

Making High Performance through Building Inclusion and Leveraging Diversity a Way of Life

By Frederick A. Miller and Judith Katz

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Fueled by her passion for addressing systemic oppression, Judith brings more than 25 years of experience to her work in strategic culture change. Known for her boundless energy and sharp analytical mind, her work is an extension of her lifelong commitment to championing inclusion and eliminating barriers to culture change. Judith helps clients achieve long-term sustainable change by connecting business strategies to efforts to leverage diversity and create a culture of inclusion. Judith became a partner in The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc., in 1985 and currently serves as Executive Vice President. She is co-editor of *The Promise of Diversity* (McGraw-Hill, 1994) and co-author, with Frederick A. Miller, of *The Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Real Power of Diversity* (Berrett-Koehler, 2002).

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Level One: Developing Individual Awareness. Many organizations currently involved in diversity-related activities are doing "diversity in a box." Their diversity activities are prepackaged, "one-size-fits-all" training exercises strictly relating to differences between people. The focus is often primarily on race and gender differences. Some add differences in sexual orientation, personal style, physical ability, or nationality. The goal of the work is to help people from the dominant culture better understand people from other cultures or social identity groups. The implied benefit and desired outcome is to change the way people see difference. To do this kind of diversity work, organizations primarily use awareness education programs, ranging in length from a few hours to a few days, coupled with cultural events such as Ethnic Food Lunches, Diversity Days, and "Culture Celebration" months. These activities are designed to increase individual awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of other cultures, but this is only the beginning.

Level Two: Implementing Various Diversity and Inclusion Programs and Activities. Sometimes the initial awareness about diversity issues leads to the awareness that more work needs to be done. At this point, organizations may institute additional programs, such as mentoring, support networks, high potential career development, and targeted recruiting. When implementing multiple programmatic interventions, organizations often select a menu of programs from different vendors or decide on programs based on benchmarking studies, each focusing on a specific diversity issue. While the programs may be coordinated through the same department or committee of the organization, they remain loosely related at best.

Level Three: Combining Programs and Activities into an "Initiative." When an organization realizes that its future success hinges on its ability to achieve higher performance through leveraging diversity and inclusion, the diversity work that had been given piecemeal attention as a soft, people related pursuit becomes a business priority. The various elements of the diversity work are evaluated, and those activities that fit with the strategic intent of the organization are knitted together into a Diversity Initiative. The investment in this initiative is justified through the creation of an organizational imperative or business case. Such a shift is based on a comprehensive diagnosis of the interrelationship of three key areas: high performance, leveraging diversity, and a culture of inclusion. A comprehensive strategy is developed, including time frames, accountabilities, and the requisite resources to achieve the strategic goals. The investment also includes changes in people related systems, management practices, and accountabilities. The focus moves from the needs of individuals to the needs of the entire system, and the need to create new competencies for a new culture and workplace.

Level Four: Linking and Aligning the Initiative into the Strategic Work of the Organization. For maximum effectiveness in changing people's behaviors and enhancing organizational outcomes, an organization must integrate leveraging diversity and inclusion into the strategic work and goals of the organization. This means integrating the new competencies and practices into all of the organization's other major strategies and other initiatives: leadership, quality, mergers/acquisitions, strategic alliances, downsizing, re-engineering, becoming a "preferred stock," or serving their customers or clients.

Level Five: A Way of Doing Business. As an organization unleashes the synergies gained from integrating its leveraging diversity and inclusion efforts with its strategic goals, it can measure the benefits in new or improved processes and outcomes. Institutionalizing the change involves using these and other measurements to create accountability among senior executives, managers, and all members of the organization. Everyone in the organization needs to acquire, practice, and continually improve their grasp of these new competencies, thereby continually

enhancing the organization's skill base, culture, overall performance, and organizational success.

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