

8 Major Myths of Diversity -- Never tire challenging or debunking them

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Having worked in the field nearly 15 years and as President of DTG for nearly ten years, I have come across these myths over and over and I am constantly debunking them. I often distribute this document prior to diversity training to undo the bias about an upcoming workshop on bias (what I call bias to the second power)!

Myth 1: Diversity is a problem. *No, it is an opportunity.* You can't understand and take advantage of something you don't know you don't know (something you don't understand). Your diversity strategy and plan is an opportunity to differentiate your organization from competition – don't blow it.

Myth 2: Diversity is our Human Resource Department's responsibility. *No, it is my responsibility.* Too many people tell me “that's not my problem; our personnel people have to handle the diversity issues.” Wrong. We all (leaders, managers, supervisors and employees) play a significant role.

Myth 3: Diversity is just about race and gender. *No, it is much broader than that.* It used to be called cultural diversity but the conversation has become more inclusive. Please see Myth 4.

Myth 4: Diversity is about minorities and women in the workplace. *No, diversity is about your internal (employees) and external (prospective clients) customers.* Understanding the diversity in your employee and customer ranks and anticipating their needs can make or break your firm (most likely break if you subscribe to this myth). Diversity marketing – marketing to new, increasingly diverse “emerging markets” is a hot new field.

Myth 5: Diversity is about exclusivity. *No, it is about inclusivity.* In other words, diversity is about all of us. If you feel diversity is about attacking the white male, you are mistaken, and the class you went through was poorly facilitated. Diversity is not about getting “them” into your corporate culture (assimilation). Diversity is about creating a

culture where everyone (each individual) can thrive and contribute to your organization (integration/multiculturalism) and understand and serve your increasingly diverse clients.

Myth 6: Diversity is about lowering standards. Be very careful with this notion. Many people I have worked with having taken great offense to this perception. My clients are not lowering standards but widening the net and sometimes raising standards or rewriting them.

Myth 7: Diversity is just another fad. If you think it is, good luck. Look at your workforce and client marketplace today and compare it with five and ten years ago and try to look five and ten years into the future. Do the same analyses for your customer base. Have you seen the demographic projections for the future? It will blow your socks off!

Myth 8: Diversity is another version of Equal Employment

Opportunity/Affirmative Action. *No, it is very different from EEO/AA.* Diversity concerns all of your employees and your customers and is all-inclusive. Minorities and women are context for EEO/AA: Major differences between EEO/AA and Diversity are:

- EEO/AA is government-initiated while Diversity is voluntary and company-driven.
- EEO/AA is also legally-driven while Diversity is productivity-driven. EEO/AA is quantitative and Diversity is qualitative.
- EEO/AA is problem focused whereas Diversity focuses on opportunities.
- EEO/AA assumes assimilation among its participants but Diversity assumes integration.
- EEO/AA has a strictly internal focus where Diversity focuses on internal and external issues.
- EEO/AA is reactive but Diversity is proactive.

Well, there you have it – a whole lot to consider. The diversity journey is long and the destination is not a place your organization will get to in the short term. Remember, you need people, passion, purpose, and a plan – what we call at DTG the 4 P's. You have to have the best people, the best minds, the best talent from all diverse backgrounds. You have to have a real passion for what products or services your organization offers to the marketplace. You have to have a purpose (a mission) and a plan to achieve your purpose – your diversity strategy and plan will do just that.

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