

# DIVERSITY DELIVERS

## FOUR TIPS FOR EMBRACING DIFFERENCES

HYPOTHESES ABOUT HOW MUCH WE COULD ACCOMPLISH IF CLONING WAS POSSIBLE—YET, IT DOESN'T SOUND APPEALING TO ME. ONE: I'M MORE PRODUCTIVE AND CREATIVE WHEN I WORK WITH OTHERS. AND TWO: HOW BORING!



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It's crucial to recognize that diversity is not a matter of groups, but individual differences. Everyone is unique and when qualities are automatically attributed to those who have a particular trait in common with others, difficulties arise. Diversity comes down to what and how an individual thinks, not group affiliation. The need for diversity goes far beyond legislative requirements. A diverse workforce is needed for organizations to stay current with contemporary culture and move into the future.

### 1 PREVENT GROUPTHINK

"Groupthink" is when the desire for harmony in a decision-making group overrides a realistic appraisal of alternatives. Conforming to the consensus and not questioning our thinking, beliefs and *modi operandi*, limits diversity.

### 2 BROADEN PERSPECTIVES

Outside influences help us move past the filters through which we see. With IREM's global presence, I have been honored to teach in countries outside of the U.S. and I've seen simple terminology get lost in translation, but when explored instead of brushed off, the communicative difference may deepen our understanding.

### 3 GENERATE NEW IDEAS

Different thoughts keep things fresh and create an interesting, challenging workplace that keeps people engaged. Working with a firm on policies and procedures, I brought in people from outside departments and geographic locations and produced ideas we never would have had.

### 4 PARTICIPATE IN GLOBALIZATION

Customers, employees, investors, vendors and competitors come from varying backgrounds and have different beliefs. Diversity actually increases the opportunity for more business.

#### THE ULTIMATE TEST

Success goes beyond tolerance to embracing and incorporating differences. The ultimate assessment is "Are diverse ideas implemented?" If not, the causes of inaction must be identified and hard changes might be needed.

Abraham Lincoln said, "You may be on the right track, but if you don't change tracks every now and then, you might get run over by a train." Diversifying business practices and common workflows is a great way to change tracks. ■

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