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Why ‘diversity’ might be missing the entire point

Most organisations have a diversity and inclusion agenda, trying to get their numbers right and making sure there is enough representation of skin colour, gender, background and age. Unfortunately, many are missing the point, struggling to get the value that comes from true diversity.

Originally from the Latin *divertere*, “to turn in different directions”, diversity is about being able to bring together different ways of thinking. Far from a box-ticking headcount exercise, it is about benefiting from having a range of perspectives and opinions. This, and only this, is what feeds an organisation with the right culture of innovation, an openness to change and a capacity to drive the markets.

The traditional approach to diversity often fails to add much value. People that look very different on the outside can still fall into unavoidable group thinking, quickly agreeing to ignore the elephant in the room and to leave the boat un-rocked.

In this issue of *Strategic HR Review*, we have collated a range of “diverse” opinions on diversity and inclusion. Do not look for patterns, but let ideas challenge your thinking, encouraging new ways of truly building diversity in your organization:

- In *Metrics of the Glass Ceiling at the Intersection of Race and Gender*, Buck Gee and Denise Peck look at hard data to examine the (largely unsuccessful) corporate efforts to increase racial diversity in management and executive levels at Silicon Valley tech firms.
- In *How Diversity (That is Included) Can Fuel Innovation and Engagement – and How Sameness Can be Lethal*, Stephen Frost makes the case that diversity must go hand-in-hand with inclusion if organizations are to truly reap the benefits of it.
- In *The Dividends of Diversity: The Win-Win-Win Model is Taking Over Business and it Necessitates Diversity*, Donald Sheppard demonstrates concrete ways in which diversity is good for business, good for clients, good for customers and, ultimately, good for the larger community.
- In *Turning Expatriates’ Cultural Intelligence into Strategic Advantage*, Aideen O’Byrne draws on the experiences of a diverse group of individuals to highlight the importance of cultural intelligence in expatriates’ work performance.

Sometimes diversity has to feel uncomfortable, unsettling and inconvenient. When choosing teams, look for people who bring different experiences to the table, who are more committed with the idea of adding value than with their own need to “fit in” and survive a job.

If you cannot do this, feel free to get distracted by the diversity agenda, making sure you find like-minded people who look rather different on the outside.

Regards,

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