

Cultural Intelligence

People building productive relationships in a world of difference

Terence Brake



tmaworld
borderless learning



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► Personal Note

I thought the move from the U.K. to the U.S. would be easy. I had been together with my American wife for a few years, and had visited the States several times.

I should have noticed the warning signs earlier than I did. My quiet British reserve didn't impress my mother-in-law who thought that if I wasn't a spy already, I ought to be. Then there were the English – American language differences. I asked a clerk at a railway for a return ticket only to be met with, "Don't know what that is. Next!" I explained that I wanted to go to New York and come back on the same ticket. "You mean a 'round trip'", he said coldly. "Why didn't you just say that?"

When I started working in the US, my 'eccentricities' were attributed to my "Englishness" and were a source of puzzlement, frustration, and fun. For example:

Accent: I spoke with an English accent, but not in a way that could be described as 'upper class.' Unfortunately, the stereotype of what an Englishman is supposed to sound like was too strong. One of my

managers would speak to me in an exaggerated aristocratic English accent that I assume he had heard on TV. My displeasure raised another stereotype. I obviously didn't have a sense of humor. "I always thought the English had a great sense of humor," he said. "Just look at Monty Python!" I avoided him when I could.

Indirectness: Unlike my colleagues – male and female – I was very indirect. I was brought up in an English working class family in which I was told not to stand out from others, to 'know my place', and always be polite. A phrase like, "Please could I have this by Friday", not meant as a question, was met with bewilderment. "So, you would like this by Friday?" "Ideally, yes please." "Do you want this by Friday, or not?" I decided to ask for as little as possible in the future.

Writing style: I followed the style I had learned growing up – an introduction, my research and findings, and a logical conclusion. "No way!" said my American managers. "I don't have time to read all this. Give me your conclusion and a few bullet points." Word choice was also a problem. "I've been to England,"

said one of my managers. "All those tiny houses packed together; nothing standing out. Well, that's how you write. I want big, bold words to persuade me." I wasn't using enough buzz words. I had to learn to pepper my writing with phrases like 'exceptional quality improvements', 'dramatic increases in customer satisfaction', and 'accelerated performance'. "But if everyone is using these phrases," I asked, "how would that make my arguments stand out? Isn't the content most important?" "In school, maybe!"

Answering questions: It took me a while to learn that not every question needed an answer. When a colleague would walk toward me in a hallway and say, "How's it going?" I would stop to answer the question. I would be left standing there while he or she carried on to their next meeting. I made a mental note to ignore them in the future.

Interrupting: Meetings were difficult. I was used to meeting conversations that followed a sequence of your turn, my turn. I didn't know how to interrupt without being impolite. I knew my manager was thinking,

"Hmm, Terry had a good resume, but he doesn't contribute." I imagined my performance evaluation: "Has little value to add. No ideas. No confidence." Desperate to prove myself, I wrote "My turn" on a Post-It during one meeting and put it on the end of my nose. The conversation ground to a halt, and I explained my predicament. I asked my colleagues to help by asking for my input occasionally.

My challenges were tiny compared with those others face, and I only use them to illustrate the impact even small differences can have on relationships and productivity at work. I can still feel the fear that I was not going to 'fit in' over 30 years later. My Post-It intervention was a small breakthrough, but taught me an important lesson: the benefits of diversity will not come about because of the presence of difference. The benefits will only be realized by people willing to identify, explore, and actively engage with them. This is why diversity must be partnered with inclusion, which is not a passive tolerance of differences, but an intentional act of creating value.



► The Changing Face of Diversity

“ Almost nine in ten respondents think their company’s number of overseas clients will increase in the next three years, while 77% believe that their company will have an operational presence in more countries than it does now. As a consequence, companies are moving away from traditional organizational structures, with 78% saying that in the next three years they will establish more cross-border teams, comprising people who are physically located in different countries.”

Competing across borders: How cultural and communication barriers affect business. The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012



The Changing Face of Diversity

► The Borderless World & Diversity

Globalization and new technologies are enabling us to work with anyone, anywhere, at any time, and from any device. The borderless workplace brings millions of diverse people together every day – both face-to-face and virtually – to do business and collaborate.

There have been dramatic changes in the composition of the global workforce over recent decades. Why?

- Demographic changes both within and across countries through immigration and migration
- The 'push' of anti-discrimination legislation – not just in the USA but also in countries as diverse as Argentina, Finland, Ireland, Israel, The Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, and Taiwan
- The 'pull' of emerging market opportunities requiring talent with local knowledge
- Increased cross-border acquisitions and partnerships
- The shortage of talent and the globalization of the talent market

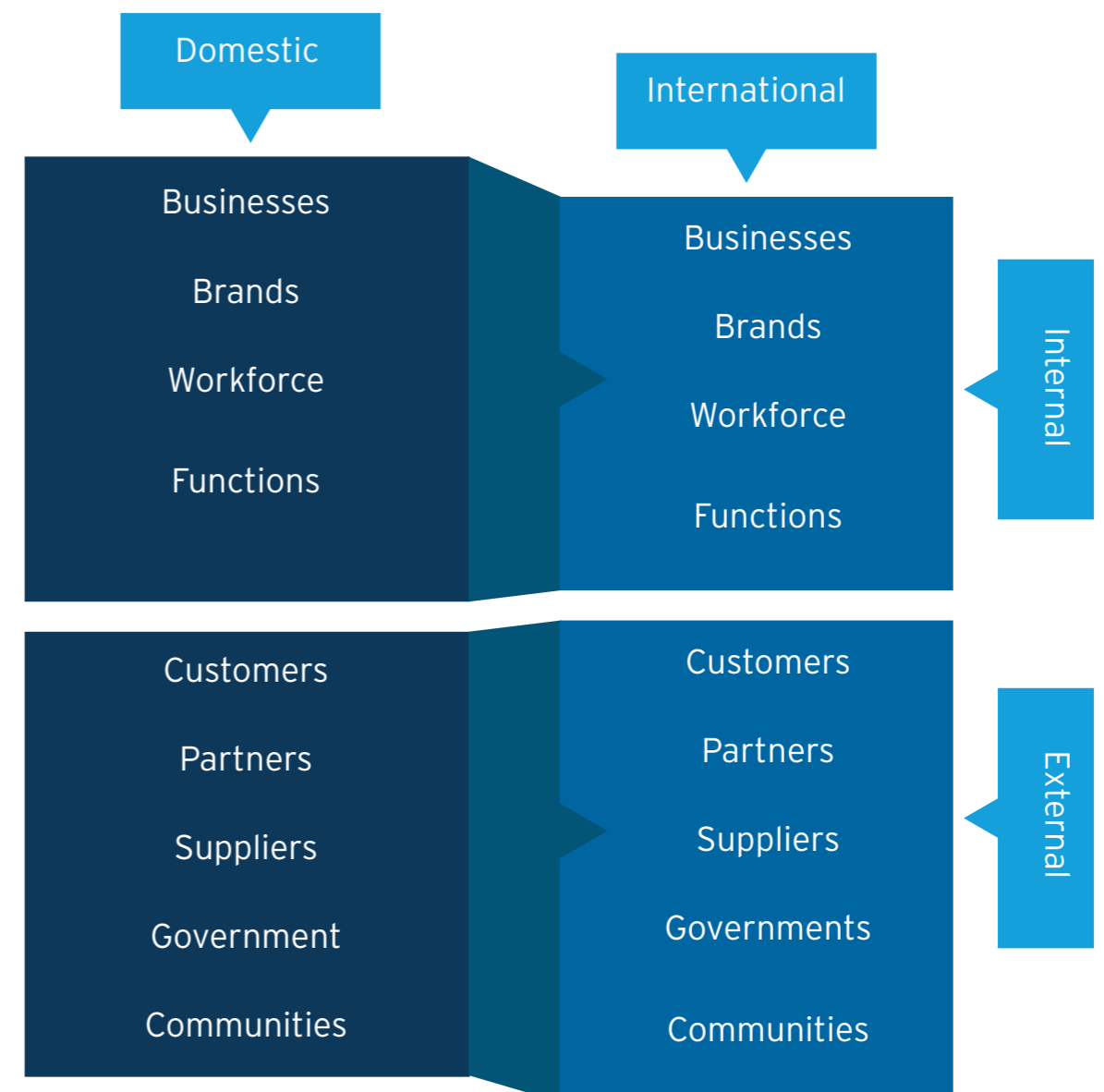
In addition to the above, the urgency for ongoing innovation in a hyper-competitive world has prioritized the need for a diverse workforce with different backgrounds, experiences, and qualifications. In a 2011 Forbes study of 321 global enterprises with at least \$500 million in annual revenue, 85 percent of those surveyed agreed or agreed strongly that diversity is crucial to fostering innovation in the workplace. [1]

Every company should analyze its own diversity landscape, and think about how greater diversity and inclusion could help generate increased competitive advantage. Within a business – domestically and internationally – there are cultural differences in the workforce that need to be leveraged for best results. Internally, there are also differences between business, brand, and functional cultures. Ideally, there will be a creative tension between these cultures to support collaboration and innovation, but too often these differences become dysfunctional. One client described his business to me as a state of warring tribes.

Externally, there are cultural differences between the organization and customer groups, partners, suppliers, governments, and communities. These relationships also need managing with a high level of cultural intelligence.

By cultural intelligence, I mean fluency in bridging cultural distances efficiently and effectively.

The Diversity Landscape



The Changing Face of Diversity

► The Borderless World & Diversity

Companies have been finding ways to operate in a complex global business environment. Some have formed global business units while others have adopted regional structures. IBM developed what it calls the globally integrated enterprise (GIE). The Internet and global communications capabilities “made it possible for knowledge work to be performed anywhere in the world where skilled people could be found to do it.” [2]

According to IBM’s Michael Cannon-Brookes, VP, Business Development, China and India:

“[When IBM adopted the GIE approach] We began looking at the world very differently, seeking out pools of high value, competitively priced, talent and skills that could be used globally to serve both our internal and client needs. A great internal example comes from Japan, where corporate culture is often considered very insular. Yet under our GIE model, we now have the HR for IBM Japan done in Manila, accounts receivable done in Shanghai, the accounting done in Kuala Lumpur, procurement in Shenzhen, and the customer service help desk is in Brisbane.” [3]

Talent able to communicate and coordinate across complex diversity landscapes is imperative.

Whether a company is operating across a city, a country, or across continents – and regardless of organizational structure – people at all levels are interacting with colleagues, customers, suppliers and partners with different values, beliefs, behaviors, and ways of thinking. But as the award winning Silicon Valley journalist Edward Iwata says:

“In today’s borderless world, we know surprisingly little about diverse business people, whether they’re a 12-hour flight away, or in the next cubicle.” [4]



The Changing Face of Diversity

► The Diversity Journey: From Complying to Innovating

“ We’re seeing that culture now extends to areas of difference such as technical orientation, management style and other domains, which affect how we run the business and interact with others . . . When you begin to build a culture that is respectful and inclusive around things like race, gender and sexual orientation, the organization learns the skills to manage without assumption. ”

Ron Glover, IBM’s Vice President, Global Workforce Diversity quoted in the article Diversity on a Global Scale, HR Management, 2013

Defining Our Terms

What are diversity and inclusion?
Let me work from those offered by the University of California, Berkeley [5]:

Diversity: “Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one **individual** or **group** different from another.”

In other words, diversity is simply the reality of human differences.

Inclusion: “Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which an individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.”

Distinguishing between the two concepts is important. Research shows that the presence of diversity alone means little in terms of business results. Leveraging diversity through an inclusive culture is what mines the value in differences.

A problem with the term ‘diversity’ is that it is sometimes seen as only relevant to America and Americans: “When we were developing the first diversity strategy, we had a global

meeting . . . of what you would call champions and supporters from all different countries. Quite frankly, there was a reaction even within this group that diversity was something to do with [only] America.”

But something happened in the discussion that shifted the frame of reference:

“The minute we started talking about inclusion, the conversation changed . . . It enabled them to focus. Inclusion is a word that resonates much more with the European experience.” [6]

The Diversity Journey

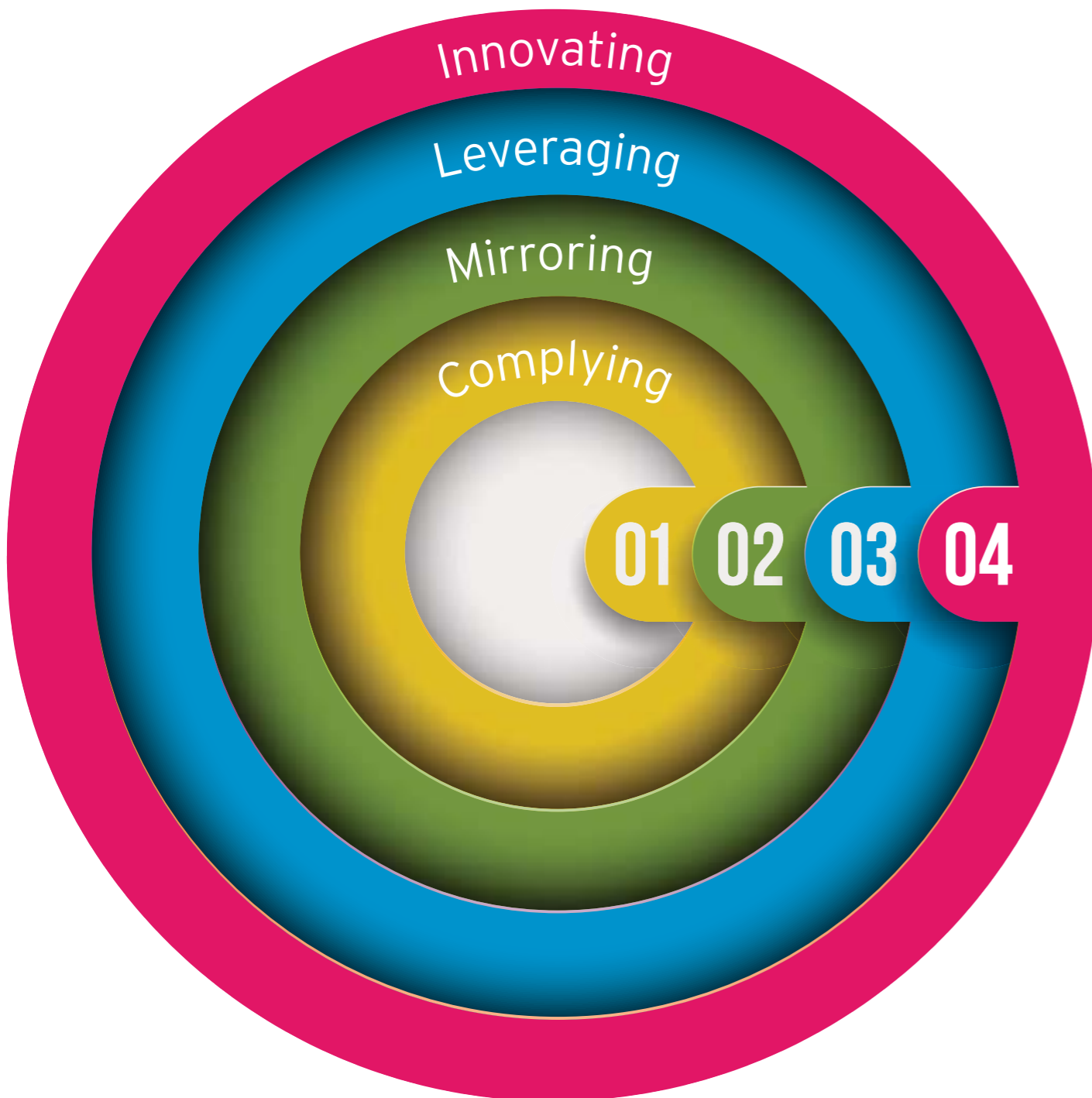
Have you seen Russian dolls in which one doll is contained within another and another within that, and so on. They are actually called matryoshka dolls and they gave rise to the matryoshka principle used in design - object-within-similar-object (or nesting). The evolution of diversity over the last 50 years has followed the same pattern. Each phase of diversity development contains the previous phases. Unlike matryoshka dolls, however, the phases in the diversity journey are imprecise, blending into one another, and each one can become more or less visible depending on circumstances. For example, a company might be highlighting Phase 4: Innovating and then find itself facing a class-action discrimination lawsuit which brings Phase 1: Complying into the spotlight.



The Changing Face of Diversity

► The Diversity Journey: From Complying to Innovating

The Diversity Journey



1. Complying

Phase 1 developed during and after the anti-discrimination, affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation of the 1960s and 70s in the United States (although some companies had taken steps to open opportunities to minorities before that time). Phase 1 was not built on the law alone; a strong moral surge powered the view that fair treatment for all was the 'right thing to do'. The intent in this phase was to increase the representation of traditionally underrepresented identity groups (e.g. race, gender) in the workplace.

While increasing demographic diversity and promoting fair treatment, the paradigm had the limitation of promoting a color-blind and gender-blind approach to difference ("we are really all the same").

Getting to Phase 1 wasn't – and still isn't - easy. Late in 2000, the Coca Cola Company agreed to pay \$192.5m to settle charges that it routinely discriminated against Black employees. In 2006, six female employees of the investment bank Dresner Kleinwort Wasserstein filed a \$1.4 billion sexual discrimination lawsuit. The company settled. In 2006, the food services and facility management giant Sodexo Inc. settled an \$80m class action discrimination lawsuit brought by African-American employees who claimed they were not promoted at the same rate as their white colleagues. In 2005, UBS, Europe's largest bank, agreed to pay \$29m to one female employee for discrimination. Walmart agreed to pay more than \$11.7m to settle an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) sex discrimination suit. **I should add that both Sodexo (number 1) and Coca Cola (38) were on DiversityInc's list of the top 50 companies for diversity in 2013.**

The Changing Face of Diversity

► The Diversity Journey: From Complying to Innovating

2. Mirroring

“It’s about people from Asia, Europe and the US. It is about women and men. It is about professional backgrounds and different personalities. Such diversity is important for the LEGO Group to match the world in which the business is made and to support better decision making.”

Jorgen Vig Knudstorp, CEO, LEGO Group, 2011

In the 1980s and 90s, businesses were looking for more payback from diversity. Globalization and the increasing purchasing power of minority groups tended to shift business concerns from litigation risk and loss of company reputation to the opportunity of new markets, at home and abroad.

Connecting with customer markets was not the only concern. The right talent was - and is - in short supply, and the talent market was increasingly global. Faced with hyper-competition, organizations needed to become employers of choice, attracting and retaining talent from around the globe.

A statement by Johnson & Johnson captures the dual purpose of mirroring marketplace diversity:

“We believe that attracting, developing and retaining a base of employees that reflects the diversity of our customers is essential to our success.” [8]

Many of the markets were niche markets, and the limitation of this mirroring phase was that it tended to “push staff with niche capabilities into differentiated pigeonholes without trying to understand what those capabilities were and how they could be integrated into the company’s mainstream business.” [9]

3. Leveraging

Beyond mirroring their diversity landscapes, some businesses realized that to take full advantage of diversity – in terms of, for example, learning, organizational effectiveness, and the creation of economic value – they needed to develop a culture of inclusion. Here is what Boeing says about inclusion:

“We believe the true test of diversity within any organization – or any society – is whether its people build upon their differences or are divided by them.” [10] Building upon differences in collaboration perfectly describes Phase 3. The objective is to leverage differences in a culture of inclusion rather than assimilate or tolerate them. A diverse workforce contains multiple perspectives and approaches to work, and these can be sources of greater efficiencies and effectiveness. At this point on the journey, diversity is strategically tied to creating competitive advantage. It means that leveraging difference “is integral to all activities and processes that build sustainable competitive advantage: innovation, operational design, building learning cultures, managing customer interfaces, encouraging effective team functioning, and managing change.” [11] Diversity thinking also needs embedding into problem solving and decision making processes. It becomes part of the organizational DNA – not just a program but a culture.

The value of integrating diversity thinking into workforce management is captured well by Jean-Claude Le Grand, L’Oreal’s Consumer Products and Corporate Diversity Director (notice the dual title):

“Diversity helps our bottom line in several meaningful ways. Take the factory floor for example. We’ve studied the operations of some of our factories. If there are both men and women in a production line, we get better results with respect to product quality, waste management, energy consumption and other factors. If the line is only men, or only women, the results are not the same.” [12]

The Changing Face of Diversity

► The Diversity Journey: From Complying to Innovating

3. Leveraging cont.

Embedded diversity thinking involves making a shift from treating diversity as a program to thinking of it holistically – not just as part of workforce management, but in relation to other constituencies, e.g. customers, communities, and suppliers. Gerald Fernandez, Sr., President and Founder, Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance, says:

“Corporations who are recognized [for excellence in diversity] all include multiple constituencies in their diversity outreach. Examples such as Marriott International, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts and Hilton Hotels, have clearly stated diversity objectives that go well beyond workforce diversity management.” [13]

4: Innovating

“Innovation, in operations, products, business models and ecosystems, isn’t merely a competitive advantage, it’s the competitive advantage . . . it’s the irregular people with their irregular ideas and irregular methods who create the irregular successes and profits.”

Garry Hamel and Polly LaBarre, Help Us Innovate the Innovation Process. Harvard Business Review Blog, 2012

In our hyper-competitive environment, continuous innovation has become a strategic imperative, and differences interacting in productive ways are central to innovation. While innovativeness from differences was an integral part of Phase 3 (e.g. increasing organizational effectiveness), in Phase 4 it becomes the primary driver for organizational success. Procter & Gamble in their Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report, 2012 put it this way:

“The primary way we achieve our Purpose is through innovation. Innovation is the lifeblood of P&G. And, we see Diversity & Inclusion as a critical enabler for innovation, connecting seemingly unconnected nodes to create innovative products that delight the consumers we want to serve.” [14]

Connecting the unconnected is the theme of *The Medici Effect*, a book written by Frans Johansson in 2004. [15] The title relates to the explosion of creativity in 15th century Italy – the Renaissance. Johansson focuses on the intersection space between ideas. When you step into an intersection you can combine different ideas and approaches in unexpected and valuable ways. Biologists work with economists to understand how markets behave. The study of a termite mound – which maintains an even temperature inside despite wide fluctuations in temperature outside – led to new construction designs. The Eastgate Centre in Harare, Zimbabwe – designed by Mick Pearce is ventilated and cooled using natural means based on the termite mound. It uses less than 10% of the energy needed by other buildings its size.

The Changing Face of Diversity

► Diversity by Design

“ With his final slide, [Steve] Jobs emphasized one of the themes of his life, which was embodied by the iPad: a sign showing the corner of Technology Street and Liberal Arts Street.”

Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson, Simon & Schuster, 2011

I was always saddened by seminar groups who when given learning material that was outside of their industry or area of expertise would shut their minds down. Inevitably, their response would be, “This isn’t relevant to us.” What I admire about the late Steve Jobs was his passionate curiosity and ability to make connections across boundaries. The way he was able, for example, to pull from his deep interest in Zen Buddhism and Japanese aesthetics into product design.

With the importance of innovation in today’s competitive environment, we might expect a greater willingness to take off our MBA business blinders and look around. The creativity economy is driving an interest in the **diversity of thought** (also known as **cognitive diversity**). The power of this form of diversity lies in recognizing and applying the insight that there is always more than one way to think about and do things.

Using mathematical models and case studies, Prof. Scott Page convincingly demonstrates in his book *The Difference* the power of diversity in problem solving and prediction [16]. Diversity for Page means cognitive diversity:

- **Diverse Perspectives:** differences in how situations and problems are represented
- **Diverse Interpretations:** Differences in categorizing or partitioning perspectives
- **Diverse Heuristics:** Differences in ways of generating solutions to problems
- **Diverse Predictive Models:** Differences in ways of inferring cause and effect

Taken together these differences form our *cognitive toolboxes*.

His analysis of problem solving and diversity leads to two main results.

1. **Diversity beats sameness:** Groups of people with diverse perspectives and heuristics outperform groups who rely on the same perspectives and heuristics.
2. **Diversity beats ability:** Random collections of intelligent problem solvers can outperform collections of the best individual problem solvers. On four conditions:
 - The problem must be difficult
 - The perspectives and heuristics that problem solvers possess must be diverse
 - The set of problem solvers from which we choose our collections from must be large
 - The collections of problem solvers must not be too small

A National Science Foundation supported study in 2012 focused on the psychological makeup rather than the knowledge base of 83 innovation teams. [17] The results demonstrated that managers seeking optimal performance must pay close attention to the cognitive style composition of innovation teams. The combined cognitive styles of members influenced team innovation above and beyond the varied functional knowledge on the team.

Is cognitive diversity being applied?

The Changing Face of Diversity

► Diversity by Design

Harrah's Hotels, Resorts, and Casinos have focused on cognitive diversity for achieving specific and defined business goals. Once an issue has been defined, 'Diverse by Design' teams are formed. They use the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) to determine cognitive predispositions. How the team applies its diverse cognitive tools to solve the problem is left to the team.

Harrah's also uses cognitive diversity in prediction markets. Harrah's employees will forecast customer spending in a casino based on their front-line experiences and perspectives. Instead of a focus on knowledge transfer, Harrah's place value on knowledge creation through cognitive diversity.

This doesn't mean traditional diversity concerns have no place in Harrah's – there are parallel approaches: Cultural diversity (age, gender, race, etc.) and cognitive diversity. Won't cultural diversity lead to cognitive diversity? No, is the answer. It is possible that life experiences in different cultural identity groups will lead to diverse cognitive tools, but there is no cause and effect relationship. An older Caucasian Swede, a young African-American woman, and an Israeli programmer will have different cultural backgrounds, but could still share the same dominant way of thinking.





The Changing Face of Diversity

Key messages

- Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ
- Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which everyone can contribute their very best work
- The borderless workplace brings together millions of diverse people every day - face-to-face and virtually
- Every company must understand and adapt to its own diversity landscape
- Diversity has evolved through four interwoven stages:
 - Complying with legislation
 - Mirroring marketplace diversity
 - Leveraging diversity thinking in organizational strategies and practices
 - Innovating by utilizing the diversity of thought

► The Business Case for Diversity

“... companies working in a global space need to figure out what are the propositions for how diversity and inclusion can add value.”

Sandy Hoffman, et al The Global Diversity Primer, Cisco Systems



The Business Case for Diversity

► Diversity Value Propositions

In their Global Diversity Primer, Sandy Hoffman and her colleagues at Cisco identified five diversity and inclusion value propositions. I'm not going to replicate their propositions here although I will draw on some of the same research findings they reference, as well as adding my own.

Value Proposition 1: Diversity generates higher financial returns

Of the 2006 DiversityInc Top 50 companies for Diversity, 42 were publically traded. These 42 companies had a 28.8% higher return than the Standard & Poor's 500 when measured over ten years with dividends reinvested.

G. Moran, The business case for diversity (5th ed.), 2006

Analyzing a statistically significant sample of companies across Europe, Brazil, Russia, India and China, companies with the highest share of women in their senior management teams outperformed those with no women from 2007-2009 by 41% in terms of return on equity (22% vs. 15%) and by 56% in terms of operating results (17% vs. 11%).

Women Matter 2010: Women at the top of corporations: Making it happen. McKinsey, 2011

Between 2008 and 2010, companies with more diverse executive teams were also top financial performers. In a study of 180 publicly traded companies in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States over the period returns on equity (ROE) in the top quartile of executive board diversity were 53 percent higher, on average, than for those in the bottom quartile. Margins on earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) were 14 percent higher, on average, than those of the least diverse companies.

McKinsey Quarterly, April 2012

Among Fortune 500 companies, those with the highest representation of women on their board of directors experienced better financial performance on average (in terms of return of sales, return on invested capital and return on equity).

The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards (2004-2008), Catalyst Study, 2011

Research in 2009 of 506 organizations with greater racial and gender diversity performed better in terms of sales revenue, number of customers and market share. A one unit increase in racial diversity increased the number of customers by more than 400 and 200 for gender diversity; a one unit increase in racial diversity increased sales revenue by 9% and 3% for gender diversity.

Prof C. Herring, 'Does Diversity Pay? Race, Gender, and the Business Case for Diversity, American Sociological Review, Vol 74, 2009.



The Business Case for Diversity

► Diversity Value Propositions

Value Proposition 2: Diversity drives new market opportunities

PepsiCo attributed one percentage point of its 7.4% revenue growth in 2003, or about US\$250 million to new products inspired by diversity efforts. PepsiCo uses its diverse workforce to obtain unique insights into ethnic markets and introduced products such as guacamole-flavored Dorito chips.

The Wall Street Journal, 2005

"Garcia's cultural insights have helped AT&T . . . become a Hispanic marketing leader, with many of AT&T's top-selling retail stores in Latino neighborhoods."

The Seattle Times, 2013

The business case for diversity in IBM took off in 1995 two years after Lou Gerstner became CEO. This was a time when IBM was experiencing sinking profits and a severe loss of market share. Gerstner understood that a workforce more closely resembling the cultural makeup of the marketplace would lead to more business opportunities and profit. Eight task forces were set up, each one dedicated to a specific affinity group, and with a senior vice president as sponsor. It was expanded to the broader employee base with the formation of 72 diversity councils and 160 employee network groups. IBM's Market Development organization – serving multicultural and women-owned businesses - was established as a direct result of the diversity task forces. The revenues of this organization grew from \$10 million in 1998 to over \$300 million in 2001.

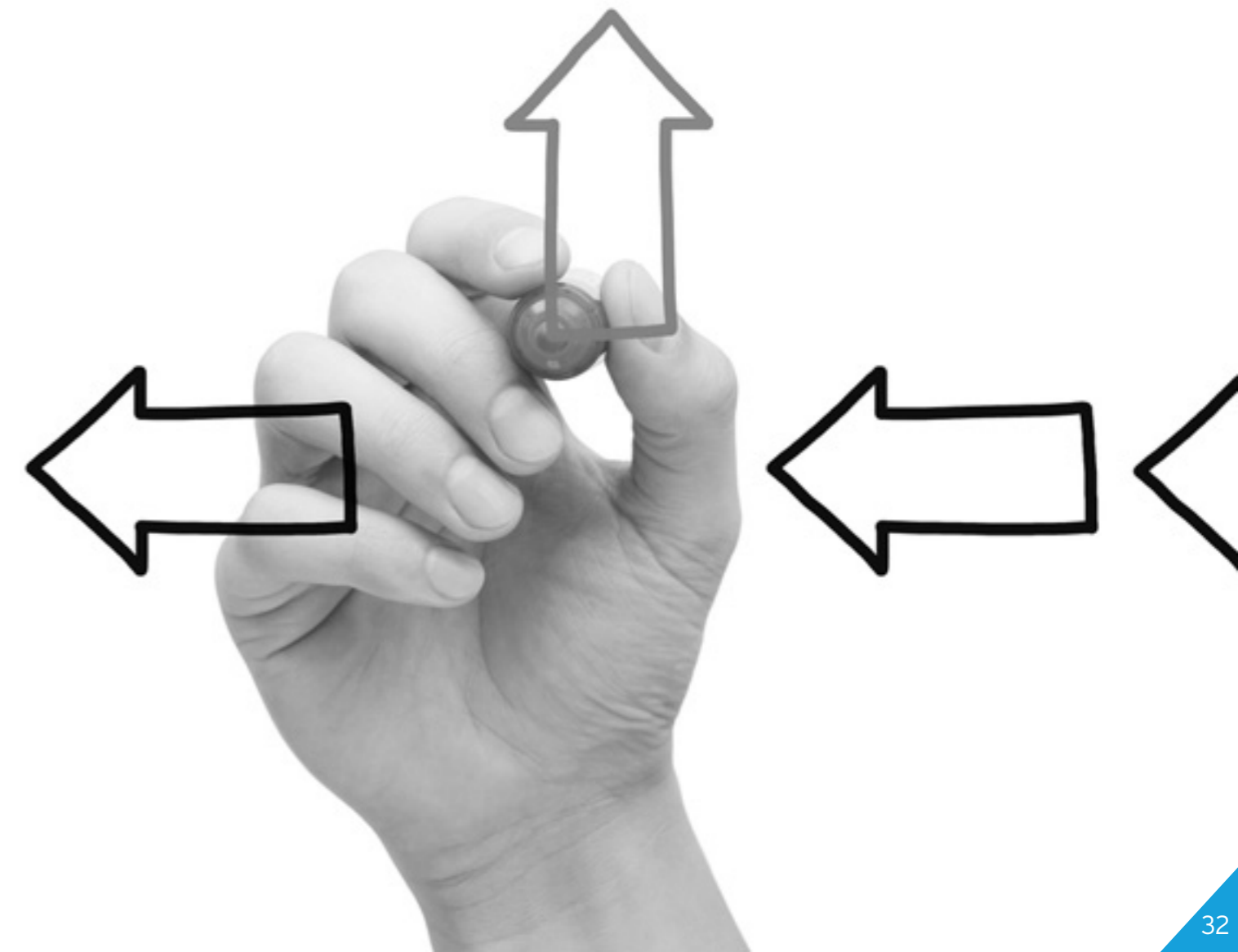
Various Sources

In 2008 the estimated purchasing power of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community was 81 billion pounds in the UK and 712 billion dollars in the US. It was also estimated that 78 percent of the LGBT community (and their

relatives and friends) would switch brands to companies known to be LGBT-friendly.

Cited in the Cisco Global Diversity Primer

Clients are asking companies to provide evidence of their diversity policies and initiatives. A research study conducted on 13 top city law firms in the UK found that all of them – when bidding for potential private sector clients had received requests for information about their diversity.



The Business Case for Diversity

► Diversity Value Propositions

Value Proposition 3: Diversity supports complex problem solving and innovation

In a study of a supply chain management group at Raytheon, Prof. Ron Burt of the University of Chicago looked at operational improvement ideas generated by two groups – a group with a highly diverse network and those with little diversity of connections. The ideas were submitted anonymously and evaluated by two senior-most executives for the Raytheon Group. Those with access to more diverse sources of information generated consistently better ideas.

Prof. Ron Burt, American Journal of Sociology, 2003

A study by Henley Management College of 28 teams found that the diverse teams solved complex tasks better than homogeneous teams because they demonstrated a higher level of creativity and a broader thought process.

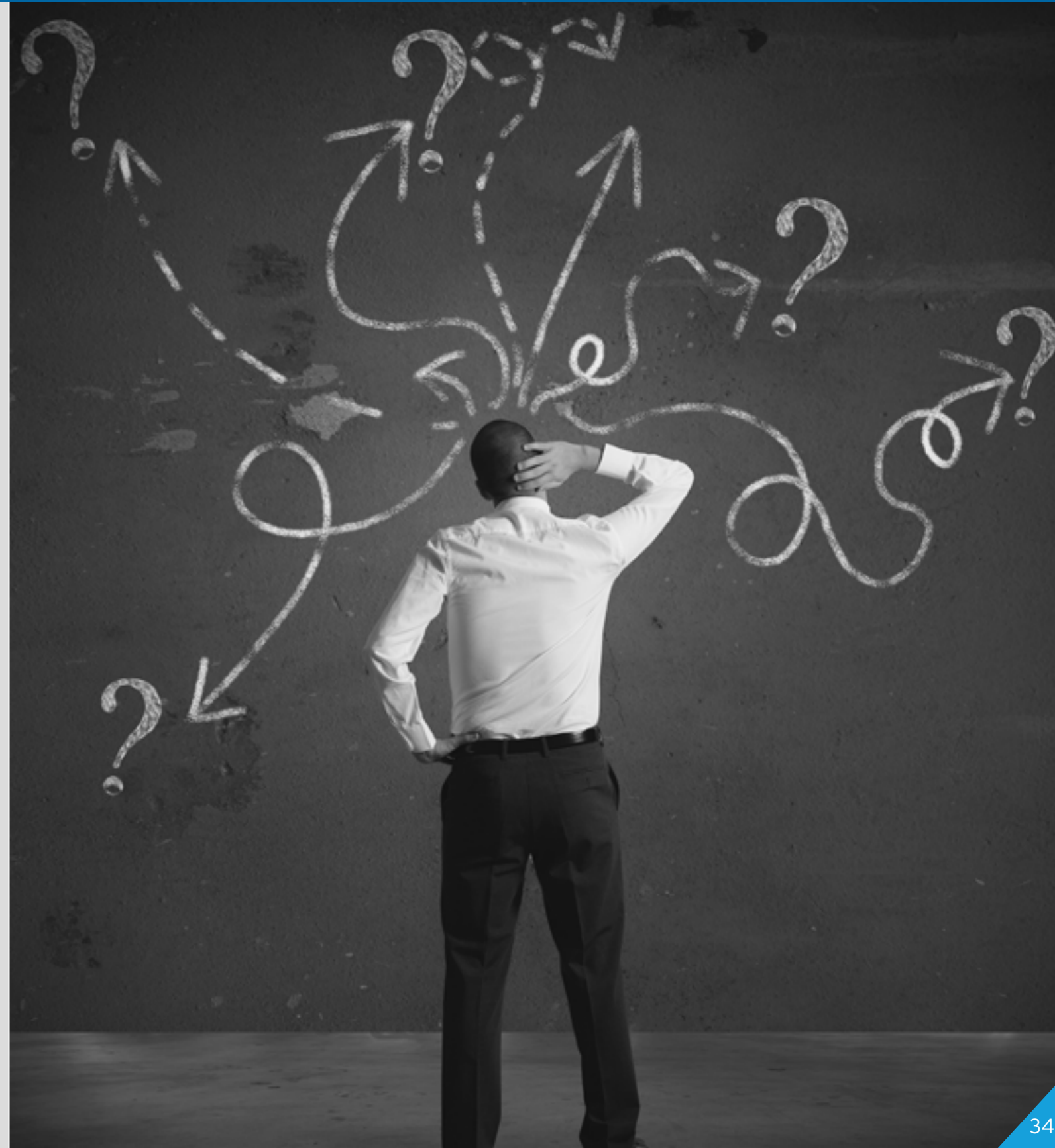
Cited in the Cisco Global Diversity Primer

In a study comparing homogeneous groups with more diverse groups, it was found by the researchers that even groups with one diverse member made better decisions that led to correctly solving a problem. The mere presence of a socially-distinct member may be enough to get people out of their comfort zones and thinking differently. The socially-distinct person could be someone from a different department in the company or someone who grew up in a different state.

Prof. Katherine Phillips, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 2009

Those companies that leverage employee knowledge and ideas meet product revenue targets 46 percent more often and product launch dates 47 percent more often than peer companies.

Cited in the Cisco Global Diversity Primer. Aberdeen Group, 2009



The Business Case for Diversity

► Diversity Value Propositions

Value Proposition 4: Diversity increases employee engagement and performance

When an employee perceives that a company and its leadership are committed to a diverse and fair workplace, they are:

- More likely to stay with that company
- More likely to recommend their company to others
- Less likely to have experienced discrimination
- Less likely to have missed days at work
- More engaged in their work

Gallup Organization, Civil Rights in the Workplace Survey, 2005

CEB research finds that in a diverse workforce where the perspectives of diverse and non-diverse employees are valued, performance improves by 12% and intent to stay by 20%.

Corporate Executive Board, 2013

Dr. Edward Hubbard, a leader in measuring diversity ROI, found that diverse teams that are trained and managed well produced results six times higher than homogenous teams.

Cited in the Cisco Global Diversity Primer

So far, I haven't really talked about the costs of not paying attention to diversity and inclusion, but . . .

More than 2 million employees leave organizations due to perceived unfairness (cumulative comments/jokes, unfair policies, perceived invisibility). This costs US

corporations \$64 billion each year – nearly equivalent to the combined revenues of Google, Goldman Sachs, Starbucks, and Amazon. This doesn't include the costs associated with legal issues or loss of reputation.

The Corporate Leavers Survey, 2007. Level Playing Field Institute

This glimpse into elements of a business case should not be taken as 'proof' that diversity will automatically lead to better business results. It is extremely difficult to make a direct causal link between diversity and performance. Without an inclusive culture in an organization, diversity can lead to dysfunctional conflict and worse results.

Measuring progress in terms of value propositions helps to create accountability, identify gaps and opportunities, and drive change. Each organization, however, needs to build its own business case based on its own priorities.

What should be the strategic (3-5) diversity value propositions for your business?

- Increased financial returns
- Improved performance and productivity
- Increased creativity and innovation
- Increased organizational agility
- Improved understanding of markets
- Easier entry into new markets
- Improved quality problem-solving
- Increased employee engagement and commitment
- Increased attractiveness to top talent
- Improved team effectiveness
- More diverse collaboration to manage complexity
- Improvements in staff retention/absenteeism
- Improved public image



The Business Case for Diversity

Key messages

- In terms of a business case, research supports at least four value propositions:
 - Diversity generates higher financial returns
 - Diversity drives new market opportunities
 - Diversity supports complex problem solving and innovation
 - Diversity increases employee engagement and performance

► Exploring Diversity

A question I often ask participants at the beginning of a workshop is, "Who are you?" Typically, each person will give me their name. When I follow-up with, "Yes, but who are you?" I'm usually given a job title or a profession. When I continue to ask the question, common responses relate to important life roles like mother or father. Nationality, age, gender or racial identity will emerge in no particular order. The truth is that each one of us is very complex; we are not one thing but many - a bundle of identities - with different identities becoming more or less significant at different times and places.



Exploring Diversity

► The Complexity of Difference

“ Diversity is an important issue for L’Oreal. It consists of recognizing, accepting, valuing differences and capitalizing on them to accelerate the company’s growth. As the undertaking has multiple dimensions, L’Oreal prefers to talk about diversities in the plural. ”

L’Oreal, Our Approach to Managing Diversities

Culture is key to understanding many of our differences. What do we mean by a culture?

A culture is a group that shares experiences and characteristics that shape how its members understand and act in the world. It is a relatively coherent set of assumptions, attitudes values and beliefs that guide behaviors within the group.

Cultures are often associated with nationalities, but national origin is just one type of cultural group.

Some cultural groups we are born into, and others groups we join or become part of during our lives.

Cultures can be shaped by many different types of shared experiences, for example:

- Age (generation)
- Education and training
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Language
- National origin
- Organization
- Physical abilities
- Profession
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Skin color
- Veteran status

When you look at the list of cultural groups above, which ones have been most influential in shaping your life?

Think again: When we are in a dominant group, we often fail to recognize our membership in specific groups. For example, when I read the term ‘gender’ I automatically relate it to female gender, and consequently discount gender has having played a part in my life. Being of the male gender has played a huge part in shaping who I am – my life experiences, my opportunities, etc. When I read ‘skin color’, I also discount it because I am white, and so what has skin color got to do with me?



Exploring Diversity

► The Complexity of Difference

Differences in cultures can be looked at in terms of two levels – **Surface and Deep**:

Surface: These are noticeable differences in groups and they can be of three types:

Demographic: Differences in easily distinguishable characteristics such as age, color, gender, race, physical abilities, language.

Material: Differences in 'tangible things' like art, literature, architecture, crafts, music, dancing, clothing, food and drink, technology.

Behavioral: These are the easily detected practices and norms of behavior in a group such as body language (e.g. posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye movements), forms of greeting, conversational patterns, rituals, festivals, and holidays.

Deep: These are differences primarily out of conscious awareness such as assumptions, expectations, attitudes, values, and beliefs that influence behaviors. They include different expectations about, for example, relationships, communication, time, power, problem solving.

When working across cultures it is the deeper differences that tend to cause the most difficulty because they are less obvious. We need tools to help us identify these hidden differences in our borderless workplace (see Analyzing Cultural Differences in the next section of the book).

When we first start working with someone we notice the surface level differences. Over time we become aware of the deeper cultural differences, and eventually move down to the person's individual personality.



► The Individual & Cultural Difference

“ Diversity of thought facilitates inclusion and collaboration by highlighting a paradox of human nature: that differences among individuals within a cultural group are often as significant as differences between groups.”

IBM

Our identities are shaped by cultural groups; but we are also unique individuals.

Cultural influencers like family, neighbors, peer groups, schools, the media, our religious institutions, and social and professional groups are powerful, but not all-powerful. We each have our own life stories, perspectives, attitudes and opinions, and acquired knowledge and expertise. Even though someone might be seen as belonging to a specific group(s) - e.g. female, Nigerian - that person, given their specific life experiences, can be quite different from others who are also female and Nigerian.

If you haven't seen it already, I highly recommend a TED talk given by Chimamanda Adichie called 'The Danger of a Single Story'. To summarize:

Chimamanda Adichie grew up in Nigeria. One day a new houseboy - Fide - started working in her family's house. Chimamanda was always told to finish her food because people like Fide's family were poor and had nothing. She felt great pity for Fide's family. One day she went to visit Fide's family, and Fide's mother showed her a beautifully

patterned basket made of dyed raffia that Fide's brother had made. She was shocked. It hadn't occurred to her that anybody in his family could actually make something; it had been impossible for her to see them as anything but poor - that was her single story of them. But, of course we are composed of many overlapping stories.

In the past, some diversity initiatives could be damaging. They were so focused on group differences that they lost sight of the individual and his or her uniqueness. It was very easy to fall into the trap of stereotyping (having relatively fixed perceptions about a group that doesn't allow for individual variation or uniqueness).

- You're English, therefore, you . . .
- You are a woman/man, therefore, you . . .
- You're gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender, therefore, you . . .
- You're an engineer/accountant/sales person, therefore, you . . .
- You're Middle Eastern, Asian, European, African-American, or Hispanic, therefore, you . .

One way we deal with the complexity of the world is to put people into categories, but there is nothing fixed about the values or behaviors of any category or of the people in them. We must always look at any broad statements about a group as reflecting statistical tendencies not absolute 'truths'.

Group Stereotypes	Group Tendencies
Fixed perceptions - often negative; they can be positive (but just as false)	Tentative expectations
Not open to modification no matter what we learn about the individual(s) we interact with	Always open to modifications based on what we learn about the individual(s) we interact with

Exploring Diversity

► The Individual & Cultural Difference

We must always remember that we don't work with a group, but with individuals who will demonstrate group characteristics to more or lesser degrees.

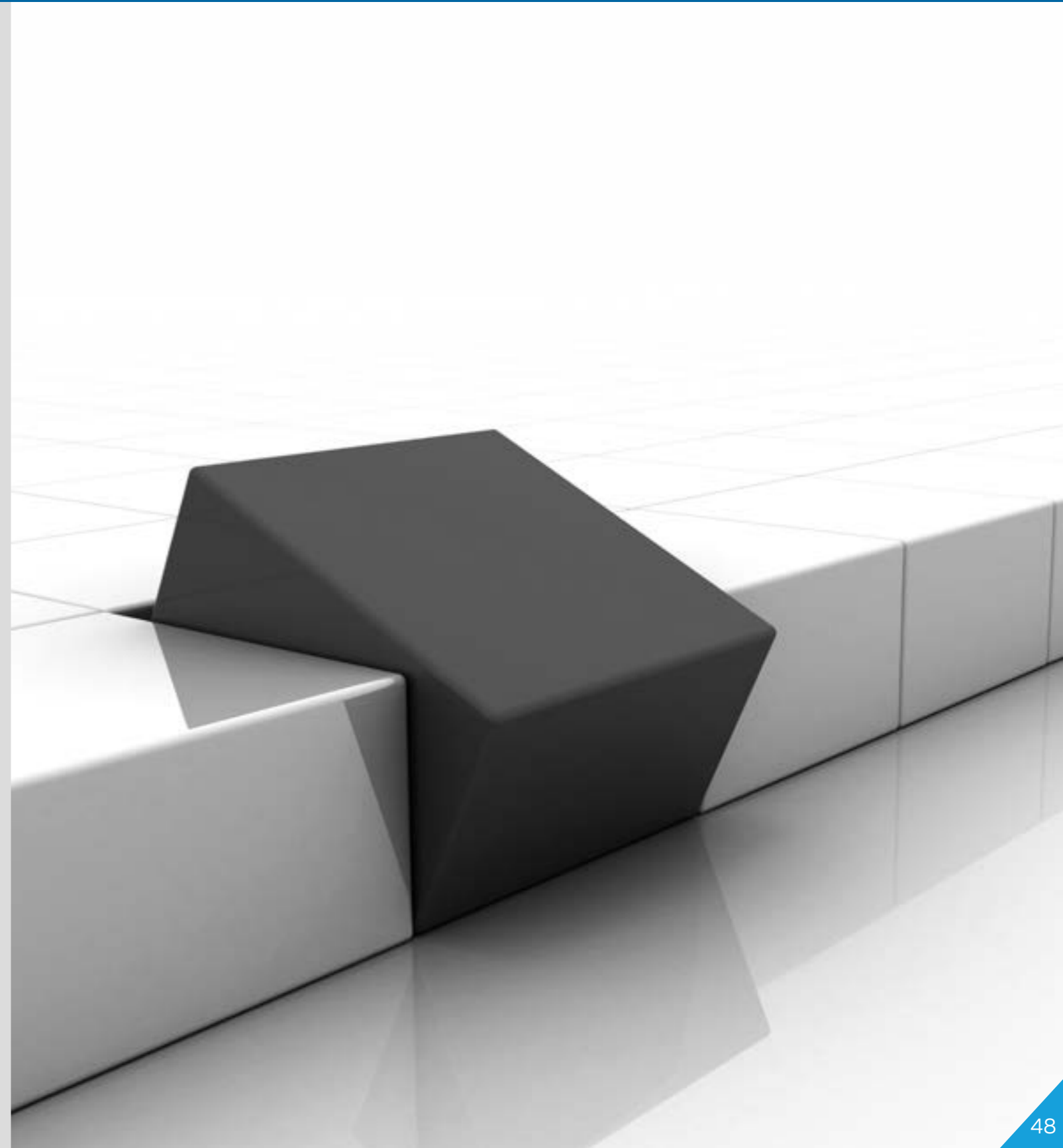
However . . .

If we only focus on the individual we can lose sight of the rich set of influences that have - and continue to - shape the individual(s) we work with. For example, how can I begin to work productively with my Japanese colleagues if I don't appreciate the wider cultural context in which they live and work?

I once gave a cross-cultural seminar to a group of high level partners in a consulting firm. The American partners would usually start their presentations with a joke and then get down to business in a confident, self-assured manner. One of the partners was Japanese (I'll call him Wantanabe-san), and he had never met other members of the group before - although he had worked with them virtually. Wantanabe-san started his presentation with an apology for not being prepared enough. I could hear the gasps of the American partners. Looking through an American cultural lenses, starting with an apology communicated a terrible lack of self-confidence, and not being prepared, well . . . how did he get to become a partner in this firm?

The Americans knew Wantanabe-san to be top in his field, but were stunned by his 'unprofessionalism'. Their mistake was to look at Wantanabe-san simply as an individual technical expert without seeing him in his cultural context. In Japan, the group tends to be valued over the individual - no individual should place him or herself above the group and so modesty is highly valued. There is a Japanese adage, "The nail that sticks out begs to be hammered down." Saying that he was not prepared would allow him to save some 'face' (self-respect) if the presentation was not well received.

As it was, the Americans had placed him in a category of 'unprofessional' at the beginning of the presentation. I could tell by the questions they asked that it was hard for them to let go of the label, even after I explained the cultural background.



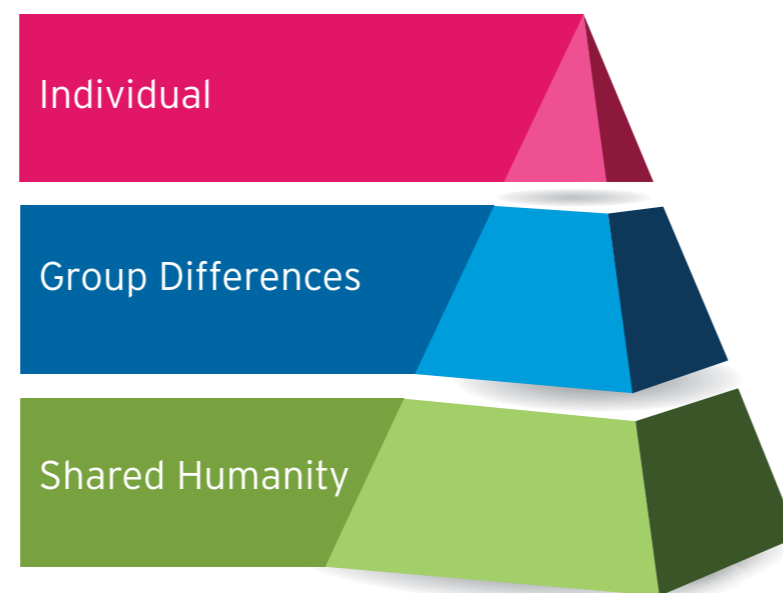
► The Identity Pyramid

“ Through our focus on understanding each individual’s skills, passions, and our fundamental commonalities, we enable behaviors that lead to a culture of innovation.”

Procter & Gamble

Commonalities haven’t entered into this discussion yet, but the fact is we all have a **shared humanity** based on common biological - and many would argue - psychological needs like acceptance, respect, and understanding.

The Identity Pyramid



Adapted from the work of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission [18]

When we are interacting with others we need to factor in all three levels of identity: Individual, Group, and Shared Humanity. If we recognize one part of the pyramid, but ignore, or deny other parts our perceptions will be distorted. Let’s think about a number of scenarios.

1. Yannick’s mindset on differences:

- Denies individual uniqueness
- Overemphasizes group differences
- Denies shared humanity

When Yannick meets Francine he is - first and foremost - only going to relate to her as a member of certain groups (e.g. black, female, Jamaican). Yannick cannot see beyond the group categories he has placed her into and so he loses out on her individual uniqueness, and the common ground he shares with her.

2. Stephanie’s mindset on differences:

- Denies individual uniqueness
- Denies group differences
- Overemphasizes commonalities

When Stephanie meets Stelios she will not see Stelios as the unique individual he is, or the influence of Greek culture on how he sees the world and how he behaves. She is an example of “we are all the same” mentality.

3. Scott’s mindset about differences:

- Overemphasizes individual uniqueness
- Denies the impact of group differences
- Denies areas of commonality

When Scott meets Daniel, he only sees him as an individual - someone untouched by group influences and a shared humanity.

▶ Getting In Shape for Working with Differences

“ Although two-thirds of workers think they are ready for a diverse workplace, a quarter of employers report difficulty hiring workers who function well in such settings.”

The Future of Work, Report by the Institute for the Future for the Apollo Research Institute, 2012

Working across differences can be enlightening or challenging or, more often, both. Certain **mental muscles** need to be in good shape for the most productive experience. Let's look at these muscles:

Curiosity: A desire to learn about others and the world

While researching the book, *The Global Leader* [19], I asked a senior vice president to look at a list of competencies for working globally. Without hesitation, he pointed to Curiosity, and said, "Well, without that you've got nothing to work with." Without curiosity your responses to others are likely to be stereotypical or perceived as dismissive, uninterested.

People who are curious tend to demonstrate:

- A wide range of interests
- A questioning mind
- A desire to look beyond the 'obvious'
- An enthusiasm for exploring and trying new things
- A high level of satisfaction in learning something

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your curiosity level?

Perceptiveness: Ability to recognize differences and their potential implications

Being perceptive is more than just receiving information through the senses; it means going beyond the information to deeper insights. It means being able to pick up on subtle differences, and not just relying on rigid social categories and stereotypes. It also means being able to perceive the possible implications of differences on working together.

People who are perceptive tend to demonstrate:

▶ Getting In Shape for Working with Differences

- An open mind
- An ability to observe, listen, and make accurate interpretations
- A sensitivity to different contexts
- An ability to differentiate between similar 'things'
- An ability to see deeper levels of difference

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your perceptiveness level?

Self-Awareness: Ability to understand one's own perceptual filters and mental models

Are you aware of how your own behaviors and thinking patterns might be interpreted by others? Are you aware that your mental models of good communication, effective leadership, and trust are culturally specific? They are not universal truths that everyone agrees with in every culture.

Are you also aware of the many biases you bring to the workplace? Many biases are unconscious and automatic so you wouldn't be aware of them. In the past it was assumed that discriminatory behavior was conscious and based on prejudice. Sometimes it was, and still is, but every day we make numerous decisions that favor one group over another. Here is a good example:

How do we select corporate CEOs? It would seem from the evidence, by height.

Population	% of CEOs
Less than 15% of American men are over 6 feet tall	60%
Less than 4% of American men are over 6 feet 2 inches	36%

Were they consciously chosen because of their height? Doubtful.

Here's an old story that captures unconscious bias very well:

A man and his son were injured in a car crash. They were taken to the hospital and as the little boy was wheeled into emergency surgery the operating surgeon said, "Oh no, that's my son!" How could that be? The answer is often overlooked – the surgeon is his mother.

Biases are based on past experience and learning, and they can make us more efficient because we don't have to examine every piece of information coming into our brains (about 11 million bits in every moment); they are sometimes called cognitive shortcuts. We use them very quickly to decide if something or someone is safe or less safe, competent or less competent, suitable or less suitable. We can, however, rely too much on past experience and learning especially in a world of constant change. We are not 'bad people' because we have biases – we all do – but we should try to make them more conscious so that we can self-manage them.

I recommend you take the Implicit Association Test available free online at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/takeatest.html>

People who are self-aware tend to demonstrate:

- An objective view of their strengths and limitations
- A recognition of their own feelings, thoughts, and behaviors
- A capacity for self-questioning
- An openness to feedback and continuous learning
- A recognition of how they influence outcomes

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your level of self-awareness?

► Getting In Shape for Working with Differences

Tolerance for Ambiguity: Ability to make a decision with only limited or unclear information

Tolerance for ambiguity in a fast-changing, complex, and multicultural world is critical. If we see ambiguous situations as very uncomfortable or threatening, we are more likely to engage in rigid either/or thinking (it's either black or white, or right or wrong). We might also seek some psychological certainty by relying heavily on stereotypes, and thereby damage relationships – perhaps even before they begin. People who are tolerant of ambiguity tend to demonstrate:

- An ability to perceive ambiguity in information and behavior in a neutral and open way
- An ability to see uncertainty as an opportunity rather than a threat
- An ability to ask tough questions that may not have a clear answer
- A resistance to either/or thinking
- An ability to improvise when solutions are unknown

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your tolerance for ambiguity?

Confidence: A belief that you can make things work out

Confidence is not arrogance which is rooted in feelings of superiority. It is a belief in one's inner resources for achieving a goal. In a borderless workplace it is easy to become disoriented by the lack of face-to-face relationships, as well as cultural differences that can shake your sense of reality. If we lack confidence, we will be worrying about the possibility of failure or the disapproval of others rather than the desired outcome.

People who are confident tend to demonstrate:

- An inner sense of security

- A trust in their abilities to deal with the unknown and unfamiliar
- A willingness to put themselves in challenging situations
- A willingness to admit mistakes, apologize, and move on
- An ease with giving credit where credit is due

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your confidence level?

Risk-Taking: Ability to act in the face of uncertain outcomes

Some people become anxious around cultural differences - afraid they will embarrass themselves or offend someone. At the heart of this fear is 'political correctness'. An article in the September 2006, Harvard Business Review describes political correctness as "a double-edged sword." [20] It has helped underrepresented groups experience a more inclusive workplace, but it can "hinder employees' ability to develop effective relationships across potentially divisive group differences." Instead it can "breed misunderstanding, conflict, and mistrust." Constructively engaging differences through emotional intelligence, questioning, mindset shifting, and communication does mean taking a risk. The result, however, can be strong, trusting relationships rather than a workplace where people tiptoe around each other and the issues.

People who are risk takers tend to demonstrate:

- A willingness to be wrong
- An excitement about stepping into the unknown
- A readiness to take the initiative, experiment, and test assumptions
- An ability to reframe potential challenges as opportunities
- An ability to manage fear and anxiety

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your ability to take risks in uncertain situations?

► Getting In Shape for Working with Differences

Mindfulness: Ability to focus attention on the here and now

You need to be very 'present' in cross-cultural interactions. You must listen to and observe – yourself and others – very intently. Are others giving you any signs – verbally or non-verbally – that they are reacting badly or feeling uncomfortable? Don't keep pushing on. Stop and ask respectful questions.

Also pay attention to how you are reacting. Are you starting to feel uncomfortable? Can you feel negative emotions coming to the surface? What is the source? Was it a behavior or something that was said (or the way it was said)? Could you have misunderstood the intent?

People who are mindful tend to demonstrate:

- An ability to avoid distraction
- A sensitivity to verbal and non-verbal signals
- An ability to sense change in self and others
- An ability to not force new information into old mental models
- A capacity to empathize

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your ability to be mindful?

Restraint: Ability to slow down negative reactions when feeling disoriented and frustrated

When working across differences it is easy to become frustrated and angry. Anger only makes others defensive; what might have been a small issue based on a simple misunderstanding can quickly become amplified and unmanageable (this is particularly the case if the interaction is virtual). In virtual relationships there is usually less time and fewer opportunities to repair the damage. Anger is often the result of a hasty judgment. Listen – Think – Act not the other way around.

People who demonstrate restraint tend to demonstrate:

- A lack of defensiveness
- A respect for the feelings of others
- An ability to foresee the potential damage of strong negative emotions
- A high degree of patience
- An ability to suspend judgments

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your ability to restrain yourself?

Flexibility: An ability to be responsive to the demands of the moment

In a world so diverse and unpredictable there are no 'one size fits all' solutions. Working with differences often requires adjustments to interpersonal style, e.g. communication. It means listening with an open mind and considering ideas that can appear counterintuitive. It means finding different ways to influence, persuade and collaborate. Borderless working is an ongoing experiment.

People who are flexible tend to demonstrate:

- An alertness to changed circumstances
- A positive attitude toward change
- An ability to be creative and improvise
- A pragmatic desire for getting results rather than being right
- A willingness to treat others as they like to be treated

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your flexibility?

Exploring Diversity

▶ Getting In Shape for Working with Differences

Resilience: Ability to recover from setbacks and keep going

Forming and maintaining cross-cultural relationships can be hard work. Misunderstanding others, being misunderstood, conflict, disorientation, confusion, and frustration can take a toll. Cross-cultural relationships can also be enlightening and fulfilling. The secret to resilience is mindset. If cultural differences are always looked upon as obstacles to be overcome, the result will be emotional exhaustion. Effectively working across cultures requires what Carol Dweck of Stanford University calls a growth mindset (as opposed to a fixed mindset).

Those with a fixed mindset don't like stretch challenges because they are afraid of making mistakes. Their success has taught them to stick with the things they are good at. If the outcome reveals any kind of weakness, they are likely to react defensively.

Those with a growth mindset will see stretch challenges as exciting not threatening. They will be focused on the process rather than the outcome, and on what they can learn for moving forward more effectively.

People who demonstrate resilience tend to demonstrate:

- An optimistic view of the future
- A focus on learning
- An ability to cope with stress
- An ability to manage self-defeating thoughts and feelings
- A high level of resourcefulness

On a scale of 1 (Low) to 7 (High) how do you rate your resilience?

How did you rate yourself overall?

Score	Readiness For Borderless Diversity
60 - 70	Very high (are you sure?)
40 - 59	Good
20 - 39	Fair
0 - 19	Definitely not ready

- What were your top 3 scores? (Keep strengthening these)
- What were your lowest three scores? (Work hard on these)





Exploring Diversity

Key messages

- Each one of us is a complex mix of identities
- A culture is an identity group with shared understandings and behaviors
- National origin is just one type of cultural group; others include gender, ethnicity, race, and age
- Differences within cultures are at two levels: Surface and Deep
- We are strongly influenced by our cultural groups and our shared humanity, but each one of us is a unique individual
- Stereotypes are fixed, distorted perceptions - positive or negative - about cultural groups and their members
- A cultural group will have common cognitive and behavioral tendencies, but there will always be variations within a group

► Cultural Intelligence

“Culturally intelligent people are like the ancient Greek Proteus. Proteus was a supernatural character in Homer’s Odyssey, a sea dweller who could change shape at will . . . This adaptation was guided by knowledge and mindfulness of his situation. The global manager of today and tomorrow must learn to be like Proteus - flexible enough to adapt with knowledge and sensitivity to each new cultural situation that he or she faces.”

Cultural Intelligence: People Skills for Global Business by David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2003.



Cultural Intelligence

► The Cultural ADAPT Cycle

Earlier, I described **cultural intelligence** as **fluency in bridging cultural distances efficiently and effectively**.

I have also introduced you to 10 mental muscles that need to be developed for working across differences in a borderless workplace. The order in which those muscles were listed was not random. They each have a place in a process for adapting to cultural differences: The Cultural ADAPT Cycle:



Analyze: Curiosity, Perceptiveness

Decide: Self-Awareness, Tolerance for Ambiguity

Apply: Confidence, Risk-Taking

Process: Mindfulness, Restraint

Tune: Flexibility, Resilience

Cultural Intelligence

► Analyzing Cultural Differences

The first step in the cultural ADAPT Cycle is analyzing differences and their potential impact on your cross-cultural relationships. To do that you need a tool that can help you identify the differences you encounter. But what differences?

I wrote earlier that differences can be divided into **Surface** and **Deep**. Surface differences are those that are easy to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Deep differences are hidden expectations about what is 'normal'. The deeper differences are the ones that tend to create the most confusion and frustration. This book will not be able to explore managing surface differences, and will only focus on those at a deeper level.

The Worldprism™ is a tool designed to help you understand some of the deep differences found in business cultures around the world.

The Worldprism™ focuses on three dimensions of culture:

- **Relating:** How we in our culture expect to interact with others
- **Regulating:** How we in our culture expect to manage work
- **Reasoning:** How we in our culture expect to solve problems and communicate our solutions

Each of these dimensions is broken down into three sets of contrasting cultural orientations. (See the Worldprism™ chart on the next page)

Relating

Expectations on how to interact appropriately with others

Task

Impersonal. Let's get down to business. Rules before relationships.

Relationship

Personal. Can I trust you? Are you loyal? Relationships before rules.

Explicit

Meaning is stated directly. Say what you mean, and mean what you say.

Implicit

Meaning often has to be inferred from what is said and not said, and body language.

Individual

Me before we.

Group

We before me.

Regulating

Expectations on how to manage our work together

Risk Taking

Make change happen; act decisively. New is good.

Risk Avoiding

Avoid change. Steady, but sure. Stress continuity.

Tight

Be punctual, control time. Time is money.

Loose

Be flexible, go with the flow. Things will happen in their own time.

Shared

Distribute power and authority within the group.

Concentrated

Focus power and authority on specific people in the group.

Reasoning

Expectations on how to think about problems and present solutions

Linear

Analytical, step-by-step process toward solution.

Circular

Focus on exploring and integrating perspectives in a relatively unstructured way.

Facts

Emphasis on data and concrete experiences.

Thinking

Emphasis on reasoning, concepts, and logic.

Simple

Focus on essentials with little context.

Complex

Focus on developing a detailed, contextual understanding.

► Analyzing Cultural Differences

Let me take each dimension and explore the different cultural orientations. Before I do that, **let me make two important statements:**

No higher value is placed on the cultural orientations in the middle or right-hand columns. While cultures might have a dominant orientation (e.g. Simple or Complex), that doesn't make either one right or wrong. **They are simply different orientations, and each one will have advantages in some contexts and disadvantages in others.**

In the scenarios I use to illustrate the cultural differences, I sometimes refer to a country like the US or Japan. When I do this, I am indicating a **cultural tendency**. **Don't turn that tendency into a fixed stereotype.**

Relating: Expectations on how to interact appropriately with others

Task - Relationship Focus

Scenario

"What do you mean **A** has sent you in his place? The issue is not between you and me. Send him in."

"He values your relationship too much, and doesn't want it to be harmed."

"What kind of nonsense is this? It'll be harmed if he doesn't meet with me himself."

"**A** and I have agreed that you and I would speak first, and then I will talk with him so there is mutual understanding. You and I can reach an agreement to solve the problem, and the relationship will still be a good one."

"Doesn't he realize I'm his manager, and that we need to speak face-to-face? And now!"

Self-Awareness: What is your first response to this scenario? Your response will be an indicator of your own cultural orientation. Did you identify more with **A** (Relationship focus), or with the manager (Task focus)?

The broad US cultural tendency is to focus on the task first, and the relationship will follow, or not. Many other cultures in the Middle East, parts of Africa and Asia, for example, put the relationship first; if the relationship is in place the business will follow. Indirect and even third-party communication (as in the scenario) will be used to protect relationships and do business. Task cultures tend to put rules before relationships, and so detailed and legally binding contracts, for example, are valued. From the Relationship perspective, sometimes a handshake is all that is necessary. In Vietnam they have a saying: "For our enemies we apply the law. For our friends we interpret the law."

Explicit - Implicit Communication

Scenario

"Look **B**, have you considered another company might be more suitable for you?"

"What's the problem, **C**?"

"I'm getting some complaints that you're rude, and that doesn't fit with our company culture."

"I'm sorry to hear that, but in the culture I grew up in being direct was respectful."

"But the way you criticized **D**'s report in the meeting was unacceptable."

"I was asking **D** tough questions because I care about her. If I didn't care I wouldn't have asked any questions."

► Analyzing Cultural Differences

Self-Awareness: What is your first response to this scenario? Did you identify more with B (Explicit communication), or with C (Implicit)?

Very direct communication can appear blunt and rude to those who are used to a softer, more indirect style. Even supposedly explicit cultures (as the US as a whole is frequently described) can be disoriented by the directness of, for example, many Germans and Israelis.

The topic of Israel frankness figured in an article in the BBC New Magazine (April 2013). In an interview, Professor Shalom Schwarz, a social psychologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said, "There's certainly something of a tendency to be direct, and it's more common in Israel than in many other places . . . There's a very strong pragmatic strain here and that's helped along by being direct and not wasting time and effort on niceties – that may partly stem from army culture, which many people have come through, where you're expected to be straightforward and focus on the task."

Individual – Group Focus

Scenario

"As a software engineer, I was asked to deliver some software training in Asia. There were no questions from the participants on the first day, and so the training was very difficult for me. On the evening of the first day, I asked them to read certain pages of the manual and prepare for some practical tasks to be completed in class the next day. Next morning, I wanted to get their opinions on the best course of action for the exercise. I asked one of the youngest men in the group (he had the best English) to present his ideas. He remained silent, and looked very uncomfortable. Unfortunately, the second day was as difficult as the first."

Self-Awareness: Do you tend to identify more with the software engineer or with the young man in the group?

In individualistic cultures like the U.S., Northern and Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, individuals are rewarded for being independent, working toward their own goals, and speaking up for themselves. Individuals are expected to try to stand out from the group. Clearly, this was the expectation of the software engineer in the scenario.

In more collectively-oriented cultures, group needs are paramount. Collectivism is a value in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Southern Europe, and South America. In the scenario, the young Japanese man was embarrassed because he had been singled out, and was asked to give his own opinion without consulting other group members. If his ideas were 'wrong' he would have lost 'face' (honor) in front of the group. He may have also embarrassed his seniors. A better approach would have been to ask him to consult with others, and then be the spokesperson for the group. He wouldn't have been speaking for himself, but for the group as a whole.

Relating: Expectations on how to manage our work together

Risk Taking – Risk Avoiding Behaviors

Scenario

"I was asked to write a proposal for a large potential client. I gave them what I thought was a very good document – very concise (just two pages). They asked for a teleconference immediately to discuss the proposal. They complained the document was not detailed enough; they needed more information to assess the risks they would be taking. I rewrote the proposal with much more detail (15 pages). Another teleconference followed, and more detail was requested. After several more conference calls the final proposal was written and it was 75 pages! They felt comfortable with that level of detail which raised their confidence about handling the risk, and we won the business."

► Analyzing Cultural Differences

Self-Awareness: Do you identify more with the proposal writer or the recipients?

In the US, taking calculated risks is valued, as are openness to change and innovation. Entrepreneurial heroes are those who have failed – perhaps on many occasions - but who have kept going. Risk-avoiding cultures like Germany dislike uncertainty, ambiguity and a lack of structure. Planning is valued as are laws, rules, and regulations. People in risk-avoiding cultures tend to want explicit instructions and direction.

Tight - Loose Use of Time

Scenario

“Hi **E**. How did your meeting go with **F**?”

“As you know, I had a 3 p.m. meeting set up with **F**, for Wednesday, but the meeting never happened. I showed up on time and waited for 2 hours. I was so angry at the way I was treated. I left eventually, but not before setting up another appointment for the Friday.”

“What happened then?”

“It was unbelievable. I was kept waiting for an hour before being taken into meet with **F**. There were three other men in the room, two of whom were constantly on the telephone and making a lot of noise. Other people must have come into the room about five times to ask **F** questions or to give him things to sign.”

“Did the meeting turn out to be productive in the end?”

“I left asking them to call when there was a better time to meet.”

“Did they?”

“No.”

Self-Awareness: Do you identify more with **E** or **F**?

In Tight time cultures (like Germany, Switzerland, and the U.S.) individuals value punctuality and completing one task at a time. There tends to be a sharp distinction between task/productive time and social/emotional time. Many other cultures are more flexible or looser about time, and don't make a sharp distinction between task and social time. In these latter cultures (like those in Southern Europe, the Middle East, South America, and some parts of Asia), a schedule is secondary to the needs of a relationship, particularly family and close friends. They also tend to have a more holistic view of time, so that many things can be done at the same time, and things will happen when the time is right. To be impatient will only lead to problems.

Shared - Concentrated Power

Scenario

“**H**, I asked you to put together a 5 year career development plan for yourself. I haven't seen it.”

“I'm very sorry, **I**.”

“When can I have it?”

“I'm . . . not sure.”

“But this is important. I need to know what your goals are so I can help you achieve them.”

“I will do my best.”

“Why is this so difficult for you? It's really just a simple task?”

► Analyzing Cultural Differences

"I don't know what to say. You are my boss, and you know more about my future than I do."

Self-Awareness: Do you identify more with **H** or **I**?

In cultures that have relatively flat hierarchies there is a great deal of interplay and sharing between levels of power and authority. While some respect will be given to those in higher positions, showing deference would be out of place. Individuals are expected to take full responsibility for their careers, with support (coaching and mentoring) from their managers. In cultures where hierarchies are particularly steep, deference to those in senior positions is expected, along with a high level of obedience. Senior managers will often make all the decisions. To know where you want your career to be in 5 years would be very presumptuous.

Relating: Expectations on how to solve problems and explain solutions

Linear - Circular

Scenario

"That was a very confusing meeting with our visitors from **J**. I'd written down a very straightforward agenda, but it was ignored."

"Don't worry **K**. I think the meeting went very well."

"How can you say that?"

"From their point of view an explicit agenda with a beginning, middle, and end is a very Western thing. They see a written agenda as a very linear, rigid, impersonal, and even confrontational approach."

"That's different!"

"For you, yes. They usually prefer an agenda that is more implicit, and to think of the meeting more holistically – spending time discussing everything in a more organic way, and getting a feeling for others in the room. An implicit agenda also gives them the flexibility to drop items if the time doesn't seem right."

"So, it was good I didn't try to force my agenda?"

"Absolutely!"

Self-Awareness: Do you identify more with **J** or **K**?

Many Western cultures are linear in their approach to meetings and problem solving. Connections are made and arguments built as the discussion moves toward an explicitly stated conclusion. Typically, little time is given to developing a context. In circular-oriented cultures, the dialogue is wide-ranging; stories are often told to make points and share insights (as well as form emotional attachment to ideas). The main point is sometimes unstated in circular-oriented cultures because once I share the story you will know what I mean.

Facts - Thinking Emphasis

Scenario

"Let me stop you there, **L**. You have obviously spent a lot of time gathering data for this presentation. Much of it I have already learned through my network. You won't influence my buying decision with more data."

"But you can see from all the data, **M**, that this program has met with great success."

"That certainly seems to be the case from the data you're presenting me with, **L**. I have many vendors who come to me with very flattering data about their programs, but I want you to put the data aside and just talk to me."

► Analyzing Cultural Differences

"If you're not convinced we could look at the data again."

"No, no! You're giving me a lot of facts and figures, but they are only part of the story. I want you to explain your ideas and we'll think them through in relation to our context. I need to understand your main concepts and your reasoning. What do you mean by diversity, and will that make sense here? What is the theory and logic behind your program design, and will that resonate with our learners? Is your program intellectually sound? Giving me all this data feels like you are offering me a fait accompli – a take it or leave it deal. Why should I trust your data? We need to think this through together, and maybe then I will trust your data."

"Well, 85 percent of our client participants would recommend it to colleagues."

"I don't think you understand what I need."

Self-Awareness: Do you identify more with **L** or **M**?

In his book, *When Cultures Collide*, Richard Lewis makes the distinction between data-oriented and dialogue-oriented cultures, which is very relevant here. [21] Data-oriented cultures will gather lots of information before moving forward. Dialogue-oriented cultures want you to listen well and talk; they will also have gathered information, but from their personal networks. I have spoken to many British and American executives who have gone to France, for example, and have found themselves in an intellectual debate that they were unprepared for. If you are unable to contribute to the debate, you will lose credibility.

Simple - Complex Explanations

Scenario

"You've given me way too much information, **N**."

"But this is a complicated issue, **O**, I need to explain . . ."

"No you don't. I just need to know the essentials so I know what to do next."

"But surely you need all the information to make the right decision."

"There's never enough information to make a perfect decision."

"But surely you need to understand the context, the background?"

Self-Awareness: Do you identify more with **N** or **O**?

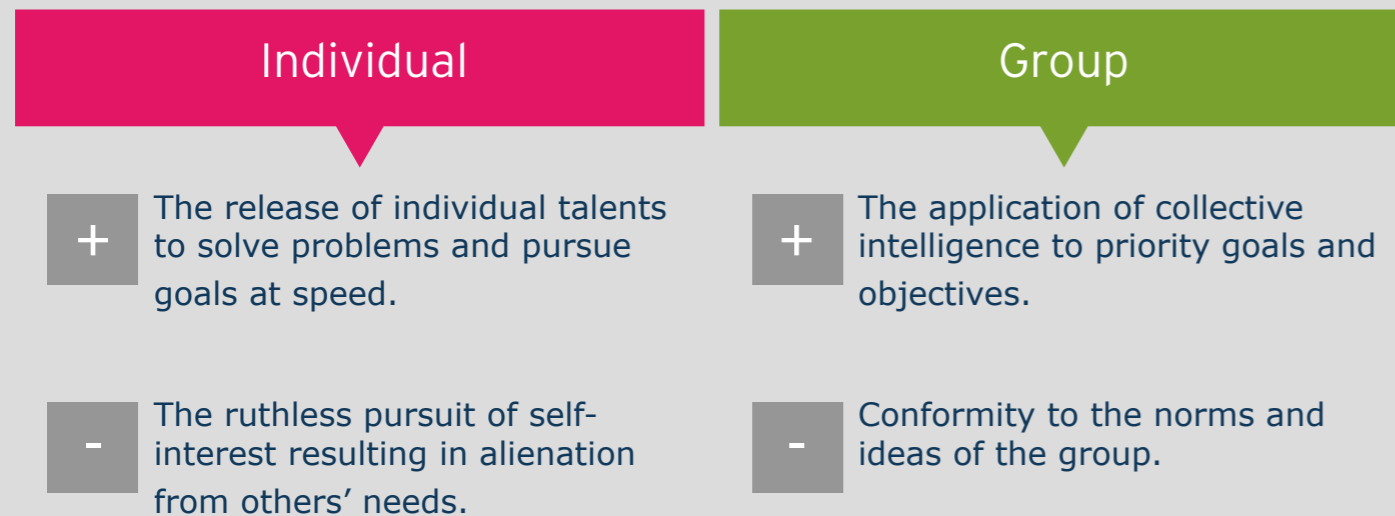
In my Personal Note, I told the story of my having to change my writing style to fit the more bullet-point style in the US (N style). It is not the case that the bullet-point style is superficial or simplistic; it is a style supportive of taking action – "Tell me what I need to do!" I was telling my story about making the transition to a US writing style at a seminar in Paris. A French woman said, "Yes, I've had the same problem. I typically write ten pages and then give my conclusion." (O style) A Spanish woman followed up with, "In Spain, we'll give you forty pages and let you arrive at your own conclusion!"

Cultural Intelligence

► Analyzing Cultural Differences

Every cultural orientation I've introduced you to in the Worldprism™ has potential benefits (+) and potential drawbacks (-). Let's look at three examples; one from each dimension of the model:

Relating



Cultural fluency means having the ability to switch styles depending on the needs of the situation. I am naturally an individualist, but there are times when I recognize the true value of having group input and guidance. If I am doing work in Asia, I will prioritize participating in the group.

Regulating



A seminar participant told me how his company (Japanese) wanted to build two new plants – one in the US and one in Japan. Within three months the Japanese plant was running at 85 percent capacity. The US plant was only at 15 percent. A Japanese manager was sent to the US to speed up the process. What had happened? The Japanese had implemented their consistently successful methodologies for plant openings. The Americans brainstormed ideas and then kept experimenting with possible winning solutions. The Japanese manager implemented the 'Japanese Way', and the US plant was at full capacity very quickly. Once the plant was up and running, the risk-taking – and more creative approach – was able to add more value. When we are culturally fluent, we can choose a style that best fits the circumstances rather than act out of habit.

Cultural Intelligence

► Analyzing Cultural Differences

Reasoning

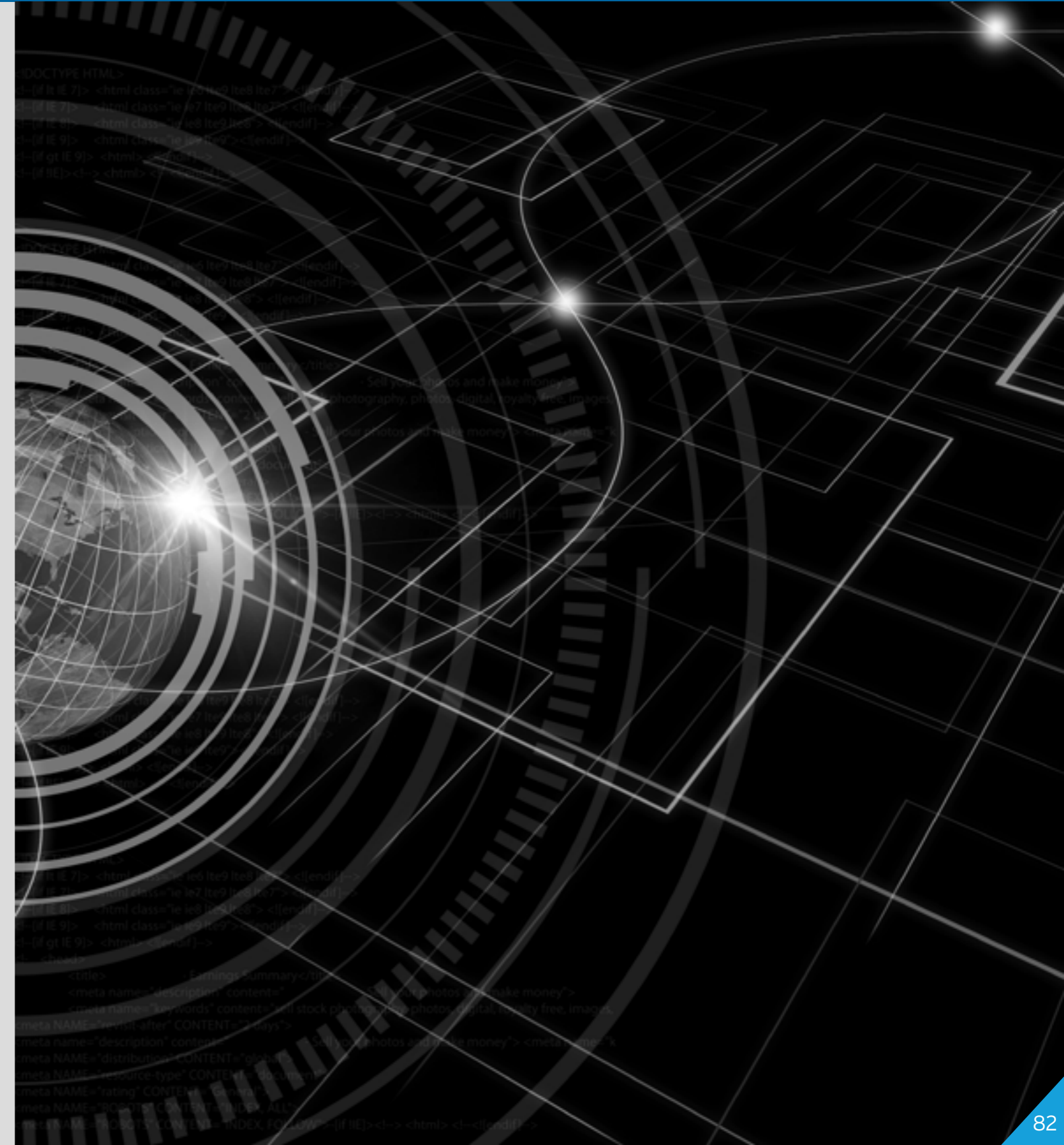
Linear-Orientation

- + Concentration of effort on quickly identifying and implementing a solution.
- Formulaic, standardized thinking with inadequate understanding of the problem and all possible solutions.

Circular-Orientation

- + Explanation of multiple perspectives enabling a deep understanding of the problem, the context, and the options for moving forward.
- Lack of focused energy causing unnecessary delays in understanding the problem and taking action.

I once had to work with one of our clients in Arizona. The task was to spend a day helping a learning and development (L&D) group design a global leadership program. After a few minutes, I realized that all members of the L&D group tended toward a Circular cultural orientation. The problem was that I also tended toward the Circular approach. We could have spent the whole day discussing the future program from every possible angle, and not arriving at a design. I had little chance of changing their orientation, so I had to make some quick adaptations. Without closing off discussions too quickly, I adopted a 'soft' linear approach that provided a recognizable path to a solution. When I sensed they were drifting too much, I would pull them back with a question, e.g. "So, how do you think that idea will impact the one we discussed earlier?" Cultural fluency is about flexing not fighting.



Cultural Intelligence

► Deciding On Appropriate Adaptation(s)

The next stage in the cultural ADAPT Cycle is to decide what adaptations could be most appropriate. Small adaptations can have big results.

Let's stay with the orientations we've just considered in terms of potential benefits and drawbacks and look at possible adaptations that help culturally-fluent bridge-building.

If you are individual-oriented, look at the ideas for adapting to the group-orientation, and vice versa. As you look at the relevant adaptations, think about which adaptations would be easy for you, and which would be harder. Why would some adaptations be more difficult? What could you do to make them easier?



Adapting to the Individual Way

Demonstrate interest in your counterpart's individuality - achievements, personal interests, goals

Show a willingness to be empowered and make decisions with little or no consultation.

Expect to compete with colleagues for recognition, promotions, salary increases, etc. Don't let modesty hide your talents.

Make your views known. If this is difficult for you in open meetings, put them in writing.

Prepare for handling conflict in one-on-one situations.

Give individual praise, recognition, and rewards. Take individual accountability for results.

Hire people for their individual competence and other personal qualities.

Adapting to the Group Way

Show respect for your counterpart's group identity - history and culture.

Be modest. Use 'I' less frequently.

Don't rush for closure on decisions; build-in time for consensus-building.

Show patience and understanding as other members of the group become involved and change agreements.

Avoid embarrassing a group member in front of colleagues.

Use the power of suggestion rather than direction. Work to fulfill team goals.

Demonstrate loyalty.

Build relationships rather than try to make quick deals.

Give praise and recognition to the group rather than single individuals.

Hire people for their mix of competence and group compatibility.

Cultural Intelligence

► Deciding On Appropriate Adaptation(s)

Use the same process, as before.

Adapting to the Risk Taking Way

Embrace uncertainty and ambiguity as providing potential opportunities.

Demonstrate initiative and your ability to take calculated risks.

Adopt a positive attitude toward change; show how risks can be overcome.

Demonstrate your ability to work in a loosely defined structure with 'fuzzy' roles and responsibilities, and relatively informal rules.

Show a willingness to engage in debate with colleagues.

Demonstrate comfort with relatively loose forms of planning - trial and error.

Show how your ideas break away from the past

Adapting to the Risk Avoiding Way

Minimize uncertainty and ambiguity as they will be seen as threats.

Do not take unnecessary risks or ask others to do so.

Demonstrate a cautious attitude to change; show how risks will be tightly managed.

Demonstrate your ability to work in a tight structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and formal rules.

Work to build consensus

Demonstrate comfort with rigorous planning activities.

Show how your ideas are consistent and compatible with the past.

Use the same process, as before.

Adapting to the Linear Way

When exploring an issue focus on the specific problem to be solved. Don't try to offer a lot of contextual information. Keep to the point as much as possible. Present your ideas logically rather than as they occur to you.

Move quickly to break a problem down into small 'chunks,' and identify a simple, systematic process for implementing a solution.

Don't over-analyze problems. You might be accused of falling into analysis paralysis. Focus on acting and getting results.

Adapting to the Circular Way

Recognize that your counterparts might see the world as being more complex than you. Things may not be so black and white as you would like them to be.

Go with the flow as much as possible while reminding others of the desired outcome.

Try to visualize the big picture and not just the individual bits and pieces.

Be patient with the more organic process of arriving at conclusions and action steps. Never demonstrate your frustration or push too hard for closure.

Provide a broad framework for a discussion, but nothing too rigid and controlled.

► Applying Adaptations

Making adaptations to differences shouldn't involve a personality or cultural transformation! What counts is making small behavioral/attitudinal changes. The ease with which you can adapt will depend on your degree of **intercultural sensitivity**.

The best known model for stages of cultural adaptation is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Milton Bennett. This model is organized into six stages of increasing cultural adaptability. The first three stages are called the **ethnocentric stages**. The second three are the **ethnorelative stages**.

According to Bennett, "Ethnocentric is defined as using one's own set of standards and customs to judge all people, often unconsciously. Ethnorelative . . . refers to being comfortable with many standards and customs and having the ability to adapt behavior and judgments to a variety of interpersonal settings." [22]

Ethnocentric Stages

Denial: Cultural differences are not recognized at all or are seen in very simplistic, broad terms, like people of color, women, or Asians. Individuals at this stage may have only experienced their own cultural group; their own orientations might never have been revealed or challenged.

Defense: Cultural differences are recognized, but are seen as threatening. People with the different cultural orientations will be negatively stereotyped and belittled.

Minimization: Individuals at this stage will see superficial similarities in areas like dress, and assume that deep down all people are the same. At this stage some cultural values will be wrongly perceived as universal.

Ethnorelative Stages

Acceptance: Individuals experience their own culture as one culture among many. They accept the viability of other cultural ways of seeing, thinking, and behaving in the world – although they may not like them. In the acceptance stage, our own cultural values and behaviors are not absolute, but relative.

Adaptation: Individuals are now able to see the world through other cultural lenses, and make adjustments. However, adaptation may not always be easy. Individuals may be skilled in adapting between several cultures, but cannot adapt well to others. A person may adapt well between many national cultures, but as Bennett says, "retain negative stereotypes of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people."

Integration: In this final stage, we are able to move with relative ease between different cultural worlds. Individuals at this stage often see themselves in multicultural terms - having an identity not defined by any particular culture.

To adapt effectively, one must be moving through these last three stages.



► Processing and Tuning Adaptations

A few years ago, I was working with a group of Americans in New York. Their firm had been taken over by a French company, and the cultures were clashing on a daily basis. One of the problems related to a perceived lack of responsiveness by the French on sharing information. The US perspective was:

It's a nightmare. I'll send a request for information to my counterpart in Paris. It could be days or a week or more before I hear back from her. Because the French have taken us over, I think they believe that they can be as obstructive as they like. It's a power play. We should play the same game until they learn better. I'm really angry.

Because the Americans were processing the French behavior as a 'power play' the situation was deteriorating very rapidly – the possibility that cultural differences were 'at play' hadn't been discussed.

What I had to do was to take the Americans back through the earlier steps in the ADAPT Cycle. I began with Analyze and presented them with an overview of the Worldprism™ model. I asked them to reflect on their experiences, and to use the model to consider which cultural orientations might be in tension regarding information sharing. I was asking them to look at the challenge through a **cultural lens** rather than a **power lens**. Two sets of cultural differences emerged from the discussions:

- Task – Relationship Focus, and
- Shared – Concentrated Power

Based on my experience, I felt they made an accurate assessment.

Task – Relationship Focus

In France, trust needs to be earned; it is given slowly based on how the relationship develops. In the US we give trust quickly, but then take it back quickly if we don't

feel it is merited. To put this in the context of the information sharing issue: if more time had been spent on developing a relationship at the beginning, there would have been much higher responsiveness.

Shared – Concentrated Power

French organizations tend to be much more hierarchical than those in the US. In hierarchical organizations, information is power. When the American was asking her counterpart in Paris for information, she was assuming that her counterpart would have the same access. Instead, the French counterpart may have had to put in a request to her boss, and that request might have needed to be pushed up the chain of command. Alternatively, she may have needed to tap into an informal network that could share the information with her.

The anger subsided in the American group as soon as we had examined the issue through a cultural lens.

The next step was to consider small adaptations that could be made to ease the situation. For example:

Task – Relationship Focus

- Call when you can, email when you must – when working virtually, the voice is a much more powerful relationship builder than text.
- Demonstrate a higher level of patience.
- Balance task with social talk. Control any feelings that social talk is a waste of time. Blend social talk with task talk. If the social talk is all in the first couple of minutes, and then you immediately switch to task-talk, your relationship building will look formulaic and non-genuine.
- Read the news about what is happening in France, and ask open-ended questions. Show your desire to learn about French culture – food and wine, cinema, sports, education, daily life. Share how life is different for you in the U.S. – without being evaluative.

► Processing and Tuning Adaptations

Shared – Concentrated Power

- Show empathy with your counterpart's position; ask politely what information she can share.
- Find out what she is required to do to get the information you need.
- Get a better and more realistic picture of the time she needs to meet your requests.
- Ask what you might be able to do make her life easier.
- Ask for you counterpart to help you.

In his book, *Global Dexterity*, Andy Molinsky makes the point that, "Until now, the vast majority of writing about culture in business has focused on educating people about differences across cultures . . . The logic is that if people can learn about cultural differences, they can adapt their behaviors successfully." [23] Knowing what behavioral adaptations might be useful is different from making them effectively. People can feel too anxious, incompetent, or scared of embarrassment to be effective. At this point in my story, the U.S. group has some knowledge of the cultural differences between them and the French, but they must now apply their knowledge by making actual adaptations.

Molinsky offers three useful steps in making the transition from knowing to doing:

Diagnosis: What part of the new cultural behavior you are looking to apply will be most challenging for you? For some in the U.S. group, it was demonstrating more patience. For others, it was not seeing 'small talk' as a waste of time. With a greater sense of their own challenges they could better prepare themselves.

Customization: This step involves customizing behavior so it can fit into our own personal comfort zone and also into the zone of appropriateness for the other culture. Molinsky gives the wonderful example of a Russian management consultant who started working for a US company. She was amazed at how easily her U.S. colleagues could promote themselves in vying for particular projects, and how they could speak

so assertively to their boss. She knew what she had to do to get ahead, but was very uncomfortable. What she did was to customize her behavior just slightly. Instead of using the direct, assertive language of her colleagues, she framed her request in the form of a question – "asking if she could be helpful in taking the lead on a particular project." She reduced her discomfort while also getting her point across.

Integration: This step involves integrating what has been learned through rehearsal and evaluation. Becoming familiar with the new behavior and rehearsing it – alone or with colleagues – can help the adjustment process. You can see how others respond to you (verbally and non-verbally), and fine-tune if you need to; you can also reflect on what is happening inside of you – what feelings and thoughts are getting in your way. Are you starting to demonstrate impatience, even anger, or find that your mind is drifting back into stereotypical perceptions?



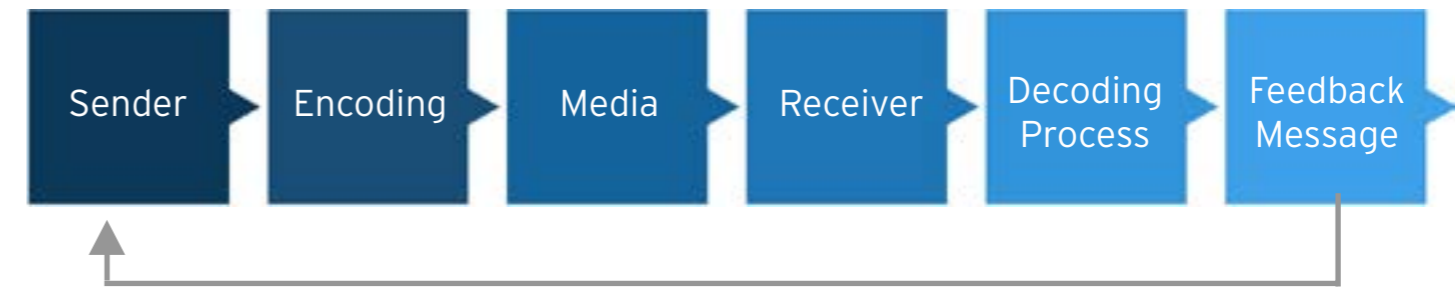
► Intercultural Communication

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion it has occurred.”

George Bernard Shaw

Communication is difficult enough within a cultural group, let alone between cultures. Even when we are using the same language, words and phrases can mean different things from one culture to another. Take the phrase “As soon as possible.” If an American uses that phrase, it usually means “Now!” In another culture it can mean “As soon as you’ve cleared your other priorities. When you can.” These two people are hearing exactly the same words, but deriving different meaning from them.

In the basic communication process between two people. We have a Sender and a Receiver. The sender is the encoder of a message. Encoding is the process of creating a message in the form of symbols: verbal (oral and written) or non-verbal behavior.



The message is the encoded thought to be communicated. The media is the means used to send the message, e.g. basic media would include voice, writing, visuals. Electronic media employ these basic channels – alone or mixed – to convey the message. The receiver receives the message and decodes it by interpreting (assigning meaning) to the symbols sent. He/she then (at least in two-way communication) encodes a feedback message and sends it to the sender (now receiver) via a communication media (it could be the media used by the original sender or a different one).

What is missing from the above is the context, particularly the cultural context(s).

If the sender and receiver are from the same cultural group there is a lot of shared understanding about how to encode and decode a message. There are also likely to be shared understandings about which media will be most effective.

When the sender and receiver are from different cultural groups the chances of conflict from different interpretations and misunderstandings increase enormously.

In the “As soon as possible” example I gave above, the meaning isn’t understood accurately because the receiver doesn’t share the same cultural context as the sender.



► Intercultural Communication

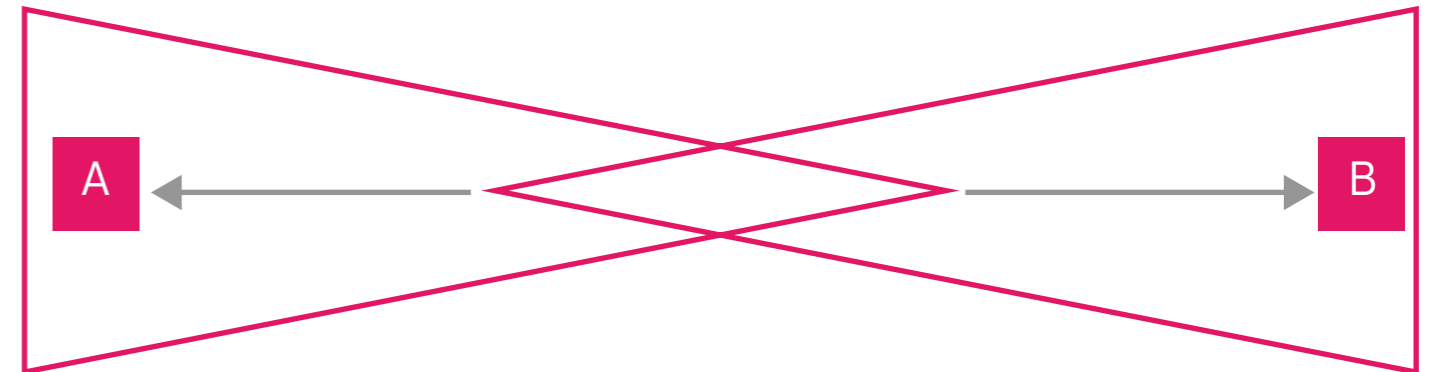
Some years ago I was visiting Kenya with a group of mostly African American students from City College in New York. One day the group started to talk about race. The African guide was asked who in our group was 'black'. He looked at the group and said, "You're all black except for him (pointing and smiling at me)." My wife and the American students were confused. In America there would be no doubt that my wife was 'white'. My wife has somewhat olive skin, and for our African guide she was definitely black. We learned quickly that the concept of 'race' and 'blackness' in Africa is much more complicated than it is in America, and that 'race' is as much cultural as it is biological. Jefferson M. Fish says:

". . . some African Americans complain that certain immigrant groups from other countries – such as Haiti or Jamaica – 'act as if they aren't black'. The cultural misunderstanding is that, in the immigrants' countries of origin, they may well not be black. But that doesn't mean that they think they are white. It just means that their cultures have more categories – like *marabou* or *grimaud* in Haiti, or fair or brown in Jamaica – than are used in the United States." [24]

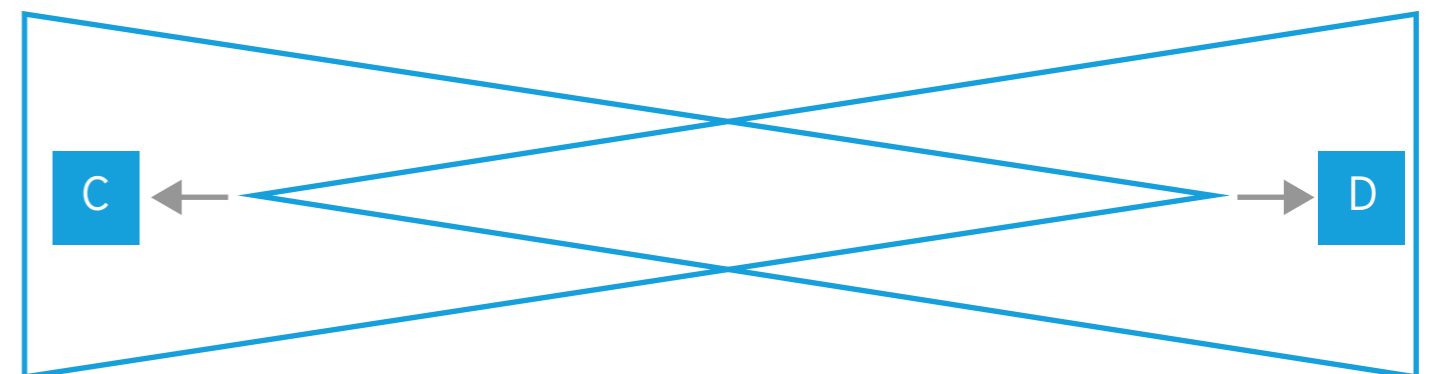
In sum, race, skin color, gender, sexuality, nationality and other categories obscure more than they reveal. Part of being culturally fluent is anticipating differences (based on study and experience) while recognizing that cultural complexity can undermine all that you think you know.

Cultural complexity makes encoding and decoding across cultures difficult because of significant amounts of uncertainty. Cross-cultural communication is aimed at reducing the uncertainty to manageable levels.

If A and B in the following chart are two cultures, there is a little, but not a lot, of shared understanding. The amount of uncertainty in the communication will be great.



The overlap between cultures C and D is greater meaning that the level of uncertainty will be reduced.



Tips

General

Avoid over-sensitivity: Misunderstanding can be made worse by being overly fearful of giving offense. People are usually very forgiving if they believe you are trying to accommodate to them

Beware of false attributions (social judgments): We make attributions/inferences about the causes of someone's behavior to try and gain clarity or predict, but research shows that we often fall prey to the **fundamental attribution error** – we over-emphasize internal (dispositional) factors (e.g. poor work ethic, attitude) and underestimate external (situational) factors like cultural restraints.

► Intercultural Communication

Challenge assumptions: E.g. Assumptions of similarity.

Challenge ethnocentrism: Feelings of superiority are common in cross-cultural interactions, but they destroy communication and damage relationships. Challenge stereotypes: They distort and mislead whether they are positive or negative.

Flex your communication style: Practice flexing between styles (e.g. explicit and implicit, simple and complex). Locked into one style will not serve you well in the borderless workplace.

Pay close attention: Take more breaks when communicating across cultures. Some people might be communicating in second or third languages. That can take considerable effort. Sometimes there is the added stress of listening to difficult accents. I can have that challenge in England and the U.S., and not just when communicating across 'foreign' cultures.

Know your differences: Identify your cultural orientations (and your counterpart's) and how they are most likely to impact communication.

Watch your language: Words often carry unintended or unclear meanings. Think about this:
"There is evidence that the first atom bomb might never have been dropped if a Japanese translator had not erred in the translation of one word. The word modzusatsu used by the cabinet in their reply to the Potsdam surrender ultimatum was translated 'ignore' rather than correctly, 'withholding comment pending decision.' Thinking the Japanese had rejected the ultimatum . . . Well the rest is history." [25]

Verbal

Oral

- Determine what level of formality is expected
- Slow down so that you can think as well as speak
- Think from the point of view of the receiver. Remember this: "How can I know what I've said until I know what you've heard."
- Take turns
- Use simple words and phrases – edit out colloquialisms, slang, and jargon
- Adjust your talking speed to make it comfortable for the listener
- Avoid double questions, e.g. "Is this book interesting and useful?" 'Interesting' and 'useful' are two different things
- Avoid asking complicated questions
- Avoid negative questions, e.g. 'Don't you have any money?' If you answer 'yes', does that mean yes you do or yes you don't?
- Avoid strings of questions, e.g. "Would you like a cup of tea? Or an espresso? Perhaps you'd prefer a glass of water or juice?"
- Let people express themselves without interruptions
- Avoid the temptation to finish others' sentences or fill in silences; give people time to process even though you might find the silence awkward
- Listen for content; avoid being distracted by style/accent
- Maintain your attention; take breaks
- Don't pretend to understand (bluffing)
- Pay attention to paralanguage (how something is said). Voice tone, speed, word emphasis can change the meaning of a phrase
- Check regularly for shared understanding
- Be cautious when using humor; jokes don't translate well
- Remember: Talking louder doesn't help understanding

► Intercultural Communication

Written

- Take the time to edit for clarity
- Remove any words or phrases that could be considered biased or discriminatory, e.g. racist, sexist
- Use simple words and phrases – edit out colloquialisms, slang, and jargon
- Be literal and specific; avoid vague, imprecise terms
- Keep sentences short; one idea per sentence.
- Punctuate carefully

One of the key skills in cultural fluency is dialogue – a learning conversation whose purpose is to seek mutual understanding. Many conversations in business start out as a debate in which there is a winner and loser.

How is a debate different from a dialogue?

Debate	Dialogue
There is only one right answer and I have it. So I will win, and you will lose	Together we can craft a solution that will work for all of us
My goal is to prove you wrong	Our goal is to work towards shared understanding
I'll listen so that I can find faults and make counter arguments	We'll listen to find common ground
My assumptions are true	We'll bring our assumptions to the surface for examination
I'll critique your position and defend my own	We'll examine all positions
I'll have little or nothing to learn from your ideas and way of thinking	We recognize that others' thinking and ideas can improve our own

As well as the tips already given for oral conversation, what else can you do to facilitate a learning conversation? Role model the following behaviors:

- Be open and transparent to create a climate of trust
- Remove power distinctions as much as possible
- Build on ideas and proposals made by others
- Show encouragement and support
- Highlight areas of agreement
- Respect confidentiality
- Share knowledge and ideas openly
- Seek information from others by asking open-ended and follow up questions
- Summarize regularly and check for shared understanding
- Test your own understanding – "Let me see if I understand you correctly. You're saying . . ."

But don't role model these:

- Arguing for the sake of arguing; being obstructive for the sake of being obstructive
- Continually attacking and defending
- Being evasive or untruthful
- Deliberately causing offense or embarrassment
- Excluding people from the dialogue
- Knowing everything
- Making unfavorable comparisons, e.g. between cultures
- Misconstruing what someone is saying
- Yes-butting
- Wanting a quick closure to move on to more important stuff. This is the important stuff!

Cultural Intelligence

Key messages

- The Cultural ADAPT Cycle has five steps: Analyze, Decide, Apply, Process, and Tune.
- The Worldprism™ is a framework of different cultural orientations to aid in identifying deep differences.
- All of the cultural orientations in the Worldprism™ have advantages and drawbacks in different circumstances. One orientation isn't right and its opposite wrong.
- Small adaptations in behavior can have a big impact.
- Effective cross-cultural communication requires a Sender encoding messages in ways that are culturally appropriate for the Receiver. The result being accurate and shared understanding.
- An important skill in cross-cultural communication is the ability to participate in learning conversations (dialogues) rather than debates.

► The Inclusion Imperative

“In a University of Houston case study, 57 percent of respondents said that they regularly give less than 100 percent of their best efforts at work. One of the two top things that would cause them to give more would be “a manager who treats me with dignity and respect.”

Craig B. Clayton, *The Diversity Factor*,
Fall 2010



The Inclusion Imperative

▶ Inclusion, Collaboration, and Innovation

“ What are some workforce trends to expect in 2013? Collaboration will rule. Collaboration across global boundaries, organizational boundaries, cultural, demographic, and racial boundaries. We will learn how we can create more meaning, more value and more impact by working together.”

Diversity Executive, Inclusion Drives Innovation

Competitive advantage in a continuously changing and uncertain economy is driven by innovation. In a 2013 Boston Consulting Group (BCG) study, 76 percent of all of those surveyed ranked innovation as a top-three strategic priority. Among CEOs, the number was 85 percent, with 40 percent ranking it number one. The top 50 of the world's most innovative companies listed in the report beat their industry peers in total shareholder returns by 6.3 percent over 3 years. [26]

Rather than being the sole responsibility of R&D, innovation is now expected right along the value chain – inside and outside the organization – and from all levels. Two of the best practices of top innovators, according to the BCG study are:

1. Top innovators understand that “innovation is a function of intellectual property” (which is dependent on having the best talent regardless of color, culture or creed)
2. Top innovators are those who can “put ideas into motion” (which is dependent on talent collaborating across borders)

Both of these best practices are dependent on developing a culture of inclusion in which **all** talent can thrive. In Cisco, the term diversity is fading into the background because as I said in the first section, it is simply reality. Cisco now talks about **Inclusion & Diversity** rather than the other way around. They also say: “Diversity naturally exists in most multinational companies. Inclusion does not.” [27] Inclusion and collaboration are becoming key drivers for Cisco. They even have a Chief Inclusion and Collaboration Strategist whose task it is to provide “thought leadership focused on the tangible value of inclusion and the links between inclusion, collaboration, and innovation.” [28]



The Inclusion Imperative

► Migrating to Inclusion

Think of a flock of migratory birds. Each bird is an individual, and the flock is the organization. The flock has a 'vision' – to fly from point A to B. Obviously, if each bird was 'doing its own thing' the situation would be chaos. The efficiency and effectiveness of the flock in reaching point B would be minimal. Like the flock, the challenge for developing inclusion is to create a workable balance between the 'flight' of the individual and the purpose of the organization.

As in any complex adaptive system, birds fly independently and together by following a set of simple 'rules'. Only in this way will they be able to achieve their 'vision'. Let's move from this analogy to the concrete world of inclusion.

First, we need a vision of an inclusive workplace. Where do we want to arrive on this journey?

Here's my vision: **A collocated and/or virtual workplace in which people can contribute their very best work because they are acknowledged and valued.**

Next come 'rules' for the flight. I won't call them rules, but enabling principles.

These are principles making inclusion a possibility. Policies, procedures, systems, and processes provide an infrastructure to support inclusion, but it is **principled behaviors** that bring inclusion to life. Without them, inclusion becomes hollow, inauthentic, a cosmetic add-on rather than an ingrained way of relating to one another for mutual and organizational benefit.

Here is a set of three enabling principles that support the development and maintenance of inclusive behaviors:

Recognition

Receptivity

Respect

Recognition: To recognize is to **acknowledge** the reality of others' differences (as well as your own). Inclusion is not assimilation or believing we are all the same. Nicola M. Pless and Thomas Maak make the point very well: "We, as human beings, know from experience that we depend upon mutual recognition: We want . . . our friends and colleagues to recognize us for what we are and what we do." [29] When we try to make people just like us or use stereotypes (positive or negative) we are not recognizing people for who they are. To recognize differences doesn't mean that we drop any attempt to find commonalities, but we do so based on communication and experience, not assumption. Without thoughtful acknowledgement of personal - and possibly group - identity there can be no inclusion.

Receptivity: Being receptive is having a positive, open disposition; one that is ready and willing to look at the world through another's eyes. This disposition supports dialogue – rather than win/lose debate - and the creation of mutual understandings through thinking together in a safe climate; one in which all voices can be heard without fear or anxiety. This requires the give and take of perspectives, ideas, and opinions in the spirit of learning from one another. Without open, receptive communication there can be no mutual understanding and no inclusion.

Respect: When we recognize people for who they are, we are already showing respect. All day and every day we need to communicate and behave respectfully – both face-to-face and virtually: in e-mails, telephone calls, teleconferences, videoconferences, instant messages, and other forms of communication. Demeaning statements or off-color remarks and images hurt relationships and performance. Treat people as they want to be treated (The Platinum Rule). Language and behavior that is in common usage and 'normal' to you might be very offensive to others. If in doubt, don't! Without ongoing respect there can be no inclusion.

The Inclusion Imperative

► Migrating to Inclusion

In relation to my vision, the enabling principles contribute as follows:



The application of the three enabling principles will result in the ultimate desired outcome of inclusion: Everyone can excel.

Some might object that what I'm doing is trying to create a set of universal values (that don't exist in our relativistic world!). It all depends on what we mean by universal values. I adopt the approach given by Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winning economist and philosopher. He says:

"For a value to be considered universal, must it have the consent of everyone? If that were indeed necessary, the category of universal values might well be empty . . .

. the claim of a universal value is that people anywhere may have reason to see it as valuable. When Mahatma Gandhi argued for the universal value of non-violence, he was not arguing that people everywhere already acted according to this value, but rather that they had good reason to see it as valuable." [30]

Principled Behaviors

Inclusion is everyone's business; it only has meaning in the day-to-day interactions between people. Inclusion is not a policy document or a strategic plan (although those can help); it is a culture.

Our inclusion enabling principles provide a container for the culture, but what types of behaviors need to fill that container?

Recognition - I am known

- Acknowledge everyone as an individual human being, not as a representative of an entire group
- Assume differences until similarities are confirmed
- Let others tell you in their own words who they are, and how they see and do things
- Tell others about yourself without any sense of superiority
- Avoid imposing or projecting your identity, style, beliefs onto others
- Ask open-ended questions to learn more before characterizing a person or situation (without turning the interaction into an interrogation)
- Take the time to get to know others beyond their surface differences
- Use experiences of difference to identify and reflect on one's own blind spots, assumptions, beliefs, and biases (in working with differences we often learn more about ourselves than others)
- Avoid closing discussions off too quickly; you might miss a lot of valuable insights
- Seek out opportunities to engage with differences

The Inclusion Imperative

► Migrating to Inclusion

Receptivity: I am heard

- Welcome everyone and their contribution
- Adopt an attitude of learning
- Assume everyone has a positive intent
- Switch styles if it can be productive
- Ask yourself what you can do to increase inclusiveness in your sphere of influence
- Respect the right of everyone to disagree
- Do things with others, not to them – create safety
- Invite questions, and ask others for feedback
- Reduce fear and anxiety; show empathy
- Find ways that enable everyone – regardless of cultural orientations - to share and participate fully
- Correct any misunderstanding or misrepresentations quickly
- Be transparent and straightforward
- Identify and minimize any barriers to communication
- Consciously reach out for different points of view
- Listen with an open mind (a “beginner’s mind”)
- Practice perspective shifting (seeing through others’ eyes)
- Listen until the other person feels understood
- Listen as an ally rather than judge and jury
- Engage in learning conversations (dialogues) rather than monologues
- See things in context

Respect: I am valued

- Wear any power you have lightly
- Be sensitive and courteous – saying “Please” and “Thank you and “I’m sorry” are priceless but cost nothing
- Use inclusive language – more ‘we’ than ‘I’ and no ‘us’ and ‘them’
- Keep your promises

- Challenge practices that exclude and limit
- Adapt to different needs in different geographies
- Give people time to prepare before calling on them to participate
- Handle conflict through side-by-side problem solving rather than confrontation
- Acknowledge the value others bring (different perspectives, experiences, etc.)
- Challenge the use of stereotypes
- Challenge any demeaning/offensive language and actions – including bullying and harassment
- Tell others you value their differences, not their conformity
- Give people time to express their ideas
- Engage in problem-solving meetings, for example, with a more diverse group of people (not the ‘usual suspects’)
- Increase diversity in the decision-making process
- Speak up if people are being excluded, marginalized
- Give constructive feedback; giving no feedback because of a fear of offending is patronizing

In the previous section, I talked about a diverse group creating operating agreements for performing the tasks needed to achieve their shared objectives. There is no reason why that diverse group can’t also create shared norms of behavior for that operating culture. The only danger is that the agreements and norms become a conformist cage rather than a creative sandbox.



The Inclusion Imperative

► Borderless Technology & Inclusion

One of the challenges of borderless working is being inclusive in a virtual environment. Technology enables people from multiple locations to work together toward a shared purpose, but it doesn't eliminate cultural differences or guarantee inclusion. In fact, technology can increase feelings of exclusion and isolation.

Cultures view technologies and their appropriate uses differently. According to the BBC, in Japan (a culture that values group harmony), your mobile phone should not be a nuisance to others; in public it should be put on what is called 'manner mode' – silent or vibrate. Texting and mobile email are more popular in Japan than voice calls. The Spanish and Italians will use mobile phones anywhere, including business meetings. Spain and Italy are also group-oriented culture, but the value in those cultures is expressed differently – there is an obligation to be accessible to family, close friends, colleagues and customers at all times.

When I've videoconferenced with Japanese teams, the camera at the Japanese end has never been focused on an individual; the widest angle will be used to put the whole team in the picture. Individuals should not be made to stand out.

When I've worked with the French, they have appeared to not take my e-mails seriously, even though I might have marked it urgent. If it was urgent, the French tell me, I would have made a telephone call, not sent an impersonal email.

What these examples mean is that individuals and teams working virtually across cultures should be discussing the best and most appropriate ways of communicating with one another. What technologies are preferred, and for what types of information? When are the best times to communicate, and how frequently? In short, there should be a shared communication plan.

What follows are some findings from research that can support inclusion:

Email is often criticized for its inability to convey social and non-verbal cues such as facial expressions that communicate additional meanings beyond text. In fact, that

perceived disadvantage can be a benefit. The lack of non-verbal and social cues has been shown to reduce miscommunication. Email users – particularly those working in a second language - have more time to compose messages that are better structured and more concise than verbal responses. They can also be more accurate through the use of grammar and spelling tools. Emails also lose the distractions presented by difficult accents. Some cultures, like China and Japan, for example, are more comfortable reading a foreign language like English rather than listening.

The challenge is to find and use a mix of technologies that will enable everyone to contribute fully in their own way; sometimes that will mean letting some people contribute anonymously (particularly if they come from a culture where there is a danger of losing face when speaking out in a group).

Teleconferences can be difficult when there are different levels of language fluency in the group. Pacing the call can help, as can having participants help each other during the call via instant messaging. Best practices like regular restating of arguments and agreements can help. Meeting technologies like Adobe Connect and WebEx allow participants to go beyond audio and write ideas and summaries on whiteboards, as well as chat to ask questions, gain clarification, and share thoughts.

A team room is a shared electronic workspace. "GVTs [Global Virtual Teams] that used them experienced decreases in communication distortion and increases in team cohesiveness, inclusion, and common ground. The use of team rooms enabled the creation of team identity and helped overcome difficulties associated with dispersion and cultural diversity." [31]

The most fundamental question in relation to technology and inclusion is: Does everyone have access to the same technologies?

The Inclusion Imperative

► Transforming Diversity & Inclusion into Sustainable Business Growth

Diversity used to be about hiring and representation. After meeting compliance requirements companies started paying attention to mirroring demographic diversity in their markets – gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, physical ability, family situation, sexual orientation, and religion. Interestingly, “Some organizations [in the U.S.] were astonished to learn that after years of effort, they had fewer African Americans than they had earlier. Companies became aware that for the most part the upper ranks of their organizations remained heavily white and predominately male.” [32] Something crucial was missing!

Attention shifted to **inclusion** – how employees’ across a spectrum of differences experienced their organizations. Did employees in demographically diverse groups see the environment as one in which their differences were respected and valued; were they able to participate fully and authentically; were they recognized for their contributions to company success?

Today, with attention shifting to the competitive need for continuous **innovation** and, therefore, the diversity of ideas, focus has shifted to the inclusion of **individual** cognitive styles. Thinking style differences cut across traditional demographic groups, and now great attention is paid to the uniqueness of each individual.

Demographic diversity, inclusion, and individual diversity are **all** necessary for sustainable business growth.

In 1997, John Elkington explained the concept of the triple bottom line in his book “Cannibals With Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business.” [33] The triple bottom line (TBL) is a way of tracking the impact of a company in three areas:

- Social performance (People)
- Environmental performance (Planet)
- Economic performance (Profit)

A very forward looking company, Cascade Engineering, sees each of these categories

as “an interdependent, innovation-enabling mechanism . . . To drive one forward is to drive all three forward.”

While the three areas are interconnected, I want to focus on social performance. This area relates to how a company’s actions impact on people, inside and outside the business: customers, employees, communities, suppliers, governments, and non-profit organizations. According to Andrew Savitz:

“The social focus of sustainability is about doing business in a way that treats people with respect, fairness, and a concern for their well-being and that improves their lives in material and other ways . . . [it] requires avoiding the social risks related to business, such as the risk of mistreating workers, exploiting vulnerable people, or engaging in racial or gender discrimination.” [34]

It is easy to see how developing a positive, diverse and inclusive environment contributes to social performance and sustainable growth. For example:

- More engaged and committed employees
- Smoother collaboration across the business and with partners and suppliers
- Greater cultural connectivity with customers and regulatory agencies
- Better relationships with communities and other stakeholders.

One of the most important reasons for high social performance is talent. What better way to attract and hire the best talent in the world – especially talented individuals in the idealistic younger generations - than through a company culture that takes its social performance seriously?

Diversity initiatives began with demographic representation, especially concerning race. Some might argue that demographic diversity is simply a ‘numbers game’, and doesn’t have any role to play in today’s drive to inclusivity and sustainable business growth. But is that true? One example of demographic diversity that is high on many corporate agendas is **gender-balance**.

The Inclusion Imperative

► Transforming Diversity & Inclusion into Sustainable Business Growth

For Unilever, gender-balance is critical for two main reasons: [35]

Consumer base: 75% of Unilever’s consumers are women. Globally, women control \$12 trillion of the \$18.4 trillion of consumer spending – more than the combined GDP’s of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

Talent: Women will be a very large segment of Unilever’s future workforce. According to the OECD, the majority of graduates from universities in developed countries will rise from 57% in 2005 to 63% in 2025. The challenge is no longer just to mirror diverse consumers, but to attract, develop, and retain talent which is increasingly female.

Unilever’s CEO, Paul Polman, recognized in 2009 that gender diversity would be critical to business success. A Global Diversity Board was formed chaired by Mr. Polman. Gender balance accountability and targets were introduced for Unilever Leadership Executives. The integration of gender diversity into processes such as talent management, career planning, and leadership development was also begun. Two other initiatives – the Global Mentoring Program for high-potential women and Agile Working – were also implemented.

To accommodate cultural norms and the needs of each region, programs were adapted locally.

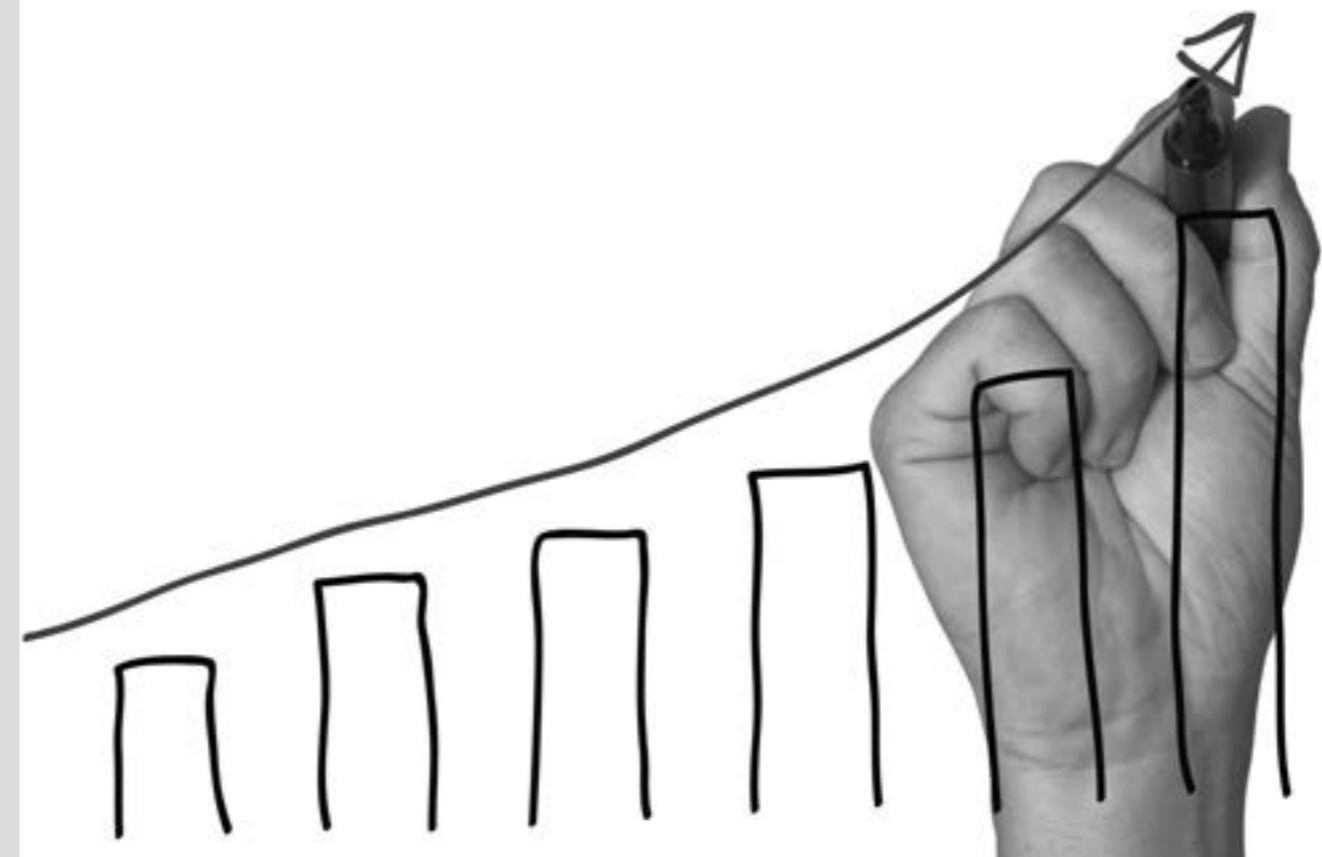
- In India, a Career by Choice program enables women to re-enter the workforce
- In business consultant roles with the option that they become full-time
- In Germany, a half-time job share initiative was started
- In North Africa and the Middle East where women are not allowed to drive “pick ‘n’ drop” facilities were made available
- Office facilities in the UK, Ireland and in Mumbai were designed to reduce travel time significantly, and provide a technological infrastructure allowing workers to work at any place
- Between **2009** and **2012**, women in the talent pipeline increased from 16 to 21

percent for Executive Vice President and Vice President levels, from 27 to 32 percent for director level, and from 40 to 43 percent for manager level.

- In Hindustan Unilever, women in management increased from 19 to 27 percent.
- In Unilever Japan, women managers increased from 22 to 29 percent.

Unilever admits that it still has a long way to go, but it has recognized that a diversity issue such as gender-balance isn’t a ‘nice-to-have’, but is strategic to its ongoing success.

And think about Shell. “It has shifted its main R&D center to Bangalore. Not to save costs, but as a talent play. It aims to be well-positioned to recruit the best engineering talent, which India is producing in numbers far exceeding the West.” [36] With changing diversity landscapes and the critical need to attract the world’s best talent, diversity and inclusion has become a major strategic priority.



The Inclusion Imperative

Key messages

- In a volatile competitive environment, innovation has become a key driver of success. Innovation cannot flourish without an inclusive culture in which diverse perspectives are heard and explored.
- An inclusive environment is: A collocated and/or virtual workplace in which people can contribute their very best work because they are acknowledged and valued.
- Three enabling principles that support inclusive behaviors are: Recognition, Receptivity, and Respect.
- For inclusion in a virtual environment, we need to appreciate that individuals and cultures may perceive the most effective use of technologies differently. Communication planning is of great value.
- With changing diversity landscapes and the urgency of attracting the world's best talent, diversity and inclusion have become major strategic priorities.

► Wrap up

Traditionally, the areas of diversity and inclusion and working across cultures have been treated as separate fields, but for me that division doesn't make sense. Part of the problem was that 'culture' was perceived as just having to do with 'national culture'. There are numerous cultural groups with surface and deep differences, and national groups are just one type. As I said in the book, there are as many differences within groups as there are between groups, and with globalization and the Internet, cultural identities have much greater fluidity than they may have had in the past. It's no wonder that individual differences – particularly cognitive differences – are moving into the spotlight.

This doesn't mean that group (cultural) differences are irrelevant in learning how to navigate our increasingly borderless world. If we lose sight of group differences, our understandings of one another will become very superficial and dangerously misleading. The fact that you have been influenced by your membership in a racial, gender, or national group is important; it's not

trivial. We are all unique individuals, but we are also touched by group differences, and our shared humanity. We are complex. As the poet Walt Whitman said in Song of Myself, "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself; (I am large, I contain multitudes)." The question, 'Who am I?' is one of the most complex questions we can ask. To be culturally intelligent is not knowing a few facts about another group. It is appreciating the surface and deep differences that can divide us, and building bridges of shared understanding; not to eliminate the differences, but to leverage them to spark creativity and innovation – for the benefit of all of us, everywhere.



Terence Brake



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