

Diversity – Why? / How?

Why are groups pushing diversity initiatives? The value of diversity really depends on your viewpoint and what you see as our purpose. Those who see themselves as carrying civilization to the masses have no use for diversity. Those who see themselves as participating in a dynamic population see diversity as a real plus.

Out in west Texas, people have scraped out a living struggling against a harsh climate, low rainfall, and weather that can be extreme. But they have also dealt with Apache raids across the border. The last “official” raid was in 1924 but there were still Apaches living up in the mountains for many years afterwards. Here, many people believe that they are bringing civilization and are defending “our culture”.

When our culture is right, we don’t need diversity. We need to defend our culture and do business with those who are also defending it. We need to “circle the wagons” against outside influences and protect what we have and are building.

Diversity values other cultures as equal to our own. This is a fundamental value shift. To those defending our culture, this is insanity. To those building the future economy, it is a necessity.

To those who make a living by trade and ideas, valuing other cultures is the starting point. It is nearly impossible to do business with people that we disrespect. To do trade, we have to respect the other person.

Research shows that the best new ideas

come from where two groups / two cultures rub against each other. The more people we interact with, the more likelihood we will come up with an idea that can be sold to more people.

Diversity is not about meeting some quota as it is about building the environment so that our economy does better in the future. Real diversity incorporates existing cultures and builds a new culture just like how pizza is now

deeply part of the American culture when it was once part of the despised Italian culture.

What constitutes real diversity actions? Some are good PR and others support real change. PR actions include corporate statements supporting diversity and racial justice or making

a small donation to a cause. More substantive actions are making strategic investments in other companies, making changes to products or services so that they meet emerging markets, requiring diverse candidate pools, or having a diversity speaker series.

Real change happens when we change suppliers so that we increase spending with minority companies, we measuring who leaves and why, we handle internal disputes differently, we change where political donations go, and we check which shows advertising dollars are spent on.

The largest changes happen when we build a program to train minority owned businesses to meet our requirements, we work with schools to have training programs so that minorities meet our employment needs, and we work to improve banks, schools, police, and courts in minority areas.

Real Change Requires Effort

What Kind of Decision is this?

One leader claims that there are two types of decisions we can make: reversible and irreversible. These need different handling. The important thing is not to confuse them. We can spend too much time on one and not enough on the other. The real challenge is when we have to decide between competing values.

In business, we have to react with all the interruptions and phone calls. We don’t have the luxury of being able to contemplate on every decision. Yet, only being in a reaction mode does not make for good decisions. We have to take time to evaluate what type of decision is facing us. By separating decisions in to reversible and irreversible, we can better handle the decision point.

Reversible decisions are ones that should be made quickly. In a larger organization, these can be handed off to someone who can make the decision and move on. These are the decisions we can learn from when they go wrong.

Irreversible decisions need time. These need far more data and wisdom. Often, we need to consult with our values in order to make these decisions. For those who are not deeply connected with their values, this takes time and meditation.

To find the real values, we often need to look at our past and understand what drove our decisions. That may take time and introspection.

Too often, we find ourselves having made decisions without thinking about the consequences and whether or not the results fit our values. By connecting with our values and realizing when those values need to guide a decision, we make decisions that better fit who we are.

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