



# Industry Reset: 10 Lessons for Driving Systemic Progress

## Learning Lesson #1

### ***Leadership Influence Happens Behind the Scenes***

**Systemic Principle:** Influence is not always visible or official. It happens quietly, through closed-door conversations, implicit alliances, and unspoken norms.

**Leadership Insight:** As leaders, we must be intentional about how we include others. Principled leadership influence requires us to examine not only what we say publicly, but what we support, or quietly ignore, privately.

## Learning Lesson #2

### ***Corporate Policy Can Shield Discrimination***

**Systemic Principle:** Corporate policies, while appearing neutral, are often used to mask underlying bias and preserve the status quo.

**Leadership Insight:** We must question and challenge policies that perpetuate inequity. Ethical leadership requires more than following the rules; it requires examining the purpose behind them.

## Learning Lesson #3

### ***Exclusion Does Not Diminish Value***

**Systemic Principle:** Exclusion is often a reflection of discomfort with disruption, not an indication of the value of the progress intended.

**Leadership Insight:** When exclusion occurs, it is an opportunity to clarify vision, deepen partnerships, and build something better, rather than seek validation from those not ready for change.

## Learning Lesson #4

### ***Systems are Built by People and Can Be Rebuilt***

**Systemic Principle:** Entrenched systems are not unchangeable. They are sustained by collective behavior and can be redesigned through courageous leadership and consistent action.

**Leadership Insight:** Systemic change does not come from being liked or accepted. It comes from being principled, patient, and committed to transformation.



## **Learning Lesson #5**

### ***Grace is Not Silence and Diplomacy Is Not Denial***

**Systemic Principle:** Effective leadership is both civil and clear; kind and bold; gracious and firm.

**Leadership Reflection:** Ignoring systemic barriers perpetuates them. The effective response to unjust behavior is with clarity, curiosity, and accountability.

## **Learning Lesson #6**

### ***Where We Walk is How We Talk***

**Systemic Principle:** Fear of perceived consequences often leads those in power to remain quiet. Silence in the face of injustice is often interpreted as agreement, and it ultimately reinforces the status quo.

**Leadership Insight:** Many leaders with influence chose to look the other way, not because they agree with the inequity, but because they fear retaliation or reputational risk. We must recognize that silence is never neutral. We are either complicit in inequity or courageous and consistent in addressing it.

## **Learning Lesson #7**

### ***Systemic Wounds Are Deeply Personal and Cause Pain for Everyone***

**Systemic Principle:** Systemic change is long, hard, and painful. These barriers are lived realities for those directly impacted by discrimination. And too often, the response against injustice is treated more harshly than the injustice itself.

**Leadership Reflection:** Those in positions of influence may not feel the immediate pain of exclusion, but they will eventually experience the ripple effects of disengagement, missed innovation, fractured trust, and revenue loss. The indirect consequences of discriminatory reveal themselves over time. They become defining systemic moments with lasting impact for years to follow.





## **Learning Lesson #8**

### ***Wounds Are Healed From Within***

**Systemic Principle:** Individual leadership is needed at every level, including all titles and responsibilities. Systemic progress cannot be outsourced; it must come from people within organizations being willing to reflect, grow, and take positive action.

**Leadership Reflection:** Change does not begin with a CEO memo, it begins with individuals who choose courage over comfort. Each of us must lead from where we are. No title is too small, and no role is exempt. If we advocate for systemic change, we must take personal responsibility to model it.

## **Learning Lesson #9**

### ***Perception is Not Necessarily Reality***

**Systemic Principle:** Sophisticated media and marketing efforts can shape public perception, often masking systemic exclusion behind polished campaigns.

**Leadership Insight:** When performative marketing replaces meaningful accountability, it sets everyone back. We need to catch ourselves, learn from patterns, and speak in truth, even when it's unpopular.

## **Learning Lesson #10**

### ***Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are Still Foundational Principals***

**Systemic Principle:** As a corporate policy, DEI had some needed areas of improvement, but on a moral and human level, diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential cornerstones, especially as we navigate a future driven by advanced technology and complex global systems.

**Leadership Reflection:** We cannot reduce inclusion to a checkbox or compliance exercise, rather a belief in the dignity, contribution, and value of every human being. In the context of innovation and AI, humanity must remain central to the heart of leaders.