

Can We Talk:  
Culture and Diversity in the  
Workplace

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Objectives

- Broaden our thinking around diversity
- Create a safe space for discussion of issues related to issues of culture and diversity
- Identify the value of diversity in the workplace

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What comes to mind when you  
hear the word diversity

- Race?
- Gender?
- Sexual Preference?
- Ideology?
- Other?

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### Diversity Defined

1. The condition of having or being composed of differing elements : variety; *especially* \* : the inclusion of different types of people (as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization <programs intended to promote *diversity* in schools>
2. An instance of being composed of differing elements or qualities : an instance of being diverse <a *diversity* of opinion>

Merriam Webster

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### Benefits of Diversity in the Workplace

- A diverse collection of skills and experiences (e.g. languages, cultural understanding) allows an organization to provide superior service
- A diverse workforce that feels comfortable communicating varying points of view provides a larger pool of ideas and experiences. The organization can draw from that pool to develop creative solutions

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### Benefits (cont.)

- Organizations that encourage diversity in the workplace inspire all of their employees to perform to their highest ability. Company-wide strategies can then be executed; resulting in higher productivity

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### Challenges of Diversity in the Workplace

- Communication - Perceptual, cultural and language barriers need to be overcome for diversity programs to succeed. Ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion, lack of teamwork, and low morale
- Resistance to change - There are always employees who will refuse to accept the fact that the social and cultural makeup of their workplace is changing. The "we've always done it this way" mentality silences new ideas and inhibits progress

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### Bias Exercise

Identify 5 bias you have that you would not want to admit if you were standing at a podium in front of all of your colleagues

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### Consider

- A discernable difference—such as race and gender—isn't the only deciding factor in determining diversity
- It's okay to accept that diversity can be difficult and uncomfortable
- Develop the habit of seeing the differences, distinctions, and dividing lines of others with a soft gaze but with a clear vision
- Everyone has his or her own story and an opinion about someone else's story—even if we don't think we do

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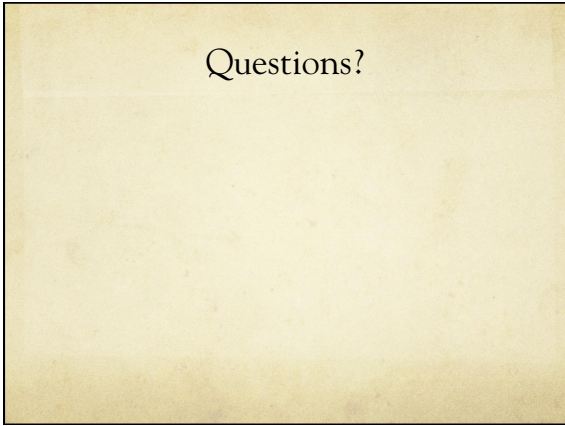
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