

Diversity of personalities often overlooked

**HANNA
DUNN**

HUMAN CAPITAL



If you Google the word “diversity” you will get over 93 million hits. If those were miles and you navigated them all, you’d be at the sun. Most bodies of work on diversity are about valuing the uniqueness of people of different ethnic origins, generations, races, sexual orientations, religions and physical / mental abilities. Many organizations now have diversity policies that state their commitment to inclusion and respect across all lines of diversity.

There is one type of diversity that is relevant to all organizations, that I don’t see mentioned. Lack of attention to this type of diversity can contribute to workplace conflicts, poor team dynamics, an absence of cultural fit, sub-standard performance and even unnecessary terminations of employment. It is rarely discussed, researched, written about or even considered, unless there is a problem. You will find little if any reference to this type

of diversity among the 93 million internet hits and yet this type of diversity is necessary for the harmonious, effective operation of any organization.

Give up? I’m referring to diversity of personalities. We all have different personalities or “behavioural preferences” that are hard wired, or part of our DNA, so to speak. These so-called preferences (for the most part they are not conscious choices) dictate the predictable ways in which we respond to situations, communicate, make decisions, the speed at which we work, how we approach people, handle problem solving, deal with information, etc. Our behavioural preferences or personalities are becoming increasingly important to corporations as they continue to put more weight on the value of building and maintaining relationships. Todd Harris, Ph.D., director of research for PI Worldwide, in a recent article in HR Magazine (a publication of the Human Resource Professionals Association of Ontario) wrote: “In today’s increasingly customer-focused, service-based and team-oriented business environment, companies are discovering that the personality attributes of their employees can be key competitive differentiators. In an era of consumer empowerment and fleeting brand loyalty, people truly make a difference.”

Problems can arise when leaders and managers of organizations fail to take into account the personality composition of their organizations, departments and teams. Lucky for me, this results in a need for coaching / consulting to fix matters; unlucky for the organizations, by the time they get to me they have usually slogged through a minefield of employee conflicts, low performance, poor hiring decisions, bad team dynamics or other expensive obstacles that could have been avoided.

Here are some examples:

A quiet, introverted team member has tremendous insight, but is not invited to meetings because he never voluntarily speaks up.

A competitive, risk-taking manager lacks respect for the cautious, careful approach of some team members.

A relaxed, easy-going employee seems unable to meet the job demand for a faster pace.

An impulsive, results driven CEO hires her senior management team in her own image, then wonders why no one is looking after the details.

A studious, logical, high performing team member feels out of place in a company that values sociability.

All of the above situations can be fairly easily resolved or even avoided, once the concept of personality diversity is understood and differences are valued. In order to begin understanding different personalities, many enlightened organizations utilize a personality assessment tool – there are many available to suit a variety of needs and budgets. Properly used, personality assessments can enhance candidate selection, team building, sales team development, conflict resolution, communication, and help coworkers to gain insight into themselves and their colleagues.

At a time when we are striving for inclusion, acceptance and respect for all types of people

in the workplace, it seems odd that we would undervalue and even discriminate against certain personality types – but we do. Quiet introverts, methodical analyzers, glib optimists, information gatherers – these people, and others, are often misunderstood, shunned or even limited in their careers because their behaviours do not match those that we seem to value most (at the moment).

Employees and managers tend to believe “if everyone were more like me we would be more successful”, but just the opposite is true. What corporations really need is a mix of personalities – diversity – because each of the different personality types brings dissimilar but necessary attributes that no one person can possess. Next time you contemplate diversity in your organization, learn about and embrace differences in personalities as well.

Hanna Dunn is a human resources professional and president of Dunn People Strategies Inc. She has been helping businesses in and around Mississauga to maximize employee engagement and corporate performance for over 20 years. You may reach her through www.dunnpeople.com.

MBOT honours ‘Best in Business’

Do you know one of Mississauga’s best businesses? Why not nominate them for the Mississauga Board of Trade’s 2008 Business Awards of Excellence?

Winners will be announced on November 6, and the submission deadlines are as follows: June 18 (early submission for Environmental Excellence and Technology & Innovation Awards) and September 10th for the other awards: Small Business of the Year; Large Business of the Year; Business and the Arts; Corporate Governance; Business Person of the Year; Entrepreneur of the Year; Nurturing Success: Education & Business Working Together; and the Sam McCallion Small Business Community Involvement.

Mississauga Board of Trade’s Business Awards of Excellence are presented annually to honour the efforts of successful Mississauga businesses whose achievements have made important contributions to the social and economic well-being of Mississauga and its citizens.

Any business in Mississauga may submit a nomination for a client, partner, supplier or itself.

Nominees will be judged according to their ability to successfully meet the requirements for each individual award.

Award information is available on the Mississauga Board of Trade website, including downloadable nomination forms for all award categories.

For more information on the ceremony or submitting a nomination please contact MBOT’s Events Manager Katerina Alexakis at 905-273-3532 or email events@mbot.com.

Off to India

Meanwhile, MBOT announced the official launch of Team Mississauga - Business Trade Mission to India.

The mission will focus on introducing interested businesses to foreign direct investment markets and other economic opportunities in India. The press conference featured key members of the mission’s delegation including Mayor Hazel McCallion, 2008 MBOT Chair Mr. Jake Dheer and Satish Mehta, consul-general of India.

The mission will provide business delegates with in-depth exposure to the realities of doing business in India. Benefits include one-on-one business matching meetings, trade information and access to trade show and business forums.

“India and China are seen as business powerhouses right now,” stated 2008 MBOT Chair Jake Dheer. “After our successful trade mission to China last year, it is important for us to continue to explore the opportunities to be gained from a venture with these emerging economies, which is why we chose to lead the trade mission to India.”

The mission will be ten days in total, from October 17-29 of this year. Cities to be visited include: Bangalore – hub for upper-end manufacturing and IT services; Chennai – huge auto manufacturing sector; Delhi – huge manufacturing sector present; and Mumbai – financial capital of India.

Delegates (limited to 35) who register before July 4, 2008 will get an early bird discount. For more information contact MBOT’s Policy & Government Relations Manager Lowell Rubin at 905-273-3524 or email policy@mbot.com.

FOX FINANCIAL CORP.

ESTABLISHED 1975

**QUICK LOW-COST
TERM FINANCING**

**WILL BUY “AGED”
RECEIVABLES**

(416) 766-2910

24/7

Mississauga Business Times

BOOK YOUR FLYERS & INSERTS

Reach key decision-makers individually addressed and includes distribution in our rack locations, throughout the greater Mississauga area. Cost per thousand lower than Canada Post!

***\$95.00 per 1000
5000 copies for
as low as: \$475**

To book your inserts call:
(905) 273-8285

*Based on 4 page folder. Special quote required for larger orders.

DID YOU TAKE A BACKUP?

25% off
For new customers! (BTOT)

Computer Troubleshooters

TECHNOLOGY SOLVED

SPECIALIZING IN SMALL AND HOME-BASED BUSINESS SERVICE
www.comptroub.com • T: 905.366.1711

Dieter Niebler, B.A., J.D.

Barrister, Solicitor, & Notary

NIEBLER LAW OFFICES:

TORONTO OFFICE:

393 UNIVERSITY AVENUE
SUITE 2000
TORONTO, ONTARIO CANADA M5G 1E6

MISSISSAUGA OFFICE:

1462 HURONTARIO STREET
MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO CANADA L5G 3H4
Telephone: 905-271-3232
Facsimile: 905-271-3677
Email: dniebler@nieblerlaw.com

www.nieblerlaw.com

AREAS OF PRACTICE:

- BUSINESS LAW
- PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW
- REAL ESTATE
- ESTATES

FLUENT IN GERMAN

Consumers' Choice
Award
2005-2007
For
Business Excellence

**ABCO BUSINESS
INTERIORS**
Dedicated to Serving the Office Environment

PEOPLE'S
CHOICE
AWARD
2007

5 DAYS ONLY

CORPORATE OFFICE FURNITURE LIQUIDATION SALE

400+ TEKNION WORK STATIONS from \$550.00 ea.
80 TEKNION TELEMARKETING STATIONS from \$450 ea.
10 PRIVATE OFFICE SUITES from \$600 ea.
90 TEKNION AMICUS CHAIRS from \$140.00 ea.
150 STEELCASE CRITERION CHAIRS from \$140.00 ea.
150 STEELCASE LEAP CHAIRS from \$185.00 ea.
100+ FILES from \$225.00 ea.

PLUS MUCH MORE !!

CALL TO SET UP YOUR APPOINTMENT !!

NEW SHOWROOM @
6625 TOMKEN ROAD, UNIT #18
MISSISSAUGA

905.564.1070

www.abcooffice.com