



The Power of Diversity

By: Kelly Graves “*The Corporate Therapist*™”

One element of creating a successful organization is bringing people with different personalities, skills, backgrounds, and experiences together and then inspiring them, focusing their attention and leading them toward a common goal or objective.

What follows are nine ways to overcome current or historical diversity-related problems and re-focus your team toward successful business-related goals.

1. **Highlight the Differences:** What advantage does each person bring to your organization or department? Help people acknowledge and leverage skills and personalities so that you gain an edge on your competitors. In other words, involve your people, ask how their special skills can further benefit the team and utilize them.
2. **Venting is Needed:** I suggest you encourage the group to “vent” some of the pent up frustrations before you move on and be productive with the next solution-oriented steps. (Two minutes of venting per person. Tips on how to let your people vent productively can be found on our website)
3. **Focus the Group’s Attention:** Slowly move the group toward solving department and company goals. Ask questions such as: ‘what are some possible solutions to the problems identified in our venting process?’
4. **Focus the Attention of each Participant:** Ask each person “what can you do to help the department or company achieve these goals?” Break the statements down into manageable parts such as “what behaviors and actions will you engage in to help the department and company succeed?” Each person must take personal responsibility for his or her own growth.
5. **Let them know “What’s in it for me?”**
 - a) Every person is motivated by self-interest.
 - b) People will initially view change as:
 - negative
 - what it will cost them
 - what they will have to give up
 - why do they have to change

Therefore, it is paramount that a “buy-in” step precedes change. So, what will personally motivate people? People want to be listened to, asked to share their

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ideas, not kept in the dark but included—in essence they want to be *valued*. When you value and respect people you build trust and when you have a group of people focused on a single objective, communicating openly and trusting one another you have a company well on its way to success.

6. **Create a Specific Time-Line:** Everyone in your company needs to be personally accountable for moving the organization forward on a daily basis. Establish clear time-lines and then discuss how these collective actions and behaviors will not only improve the company but will directly impact the customer. If they don't directly and positively impact the customer, then they are of no value and a waste of resources.
7. **Visualize Successes:** Look ahead one week, ninety days, and six months and ask the group. When we implement these solutions “how will our company be improved?” “How will the customer experience be improved?” “How will our bottom line be improved?” “How will our communication, trust, problem solving and workflow improve?” The answers that come from these discussions will inspire and unite.
8. **Reinforce successes weekly:** Point out what went well and then discuss how people accomplished what they did. Provide homework such as: “between now and our next meeting, be prepared to share examples of solution-oriented conversations, meetings and successful behaviors.” This will reinforce more of the successful “target behaviors.”
9. **Refine this process:** Create a feedback loop of what went well and what still needs to be refined further.

Diversity can work for your team or against it. If you inspire and focus your team, chances are it will move your organization toward success.

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