

Diversity and SOCIAL STYLE



What is Diversity?

Most large organizations have made strides to increase diversity in their workforces, and many implement “diversity training” to help their leaders and employees be more aware of the issues faced by a diverse workforce. But too often this training fails to achieve its desired results, and can leave people feeling confused about what concrete steps they can take to benefit from an understanding of diversity.

Part of the problem is that some organizations don't provide their people with a clear definition of diversity or how it can benefit their bottom lines. According to an article in Training Magazine,ⁱ the most effective training programs treat diversity as an inclusive process, rather than excluding people who don't meet the traditional definitions of a diverse person. Essentially, diversity encompasses any dimension that differentiates a person or group from others. This definition includes everyone. Since we are all different from one another, we all contribute our own unique perspectives and abilities. The key is to educate people about how to leverage these differences for business success.

How is SOCIAL STYLE Related to Diversity?

SOCIAL STYLE describes differences and similarities in people's natural behaviors and work preferences, with the ultimate goal of teaching people how to manage those preferences for increased productivity and effectiveness. Over many years of practice and research, we've found that each Style has specific strengths that help them succeed in their work lives. However, one person's strengths can be another person's stress. Success at the team and organizational levels requires people of all Styles to work together, and in order for this to happen they need to understand basic Style differences and how to manage these differences.

Regardless of a person's ethnicity, age, or nationality, he or she will have behavioral preferences that result in a particular SOCIAL STYLE. TRACOM collects data from across the world and we've found that all people can be described by their Style behaviors, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, or nationality. This is important because it means that one of the most effective ways to work toward success is to understand other people's SOCIAL STYLES. In essence, this is the gateway to getting to know others and working effectively with them.

How Can SOCIAL STYLE Contribute to Bottom Line Results?

Understanding SOCIAL STYLE concepts can increase the power of a diverse workforce in several ways. One of the most important ways it contributes to success is through its ability to help people from different cultures and societies understand and interact with one another. In the modern world, working across cultures is not only unavoidable, it is necessary. Common barriers to success include language differences, cultural nuances for appropriate behavior, global politics, and differing concepts of authority structures and relationships. Misunderstanding any of these things can make working together difficult, but the combination of them can be disastrous.

Most people would agree that the first step in working with individuals from other cultures is to develop a good personal relationship as the basis for success. In fact, in many societies taking the time to develop a trusting relationship is essential before work even begins. SOCIAL STYLE can help you do this. By objectively observing people's behaviors you can gain an understanding of their Style preferences. By then practicing good Versatility skills, you can more quickly make them comfortable in their interactions with you.



Diversity and SOCIAL STYLE (continued)



As an example, consider working with people from China. TRACOM's research shows that, on average, they are more direct and Tell Assertive than Americans. By knowing this ahead of time, you can anticipate how to make Chinese individuals more comfortable by appealing to their behavioral comfort zones. You can expect them to be more direct and blunt than people from your own culture. You can also more accurately diagnose each individual's Style, relative to others in the Chinese culture. There will still be many Chinese people who have Amiable and Analytical Styles (less Tell Assertive), but they may come across slightly different from Americans who have these same Styles. A Chinese person who profiles as moderately Analytical in China might profile as a Driving Style in the U.S. This information can be very useful when traveling across cultures and working with culturally diverse populations.

Because people in other cultures are different in their Style behaviors, TRACOM develops norms that are specific for countries and regions throughout the world. This gives people an accurate understanding of how their Style is viewed within

their specific culture. It also provides people with an idea of how they might be viewed when working with people from other countries and cultures.

Leadership Skills

Regardless of individual's cultural backgrounds, leaders can use SOCIAL STYLE in their everyday business and personal interactions to increase their effectiveness with others. Understanding their team member's Styles can help leaders run more effective meetings, delegate more efficiently, effectively manage conflict, and mentor and develop their people with greater skill. TRACOM's research shows that leaders who practice their Versatility skills are seen by both their direct reports and bosses as being more effective across a wide spectrum of leadership abilities.ⁱⁱ

In summary, developing a diverse workforce is all about enhancing productivity and helping people of different backgrounds work together towards success. These are the same goals that have been espoused by TRACOM's SOCIAL STYLE Model for almost half a century. Our practice and research has proven that by understanding people's Styles, and learning basic

skills for working with people of different Styles, people can contribute more effectively to the success of their businesses.

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ⁱ Training Diversity: The Path to Inclusion, by Holly Dolezalek (available at http://www.managesmarter.com/msg/content_display/publications/e3i1e3d5e92979d92c19232d7c2864560b4)

ⁱⁱ TRACOM Managerial Success Study, downloadable from www.tracomcorp.com

