Diversity and Cultural Awareness Profile

Dr. Jon Warner

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Introduction

The Diversity and Cultural Awareness Profile looks at the individual's awareness of differences among people in the organization and assesses their level of commitment to such diversity. This is done by examining the individual's views and understanding about diversity, as well as their perspective regarding the organization's awareness and commitment to a culturally diverse workplace.

Because Diversity and Cultural Awareness is such a broad subject, this assessment will break it down into six competency areas. These competency areas are:

1. **Awareness and Climate**
2. **Levels of Inclusion**
3. **Levels of Tolerance and Understanding**
4. **Degree of Empathy**
5. **Degree of Adaptation and Change**
6. **Persistence and Commitment**

Individuals completing this questionnaire will be assessed in each of the six competency areas.

It is important to note that the data provided by this assessment will only be valid and useful if the person completing the questionnaire is completely honest and accurate, focusing on what they perceive to be true at the present time—**not** on what they might or should say if things were a little different in the future.

This is a self-scoring profile. Once you have rated all the statements first from your own viewpoint and then from the perspective of the organization as a whole, you will be given instructions on how to plot your scores on the Diversity and Cultural Awareness profile shown on page 5. This will give you a diagrammatic representation of diversity awareness and commitment within the organization and the gap between the two. General interpretative information for all six competency areas is included in the back of this booklet to help individuals determine whether future improvements can be made by the individual or the organization in order to increase their effectiveness and improve the quality of the results that are achieved.

Directions

On the next two pages, you will find 48 statements about cultural awareness and commitment to cultural diversity. For each statement, think about whether or not you agree with the statement, and how strongly. Also, circle the letter that most closely fits your view, using the following scale on the Answer Sheet:

SA = Strongly agree
A = Agree
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly disagree

Please use a ball-point pen or pencil on the Answer Sheet and mark your answers clearly.

Diversity and Cultural Awareness: Questions

1. Harnessing the power of cultural diversity is a major priority.

2. Not enough people with disabilities are employed in the workplace.

3. You don't need a degree to succeed in the world of work.

4. Older people tend to be rigid and reluctant to change.

5. On the whole, the opposite sex is less intelligent.

6. Minority groups have to conform to majority rules.

7. Overweight people inhibit their chances of career success.

8. It is better to have as much cultural similarity as possible in a single organization.

9. Hiring is always carried out without any bias or prejudice.

10. Participation through increased "ownership" in the organization is a good thing.

11. Teams made up of people from many different cultures are given the time and commitment to work well.

12. A person's sexual preference does not affect how they are treated at work.

13. A business "formula" that's been successful elsewhere shouldn't be questioned or scrutinized just because there are different attitudes or ways of thinking in our organization.

14. It's okay for one function in an organization to dominate the others.

15. Making an effort to bring in people with ideas that are different from the "norm" is highly beneficial.

16. It is sometimes necessary to change our own habits and ways to make people who are different feel more comfortable.

17. Jokes and jibes about people who are different are okay if they are not in bad taste.

18. It is important to always learn about other people's cultures and religious beliefs.

19. Many cultural customs and habits hold back or get in the way of workplace productivity.

20. Important communications are sent in each person's primary spoken language.

21. The opposite sex generally doesn't work as hard.

22. "Quota" hiring systems for disabled people or other minorities are **not** a good idea.

23. Older people need more time and patience.

24. Different races should all be treated in exactly the same way.

25. Diverse opinions should always be gathered before a major decision is made.

Diversity and Cultural Awareness: Questions

26. Knowledge about different cultures helps build stronger teams.

27. What all people have to say and how they choose to say it is respected at all times.

28. A lot of thought and action is given to helping minority people and groups feel comfortable in the organization.

29. People who do not conform to the organization's cultural norms should move on.

30. Warmth, sincerity, and friendliness is shown to everyone, whatever their race, color, creed, or belief.

31. People who are very different usually have little in common emotionally.

32. Cross-cultural socialization is practiced and enjoyed here.

33. The first question asked when people think or decide to do something differently is, "Are their perspectives or beliefs different from ours?"

34. Social stereotypes are a helpful way to think about cultural difference.

35. Quality time is taken to change the misconceptions about people who are not similar to ourselves.

36. Organizational rules and procedures should not have to change according to people's different cultural beliefs.

37. Reading people (and the behavioral clues they offer) is a developing skill.

38. Our diverse cultural mix provides a rich tapestry of talent that can move mountains.

39. Visible initiatives to bring about greater diversity do more harm than good.

40. Action-oriented diversity-aware role models are positively recognized.

41. Some effort is made to weed out limiting beliefs and prejudice at all times.

42. Diversity is the focus of a specific project or activity every so often.

43. When there is cultural clash here, more research as to why this happens is undertaken.

44. Creatively finding new ways to bring different people together takes too much time.

45. You can't discipline people in minority groups these days.

46. This organization sets "stretch" targets to see and use our diversity as a positive strength.

47. This organization relentlessly searches for the root causes of prejudice.

48. Even when people have made great efforts to bring about more diversity, there is always more to do.
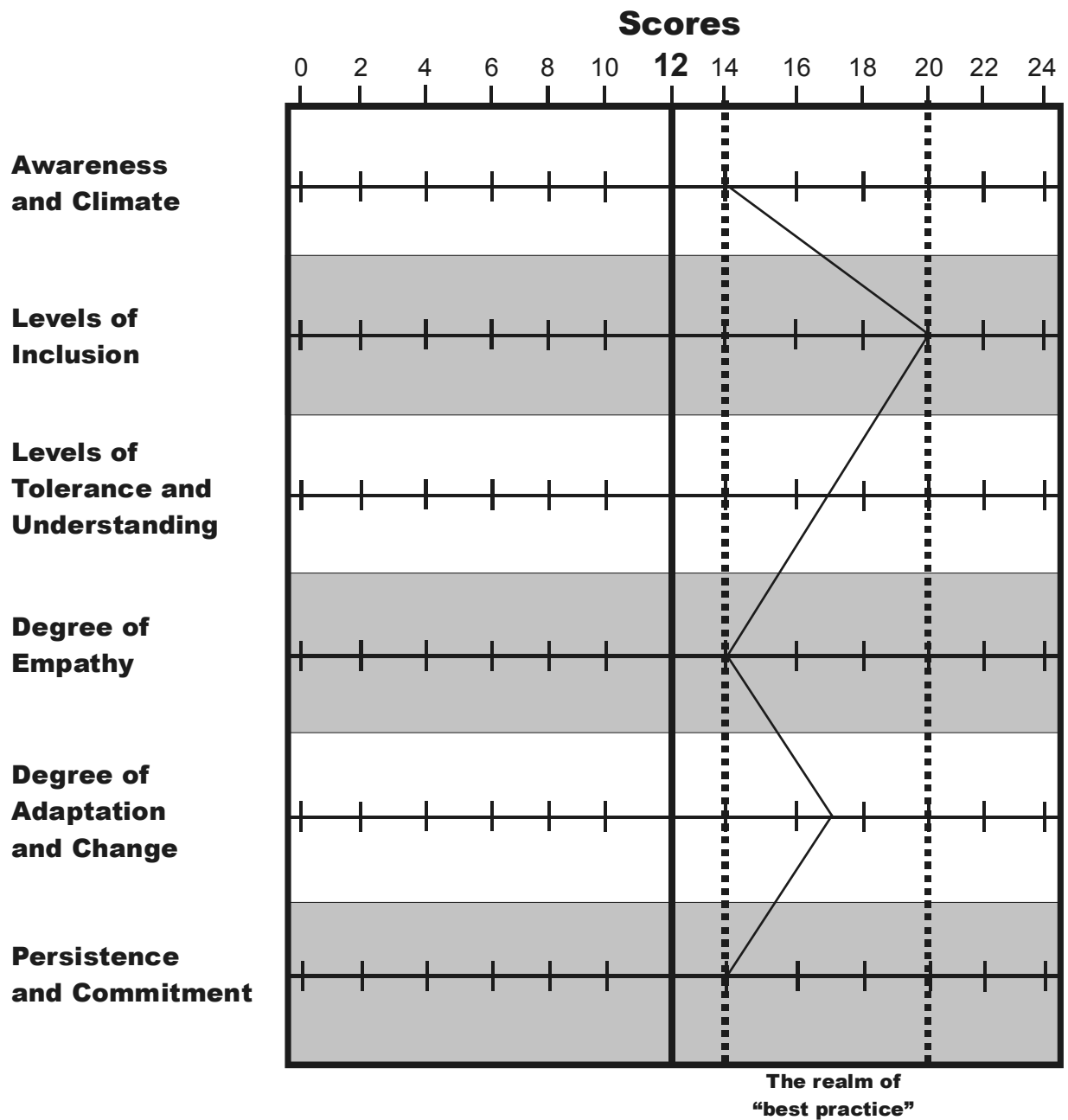
Scoring Your Instrument

Separate the scoring sheet from the response sheet. You will see that your SA, A, D, and SD responses have translated into numbers. Your first task is to total these numbers and enter them in the appropriate column-total boxes at the bottom of the page. Be sure you add the numbers accurately.

The six column-total boxes correspond to each competency area in the Diversity and Cultural Awareness descriptions shown on page 8. By translating these column-total scores, you can now plot these numbers on the grid by making appropriate marks on the appropriate axis. Each scale runs from 0 on the left to 24 at the right of the scale. Each column will give you two scores—one that reflects your personal view, and one that reflects your view of the organization as a whole. Both of these points should be marked on the appropriate axis. Sometimes these points will be the same or very close together, and at other times they will be wide apart. (This creates a gap that will be analyzed further.)

Once you have the two scores from all six column-totals plotted on the grid, use your pen or pencil to connect all six points with a straight line. Then turn to the Interpreting Your Results section of this booklet, which starts on page 7.

Your Scores

Your Name: _____ Date: _____

Scores

| | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | **12** | 14 | 16 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 24 |

Awareness and Climate

Levels of Inclusion

Levels of Tolerance and Understanding

Degree of Empathy

Degree of Adaptation and Change

Persistence and Commitment

The realm of "best practice"

Take your column-totals from the scoring sheet and plot them one at a time on the chart above, using the symbol of a cross for your personal score and a small circle for the organizational score. Each horizontal scale should contain two marks—one reflecting your personal views, and one for how you perceive the organization. Once you have plotted all six horizontal bars, connect all your personal scores (the crosses) and all the organizational scores (the circles) with straight lines. Some of these scores will be close together, but there is probably going to be a gap (and in some cases quite a considerable one) between the two resultant lines.

Your Individual Score

Once you have responded honestly and accurately to each item and have plotted your personal scores and your organizational scores, you are ready to:

1. **Review your personal awareness and commitment levels in each of the six categories.**

2. **Review the relative performance of the organization in terms of your perception of its scores in each competency category.**

3. **Compare your score and the organizational score for each competency area and study the gap between the two in each category.**

4. **Determine your priorities (for yourself and for the organization) in terms of changing behavior or actions.**

The essential value of any measurement assessment is in the extent to which it provides a useful indication about a current situation and some guidance in terms of what an individual can do to change it for the better. The individual can then analyze the results and decide whether any adjustments or changes are necessary or desirable.

The items on the assessment, when scored, should provide a useful basis for such a review. To deepen or extend this further, ask two or three of your colleagues to complete the profile as well, to see whether or not they share your perception about cultural diversity (especially as far as the wider organization is concerned). By averaging their scores and plotting them on the grid, you will create an interesting comparison between your own and the organization's awareness and commitment, as well as the awareness and commitment that others perceive to exist.

Whatever your scores (and whether they are yours alone or enhanced by the views of others), consider developing a stronger commitment in those competency areas you are the weakest in. You will find a number of ideas and suggestions on the next page.

Interpreting Your Results

An organization's success rests heavily on how well it harnesses the array of skills and experiences of its employees while they remain a part of its workforce. How good is it at fostering teamwork? Does it bring together people of diverse backgrounds and styles in order to enhance creativity, solve problems more effectively, and discover new approaches to old issues? The organization must do all these things if it wants to achieve its goals and hold on to its best and brightest workers.

Many researchers and industry experts believe that the organizations that excel at these things have six characteristics in common—six sets of actions or attitudes that form the foundation of a successful team of people who take pride in together achieving greater levels of success. The steps can be thought of as a series of competencies that are progressively acquired by individuals and the organization as a whole, illustrated by a pyramid. Starting at the base of the competency pyramid and moving up, these six factors are:

1. Organizations and their employees develop an **awareness** of the benefits that can flow from cultural diversity, and establish and maintain a **climate** of mutual trust. They also recognize that this welcoming and trusting climate helps them grow and derive strength from the knowledge, skills, and experience that different people bring to the organization.

2. Minority groups feel a part of and are **included** in the major decision-making processes of the organization. Their views and ideas are genuinely valued and seen to be important.

3. Different beliefs, stated views, actions, and reactions are fully **understood** and are naturally **tolerated** and accepted as part of the rich overall "tapestry" of human behavior.

4. Warmth, sincerity, and goodwill are extended to every individual and group without applying stereotypes, so that each person feels high levels of mutual **empathy.**

5. Groups and the organization as a whole permanently **adapt and change** when bias or prejudice toward people who are different from the majority begin to hold back the organization or the work of individual employees.

6. Individuals and the organization as a whole **persist** in their efforts to recognize diversity and cultural awareness shortfalls; **commit** to increasing overall knowledge; and seek to reap the long-term benefits from people's differences, rather than insist on similarity.

The Diversity and Cultural Awareness assessment details these steps as competencies in the sense that they are required attitudinal and behavioral changes if the organization is to harness all the skills and experiences of its members. The assessment uses these steps on the competency pyramid to give an individual the opportunity to rate their personal performance, as well as to assess the performance of the organization around them. Although this is a subjective judgment, the resultant gaps between individual scores, organization scores, and best-practice scores can be a rich basis for further follow-up and action. Each of the above steps is described in more detail on the following page.

The Diversity and Cultural Awareness Model: Competency Steps

Building the Diversity and Cultural Awareness Pyramid

1. Awareness and Climate

Any individual or organization that wants to bring about a greater appreciation of the prevailing levels of diversity (and derive direct benefits from it) needs to first build a strong foundation of awareness as a solid base of their "diversity pyramid." This foundation of awareness is created by trying to understand the different ways in which people or groups of people look, feel, believe, and act, and then becoming aware of the need to establish a climate of open, mutual trust. Diversity must be seen as a strength, not a weakness to be attacked.

2. Levels of Inclusion

Individuals and groups make many decisions on behalf of the organization each day. If the decision-making processes are controlled by only a few people or biased toward only one or two majority groups, the organization runs the risk of disenfranchising the groups in the minority, or of subordinating their interests and input. Inclusion requires that you not only give all individuals and groups an equal voice, but also that you make certain that every opinion is genuinely valued and considered worthy of equal consideration.

3. Levels of Tolerance and Understanding

Once awareness has been raised and people have been more equally included in organizational decision-making, there will be greater appreciation for the depth and breadth of people's diversity of beliefs, stated views, actions, and reactions. However, this does not necessarily lead to greater tolerance and/or understanding. Individuals and the organization as a whole need to reject intolerance of any kind and actively defend the right to offer a different view. More discussions need to be held concerning why people hold their particular views and perspectives.

4. Degree of Empathy

Empathy represents the highest level of understanding about another person's beliefs or viewpoint. It therefore reflects an individual's ability to put themselves in the shoes of another person and make a sincere and positive effort to appreciate their background or perspective—not judging or perceiving them according to stereotypes. Empathy is created by showing warm and genuine interest in the opinions of others and seeking to understand the unique underlying feelings and beliefs that might be influencing their words and/or actions.

5. Degree of Adaptation and Change

Most everyone can easily accommodate some level of cultural and general diversity in relation to our own perspective and even accept greater understanding of diversity on an occasional basis, but it is of little sustained value until cultural awareness fundamentally and permanently changes individuals and the organization as a whole. Such change is usually first reflected in policies, procedures, and principles, but must extend visibly to the day-to-day practices of every individual, so that these practices become the "normal" role models of behavior.

6. Persistence and Commitment

Every concerted effort to progress up through the diversity and cultural awareness competency pyramid does not necessarily lead to sustained success. Bias, prejudice, and discrimination will continue to prevail in less visible ways and occasionally undo much of the good work invested in changing attitudes. Individuals and organizations must maintain their commitment and persistence and no longer tolerate negative reactions from others about the new commitment. In addition, they must make active and ongoing cultural learning an indelible part of the workplace—it is through deeper education that we truly change ourselves.

Awareness and Climate

If you are serious about becoming more aware of the diversity of people around you and the wealth of cultural resources within your organization, you will understand the need to develop an open-minded attitude and an enthusiasm for the journey toward greater enlightenment, which is in itself valuable and worthwhile. This typically means that each individual will need to reflect on whether their prevailing attitudes are closed-minded or limited—and what can be done to change this. The goal is to do your part to create a climate that is welcoming and trusting of diversity of belief, opinion, and action.

When workers actively talk about diversity and focus their minds on the strengths and the benefits that it can bring, they heighten awareness in general and change the organizational climate. They must draw attention to fear, trepidation, bias, discrimination, and prejudice at every opportunity when views and beliefs and people are different than what is reflected by the "majority."

The organization needs to help every individual at this fundamental level to understand the consequences should negative reactions to cultural diversity persist. Formal training can be mandated to help such individuals understand the role of their own upbringing, background, and personality, and to appraise their own beliefs, values, and customs relative to those of others. Such training can also involve people in early debate about how culture arises from the so-called "norms" that are created by such factors as:

- Racial background
- Country of origin
- Religious belief
- Type of work
- Family values
- Age group, generation
- Gender issues

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open, accepting climate:

■ FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Make a concerted effort to spend more time reading about diversity and cultural issues so you increase your general knowledge about the subject.
2. Participate in discussions and meetings that focus on the prevailing culture and beliefs in the organization and the other cultures and beliefs that exist.
3. Involve yourself in diversity-awareness training, and actively participate in individual or group opportunities to learn more about your own culture and its characteristics.

■ FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Take the organization's "cultural temperature" by conducting opinion surveys.
2. Find specific and visible ways to demonstrate that senior managers are committed to greater diversity.
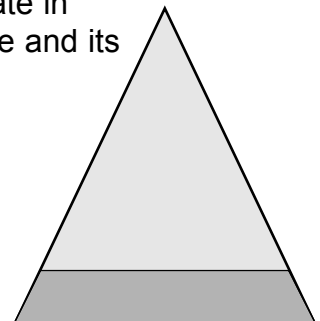
Levels of Inclusion

Once everyone in the organization has a heightened awareness of cultural diversity, the organization is ready to look at the extent to which people are afforded fair and free involvement and inclusion in the major decisions that are made by the enterprise, or the collective processes that cause action to be taken. This typically involves a rigorous appraisal of whether or not all recognizable groups and individuals are included in key discussions, meetings, or collaborations, and that their opinions are given equal weight and are truly valued.

Organizational decision-making usually takes place at many levels within a commercial enterprise, starting with the governing board or board of directors and the executive team, and extending to advisory groups, committees, task forces, and action teams. *All* of these groups should ideally represent as many people as they can across the enterprise—not reflect only one or two majority groups. Every decision-making team should reflect a balance of gender, religious or racial groups, age, and any other relevant common interests as much as this is possible.

Include a wide variety of people at all levels of organizational decision-making. It will help you avoid appearing to concentrate power in the hands of only a few. A balanced approach also provides representation of a wide range of interests in a direct way, and creates a greater sense of perceived fairness and honesty.

Be sure you avoid doing anything that smacks of tokenism. This structural inclusion policy should create useful role models for the various interest groups to emulate. In more informal circumstances, it can help you make sure that all decision-making is based on broad input and opinion in order to strengthen the decisions made and solicit wider support and commitment. It is especially important that you *ask* for this input before making the decisions.

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

■ FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Reflect on whether or not you think that power is mainly vested in the hands of a majority group, and why.
2. Review the potential limitations of beliefs or the extent to which some groups are being excluded from organizational decision-making.
3. Look at the people represented at the decision-making meetings you attend and ask why some groups are not represented directly.

■ FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Look for representation from as many groups as possible in major meetings or in committees that make policy decisions.
2. Encourage all meeting planners to invite participation from individuals who represent different organizational interests.
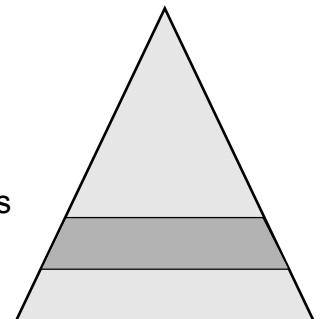
Levels of Tolerance and Understanding

An organization that makes sure a wider representation of views is factored into overall decision-making isn't out of the clear: Levels of tolerance toward diversity and understanding about cultural differences might not have changed and might even have deteriorated. This isn't unusual; power bases of individuals and groups with past vested interest are changing and people aren't sure how they are expected to act in the "new world."

Research has demonstrated that levels of tolerance are related to the extent to which people can accept and live with a high level of general ambiguity or uncertainty. In other words, the more individuals can quietly and calmly accept that they don't fully understand why someone thinks or acts or looks differently (and they remain open-minded), the more comfortable they will be with cultural diversity.

In general, intolerant individuals are more aggressive, cynical, and authoritarian in their attitudes. They want people to conform to pre-set mental models of behavior and appearance. Differences of any kind are threats to this ordered world of certainty, and they are likely to overtly and covertly resist such differences.

You can break down intolerance and reject it by exposing people (or yourself) to different attitudes and beliefs, and through continuing education. Organizations must encourage their people to offer different perspectives, be different, and not conform to pre-set norms that have perhaps successfully prevailed in the past. Their leaders must value and show that they value this free-flow of ideas and self-expression.

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

◼ FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Read articles and books on other cultures and on the subject of diversity.
2. Set up systems and procedures by which widespread input is invited as a matter of course before decisions are made.
3. Calmly and quietly accept situations that you do not fully understand, and take more time drawing conclusions or making judgments.

◼ FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Encourage individuals to accept uncertainty as a normal reaction in some circumstances, and coach people to seek more information before making final decisions.
2. Put people of different backgrounds and cultures together as teams to complete a short-term task or project together.
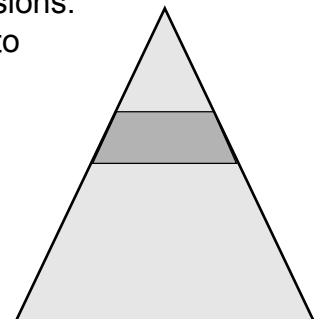
Degree of Empathy

Grudging or reluctant acceptance of workplace diversity that lacks true warmth and sincerity is not good enough, but it is a beginning. To move to the next level in the cultural awareness pyramid, individuals and the organization as a whole need to *demonstrate open and genuine sensitivity* to the needs of all kinds of "different" people, whatever their background, appearance, or beliefs. They need to find many ways to empathize with them.

One of the greatest barriers to genuine empathy toward people who are perceived to be "different" is social stereotyping. Stereotyping is the process of ascribing or assigning particular behavioral traits to individuals on the basis of their apparent connection to or membership in a group. The stereotype might or might not be accurate, but in any case, it acts as a mental "filter" through which judgments can be made.

Stereotypes are typically used as a shorthand way to conveniently categorize people or to "simplify" individual reactions or determine how "the world" operates in general. People use stereotypes to describe race, religion, country of origin, gender, education, weight, height, age, accent, and many other categories.

Stereotypes will continue to prevail as long as people can avoid close associations with different people and groups (or they are arbitrarily kept apart). Higher levels of personal familiarity help us appreciate unique perceptions and beliefs and point out the limitations of stereotypical thinking. By increasing involvement and proximity, an individual's unique identity is highlighted and similarities (rather than differences) of reaction and feeling are consequently more recognizable and accepted.

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

■ FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

1. Eat lunch with at least one person of "difference" each week or month and find out how they feel about their involvement in the decision-making process.
2. Offer to directly help minority groups in the general community.
3. Think about the accuracy of your own mental stereotypes concerning people around you who come from different backgrounds or cultures.

■ FOR THE ORGANIZATION

1. Become more vigilant about changing existing stereotypes that limit or restrict us from healthy interaction and communication. Discuss this with friends or colleagues.
2. Find ways and means to publicly reward and recognize behaviors and actions that are positive and helpful to the effort to become a more open-minded and diverse workplace.
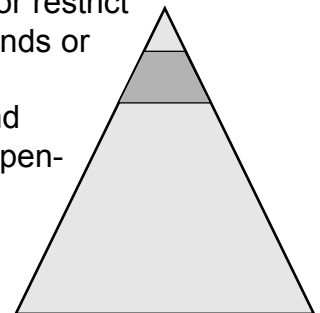
Degree of Adaptation and Change

You will have to approach the idea of cultural diversity informally at first. A relatively slow and patient build-up of awareness allows the organization to come to terms with shifts in attitudes concerning the involvement of groups that previously had little or no involvement in so-called "mainstream" enterprise processes. However, at an appropriate point, leaders need to signal the organization's formal commitment to supporting diversity at every level and to bringing about structural adaptation and change to past practices.

The tools available to an organization to formerly change or to adapt on a permanent basis typically involve written policies, procedures, standards, and rules that will govern how people are expected to work together to achieve appropriate and acceptable results to the level or standards of performance required. These tools can be used for a range of processes and systems, including:

- The way that people are hired
- Objective-setting and appraisal
- Promotion and career development
- Communication processes
- Rewards and recognition
- Training and development

Policies and procedures can be amended or entirely rewritten to promote and support greater acceptance of cultural diversity (and tolerance of difference) as a primary organizational requirement, and one that will be rewarded in a variety of ways. However, it should be recognized that changes in policy are unlikely to be enough to ensure long-term adaptation and change. Everyone has to commit to implementing any policy so that changes take place in ways that are practical, meaningful, and visible for all to see. If this is also supported by visible behavior on the part of managers, their actions will serve as powerful and positive models for others to emulate.

Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

■ **FOR THE INDIVIDUAL**

1. Form or serve on a committee that reviews policies designed to help promote greater diversity.
2. Volunteer to work with groups or cultures unfamiliar to you.
3. Start to learn a new language.

■ **FOR THE ORGANIZATION**

1. Review all the major policies and procedures of the organization to help encourage greater cultural diversity and awareness.
2. Make a point of publicizing one major policy change and the actions that you intend to take immediately as a result. Follow through and follow up.
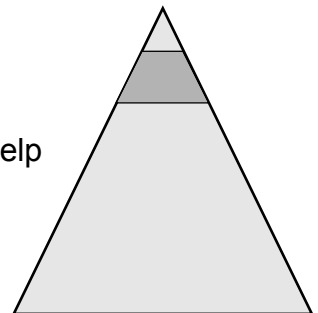
Persistence and Commitment

Successful organizations get that way and stay that way because of enduring conviction and commitment. **A widespread cultural change of any sort takes considerable time, energy, and commitment. It makes enormous demands on the organization to achieve a permanent and sustainable level of success. However, it can lead to some difficult conflicts and negative impacts that will undermine the overall goal to establish cultural diversity as a valuable organizational strength. In such situations, the organization needs to maintain the courage of its convictions and persist in its objectives, despite opposition or discomfort.**

The ultimate success of any effort to bring about widespread acceptance of diversity requires that you adopt two long-term planning strategies: One, **focus on a model or a methodology for resolving conflict positively at all levels**—perhaps widespread training and individual coaching, but more importantly, communicating a commitment to integrative or "win/win" resolutions, rather than "win/lose" encounters that can create ill will and resentment.

Secondly, **attack subtle or obvious bias, prejudice, and discrimination** that might have been driven "underground" because individuals see that it is now more openly difficult to resist diversity. **The organization must develop a much more "assertive" intolerance toward people and groups** that continue to demonstrate negative reactions: **Apply more serious sanctions than were used in the past. Selectively remove such individuals** from positions of authority and influence (and possibly from the enterprise as a whole).

In the final analysis, organizations cannot afford to be complacent if they want to create a comfortably diverse culture. They must continue to commit to educating people and advocate the benefits of the goal in relentless fashion.
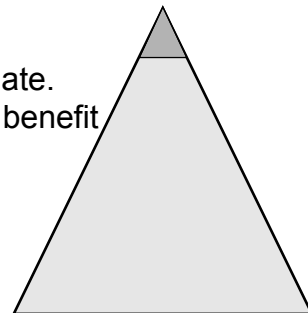
Specific actions to increase awareness of cultural differences and create a more open climate:

■ **FOR THE INDIVIDUAL**

1. Regularly raise diversity and cultural awareness as a topic of discussion in meetings and forums.
2. Test all major decisions made by you or the organization to ensure that they are not discriminatory in any way.
3. Work harder at finding win/win solutions that benefit as many people with differing interests as you can.

■ **FOR THE ORGANIZATION**

1. Invoke sanctions on individuals and groups that continue to discriminate.
2. Offer conflict resolution training and coaching to all those who would benefit from it.

Action Notes

Now that you have plotted your score and read the associated category descriptions, use the page below to make a number of action notes for yourself or the wider organization. Ideally you should look to focus on areas where the scores are weakest. In a group situation, small teams might like to each underline or highlight key points in a different competency area description and to brainstorm what can be done to improve performance.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Warner is a professional manager with over 20 years' experience working with multinational companies in the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, and Australia. He has been the senior staff member in human resources departments, and has held several professional leadership positions with responsibility for large groups of employees. Jon has in recent years been involved in wide-ranging organizational consultancy work and the pursuit of best-practices leadership for such major organizations as Mobil Oil, Quantas, United Energy, Dow Corning, Coca Cola, Barclays Bank, National Bank, Honda, BTR, Gas and Fuel, Air Products and Chemicals, and Caltex.

Jon is managing director of Team Publications PTY Limited, an international training and publishing company committed to bringing practical and fun-to-use learning material to the worldwide training market, such as the One Page Coach® storyboard-based integrated training packages. He holds a master's degree in Business Administration and a Ph.D. in organizational change and learning, and lives and works on Australia's Gold Coast.

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