



5 Steps to Diversity Management

The workplace has become a melting pot for people of different cultures. Here are five things you can do to help build a positive multicultural environment:

1. Avoid offensive terms when referring to race, gender or ethno-cultural background.
2. If possible, team new employees with partners from similar backgrounds until they find a place in your organization's culture.
3. Learn about the ethno-cultural backgrounds of people in your organization. You will discover useful information about how to interact positively with them.
4. Find out how long your associates from other cultures have been in the country. This knowledge will help you to gauge their understanding of, and comfort with, local customs.
5. If you are working with people whose cultural attitudes toward time and punctuality differ from yours, discuss the differences with them and try to negotiate a mutually acceptable solution.

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For more information about this subject, check AMA's interpersonal skills and management seminars, books and self-study courses at www.amanet.org.

Intercultural Communication

BY FLORENCE STONE

Executives and managers need to master intercultural communication skills.

Whether your global business entails a joint venture, a partnership or a merger, or simply a new market for an existing product, you will find yourself speaking with others from different countries more frequently than did previous generations of businesspeople. Just as diversity is an issue within your workplace, it should be considered in your communication to those abroad.

When you talk to someone from another country, you need to be sure that you:

Avoid abbreviations. They may be convenient for you, but they may make it difficult for the other person to understand. The same goes for acronyms.

Avoid slang. It will help if the person to whom you are talking has lived in the U.S. at some point, but that doesn't mean that you can safely use slang—it changes over time. For instance, the individual may speak English fluently but may not have been in the U.S. over the last few years and consequently may not know what "get a life" or "whatever" means.

Also, in very formal cultures, slang may be offensive and signal a lack of respect.

Be careful about jokes. They don't translate well. What one culture considers funny, another may consider crude or rude. In order to appreciate a joke, the other party must share cultural references with the speaker. Without them, jokes lose their humor.

Further, most jokes are based on puns and word play, which seldom translate well into another language.

Understand patterns of organization in written communications. People from different cultures organize information

differently. For instance, people from East Asian cultures tend to organize material based on relationships of elements rather than the linear progression typical of Western thinking.

There are also differences in the West. Canadians, for instance, generally like to have recommendations at the beginning of a communication; the remainder of the message supports the recommendation. Germans, on the other hand, traditionally prefer information to be organized chronologically. They give the background first, then the recommendation.

For more information about intercultural communication and diversity management, review the list of AMA communication seminars at www.amanet.org.

More Companies Are Promoting Employee Health & Wellness

55% of companies sponsor programs on exercise and fitness.

Nearly **50%** of companies offer programs on smoking cessation or blood pressure, weight or stress management.

72% of employees attend one or more company-sponsored wellness programs.

45% of companies offer health club discounts to employees.

18% of organizations offer corporate-sponsored, comprehensive annual physicals for all employees. Another **18%** offer them to executives only.

For the full AMA 2004 Survey on Health and Wellness Programs, go to the Research area of www.amanet.org, where you'll find dozens of other AMA surveys on current business issues.

Writing for Personal Success

The quality of our communications can impact our careers. That includes our e-mail. As Deborah Dumaine, author of *Write to the Top* (Random House, 2004) points out, poorly conceived and written e-mail can do a grave disservice to one's career.

"Too many managers just don't believe that taking the time to write a professional-sounding e-mail makes a difference," says Dumaine. She adds, "Many executives judge poorly managers who haven't mastered the skill." Top management will often doubt other aspects of a manager's skills when they receive a careless, error-filled e-mail.

Here are some questions you should ask about your e-mail:

1. How many messages are in a single e-mail? A multi-topic message, especially with an uninformative subject line like "Important Issues to Consider," will be hard to read, harder to remember and hardest to file, according to Dumaine. At best, readers of such e-mail will focus on the first one or two issues.

2. Is the main point of the e-message clear? If readers were to forget everything else, would they still remember that point?

3. Is it clear who the readers are? As you consider this question, keep in

mind that the readers aren't only those to whom the message is being sent but other people who are likely to see it.

4. Has the writer given thought to the attitude of the intended audience: positive, indifferent or resistant? Information not likely to be well received might be better placed between two pieces of good news if possible. E-mail should begin in an upbeat manner.

5. Is it clear what the writer of the e-mail wants the reader to do? Too often, e-messages fail to indicate the next steps. These should be delineated.

6. Are subject statements drafted to get readers' attention? Whatever its nature, the subject statement should be as specific as possible.

7. Is the opening statement designed to interest the reader? An e-mail message is no different from other written messages in this respect.

8. Are paragraphs and sentences readable? To ensure this, a paragraph should contain no more than six lines. Sentences should be limited to 20 words each.

How does your e-mail fare against these questions?

For more information on perfecting your communications, check out AMA's professional development courses and books.

Top Executives Talk Branding Strategies at AMA Conference



Kurt Kuehn

Jerry Dowd

Scott Davis

More than 125 attended AMA's Corporate Branding 2004 conference in Chicago in mid-November to share the latest trends and insights on branding strategies and tactics.

The two-day program featured presentations from 20 top marketing executives from leading companies such as IBM, CIGNA, UBS, LendingTree.com and H&R Block. Scott Davis of Project Consulting chaired the event.

Keynote presenter Kurt Kuehn, SVP, Worldwide Sales and Marketing, UPS, traced steps taken to update the brand image of the global logistics company. And Jerry Dowd, Managing Director, Worldwide Marketing and Communications, United Airlines, shared the thinking behind the development and launch of United's new low cost airline, Ted.

Two special programs for non-profits featured Chris Orzechowski of The Susan B. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Patricia Deneroff of Siegel & Gale and Carol Gifford of America's Second Harvest, recounted the recent branding and positioning efforts on behalf of the national food bank network.

For a full report on the conference, go to www.amanet.org.

Five Ways People Get in Their Own Way

Sometimes, we sabotage our own careers. In his book *Failing Forward*, Dr. John Maxwell, noted author and consultant, reminds us that we are blind to many of our own failings.

Here are five:

1. Poor people skills. In Maxwell's opinion, this one tops the list. He quotes President Theodore Roosevelt: "The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people."

2. A negative attitude. Your reaction to circumstances will also impact your success. If you can learn to make the best of any situation, you can remove a



formidable obstacle that stands between you and your dreams.

3. A bad fit. "Sometimes a case of mismatched abilities, interests, personality or values can be a major contribu-

tor to chronic failure," writes Maxwell. "If there is a poor fit, think about making a change."

4. Lack of focus. People lacking focus have trouble not because they're too busy but because their priorities are out of whack.

5. A weak commitment. Maxwell quotes Goethe, "Until one is committed, there is hesitance, the chance to draw back, and always ineffectiveness."

This article is based on material in *Failing Forward: How to Make the Most of Your Mistakes*, by Dr. John Maxwell, published by Nelson Books.

For more on management and leadership, visit www.amanet.org.

Why Change Efforts Fail

Mitchell J. Neubert, of Baylor University, and Clinton O. Longenecker, of the University of Toledo, conducted 166 focus groups, made up of 830 managers from over 100 firms, to determine why they think change efforts fail.

The research found that lack of “fundamental business practices is the major reason change effort fail.” Organizations and their managers need to practice the fundamentals of communication, collaboration, clarification, delegation, motivation and planning to get results.

In addition, they must exhibit flexibility both in adjusting to shifting job roles and expectations and in adapting their own personal habits or styles to fit the changing work environment.

Finally, credibility is enhanced not only by adhering to sound management fundamentals and exhibiting flexibility but also by demonstrating integrity, which engenders trust.

Here is a summary of survey findings:

■ **80%** of those surveyed pointed to ineffective communication skills/practices, which lead to uncertainty and stress and make it difficult for informed decision making.

■ **79%** cited poor interpersonal skills: for the inability to foster effective working relationships, thereby isolating managers from the informal networks of knowledge and resources necessary to cope with change.

■ **69%** of the respondents mentioned job mismatch as the cause of poor performance from managers and others whose output is critical to change efforts.

■ **66%** pointed to failure to clarify direction and performance expectations as responsible for lack of effective planning, poor motivation, bad resource allocation and inability to navigate through uncertainty.



YOU'RE RIGHT! There's More Stress in The Workplace

According to a survey by ComPsych, 67 percent of managers in 2004, or 18 percent more than in 2003, reported having “high” stress levels. The survey also showed more employees took time off due to stress. Workload remained the number one reason for stress for 40 percent.

“The hopes of employees, inspired by an improving economy, have been dashed since there are still relatively few new hires,” said Dr. Richard A. Chaifetz, chairman and CEO of ComPsych. “The continuation of super-sized workloads, coupled with a lack of confidence in their employer’s plans for new hires, are causing employees’ blood pressure to rise. Paradoxically, many employees are witnessing layoffs even as business is picking up.”

Making work-life services available to employees during the day, and also reminding employees to use them as well as vacation time, are important steps to keep employees’ spirits—and productivity—up.

The study found these major causes of stress:

- **40%** cited workload
- **31%** cited people issues
- **21%** cited juggling work and personal life
- **8%** cited lack of job security

The feelings of stress were found to impact worker performance, as follows:

- **44%** lost 1 hour or more per day in productivity due to stress
- **37%** lost 15–30 min. per day in productivity due to stress
- **19%** reported productivity unaffected by stress

Sign up for AMA’s free monthly e-newsletter devoted to work/life balance, “Get A Life,” or any of AMA’s E-newsletters at www.amanet.org.

Did You Know That Some Customers Aren't Worth Having? *Rather than terminate an employee for poor customer relations, you might want to rid yourself of the customer.*

There are some customers who are just too demanding and who are a continual drain on good employees. Curt Coffman, co-author of the book *Follow This Path: How the World's Greatest Organizations Drive Growth by Unleashing Human Potential*, observes, “When mutual respect isn’t present and cannot be created, the value of the customer dissipates.”

Coffman, who is the Gallup Organization’s Global Practice Leader for Q12 Management Consulting, suggests companies ask themselves, “Are customers like these worth the effort that so many people must make on their behalf?”

Coffman and co-author Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina have even identified warning signs for bad customers.

Symptom 1: Employee Burnout. Bad treatment, including abuse, suffered when dealing with an actively disengaged customer is not something to which employees should be subjected.

Symptom 2: Negative Attitudes. A consistently negative attitude on the part of a client can wear an employee down.

Symptom 3: No Respect. Lack of respect for either the organization or the individual who services the customer’s account may evolve into a personal conflict.

Symptom 4: Obstacles to Effectiveness. Inadequate access to vital information or someone critical to the process, for example, may deter a salesperson’s effectiveness. Whatever the problem, admit that you don’t match up very well and move on.

Symptom 5: A Relationship Based Solely on Price. When the only basis for a business relationship is a lower price, problems are likely in the future.

For more information on building customer relationships, check AMA’s sales and marketing seminars at www.amanet.org.



Here's what you'll find on the
AMA Members-only Website www.amamember.org

MANAGEMENT

Encouraging Work-Life Balance Can Boost Your Bottom Line. Organizations that help employees manage their personal and professional priorities will be rewarded with increased productivity and creativity and lower costs. Here are seven tips to get you started:

LEADERSHIP

Persistence: The Sweet Sweat of Success. How did Sander Flaum transform healthcare ad agency Robert A. Becker from near extinction to Advertising Agency of the Year? By building a culture of persistence.

Two looks at holiday office parties: Take this fun self-assessment to make sure

you know how to eat, drink and be merry—AND still have a job after the holidays!

Holiday Message to Employees: Don't Expect an Extravagant Party this Year. With the economy on the upswing, employees might logically anticipate more elaborate holiday parties this year, right? According to a new study of HR executives, don't count on it.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Is Outsourcing the Answer for Your Organization? Opponents of outsourcing say that it robs America of jobs. Proponents say outsourcing is a necessary part of globalization that will benefit U.S. companies. Here's an overview that will help you decide what's best for your company.

Book of the Month:
The New Workforce—Five Sweeping Trends That Will Shape Your Company's Future, by Harriet Hankin (AMACOM 2005)

Find out what actions your company must take today to remain productive and competitive tomorrow in Harriet Hankin's groundbreaking new book.



AMA Conferences/Special Events Calendar

FEB. 28-MAR. 2, NEW ORLEANS • Training Conference & Expo 2005—Discover the latest training resources at the AMA Booth, plus AMA merchandise and special show-only discounts.

APRIL 4-8, LAS VEGAS • "AMA's Course for Presidents and CEOs"—A weeklong refresher and re-energizer for senior executives. Time to refocus on core strategies and rejuvenate in the company of peers and dynamic facilitators. AMA Members save \$500.

APRIL 27-29, RHODES, GREECE • 37th Global HR Conference "The Impact of Globalization on Human Capital"—Sponsored by Management Centre Europe. Go to www.mce.be for details.

MAY 23-27, HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC • "AMA's Course for Presidents and CEOs"—Polish your leadership skills and hone your strategic vision at this weeklong program. Return to work with new ideas and renewed enthusiasm. AMA Members save \$500.

JUNE 10, SCOTTSDALE, AZ • Current Issues Forum: Doing Business in Today's India—Experts on the political, cultural and business climate in this burgeoning world power will discuss the opportunities and the potential pitfalls. The Sanctuary. Members \$995, Nonmembers \$1,195.

SEPTEMBER 18-21, SAN DIEGO • 13th Annual Administrative Professionals Conference—Dynamic keynoters, valuable skill-building sessions and learning from peers. Manchester Grand Hyatt. Go to www.apcevent.com.

SEPTEMBER 20-21, LAS VEGAS • Sales Leadership 2005—Join other executives in an in-depth exploration of the role of leadership in building and strengthening your sales force. Call 1-800-262-9699 for details.

OCTOBER 14, LAS VEGAS • 4th Annual China Forum: Doing Business in Today's China—Intelligence professionals and business experts on the world's largest and fastest growing economy discuss the opportunities and pitfalls of doing business in, or with, China. Caesars Palace. Members \$1,095, Nonmembers \$1,295. Register by June 30, 2005, and save \$100. Call 1-800-262-9699 for additional information.

For details and to register for this event, go to www.amanet.org or call **1-800-262-9699**.

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