

Culturally Dynamic Philosophy: The New Language and Practice of Diversity

Clear your mind and heart of everything you ever knew about the great diversity debate. How modern day civilization confronts and resolves the centuries old issues of race and culture will define our society in this millennium and forward. For far too long, people of diverse heritage have been marginalized, enabling the powers-that-be to frame all the questions, and construct self-serving answers. Demographic and economic realities have empowered a new generation of authentic communicators to take their rightful leadership position in the great diversity debate – creating solutions that originate from the bottom upward. The days of top-down diversity dialog are numbered. Prepare to leave the comfort of thinking and acting ‘in the box.’ By joining the ranks of those who ‘Get It,’ you will insure that your enterprise reaps bottom line success. The professional and authentic cultural communicators have answered the drum call. The village is finally going global and world has to listen!

Diversity: A Condition or Behavior?

Let’s frame the diversity issue historically. In the past, mainstream corporate titans and ivory tower scholars have attempted to define the issue of how different races and cultures relate and communicate with nouns that merely describe a

*by Gina Russell Stevens
Principal
Executive Performance, LLC*



condition... a state of being. Our greatest need to survive and thrive, as a “diverse” global civilization is to develop a common philosophy, language, and practice for relating cross culturally. Yet, those nouns that have trickled down as top to bottom, outside-in descriptions of our condition have failed to inform our ‘behavior’ toward people who are different from us. Debate surrounding nouns like segregation, desegregation, integration, apartheid, genocide, multiculturalism, inclusion, affirmative action, minority, majority, emerging majority; and yes, even the now politically correct terminology “diversity” itself – have not slowed the pace of discrimination, hate crimes, civil and human rights violations, and yes, even wars.

In the *Mosaica Diversity Guide*, organizational consultant Hafeezah Basir clearly states:

“No amount of class action lawsuits, punitive damage awards, or threats of termination have ever mandated a change of heart in human beings. But what if the simple act of convening conversation circles among willing co-workers could begin to shift beliefs and attitudes, hearts and minds? Perhaps lasting behavioral change would follow.”

With this challenge in mind, as an enterprise leader, you must recognize that merely having the ‘condition’ of people of color present at the table, is no guarantee that you have resolved the problem ‘behaviors’ in relating and communicating across diverse markets. Bottom line success will be determined by the philosophy and practice modeled in boardrooms, explicitly expressed by changes in behavior.

Rationale for Culturally Dynamic™ Practice

Savvy enterprise leaders who genuinely seek to discourage stereotyping, reduce litigation, spark economic growth, expand markets, and maximize profits will see the value in engaging authentic communicators to facilitate developing our new “culturally dynamic” philosophy and practice for reaching diverse markets. No longer can we frame this issue as a purely an academic exercise in applying ‘soft’ social sciences solely from

a human resources perspective, to realize a noble vision by creating a more tolerant and peaceful great society. The major rationale for adopting a *culturally dynamic*TM philosophy and practice can be summed up in two words – demographics + economics. There exists now a global economic and political imperative for the highest levels of government, corporate boards and CEOs to proactively manage the issues of race and culture, as consumers of color control \$1.4 Trillion in spending, annually, in the United States alone, and voters of color increasingly cast the deciding ballots in now routinely tight political contests where the projected winner is “too close to call.” The die is cast. Diverse groups formerly described as minorities and disenfranchised are emerging as powerful decision-making blocks, both economically and politically. As Milca Esdaille keenly observes in the *Mosaica Diversity Guide*,

“Today, corporate diversity officers and consultants are part of a multi-billion dollar workforce re-education phenomenon which lauds the benefits of not only celebrating differences as a moral imperative, but as a strategic business tool yielding quantifiable bottom line results.”

Unfortunately many professionals, trade associations, organizations, enterprises, industries, and governments are throwing billions of dollars at ineffective and inauthentic diversity ‘experts’ and initiatives. However, the most effective strategies and solutions are created by professional grassroots cultural

communicators and translators, who recognize their own cultural competencies, are sensitive to cultural nuances, understand there are no neatly defined monolithic cultural identities, and who know their limitations, and an established network of grassroots communicators representing other cultures to extend their reach in other diverse niche markets.

Concepts in *culturally dynamic*TM philosophy and practice

Conceptually, what does it really mean to be *culturally dynamic*TM? First, being *culturally dynamic*TM is not about theoretical rhetoric. It represents core philosophy and competencies that identify and celebrate authenticity through sustained and consistent practice.

- It’s about seeing the whole, while valuing each and every distinct part.
- It’s about recognizing that differences represent strengths, not weaknesses.
- It’s about knowing how diversity creates opportunities, not threats or obstacles.
- It’s about working collaboratively from within, rather than controlling from without.
- It’s about achieving equitable success, rather than exploitive domination.
- It’s about rewarding integrity and authenticity, rather than stereotype and imitation.

Criteria for adopting the *culturally dynamic*TM approach

When an individual or enterprise adopts a *culturally dynamic*TM approach to relating and communicating in a diverse

society and marketplace, they voluntarily commit to

- move out of their comfort zone
- think outside the limitations of ‘their box’
- observe and acknowledge differences, without judgment
- identify and affirm similarities, without expectations
- compare and contrast worldview and perceptions
- seek and engage conversation with authentic primary resources
- accept and analyze how, given the same exact situation or event, diverse populations have distinctly different experiences
- learn to dynamically relate and communicate appropriately in diverse environments

Hierarchy for *Culturally Dynamic*TM Development

Individuals can identify their level of cultural competence and behavior using the *Executive Performance Hierarchy of Culturally Dynamic*TM *Development* as follows:

1. *awareness*: cultural self-knowledge
2. *acceptance*: mental commitment to understand and tolerate the culture of others
3. *sensitivity*: capacity to affirm the feelings and situational inequities of diverse others
4. *responsiveness*: reactively demonstrate and communicate appropriate cultural behavior
5. *dynamic*: proactively initiate and exchange appropriate cultural behavior

Hierarchy of *Culturally Dynamic*[™] Development

