



Diversity Leadership: How to be a Great Leader in Changing Times

By Dani Monroe

Leadership is one of the fundamental factors that contribute to the success of corporate diversity work. Executive-level support, guidance and direction are essential to effective diversity change. Leaders need to leverage all of their resources, power and influence to tackle the complexity inherent in diversity work. In a 1995 report on diversity strategies and the business rationale, the Conference Board, a senior-level human resource organization, identified leadership as one of the top diversity practices. Eight years later, we are still faced with making diversity effective, and great leadership is still a central requirement of planning and implementing successful diversity work.

You may find yourself wondering, "What makes for great diversity leaders, especially since September 11, 2001?" On that day, the world was turned upside down, and Americans began to create a new worldview. The answer to that question is not simple. It involves responding to our yearning for comfort with a strong voice, a clear vision, and a gracious heart, as well as sharp business acumen. Every day, consciously or not, we want people to demonstrate their ability to do the right thing. Somewhere in us, there is the belief that we as individuals have it right or are in the process of getting it right. The desire for correctness, for courage, for caring about others and their success runs deep in individuals participating in diversity work. As we struggle to define and find great leadership, we struggle with a core need not only in diversity work, but also in our lives in general.

Diversity Leadership

Great diversity leaders implement diversity as a business strategy that optimizes the performance of their corporations. They integrate the development of people with innovative products to ensure profitability. Diversity connects all things in a corporation. Smart leaders use diversity to build success. They view diversity as a win-win strategy that is good for employees, good for the corporation, good for the community, and good for shareholders.



An Inclusive Work Environment and Personal Examination

Diversity leaders frequently begin their work by building an inclusive work environment and examining their own personal assumptions. They make everyone in their organizations feel that they are part of the diversity journey. The leaders' inclusive approach involves creating messages that speak to the entire organization, developing policy for all segments of the organization, and behaving in a way that shows they value individual differences.

When a company's leaders value individual differences, the company is representative of its community, its customer base, and the global business environment. Representation of diverse people across the organization is a strong point in conducting business in 2003. Leaders by their very nature seek a competitive advantage, and many are finding that diversity is the answer to obtaining that business edge.

Because the world has changed, leaders often focus on demographic changes and their impact on market trends and financial resources. They notice that women and men of color are in CEO positions, customers are asking for information on diverse vendor programs, and the demands of their customer bases are changing. Leaders' responses to change are evident in the changing demographics in conference rooms, boardrooms and training sessions. No longer is the new millennium leader looking for a mirror image of him- or herself; rather, he or she is seeking the exact opposite—someone with a fresh view and new ideas.

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AARP Staying Ahead of the Curve: The AARP Work and Career Study

In September 2002, AARP released the results of Staying Ahead of the Curve: The AARP Work and Career Study, a survey that explored the perspectives, desires, fears and work-related needs of older workers today and tomorrow. These older workers promise to reshape the U.S. work force over the next decade and beyond. What will this work force look like? And what must employers do to recruit, retrain and address the needs of older workers?

First, in the near future more workers will be over age 55. In 2000, 13 percent of the work force was 55 and older; by 2015, this figure is expected to rise to 20 percent. During the same period, the highest growth rate in the U.S. work force will be among workers aged 55 to 64.

Second, as the baby boomer population retires, there will be more jobs available than workers. In large part, the labor shortage of tomorrow will be caused by the smaller size of the generation following the boomer cohort.

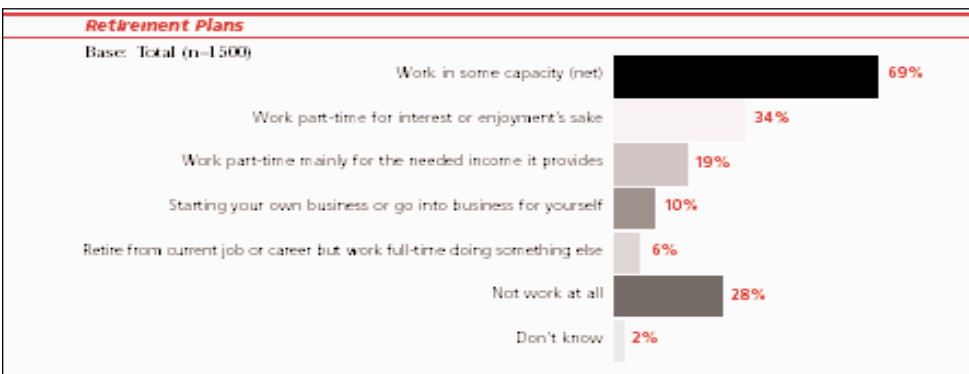
In the Staying Ahead of the Curve survey, Roper ASW conducted telephone interviews with

2,518 workers aged 45-74, including those looking for work. The results show that 69 percent of these older workers plan to work in some capacity during their retirement years. They work for money, of course, but also for intangible benefits, such as enjoyment and a sense of purpose. For many (particularly baby boomers), juggling work and personal responsibilities is a pervasive feature of their lives.

“As the baby boomer population retires, there will be more jobs available than workers”.

Among other amenities, older workers want respect, training, benefits and job flexibility. Although optimistic about their own ability to find and retain a job, 67 percent have concerns that age discrimination remains a major barrier to their advancement and well being in the workplace.

For more information, visit www.research.aarp.org/econo/multiwork or contact Xenia Montenegro at AARP Knowledge Management at XMontengro@aarp.org.



MOSAICS: SHRM Focuses on Workplace Diversity

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Understanding Issues Around Multiple Language Usage in the Workplace

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Question: It is increasingly difficult in my workplace to deal with so many different languages. If you go to our cafeteria, you will hear Tagalog, Korean, Farsi, and more. The biggest problem, though, is Spanish. Other immigrant groups cannot exist well in the United States without knowing English, but Spanish speakers can and do. There are places in my own country where I feel like the foreigner. Whatever happened to the idea, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do?" How do I get these people to see they need to learn English? How do I manage my own anger and frustration?

Answer: You have touched on one of the most complicated and volatile issues in the multicultural workplace. We have heard your sentiments many times before. Our answer comes in two parts, and as befitting the complexity of the issue itself, they are not necessarily clear-cut or easy. The two areas of focus involve understanding the larger context and suggesting behaviors, which may help you better manage your own reactions.

Understanding the Larger Context

1. Language is Power.

Part of the frustration anyone feels who cannot communicate with another has to do with lack of power, control, and influence in one's own world. For most of the short history in the United States, the expectation was that those coming to our shores had to learn English to fit, to belong, and to be successful. Immigrants who arrived in the late 1890s and early 1900s purposely dropped their own languages to learn English, but that was a different time. The larger world and our own demographics in the United States have changed dramatically. Because English continues to be the international language of science and business, it is probably the language most people learn as a second language. It is important to speak English in the United States and if one is to be successful in business, it is helpful to know it, period.

On the other hand, in our city of Los Angeles, for example, whole immigrant communities exist where signage is in Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc., and in these communities, daily survival does not depend on English. Perhaps the biggest change in the last 20 to 30 years is the recognition that while English may be a preeminent language, it is not the only language. To grow up in the United States today, it is essential to speak more than one language if one is to maneuver successfully through the complexities of our world. Being monolingual is a detriment. Knowledge is and always has been power. We are getting used to a world where part of the change in what we need to learn involves acquiring multiple language skills.

2. "They Don't Want to Learn English."

There is a myth that exists which says people who immigrate are very content to stay in their own communities and never learn English. This may be true for people of a particular generation who may have limited formal education even in their native languages. Children of immigrants who are initially monolingual in their parents' language will learn English quickly. And most newcomers understand that people who

speak no English will continue to see very limited job opportunities in the United States. English matters here.

The myth centers around the idea "they don't want to learn English." The adult schools (day and night) in our city are swamped with people who work one and two jobs and still try to have time and energy left over to learn English. It is inspiring to see the lengths to which many people will go to learn.

3. "They're Talking About Me."

Finally, the most frequent complaint we hear from employees is that they feel talked about and cannot understand what people are saying. We offer this example as a counterpoint. In one health care organization, nurses were arguing over whether or not they should be allowed to speak their native language on the job. The nurse manager, whose first language was Tagalog, told her staff they must speak English to patients and she asked them to be sensitive to talking to one another in Tagalog in front of co-workers any time they are working.

However, she also made the point that it is extremely stressful and sometimes difficult to think and work in a second language all day. When people go to the cafeteria for lunch, or breaks, they relish the comfort of being able to think and speak in their native tongue.

We imagined that if we were fluent enough in a second language to work in another country where there were other English speakers, we also would appreciate that same opportunity to relax at lunch and speak in our familiar language. It gave us empathy for people who struggle daily to be functional in another language.

Having said all of this as a way to help you get a bigger perspective, we still understand the difficulty of not being able to communicate with someone in your own community or workplace. There is sometimes a sense of frustration, anger or irritation from the unmet expectation that people who live here should speak English. To increase your own sense of power and control, we have a few suggestions for you.

Behaviors to Decrease Frustration

1. Try Learning a Second Language.

We remember reading an article about Pace Picante Salsa where the CEO, in order to communicate better with his employees, tried to learn Spanish. He was unembarrassed about mistakes he made when using it and he gladly learned from his employees. An amazing thing happened. Employees, who were trying to learn English but were embarrassed about their poor skills, followed the CEO's lead and started using it more. Everyone was helping each other. Both the organization and the employees gained in that transaction. It can only be an asset to be bi- or multilingual.

2. Suggest That the Organization Offer Language Classes for Employees.

One of our client hospitals has signage in four languages and it offers a course called "Spanish for Gringos" on work time. It is a class tailored to help employees in using hospital/medical terms and the

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Diversity leaders appreciate the differences in thought that people from various cultures, sexual orientations, physical abilities or religious groups bring to the business environment. They embrace out-of-the-box thinking and ways of working. They support women and men who require flexible work arrangements so that they can care for children or elderly parents. Great leaders know that employees who feel taken care of and valued will produce. In addition, they believe that employees' appreciation for this flexibility and respect results in greater productivity and profits.

Many leaders are able to achieve their visions of an inclusive environment by connecting head and heart through the examination of their own biases and beliefs about people and situations different from themselves. Leaders understand that to make sound business decisions that are diversity related, they must first understand their own life experiences and belief systems. Self-examination allows them to question whether their internal workings have hindered or informed their business decisions. Does their perspective add light and understanding to complex business issues, or does it provide misconceptions based on cultural assumptions and perceptions?

One talented diversity leader in a large financial institution found himself confronting his beliefs about having a gay and lesbian resource group as a legitimate part of the diversity initiative. After spending some time discussing the topic with his consultant and peers, he discovered that his own limitations and thinking were preventing him from moving forward with the concept. The business case was clear that gays and lesbians were loyal customers, represented a large customer base, and demonstrated high levels of performance at work. Eventually, he concluded that a gay and lesbian resource group was essential to the organization.

Innovative Products

Just as the internal atmosphere and reflections of a corporation must change, products must be adapted to meet the needs of new customers. Products that are relevant and reflective of the new world are essential to surviving in today's marketplace. Products must also have appeal and authenticity. They must have a ring of truth. Leaders know that they cannot simply translate an American ad into another language without also changing the nuances of the ad to reflect the population to which they are selling. Similarly, for instance, the manufacturer of Barbie cannot simply change her color to brown and expect her to sell as well as the white Barbie. Barbie has to have a cultural basis. She must change sufficiently to appeal to a diverse group of children yet maintain the Barbie mystique. This sort of change is a major challenge for any corporation that has a one-dimensional view of the world. Diversity leaders know how to develop products to meet the needs of end users and not just those of the people buying them.

Leaders want their products to be representative of the values of their organizations. When a CEO says that a company's values are diversity, integrity, quality and teamwork, the public looks for those characteristics in the company's products. Whether the business is banking, publishing, transportation or telecommunications, we all want authenticity in our products. Using the collective wisdom of diverse teams, leaders create products that speak to either a broad cross section of people or a very specific group, as appropriate. Drawing on the wealth of information available to them, successful leaders apply multifaceted thinking to new or retooled product lines.

One example of an organization that successfully changed its prod-

uct line is one division of a major publishing company in New England. An executive vice president there was committed to making diversity a business imperative. She spent five years training staff at all levels of the organization, creating project work teams that reflected the organization's other business lines, increasing diversity in her unit, and eventually retooling the division's books. This entailed redesigning book covers, examining language, and assessing how information was conveyed in the books. Last year, this division exceeded its goals and performed at the highest level ever.

Profitability

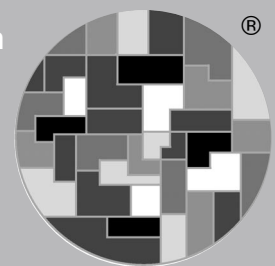
Great leaders demonstrate that profitability results from maximizing the skills and talents of employees, understanding changing markets and then capturing those markets, and developing products that fit people's core needs and lifestyles. Today's competitive business environment requires a new outlook, discipline and approach. One example of a company that has met this challenge is SAS, a telecommunications company. Over the past several years, SAS has grown by 8 percent per year. Employees work a 35-hour week and have every amenity imaginable on-site, including a childcare facility, a 50,000-square-foot gym with personal fitness instructors, and even a hair salon and spa. Employees tout SAS as the best place to work in America and are more productive than many people who work 50 or more hours a week.

Conclusion

Not all leaders have the personal insight and business skills to implement an integrated diversity strategy. Some leaders are good at the people side of change, others are skillful at adapting products, and still others focus only on profitability without understanding that relying on diverse people to help shape the work environment enhances profitability and products. Successful implementation of an integrated diversity business strategy requires commitment, energy and focus, all underscored by the desire to do the right thing. 🌐

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Looking for information
from your colleagues
on a diversity-related
issue? Post a question
on the bulletin board...



<http://www.shrm.org/diversity>

result has been both greater comfort for family and patients and feelings of greater competence for employees. Making classes in other languages and English available is helpful to everyone. Depending on your community, work or geographic area, the language offered may differ. If being able to communicate in another language is a useful job skill, the organization should make the learning opportunity available by committing time, energy and money.

3. Try Attitude Adjustment.

The last suggestion involves part empathy and part mental adjustment. Empathy should be extended toward those who are making the effort to learn English. Recognize that most adults who are doing so hold jobs while also trying to learn English after they have worked all day. One way to develop empathy in this situation is to go to an immigrant community in your city and experience what it feels like to be unable to read signs or talk to others. People who have done this describe the experience as eye-opening. They will not forget what it is like to be an outsider without basic communication skills.

Part two of our suggestion and attitude adjustment means coming to terms with a different reality than existed 50 years ago. While English is the world's preeminent language today, it is not certain that it will always be so. Language preeminence goes where the power goes. In 50 years, we may all need to learn Chinese, but whether or not that fact becomes a reality, what is true is that speaking two or more languages increases your own power and options. The best way to feel less threatened is the answer that has probably always been true—gain knowledge. Language acquisition will increase your overall competence at functioning in our complex universe. Considering the many languages that exist on our planet, the winner in today's world will be the person who can connect and communicate with people across multiple boundaries. 🌍

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based in Los Angeles, Calif. They can be reached at www.gardenswartzrowe.com and welcome diversity questions.

10 Steps for Creating Tolerance in the Workplace

1. Hold a "brown bag lunch" series to talk about diverse cultural and social issues.
2. Create a display area where employees can post notices of events and activities happening in their communities.
3. Collaborate with local community organizations and encourage employees to volunteer.
4. Provide employees with opportunities to attend local cultural events and exhibits.
5. Incorporate diversity as a business goal and secure a high degree of commitment from all employees.
6. Avoid singling out employees of a particular race or ethnicity to handle diversity issues on behalf of everyone else.
7. Start a mentoring program that pairs employees of diverse backgrounds, e.g., different age groups, cultures or levels within the company.
8. Foster an open working environment.
9. Value the input of every employee and reward managers who do.
10. Establish an internal procedure for employees to report incidents of harassment or discrimination. Publicize the policy widely.
(www.tolerance.org)

DIVERSITY RESOURCES

Generations United (GU) has recently published a new user-friendly guide called "Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children: Support in the Workplace." The guide and its accompanying fact sheet are designed to raise the awareness of human resource personnel concerning the number of these families in the workplace, and to provide models of supportive policies and programs that employers can replicate. These publications contain the results of a corporate human resource survey that GU conducted, which asked about the inclusion of these families in: medical insurance; dental and vision benefits; childcare services; employee assistance/counseling programs; leave policies; and other available benefits. GU's National Center on Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children is available to serve as a resource for Work/Life program staff, benefits administrators and other human resource personnel who are looking to find ways to support relative caregiver employees in their companies. For a free copy of the guide and/or fact sheet, or to find out more about the training and technical assistance available through GU's National Center, go to www.gu.org/projg&to, or contact GU at 122 C Street, NW, Suite 820, Washington, DC 20001-2109 or (202) 638-1263.

www.women-21.gov—This site is designed to help businesswomen effectively and efficiently access federal government resources, and builds on the president's initiative to foster the growth of women-owned businesses. www.women-21.gov champions the cause of women small business owners and their ever-increasing role in the American marketplace. The site, the first of its kind, aims to serve these women by providing the resources they need to continue driving their businesses forward, creating more jobs in the nation's economy. Highlights of the Web site include up-to-date information regarding key issues such as access to capital, health insurance, government procurement, retirement security, technology and the tax code.

HireDiversity.com is driven by its commitment to work force diversity and quality staffing. Its mission is to facilitate excellence in diversity recruitment by bringing together human resource professionals with quality, prescreened, multicultural and/or bilingual professional candidates from diverse backgrounds. (www.hirediversity.com)

National Organization on Disability promotes the full and equal participation and contribution of America's 54 million men, women and children with disabilities in all aspects of life. (www.nod.org)



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May 20–21, 2003, Seattle, Wash.

Addressing Race in the Workplace—Are you finding it difficult to attract and retain people of color in your organization? Do you wish you had a better understanding of race issues and how they play out at the personal and organizational levels? Are you curious as to how race issues may be subtly affecting your organization? If you answered "YES" to any of these questions, you will want to attend the Woodrick Institute's workshop on "Addressing Race in the Workplace." For more information, visit <http://www.woodrickinstitute.org/raceatwork.shtml>.

May 22–23, 2003, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Advanced Gender Certificate Training Program—This program is open to all professionals wanting to further their overall continuous improvement in designing and implementing gender cultural changes in the workplace. The program will cover arenas of work where gender perspectives play out, how to overcome barriers to effective gender programs, stages of power related to coaching men and women, and strategic planning involving senior management and employees. Attendance is limited, so register early. For more information and registration, contact Leslie Jenness at (480) 473-0426; fax (480) 473-0427; e-mail: leslie@gendertaining.com; Web site: www.gendertaining.com.

May 22, 2003 Cincinnati, Ohio

Diversity Solutions Forum—The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in collaboration with JJA Consultants and other participating organizations are co-sponsoring the Greater Cincinnati Area Diversity Solutions Forum to be held at the Radisson Cincinnati Riverfront Hotel in Cincinnati, Ohio, on May 22, 2003. The Diversity Solutions Forum is designed to assist public and private sector organizations in creating a diverse work environment for excellence and competitiveness. This forum will provide participants with tools, techniques, strategies, methodologies and best practices for recruitment, retention and mentoring of a diverse work force. The forum structure includes: panel discussions on 21st century issues; hands-on and results-oriented tutorials on diversity tools and techniques; and presentations from public and private sector organizations on diversity best practices. To receive a full copy of our brochure and learn more about the Diversity Solutions Forum, please contact (703) 359-5969 or fax (703) 359-5971.

May 29–June 1, 2003, Washington, D.C.

National MultiCultural Institute's 20th Anniversary National Conference—NMCI offers four-day intensive Training of Diversity Training workshops and a workshop on Designing and Implementing Diversity Initiatives. Other offerings include 24 1 1/2 hour and two-day workshops on Cultural Competence, the Workplace, Multicultural Education and Dialogue. For more information, contact: phone: (202) 483-0700, ext. 224; Website: www.nmci.org.

June 22–25, 2003, Orlando, Fla.

SHRM's 55th Annual Conference & Exposition—Make plans to attend SHRM's Annual Conference & Exposition featuring Madeline Albright, former Secretary of State, and highest ranking woman in the history of the U.S. government, Jim Collins, best-selling author of *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*; and Tom Morris, one of America's foremost business thinkers and author of *True Success: A New Philosophy of Excellence*. In addition, on Tuesday night, SHRM goes to EPCOT®. EPCOT® has something for guests of all ages to discover and explore. SHRM attendees will begin their experience at 6:30 p.m. with a self-paced journey. For more information, visit www.shrm.org/conferences/annual.

July 16–Aug. 1, 2003, Portland, Ore.

The 27th Annual Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication—Offers professional development opportunities for people working in education, training, business, counseling and consulting in domestic diversity and international/intercultural contexts. Choose from more than 40 in-depth workshops and seminars, evening programs, a 15,000-item intercultural resource library and an intercultural bookstore. Internship and certificate programs are also available. Session I: July 16–18; Session II: July 21–25; Session III: July 28–Aug. 1, 2003. In partnership with the University of the Pacific, ICI also offers the MA in Intercultural Relations program. Contact: Intercultural Communication Institute, 8835 SW Canyon Lane, Suite 238, Portland, OR, 97225; phone: (503) 297-4622; fax: (503) 297-4695; e-mail: ici@intercultural.org; Web site: www.intercultural.org.

Oct. 26–29, 2003, New York, N.Y.

SHRM's Diversity Conference & Exposition—Join leaders in the field of diversity management at this two-day forum. You will attend guided dialogue sessions that focus on emerging issues, current research and legislative and regulatory compliance. For more information, visit www.shrm.org/conferences/diversity.