



# DIVERSITY

## In the Workplace



**William Morgan**

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## **About the Author**

### ***William D. Morgan, Psy.D.***

Dr. Bill Morgan is an executive, business, and career coach and founder of Leadership Concepts ([www.LeadershipConcepts.net](http://www.LeadershipConcepts.net)), a Philadelphia area based coaching and leadership development firm. He works with small-business owners, executives, managers, entrepreneurs, and service professionals to help them significantly increase their performance, productivity, and profitability. In addition, Dr. Morgan coaches business and professionals in career transition, assisting them to bring about increased alignment between their career and their own individuality.

Prior to entering the field of coaching, he was a psychologist in private practice and for a major counseling organization. His experience also includes work in community agencies, hospitals, and as director of human resource development. Dr. Morgan has a doctorate in clinical psychology and has been adjunct faculty at two universities. He regularly speaks to groups throughout the United States on increasing personal and career effectiveness and presenting business and leadership enhancing training workshops.

## **Diversity in the Workplace**

### **What is the climate in your company regarding diversity?**

In our diverse work world, we must be able to work well with people who are different from us. They may be different culturally, racially, or in gender, age or background. America's workforce and consumers are fast becoming more diverse. It is imperative that we understand and respond appropriately to these differences.

More and more, companies are recognizing that a diverse workplace is not a burden, but an asset. The challenge is to maintain a positive, collaborative workplace where differences are understood, appreciated, respected, and handled skillfully.

Unfortunately, many companies are experiencing tensions and problems due to diversity. These tensions can distract workers, create unpleasant work conditions, and even lead to lawsuits. Much of this can be avoided, if people are more aware of and informed about cultural differences, learn to behave sensitively, and develop a comfort level with diversity.

Should you decide your company would benefit from training programs focusing on workplace diversity, call Leadership Concepts at (610) 687-7615.

Additional copies of this special report are available free at our website ([www.LeadershipConcepts.net](http://www.LeadershipConcepts.net)) or bound copies may be purchased for \$12.00 (which includes shipping and handling within the U.S.).

See the Leadership Concepts website for additional materials and programs you or your company may find beneficial.

Best Wishes Always,

Dr. Bill Morgan  
Bringing Out the Best in People

## **How to Succeed in a Diverse Workplace by William Morgan**

The demographics of the American workplace is changing and will continue to change rapidly. Diversity is truly a facet of the American workplace. Today's workforce is a mosaic of different races, ages, genders, ethnic groups, religions, and lifestyles. Dealing with a diverse workplace is new terrain for many managers and executives. They must learn how to handle situations skillfully and create a work environment in which diversity and differences are not only accepted but valued so that all employees can contribute to their fullest potential. Good intentions are not enough.

### **What is Diversity?**

Diversity is the range of significant differences among people which may be racial, cultural, or related to gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical abilities. Diversity in the workplace brings with it differences in communication styles, outlooks, goals and behaviors.

### **Benefits and Challenges**

Diversity brings differences which can help organizations create new and innovative products and services, better meet the needs of customers, and create new opportunities.

Diversity also means challenge. Misunderstandings and lack of awareness, sensitivity, and skill in dealing with people who are different can lead to problems and hinder organizations in achieving their mission.

### **Dimensions of Diversity**

Some critical dimensions of diversity in the workplace are:

- Ethnicity
- Age
- Race
- Gender
- Religion
- Status
- Physical ability/disability
- Values
- Family Situation
- Sexual Orientation
- Social Class
- Communication styles
- Economics
- Workplace goals

## The Business Case for Diversity Awareness

Why is it worthwhile to value diversity and work towards a workplace that is comfortable with diversity? Here are some ways in which well-managed diversity can be a competitive advantage:

1. **Increased productivity.** With fewer problems and distractions, a workplace where people feel respected, included, and valued will lead to better productivity.
2. **Fewer lawsuits.** Lawsuits cost organizations enormous amounts of money, not to mention the time and energy lost and the stress people experience.
3. **Retention of business.** Consumers pay increasingly more attention to the demographics and attitudes of businesses with which they do business.
4. **Increasing marketing capabilities.** A diverse employee group can provide insight into the thinking of a wide range of customers.
5. **Creating the largest possible talent pool for recruiting.** In today's competitive work world, it is important to have access to the largest possible pool of smart, talented, energetic people.
6. **Becoming the employer of choice.** Word spreads about which companies are best to work for—for women, people of color, people with families, etc. And, a bad image is hard to change.
7. **Morale, creativity, and decision making.** Businesses who are diverse and manage diversity well are often said to have employees with better morale, heightened creativity, and higher-quality decision-making.

## How Businesses Can Manage Diversity Effectively

Companies and organizations that support diversity and manage it well typically focus their change efforts on both individual and organizational or systemic change.

Successful diversity efforts begin with the organizational leadership communicating that diversity and a positive environment is a priority. An organization needs a vision and plan for how healthy diversity will be a reality. This plan can be developed with the help of consultants, or a task force within the organization. An active "diversity council" can help ensure ongoing action and change.

## Diversity Training

Organizations and businesses often begin or improve their diversity work with a program on diversity awareness and skill-building. After initial awareness training, additional training in managing diversity can help leaders and managers deal with the challenges of a diverse workforce. Diversity training involves skill-building in areas such as:

1. Understanding our own cultural biases
2. Creating a culture of inclusion
3. Managing a diverse team
4. Communication skills for multicultural teams and organizations
5. Preventing problems such as sexual harassment and discrimination
6. Leveraging diversity

In addition, individuals and teams can be coached in developing skills, making changes, and increasing collaboration.

## Leveraging Diversity

We are now in an age where the most effective employees, managers, and businesses will be those who are the most understanding of diversity issues and capable of leveraging diversity.

Being a business or a team where people are comfortable with diversity creates many advantages, including:

1. Fewer people problems and distractions
2. Better morale and performance
3. Enhanced creativity and decision-making
4. Hiring and retaining the best people
5. Better understanding and service to customers and clients

Highly successful businesses position themselves to be current or even ahead of the pack in training and equipping their employees and managers in handling diversity.

**Here are six recommended action steps to leverage diversity in your business:**

1. Have your leadership read a book on workplace diversity. Recommended books include:

- Workplace Diversity: A Managers Guide to Solving Problems and Turning Diversity into a Competitive Advantage by Katherine Esty, Richard Griffin, and Marcie Schorr Hirsch
  - The Diversity Toolkit: How You Can Build and Benefit from a Diverse Workforce by William Sonnenschein
2. Begin a diversity initiative in your organization. Begin with the leadership, and develop a vision, plan, and organization for the initiative.
  3. A diversity council or task force can help create momentum and structure for the process.
  4. Diversity Training. You may begin your diversity work with a program or series of programs on diversity awareness. These workshops typically range from a half-day to a full-day.
  5. Diversity initiatives and problem-solving can be facilitated by business or executive coaching. This one-on-one or team coaching can provide structure and support for transition and change.

While it is often challenging for businesses, executives, and managers to adapt to and leverage the evolving diverse workplace, success in this area can be had and is well worth the effort. The skills and attitudes important for relating to co-workers and customers should be a focus for every leader and organization in today's workplace.

**We hope this special report has provided you with stimulating thoughts and ideas about how you can succeed in a diverse workplace, and position your organization to thrive in today's business environment.**

**The next step is to take action.**

**The author would love to hear how this special report has inspired you or helped you act on your ideas. You can reach him using the information below.**

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