make people more comfortable?
- How can team members support those with less heard voices in other ways?

#### **Step 5.** Follow up

If your team decides to move forward, send an email with all the agreements made. This email serves as a reminder to keep it top of mind and an indicator that you value this strategy. This will give others a bit more confidence in trying it out when you first get started. It also serves as documentation of one way you are actively seeking to prioritize equity and belonging on your team. If your team chooses in the future, this documentation could possibly be shared with other offices as a way to encourage the spreading of best practices in inclusivity.