

How workplaces can encourage diverse personalities, values and attitudes

January 18 2023, by Steven Smith, Katelynn Carter-Rogers and Vurain Tabvuma



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If you work for an organization that believes diversity can increase organizational performance and employee well-being, we have a secret to share with you: despite what is commonly espoused about diversity, very few organizations have actually [achieved benefits through current](#)

[diversity approaches](#).

There is no question that [diversity](#) and accessibility in the workplace has value—diverse workplaces are [more welcoming, more productive and have better retention](#) of employees.

However, diversity is usually only thought of in terms of visible diversity (e.g., in terms of race, ethnicity, age, national origin, sexual orientation and cultural identity). In reality, diversity goes far beyond this.

The importance of valuing diversity

There are two limitations to only approaching diversity from a visible perspective. First, people may not be diverse in ways that are meaningful to organizations [when only visible diversity is considered](#). Second, people may be diverse in ways that are not clearly visible and are difficult to observe and identify.

A visible diversity-only approach stops organizations from achieving the full benefits of true diversity and can lead to organizations actually becoming less diverse in their attitudes and beliefs. This is because of group polarization and groupthink, which can [occur when like-minded people get together](#) and make decisions.

Many professions tend to skew either liberal (e.g., [academia](#)) or conservative (e.g., [the military](#)), and the [work environment](#) further accentuates those tendencies, potentially leading to poor decision-making.

In such groups there are different, more deeply held attitudes, beliefs and values that cannot be easily dismissed without sincere critical thinking and engagement.

[Groupthink and group polarization can be overcome](#) when workplaces are composed of people with diverse personalities, values, and attitudes.

This makes it more difficult for the group to coalesce around particular beliefs and attitudes because these are continuously challenged from within the group.

Further, this process of deep critical thinking and engagement leads to increased creativity, innovation and productivity as underlying assumptions about work and organizing are challenged and critiqued.

Managing diverse organizations

The challenge that managers and human resource professionals face within organizations and groups that have diverse personalities, values and attitudes is finding ways for the organization to work together effectively and reduce conflict. Here are three ways to ensure diversity works in your organization:

1. Create an inclusive climate

Organizations must create an environment where all voices are heard and everyone is encouraged to express themselves and contribute. This should begin from the very moment newcomers join the organization.

Employee on-boarding should introduce newcomers to an organization's inclusive practices and openness to engaging their unique perspectives and abilities. These inclusive practices should include having robust conflict resolution procedures, as [these have been shown to positively impact team outcomes](#).

This is especially important for organizations with diverse personalities,

values and attitudes. A wide range of deeply held values and attitudes have the potential to lead to discord and disputes.

In addition, inclusive leaders are needed to create workplaces that encourage dialogue concerning differences and support authenticity in employees.

Recent [research has found that inclusive leadership](#) is more likely to result in workplace environments where employees are open to making changes in their work procedures, policies and tasks. We live in a fast changing dynamic world where organizations need a workforce that is able and willing to adapt to continuously changing conditions.

2. Leave your ego at the door

It's important for organizations to [hire people that don't bring feelings of self-importance, vanity and arrogance](#) to the workplace.

First, organizations should encourage members to leave their ego at the door and focus on team goals, not individual accomplishments or pride. Research has shown that [teams perform better when they set group goals](#).

Second, organizations should ensure there are ways for everyone to communicate their perspectives in ways suitable to them. Introverted members, for example, should [have their preferred communication methods available](#).

Third, organizations should encourage all members to learn something new. Mastering a new skill elicits feelings of doubt and frustration, which causes people to seek help or guidance from others. It also [results in humility](#).

3. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable

To work effectively, organizations should strive to create a culture where members are comfortable working with people with different personalities and perspectives. Such an environment is one where members are encouraged to be honest about their strengths and weaknesses.

Acknowledging our capabilities and the areas where we struggle—and seeing the same in others—helps us see others more completely. Group members can use a deeper understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses to assign tasks and support where needed.

Research has shown that perceptions of individual group task competence and group belonging are [higher in groups that receive positive feedback](#). Organizations should focus on positive aspects of individual differences as groups learn to work effectively together.

The road to prosperity

We are able to make the most impactful, lasting changes when we embrace those with different values and attitudes from our own. Leading innovation consultancies have understood this for quite some time. For example, the success of the innovation consultancy IDEO is built on [developing innovations by having multi-perspective working teams](#).

This approach has helped IDEO create breakthrough innovations such as [Apple's first mouse](#), [Steelcase's Leap Chair](#), and [the Palm V](#).

The process of intentionally including diverse personalities, values and attitudes in the workplace is not an easy one—it is hard. Working with people with very different value systems can be very challenging.

However, once we begin to have a deeper understanding of what drives these different perspectives, we can start to leverage the vast wealth of knowledge that has come from the many different individual experiences around us. With this wealth, we can begin to create new thoughts, ideas, products and experiences that will enrich us all.

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Provided by The Conversation

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