

Eric P. Bloom: Value of diversity within your team



By Eric P. Bloom

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As a manager, an understanding of the true value of having diversity within your department can greatly enhance your team's effectiveness. As a result, it can also greatly enhance your professional career. When I consider diversity, I like to think of it from a number of perspectives, each of which is equally important to the success, creativity, productivity, and overall effectiveness of the team. These diversity types include, but are not limited to, gender, ethnic background, religion, age, stage of life, personality type, education level, personal strengths, and personal weaknesses.

From a personal and ethical perspective, I truly believe there is no place for discrimination of any kind in the workplace. It's divisive, counterproductive, and just plain mean. The nature of this column, however, is to discuss diversity as a strategic advantage that should not be overlooked in today's competitive business place and tough economic conditions.

In short, the power of having diversity within your team comes from the ability to view challenges, issues, and opportunities from different points of view. The goal for you, as the manager, is to recognize this power, cherish it, and use it to maximize your team's flexibility and effectiveness.

Over the years, I have worked with people of virtually all ethnic backgrounds, ages, religions, personality types, and so on. At the end of the day, I have learned from them all and I hope they learned a little something from me. Truth be told, each of us adds to the diversity of our teams, our

companies, and the workforce in general. We all have a specific ethnic background, age, and unique types of work experiences, myself included.

Let's talk about different types of diversity.

- People from different parts of the world attended different types of schools with different teaching philosophies, techniques, and thoughts on homework, achievement, and discipline
- People of different ages have had their perspective of life framed by different world events ranging from World War II, 9/11, the rise of the internet, booms and busts in real estate, the stock market, and economic conditions in general, and other major world shifts and events
- Regarding stage of life, people with no children, small children, and grown children have different types of personal obligations, work/life balance needs, and perspectives on product types, management styles, and alike
- Men and woman very often have different styles regarding decision making techniques, problem resolution processes, interests, and perspectives
- Different personality types analyze problems and make decisions using different thought processes
- Each human being has their own personal strengths and weaknesses

On the other side of the coin, there is a big danger of having a lack of diversity on your team. That is to say, if everyone on the team is the same, there is the real potential to miss something big, good or bad, because everyone is looking at things from the same perspective.

With the backdrop of your department's issues and objectives in mind, look at each of the members of your team and analyze their strengths, weaknesses, perspectives, and general backgrounds. The key to your personal managerial success and your department's company contribution is based on your ability to take advantage of your team's wonderfully diverse backgrounds.

The primary advice and takeaways from today's column is to know that:

- The power of having diversity within your team comes from the ability to view challenges, issues, and opportunities from different points of view.
- Each of us adds to the diversity of our teams, our companies, and the workforce in general. We all have a specific ethnic background, age, and unique types of work experiences,
- The key to your personal managerial success and your department's company contribution is based on your ability to take advantage of your team's wonderfully diverse backgrounds.

Until next time, manage well, manage smart, and continue to grow.

Author Bio:

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