



Beyond Training Rooms: How Molson Coors Made DEI Personal

Molson Coors

Best Advance in Leading Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Initiatives

November 2024



Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Chicago, IL
Year Founded	Molson (1786), Coors (1873), merged (2005), company name rebranding (2020)
Revenue	\$10.3B
Employees	>16,000 globally
Global Scale	Over 50 countries – including Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe, Latin America, and the United States.
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	In the United States the key customers are beverage distributorships based on the government regulated three tier system. In Canada, Europe and Asia, the customers are on and off premise retail outlets that sell alcoholic beverages.
Industry	Consumer Packaged Goods
Stock Symbol	TAP
Website	https://www.molsoncoors.com/



Budget and Timeframe

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Overall budget	\$485,900 CAD/\$363,130 USD for Canadian expansion
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	15
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	12
Number of contractors involved with implementation	3 - Sklar Wilton (research, creative, implementation), Trisect and ISS (construction)
Timeframe to implement	18 months – kicked off January 2022, launched June 2023
Start date of the program	June 20, 2023

Business Conditions and Business Needs

*At Molson Coors, we believe we each own a role in making diversity, equity, and inclusion part of everything we do – from how we work together to how we grow our company. And while this belief comes to life in many different ways across our organization, the Empathy Experience provides employees with a unique, immersive and emotionally engaging opportunity to live our values of **putting people first** by understanding that our uniqueness makes us strong together, **learning every day** to build understanding across difference, **being bold and decisive**, accepting what we may not know and taking initiative to expand the lens of individual lived experiences, **taking accountability** for our actions and interactions and **celebrating together**, honoring all dimensions of diversity to create a culture of inclusion and belonging for all.*

The business need for the Empathy Experience originated in late 2018, when a team of consumer insights employees, marketers and HR team members identified a two-fold opportunity. Molson Coors leaders were seeing a shift - the needs, interests and buying habits of consumers continued to evolve, the



demographics of consumers continued to diversify, and the needs of the employee population continued to change.

On the marketing and brand side of the discussion, an internal team identified the Empathy Experience concept as a way to help employees understand the lived experiences of those from marginalized communities and how those experiences, values and influence from their community members impact the brands they gravitate toward and ultimately shape their buying decisions.

On the HR side of the discussion, colleagues with marginalized identities continued to share their lived experiences from inside the organization, sharing moments of microaggressions and biases that made them to feel as if they don't belong at Molson Coors.

With the knowledge that dimensions of diversity and cultural shifts were impacting both employees and the greater consumer population, the Empathy Experience began to take shape. When the Empathy Experience was created for the US, the development team and external supporting creative vendor focused on the unique experiences of five distinct marginalized communities, the Latino community, Black community, Women, LGTBQ+ community and Asian American Pacific Islander community. For each community, the team conducted external research to better understand historical context lived experiences in the United States, demographic insights, common myths, and stereotypes, impacts on the community in both social and business settings and then integrated their learnings into the final content for the experience. In addition to the external research, the team also hosted in depth focus groups discussions with our employees to understand the true impact of their lived experiences more fully, right down to the specific microaggressions employees had experienced and biases they had encountered both inside the workplace and in the world around them. As a result of this extensive research effort, the internal and external project team came together to create the Empathy Experience, an interactive, immersive, and emotionally engaging experience designed to build understanding, awareness, and empathy between employees and across the organization.

While the US Empathy Experience was initially piloted as an immersive two-hour facilitated in-person learning experience in late 2019, the world as we knew it shifted drastically in 2020 as a result of a global pandemic, followed by a drastic shift in how United States citizens understood and discussed race relations in the country in the summer of 2020. Before re-launching the US Empathy Experience



after returning to the office in early 2022, the team took the intentional time needed to review all content with a fresh set of eyes to ensure the experience continued to maintain the impact it had prior to the pandemic, addressed the ongoing realities of marginalized communities in America and began conversations on the broader impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion work across North America. The Vice President of DEI and DEI Program Manager spent the summer and fall of 2021 evaluating the content for each of the US experiences adjusting out-of-date language, double checking population statistics to ensure accuracy, streamlining activities to make the Experience more engaging for employees and integrating new video content to be more reflective of the current state of race relations in the US in order to deepen the conversation and personal take aways from each space. In addition to the content review process, the team also created new and improved interactive tools to enhance the learning experience and challenge participants to commit to think, feel and do differently as they moved forward into their next interactions in and outside the workplace. *In addition to the content updates and adjustments made in summer and fall of 2021, Empathy Experience participants are encouraged to complete a short 6-questions survey at the end of each session where they are intentionally asked for their open and honest feedback about the experience. Each week, this survey feedback is reviewed to understand spaces where conversations have changed, opportunities to be more intentional or direct in how the content comes to life for participants and continued to drive continuous improvement and the future evolution of the space.*

The Latino Experience

Participants begin the Empathy Experience in the Latino Experience. Upon entrance into the space, participants are encouraged to engage with the stereotypical props, understand the wide range of identities that exist within the broader context of the Latino experience and engage in microaggressions and biases on the walls and windows, highlight comments that employees inside the organization have previously experienced. Participants are encouraged to share their perspectives, what content may be new to them or what might surprise them about the items and words in the space. The Latino Experience culminates in a video, highlighting the ridiculousness of microaggressions and assumptions the broader community may experience during a given work day.



The Black Experience

Participants then transition to the Black Experience. Upon entrance into the space, facilitators share information about the space, including how the space has evolved over the past four years. Participants are encouraged to explore microaggressions, biases and lived experiences of past and current employees on the walls and windows, taking time to explore the microaggressions and discuss understand why they cause harm. There is a hopscotch style activity on the floor which participants are encouraged to engage with before being directed toward a video that helps all in the room understand how media and stereotypes have such a profound impact on biases as they are shaped over time. Following the emotional video, those in the room often engage in meaningful dialogue about how to challenge the stereotypes often portrayed in the media and how to assess and expand the social channels and news networks that may have been traditionally relied on for news to understand what biases may be amplified in certain spaces.





Women Experience

Participants then transition into the Women Experience where they are again encouraged to engage with and take in the content on the walls around the room. The space highlights gender stereotypes and how we can all fall into traps around gender norms and expectations into the work place. In this space, participants engage in an interactive activity called Her Meeting where the group collectively walk through different scenarios and how a woman likely responds in a given scenario versus how a woman may actually feel in that moment.

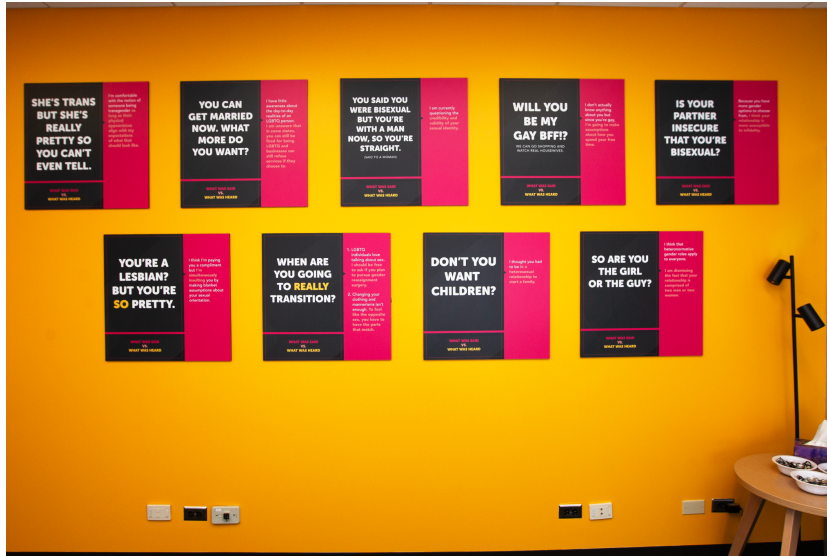




LGBTQ+ Experience

The next space on the Empathy Experience journey is the LGBTQ+ Experience, one of the most emotional and vulnerable spaces throughout the entire facilitated learning experience. Participants begin in a space called The Closet, where lights are dimmed and an audio voice over is played, highlighting the experiences of some past and current Molson Coors employees. Many of the same words are written on the walls around the space, highlighting the importance of understanding and acknowledging the lived experiences of others, whether that is externally visible or unknown. Participants then move to the larger space to spend time learning definitions important to the community, historical facts, the current state of life for members of the community in the US and provide a greater understanding of the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity.





Asian Pacific Experience

The final experience takes participants into a space complete with microaggressions and stereotypes members of the Asian Pacific community encounter on a daily basis. A video is shared with the group, highlighting how easy it may be to fall into the stereotype trap or continue to lean on and share common, and sometimes quite harmful misconceptions about the broader Asian Pacific community. Participants and facilitators also take time to understand the wide number of cultures represented under the broader label of Asian Pacific and how many within that label may not identify as Asian or Pacific Islander. In addition to all of the challenges the community faces on a daily basis,



participants also spend time discussing how much of the world's population is limited to one or two demographic boxes when having to self-identify.



Once participants complete all give Empathy Experiences, they move through a space highlighted with an artwork piece commissioned through ArtLifting, an organization focused on creating opportunity, empowerment, and validation for members of the disability community and those who have experienced housing insecurities, offering artists the chance to secure income through the sale of original paintings, prints, and products to organizations like Molson Coors. As participants move past this space, facilitators encourage them to consider and



openly share what they will think, feel or do differently as a result of their time in the Empathy Experience. The group reconvenes to begin the discussion around intersectionality and the important of intersectional identities, the importance of providing safe spaces for continued conversation inside our organization and conclude the two-hour time frame together walking through the importance of intentional allyship in the work place and beyond.



As the Molson Coors business spans all of North America with race relations and lived experiences being unique across borders, organizational leadership and the DEI team understood the importance of bringing the Empathy Experience to life by Canada and for Canada following the re-opening of the US space. In late 2021, the team embarked on expanding the Empathy footprint, beyond the borders of the United States, connecting with existing Molson Coors creative partners at Sklar Wilton, a strategy and insights consulting firm located in Toronto. The team anticipated an immersive and courageous conversation around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion would need to be different in Canada, requiring a fully new build of content to be delivered, while also elevating how it was delivered to engage employees in meaningful conversation. In addition to partnering with Sklar Wilton, the team identified an internal working group of DEI champions and ERG leaders, bringing together a committee of 12 internal stakeholders representing Marketing, HR, Sales and Supply Chain. This team was geographically spread across Canada, representing a true cross section of



diversity dimensions and were instrumental in sharing their lived experiences, unique nuances and diverse perspectives on life in Canada. The teams dug into the data, mining for demographic and diversity-based data points unique to the Canadian lived experience. The team collectively conducted qualitative and quantitative research, utilizing the extended network of the Sklar Wilton team to tap into the insights of both Molson employees and humans across Canada. Throughout these research efforts, the team discovered that the key area of opportunity for the Canadian experience was to focus on the behaviors that negatively impact members of marginalized communities and how those behaviors impact a wide range of humans across Canada, rather than a more specifically focused community approach that is core to the experience in the US. Rather than focusing on specific communities, the Empathy Experience in Canada focuses on five distinct spaces: **Who We Are** and our shared experiences as Canadians, **Perceptions** and how our biases can impact our interactions with each other at work and in the world, **Privilege and Burden**, highlighting how our space and place in the world can dramatically impact our lived experiences, **Polite Racism**, breaking down the harm caused by microaggressions and racial gaslighting and finally, **Connections**, identifying ways we can work through problematic behaviors to better connect with our fellow humans. While the content is not specific to five distinct communities, the most marginalized communities identified within Canada were woven throughout each of the behavioral based spaces through applicable videos, quotes, authors, and imagery, enriching the conversation, visuals and ultimately, the presentation of the learning process. Similar to the process and cadence of the US Empathy Experience, each of the Canadian Experiences is designed to take 15 to 20 minutes for a total of a two-hour learning experience, allowing for 8-10 participants to absorb the content in the space as a collective group, participate in shared activities to help encourage safety and vulnerability and encourage brave conversations between participants with guided support from the trained co-facilitators.

Over the course of eighteen months, this dedicated team not only created engaging, insightful and courageous content, they also developed a space that truly moves around the participant, an immersive and highly visual learning experience that was constructed in a wide-open space in the Toronto corporate office. In Spring 2023, the internal committee began the facilitator recruitment efforts, extending the opportunity to DEI advocates and champions in the Toronto corporate office and brewery location. Facilitators were either self-nominated,



nominated by their peers or recommended by members of the Canadian leadership team, resulting in a team of approximately 30 employees from our Toronto locations agreeing to step into the role and support the Empathy Experience in Canada. This cross functional team participated in a training kick off discussion focusing on an overview of the content, along with facilitator tips and tricks for supporting the educational experience and addressing resistance or concerns as they were shared in the space. Following the virtual kick off, the full team participated in a day-long training in the space in Toronto, working through the content as a collective group and walking through questions, concerns, and next steps in advance of the space being open for the larger employee audience. Each facilitator was asked to guide participants through the Empathy Experience and were encouraged to curate personal lived experiences to share in the moment as needed, helping to bring safety and vulnerability to each conversation. In June 2023, the team was immensely proud to open the first Canadian based experience in Toronto, expanding empathetic and courageous dialogue beyond the original US borders.



Photos below feature images of the space in the Toronto corporate office.

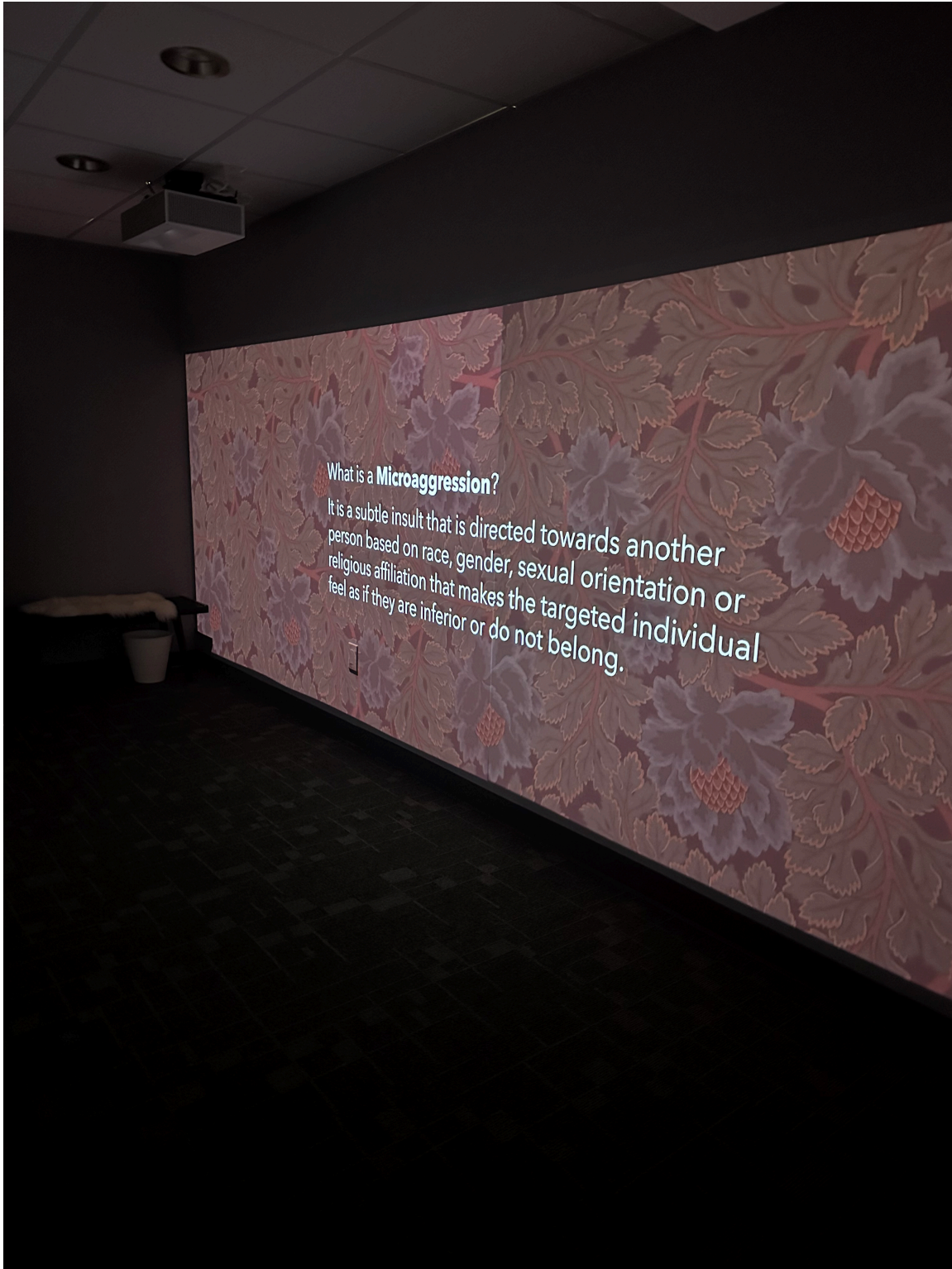














Overview

The leadership team at Molson Coors has a continued focus on transforming culture into one focused on transparency, courage, and accountability, especially when it comes to intentional diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. Throughout the evolution of the Empathy Experience, the DEI team has worked side by side with members of the senior leadership team to encourage participation with open minds and open hearts. When planning to reopen the US experience following the pandemic, the DEI team and the Executive Leadership team aligned on taking a functional approach to outreach and communication. After attending the first kickoff session upon reopening in Milwaukee in spring 2022, the Chief Supply Chain Officer, expressed a need within the function to be the first invitees into the space, leading to a strategic invite and encouragement from him to the 500+ Supply Chain employees based in Milwaukee and Chicago, representing manufacturing operations, supply chain planning, sustainability, distribution, innovation, quality, project management and more to schedule time to participate within a 4-month period of time. This initial session was considered of utmost importance for the leadership team in order to be champions and advocates for not only the experience itself, but also for the importance of DEI principles, empathy and allyship across the organization. Reinforcement and reminder emails were then shared by the HR business partners throughout that four-month window of time and participation rates were continuously shared with leaders to provide visibility. In May 2023, the Molson Coors global leadership team representing all areas of the business including Supply Chain, HR, Marketing, Sales, Legal, Strategy, Finance, Corporate Communications, and the full leadership team representing EMEA APAC, convened in Milwaukee for an annual leadership meeting, intentionally building the Empathy Experience into the agenda for this once every other year gathering. This provided a platform to share the Empathy Experience with functional leaders from across the world, inviting and encouraging them to not only participate fully and transparently in the space and conversation with one another, but also to become champions for the work and experience as the DEI team continued to expand the invite to participate across all organizational functions. The initial leadership engagement and communication model started within Supply Chain continued to be followed by all functional leaders throughout the balance of 2022 and 2023. Throughout this time, the DEI team welcomed team members across HR, Finance, Procurement, IT, Marketing and Legal into the space to engage in intentional and vulnerable conversations with their colleagues, welcoming over 1,800



participants over the course of 18 months. These sessions were facilitated by a team of approximately 40 DEI advocate facilitators representing HR, Finance, IT and Supply Chain.

When preparing to open the doors to the Empathy Experience in Canada, a similar approach was followed, despite the smaller employee base that sits between the Corporate Office, Sales Team, and Brewery. The President of the Canadian business and his team of 14 direct reports participated in a live Empathy Experience session to move through the content together, allowing for individual learning moments and collective conversations about the opportunities to build empathy across the Canadian business. Following the leadership experience, a series of tiered communications were shared with Canadian based team members within a specific radius of the Toronto location, inviting all to register to attend in 2023. This initial message was then echoed by additional members of the leadership team, many of whom had had the chance to participate in both the US and Canadian experiences, sharing their personal experience within the Empathy Experience, while also reflecting on and encouraging continued empathetic and courageous conversations in the space.

Leaders across the US and Canada continue to convey the importance of participation, share their personal experiences in the space and look for opportunities to extend the learning beyond the physical walls of Molson Coors. In November 2023, the Molson Coors Board of Directors and Senior Leadership Team members had the opportunity to participate in an Empathy Experience session in Toronto, marking the first time the Board members were engaged in intentional and meaningful conversations about empathy and what it means inside of the organization. Not only was this an impactful opportunity to share the beauty of the space, the great work of the team and engage in courageous conversation with the Board of Directors, it also provided a jumping off point to discuss the evolution of the work and how important it is for participants to take learnings from this internal experience outside the walls of Molson Coors.



Leadership Practices

The Empathy Experience is viewed as an integral learning component of the broader Inclusive Leadership journey for all people leaders across Molson Coors. When someone joins the organization as a people leader or transitions from an individual contributor to people leader during their career journey at Molson Coors, they are required to go through leadership development programming, spending ample time exploring and understanding the importance of inclusive leadership within the organization. The expectation is for people leaders to exemplify the traits of authenticity, emotional resilience, self-assurance, inquisitiveness, and flexibility.

*The naming of the Empathy Experience was an intentional decision at Molson Coors as the expectation is that participants experience the space and the courageous conversations in the moment and take that experience with them as they move into their next conversation, meeting, or human interaction. The space provides participants a powerful and safe way to be **authentically** human, sharing their personal lived experiences with others in an effort to help those who differ expand their lens of understanding and empathy. It provides participants the opportunity to build their **emotional resilience**, experiencing human emotions from those who share vulnerable moments as the group moves through the space together. The experience requires participants to lean into their **inquisitiveness** in a safe space, encouraging those unfamiliar with certain lived experiences to ask intentional questions, listen to listen, not to respond and absorb the lived realities of those from marginalized communities. It challenges employees to embrace **flexibility**, stepping outside of comfort zones and status quo to feel with one another in sharing of deeply personal experiences throughout the space. Through all of the moments of vulnerability and courage that take place in the space, the hope is the Empathy Experience helps leaders build their **self-assurance** and confidence to continue the important conversations that begin in the space, leaning into their learnings, their a-ha moments, and their moments of discomfort to actively embody these traits of inclusive leadership.*

Empathy Experience participants and leaders in particular have shared their visceral reactions to the space, how the content and conversations have encouraged them to be more vulnerable, more human with their teams. As a result, they are actively seeking opportunities to build more trusting relationships with their team members, encouraging a deeper level of trust and understanding amongst their broader team.



Engagement

The Chief People and Diversity Office, along with the VP of DEI are true examples of advocates and champions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work across the organization. When re-launching the Empathy Experience in the United States following employees returning to the office and when introducing the Empathy Experience to Canada, both leaders have used their position and influence in the organization to ensure that all leaders were not only active participants and supporters of the Empathy Experience, but also made it a personal priority to ensure that all employees were actively invited to join the experience once open. In partnership with all senior leaders across the organization, the Empathy Experience was rolled out as an organizational priority with leaders being held responsible for their functional participation. Leaders were encouraged to make their participation a priority to exemplify the importance of the program to all employees in their function. Various participation check points were built into the timelines for program roll out in the both the US and Canada, sharing up to date participant information with the appropriate leaders and supplying both the leaders and HR business partners with follow up communications to be sent to those who had not yet completed the program. In addition to the engagement plan for current employees, the DEI leaders developed a plan for new hire engagement, integrating the importance of empathy at Molson Coors, sharing a high-level overview of the Empathy Experience in week one onboarding and ensuring all new hires had the Empathy Experience added to their learning plan within 60-90 days of their hire date. For field based employees spread across the US and Canada, many of whom are not located near one of the physical business locations, the DEI team has worked with functional leadership to integrate the Empathy Experience into onsite live learning sessions, dedicating two hours of meeting dates spent at the Corporate locations in Milwaukee and Toronto to ensure both people leaders and individual contributors were given the space and time to participate in and complete the program.

One of the five Molson Coors values is Take Accountability. All of these pieces were put into place to ensure all leaders were provided with the resources and supporting tools to take accountability for the participation of their team members.



Measurable Benefits

The foundational, baseline measure of progress put in place prior to the US and Canadian rollout of the program was participation. Since re-launching the program in spring 2022, 1,976 participants have gone through the program in the permanent Empathy Experience space in Milwaukee. And since opening the permanent space in Toronto in June 2023, there have been 223 employees who have completed the experience.

Year	US Participants	Canadian Participants
2022	1305	N/A
2023	671	223

*We continue to monitor our progress via a 6-question survey which we encourage all participants to complete as they complete their Empathy Experience session. From June 2023 to February 2024, **85%** of survey respondents for the Canadian Empathy Experience say they would recommend the Empathy Experience to a peer or colleague. **59%** strongly agree and another **31%** agree they are motivated to apply their learnings from the Empathy Experience in the next 30 days and **78%** of respondents say they understand the importance of valuing different perspectives based on their Empathy Experience participation.*

Perhaps more important than physical participation is how participants take the conversation and learnings forward following the Empathy Experience. The DEI leaders at Molson Coors were intentional in naming it the Empathy Experience – the hope is for participants to not only experience honest and in some cases challenging conversations when in the space, but to also take those experiences, those learnings and a-ha moments beyond the space to their next human interaction, their next meeting, their next experience in the world outside of Molson Coors. While individual impact and behavior change can be hard to measure, the DEI team continues to see how this behavioral change is taking place across the organization.

Shortly after re-opening the Empathy Experience in the US and launching the new experience in Canada, the DEI team began receiving requests for more –



deeper discussion opportunities, deeper dives into concepts introduced in the Experience, more tools, and resources for leaders to incorporate new learnings and continued conversation in meetings with their teams. This was an indication to the organization that while the Empathy Experience started a very important conversation, there were many individuals and teams looking to continue the important and brave conversations that started in the space. The DEI team developed Expanding Empathy, a program that could be utilized as a standalone learning for those who had not yet participated in the Empathy Experience or as an expanded discussion tool to dive deeper into concepts, workshop microaggression examples in a large group format and set personal action plans and commitments to be shared with the larger team. Expanding Empathy was created based on evolving business need, understanding the courageous conversations that began in the Empathy Experience needed a space to continue among smaller working groups and teams across the organization. The program is customized to meet the needs of a specific group or team, provides a deeper dive into microaggressions, harm assessment and intentional inclusion. Expanding Empathy is designed as a 60–90-minute workshop and has been delivered to an additional 200+ employees across the organization since June 2023.

The other important shift that has come as a result of the Empathy Experience a growing level of comfort with challenging the status quo. Employees who have participated in the Empathy Experience have continued to build their courageous conversation toolbox, now having the tools to call someone in or out as a result of the resources gained through Empathy Experience participation. When something heavy is happening in the world and there's concern over how the organization is or is not addressing in the moment, there are employees who lean on the Empathy Experience and empathy more holistically as a clearly and often stated organizational priority to not only engage in open and honest dialogue through differences in perspective amongst their peers, but also challenge leaders to ask why the organization is or is not taking a stance in a certain moment. These challenges have encouraged deep and meaningful discussions around the differences in lived experience and perspectives as the highest levels of the organization, an important step in leading true cultural transformation. The foundation set in the Empathy Experience and the prioritization the organization has put behind the program continues to encourage behavioral change at the individual, team, and organizational level.



Overall

It takes courage and often times discomfort to achieve cultural transformation. From the moment of inception to the expanded reach of the Empathy Experience across Canada, the Empathy Experience has been challenging employees across the US and Canadian network to expand their lens to better understand the lived experiences of others. The lessons learned have been many – there are some individuals who will never be willing to understand, agree with or accept lived experiences beyond those of the majority. While challenging in the moment, the DEI team has seen the Empathy Experience provide space for light bulb moments, however small they may be, and the hope is that one moment grows to many those who may be resistant.

Being fearful of a lived experience that is different from what one person knows should not be an excuse or a crutch to not get to know someone on a deeper level.

While empathy can feel like a squishy, feel-good term, true empathy and calling bad behavior and injustice in or out is one of the most important things we can do – it spurs a collective belief in a better world and that we as humans sharing space at work and in life can all be better to and for one another.

The power of the pause is very real – it's important that when someone is feeling judged, misunderstood, or attacked to take a moment to pause, breathe and check in with internal feelings to avoid lashing out in anger or frustration. Giving space to recognize those feelings and assessing why they are rising to the surface is an important moment of growth.

Listen to listen, not just to respond. In a world where everything seems to be available instantaneously, it's important to not only pause, but truly listen. It's absolutely imperative to true human connection.

The evolution of the Empathy Experience will continue in 2024. Molson Coors is expanding the Canadian Empathy Experience to brewery locations outside of Vancouver and Montreal in Q1 2024. Following the additional physical spaces, the team will also be developing an engaging virtual based offering that can be offered either in person or with a team of people who are spread across a wide geographic area. This additional program format will allow for employees in remote areas of Canada to put empathy into practice in their daily work and life.

With support from the senior leadership team, the DEI team, and their partners at Sklar Wilton will kick off the evolution of the Empathy Experience in the US in



spring 2024, creating a brand-new interactive space to add to the existing space in Milwaukee while looking forward to continuing to welcome new hires to the experience throughout the year.

The DEI team will also be growing the reach of Expanding Empathy, adjusting the content to meet the specific needs of teams across the organization and providing teams with the tools and resources needed to continue the conversation and build proficiency in conducting courageous and brave discussions.

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