

Diversity Leadership Guide

Diversity Management: Whose Job Is It?

Diversity Management is defined as a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued, so that all can reach their potential and maximize their contributions to an organization's strategic goals and objectives.

A high-performance organization relies on a dynamic workforce with the requisite talents, multidisciplinary knowledge, and cutting edge skills to ensure that it is equipped to accomplish its mission and achieve its goals. All employees, not just managers, have a role in making that happen. Such organizations typically (1) foster a work environment in which people are enabled and motivated to contribute to mission accomplishment and (2) provide both accountability and fairness for all employees. To accomplish these objectives, high-performance organizations are inclusive, drawing on the strengths of employees at all levels and of all backgrounds—an approach consistent with diversity management. The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted a government-wide benchmarking activity, reporting on the government's performance in managing its diverse workforce. Of the experts in the field of diversity management contacted by GAO, a majority cited the following nine practices as essential to success:

- **Top leadership commitment**—a vision of diversity demonstrated and communicated throughout an organization by top-level management.
- **Diversity as part of an organization's strategic plan**—a diversity strategy and plan that are developed and aligned with the organization's strategic plan.
- **Diversity linked to performance**—the understanding that a more diverse and inclusive work environment can yield greater productivity and help improve individual and organizational performance.
- **Measurement**—a set of quantitative and qualitative measures of the impact of various aspects of an overall diversity program.
- **Accountability**—the means to ensure that leaders are responsible for diversity by linking their performance assessment and compensation to the progress of diversity initiatives.
- **Succession planning**—an ongoing, strategic process for identifying and developing a diverse pool of talent for an organization's potential future leaders.
- **Recruitment**—the process of attracting a supply of qualified, diverse applicants for employment.
- **Employee involvement**—the contribution of employees in driving diversity throughout an organization.
- **Diversity training**—organizational efforts to inform and educate management and staff about diversity.

NASA Administrator, Mike Griffin has much to say about diversity:

"The principles of diversity are integral to the NASA Core Values of Safety, Teamwork, Integrity, and Mission Success. Diversity reflects a broad range of values and practices, the overall goal of which is to make sure we take full advantage of the differing viewpoints, ideas, and backgrounds that each of us brings to the table. What is important is the suite of capabilities that each individual brings, not the package it comes in.

We have not always thought that way in this country. I grew up in a place and at a time where these views were not common, and if they were held, they were not respected. That time is passed. Today, at NASA, I am committed to making sure that we continue to move forward in the right direction and that we do not backslide.

The effectiveness of diversity, both from an individual and an institutional perspective, is something I have observed directly and value deeply. In my own experience as a systems engineer, I have seen over and over again that to design the most effective systems, you must have a diversity of views, ideas and perspectives. This requires taking into account all the possible sets of training and experience that come

from people of different backgrounds and life experiences. It is the widest diversity of viewpoints and considerations that go into making good technical solutions for NASA. It is that simple.

Not only do we need diversity of thought and opinion, we need the freedom to express it. We all, especially managers and supervisors, must work to create an environment in which people are not afraid to speak out before we are about to make a critical decision. I am making it known, with this statement among other things, that NASA is an organization where the "head guy" simply will not tolerate the suppression of honestly stated opinions.

Returning astronauts to the Moon, and journeying to Mars and beyond, will require a diverse team of many individuals with the best minds, the most comprehensive expertise, the broadest knowledge and the strongest talent. I am absolutely confident that if we have the appropriate diversity of thought, perspective, background, and experience, we can go where the President's Vision for Exploration will take us. I ask you to come on that journey with me, fully committed to diversity as a model for helping NASA to find and develop the best talent, create effective teams, achieve excellence, and realize mission success".

Transcribed from a recording of the presentation made to the NASA EO/Diversity Board, 2005. Used with permission of NASA Headquarters.

Ideas for Dialogue

1. Who is responsible for fostering an environment in which all employees are motivated and able to contribute to mission accomplishment? Why?
2. What do you see as your individual responsibility to GRC and the Agency to support the effective utilization of our collective diversity?
3. How do/can Center leaders support diversity?
4. How do/can all employees support diversity?