PDP Communiqué

Reflecting on Workforce Diversity Today

Eugene J. Monaco, *Executive Director and Public Service Professor*
Professional Development Program

Achieving a diverse workforce balance has prevailed as a goal since the late twentieth century. Organizations that strived to meet the goal and the resulting challenges of building, managing, and optimizing a diverse workforce composition have benefitted from their efforts. This issue of the *Communiqué* examines the ways in which diversity affects work and the workplace.

To understand just how the changes occurred and why organizations became committed to workplace diversity and inclusion requires taking a step back and reflecting on the evolving demographics of our population. As the U.S. population base shifted in the late twentieth century, organizations witnessed an increase in diversity among the population categories entering the workforce, including ethnic, cultural, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, and others. No longer were organizations made up of a homogeneous population of employees who came from similar cultures, perspectives, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The new, diverse population brought with it new ways of thinking. As a result, organizational cultures gradually changed, which influenced the ways business was conducted. The "old ways" of conducting business gradually became passé. For example, gender diversification created a need to change the way organizations treated leaves of absence. Other examples of the ways diversity changed the workplace are the culture and expectations prevalent on the Google and Facebook campuses. These may represent the extreme in workplace culture, yet they also represent organizations in high demand by today's diverse employees.

In the twenty-first century, as organizations shift their attention from building a diverse workforce to managing diverse employees, who experience the world differently and apply unique perspectives to their work, incorporating diverse workers into the fiber of the organization has become the mantra for success. Organizations realized that the former homogenous workforce that produced conforming ideas and results was no longer of value in the global marketplace of the twenty-first century. As organizations aligned to the new reality that workplace

Diversity of thinking promotes employees' resistance to conformity and leads to better personal and organizational decisions. Workforce diversity not only generates creativity but also enhances productivity.

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PDP's Working Definition of Diversity

Diversity refers to "the collection of similarities and differences that we carry with us at all times based on characteristics we were born with, experiences we have had, and the choices we have made."[1] In this context, everyone is diverse. Exploring similarities and differences through dialogue in a safe, supportive environment promotes an attitude of mutual understanding and inclusion.

PDP seeks to continually foster an inclusive, welcoming work environment that embraces the individual and the collective strengths, talents, and abilities of its staff. PDP recognizes that true excellence can only be achieved in a culture of respect where all members have the unimpeded opportunity to be fully engaged.

DIVERSITY STATISTICS[2]

Did You Know?

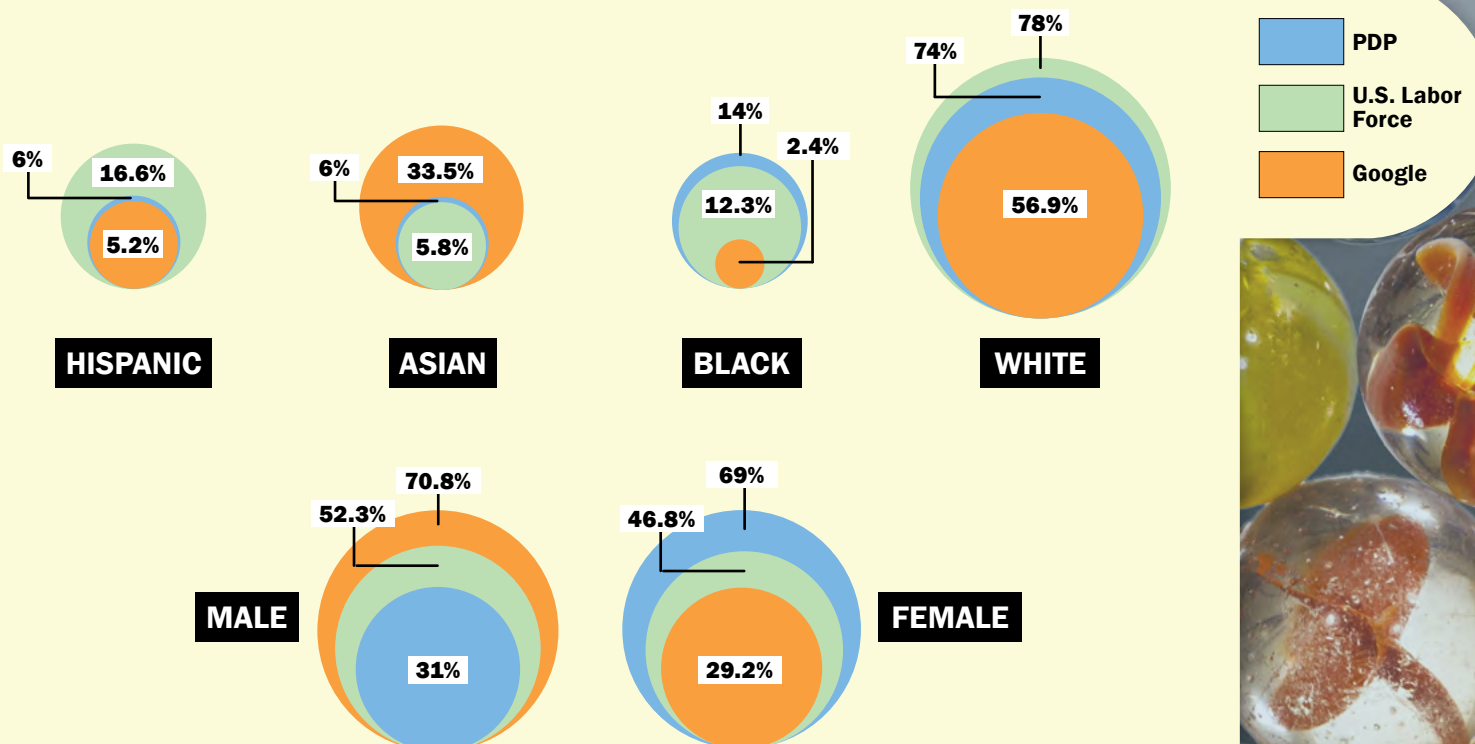Blind hiring practices lead to the hiring of **five times** more women.

43% of companies offer holiday structures based on employee religions or cultures.

57% of employees think their companies should be more diverse.

Racially diverse teams outperform non-diverse ones by **35%** and teams with equal numbers of men and women earn **41%** more revenue.

**41%** of managers say they are "too busy" to implement diversity initiatives.

DIVERSITY: PDP Compared to U.S. Labor Force and Google

Legend:
- PDP
- U.S. Labor Force
- Google

HISPANIC
- 6%
- 16.6%
- 5.2%

ASIAN
- 6%
- 33.5%
- 5.8%

BLACK
- 14%
- 2.4%
- 12.3%

WHITE
- 78%
- 74%
- 56.9%

MALE
- 70.8%
- 52.3%
- 31%

FEMALE
- 69%
- 46.8%
- 29.2%

Response from the *Organizational Culture* Workshop

The Professional Development Program trains employees from numerous organizations every year. PDP's mission is to make a difference in a changing world by linking the learning, applied research, and evaluation resources of the university with the continuing professional education needs of the public service. To achieve this, there must be an awareness of how organizational culture can affect employees' ability to implement changes based on information learned in training.

In September 2018, PDP offered an internal workshop Organizational Culture, presented by University at Albany Professor Edmund Stazyk, to strengthen both its own organizational culture and its ability to help trainees affect change within their organizations' cultures.

U.S. POPULATION

3.3%

JOHN

4.6%

51%

FEMALE

5%
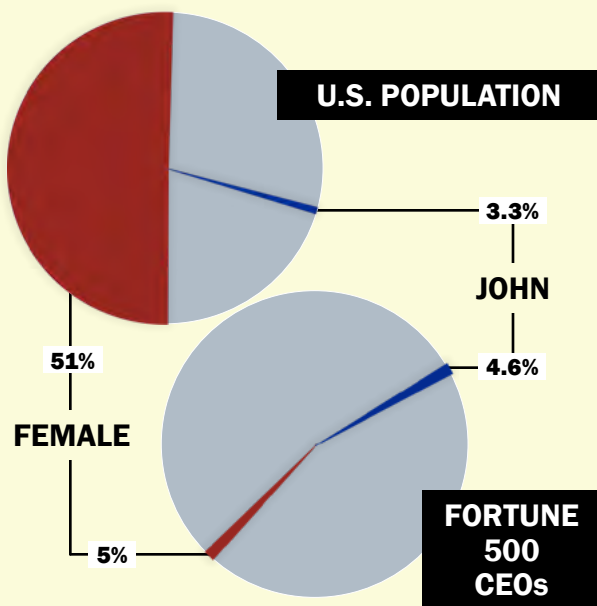
FORTUNE 500 CEOs

There are 25 female CEOs of Fortune 500 companies **(5%)**. There are 23 CEOs named John **(4.6%)**. For comparison, women make up almost **51%** of the U.S. population and men named John make up **3.3%** of the population.[3]

1 https://www.worldcat.org/title/trainers-diversity-source-book-50-ready-to-use-activities-from-icebreakers-to-wrap-ups/oclc/1072934265&referer=brief_results

2 https://blog.clearcompany.com/10-diversity-hiring-statistics-that-will-make-you-rethink-your-decisions

3 https://observer.com/2018/04/diversity-women-in-the-workplace-john/

Employees in attendance were asked about their experience. These answers are highlighted below.

1. **What is one thing you learned (or found most interesting) from the Organizational Culture workshop?**

   - Motivating factors are not necessarily what they seem. Some motivators that seem obvious, such as monetary bonuses, do not have the effect that organizations are seeking. Instead, motivators such as recognition, encouragement, and support, along with intrinsic motivators, are more successful at increasing employee satisfaction and commitment.

   - Every person has their own "why"— their own specific psychological and behavioral process behind their motivation. Tapping into an individual's "why" through active listening and engagement is one way to increase motivation and manage resistance to change.

   - This is as true within training rooms as it is within organizations. The microcosm of a training room has its own culture created by those in the room and tested when the training curriculum abuts with trainees' personal values, beliefs, or understandings.

   - Also interesting was the history and research into human behavior and rewards that played a part in the current knowledge of organizational culture.

2. **How will you use the information shared in the Organizational Culture workshop in your interactions with coworkers?**

   - Thinking about organizational culture within PDP has led to an increased awareness of PDP's organizational goals. The focus on common goals will heighten the feeling of community with coworkers and can be used to increase the involvement of team members throughout the curriculum development process, as well as allowing for better communication and interaction with coworkers.

   - Engaging with coworkers to ensure others' points of view are heard and trying to understand reasons for resistance is worth the time and effort. It increases the sense of community and allows for more personal recognition that can lead to new opportunities for individuals, teams, and PDP.

   - By recognizing the importance of a healthy organizational culture through internal trainings and dialogues, we can all use our differences to build a stronger work environment.

Being Accessible to Diversity of Abilities

Instructional Technologies Unit
Professional Development Program

Diversity of abilities are an often overlooked aspect of the modern workforce. When creating digital content—e.g., websites, electronic documents, and e-learning courses— we must be aware of our audience's ability to access and use that content. One approach to understanding accessibility are the POUR principles (Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, Robust).

Perceivable content ensures users can access and process the presented information; can the content be experienced? For example, tiny, grey text on a white background may not be perceivable to some users. Since they cannot see the content, they will not receive the information. A video that delivers content via audio is not perceivable to users who are hard of hearing or lack sound capabilities on their device. The first purpose of content is to be perceived and received by the audience. We can remove barriers by presenting content clearly. This includes ensuring text is large enough, confirming contrast between text and background, and adding captions to videos.

Operable content can be easily found and used. For example, a document or web page that has no landmarks (e.g., headings) will not be operable to users who need to tab through the content using their keyboard. Videos and audio that lack controls or play automatically are not operable because users have no way to pause or rewind the content. Web content that lacks clear and consistent navigation is not operable because users may get confused as to how they can—or if they are even able to—move through the content. Tiny buttons and link text is not operable for some users, as their fingers or dexterity may not allow them to click the link or button on a mobile device. We must provide clear, usable controls that users of diverse abilities can easily operate.

Understandable content is uncomplicated and written at a level that users understands. Text that is written at too high of a reading level (e.g., unnecessarily "big" words; long, complex sentence structure) is not understandable to some users. Content that uses an overwhelming number of abbreviations and acronyms is not understandable to users who do not know the meaning or definitions of the shortened phrases. We can make content understandable by writing content at an 8th grade (or lower) reading level, organizing content logically, and providing definitions when using acronyms and abbreviations.

Robust content is content that is compatible with the software users have. For example, content created in proprietary software like Flash requires specialized players that may not be available on users' device. Applications or content that only allows users to input information one way, such as text inputs that only respond to keyboards, are not robust because some users may need to respond by voice. Content that relies upon the latest technology and devices does not account for individuals who cannot afford to upgrade their devices every year. Robust content doesn't require special software. For example, most computers and devices come with a web browser and document viewers. Your content should work with the tools users have at their disposal. *PDP*

- Text alternatives for non-text content
- Captions and other alternatives for multimedia
- Content can be presented in different ways
- Content is easier to see and hear

- Functionality is available from a keyboard
- Users have enough time to read and use the content
- Content does not cause seizures
- Users can easily navigate, find content, and determine where they are

- Text is readable and understandable
- Content appears and operates in predictable ways
- Users are helped to avoid and correct mistakes

- Content is compatible with current and future user tools

https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-principles/

Work-Life Balance or Integration: Which Approach Fits Today's World?

Brenda Seckerson, MA, CEAP
Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Coordinator
University at Albany

The goal of achieving work-life balance has been present in our culture for decades. Individuals and families strive to establish a sense of balance, but this can be an elusive endeavor. What does work-life balance look like for each of us? Is it even possible considering the fast pace of our daily lives and the ever-changing landscape of the technological world?

In her 2015 white paper "Work-life Balance is Dead and the Virtual Workforce Killed It" (https://magellanhealthcare.com/media/310819/2015-10-work-life-balance-white-paper.pdf), Lynn Hamilton, Senior Vice President of Behavioral Health for Magellan Healthcare, articulates that the concept of work-life balance isn't really dead but rather has transformed into the new approach of "work-life integration." The use of technology and flex scheduling has created an environment in which work and home life are blended. Hamilton cites the examples of an employee who leaves the office early to watch his child play soccer but completes a project from home after dinner, or the employee with an ailing mother who is able to work from home through teleconferencing and therefore also be part of her mother's care team.

Balance implies that work and life be equal parts, yet that's just not realistic. Since the way we frame things matters, consider tossing out the word "balance" and replacing it with "integration" to see if work-life integration makes better sense.

Whether aiming for balance or testing out the concept of integration, making decisions about how to use our time is key. The Mayo Clinic offers some suggestions about setting limits and boundaries on its website, https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/work-life-balance/art-20048134.

For instance, to help set expectations and alleviate stress:

- Talk to your manager and coworkers about certain work activities that can be cut, delegated, or shared.

- Delineate between work time and personal time.

- Unless using flex time and choosing to conduct work at home, stick to the mindset that when you are working, you are working; and when you are not working, you are focused on your personal life.

- Check e-mail three times a day; if you are away for an extended time, indicate in your out-of-office notification what your frequency will be for checking e-mail.
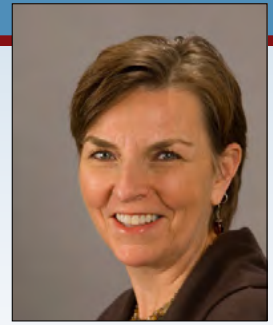
Brenda Seckerson

When it comes to home life, the Mayo Clinic emphasizes organizing tasks efficiently (e.g., running errands together, doing laundry several times a week instead of all in one day, making daily lists, using a family calendar). Planning is a fundamental way to keep on track without getting pulled away from what you want to do.

Learning to say no is important both personally and professionally. When asked to do something, pause and reflect before answering. Accepting requests out of guilt or perceived obligations is a sure way to undermine yourself.

Whatever you call it today, managing work and home life together is vital to overall productivity and well-being, and is truly one of the cornerstones of self-care. *PDP*

NYS Leadership Institute Participants

News and Views

NYS Leadership Institute

The NYS Leadership Institute is the product of a partnership between the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER), PDP, and the University at Albany's Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy. The eight-month program provides senior-level state employees with the tools and strategies to successfully meet the challenges facing those in leadership positions in New York State government. After a successful pilot delivery of the program in 2017, the second program was delivered from May to December 2018. Thirty-nine participants representing 26 different state agencies successfully completed the 2018 program. The program has been very well received with one hundred percent (100%) of responding participants recommending the program to their colleagues. The third delivery of the program is expected to begin in May 2019.

The final session and graduation held in December 2018 (pictured above) included closing remarks by R. Karl Rethemeyer, Dean of Rockefeller College, and Michael Volforte, Director of the NYS Governor's Office of Employee Relations, as well as a brief appearance from the University at Albany President Dr. Havidán Rodríguez.

New PDP Studio Complete

The PDP studio is now operational and is located in the center of UAlbany's Academic Podium on campus. The studio is part of a larger state-of-the-art production facility that includes meeting rooms, a dressing room and space for broadcast control, audio production, editing, and graphic production.

PDP now has the capacity to broadcast live webcasts and events, create training videos and public service announcements, and record video and audio to enhance web-based trainings for UAlbany. The studio includes five cameras, LED studio lighting, various backgrounds (including a green screen), and the latest in audio and video production equipment. Contact pdp@albany.edu to discuss your next media project.

The New PDP Studio

PDP's Annual Center Report

PDP's Annual Center Report for July 2017-June 2018 is now available at www.pdp.albany.edu/about.cfm. The report highlights the work done by PDP and its over 200 professionals in the last year. This work included:

- 25 awarded contracts
- Over 2,700 instructional activities
- Over 286,000 trainees
- Close to 850,000 contact hours of training

PDP Staff Retire

Torie Seeger

Torie Seeger retired on January 18, 2019, after 27 years with PDP. Torie joined the Research Foundation in 1992. She trained, wrote curricula, and coached trainers on a variety of projects, including the Early Childhood Education and Training Program, Educational Incentive Program, CONNECTIONS Training Project, Faith-Based Community Outreach Project, and the Child Care Regulatory and Child Care Subsidy Training. Torie was known for her dedicated professionalism and strong organizational skills, as well as her ability to cultivate excellent rapport with staff and sponsors. PDP thanks Torie for her dedicated service, hard work, and many contributions to furthering PDP's mission.

Torie Seeger

ED KIRCHGESSNER

Ron Goulet

Ron Goulet retired on January 11, 2019, after 14 years with PDP. Ron joined the Research Foundation in 2005, bringing with him a wealth of experience in event planning in corporate and non-profits settings. Throughout his tenure, Ron was an asset to PDP in planning training programs and events, selecting sites, and liaising with hotels and sponsors. Ron's experience also enabled him to be an effective coach and mentor to PDP staff on related matters. Ron was recognized for his teamwork, event planning skills, and contributions to numerous training programs and events. PDP thanks Ron for his contributions and his years of dedicated service. *PDP*

Ron Goulet

ED KIRCHGESSNER

- This workshop offered insight into our training audience and why trainees sometimes come to training seemingly ready to be resistant. For trainees who have a wealth of experience, attending training can be a threatening experience. The experience may threaten their self-perception, and it may combat with the organizational culture of their agency. This is important to acknowledge and work through to facilitate a successful training.

3. **How will the information shared in the Organizational Culture workshop inform your work (e.g., training deliverables, curriculum work, interactions with sponsors or participants)?**

   - By involving more team members in the development process, there is more buy-in to the final product

   - Focusing on using better listening skills

   - Being more aware of both PDP and sponsor goals to really keep that at the forefront when training or working on curriculum

   - A stronger understanding of why individuals are resistant to change can help navigate resistance from participants during training deliveries

   - Add an activity such as the "baggage check" to the beginning of trainings. This is an activity in which people write down what may be an obstacle to them fully participating in the training. The trainer then removes the baggage for the day by taking the piece of paper away from the participant

   - Modeling positive reactions to change with my coworkers

Overall, employees who attended the workshop had positive reactions to the information shared. Those who attended shared how they will use what they learned to enhance PDP's organizational culture, as well as to increase their awareness of how organizational culture can affect trainees in the classroom. This outcome forwards PDP's mission to make a difference and supports improved outcomes for trainees and the clients they serve while also enhancing the professional experience of PDP's employees. *PDP*

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Reflecting on Workforce Diversity Today

diversity had thrust upon them, the benefits of diversity and inclusion began to materialize as a competitive advantage, and organizations realized the promise that a diverse workforce would bring tangible returns for both the employer and employees. Diverse employees brought vibrancy and created a better working environment for all.

Forbes, in a 2018 comprehensive study of over 300 companies, found that diversity and inclusion served as a key driver of internal innovation and business growth for organizations that embraced the challenges.[4] In addition, they found that diverse groups or teams of problem solvers outperformed homogenous groups or teams of high-ability problem solvers. The study further concluded that diversity was a key driver of innovation. Although Forbes noted that significant progress has been made to build and retain diverse workforces, they acknowledged that further effort is needed. Substantial progress has been made in workplace diversification of gender, ethnicity, and race, but improvements are still needed in disability, age, and sexual orientation.

Considering these findings, the boost in creativity stands out as a prime outcome. It appears that when organizations employ those who come from similar cultures, perspectives, or socioeconomic circumstances, they limit their creativity and innovation. Diversity of thinking promotes employees' resistance to conformity and leads to better personal and organizational decisions. Workforce diversity not only generates creativity but also enhances productivity. The more diverse a workforce, the more diverse the brainstorming; consequently, the more diverse the solutions. This results in a more productive environment in which employees feel better about themselves and, in turn, generate solutions of the greatest value.

As we examine diversity and its affect on work and workplaces in this issue of the *Communiqué,* PDP continues its efforts in sharing New York State's and the University's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workplace. **PDP**

Eugene Monaco

[4]Global Diversity and Inclusion: Fostering Innovation Through a Diverse Workforce. *Forbes | Insights,* p.3.