

Stronger together

 By [Su-Mari Du Bruyn](#)

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The very nature of human beings echoes diversity. Diversity is really just differences amongst people on various aspects. It includes language, nationality, religion, gender, age, physical abilities, education, and views.

The reality is that diversity really is everywhere - in our families, in our workplaces, in our supplier and customer bases, in our communities and in our sports teams. And the truth of the matter is that it is our diversity that makes us stronger. After all, how successful would a soccer team made up of only goalkeepers be?

Managing a diverse work environment is not always easy, but if done right, diversity can help your team and business to excel. The key is to establish shared goals, shared values, and an environment where the team is empowered. So how can we go about facilitating this?

1. Lead by example

- Be empathetic, supportive, fair and ethical

*By being empathetic and supportive, leaders can inspire cross-culturally and socially different employees to work together

*By being fair to each and every person, leaders can inspire different people to accept and tolerate differences

*By being loyal and ethical, leaders can stimulate a diverse culture in which people co-operate with one another and respect each other's uniqueness

2. Educate yourself and others

- Take the time to learn about those around you. Knowledge is the foundation for understanding yourself and others.

Without it, customs could be misjudged based on our own limited perceptions

*Develop sensitivity for personal background and attributes of diverse team members

*Explore your own unique skills, talents and expertise in dealing with diversity

*Help your team to understand themselves and others better

3. Establish a team identity

- Build diverse teams with shared goals and shared values

*Find similarities among people and capitalise on common interests and complementary strengths

*Create an environment of trust, transparency, empathy, enrichment, fulfilment and growth

*Instead of focusing on what makes us different, rather focus on the good things that each person brings to the team. Make sure that you recognise every individual for their unique contribution

4. Develop yourself and others

- Help others to contribute their strengths to the benefit of the overall team, by creating opportunities for them in which to excel
- Develop effective communication skills
- Understand various multi-cultural behaviours and communication styles
- *Develop sensitivity and respect for cross-cultural diverse talents, creativity and intellect
- *Do not make assumptions about others' behaviours, culture and customs without knowing the background

5. Establish a culture that embraces diversity

- Encourage people to focus on the positive, take responsibility and focus on finding solutions rather than getting trapped in problems
- Review your policies and procedures to ensure that they too embrace diversity

In the end we are all different and we all do things differently and that is okay. As much as we want others to allow us a space in which to be ourselves, we also need to allow others the space to be themselves - even when they do things differently to the way that we would do them. Don't sweat the small stuff! Keep your eyes on the end goal - then it doesn't matter so much how we get there or the bumps we incur along the way.

ABOUT SU-MARI DU BRUYN

Su-Mari Du Bruyn is co-founder of the company Adapt To Change. She is a qualified HR practitioner and logistics specialist and is passionate about Continuous Improvement and people development.

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