



## COMPANIES TAKE DIVERSITY MORE SERIOUSLY! True or false?

by Feroza Sader

It is true that some companies are taking Diversity seriously while others are still stuck in the belief that "birds of a feather must flock together"!

Best way to fight ignorance is with knowledge.

There is a huge drive – not only in South Africa but all over the world – to include people of diverse backgrounds in the workplace. Well I can't say much though for some like Google or the South African Police for that matter!! Yes they are "trying" but let's hope they "achieve" soon enough.

**What are your experiences at your workplace?**

The challenges we are facing in our organisations have become more complex and more difficult but having a diverse workforce has great benefits in bringing in many perspectives. Creating a pool of inputs that are generated by

men and women, young employees and senior ones, and by perspectives from emanating from different cultures can only be of great value to an organization.

**What are your experiences at your workplace?**

Here are 5 key benefits to having diversity in teams:

1. More innovative results
2. More productive
3. Takes people out of their comfort zones
4. Diverse teams outperform homogenous groups because they work harder cognitively
5. Better decisions are made.

**Do you agree?**

However, we do not live or work in utopia, so we need to be aware of some essentials that need to be in place. For example:

- 1 Respect in the Workplace – where acceptance of individual differences exists.
- 2 Conflict-resolution – where prejudice, racism, discrimination and a lack of respect is handled justly and firmly.
- 3 Co-existence of ethnic and cultural differences – the workforce is trained on understanding unfair prejudices against others of different colour, culture, ethnicity or religion. Harboring prejudices can be a reality.
- 4 Gender equality – women are not viewed as objects (where harassment can take place) or as inferior in competence.
- 5 No age-discrimination - motivating a culture where multiple generations of workers can work together.
- 6 Disabilities are respected - there is a fair and comfortable work environment for disabled employees.

**How many of the above exist in all workplaces around us?**

Addressing communication hindrances - hiring immigrants who speak little or no English can sometimes reduce productivity due to poor ability to communicate.

We all come from different cultures and backgrounds. If we are going to "judge" each other then it should be based on our actions and character, and not on outward appearances.

**Do you agree that prejudices should not be tolerated in the workplace?**

Our focus should be on looking for the good and not on building barriers! We can with a little effort learn to work together for a common goal – which is the success of our organisations where we make a living!

**Isn't that a good enough reason?**

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Feroza lives by this saying:  
*'There are only two days in the year that nothing can be done. Yesterday and tomorrow'. So today is the right day to love, do and live.*

