A dialogue on the meaning of diversity

by Gail M Stephens

The first issue of this newsletter included a definition of diversity. This office received quite a bit of feedback on that definition. Some individuals liked the idea of the newsletter and at least its attempt at providing information and some food for thought. A few people disliked the definition...surely we are not really expected to embrace those individuals who may espouse Nazism, racism, terrorism or murderers and thieves and the like.

The feedback certainly confirms that people do not agree on a definition for diversity. As far as the workplace is concerned, the Society for Human Resource Management notes that only about 30 percent agree. Diversity isn't well-defined or understood. Often there is too much emphasis on compliance with laws and regulations, or issues related to race and ethnicity and/or gender. Diversity is not a civil rights issue.

Focusing on diversity typically means that the organization works to expand the number of individuals from various groups—more women, Hispanics, people of color, etc.—and to ensure that those individuals are appropriately represented in all functions and at all levels. A word that might be better understood is inclusion. An emphasis on inclusion means that an organization needs to ensure that it not only attracts a diverse group of employees, but that it provides them—regardless of which group they belong to—challenging tasks, real authority within their span of control, and the support to grow and develop.

I recently had the opportunity to hear Kerry Watson, President of Durham Regional Hospital in North Carolina, speak at an event. He stated the obvious—"we all think differently regardless of what we look like on the outside". When he spoke of diversity he used words like equity, inclusion, fairness, respect, and trust. I like those words better. Diversity isn't just an awareness exercise. Initiatives for inclusion improve individual and team performances. They increase productivity, reduce the number of people who leave, and make it more attractive to potential employees, students, and others who have a chance to be part of the organization.

Hopefully, this is only the beginning of a dialogue among all of us at UTM.

Source: Ten Elements for Creating a World-class Corporate Diversity and Inclusion Program. Michael C. Hyatt, President & CEO, Novations Group, Inc.
Hispanic Heritage Month


Five facts about Hispanics for Hispanic Heritage Month
National Hispanic Heritage Month runs from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, a period chosen because it bookends the independence days of five Central American nations (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Costa Rica, Sept. 15), Mexico (Sept. 16) and Chile (Sept. 18), as well as Columbus Day/Día de la Raza (Oct. 14 this year in the United States). In honor of the event, here are five key facts about U.S. Hispanics:

1. Geography: Although there’s been some dispersion in recent years, the Hispanic population remains highly concentrated. More than half (55%) of the nation’s Hispanics live in just three states — California, Texas and Florida — and 71% live in just 100 of the nation’s 3,143 counties and county-equivalents.

2. Population size: According to the Census Bureau, there were 51.9 million U.S. Hispanics in 2011 (its latest estimate, for 2012, is just over 53 million). The Hispanic population grew 47.5% between 2000 and 2011, according to a Pew Research analysis, and accounted for more than half (55%) of total population growth over that period.

3. Countries of origin: The umbrella term “Hispanic” embraces a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. However, nearly two-thirds of U.S. Hispanics trace their family origins to Mexico. Puerto Ricans, the nation’s second-largest Hispanic-origin group, make up 9.5% of the total Hispanic population.

4. Educational attainment: College enrollment among Hispanic high school graduates has risen over the past decade. According to the Census Bureau, 49% of young Hispanic high-school graduates were enrolled in college in 2012, surpassing the rate for white (47%) and black (45%) high-school grads.

5. Language usage: A record 35 million (74%) Hispanics ages 5 and older speak Spanish at home. Spanish is the second-most spoken language in the United States. Nearly all U.S. Hispanics say it’s important that future generations speak Spanish.

FAST FACT

4.8%

Tennessee has the third-fastest growing Hispanic population in the country, but is only 4.8% of the total state population.
U.S. CENSUS 2012

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, With conquering limbs astride from land to land; Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name Mother of Exiles.

From her beacon-hand Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame. "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

By Emma Lazarus. Inscribed on the plaque below the Statue of Liberty
Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013

Some background. The World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the same year, concluded that civil society and governments have acknowledged that domestic violence is a public health policy and human rights concern.

The Violence Against Women Act was developed and passed as a result of extensive grassroots efforts in the late 80’s and early 1990s, with advocates and professionals from the battered women’s movement, sexual assault advocates, victim services field, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors’ offices, the courts, and the private bar urging Congress to adopt significant legislation to address domestic and sexual violence. Since its original passage in 1994, VAWA’s focus has expanded from domestic violence and sexual assault to also include dating violence and stalking. It funds services to protect female adult and teen victims of these crimes, and supports training on these issues to ensure consistent responses across the country. One of the greatest successes of VAWA is its emphasis on a coordinated community response to domestic violence, sex dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking of women; courts, law enforcement, prosecutors, victim services, and the private bar currently work together in a coordinated effort that had not heretofore existed on the state and local levels. VAWA also supports the work of community-based organizations that are engaged in work to end domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking against women, particularly those groups that provide culturally and linguistically specific services.

In February 2013, the Senate and the House passed an extension of the Violence Against Women Act. The extension was signed by President Barack Obama. On February 28, 2013, the House passed the Senate’s all-inclusive version of the bill. The renewed act expanded federal protections to gays, lesbians and transgender individuals, Native Americans and immigrants.

The University of Tennessee at Martin prohibits the sexual harassment of its employees and students. Sexual harassment, including sexual violence, will not be tolerated and will be grounds for disciplinary action.

If you observe or have knowledge of sexual violence or harassment, please report it.

For more information click on the following links.

PSEPP (Personal Safety Empowerment Program Project) http://www.utm.edu/departments/psepp/

Public Safety
http://www.utm.edu/departments/publicsafety/csa.php

Equity and Diversity Office
http://www.utm.edu/departments/equalopp/

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The Giraffe and the Elephant: A Modern Fable, by R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr. and Marjorie Woodruff

In a small suburban community just outside the city of Artiodact, a giraffe had a new home built to his family’s specifications. It was a wonderful house for giraffes, with soaring ceilings and tall doorways. High windows ensured maximum light and good views while protecting the family’s privacy. Narrow hallways saved valuable space without compromising convenience. So well done was the house that it won the National Giraffe Home of the Year Award. The home’s owners were understandably proud.

One day the giraffe, working in his state-of-the-art wood shop in the basement, happened to look out the window. Coming down the street was elephant. “I know him,” he thought. “We worked together on a PTA committee. He’s an excellent woodworker, too. I think I’ll ask him in to see my new shop. Maybe we can even work together on some projects.” So the giraffe reached his head out of the window and invited the elephant in.

The elephant looked around, saw a half-finished project on the lathe table in the far corner, and decided to explore it further. As he moved through the doorway that led to that area of the shop, however, he heard an ominous scrunched sound. He backed out, scratching his head. “Maybe I’ll join the giraffe upstairs,” he thought. But as he started up the stairs, he heard them begin to creak. He jumped off and fell back against the wall. It too began to crumble. As he sat there disheveled and dismayed, the giraffe came downstairs.

“What on earth is happening here?” the giraffe asked in amazement.

“I was trying to make myself at home,” the elephant said.

The giraffe looked around. “Okay, I see the problem. The doorway is too narrow. We’ll have to make you smaller. There’s an aerobics studio near here. If you’d take some classes there, we could get you down to size.”

“Maybe,” the elephant said, unconvinced.

“And the stairs are too weak to carry your weight,” the giraffe continued. “If you’d go to ballet class at night, I’m sure we could get you light on your feet. I really hope you’ll do it. I like having you here.”

“Perhaps,” the elephant said. “But to tell you the truth, I’m not sure that a house designed for a giraffe will ever really work for an elephant, not unless there are some major changes.”

Praveen Gupta, an ASQ Fellow, has authored several books on business management. His review of the book notes: “If giraffes are the people who own the house, head giraffes are the people who are ultimately in charge. It is they who decide where the organization will go and how it will get there. They also determine the culture that exists inside the house. Elephants are outsiders trying to fit into houses that are built for others. The elephant experience is universal. All of us, say the authors, including white males – feel like an elephant in a giraffe house - at certain times and in certain settings. As a rich tapestry of anecdotes about giraffes and elephants unfolds, it only becomes too obvious that diversity is not a function of race or gender but a complex and ever changing blend of attributes, behaviors and talents.”

Copies of the book are available at www.amazon.com and www.thriftbooks.com