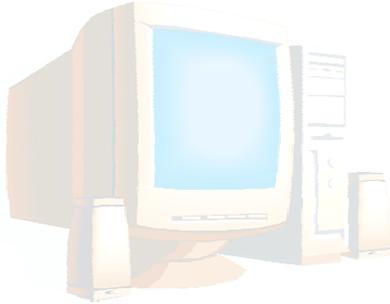


Rethinking the Diversity Council



During the 1990s, many corporations formed Diversity Councils in an effort to underscore or implement their diversity initiatives. These efforts occurred during a period of extraordinary productivity gains in the US. In large part, this productivity was fueled by the application of technological capital in manufacturing, production and information. Fifteen years later, many corporations are looking to their human capital for the additional productivity gains needed to remain competitive. And increasingly, the human capital they see both inside their organizations and available for hire from the outside, is much more diverse than even fifteen years ago.

Over the past 30 years, Pope & Associates has assisted more than half of the Fortune 500, as well as hundreds of smaller corporations, non-profit organizations and government agencies in meeting the challenges of building human relationships across a diverse interface. From this experience, we offer these observations on Diversity Councils.

A Rose by Any Other Name...



The Diversity Councils of the 1990s were called upon to raise *awareness* in their organizations. The mission of the 90s came with the moniker of the 90s...*Diversity Council*. *Diversity* is descriptive. Diversity Councils effectively described the landscape beyond their corporate walls. Often they also described the gap between that external landscape and the one found inside their walls. And corporate awareness was raised.

Today, Diversity Councils are increasingly being asked to develop *skills—and deliver results*. This mission is active, not descriptive. *Inclusion* is active, not descriptive. It is the effective addition of people of difference into the workplace. Effectively adding people of difference to the workplace requires skills.

Maybe we should change the name of our Diversity Councils. But like the rose, would that really change anything? We think so because people don't rise to low expectations.

We will use the term *diversity* here because it continues to describe the mission of most Councils. But it shouldn't.

Inclusion converts diversity into results.

Where You Stand Depends Upon Where You Sit



Many Councils in the past were made up of relatively like-minded people—advocates for diversity and people whom the organization perceived as diverse. Organizational perceptions of diversity generally meant people of color and women. But diversity is a larger concept than gender or race, and like-minded people are rarely effective in making real change happen.

The dimensions of difference that cause organizations to operate less efficiently begin with the *biological*—race, gender, ethnicity, age, personality, sexual orientation, language and physical abilities. But they also include both *personal or cultural* differences and *organizational* differences. Personal or cultural differences can include religious beliefs, marital status, appearance, income,



education, geographic location, military experience, work style, recreational habits, parental status and personal habits. Organizational differences can include management status, union affiliation, division, department, unit or group, seniority, title, classification, function and location.

These differences have varying consequences, but all of them cause *social distance* between people. Social distance causes people to gravitate toward their comfort zones; they value what is like them and question what is different. People operating within their comfort zones learn to sing Kumbaya; people who operate outside their comfort zones learn to hammer out solutions.

Diversity Councils work when membership is diverse in the largest sense of that word. Including membership from those who advocate the status quo.

Just the Facts, Ma'am; Just the Facts



Diversity Councils that base decision-making on factual data succeed more often than those that don't. Facts provide the foundation for looking at diversity initiatives through a business lens. While the pursuit of diversity initiatives can be accurately described with adjectives such as *moral, ethical or noble*, the Diversity Council will remain on the sidelines if its initiatives cannot be described with business adjectives. *Productivity, competitive positioning, customer value, efficiency, time-to-market and profitability* are all adjectives Diversity Councils must accurately associate with their initiatives.

And the facts are changing faster than most organizations know. In the 1990s we saw the performance of computer chips double and their price fall by half every year or two. Today, we are seeing a similar phenomenon in diversity—but its outcome is hardly as positive. We are watching *social distance increase and organizational effectiveness decrease* at roughly the same, but reversed, price-performance ratio.

Lay that on top of common conceptual misunderstandings about diversity and Diversity Councils can get stuck in neutral. Affirmative Action deals with representation; Diversity deals with relationships; Inclusion deals with results. Prejudice is an attitude; Discrimination is a behavior. Make sure your Council understands these concepts fully. And by fully we mean significantly more than the three words we have attached to each one above.

Diversity Councils operate effectively when they are supported by the same facts that support their organization's business objectives.

Get Your Game Face On



Winning teams need skills, coaching and rules. So do Diversity Councils. Membership in your organization's Diversity Council does not grant skills. Neither does membership in a group of difference. Being a woman or a person of color does not translate into the skills to effectively leverage organizational diversity. Training, not biology, provides skills. Effective Diversity Councils get training.

They also seek coaching. Great coaches have a strategy or plan for winning. Great coaches motivate their teams. And great coaches step aside and allow the team to perform. Effective Diversity Councils have great coaches. These are also the organization's CEO or President. If they are not, your chances for success are greatly diminished.

Effective Diversity Councils also have rules. Rules of governance, boundaries, performance, and measurements. Just like sports teams. If sports teams violate their rules of governance or their boundaries, referees penalize them. When they don't perform, coaches step in and go over the game plan again. When sports teams don't meet their measurements—when they don't score—fans leave the ballpark.

Diversity Councils need to get their game faces on before they go out onto the field.

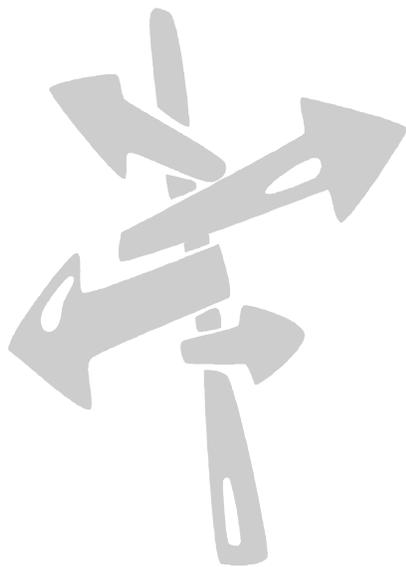
\$#! Just Happens; Change Doesn't

Change is uncomfortable for most people. So much so that organizations often opt for the *appearance of change* rather than *real change*.

Diversity Councils can come into existence as the result of a consent decree, an incident in the organization or an employee lawsuit. These events can be a catalyst for real change, but often not before they are a catalyst for ill-advised action. Fear can be a great driver in some realms of business, but not in effectively leveraging a diverse work force. Change made by dictum or fiat sticks about as long as it takes to utter the order. Without collaboration, cooperation and acceptance, change is no more effective than a team without skills, coaching or rules.

Real change occurs in phases. Each phase can be defined, mapped, understood and measured. If this is news to your Diversity Council, its chances for success are limited. Reaching diversity goals is largely the result of effective change leadership. And these are heady skills. Your coach might have them. A consultant might help you get them. Someone on your Council might be an effective change agent in your organization.

Diversity Councils without change leadership skills will learn how to be satisfied with the appearance of change.



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