



605 Managing Diversity for All Employees

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Bill Proudman is a founding principal in White Men as Full Diversity Partners. Mr. Proudman pioneered a white male only diversity workshop in response to seeing white male leaders and executives continually leave diversity change efforts solely to women and people of color. This dynamic and provocative work is unparalleled within the United States. Mr. Proudman is a highly sought after consultant assisting companies and organizations with creating new paradigms of diversity partnerships that include white men.

Mr. Proudman is the author of the White Men and Diversity series that has been published in Diversity & the Bar throughout 2005.

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Veta T. Richardson is the executive director of the Minority Corporate Counsel Association (MCCA) in Washington, DC. Ms. Richardson also serves as the director of publications for MCCA's magazine, Diversity & the Bar, which is published bimonthly and distributed to a circulation base of more than 35,000 attorneys world wide as a supplement to Corporate Counsel magazine. MCCA's mission is to advocate for the expanded hiring, promotion, and retention of minority attorneys by corporate law departments and the law firms that serve them. Since its founding, MCCA has emerged as a knowledge leader on diversity issues and its expanded platform addresses diversity management issues involving women, physically challenged, and gay and lesbian lawyers, in addition to lawyers of color (which remains its primary focus). The MCCA board of directors includes many of the legal profession's most respected and widely sought thought leaders on diversity matters.

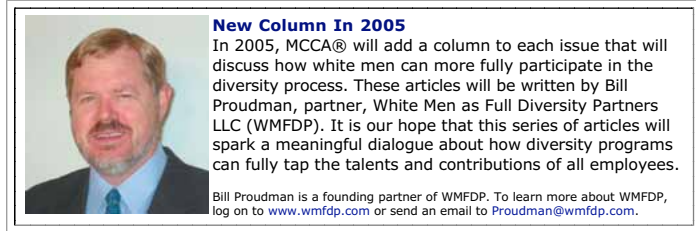
Prior to joining MCCA, Ms. Richardson was vice president and deputy general counsel of ACC, formerly the American Corporate Counsel Association (ACCA). As a member of ACCA's senior management team, she was responsible for the development of its education and legal resources functions. This entailed planning ACCA's continuing legal education programs, serving as primary staff liaison to ACCA's national committees, and managing the legal resources group, which responded to members' information requests. Before joining nonprofit/bar association management, Ms. Richardson was in-house counsel to Sunoco, Inc. in Philadelphia.

Ms. Richardson received a B.S. from the University of Maryland at College Park. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland School of Law.



White Men and Diversity: An Oxymoron?

By Bill Proudman



TO: Bill Proudman
FROM: John Doe
SUBJ: Diversity

I am wondering what this is about? Is it more of a source of telling white men what they are doing wrong with respects [sic] to inclusion? I am a white male that hasn't had the best time as far as being "privileged" as per advertised for white males. So I am confused on this topic or goal. Is this another vehicle to show me how I am bad for being born white? I know that inclusion and diversity is something that should be [sic]. So if you could answer my questions I would surely appreciate it, thanks.

TO: Bill Proudman
FROM: Bob Smith
SUBJ: Golden Rule

I am one white male that treats everyone as they treat me. Golden rule, plain and simple. I treat everyone as a human being rather than dividing them into groups based on something other than their actions. I accept others' differences as long as they are courteous and kind. It matters not to me what race someone is, when I am confronted. What do matter [sic] are their actions toward me. I am a little tired of the "over sensitivity" I see and hear about. Let's face it, white males are on the bottom rung. We haven't changed our society, only reversed it.

Many white men have become angry, confused, or indifferent by diversity efforts in corporate America. The words above, from two emails I recently received, represent the views of many white men who, for differing reasons, have learned to view diversity as not about them or other white men. In many firms and companies today, the terms "diversity" and "white men" are often practiced as an oxymoron, offering something for everyone but white men.

This approach can create tension, misunderstanding, and backlash that can result in resentment, ineffective work partnerships, and an environment where diversity is disparaged, rather than celebrated. It also belies the main point of any diversity program, which is to recognize and respect the differences that each individual brings to the table. An effective diversity program that celebrates what every individual has to offer must, by design, include white men for the unique perspectives that they offer.

Fully understanding and valuing diversity in its varied dimensions can be complex and confusing. The intent of this article is not to be the defining voice in where we should go. Its purpose is to deepen the reader's curiosity to engage others in meaningful dialogue about how diversity can best build effective work partnerships that include white men.

The Role of Dominance

In current diversity programs, the role of white men often goes unexamined. When the subject is race, what usually comes up are the experiences of people of color. When the issue of gender enters the picture, often the experiences of women are examined. Programs on sexual orientation almost always focus on what it means to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. One unintentional result of this standard framing is that the diversity dimensions of heterosexual, white, and male go unexamined. This dynamic has several strong implications for people and organizations:

- Heterosexual white men don't think diversity is about them. Diversity is about "those people and their issues." The result is that many organizations struggle to engage white men in organizational diversity efforts.
- White men don't identify their self-interest in diversity. What do they have to gain? They often think diversity work is about white men losing and others winning (like the opening emails). They develop a negative attitude about diversity and remain suspicious of diversity initiatives.
- Since there is often no examination of what it means to be heterosexual, white, and male, there is relatively little insight into how *their* experience is different from that of women, people of color, and other groups. At the same time, white men often fear that they will be blamed for any problems that others have in succeeding at work. The result is often a resistance to hear, understand, or validate the experiences of others who are different, which leads women and people of color to feel misunderstood or invalidated.

What Results When White Men are Disengaged

These factors lead to the absence of white men from the difficult and complex efforts to create and sustain inclusive work

cultures. Sadly, this lack of participation leads to the creation of harmful stereotypes, such as:

- White men aren't diverse. They think, act, learn, and contribute in the same way.
- White men don't know anything about diversity. They often become totally dependent on white women and people of color for any diversity insight or learning.
- White men can't effectively lead or contribute to the organization's ongoing diversity efforts. This attitude results in many white men being less vocal or visible proponents of diversity change efforts.

These assumptions, if unquestioned, can make ongoing diversity efforts much harder than necessary. Similarly, focusing on every group other than white men can lead to a number of unintended consequences, ranging from tokenism to backlash. White women and people of color can feel that they are getting promoted based only on their gender or skin color, or fear that their colleagues may suspect as much. They often feel they have to work twice as hard to be seen as competent. This expenditure of energy takes away from both the individual and the organization's ability to enhance effectiveness.

White men can feel excluded from the process altogether, which contributes to their resistance and skepticism of ongoing diversity efforts. They may fear being labeled as "the problem," or as someone who "just doesn't get it," due to a careless phrase or action. The result is a paralysis on the issue of diversity, and fear toward contributing in any way.

Many leaders further collude in this dynamic by looking solely to white women, men and women of color, or openly gay and lesbian employees to disproportionately serve on the firm's diversity committee. How many corporate law departments or law firms have white men as chief diversity officers or as chair of a diversity committee? In our 10 years of diversity work in the U.S., we know of only a few instances where the chair of a diversity committee was a heterosexual white guy. We know of even fewer instances where a company's chief diversity officer is a white male.

Relying on women and minorities to continually educate white men is exhausting and contributes to a culture of blame and unequal responsibility for successful diversity programs. Paradoxically, it also can negatively impact the female or person of color diversity chair, because he/she is almost always suspected of being self-serving or self-seeking in their advocacy of diversity.

The net result: Everyone suffers, and so does the business. Understanding and utilizing diversity is about consciously creating a work culture that brings out the best in everyone. Lasting change to an organization's culture will not happen until leadership shows that embracing diversity and inclusiveness is everyone's business, and not just the responsibility of diversity committee members. Long-term sustained change in workplace behavior and inclusion practices will not take place without white men fully engaged alongside women and people of color. All must be equitable players in this endeavor.

Moving from Either/Or Thinking to And/Both

Many companies espouse that diversity includes everyone and all the ways people differ. Yet, diversity is often practiced by focusing on everyone who isn't a white man. When diversity becomes only about hiring or promoting women and nonwhite males, it contributes to an either/or approach that can unintentionally place various segments of the workforce against each other. Viewing diversity as an either/or proposition contributes to some feeling they are losing if others are gaining. Diversity must be viewed as an "and/both" proposition-ensuring that valuing one perspective does not invalidate a different one. Leaders must learn to tolerate ambiguity better and know that diversity efforts will spur emotion.

Examine the Impact of White Male Culture

White men in the United States work in organizational cultures that have been created by other white men. Therefore, the prevailing business culture looks "normal"-it's the way business has always been done.

When the topic of white male culture is raised, people can easily misinterpret the conversation as white male bashing or an assault on the dominant culture. As a result, the white male culture never gets examined and remains largely undistinguished from the culture at large.

The challenge with white male culture is not the individual qualities of the culture, but the fact that some assimilate far more easily into the culture than others. White women, people of color, and openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals often have to be bi-cultural. They must learn to consciously be seen as competent in the white male heterosexual culture. What complicates the issues is that often times, white heterosexual men are not even aware that such assimilation is part of their colleagues' everyday work experience. This "not knowing" can create difficulties, strained work relationships, and charges of "He just doesn't get it."

White men never have to leave their culture; thus they are often unaware of the systemic advantages they receive-from being white and/or male-and how this impacts their partnerships at work with white women, people of color, and other white men. Systemic advantages are often the unspoken and invisible benefits that are received by a person because of their group membership (being white, male, heterosexual, and so forth). These advantages are made to look normal and available to any person who desires them. Systemic advantage is not so much what a person has, but it's more what a person doesn't have to think about on a daily basis. However, receiving systemic advantage does not entirely prevent white men from being the recipients of mistreatment and discrimination.

Diversity is Also About White Men

In a world that is increasingly polarized and politically correct, it is critical that white men focus with other white men on their willingness to engage each other and others to create new and equitable organizational cultures that bring out the best in everyone. Their partnership journeys with women and people of color depend on their ongoing work to understand themselves and talk with other white men.

As white men realize that diversity is also about them, they gain more permission to be themselves. White men often times have the most to gain from an increasingly inclusive work culture, because they sometimes suffer the biggest repercussions if they deviate from that culture. Yet, it is often challenging for white men to identify how diversity benefits them personally.

The meaningful engagement of white men is not a short-term project. It is an ongoing and complex task that involves tenacity, courage, and a willingness to discuss what rarely ever gets discussed. It also is not about "fixing" white men. Additionally, women and people of color have their share of the work to do to reexamine their partnerships with white men at work.

Initial Steps to Re-engage White Men

Here are a few key steps:

1. Ensure your diversity and inclusion efforts are defined and communicated to invite white men to be a part of the dialogue and the effort.
2. Don't allow white men to be used as the scapegoat for racial or gender inequity, or any other diversity dilemma. It's important to stop blaming this group for all inequities in the workplace. White men are not "broken" and don't need to be "fixed."
3. Expect white men to be capable and willing diversity partners. Ask them to rise to the occasion to become more visible

4. champions and supporters of diversity efforts. Don't do the work for them. Get white men to take on more direct diversity leadership positions to model that the diversity effort must not be left solely to white women and people of color. Examples include chairing diversity councils, bringing up diversity issues that impact business meetings and relationships, or hiring a heterosexual, white male for a diversity function-including the chief diversity officer position.
5. Get white women and people of color to more closely examine any negative reactions or questioning of motives directed to white men who take on more direct involvement. Help them focus on why they are reacting this way, rather than curtailing white men's leadership efforts toward diversity.
6. Have key senior white men publicly demonstrate their understanding of diversity.
7. Don't focus only on white men. While men have additional learning to do, white women, and women and men of color, also have work to do, such as examining how their learned assumptions about white males impact their partnerships with them at work.

Regardless of the progress, keep at it. It is important to know that the work is never complete. You'll have to become comfortable with the inexactness and messiness that issues of diversity can raise in the workplace. Therefore, it is important to know your goal. It may help to view discomfort and turbulence as your friend. The journey can be a wonderful ride full of new insight, resulting in sustained relationships and strengthened business results.

White Men as Full Diversity Partners

White Men as Full Diversity Partners LLC (WMFDP) is a culture-change consulting firm that is committed to shifting the way diversity is practiced by fully engaging white men as integral partners. WMFDP team with their clients, over the long term, to inspire organizational leadership to make a commitment to diversity and to operate with courage in helping their organizations experience difference as a vital asset.

The company assists by maximizing an organization's human resources and by helping individuals thrive in the presence of the turbulence and confusion that often accompanies diversity topics.

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White Men and Diversity

Examining and Understanding American White Male Culture

From the British Isles Through the American Prairie to the Boardroom: The Roots of the White Male Culture

By Bill Proudman

New Column In 2005

This is the second of six articles that will discuss how white men can more fully participate in the diversity process. These articles are written by Bill Proudman, partner, White Men as Full Diversity Partners LLC (WMFDP). It is our hope that this series of articles will spark a meaningful dialogue about how diversity programs can fully tap the talents and contributions of all employees.

To learn more about WMFDP, log on to www.wmfdp.com or send an email to Proudman@wmfdp.com. The views expressed herein are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of MCCA®.



For corporations and firms committed to a diverse workforce, recognizing and celebrating multiculturalism is a common theme. Both corporate and popular culture strive to recognize the ethnic roots of many international customs. A meaningful examination of culture in the United States can be both complex and difficult. The United States has long been thought of as a melting pot of cultures with people immigrating here from all over the globe. Many cultures have and continue to influence the "American way."

But there's one culture that's so pervasive, it's often invisible, even to those who rarely if ever have to leave it: the "white male culture." Like fish unaware of water, most white men respond, "What culture?" when the topic is raised. But just as Asian's respect for elders can be traced to their reverence of their ancestors, white male culture (which is the dominant culture at the foundation of most U.S. based organizations) can be traced to the environmental influences of European white men struggling to leave the British Isles and survive in the Colonies. This historical "can do" individualism pervades the American workforce to such an extent that its roots are imperceptible, and some of its fiercest defenders can be non white men who see it as "the way things get done."

The intent of this article is to shine light on the white male culture, which is the dominant culture in the United States as well as the prevailing culture of most U.S. based organizations. Because the norm is almost never examined, this article looks at various aspects that make up white male culture in America. The next article will address the impact that this culture has on white women, people of color, and other white men. But before we examine the impact, let's look at what makes up the white male culture.

The "norm" goes largely unexamined in most systems. What often gets examined and re examined are the exceptions to the norm. An examination of white male culture can be awkward and difficult because the culture is rarely called anything other than "American culture" or "the ways things are."

One of the characteristics of white male culture is a low tolerance for ambiguity. One of the by products of this low tolerance is often to view issues from a place of either/or rather than and/both. When culture in the United States is examined from a place of either/or and the focus is white male culture, it is easy to interpret this examination as a diminishing of other cultures and its influence on shaping corporate culture or as a bashing of white men. The intent of this article is neither of the above. Instead, I invite a thoughtful examination of the parts of white male culture that largely go unexamined.

Despite its pervasiveness, it's important to examine the roots and characteristics of white male culture, not only for white men but also for those who work with them. This closer examination can help to deepen awareness and understanding, leading to a heightened effectiveness when partnering across differences at work, more productive work relationships, and stronger business results. This examination does require the acceptance of a few ground rules. First, this is not an attempt to better understand individual white men; no one person defines a culture, and no broad cultural description can define an individual. Second, the characteristics of a culture are neither good nor bad. Cultural norms are the unspoken ways to which all people generally are expected to conform. Third, it is generally accepted that a person's aptitude and ease in navigating organizational culture are contributing factors to advancement and satisfaction.

White Men as Both Individuals and Members of a Social Identity Group

American white men don't typically view themselves as members of the white male group or any group, but as unique individuals. Culture is something other people have. The notion of being part of a white male social identity group is a strange

new proposition—one that their fierce attachment to individual identity makes hard to swallow. Furthermore, many white men fear that a closer look is for the purpose of assigning criticism or blame.

Yet as long as white men don't accept their membership in the group, they will often be unable to see how traits of white male culture affect white women, and men and women of color, as well as themselves. These traits have become virtually interchangeable with corporate America, making white women and men and women of color subject to the same definitions of success and self worth that define life for white men whether or not they agree or choose to accept those definitions.

As you examine the following characteristics that define white male culture, feel free to accept or challenge any of them. Your consideration of the issue will help to frame your understanding and curiosity of the impact of the dominant culture (what we will call white male culture) on organizations and people in the United States. This understanding can be key in creating workplace cultures of inclusion.

Roots in the British Isles

An understanding of current American white male culture starts in the British Isles. While not all white males are English, much of northern European culture, particularly in its influence on the United States, can be traced here.

English history shows how today's white men (and others, through assimilation) have been battle tested through the centuries. Early existence in England consisted of fighting nature and invasions. A cold, wet climate, poor soil, and disease made scarcity the daily reality. Constant wars with invaders fostered distrust of outsiders. These experiences led to feudal classism, where hero leaders were responsible for safeguarding their people.

Because there was little wealth to pass on, inheritance went to the eldest son only. Younger sons were forced to go into the world to make something of themselves, creating the seeds for the tenure system, the development of business, and the brotherhood of the military. These conditions led the English to spread out to the rest of the world. There, innovation helped them survive. Still, constant fear of invasion had stamped the English worldview, and the result can still be seen today.

Key White Male Culture Characteristics

Studying the relationship between white male culture and the history of the British Isles can help American white men see which traits that ensured their ancestors' survival live on in them today, such as:

- Survivor mentality that focuses on the future;
- Tendency to rugged individualism;
- Can do attitude;
- Operating from principles and conscience;
- Focusing on hard work, action, and task completion;
- Striving toward success and materialism;
- Measured moderation and silent strength; and
- Focus on status and rank over connection.

Survivors with a Focus on the Future

Many ancestors of today's American white men crossed the Atlantic because their prospects were so bleak that forging out to unknown America was more promising. Some were fleeing religious or class persecution; others simply couldn't scratch a living from the landscape.

Persecution distanced many settlers from their family roots by prompting them to change their surnames and create new identities. By doing so, white male pioneers created a culture in which each was judged by his own abilities, not by his class (as long as he was white and male), and only the strong survived.

Puritan and Calvinist ancestors cultivated a work ethic in which activity bears a near moral virtue. Many white males find their identity in the projects they are building?"

This survivor mentality persists in a fixation with rigid either/or thinking. White male culture defines engagements through opposition and ultimatum and values winners above all. As their ancestors fled from persecution, today's white male culture often divides people into groups of "us" vs. "them," resulting in the mindset of: "You're either with us or against us."

A Tendency to Rugged Individualism

Pioneer survival carries forward to the culture's heavy focus on individual achievement. No matter how successful one's family, a white man is expected to make something of himself on his own, to "stand on his own two feet." (Today, because the culture is so pervasive, young people of both sexes hear this message.) Men who utilize a family name for success are scorned, and none are more celebrated than those who "pulled themselves up by their bootstraps," going from poverty to financial and personal success.

Individuality was a value sacred to the new America; it birthed the Bill of Rights and the separation of church and state. American innovation and entrepreneurship were largely born from these protections for the individual over the institution.

This individualism keeps many white men from discovering the value of ancestral ties that others (especially non whites) hold central to their identity. Not acknowledging their own culture, and differences in general, leads many white men to disregard skin color and gender. Their attitude is to "Just treat everyone the same." All too often, this means others should, in fact, act the same—the same as the dominant white male culture.

A Can Do Attitude

White male culture is a can-do culture. Trace it to the constant battles of English forerunners against Mother Nature. It's also linked to the way victors are supposed to contain their glee when they succeed. Keeping cool after good outcomes plays to the

notion that success is an expected by product of the can do attitude, while gloating may suggest it was uncertain.

Today, these can-do roots reach into other realms, such as affirmative action—an engineered fix to a problem with deep, complex causes. Can-do helps create an "act first, think later" tendency, which has led to spectacular results and tragic missteps. The culture believes so deeply that anything is possible for those who just try hard enough, that it is hard pressed to deal with people who don't succeed in this paradigm.

White men have been conditioned to think of themselves as quiet, hardworking doers who forgo the spotlight. And organizational cultures mirror this need?"

Operating from Principles and Conscience

The white male culture is deeply rooted in the notion of acting from principle and conscience. It is considered worthy to take a stand based on a set of personally cherished principles, as evidenced by the nation's robust protections of free speech, open expression, and the right to bear arms. Legends and pop culture celebrate stories of the individual speaking out, against overwhelming odds, to make a difference in the larger society. According to this creed, the white man acts alone, as necessary, to speak his truth.

Focusing on Hard Work, Action, and Task Completion

Puritan and Calvinist ancestors cultivated a work ethic in which activity bears a near moral virtue. Many white males find their identity in the projects they are building, rather than in their relationships or their essential sense of being.

Today's organizations manifest the same priority by not permitting workers time to relax or reflect. The push to stay competitive against other companies working equally hard keeps business moving ever faster. And under free market capitalism, the carrot is the material reward in the here-and-now. That lure is powerful enough to keep employees at their desks for long hours, eager to attain the success spelled by a luxury car or a bigger house.

Striving for Success and Materialism

America is obsessed with the new—whatever the product or purpose. This hunger for the bigger and better has contributed to (among other signs of national ill health) the massive amount of U.S. credit card debt.

In the book *The Stuff Americans Are Made Of* by Joshua Hammond, the author paints this driving force in the following terms: "Our freedom of choice allows us to tackle an 'impossible' dream that is bigger than anything we've done before; we want to achieve it now but fail in our initial attempts; we try again and through some form of improvisation succeed, only to wonder what's new so that we can start all over and make another choice."

Measured Moderation and Silent Strength

Probably more than anything else, the white male cultural trait of emotional moderation and restraint continues to define the group. *White Men Can't Jump*, the title of a popular film, could easily be extended to cover singing, dancing, laughing, and any kind of emoting. What can white men do? Work hard, keep a stiff upper lip, and don't complain.

White men have been conditioned to think of themselves as quiet, hardworking doers who forgo the spotlight. And organizational cultures mirror this need to be rationally purposeful, hardworking contributors who make things happen. This atmosphere of measured restraint has infected not just white men, but all people seeking to thrive in corporate America.

Focus on Status and Rank Over Connection

Success in white male terms is often linked to evaluating one's place in the hierarchy. Power and success is derived from a person's organizational status and positional rank. The higher that individual's position, the more status the person has.

Corporate culture in the United States is heavily influenced and affected by status and rank. Thus, the natural consequence is to have those who don't fit the "in-group" norm ("unequal" white men, people of color, gays/lesbians, women, non Christians, and so forth) placed in a lesser position. Despite all good interactions, it's impossible to deny that this unchecked dynamic is still embedded within individual interactions in the workplace. Often its subtle effect is devastating to those on the receiving end.

Issues like dress, educational background, manner of expression, and even where a person sits in a meeting are used to various degrees to determine if a person is "management material," and to establish if a person fits the organization's way or culture upon making hiring decisions. For example, are white men ever judged as a result of sitting together in a meeting? This examination itself is not bad; however, what is problematic is that often times the success indicators are limited only to the attributes that define white male culture. Many performance measurement systems are slightly modified vestiges of the characteristics of white male culture.

Status and rank has also been systemically ingrained in many corporate structures and practices. Systems are set in place that routinely deny advancement opportunities to individuals and groups who don't automatically fit the norm, which leads to a rash of class action lawsuits related to gender, race, and other forms of discrimination.

On a person-to person-basis, this focus on status and rank lessens the quality and depth of relationships. Being "one up" takes on more importance than whether an interaction draws people closer together. The upside is that roles tend to be clear and work flows through the chain of command. The downside is that often qualities such as collaboration, intuition, and empathy are devalued and/or belittled.

A Lifelong Discovery

None of the traits described here are automatically negative. But collectively, they create a thick web of what's expected of white males and, by association, of everyone else. The result is that all people are measured against a white male standard of organizational worth and contribution.

Identifying these standards is not an effort to sanction or proscribe individual behavior. Rather, it is an attempt to understand the origins of corporate expectations for success and dedication in order to create environments where everyone is allowed to more fully explore unique characteristics and contribute in meaningful ways.

This change is not a one time alteration, but a lifelong process of discovery. And it's important to tease out the self interest inherent in this investigation. What might our world look like if we spent less time conforming to the mostly invisible behavioral norms of white male culture? What would it be like if we could express all parts of ourselves?

As we forge new ways of being and working together, I believe it will be extremely valuable to individuals, organizations, communities, and the world to find out.

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White Men and Diversity

What White Men Often Don't Get and What White Women and People of Color Often Don't Understand

By Bill Proudman

This is the third of six articles that will discuss how white men can more fully participate in the diversity process. These articles are written by Bill Proudman, partner, White Men as Full Diversity Partners LLC (WMFDP). It is our hope that this series of articles will spark a meaningful dialogue about how diversity programs can fully tap the talents and contributions of all employees.



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Over the last 10 years, White Men As Full Diversity Partners (WMFDP) has talked with hundreds of business leaders who value, yet struggle to create, partnerships that span differences in the workplace.

For "Linda," a white female leader at a large corporation, feelings of not fitting in at work create fatigue and weariness.

"In isolation, each story can seem insignificant; however, the significance grows with the repetition. The stories don't happen occasionally. They happen every day. They accumulate in a cluttered corner of my mind where I sweep them into the pile labeled 'repress or contemplate.' It is the growth of that pile over the years that has begun to wear me down. It begins to make me accept things I don't want to accept because it isn't worth it to react. Repetition brings doubt. It begins to make me believe things about myself or white women as a group that I know are not true. It makes me question myself and gradually erodes my self-esteem," Linda shared.

Imagine how much time and energy are diverted into examining even the most innocent of interactions—wondering if ideas are heard and realities validated. On the other hand, white men often feel singled out or personally attacked. After participating in WMFDP's white men's caucus learning lab, "Mike's" reaction epitomized some of the fear and frustration that many white men experience. They are unsure of what to do to effectively partner across differences.

"I came into this learning lab with a high level of resistance toward the way diversity has worked in our company in recent years," Mike admitted. "It seems like I and many other white men are just frozen; you are damned if you do and damned if you don't. You make a comment to somebody and your hand gets slapped. You don't make a comment and your hand gets slapped. I now have a different view of my role in diversity. What I have learned is not to fix it for someone else. It's more about understanding other's reality. Maybe talk about it, maybe not, depending on where they are. I realize that I have some issues too that I need to work through."

For Mike and many other white men, feeling frozen or paralyzed is a common experience. White male leaders have less and less leeway to speak truthfully about what they know and don't know about diversity issues at work. The fear of disciplinary action and class-action lawsuits has made inquiry and curiosity endangered acts in the workplace. The result is reduced dialogue and diminished partnerships that negatively impact business results. Some examples:

- A male executive who is reluctant to meet with or travel alone with a female colleague on a business trip;
- A white manager who withholds important, critical feedback from a person of color during a performance review for fear of being labeled a racist; or
- A black woman who doesn't inform her white manager about her child-care problems, assuming he won't understand or care.

White Male Culture and Impact in the Workplace

At the center of this dilemma is the impact that the prevailing dominant culture, which can be labeled "white male culture," has on all employees' interactions and contributions. This is the business culture of most organizations in the United States. As indicated in earlier columns, white male culture is not bad. It does not need to be fixed or replaced. It is mostly invisible to white men, who rarely have to leave it. These same men are unaware that white women and people of color must continually accommodate, assimilate, and negotiate to fit into this culture in order to have their contributions acknowledged and valued.

It is easy to assume that only white women and people of color are impacted by white male culture, when in reality it creates challenges for everyone in the workplace. For example, when any employee feels undervalued or misunderstood, that individual expends more energy than is necessary to simply get through the day, week, or month. Employees forced to do this will

eventually leave, and the organization must recruit their replacements, costing time and money. Those who remain adopt coping behaviors, such as keeping a lower profile or doing just enough to get by.

Recognizing these issues may stimulate deeper dialogue in organizations to create more inclusive workplace cultures. WMFDP has routinely asked leaders and managers to address the impact of U.S. white male culture at work on white men, white women, and people of color. Repetitive themes were voiced—some universal to all three groups, some shared only by white women and people of color, and some unique to each group. The most common impact voiced by all groups was feeling isolated and lonely. The overbearing and pervasive presence of white male culture pressured individuals to not be themselves—even white men, who have been conditioned and rewarded to "be strong and silent, don't ask for help," or "don't burden others with your shortcomings or struggles," and "just suck it up and get it done." Members in all groups reported that this isolation and loneliness kept them from fitting into the work culture.

Impacts on White Women and People of Color

Being Asked/Expected to Act Like White Men

Many white women and people of color are routinely affected by the paradox of sameness and difference. They are expected to act like white men, but when they do, they are penalized for it. According to "Sharon," a white female business leader who participated in a WMFDP learning lab, "My efforts to be directive, assertive, are almost always judged by white male standards. It is a double-edged sword, because when I act like successful white male leaders, I am described as aggressive or worse. I can't win. As a leader, the image I am expected to emulate is one of a male leader: Don't be indecisive, don't be too emotional, tell people the direction (don't solicit direction), don't hesitate, and don't let them see you sweat. It is not me."

When people say they treat all people the same, they expect all people to act the same. Those who don't are judged accordingly. The message heard on the receiving end is: "Act like me, talk like me, and contribute like me" or "Be a white male, or at least act like one."

If you are a white woman, person of color, gay, lesbian, or differently abled, being treated the same usually means you must continue to hide, modify, or change your behaviors to fit the current and dominant culture.

Being Bi-Cultural in Order to Fit in

Many white women and people of color talk about having to be bi-cultural at work, since they are expected to conform to white-male norms. African American men talk about going home and becoming black again. Many African American men feel ostracized and are even fearful of being labeled as acting "black" at work. Subsequently, the message to individuals is to not be themselves at work. The cost is enormous—to say the least.

Similarly, white women must also be bi-cultural. Although they usually have closer relationships with white men who are their partners, sons, and brothers, they routinely experience being judged according to white male leadership standards in the workplace as it pertains to their rationality, assertiveness, and directness.

"Whether I want to or not, and whether I know anything about diversity or not, I am often designated as the diversity committee representative, teacher to all on not just race but on all types of diversity issues."

"Julie," a senior IT manager with 25 years of experience in a global energy company, conveyed, "Even though my brain is normally wired to be analytical, I also possess a most reliable sense of intuition, often thought of as a more feminine characteristic. My intuition rarely fails me in making good decisions so I trust it. After many years of marriage, my husband learned to trust it also. Male colleagues do not. Someday I hope my daughter's colleagues not only understand and trust her intuitive abilities, but also seek them out."

Feeling Like I Must Be Overly Prepared, Over Competent

White women and people of color often talk about the pressure they feel to continually prove themselves in order to respond to the unspoken thought that, "You only got this job because you were X." "Barbara," a white female senior vice president at a large hospital system who participated in a WMFDP class, shared, "I go out of my way to make sure I am overly prepared. I feel like I have little-to-no margin for error. I often feel I must be twice as good to be seen as half as capable as many of my white male colleagues." This pressure to prove beyond a measure of doubt that they are capable, competent, and prepared takes an enormous toll.

Motives Being Continually Questioned

When white women or people of color raise concerns about diversity issues, their motives are often questioned as self-interest in disguise. In addition, they can be labeled as overly sensitive, humorless, militant, or the diversity/political correctness cop.

Furthermore, companies routinely set up white women and people of color to be the diversity experts and/or teachers. This dynamic can contribute to white women and people of color holding back their comments and thoughts for fear of being labeled as a troublemaker, an angry person, or unfairly playing the race/gender card. "I become the designated spokesperson for my group," says Ron, an African American computer science engineer in a large tech company.

"Whether I want to or not, and whether I know anything about diversity or not, I am often designated as the diversity committee representative, teacher to all on not just race but on all types of diversity issues. Any mistakes I might make are magnified. Others use it to justify stereotypes about my racial group or I internalize it and feel like because I am the designated spokesperson, I can't let my group down or have a bad day."

Dress, Appearance, and Emotions are Constantly Scrutinized

Women report that frequently their dress and appearance are mentioned. The scrutiny comes with a double edge: Women who seem masculine in appearance or manner can be tarred with destructive labels. If they are too feminine, they aren't taken as seriously in the workplace and are accused of flaunting their looks to extract favors from male colleagues. They lose either way.

Not only are men and women of color closely scrutinized, they also receive subtle hints to "tone down" their ethnicity. Essentially, angry behaviors displayed by people of color frequently have very different consequences than those displayed by white men.

Over-Expenditure of Energy Leads to Self-Doubt, Exhaustion, or Frustration

The daily bombardment from small, subtle, nuanced messages takes a toll. According to a white woman leader who consulted with WMFDP, "I often say and hear other white women and people of color say, that it takes more energy for us to do the same job than a man. Though this could sound like we think more is required or expected, I feel that it comes from the extra energy drain—the energy drained from having to spend more time to get my ideas listened to or accepted, or emotionally processing the extra clutter that's going on in the background. I have lower self-confidence than most of my male colleagues and I've found this to be a common thread amongst white women throughout my company. The good performers hide this, but often say they still feel it inside. We consistently lose opportunities by saying, 'I'm not sure I can do that' against men with less competence who are very confident they can do it. The pressure of continually being expected to conform contributes to not really knowing who I am."

One reason that women and people of color may have doubts about their abilities is that the consequence of falling short is so high. When a white woman or person of color fails—as all people inevitably do—their failure has widespread implications for their entire ethnicity. However, when a white man fails, his performance is not tied to all white men.

Impacts for White Men

White Men are Often Viewed as the Problem or Impediment to Diversity Efforts

The message is if white men simply "got it," the organization could move on. "Scott," a white male manager in a global energy company, confided, "I often feel I am walking on eggshells. The consequence for any missteps on diversity issues is even greater the higher up the organizational chart one is. There is no allowance to be unpolished or 'messy' with one's learning. Executives are expected to know it. This promotes a 'fake it until you make it' posture. It also engenders political correctness. We know what to say but nothing more than that. It's like working in a paper house. It looks good until some probing or prodding starts to make it fall apart."

"There is no allowance to be unpolished or 'messy' with one's learning. Executives are expected to know it. This promotes a 'fake it until you make it' posture."

This thinking promotes the myth that white men are single-handedly holding the organization hostage from moving forward or that white women and people of color can single-handedly lead diversity and inclusion initiatives without partnering with white men. Both are incorrect.

Work is the Primary Source of Identity

The stereotype for white men is that their primary role is to work and be the breadwinner. "George," a white male who works in banking, related, "I feel more and more pressure to achieve business results at the expense of all other aspects of my life. My fixation on work and all things related to work negatively impacts my ability to have deeper and more intimate relationships with family members and loved ones."

Great shifts have happened in this arena, and more women are primary wage earners in households. Still, many white men continue to define their self-worth by the work they perform.

Viewing Diversity Issues Through an "Either/Or" Lens

White men often have a low tolerance for ambiguity. This tendency to view things in "either/or" terms can keep them from seeing the complexity inherent in diversity issues. Many white men resist being told they are part of a white male group. They view themselves as unique individuals, and feel that if they acknowledge their group membership, they will lose their individuality. Conversely, many white women and people of color view individual white men as the representative of the larger group.

Claiming group membership does not mean a person must renounce their individuality. You don't give up one to acknowledge the other. Viewing the complexities of diversity through an "and/both" lens can assist in seeing the many facets of diversity.

Don't Ask for Help. Be Strong.

The standing joke about men is that they never admit they are lost and they certainly never ask for directions. White men view asking for support as a weakness. Many white men operate from the "run silent, run deep" school of non-collaboration. They further believe the stereotypical notion that women are better suited to manage complex people issues and are better at nurturing people.

When white men continually discount qualities like intuition, compassion, and nurturance, everyone is negatively impacted. For white male leaders, it can diminish how they utilize their "feminine" skills as courageous leaders.

Seeing Everyone Else as Diverse

One myth about white men is that they are not diverse. The reality is that white men are like any other group. No two white men are identical and all white men are not the same. Yet, most diversity efforts are disproportionately led by white women and people of color who often observe white men interpreting diversity efforts as a challenge to their workplace survival.

Many White Men Don't Know that They Don't Know

Many white men are unaware that white women and people of color are presented daily with a barrage of assimilation challenges, such as those discussed by Linda. White men are often oblivious to the various micro-barriers white women and people of color must negotiate daily in the workplace. White men generally do not have to question every interaction to determine whether it has racial or gender overtones. Not having to deal with these everyday irritations contributes to white men often being labeled with "they just don't get it."

The long-term cost of white men not knowing about the daily realities of others, and how such issues impact productivity and self-worth, is high across the board. In fact, not knowing degrades white men's partnerships across race and gender. Not being informed is a lose/lose proposition for everyone.

More about Feeling Alone and Isolated

Further elaboration on this impact on white men is needed. The prevailing myth is that white men enjoy the benefits of the "good ole boys club." While white men certainly have an easier time establishing their credibility, however, as mentioned earlier, many are reluctant to ask for help and prefer instead to operate independently.

In his book, *I Don't Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression*, Terrence Real writes about the hidden epidemic of depression in men. He states that 20 years of experience treating men and their families has convinced him that, "Depression is a silent epidemic in men—that men hide their condition from family, friends, and themselves to avoid the stigma of depression's unmanliness." Problems that are thought of as typically male—difficulty with intimacy, workaholicism, alcoholism, abusive behavior, and rage—are really attempts to escape depression. These escape attempts only hurt their loved ones, and unfortunately, they pass their condition on to their children.

(For additional information about depression, read the article "Addressing Mental Illness in the Legal Workplace" by Andrew J. Imperato in this issue.)

Implications for the Workplace

Everyone who is part of an organization must assimilate to some degree, whether that organization is a law firm, a corporation, a government agency, or a storefront business. But organizations need to assimilate as well, and their leaders must intentionally shift their organization's culture to more fully value and utilize the myriad talents, life experiences, and perspectives present in their workplaces.

We are convinced that white men have much to gain from recognizing and valuing different styles. In the process, they will rediscover their own self-interest and deepen their understanding of the breadth and scope of their own diversity.

White women and people of color also have work to do. They must question how their assumptions about white men affect relationships. This examination is not a linear process, and it will likely never be perfect. It is, however, an ongoing challenge for all of us to cultivate and create more consciously inclusive work environments.

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Diversity Partnership Tips for White Women and People of Color to Engage White Men—Open this book, open your mind, and climb out of your box. The book tackles workplace diversity with startling candor. Consider this guide required reading for all white women and people of color who want to work more effectively with white men and others.

Eight Critical Leadership Skills Created through Effective Diversity Partnerships—In this book, you'll learn how real leadership is best cultivated by working with the diverse people around you. As you read and reflect on the thought-provoking questions and do the activities described, you'll boost your ability to lead-and improve your organization's business results.

As an exclusive for the legal profession, WMFDP is offering all *Diversity & the Bar*® readers a 10 percent discount off the retail price of these publications, so make sure that you mention MCCA® when ordering. For more information or to order copies of WMFDP's field guides, please visit www.wmfdp.com or call 888.597.3571.



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White Men and Diversity

White Men and Diversity What White Men, White Women, and People of Color Can Do to Make a Real Difference in Their Workplace Diversity Partnerships

By Bill Proudman

This is the fourth of six articles that will discuss how white men can more fully participate in the diversity process. These articles are written by Bill Proudman, partner, White Men as Full Diversity Partners LLC (WMFDP). It is our hope that this series of articles will spark a meaningful dialogue about how diversity programs can fully tap the talents and contributions of all employees.



To learn more about WMFDP, log on to www.wmfdp.com or send an email to Proudman@wmfdp.com. The views expressed herein are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of MCCA®.

*My teacher says, You've got to stink first.
I tell her, I don't have time to stink-
At 64 years old
I go directly to perfection
Or I go nowhere.
Perfection is nowhere,
she says, So stink.
Stink like a beginner,
stink like decaying flesh,
old blood,
cold sweat,
she says,
I know a woman who's eighty-six,
Last year she learned to dive.*

-Lisa Colt

The notion of "stinking" at something is unfathomable for most accomplished adults, yet the willingness to have a "beginner's mind" is critical to learning and practicing effective diversity partnerships. In many workplaces, people fear that any "messiness" regarding diversity is unacceptable. As explained in detail in the March/April column, this attitude promotes a "fake it until you make it" approach to diversity learning. The result is that real learning does not take place. What emerges instead may be politically correct rhetoric and hallway conversations like "They just don't get it" from white women and people of color and "We are damned if we do and damned if we don't" from white men. Expectations of perfection are counterproductive when negotiating difficult diversity conversations.

How can we expect to deepen and expand our partnerships if we are never allowed to "stink"? Partnership work is a critical component of embracing diversity and inclusion, and the road to mastery must be littered with mistakes. Effective partnership work requires perseverance and practice, a willingness to risk and be vulnerable, and enduring missteps. Below are some partnership tips to consider while on the diversity learning journey. As you move forward, make sure you have an able support team you can talk to about what you know, what you don't know, and why diversity is important to you and your organization.

What Can White Men Do?

I will act as if what I do makes a difference.

-William James

Here are eight things white men can do to strengthen partnerships with white women and people of color.

USING COMPLIANCE FOR A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Be a lifelong learner.

Many white men invariably think of diversity as a problem to solve. It is important to resist the temptation to see diversity as a finite issue to fix. While problem-solving skills are helpful, the role of an effective and ongoing diversity partner is building the stamina to hang in there for the long term. It is also key to adopt a stance of lifelong learning about this topic, including asking the question, "As a white man, how is diversity about me?" Here, it's okay to become comfortable being occasionally uncomfortable with the topic. Try to see the discomfort as a part of your learning, not as something that must be tolerated. Relish the confusion and the uncertainty, and resist the urge to fix it. Learn to use any discomfort in service to your learning.

Cultivate an appetite for new learning.

White men, who rarely if ever have to experience being in the minority, will often say, "The more I learn about diversity, the more I realize I still don't know." This not knowing can feel awkward for many white men, who may expect to quickly master a new skill or be able to follow clear rules. They may ask, "What name should I call 'them' and their group?" and become frustrated when there is more than one "right" answer. The need to be right can block learning. Diversity learning is not about being right or wrong. It's simply that one has an incomplete picture of the whole. Act on what you know, while also seeking insight and a broader perspective through the eyes and voices of others. Stay in touch with your wisdom and humility. In doing so, others will be able to experience you as human and imperfect, and as an ongoing learner. They will feel more comfortable learning and working with you. "Stink" a little.

Work hard to better understand systemic privilege.

Systemic privilege is the web of unspoken, invisible benefits that come to a person by no virtue of his/her own. The benefits are made to look achievable through effort and, hence, available to any person. Being a recipient of systemic privilege based on skin color, gender, and sexual orientation does not prevent straight white men from feeling mistreated or personally powerless in individual interactions. That said, not understanding how the benefits of systemic privilege impact day-to-day interactions can create enormous barriers in effectively understanding, communicating, and leading diverse organizations. Here are some examples of systemic privilege:

White Privilege:

- I don't have to think or worry about whether I got a job or promotion solely because of my race. Nor do I have to worry about whether my peers think this was the case.
- I can be pretty sure I will never be asked: "Do you speak English?" or be told: "You speak English very well."
- I do not need to ask myself if each negative episode or situation I experience has racial overtones.
- I routinely witness and benefit from the many positive white male role models displayed in the media, politics, and entertainment that far outweigh the Tim McVeighs and Ted Kaczynskis of white maleness.

"The need to be right can block learning. Diversity learning is not about being right or wrong. It's simply that one has an incomplete picture of the whole."

Male Privilege:

- I can more easily put my work and work schedule first without regard to key obligations to my family and/or significant others.
- I can, in many more situations than not, take up more time, get more respect, and be listened to more often than a woman.
- On the job, I am not judged by the attractiveness of my appearance.

Heterosexual Privilege:

- I can have pictures of loved ones on my desk and not have to worry about what people will think.
- I can talk about what I did last weekend without having to edit what I say.
- I can bring a date to company functions and offsite events to which spouses are invited without the risk of negatively affecting my career.

The ultimate privilege for heterosexual white men means they do not have to think about or question the dimensions of their identity in each workplace situation. They can choose to address or not address diversity issues without much professional consequence. If they choose not to intervene in a diversity issue, their colleagues will not think less of them.

When white women, people of color, and gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered (GLBT) people share struggles related to not having privileges (like some of those described above), white men often unconsciously invalidate or discredit their experiences. Often this comes from not understanding how group membership affords white men protection from what others must face on a daily basis. They may dismiss the dilemmas of their white women and colleagues of color by thinking or stating, "I've overcome obstacles in my life; why can't they stop whining and overcome theirs?"

Anyone whose reality is consistently invalidated may get angry and frustrated, and respond with, "You just don't get it." Everyone involved was away feeling a little worse. White men feel misunderstood and bashed. White women and people of color feel marginalized and invisible.

Know that you will be perceived as both a member of the white male group and as an individual.

White women and people of color have to understand and operate in two worlds-theirs and the white male culture (the dominant culture of the business world). Like chameleons, they navigate back and forth between both worlds. For white men, one privilege means not having to acknowledge membership in the white male group. There is no long-term cost or consequence to white men to consider themselves only individuals. As examined in the March/April column, white men aren't ever asked to speak for their entire group. They do not have their actions scrutinized to the degree that white women and people of color do simply because of their gender or skin color.

Many white women and people of color, however, view white men as both individuals and as representatives of the white male group.

When white men can acknowledge their group membership as well as their individuality, they develop the skills to be able to distinguish whether a person is talking to them as an individual or as a member of the white male group. Making the distinction reduces the possibility that they will take personally a remark meant as a general observation. Every comment a woman or

person of color makes about white men is not necessarily about a specific man. Explore how this perception influences and impacts communication and understanding between white men and others.

It's not your fault and you are responsible.

Sometimes, when issues regarding the systemic mistreatment of blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and other marginalized ethnicities enter into a conversation, whites may feel they are being asked to personally apologize for something they did not cause or perpetuate. They may feel discomfort, withdraw completely, or shut the conversation down.

The solutions are simple: Don't apologize for things you have not done. Take responsibility for showing up fully in the partnership. Pay attention to how the issue is impacting the substance and mood of the conversation.

Don't allow any insinuation of guilt or blame to mute your voice or prompt you to respond from a shameful or defended place. Guilt can be an interesting place to visit, but it's not a helpful place to stay. It can deter you from learning about other people's experiences. It can also deter you from recognizing how you unintentionally collude in prohibiting any examination of inequality. Transcend the blame conversation so you can study what is really going on in the moment. It can also deter you from recognizing how you unintentionally collude in prohibiting any examination of inequality. Transcend the blame conversation so you can study what is really going on in the moment.

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Learn how to listen...again.

White male culture socializes white men to take action. They are doers and problem-solvers. White men often hear from a spouse or significant other, "I don't want you to fix me or solve this; I just want you to listen and hear me." White men have to learn that when someone shares a problem, it doesn't imply a request or responsibility for them to fix it.

Many white men have also been trained and rewarded that the purpose of conversation is debate—a debate they must win. As a result, many white men spend most of their time advocating their own position and little time inquiring and hearing others' perspectives. When others do share their perspectives, white men sometimes use this time to plan their next point. This approach does not promote mutual understanding. It does create a winner and a loser and great frustration. The goal of a conversation for learning is mutual understanding. Work to hear the other's perspective. Don't judge whether you agree or disagree; the conversation is simply two people with different perspectives conversing.

Being a member of this advantaged group shields white men from accurately hearing others and understanding their reality. Inquire about how others would like to be treated, rather than making assumptions.

Learn to be both "color/gender blind" and "color/gender conscious" simultaneously.

"I am color or gender blind. I don't see someone as black/white or male/female. I just treat everyone the same. Best person gets the job. Everyone has equal opportunity. After all this is America."

The intention of these comments is often to reassure others that the speaker is fair and equitable to all involved. They recognize the uniqueness of the individual. However, it doesn't encompass the complexity of diversity.

When people say they treat all people the same, it usually is defined by the dominant culture's definition of expected behavior. If you are white, male, and heterosexual, this distinction is usually difficult to notice, since white men never have to leave this culture—as discussed in the March/April issue. Yet, white men are oblivious to the difficulty caused to others by having to continually fit into the white male culture box.

To white women, people of color, GLBT, and the differently abled, being treated the same usually means suppression or a change of behavior. They must modify their talk, dress, or thinking style to fit into the dominant culture, as well as act and contribute like a white man.

White men must notice how gender, race, and sexual orientation impact basic workplace interactions. It lessens all of us when someone cannot fully show up at work as they really are. Ask questions, observe patterns and interactions, and speak up about what you notice. Don't wait for those most adversely affected to constantly have to raise inequity issues.

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The other unspoken reality is that white men also assimilate into the dominant culture. They are even less aware of this assimilation than white women and people of color because white men never have to leave the culture. As white men become more aware of how others have to be bi-cultural, they too can make more deliberate choices about who they are and what they wish to bring of themselves into the workplace.

Learn to challenge and support other white men.

White men can demonstrate full partnership in the workplace by publicly engaging their white male colleagues about diversity dilemmas or issues. This should be accomplished without looking to white women and people of color for validation. White women and people of color notice when white men engage each other on this topic, and it can be a sign of hope for them. They no longer have to be the only ones to speak up.

Recognize that speaking publicly demonstrates one's own learning and imperfections. Remember to risk "stinking." This outspokenness counters a white man's ultimate privilege—that he can choose whether to engage or ignore diversity issues. Vary the tool used when speaking out. Don't "use a hatchet to kill a mosquito." Too heavy a hand can further reinforce a fear-based culture that already pervades too many organizations.

It's okay to experiment. Try new ways of challenging and supporting other white men such as:

- Talk about how what was said or just happened impacts you.
- Don't scold, lecture, or degrade.
- Support what you saw as the person's intent, but probe for what the impact might have been on you or others.
- Take risks.
- Assume your colleague was doing the best he could and that he can and will do better.
- Act as a coach, not as a judge or referee.
- Intervene most with other white men with whom you have a pre-established relationship (and hence some permission) to publicly discuss controversial diversity topics.
- Talk to your colleagues in advance about how together you will handle difficult conversations. Have some pre-established agreements about how and when to intervene.
- Share your own insights—both glorious and painful. Use yourself as an instrument of learning, a work in progress.
- Don't assume you are "there" and others aren't. Stay humble. Learn something new every day and try to view your diversity learning journey as a series of gifts to behold.

What Can White Women and People of Color Do?

The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.

-Jiddu Krishnamurti

Here are some things white women and people of color can do to strengthen partnerships with white men:

Examine how your assumptions stop you.

Recently, at a day-long learning session on engaging white men, a number of white women and people of color found themselves questioning the authenticity of a group of white men. They felt the white male managers were reading from scripts when they shared their diversity journeys. They simply couldn't believe these white men were speaking genuinely. They had never seen white men speak so personally about diversity and what it meant to them.

"Don't assume to understand the diversity journey of a white man. Don't assume he neither has one, nor wants to have a deeper understanding. Ask questions that uncover how diversity is a part of his life."

They were asked to consider how questioning the authenticity of these white men might reinforce some of their own biases (for example, "White men don't care, and when they do, it must be because of a performance measure or something else.") Further, they examined how this attitude might be unintentionally blocking what they so desire—engaged, self-interested, truthful white male partners.

Key to diversity growth is re-examining words and actions to make sure white men who are on their learning edge are supported.

Assumptions and previous experiences sometimes get in the way of being better diversity partners to white men. First, be aware of what your assumptions are. Explore them. Notice cynicism, frustration, or suspicion of white men's intentions when expressed by white women or people of color. If one whispers, "There goes another white man who doesn't get it," force the whisperer to articulate what he might not know and how one might be unconsciously keeping him in the dark. Perhaps it is time to stop whispering and risk "stinking" so that a partnership can be forged to advance diversity issues in the organization.

Use an inquiry approach.

Don't assume to understand the diversity journey of a white man. Don't assume he neither has one, nor wants to have a deeper understanding. Ask questions that uncover how diversity is a part of his life. Ask him to describe his journey and current diversity challenges. Ask what can be stopped, started, and continued to increase his willingness to engage as a diversity partner. Acknowledge the work he has done, the ways he identifies himself as an ally, and his willingness to engage in diversity dialogues.

One white man is not white male culture.

Learn to separate white male culture from the actions and behaviors of individual white men. They have been conditioned to operate in, and are affected by, this culture. Make the results of the culture (positive and negative) visible to all, without putting individuals on trial or holding them personally responsible for systemic wrongdoings. Notice what white men are doing to uncover and acknowledge systemic infractions within the organization. By their very nature, injustices can be so interwoven in the fabric of how things are done in business cultures that they are invisible and appear normal.

Don't do the work for white men.

Don't allow white men to become dependent on white women and people of color to be their teachers or guides. Convey to white men what is needed from the partnership and be willing to point out when they are using others as a crutch. As partners, white women and people of color need to know what white men will do that will demonstrate they are learning and applying their learning at work.

Avoid the invitation to teach white men about diversity. Help them strengthen their diversity partnership muscles by doing their own heavy lifting. Keep in mind that doing such may be frustrating or demoralizing.

Lean in and strengthen your support system with white men.

If white men were fully aware of systemic inequities, the most divisive inclusiveness issues would already be transcended. Thus, it is important to work in partnership with white men. Find one white guy who has the potential and spark to be a voice to lessen the pressure that falls on white women and people of color. White men can make great diversity allies. Value their partnership and push them to go deeper to do their own learning.

Partnership work never ends. It represents an endless series of next steps. Moving forward must be combined with a heartfelt acknowledgement of your present position. Know that "stinking" occasionally helps make your partnerships vital and real. This article is drawn in part from WMFDP's new series of field guides on diversity partnerships. "Diversity Partnership Tips for White Men" and "Diversity Partnership Tips for White Women and People of Color to Engage White Men" have been excerpted.

From the July/August 2005 issue of Diversity & The Bar®

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Cover Story

CEOs Speak Out on the Business Case for the 21st Century

Diversity in Dollars and ¢ense

Articles and profiles by Dr. Arin Reeves



As U.S. companies seek to create competitive advantages in a rapidly changing global marketplace, workforce diversity has emerged as one of the primary sources through which a company can gain and sustain a competitive advantage. Today's discussion has evolved from one of moral imperative and being "the right thing to do" to the business imperative of being "the necessary thing to do."

Companies that integrate diversity into their business fabric as a core value are positioning themselves to maximize their organization's potential in the global arena, where diversity of perspectives at every level of an organization is critical to success.

Even as diversity differs in substance and form from organization to organization, integrating diversity into the business values of any organization starts in the same place—at the very top with the chief executive officer.

In the pages that follow, you'll read diversity profiles of CEOs representing seven of the most successful and admired corporations in the world. These CEOs are sharing their personal and business philosophies about diversity as a core business value guiding their organizations to national and global success.

Individually, each CEO highlights the importance of diversity for his own organization and leadership style. Together these leaders carve out a business case for diversity that cannot be ignored.

As each of the CEOs profiled have articulated so passionately, achieving sustainable diversity in organizations begins with committed leadership from the very top. In addition to personal and professional commitment from the CEO, the business case for diversity must be clearly defined, thoroughly developed, and effectively communicated to each and every employee within the organization.

As these business leaders have emphasized individually and collectively, diversity is no longer a choice for businesses that seek to compete in the global marketplace; it is a business imperative and a business necessity.

Dr. Arin N. Reeves is a principal consultant with The Athens Group, where she specializes in diversity strategies and solutions for legal and corporate workplaces.

From the November 2002 issue of Diversity & The Bar™

Profiled

F. Duane Ackerman
Chairman, Chief Executive Officer
BellSouth

Alan Lacy
Chairman, Chief Executive Officer
Sears, Roebuck and Co.

Kenneth D. Lewis
Chairman, Chief Executive Officer
and President
Bank of America

J. W. Marriott, Jr.
Chairman, Chief Executive Officer
Marriott Corporation

Philip J. Purcell
Chairman, Chief Executive Officer
Morgan Stanley

Michael I. Roth
Chairman, Chief Executive Officer
The MONY Group

William C. Weldon
Chairman, Chief Executive Officer
Johnson & Johnson

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Cover Story

CEOs Speak Out on the Business Case for the 21st Century

Diversity in Dollars and Sense



F. DUANE ACKERMAN

CHAIRMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

BellSouth

Inclusion is not just "nice to do." It's a must do! The first step is to help people within your organization understand why diversity is a business imperative and how it contributes to your company's success. Once employees see this, your diversity efforts and activities won't be just another task on the list of things to do—it will be seen as a means to accomplish that list.

Profiled

- F. Duane Ackerman
- Alan Lacy
- Kenneth D. Lewis
- J. W. Marriott, Jr.
- Philip J. Purcell
- Michael I. Roth
- William C. Weldon

"At BellSouth, we believe that a diverse and inclusive environment is not only the right thing to do, it's also critical to maintaining a competitive advantage in today's marketplace," said F. Duane Ackerman, chairman and CEO, BellSouth.

Mr. Ackerman builds on this essential premise of BellSouth's commitment to diversity by emphasizing that "we have long embraced inclusion as a strategic business imperative. We believe diversity is the right thing to do, so it's not hard to build a business case for it." Mr. Ackerman concentrates his leadership in the commitment to diversity on "diversity being an integral part of our mission to create shareholder value" where "an important part of building—and proving—a business case for inclusion is demonstrating the correlation between focused diversity efforts and company results."

This combined commitment to the business bottom line, and the inclusion of the diverse backgrounds represented within the BellSouth team, has brought forth recognition and praise from business and minority communities. BellSouth has: won the NAACP Corporate Image Award (awarded for exemplary business practices and public service); been named in Fortunemagazine's "50 Best Companies for Asians, Blacks and Hispanics" for several consecutive years; was honored by Hispanic Magazine as one of its "Corporate 100: The One Hundred Companies Providing the Most Opportunities to Hispanics;" and garnered several awards from the national legal community on its advocacy for diversity within corporate legal departments and law firms.

BellSouth's dedicated commitment to diversity specifically shines under the leadership of Charles Morgan, general counsel of BellSouth, who has been recognized as a national catalyst for diversity within the legal profession. Mr. Morgan authored the Diversity Statement of Principle, which has currently been adopted by more than 470 general counsel of major corporations. The statement reads: "We expect the law firms which represent our companies to work actively to promote diversity within their workplace. In making our respective decisions concerning selection of outside counsel, we will give significant weight to a firm's commitment and progress in this area."

Not only has this statement made a visible difference in BellSouth's business case for diversity, but it has impacted the business case for diversity for law firms nationwide.

While BellSouth continues to execute its business and organizational commitment to diversity, Mr. Ackerman reflects on the journey as a "humbling effort...This is a journey, not a destination; we're still learning and we'll continue to make additional strides." He advises other chief executive officers that: "Your commitment must start at the top—with you. I think the first step toward developing diversity as a core value is awareness and education."

Profile by Dr. Arin Reeves

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Cover Story

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Diversity in Dollars and Sense



ALAN LACY

CHAIRMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Sears, Roebuck and Co.

Research has shown that diverse organizations are consistently more creative, produce higher quality products, and achieve better returns for shareholders. Their products and services are also more appealing to a diverse customer base. We believe it is essential that vendors who provide service to Sears, including lawyers, must reflect the diversity and inclusiveness that are an inherent part of our culture. This can only result in a win-win situation for our customers, our associates, and our shareholders.

Profiled

- F. Duane Ackerman
- Alan Lacy
- Kenneth D. Lewis
- J. W. Marriott, Jr.
- Philip J. Purcell
- Michael I. Roth
- William C. Weldon

According to Chairman and CEO Alan Lacy, "diversity is not just the right thing to do at Sears, it is a business imperative." Furthermore, "it gives companies a competitive edge in the marketplace. At every level, we need to look and think like our customers to truly understand and satisfy their needs." In order to integrate diversity as a business imperative into Sears' business strategies, Sears has created strategic programs that drive an inclusive corporate culture through clear communication of the diversity principles, talent and performance management systems that integrate diversity into their structures, and executive report cards, which make management accountable for upholding the diversity values critical to their business unit.

Moreover, Mr. Lacy takes personal responsibility for this programming by integrating diversity into all communication out of his office, "I am working to make it a part of the corporate vocabulary. For instance, 'Be a diverse, high-performance team,' is one of our four corporate priorities."

In reflecting on the complexity of diversity within corporations, Mr. Lacy recognizes that creating an awareness of diversity sometimes has to precede the personal commitment to diversity on behalf of leaders: "We've established an awareness of the business case for diversity...Our next steps are focused on ensuring understanding that leads to new behaviors. Toward that end, senior leaders recently participated in a half-day diversity workshop. One key outcome: personal commitment to actions supporting diversity from each leader."

Mr. Lacy communicates his personal and business commitment to diversity as a priority for the law firms Sears retains and states that: "the firms we retain know that diversity is an essential part of the criteria that we use to evaluate them. Our commitment to diversity is clearly stated in the retainer letter each law firm must sign before receiving any assignments from Sears. In addition, we monitor both the fees paid by Sears to minority- and women-owned firms, as well as hours billed by minorities and women working in majority firms."

Anastasia Kelly, senior vice president and general counsel for Sears, reaffirms Sears' intrinsic respect for diversity, "I have always found that we, as lawyers, are most creative when there is diversity of thought around the table. When we bring very different backgrounds, cultures, and educational experiences to our professional lives, we not only do a better job for our business partners, but we also are able to enrich our own professional lives."

Mrs. Kelly further affirms the effect of Mr. Lacy's commitment on the legal department's ability to assert diversity as a priority for itself and the law firms it retains. "We all look up to and listen to the CEO, and when he or she leads by example and also makes it clear that diversity is important to the company, it reinforces the importance of the effort, and gives it an impetus and an imprimatur that makes accomplishing our goals easier."

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KENNETH D. LEWIS

CHAIRMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND PRESIDENT

BANK OF AMERICA

Diversity of viewpoint, background and opinion helps us get to the right answers to tough, complex business questions. We rely on our legal counsel for advice about how to do business, defend our company, and navigate the legal system in a complex and diverse environment. A diverse legal team is critical in enabling us to achieve our goals.

Profiled

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- J. W. Marriott, Jr.
- Philip J. Purcell
- Michael I. Roth
- William C. Weldon

Chairman, CEO, and President Ken Lewis summarizes his business case for diversity for Bank of America by stating: "I start with the premise that you will either succeed together because of diversity, or you will walk off a cliff together if you don't have a diversity of opinion and experience."

"We will not be the most admired company in the world if we don't have a business strategy that is formed by a diverse body of thought." Bank of America has clearly made its mark as one of the most admired companies in this country, as it gathers accolades for its commitment to diversity in the workplace from Fortune, Working Mother, and the Minority MBA magazines.

Bank of America, under Mr. Lewis' leadership, stresses the diversity in the demographic profile of its markets and aligns the rest of its business strategies to reflect this diversity.

Even as Bank of America upholds diversity as an intrinsic corporate value, Mr. Lewis acknowledges that in order for a corporation to truly embrace diversity, "the CEO has to believe in it and be passionate about it. I believe in it and am passionate about it."

In articulating a strong business commitment to diversity, Mr. Lewis confirms an equally strong personal commitment to diversity so that he can "demand results" from every level of every business unit.

Bank of America's General Counsel, Paul J. Polking, reflects on how Mr. Lewis' personal commitment to diversity enables Bank of America's legal department to set and reach its own diversity goals: "Diversity is important in our legal department because it adds to our perspective, heightens the quality of our thinking, and enriches our discussions as a community of professionals dedicated to providing the most useful counsel to our clients on complex and sensitive legal issues...It is extraordinarily helpful to me and the legal department that our CEO feels so strongly about the importance of diversity."

Mr. Lewis acknowledges that there can often be a "pushback on diversity efforts early on because of the fear of the unknown." Moreover, "there's often more conflict to manage because difference of opinion adds an influx of new and contradicting opinions into the conversation." However, it is this very difference of opinion that creates a stronger and more competitive corporation, and with a consistent commitment from the top, diversity can be executed with profound results.

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Cover Story

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Diversity in Dollars and \$ense



J. W. MARRIOTT, JR.

CHAIRMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Marriott International, Inc.

It's smart business. I value the presence of minority and women associates' perspectives. Those who don't have these perspectives cannot compete with those who do.

Profiled

- F. Duane Ackerman
- Alan Lacy
- Kenneth D. Lewis
- J. W. Marriott, Jr.
- Philip J. Purcell
- Michael I. Roth
- William C. Weldon

According to Chairman and CEO J. W. Marriott, Jr., "Marriott International's commitment to diversity is absolute. It is the only way to attract, develop, and retain the very best talent available. It is the only way to forge the business relationships necessary to continue our dynamic growth. And it is the only way to meet our responsibilities to our associates, customers, partners, and stakeholders."

Marriott International's statement on diversity firmly places diversity as a primary core value governing its business strategies, and Mr. Marriott's leadership at the helm of this organization supports the "absolute" commitment to this value at all levels of the company's structure: "Embracing diversity adds substantial value to the organization. It strengthens the company's culture and improves its ability to reach a changing and diverse marketplace."

Mr. Marriott makes a clear connection between a diverse workforce and the ability to compete in today's market and asserts that: "in today's marketplace, you have to be diverse to be competitive for consumer business and talented employees. A more diverse management team means better business decisions."

The company's commitment to diversity has resulted in Marriott International being ranked number one on the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Hospitality Industry Report Card three times out of its five-year existence, in Fortune's "Top 50 Companies for Minorities" for the fifth consecutive year, and as the National Black MBA Association's Corporation of the Year (2002). Marriott International is also the recipient of the Catalyst Award (2002) for advancing women's leadership in the workplace. Even with all these awards and recognitions under his belt, Mr. Marriott continues to push his board of directors and his management team to create a corporate culture where diversity continues to be prioritized as a business imperative.

Marriott International focuses on diversity because it is the business thing to do, and Mr. Marriott suggests that companies that do not focus on diversity will quickly fall behind in capitalizing on the consumer purchasing power as well as the employee talent rising from minority communities. He stresses this for every level within his own organization, as well as the service providers that Marriott hires, including law firms.

As Joseph Ryan, executive vice president and general counsel, echoes, "Mr. Marriott and Mr. Shaw [president & chief operating officer] are completely committed to having a diverse group of associates. Having that commitment at the very top of an organization is critical to developing successful, business-oriented diversity initiatives. The law department shares their enthusiasm because it makes sense in every respect; our associates, including, of course, the lawyers who represent us need to be representative of our community and our guests."

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PHILIP J. PURCELL

CHAIRMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Morgan Stanley

First and foremost, lead the charge. Demonstrate publicly that you know and appreciate the importance of diversity. Second, drive the message down through the ranks of your organization. Give the day-to-day managers the support and resources they need to be successful in managing diversity. Third, have a plan. There should be a business plan on what will be done, when it will be done, and who will be responsible for doing it. Fourth, develop a system of accountability. Know who will be required to explain the success or failure of the diversity initiatives and reward them accordingly.

Profiled

- F. Duane Ackerman
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- Philip J. Purcell
- Michael I. Roth
- William C. Weldon

Morgan Stanley's commitment to diversity, as explained by Chairman and CEO Philip J. Purcell, is driven by the proposition that "diversity is important because, as a firm, we are only as effective as the people we employ. Different perspectives allow us to retain our competitive edge and to provide the best service possible to our clients."

Mr. Purcell clearly links the company's commitment to diversity with its commitment to business success. For a diversity initiative to be successful, he says, "it must be treated like every other business initiative, and it must be tied to the bottom line. We are a service business and our business succeeds or fails on the strength of our people."

Pursuing Morgan Stanley's goal to "be our clients' first choice" for financial services, "the firm must stay focused on being at the forefront of all critical business initiatives, including diversity," said Mr. Purcell.

This personal and professional commitment to diversity as a critical business imperative at the CEO level allows Morgan Stanley to set realistic and measurable goals around diversity as a core value for organizational success.

While Mr. Purcell encourages diversity initiatives in every part of his company, he recognizes that "our biggest challenge is that we are a results-oriented culture, where people expect immediate, tangible outcomes. That doesn't always happen—whether pursuing business initiatives or diversity initiatives."

He advises his senior management to "be patient and stick to your game plan. To sustain your diversity momentum, you must have a long-term focus. Change may not always occur instantaneously. Successful diversity initiatives are evolutions—a continuous process of change and development."

Mr. Purcell's commitment to diversity is especially tangible in Morgan Stanley's legal department. Donald Kempf, Morgan Stanley's chief legal officer, credits Mr. Purcell's leadership for the favorable recognition the firm's diversity initiatives have received in recent years. "Phil has shown the way. And not with rhetoric, but with action," said Mr. Kempf.

Profile by Dr. Arin Reeves

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Cover Story

CEOs Speak Out on the Business Case for the 21st Century

Diversity in Dollars and \$ense



MICHAEL I. ROTH

CHAIRMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The MONY Group

Look carefully at your business partners. Listen to what your managers and employees have to say. They are close to your customers and employees. And always be aware that there is more you can do.

Profiled

- F. Duane Ackerman
- Alan Lacy
- Kenneth D. Lewis
- J. W. Marriott, Jr.
- Philip J. Purcell
- Michael I. Roth
- William C. Weldon

From the November 2002 issue of Diversity &

When Chairman and CEO Michael I. Roth speaks of the value of diversity in his company, his perspective is simple and clear: "We want our workforce to reflect the community in which we serve."

His overriding message within the company he leads is that "while diversity is good from an ethical point of view, it's also good for business." He explains this message further by articulating the business case for The MONY Group: "Our primary market, the U.S., continues to become more and more diverse. And for us to remain competitive in our industry, our organization needs to reflect this diverse community."

In considering companies who resist prioritizing diversity as a core business value, Mr. Roth reemphasizes that, "diversity is good for business" and urges these companies to rethink their business strategies. "It is wrong and a cop out to not make diversity a business value. You must have your head buried in the sand if you don't see the changing demographics of your future customers and your future employees. You are doing your company an injustice from a leadership perspective if you're not paying attention to diversity."

Although he recognizes the challenge that "people are extremely busy," he stresses that "we need to make the time to ensure our workforce is as diverse as possible."

One way to accomplish this is to employ a multitude of strategies ranging from "encouraging diversity as much as possible" to "making it a part of our business plans."

Moreover, in order to be truly effective, diversity strategies must be communicated from the top. "Diversity is most effective if it comes from the top. It has more credibility and viability, and as a result, local managers become empowered by the message from the top."

Mr. Roth reasons that, "if a company is not diverse, their talent base is not diverse, and their work product will not be as good. You cannot be myopic and ignore this business fact."

Profile by Dr. Arin Reeves

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Cover Story

CEOs Speak Out on the Business Case for the 21st Century

Diversity in Dollars and Sense**WILLIAM C. WELDON**

CHAIRMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Johnson & Johnson

More and more businesses face complex legal issues in today's marketplace. Any company will benefit greatly from being represented by diverse legal minds. If businesses fail to recognize this, we impair our ability to innovate and compete in the global workplace. Diversity should be a critical core value of every corporation and its legal staff.

Profiled

F. Duane Ackerman

Alan Lacy

Kenneth D. Lewis

J. W. Marriott, Jr.

Philip J. Purcell

Michael I. Roth

William C. Weldon

According to Johnson & Johnson Chairman and CEO William C. Weldon, "Valuing diversity comes naturally to us. Diversity is naturally woven throughout the framework of our organization. It captures, in one word, the essence of an organization composed of nearly 106,100 individuals in 54 countries, serving customers across every age group around the world, with products covering nearly every facet of human health care."

In 2002 alone, Johnson & Johnson topped the 6th annual "BusinessWeek 50" (BusinessWeek's ranking of the nation's best-performing, large public corporations), scored the number one ranking overall in a recent evaluation of pharmaceutical company reputations (Pharmaceutical Executive Magazine), and was ranked the "7th Most Admired Company" in the world, and the third among pharmaceutical companies by Fortune Magazine.

As Mr. Weldon reflects, "diversity is of key importance to us if we want to remain the world's best comprehensive health care company. We have to have a diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of our consumer base. And in order for us to have a diverse workforce, we have to be an employer of choice so that we can attract talented people of all different walks of life."

From the perspective of executing a diversity strategy in any corporation, Mr. Weldon stresses the importance of a CEO: 1) "creating a global diversity statement and vision," 2) "communicating this statement and vision to all employees," and 3) "demonstrating it through leadership."

At Johnson & Johnson, diversity is a living and breathing principle that is integrated into all business initiatives by clear and consistent leadership from Mr. Weldon. "Whenever possible, I seek opportunities to speak about diversity. It's a message from the top that diversity is a part of who we are at Johnson & Johnson."

Not only does Mr. Weldon stress diversity as a competitive advantage for Johnson & Johnson, but he also stresses that companies that do not embrace diversity as a core value will not be able to compete in the global marketplace.

This emphasis on diversity extends to Johnson & Johnson's legal service providers. "We ask for reports on a quarterly basis from law firms on minority and female attorneys working on our matters. Legal workplaces can be greatly affected by corporate diversity measures, and we make it clear that we want the benefit of diversity reflected in who gets assigned to do our work."

Profile by Dr. Arin Reeves

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