

Title:

The Case for Diversity

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Summary:

Our society wants to define diversity as profiles in which demographics measure the state of variation within a group. The portion of females, the ethnic distribution, and statistics is our criteria for diversity. I suggest a broader perspective which will certainly include well distributed demographics attributes, but also include people from a wide range of economic, educational, social, and political perspectives. The key element is a broad and open mind.

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Article Body:

Our society wants to define diversity as profiles in which demographics measure the state of variation within a group. The portion of females, the ethnic distribution, and statistics is our criteria for diversity. I suggest a broader perspective which will certainly include well distributed demographics attributes, but also include people from a wide range of economic, educational, social, and political perspectives. The key element is a broad and open mind.

Everyone comes complete with a theory of everything. Some theories are in various stages of development, and others are intransigent. A single view of the universe is not good. Enough variety is necessary to thoroughly investigate all the options. Alfred P. Sloan, the genius who put together General Motors, provides an excellent example with a top level management proposal. He was having a staff meeting. The proposal at hand received unanimous consensus. Sloan purportedly indicated, "This proposal has unanimous acceptance which frightens me. Let's table this issue for reconsideration at our next meeting. In the interim, research and evaluate this proposal." At the next meeting, the group unanimously rejected the proposal just as they had previously accepted it. The moral to this story is a uniform perspective is a bad thing, whether it is universal acceptance or universal rejection.

Progress arises out of dissonance. A compliant Albert Einstein would have never given us the Theories of Relativity. It was Einstein's attempting to force observed data into existing theory which broadened his perspective into an

expanded restatement of Newton's laws of motion. However for every Einstein, a million quacks exist. Just because a new vision has birth, does not mean the new vision is an epiphany. The two professors who believed they had just discovered cold fusion is a good example. The two were so bound by their immutable theory of everything they could not observe the obvious flaws in their research. When their research received the scrutiny of peers, they became renowned as fools. Their closed-loop thinking trapped them in their own ignorance

Liberals and conservatives, progressives and regressives, well educated and those who gain their knowledge in the school of hard knocks all bring important perspectives. The conservatives will moderate the exuberance of the liberals. The Liberals will draw the conservatives from their bastions. Progressives will attack the boundary of technologies. Regressives will tend to the center not venturing from the safety of the known. The well educated will apply the vast array of convergent and divergent thinking while those with a plethora of real life experience will prevent small details from sinking the ship. The important point is not to see these different and seemingly opposing philosophies as conflict. The goal is not to battle until one outlook dominates all the others. The purpose of the inclusion is to make synergy prevail into a solution which each component is incapable of developing.

Lean Six Sigma has a purpose of creating dissonance. Processes such as 4 S, FMEA, VOC, DMEA, SPC, and others seek to make the current condition better. All are technologies by which to disturb beneficially the status-quo. Each provides a systematic and constructive process to investigate and to improve. In a word, they are all dissonance. In a mono-culture, none of them will thrive. Diversity is a precedent condition for Six Sigma. Broad diversity across all components optimizes the results using the Lean Six Sigma processes.

The first step is recognizing diversity is not a competition or a contest. Diversity does not end with a victor. All components are necessary to present and to articulate a thoughtful perspective. The purpose of diversity is to understand. Understanding does not connote agreement. Understanding does not connote dominance. Understanding does not connote abdication. Each component remains in tact changed only by its more complete understanding and its corresponding re-evaluation of its respective "theory of everything". For an organization to move forward, each component needs affirmation that their participation adds value. Each component needs affirmation their respective condition is secure.

The second step is construction of diversity. Diversity will not occur by itself. An overabundance of forces exists to prevent inclusion. Perhaps

affirmation is the primary driver preventing diversity. People will naturally reduce the angst resulting from discordant information and alternative outlook by seeking sanctuary. It is easy to receive confirmation when all those around have a narrow and parallel view. President Lincoln is the best example of how to construct diversity. In a time of maximum turmoil in our country, Lincoln purposefully sought to build a cabinet of dissimilar people. He valued thoughts different from his own. Cabinet meetings often were tumultuous. After hearing a full and vigorous debate, it came to a vote. It was Lincoln saying, "Nine nays and one aye. Gentlemen, the ayes carry." Lincoln was superb at building a Team of Rivals*.

The third step is valuing and nurturing the difference, Vive Le Difference as the French would say. Realize the forces at work. Each segment will try to establish dominance over the other. Each segment will retreat to a safe position. A substantial atmosphere of a contest exists. Every possible method is necessary to establish value in the difference and to overcome the above forces. Each segment has to have as its mission to maintain the health and prosperity of the other segments. The organization has to adopt the model of a mental health organization where each person has the responsibility to interact in such a way as to reinforce the value of the other people. A definite value of inclusion and a definite value of preventing exclusion have to exist.

Lean Six Sigma may work in mono culture environments; however it will be far from optimum. Lean Six Sigma has a purpose to create dissonance. The accommodation of that dissonance is the process by which Lean Six Sigma makes improvements. Well constructed and nurtured diversity is the precedent condition which allows Lean Six Sigma to work its magic.

*Doris Kearns Goodwin, A Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln, Simon & Schuster