

Diversity Works!



Diversity at Work
in London

Updates



Dear Readers,

It was my pleasure to hear from several of you, about the last issue, "The Perils of Political Correctness" in the workplace. I heard coast-to-coast from readers who were from every background who reassured me that I wasn't alone in my assessment of political correctness going too far in the workplace. They recounted their stories of how they were scared to open their mouth for fear of offending someone.

I found it especially intriguing that the readers that I heard from the most were those who had identified themselves as aboriginal, francophone, or black, who applauded my efforts to make the workplace more natural. What I find remarkable here, is that these are typically the people that everyone is so afraid of offending, but they were telling me, that they are fed up with it, too!

The bottom line is that workplace respect has to be a core value. Inclusion means "everyone" and workplace equity is for all employees. If we can keep this in mind as we move forward in our organizations, it makes it easier to deal with issues as they arise. By focusing on building workplaces where all employees can contribute by removing systemic barriers, we can remove ourselves from the "us" versus "them" attitudes that can be so prevalent.

Since our last issue, we have released our webinar "Diversity & Inclusion on a Budget", and have received very positive responses. Several of the registrants are showing this webinar during their diversity

committee meetings. This is a brilliant idea, and a cost effective one. At a \$125 plus HST, your organization can view the webinar as many times as you would like for a period of 1 week. If you are stumped with ideas about what to do with your diversity committee, the webinar will give you many suggestions for activities that you can take on.

We are catching up with updating our website, so if you have missed a past issue of the Diversity Works! newsletter, you can find them all on-line now. We had experimented with a new format for one issue of "Out At Work" and the link was expired, but the contents are there now.

If you have a diversity event that you would like to let the world know about, please get in touch with us and we can try to help you out. We have a growing international readership and may be able to post your event online or circulate it through our newsletter.

We have recently implemented pronunciation and elocution classes for internationally trained professionals via Skype. These classes are geared toward people who don't have a lot of time to leave the office to take classes, but wish to have private sessions. We offer face-to-face classes in Toronto and London, Ontario. Take a look at our website and you will see that we have highly experienced instructors that can help you to meet your communication goals at your pace and convenience.

The Christmas season brings to the forefront many issues of political correctness. . Is it a Christmas party or is it a Holiday party?

At the risk of sounding politically incorrect, but with the intent of being inclusive, I would like to wish all of our readers a Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays or a restful vacation.

On behalf of the team at Diversity At Work in London Inc., we would like to extend our appreciation for your continued readership and thank you for your business. We wish you an inclusive workplace in 2011.

Evelina Silveira
President

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Capitalizing On Your Diversity Committee

So you have put a diversity committee together, and then like most people, you probably ask yourself: "Now what?"

Organizations initiate diversity committees all the time, with the best of intentions, however, within about a 6-9 month time frame, they are struggling to remain afloat.

One of the assumptions that organizers make, is to believe that a committee can be struck solely on the basis of passion and representation. Passion is not enough! Recruiting members with a variety of skills and knowledge will get you a lot further than "passion about diversity". Don't get me wrong! There has to be some excitement at the table or it will be quite difficult to go forward.

With recruiting on the basis of diversity representation, there is an implied assumption that a diverse group of committee members will adequately represent all constituencies --- but that is not always the case. There is also the assumption with diversity representation (or recruiting someone on the basis of their race, gender, ability etc.) that we, as humans, can be reduced to one dimension. How flattering is that? Are we not a complicated mix of many diversity dimensions? Recruiting people on a uni-dimensional criterion is ineffective, yet very common. I have had this happen to me a couple of times, and I have to say, when you have discovered that you are filling a "quota", it can be rather uncomfortable.

Diversity committees need skilled members, a diversity strategy to follow, and support from senior

management. If one or all of these requirements are missing from your committee, there is a good chance that you are missing out on the true potential that can be derived from your committee.

Think for a moment. Are you investing the time and energy you put into recruiting good diversity committee members as you do to your board of directors? If your reply is "no", then it shouldn't surprise you if you are reaching a deadlock in some way. It could be due to a lack of direction, activities, leadership and/or essential skills to maintain the committee's momentum.

Now consider your board of directors and how they got their positions. Usually it is because: they have a special skill set; or knowledge that can enhance the business goals of the organization; they were recommended; or they have special contacts that can be beneficial.

Believe it or not, if you make the parallel between a diversity committee and a board of directors, they should bear a striking similarity.

With a board of directors there usually is:

- An application process
- An interview
- References checks

Board of directors are recruited to fill many roles such as: fundraising, special events planning; governance, financial etc. They have to fill a void in the organization that is based on a member leaving or because of

a new skill set that the organization is seeking. They all serve a term.

Haven't you ever been on a committee where you felt some of the members were too tired to generate any new ideas or to problem solve? Having a pre-determined length of service can contribute to a dynamic, productive, goal-oriented committee. With this in place, it guarantees that more talent will be recruited in the future.

In any case, a board member needs to be more than passionate about the organization that they have chosen to serve. They need to be prepared, available, skilled, well respected and a champion of the organization.

You might ask, "What does Evelina know about diversity committees?" I have to say that my knowledge is both practical and theoretical. I have spent the last few years researching the characteristics of effective diversity committees, and I have also served on many different types of committees which served as the inspiration for this issue.

Some were quite formal and others were less so. There were those that were comprised of volunteers who signed up, and then, there were ones where the members were personally recruited.

(Continued on page 3)

In most cases, they had one thing in common – they failed. There is one exception that I believe still continues but the rest were doomed. I don't mean to sound fatalistic, but there were salient features that were common to the ones that died off, including:

- Lack of guiding principles or terms of reference
- No budget
- No diversity and inclusion strategy that they could be linked with
- No endorsement or the participation of senior management.

The membership was comprised of very similarly-minded individuals. (I thought this was supposed to be a diversity committee!)

By telling you this, it is not intended to deter you from starting a diversity committee or to shut down the one that you have. I think Diversity Committees are wonderful, but they have to be built with a group of dynamic and skilled individuals who have committed the same way to the organizational goals as a board member would.

Here are a few great reasons why your organization may wish

to consider having a Diversity Committee:

- Gives decision-makers a broader view to test ideas or gain insight and direction on certain diversity related issues
- Helps to effect organizational culture change
- Establishes processes and practices that can be sustainable and profitable for the long term
- Guides an organization to harness the differences to make them work
- Easy to make decisions that do not take into consideration the organizational diversity if you do not have a resource base to draw from.

In essence your diversity committee is really about preparing your organization for "inclusion" and the process of leveraging the power of diversity.

If you have been considering having a diversity committee and don't know where to begin, build a business case for your senior management that will justify the time away from your regular work duties and the costs that may be involved. Be prepared to show them how an effectively run diversity committee can help them to improve the bottom line through:

- Creating educational opportunities and awareness of diversity and inclusion
- Helping them reach new markets (globally or locally)
- Reducing their chances of bias or discrimination costs
- Improving their hiring and retention rates amongst employees with barriers
- Improving employee engagement rates
- Enhancing and creating community awareness of the organization.

If you haven't done so already, now is the time to start thinking about your goals for your diversity committee in the upcoming year. If they are written down with some time lines and metrics, you are well on your way to creating an energized diversity committee that will take your organization forward.

Evelina Silveira,
Editor and President

Types of Diversity Committees

Sometimes, diversity committees are also referred to as "councils", but go by many other names including:

- Diversity and Equity Committee
- Employee Resource Group
- Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- Diversity and Race Relations Committee
- Diversity Awareness and Resource Committee
- Diversity Affairs Select Committee



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www.diversityintheworkplace.ca

Indicators of a Well Functioning Diversity Committee

Here are some of the activities that need to be happening in order for you to have a productive committee. The list is by no means exhaustive, but we have included the major ones.

- Senior management endorses and has a least one active representative on the Committee
- All levels of the organization are represented and informed about the work of the Committee
- A strategic plan is in place
- Regular meetings are held and attendance is good
- A budget has been allocated
- Actions are taken at each meeting
- There are time frames and metrics in place to measure your Committee's return on investment.



We Want to Hear From You

Would you to submit a question for our columnists?

Do you have any feedback or suggestions for future issues?

Please e-mail us at info@yourdiversityatwork.com

Did You Know that Diversity At Work:

- Conducts cultural competency assessments.
- Provides ethnic marketing.
- Does training in international business etiquette and social customs.
- Helps build business partnerships between mainstream and aboriginal communities.
- Assists you to start up and troubleshoot your diversity committee.
- Provides elocution classes for foreign trained professionals.
- Develops diversity strategic plans and More ...

Diversity Committee Manual

Would you like to be on our list to receive information about our upcoming manual about Diversity Committees. Please e-mail us at info@yourdiversityatwork.com.



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Troubleshooting Your Diversity Committee

Have you encountered an impasse with your Diversity Committee?

Here is a simple, quick diagnosis.

Issue	Check
Not sure what your purpose is?	Do you have a Terms of Reference? or Are your Terms of Reference clear? Do you have a business plan?
The organization is not sure what your committee is doing?	Have you set up a system in place that ensures accountability to the management and other employees (bulletins, minutes, presentations)?
Committee members lack energy?	Have you set in place a length of service for the committee members? Is it the right fit between the task assigned and the person? Do your meetings lack structure? Are all the participants taking part in the meeting? Would reassigning them to a new project, create a renewed energy for the committee?
Committee members bring personal agendas and personnel issues to the table?	Were the committee members clear from the beginning that the purpose of the committee was to create workplace equity and inclusion? Was it made clear to the committee members that individual personnel issues were out of the scope of the committee?
Are your meeting unstructured and the same people are always participating?	Does your Committee Chair have the qualifications to chair a meeting and have the skills to create an inclusive, participatory team? Committee Chairs should be screened for these skills.

Do you need a quick answer to a diversity question or problem?

We can help. Skype and telephone consultation is available.

Reasonable rates. Call 519-659-4777.



Diversity & Inclusion On A Budget Webinar

Available On Demand

Is your organization putting your diversity strategy on hold because of budgetary constraints?

Are you hard-pressed for creative ideas to keep the diversity momentum going without breaking the bank?

Now, in the comfort of your office and at a time that is convenient for you, learn how to make your organization a diversity success, while keeping the costs down:

Would you like to learn how to:

- Reduce your diversity recruitment costs?
- Minimize allegations of discrimination in your hiring practices?
- Improve your accessibility for both your employees as well as your clients?
- Create a more inclusive training environment?
- Make management and staff accountable to diversity and inclusion practices?
- Allocate diversity dollars more effectively.

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Cost \$125 plus taxes. Your organization will have access to the webinar for one week.

To register for this webinar, visit:

<http://www.yourdiversityatwork.com>



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Ask the Elocution Instructor



Dear Elocution Instructor:

I'm having problems communicating with a few of the non-native English speakers in the organization. I am their supervisor. When I ask them, "Do you understand?" They say no. I am obviously not getting through to them. Can you give me some hints about how to speak more clearly to people for whom English is a second language? Also, how do I know I'm getting through?

Baffled in Brantford

Dear Baffled:

Thank you for this wonderful entry. Two issues seem to be in question: one is communication technique and the other sound production.

Communication technique always requires focus and responsibility. For you, as a native speaker, to question whether your message is being received as you meant it, shows great awareness and sensitivity – two wonderful starting points.

Effective communication begins with the speaker taking responsibility for the communication process. The words one expresses must make sense to the

listening ear, as all communication is always receiver based.

In your entry, you question whether you are getting through (to those members who are non-native English speakers). However, it bears mentioning that these members were hired because they were deemed to possess the skill set required to make an impact to your organization's bottom line.

Remember that as the team's supervisor, it is imperative to establish an open communication environment – motivate your members to give and receive feedback in an ongoing basis. They're looking towards you for leadership – to inspire confidence and trust. They're also looking at your honesty, your integrity – the consistency in your actions and words.

If the response to, "Do you understand?" is, "No." Perhaps one of the above mentioned points has gone amiss.

Diversity at work requires the sensitivity and awareness that you demonstrate in your opening statement. However, there are instances when those in supervisory positions will speak down to foreign-trained individuals out of their own fear of not being understood or out of their own fear of not being heard. Nobody likes being spoken down to. And the insult is compounded by the fact that some foreign-trained professionals may be better qualified than those in the position of authority.

Therefore, effective communication also requires that we be conscious of our attitudes and that we exercise this consciousness through the choice of our attitude from one moment to the next. We must listen with the intent to understand. Communication in the work environment must be open, flow in all directions and where ideas are not only

considered, but where there's the creative trust to express them – thus making the word the most powerful tool in the workplace.

You also request suggestions as to how to speak more clearly. I would venture to say that the issues illustrated in your entry have less to do with sound production than they do with communication technique, although these overlap in the communication process.

For suggestions please read through the above work, but also consider:

▪ **Not taking the talking stick approach** (you delegate while the rest passively listen; instead, engage your team & make them active participants in the decision making process)

▪ **Be specific in your questions** (simplicity is best; ask for feedback at various points)

▪ **Be aware of phrasing** (illustrate specific examples of what you wish **to be done**)

▪ **Use visual aids** (engage your team visually; guide them through what you wish to achieve)

▪ **As a supervisor**, you get paid to manage and lead your team; therefore it is your duty to shift the tone of communication in the workplace. Make use of all your communication skills, but don't forget your interpersonal ones.

Be authentic. Your authenticity will read to your team members as strength of character, candour, charisma – that indefinable quality that is infectious and appealing to all.

Elocution Teacher

Alfredo Garcia

Advertise in Diversity Works!

Stretch your advertising dollars and reach an international audience that supports workplace diversity.

Call us for our rates.

Phone: 519-659-4777

Do You or One of Your Employees Need Help With Your English Pronunciation Skills?

HERE ARE SOME SIGNS THAT A PRONUNCIATION CLASS MAY BE WELL-SUITED FOR YOU:

- People tell you that they don't understand you when you speak.
- Errors are frequently made because of misunderstanding.
- Conflicts arise as a result of miscommunication -- the intonation that the speaker has used has been mistaken for anger, lack of interest, lack of self-confidence etc.
- Opportunities to speak in front of others are turned down because of feeling self-conscious.
- Increasing frustration on the part of the speaker, clients and co-workers because of misunderstanding.
- Your boss has identified that you need to improve your speaking skills to advance in your position.
- You are finding it difficult to get past a first job interview.
- You may not fit any of the categories mentioned above, but you feel that a pronunciation class will help you to refresh and recall particular mouth positions and sounds.

CONSIDER PRONUNCIATION CLASSES WITH DIVERSITY AT WORK!

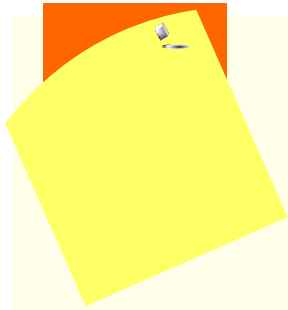
These classes will help you to become more comfortable with North American English pronunciation and its usage. This is particularly the case if you are unsure of how and when to use it properly. You will learn the grammar rules to help you become a more confident and successful speaker. In addition, learning proper pronunciation will also help you learn the particular mouth positions needed in order to create the proper sounds. The classes suit everyone, and are given in a warm and friendly atmosphere at a pace that will meet your needs, make you feel relaxed and support you throughout the course.

Investing in your verbal communication skills can lead to: improved self-confidence; obtaining and retaining a job; and widening your customer base. Give yourself or your employees the gift of clearer pronunciation.

Call us today and have your name placed on a list for public classes in London and Toronto. Ask us about our onsite classes for a group of your employees.



Ask the Consultant



Dear Ask the Diversity Consultant:

My manager recently called me into his office to tell me that my behaviour is offending people in my workplace. I was told that my co-workers feel like I am always putting down Canada and "Canadians". I guess I have a tendency to make a lot of comparisons between my country and Canada. I just don't like Canada. The guys that I work with told my manager that he should send me back because I seem so ungrateful. Isn't this a free country, and doesn't this mean that I have the right to say what I want?

Problems in Peterborough

Dear Problems:

Unfortunately, the sentiments that you have expressed have become very common place. As a consultant who works with local businesses on diversity related issues/problems, "ethnocentrism" is frequently mentioned as a

frustration that many workers and managers raise when they hire New Canadians. *Ethnocentrism can occur when you believe that your culture and beliefs are superior to others and as a result you tend to view everything from your own cultural perspective.* It's not just New Canadians who can be ethnocentric; any group can have this belief. I believe that sometimes this comes as a result of frustration and homesickness, and unmet dreams. With time, ethnocentrism can dissipate with feelings of greater integration. Common examples of ethnocentrism are making derogatory remarks about the Canadian: educational system, parenting style, work ethic and moral behaviour etc. Try for a moment to imagine if a Canadian said something that was derogatory about the educational system of the country that you have come from. Would you not be hurt or offended? You might even think that they are ignorant and lack the knowledge or the experience of living and understanding the culture fully. These feelings are no different for the Canadians. The problem then becomes magnified when Canadians perceive themselves to be helping many people around the world by given them a safe haven. And then, these individuals make offensive remarks about the country that they live in and proudly call

home. The best way to avoid this is to put yourself in the other person's shoes, and then you will be less likely to make comments that you might regret later.

Although your letter is short it does relay to me that you could be having some issues with the integration process. You appear to be separating yourself by making such distinction as "my country" and/or "Canadians". Hopefully, in time, you will see that Canada has welcomed you, and you can claim it as your country. Furthermore, the label of "Canadians" is confusing. Frequently, this term is used inaccurately to describe only people who are born in Canada. With the number of Canadians who are foreign-born, I challenge you to rethink what you mean by "Canadian" and to work toward seeing yourself as a Canadian. Your current attitude could adversely affect your ability to integrate fully into the workplace, your school and the community. There is good and bad with all cultures. Challenge yourself to see some of the beauty that Canada can offer you, and the new experiences that you can have here. Surely, those experiences will not be the same as your country of origin, but nevertheless they can still be valuable.

The Diversity Consultant

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