

## Diversity 101

Did you know that over 100 languages are spoken in many cities in North America? It has become a multi-cultural mosaic. Canada and the United States are the most culturally diverse nations on earth. Thousands of people from virtually every nation and ethnic group are coming to our shores. We are becoming more of a "toss salad" than a "melting pot".

As the multicultural population in North America explodes, so does the market potential and multicultural customers/workforce. Companies and entrepreneurs often miss market penetration because of the failure to understand the target group's cultural values and customs. Cultural and ethnic diversity is challenging the way we do business with multicultural communities.



### What is Diversity?

It is a new word emerged into our vocabulary. Diversity is not a new flavor of the month rather it will be a regular feature on the United States and Canadian HR menu. It means many things for many people. A lot of people have used diversity as a means to promote or further their personal or group agenda. I don't mean to distract from those agendas. Others have deliberately excluded themselves from the conversation assuming "it" is not for them. I don't want to assign any meaning or motive to that decision. I merely want to offer a perspective based on years of involvement as a practitioner in the field. The original intent of the movement called diversity management was to create an environment that allows all people to maximize their contribution. Diversity is here to stay, it is not going to disappear; it will be here for good, so let's get used to it and celebrate diversity.

Many people equate diversity with cultural differences or affirmative action. But diversity is not so simply defined. Diversity is more than simply "us vs. them" - it is the understanding that we are all unique in various ways. For example, diversity is more than just culture - it is the changing demographics of our population. It's also about the various beliefs and attitudes held by each individual, and the influence of one's identity and the groups with whom one interacts. Diversity is not just affirmative action either-it is the elimination of stereotypes and discrimination that affects our ability to understand each other and work together productively. In business, diversity increases profitability by bringing in fresh new ideas and methods; in schools it means greater learning and understanding; in relationships, diversity can mean personal growth. Diversity should not be seen as a detriment, but rather an asset, a celebration of our individuality as well as our commonalities.

### Dimensions of Diversity-

There are primary and secondary dimensions of diversity. Primary dimensions of diversity, which consist of characteristics we cannot change, include race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual preferences, and mental/physical abilities or characteristics. Secondary dimensions, which are aspects of our selves that are less visible, can be acquired, modified, and sometimes discarded. These aspects include education, communication style, primary language, religion, income level, work style, work/military experience, family status, organization role/level, geographic location, group affiliations, and political preferences, among a few.



### **Advantages of Workplace Diversity:**

The stats; Canada predicts that 40 percent of the Canadian labor force will be comprised of minorities by 2010. More importantly, it estimates that from 1998 to 2010 some 45 percent of the people entering the Canadian workforce will be minorities. In the United States 85% of the new workforce in the next decade will be women, Hispanics, Asians and Afro-Americans, only 15% of them will be white men.

Most companies in North America recognize that there are significant advantages to integrating workers from culturally diverse backgrounds into their workforce. However, many firms don't understand the full importance of doing this. Diversity needs to be seen as the business plan, essential to successful products and increased sales. This is especially true in today's global marketplace, as companies interact with different cultures and clients.

*Among the advantages of a well-integrated company are: increased creativity, increased productivity, new attitudes, new language skills, global understanding, new processes, and new solutions to difficult problems.*

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### **About David McLaren, Ph.D.**

David is a diversity specialist who speaks five languages. He brings a wealth of education and expertise to businesses and brilliantly helps companies increase their profits and productivity through diversity.

A highly sought-after keynote speaker, facilitator, and expert on diversity, inclusion, and multi-cultural issues, David consistently energizes, educates, and empowers his audiences.

Call today to book him for your next conference! **888.897.4224**

Helping you maximize diversity through connector,

*David*

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