



Microlnequities: The Power of Small

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Words are powerful, but the cumulative impact of our actions is incredibly more influential, concluded speaker Stephen Young during a March 17 session called “MicroInequities: The Power of Small.”

Young, a former Senior Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer at JPMorgan Chase, is an in-demand global speaker on the concept of micro-messages and their capacity to produce micro-inequities, which is emerging as a new paradigm for diversity and leadership.

“We’ve been told all our lives that words are so important, but when compared to micro-messages, they

pale in comparison,” said Young, who is the author of the 2006 book *Micromessaging: Why Great Leadership is Beyond Words*.

Micro-messages are subtle, semi-conscious, and largely unintentional. Micro-messages include looks, gestures, tone, nuance, and syntax. They are smiles of engagement or blank looks of indifference. They divulge core feelings.

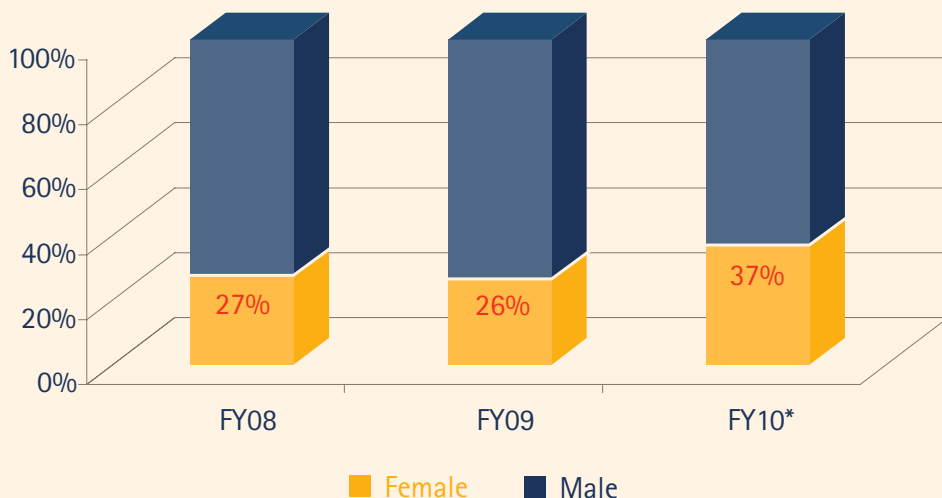
The sheer volume is surprising: in an average 10-minute conversation, we send between 40 and 150 micro-messages. Each day, we typically send between 2,000 and 4,000 positive or negative micro-messages.



“Micro-messages have a direct hardwired connection to bottom-line performance,” declared speaker Stephen Young.

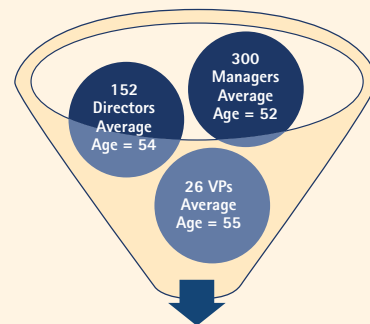
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GG to GH Promotions, by Gender



	FY08		FY09		FY10*	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
In Situ	17	33	14	41	18	39
Competitive	8	33	15	41	21	28
Total	25 (27%)	66	29 (26%)	82	39 (37%)	67

Average Age of the Manager Cadre*



Retirement Age = 62/65

of Managers Under Age 40 = 6
Youngest Manager = 35

of Managers Over Age 50 = 346
Oldest Manager = 64

* WBG excluding IFC
Source: HR Query Q2FY10

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Most people are unaware of the powerful influence of micro-messages on personal interaction, and ultimately business performance: "Micro-messages have a direct hard-wired connection to bottom-line performance," Young declared.

"The impact this has on the workplace is nothing short of enormous ... we drive commitment, engagement, and loyalty."

– Stephen Young

To demonstrate, Young read the same seven-word sentence with six different intonations, conveying vastly different connotations—even though he used the exact same denotation, or words.

Even more than words, "micro-messages form the foundation of human communication," said Young, emphasizing the principle applies across countries and cultures. This may have its roots in history: while humans and their ancestors have been around for about 4 million years, asserted Young, codified written language has existed for only about 9,000 years—less than 1 percent of that time. As a result,

"micro-messages transcend structured language."

The original research on micromessaging was done by Ph.D. Mary Rowe, an Adjunct Professor in Negotiation & Conflict Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Micromessaging was the subject of a brown bag lunch in

September held by the Bank Group's Library Services. There, a video called *Drop by Drop* described the small gestures that add up to frictions in the workplace.

Studies show that we tend to send more messages to people we like and agree with than to people we don't like and don't agree with. "So when we're *not* getting micro-messages, we *may* be getting a message after all," said Young.

Young used examples from common interactions that were at once entertaining and revealing—ranging from personal apologies to business introductions. Then he presided over an interactive session where staff

paired up and acted out examples.

In conclusion, Young said that employing well-crafted and constructive micro-messages can have a powerful *positive* effect on professional interactions.

"The impact this has on the workplace is nothing short of enormous," said Young. "By this process we drive commitment, engagement, loyalty—and certainly performance. It does work."

Young stayed late to answer staff questions. "It illustrated for me, how making very small shifts in my perception I can improve working relationships with my team, across teams, and encourage better performance," said Richard Crabbe, who works in EXT's Office of the Publisher. "This has a huge impact for the way we work."

Stephen Young is Partner and Founder of Insight Education Systems, a management consulting firm specializing in leadership and organizational development services. His leadership seminar *MicroInequities: The Power of Small* has been delivered to more than 10 percent of the Fortune 500 in 24 countries.

For more, type "diversity" in your browser.

Hot News: Leadership Award Winners Announced

More details to come in a future issue of *The Junction*.

Khawaja Ahmed, *Senior Manager, Cairo Office, IFC*

Carlos Braga, *Director, SECVP*

Rodrigo Chaves, *Sector Manager, LCSPE*

Nora Mangalindan, *Program Assistant, IFC*

Samuel Otoo, *Manager, WBICR*

Hemant Pawar, *Senior Accounting Officer, Chennai Office, CTR*

Jean Philippe Prosper, *Director, Nairobi Office, IFC*

Jordan Schwartz, *Lead Economist, LCSSD*

Mercy Tembon, *Country Manager, Bujumbura Office, AFR*

Family Issues Group,

WBG Staff Association

Don't Miss...

Kahan: D&I Community Building

March 31, 12:30-4:30

JB1-080

(For D&I VPU coordinators, HR officers, and executives of the Staff Association and other affinity groups.)

Robbins to ACS: Embracing Change Now

How difficult it is to embrace change,” admitted noted diversity speaker, Steve Robbins, to a packed Preston Auditorium during ACS Forum, whose tagline was “Embracing Change, Shaping Your Future.”

“In our encounters with difference, we need to give others a chance,” said Robbins, making his third appearance at the World Bank in the past year. “But more importantly, in our encounters with difference we need to give *ourselves* a chance.”

With a potent mix of erudition and comedy, Robbins steered participants toward his core conclusion—that we can overcome our tendency to exclude only through conscious effort, but that the effort is worth it.

With a wink, Robbins said he wanted to dispense with stereotypes about himself. “I don’t know any martial arts and have never owned a laundromat,” said Robbins, who is an Asian-American. “I am, however, good at math, and I own a lot of cameras.”

When the laughter subsided, Robbins stressed that stereotypes and more broadly—culture—is learned through experience: “Culture is the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior.”

This learned behavior, however, is rooted in biology. Cognitively, our brains have evolved to operate on an efficiency principle, said Robbins. It conserves energy, taking informed shortcuts, which sometimes perpetuates negative stereotypes.

Robbins shared the reason he got into this line of work. At the age of five, he immigrated to the US with his Vietnamese mother and American serviceman stepfather. His early life was defined by a series of personal tragedies—including the conviction of his stepfather of raping his sister, his sister’s murder, and his mother’s suicide.



“I do this work to honor my mom and my little sister,” said speaker Steve Robbins. “This work is about caring for other people.”

“My mother became a citizen, but she never became an insider,” said Robbins. “My mom taught me, ‘you walk on a path cleared by others, and so it is your responsibility to clear that path for others—to care about other people.’”

“I do this work to honor my mom and my little sister,” said Robbins. “This work is about caring for other people. The true measure of whether you’re a caring person is not how you’ve cared for your friends, but how you care for outsiders.”

In conclusion, Robbins challenged ACS staff to go out into the world and overcome the way our brains are inclined to exclude.

Fayezul Choudhury, Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group and VP of Corporate Finance and Risk Management, opened the session, remarking that by virtue of the rich variety of national attire on display, the Bank Group is already very diverse—but the challenge of inclusion still confronts us.

Chief Diversity Officer Julie Oyegun charged ACS staff to recognize their own roles as leaders: “The quality of our own organization belongs to all of us. We contribute to it and we draw on it,” said Oyegun. “Taking active responsibility for this dynamic is the D&I leadership we are looking for from everyone now.”



Robbins turned the event interactive with a high-five session.

Moderator Michael Randel called Robbins’ message especially important because “of the role that ACS staff play in connecting people in the offices. They are the glue that connects people to one another.”

Sun Limei, a Program Assistant in HD, said Robbins’ story of his mom was particularly touching. “We live in a society where we should care for other people, especially outsiders. For our work, because we are talking about teamwork and cross-sectoral support, this is relevant to us.”

Azz Imam, a Team Assistant in SDN, agreed: “He was so convincing and spoke from the heart ... I learned a lot about myself and how I interact with people. I think I will try to make sure I do not put up boundaries.”

Dora Harris, a Program Assistant in PREM, said she loved it: “The personal stories actually drove it home for me, that at least I should learn to care more for others.”

Robbins’ latest ideas will appear in his forthcoming book *Homisapiens: What Brain Science Says About Why We Love Our Comfort Zones, Our Homies, and Being Closed-Minded*, set to come out in summer 2011. In addition to the ACS Forum, Robbins led sessions to a total of 250 members of CTR, EXT, FPD, IEG, ISG, GSD, MNA, and SDN.

Banaji: Awareness of “Mind Bugs” Fights Exclusion

A crowd of nearly 200 gathered in the IFC Auditorium Monday for a workshop on “Building Your Career and Leadership Potential through Self-Awareness.”

Some participants sought advice on developing their careers, while others looked for guidance on becoming more aware of diversity issues. How colleagues see one another can affect the workplace and ultimately how we build our careers.

Dr. Mahzarin Banaji, a professor of social ethics at Harvard University, shared her research into “mind bugs”—the unconscious assessments that people make about others. Her work has focused on the mechanics of these unconscious mental processes and how they generate bias and stereotypes to shape social judgments.

Through audience participation, Banaji demonstrated that even audience members made unconscious assessments based on ‘mental’ associations made between groups and factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, or class. The task revealed that these assessments often directly contradict what people espouse or even concrete evidence.

Banaji said these behaviors are counterproductive to promoting diversity and inclusion. But she also offered words of promise: humans are adaptive and can adjust their habits. To do that, individuals must be aware of their own prejudices and make conscious efforts to align their behaviors with intended outcomes.

“Every organization that thinks about the future has to consider these basic aspects of human behavior,” she explained.

Banaji said important things for staff to work on include: introducing tests for self-discovery; analyzing the results; developing strategies to address certain biases; and interrogat-



Harvard Professor Mahzarin Banaji described “mind bugs” as the unconscious assessments that people make about others—which generate bias and stereotypes to shape social judgments.

ing assumptions to improve the work environment. Since last March, Banaji has conducted two sessions with Bank Group management teams.

She added that the World Bank is in an exciting position to demonstrate what a diverse global workforce truly is: “Talent comes in different shapes, sizes, and forms.”

Dimitris Tsitsiragos, IFC Director of Global Manufacturing and Services, who serves as Deputy Chair of the WBG Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group, said, “As an institution, we need to see diversity as an added-value and an important part of our identity.”

In closing, Julie Oyegun, WBG Director of Diversity, thanked Banaji for her insight and reiterated the

Bank Group’s commitment to creating an environment that values all human differences and mobilizes them as strategic business assets in service of poverty reduction.

The workshop was organized by IFC’s Human Resources Department and the WBG Office of Diversity Programs as part of the Bank Group’s Diversity and Inclusion Month.

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