

The University of Diversity

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The play on words of this title could be loosely translated as the global oneness and totality that can be achieved by combining a variety of backgrounds and belief systems; in short... unity in diversity. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines diversity as *“the condition of having or being composed of differing elements, the state of being diverse.”* (i.e., variety, assortment, a mixed bag.) In and of itself diversity is a wonderful aspect of humanity, particularly in a workplace environment.

Every one of us is a uniquely different individual with our diverse combination of genes, beliefs, opinions, cultures and background. The broader the diversity the more important it is to introduce the concept of commonality, finding a shared purpose beyond our differences. In one of the most memorable scenes of the award-winning film, *Gladiator*, Russell Crowe unites a rag tag bunch of individual glory-seeking gladiators to victory by declaring the now famous mantra... **“As One!”**

If you saw this movie, it was obvious that the evil Roman Emperor had overwhelmingly stacked the deck against the gladiators gathered in the Coliseum, and their impending deaths were virtually guaranteed. However, he had totally underestimated the power of true leadership to galvanize the skill sets of the individual fighters into a synchronized fighting force. Companies today could re-learn a valuable lesson from this example.

Today, there is an increasingly pervasive internal threat to America’s workforce. That threat is divisiveness. Whenever any team is fractured, whether it’s by conflicted ego, misaligned mission or ambition, ethnicity, ideology, miscommunication, narcissism, cultural bias, or the like, the results are always less than optimal. Many studies show that more companies fail to meet their full potential due to internal challenges than by external pressures.

In fact, while recent efforts to promote workplace Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) have received a tremendous amount of attention, several universities and governmental agencies have begun to dismantle their DEI programs in favor of more balanced solutions to situational inequities. These new approaches seek to achieve inclusion outcomes through collaboration from, and for, all employees rather than from a divided workforce.



Aside from the obvious market advantages derived from a superior combination of products/services and skillsets, there is another internal variable that can multiply your company's leverage to reach higher levels of excellence. Such is the potential power of community of cohesively aligned "team partners," unselfishly collaborating equally to function together... **"As One"**.

Blending individual differences (inclusion) brings strength to any organization. Taking the time to further understand each other is an excellent way to further fuse the bond. The synergy of a proactive, culture driven team integrating commonality, equality and cohesion can be tangibly experienced at every level of an organization, many times with demonstrably positive results.

However, the results may not always be consistent with your company goals. You need to inspect what you expect, remembering that it is difficult to change what you don't measure. Achieving optimum commonality within a diverse company culture is not something that happens randomly. It takes intentionality. Therefore, it is important that you implement appropriate measurement metrics to help ensure that you are on the right track.

One strategy to seriously consider is to have a [S.C.O.R.E.S. Analysis](#)³ (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Risks, Environment and Systems) facilitated within your company to examine and bring to the surface the core strengths and weaknesses of your team. This analysis tool brings into focus performance gaps that can be filled by increased collaboration. It also generates benchmark metrics to measure future growth, changes and constructive feedback.

A highly regarded DEI study for McKinsey & Company recognized the need for a "systemic, business-led approach to inclusion and diversity..." (McKinsey & Company, 2020, Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters)¹. This study further recommends the following inclusion strategies:

- Increase diverse representation, particularly in leadership and critical roles
- Strengthen leadership and accountability for delivering on I&D goals
- Enable equality of opportunity through fairness and transparency
- Promote openness, tackling bias and discrimination
- Foster belonging through support for multivariate diversity

It is also critically important that the desired cultural strategy has individual buy-in from the top down. As a CEO, you cannot simply delegate someone to implement culture changes and expect it to work anymore than you can legislate morality. To be clear, you can punish someone when they break the law, but you cannot force them to stop speeding, cheating on taxes, etc. The same is true with culture change. People need to believe in the personal benefits and be willing to get on board with it from an "all in" perspective. And not just everyone buying into one idea but offering themselves into a solution-based process whereby each individual can freely engage without fear of rejection or exclusion of ideas.

"Imagine a work environment where every person is appreciated. Every person. Where diversity, equity, and inclusion are more than admirable aspirations but instead clearly defined plans with proven methods of achievement. Where everyone is committed to pulling on the same rope, devoted to creating a culture with a strong sense of belonging, and unlocking new levels of business and success." If you want to achieve real, lasting change in your company, you'll first have to see real, lasting change in the hearts and minds of the people who work for your company. (Sarvadi and Jones, 2023 Making Differences Work)²

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Catherine Benavidez, CEO of Injury Management Organization, an established three-decade old managed care company, reflects "that both small and large companies, must realize that collaboration of all races and backgrounds, with experience, brings significant value as we serve our clients. Of course, it is the skill of the individual that is critical, but the diversity of the team brings innovation and cohesive reflection that establishes our common goals and serve well."

Possibility thinking can become reality with the right mindset, right implementation, and the right resources. If you desire to explore ways in which your organization can benefit from implementing a culture exhibiting the synergistic benefits utilizing the University of Diversity principles, please contact a representative at The Lighthouse Resource Group.

For more information please visit our website at [LighthouseResourceGroup.com](https://www.LighthouseResourceGroup.com)

Learn more about IMO at [InjuryManagement.com](https://www.InjuryManagement.com)

1. Diversity wins: How Inclusion matters, 2020 (<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>)

2. "Making Differences Work" – Paul Sarvadi and Eli Jones, 2023

3. S.C.O.R.E.S. Analysis – <https://www.lighthouseresourcegroup.com/the-impact-of-a-scores-analysis/>