Different Like You

Appreciating Diversity in the 21st Century

Leader's Guide

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Disclaimer

The materials presented in this training program are in no way intended to provide any legal advice. For legal advice on diversity issues, please consult your in-house counsel or an attorney that handles employment issues. You can find one by calling your state Bar Association.

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Introduction

Most of us have heard a lot about workforce diversity lately; we may even have attended a diversity training program of some sort. Despite all the talk and commotion, many of us still are wondering what diversity means to our organization, and why we should care. We need to know what workforce diversity will mean to each of us, individually, in the 21st century.

In the 21st century "diversity training" will mean much more than learning about differences and finding ways to like those who are different. The concept of diversity must go beyond encompassing aspects of individual uniqueness such as age or generational group, religion, economic status, education, disability, cultural differences, and family make-up, and further evolve to encompass all of the talents, preferences, affiliations, intelligence, and experiences that make each one of us unique as individuals.

Workforce diversity in the 21st century will focus less on what a group of people can be identified with, and focus more on the unique diversity of each individual as our organization's most valuable resource: its human capital.

Program Objectives

We recommend that you write these on flipchart paper and place them in a location for all to see during your training session.

Upon completion of this program, you will:

- Have an awareness of diversity issues and the need for diversity training.
- Understand the importance of acceptance and appreciation of differences between us.
- Examine your own stereotypes and prejudices and how these impact your behavior.
- Become aware of changing demographics, buying power, and other factors that require us to change the way in which we work.
- Understand barriers to accepting diversity, and how they might impact us.
- Be able to communicate more effectively with people who are different from you.
- Learn steps to take to handle conflict:
  — Finding the true Source of the conflict
  — Discovering the Objectives of the task to be accomplished
  — Determining the Responsibilities of each person involved in the task
  — Making sure each Task is accounted for

Preparation

In order for participants to be more accepting of diversity training, it is often helpful to determine ahead of time what your organization is doing to promote diversity issues. For example, if your organization is recruiting from diverse groups of individuals to keep up with the changing market, if they are doing diversity training for *all* people in the organization, or if your organization has flex time for families with different make-ups, you may want to make a note of this so you can inform your participants. This makes the participants feel like diversity is an important objective for your organization rather than simply something your organization is doing so that they can say they have done something about diversity issues.

Secondly, if you have control over the class make-up, you may want to have people from all levels of the organization in your training session. This not only reinforces that diversity training is being taken seriously, it allows for diverse perspectives and ideas about the issues presented.

In addition, the topics covered in this training session may elicit strong emotions. For example, many people feel strongly about quota systems and the possibility that someone was promoted for other reasons than being truly qualified. It is important that you, as the trainer, be prepared to handle these issues by staying objective rather than becoming defensive or choosing sides. Watch out for questions that begin with, "Don't you think . . .," asking you to agree or disagree. The best response for a question like this would be to ask the participant how he or she feels about the issue. Another tool to use for heated discussion is to reflect back or paraphrase what the participant says to you in order to make him or her accountable for his or her own feelings and beliefs. In any event, if things start to get out of hand, take a break so that your participants can calm down.

Finally, there are some key steps and important ideas presented in the video. You may want to make overhead transparencies or write key points out on flipchart paper. You might also look on the Edge Training Systems website for updated support materials from time to time.

Training Options

Different Like You can be presented in a variety of formats. As the facilitator, you should examine each option and use the one that best fits your organization. Suggested training options include:

- After some short introductory remarks, have the training participants view *Different Like You.* Have an in-house expert discuss the video, the organization's policy, and what the organization is doing about diversity issues, and the law related to diversity issues.

- After introductory material, the facilitator shows *Different Like You.* After scenarios are viewed that might elicit discussion, the facilitator stops the video and has small subgroups discuss what happened in each scenario, what barriers might be present, and possible solutions. Then the small groups present their ideas to the larger group for discussion.

- Follow along with this Leader's Guide and have participants complete suggested exercises.

- The trainer could develop other potential "on the job" scenarios with participant input and have the group discuss potential solutions.

The Training Session

Below is suggested script for the facilitator. These are suggestions only. Please customize this script for your organization and for your personal training style. Please also be aware that there are several more exercises and there is also more information in the participant's material that you might choose to use. We did not include this in the Leader's Guide for fear that the program would be too long.

Introduction

Say: Many of us are hearing a lot about diversity lately. Most of us have also been given some information about diversity issues in our jobs. The question I would like you to answer is:

What is diversity training?

> You can have the groups answer out loud or in subgroups. You may want to record answers on flipchart paper. Some common answers are:
>
> - "Diversity training is where I learn to like people who are from different cultures."
> - "Diversity training teaches us about the differences between us. We then learn how to get along with those who are different."
> - "Diversity training is something I have to do if I want to move up in my organization."
> - "Diversity training is something my organization is doing to look good."
> - "Diversity training is touchy-feely training where white men are usually made to look bad."
> - "Diversity training is a big waste of time. People feel the way they feel, and no training session is going to change that."

Say: Now let's watch a video called *Different Like You* to see what others have to say about diversity training.

> Show the video, *Different Like You.*

Say: Now that we have seen the video, let's answer this question:

Why do we do diversity training?

> You will probably want to have participants answer this question out loud and again record answers. Make sure there are answers on the list that cover the changing demographics, the changing market and buying power, loss of productivity and employees if we don't accept and appreciate diversity, and keeping the organization successful by keeping up with the times. This material is all found in the participant's material as well as on the video.

Say: It is critical that organizations of every type and size meet the changing realities of today's workforce. Today, some organizations are losing huge amounts of money due to loss of productivity, inability to retain employees, and even lawsuits. This is happening because these organizations have not updated their ways of working to keep up with the rapid changes in the workforce and in the markets of the 21st century.

We must each do our part to become better employees and to create a work environment that fosters respect and values the ideas and contributions of fellow employees. But how do we do this?

The first step is to become aware of our own actions and behaviors that impact our organization, and to learn to accept and appreciate the diversity in our organization.

Why Diversity Training: The Building Blocks of the Respectful Workplace

Say: It is essential that we work in a harassment-free environment where each employee is valued and respected. This respectful workplace is built on a foundation of very important principles.

Equality

Say: Equality is required by law and ethically what is right. A lack of equality is discrimination. Think about instances of inequality or discrimination in your workplace. What are the effects of this inequality?

Accepting Differences

Say: While it is important to realize that all people should be given an equal right to make the best use of their skills in their workplace, diversity training is not just about avoiding lawsuits and doing what is morally right. We must begin to *accept differences* between ourselves and others so that we can be better, more productive employees. When we do our part to create a workplace that accepts differences, we become more valuable employees to our organization.

Different from What?

Say: In order to truly accept differences we must ask ourselves exactly what these differences are. To do this, please turn to the worksheet entitled, "Different from What?" and do the following exercise:

In this program we are talking about differences in people for diversity training purposes. Right now, take a moment to imagine people who have these differences. Please answer this question: "These people who are different are different from what?"

> The answer most likely is, "Different from me." (The answer might also be, "Different from the norm," in which case you must ask your participants what this norm is.)

Say: Now, thinking about these people who are different from you, please describe yourself below in detail. In this description please include values and beliefs that you have.

You may want to give the following examples: While thinking, "People who are different from me are male," write, "I am female." Example: While thinking, "People who are different from me are not Christian," write, "I am Christian."

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Say: Now, consider the importance of each of these characteristics, values, and beliefs. For example, if you wrote, "I am very liberal politically," consider how important that is to you.

Go back to your list of characteristics, values, and beliefs and put one star by characteristics that are somewhat important to you, two stars for moderately important characteristics, and three stars for very important characteristics.

*	Somewhat Important
**	Moderately Important
***	Very Important

Say: The more important a characteristic, especially a value or belief, is to you, the more difficult it will be for you to accept those who are different from that characteristic. Characteristics that describe us externally, such as gender, age, race, or cultural background, are usually important to us, and it may be difficult for us to work with others who are different from that characteristic. But differences in internal values and beliefs that we have rated very important more often than not create conflict in the working environment. Again, if you are very liberal politically, and that is very important to you, it will be difficult for you to accept someone who is extremely conservative politically. Take a look at the characteristics you rated "very important." Think about people who are very different from you in those characteristics. How do you feel about those people? How do you get along with those people?

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Say: The point is that even if we find it difficult working with those who are different, and even if we don't like the differences in others, we must learn to accept them in order to be valuable to our organization. We must also behave in a manner that does not harass or demean others. Our jobs do not require that we like our co-workers, they require that we get the job done without causing problems for ourselves or for the organization.

Stereotypes and Prejudices

Understanding feelings about others by examining stereotypes and prejudices is an important part of any diversity training. Please hand out the "Stereotypes and Prejudices" worksheet either before or after this section for the participants to read. You may want them to think about stereotypes and prejudices that others have and how they impact the workplace. You may then want to suggest that they honestly examine their own stereotypes and prejudices. Even when we think that our actions don't impact others, sometimes actions that result from our feelings of prejudice truly can hurt others.

Say: In order to accept differences we must also look at our stereotypes and prejudices. Stereotypes and prejudices are most frequently based on our past experiences and backgrounds.

Take a moment to think about your family's beliefs and about your environment growing up. Was your family accepting of differences or fairly closed-minded? Did your family consist of a mother, father, and biological children, or did you have a different type of family make-up? Did you hear a lot of racial or prejudicial remarks as a child? Was your neighborhood diverse, or were the people in it very similar? What about your school? Think about your relationships. Who do you choose as friends or romantic partners? These factors will greatly influence how you think and how you behave towards others.

As we examine our past experiences and backgrounds, what we must do is to become aware of our prejudices that result from our experiences and backgrounds. We all have some stereotypes and prejudices—we do not expect diversity training to change that. When we become aware of them we can begin to make sure that these prejudices are not exhibited in our behaviors and our actions towards those who are different. We can then put a halt to any behavior that might be considered offensive or cause harm to others or to our organization.

We must also realize that behavior that stems from prejudice, i.e., jokes that we tell and words that we use, can do a lot of harm to our organizations, to others that are harassed or demoralized by them, and to ourselves. We can be held personally liable if our actions that stem from prejudice create a hostile environment for a co-worker. Therefore, we must make sure that, despite negative feelings that we may have about those who are different, our actions do not harass or demean others.

Finally, we must also accept that these prejudices are simply that—negative beliefs that we have learned. These beliefs are not true about each individual with these different characteristics any more than you are exactly like each person in your racial, social, ethnic, or religious group. When we let our prejudices control us, then we do a great injustice to ourselves and to others. We must remember to give each person a chance to be who he or she truly is—to get to know each person as the individual he or she is rather than as a person we already have feelings, beliefs, and ideas about before we even meet him or her. We must also bear in mind that prejudice often leads to hate—and hate is not healthy for anyone.

That's Icky!

Say: Consider the scenario on the video in which the two women are talking about the man with dreadlocks. When watching them and listening to their conversation, they seem very immature.

What stereotypes or prejudices are they portraying?

What fears are they portraying?

What might be the results of their comments?

If they simply speak about him to each other, is any harm done? If so, what?

They're All Alike

Say: Next, let's examine the scenario in the video in which the supervisor is expecting a new employee from Puerto Rico to work for him. He already feels that this employee is going to be a problem even though he hasn't even met him.

What stereotypes or prejudices is this man portraying?

Why is it easier for him to accept that in a shipment of computers from the same factory there will be a lot of differences between computers than to accept that all Hispanics are not the same?

What could he do to help himself accept the new employee?

Appreciating Differences

Say: Beyond merely accepting differences between ourselves and our co-workers is the ability to appreciate the diversity that exists in our workplace.

But what does appreciating differences mean?

Appreciating differences means learning to accept the fact that because the workplace and country demographics are rapidly changing, the different experiences, ideas, and thoughts that people bring to the workplace are very valuable to the organization.

The Right One for the Job?

Think about the video scenario in which the woman was interviewing candidates for a job. She seemed to like the person with the external characteristics that were very similar to her own.

Why do we choose people to work with us who are like us?

What are the problems with choosing employees to work with us that are a lot like us?

What could this woman have done differently?

Changes in Our Country and Our Workforce

Say: Let's first take a look at the changes is our workforce. Please turn to the worksheet entitled "The Diversity Quiz."

Have them complete "The Diversity Quiz."

Say: Now look at the worksheet with the Answers to the Diversity Quiz and check your answers to the quiz questions.

> You may want to suggest that they read the information about each answer on their own time.

Say: How many of you were surprised by some of the answers? The point is that our country is changing, and our organizations need to keep up.

Changes in Buying Power

Say: Along with the changes in the demographics of our country are the changes in buying power in the United States. In the past, the vast majority of buying power has belonged to white males. The University of Georgia's Selig Center for Economic Growth suggests that minority buying power is increasing at a much faster rate than overall U.S. buying power.

What Happens If We Don't Change?

Say: It is important that we become aware of the changes in the country, buying power, and the workforce because we need to understand that we all must make changes to be successful in today's world. We need diversity training to help us to learn to accept and appreciate differences and to communicate with others effectively. If we can do this we will be more valuable to our organization because we are helping our organization to be successful.

Barriers to Accepting Diversity

Say: Too often in our workplaces there is still much discrimination and harassment because the fears about accepting diversity keep people from doing just that.

Fear of Change

Say: One of the major barriers to accepting diversity is the fear of change. Change makes us uncomfortable. This is true whether the change is for the better or for the worse. People are simply creatures of habit, and once our routine is disrupted in any way, we get a little antsy.

We need to realize that feeling uncomfortable or feeling fear associated with change is normal and healthy. But, because changes in the way we work with those who are different are essential to a productive and healthy workplace, we must acknowledge our fears about the changes and not let them be a barrier to making these necessary changes.

Fear of Loss or Inconvenience

Say: If we are inconvenienced or experience loss in any way because of diversity issues, we may not feel very open to accepting diversity.

Take a moment and think of any inconveniences you have experienced that are a result of our changing workforce. Did those inconveniences make you feel angry or annoyed?

Along with the fear of inconvenience is the fear of loss. We often fear that we will lose status or importance because of the changing workforce. For example, if the buying power of Hispanic Americans is increasing rapidly, if we are not Hispanic we may fear that our organization will hire and promote Hispanics rather than us regardless of our qualifications.

Fear of Embarrassment

Say: How many times have you avoided talking to someone who was different from you because you were afraid of embarrassing yourself? You might have been afraid that you would not be able to understand his or her accent, or that you would unintentionally insult him or her in some way. Because we often don't know or understand about people's differences, we avoid them rather than take a chance of looking silly or foolish due to our ignorance. The problem with this comes when we have to work with that person who is different.

Say Again?

Say: Think about the video scenario in which one employee sits down next to the employee with the strong accent. It is clear that the first employee cannot understand the other.

What fears do you think each employee had about talking to the other?

How do you think each employee felt?

What could each employee have done differently?

What are your fears about working with those who are different from you?

> You can have participants answer out loud as a group or in subgroups.

Communication

Say: We must first become aware of diversity issues and our attitudes and behaviors and then take a look at the way we communicate at work. Communication is the most important tool we can use to help us with diversity issues. In fact, most diversity problems stem from a lack of communication.

Listening

Say: The most important part of communication is listening. In today's world we are often so busy that we often do not truly listen to others. The problem with not listening to others at work is that misunderstandings may result.

Think about when we were young and many of us played a game called "telephone," in which someone started off thinking of a phrase or two and whispered it to the person next to him or her. The person next to him or her then whispered it to the next person, and so on, until the last person received the whispered message. The last person would then say out loud what he or she had heard. The vast majority of time the message would have been distorted in such a way as to invoke much snickering and giggling from all of the message passers. The point of the game was to show how much information can change when passed from one person to another.

In situations in which communication styles are often significantly different, it is very difficult for messages, information, and instructions to get passed clearly from one person to the other. Listening carefully to what a co-worker is telling us is critical to doing our job correctly and professionally. But what if we still don't understand?

Clarifying

Say: How many times have you heard what someone told you, but were still not really clear about the details or what needed to be done? Too many times in our jobs we just go on and do what we think that person told us to do, or we pass on information as we think we heard it. It is crucial that we ask clarifying questions to avoid problems and misunderstandings in the workplace.

Taking Time to Think before Speaking

Say: "Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words *can* really hurt." Take a moment to think about a time when someone said something really unfriendly or insulting to you. Think about the anger and hurt that resulted.

Next time, before you make fun of someone's differences, tell a sexual, racial, or ethnic joke, or say something that discriminates against those who are different from you, stop. Think about the work environment that you want to create and be a part of. Avoid harassing and disrespectful behavior and be a part of a comfortable and happy work environment.

Conflict Resolution

Say: A major part of communicating effectively is the ability to resolve conflicts. Diversity in the workplace, however, often creates conflict. Think about instances in your workplace in which diversity causes conflict.

So what do we do? One tool that we can use to deal with conflict when working within a diverse workforce is to SORT out conflict.

S When conflict arises, look honestly at the Source of the conflict, without assigning blame or assuming the worst of the other person. Try to recognize the conflict as a professional misunderstanding of some sort, not a personal problem. This is very difficult to do since we often take conflict personally. Sometimes it is also easier to assume the source of the conflict is external differences or personal differences. We must look beyond our differences to find the true source of the conflict.

She's a Jerk!

Say: Think about the scenario on the video in which the employee assumed the female employee had a problem with him because he was gay, and his co-worker suggested that it might be because he was black.

What was the actual source of the problem?

What should have happened instead of the employees talking about each other to their friends?

O Examine each person's understanding of the Objectives you are trying to reach and ensure that you are all in agreement as to the goal you are working towards.

R Make sure that you have a complete understanding of the Responsibility each of you has in regards to the objective. Are the roles you are playing on the team clear to each of you?

T Finally, make sure there is no misunderstanding about the Tasks or methods each of you will employ to carry out the responsibility.

Take a minute to think about a conflict you have had recently at work. Please write the answers to the following questions:

• What was the true Source of the conflict?

• Did you each understand and agree on the Objective you were trying to accomplish?

• Did you each understand and agree on each person's Responsibilities regarding the objective?

• Did you each understand and agree on the Tasks or methods you would use?

You may want to take these answers back to your workplace and talk to the person you had the conflict with about them. Perhaps you will be able to clear up the misunderstanding and both do your jobs more effectively.

Diversity Quiz

1. Persons of Hispanic origin represent approximately what percentage of the U.S. population?

    A. 4%
    B. 11%
    C. 22%
    D. 30%

2. Between 2000 and 2050, the Hispanic population of the United States is projected to:

    A. Decrease by about 20%
    B. Remain about the same
    C. Increase by about 20%
    D. Triple in number

3. Which of the following racial / ethnic groups in the United States has the highest median income?

    A. Asians/Pacific Islanders
    B. Blacks
    C. Hispanics
    D. Whites

4. As measured in 1997, approximately what percentage of U.S. residents were foreign-born (that is, born outside the United States to non-American parents)?

    A. Less than 5%
    B. 10%
    C. 15%
    D. 25%

5. What U.S. city has the largest foreign-born population?

    A. Chicago
    B. Los Angeles
    C. Boston
    D. New York City

6. How many adults aged 25 and over are high school graduates?

    A. 2 out of 3
    B. 3 out of 4
    C. 4 out of 5
    D. 9 out of 10

7. What percentage of the American adult population are married and living in a household with their spouse?

    A. 26%
    B. 36%
    C. 56%
    D. 76%

8. What percentage of adults (18 and older) speak a language other than English in their home?

    A. 1%
    B. 5%
    C. 9%
    D. 14%

9. How many households in the United States own a home computer?

    A. 1 out of 4
    B. 1 out of 3
    C. 1 out of 2
    D. 7 out of 10

10. Which adult age group is projected to increase as a percentage of the population at the fastest rate between 2000 and 2050?

    A. Adults between the ages of 18 and 24
    B. Adults between the ages of 35 and 44
    C. Adults between the ages of 65 and 74
    D. Adults aged 85 and older

Answers to the Diversity Quiz

1. **B.** 11%

   At a projected population of 31 million in 2000, persons of Hispanic origin are approximately 11.4% of the U.S. population, up from 9% in 1990. These numbers are based on data collected in the fifty states and the District of Columbia, and does not include residents of Puerto Rico.

   Non-Hispanic whites represent about 72% of the population, blacks account for about 12%, and Asians and Pacific Islanders are approximately 4% of the U.S. population. American Indians number less than 1% of the population.

2. **D.** Triple in number

   The Hispanic population is one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population. Growing nearly 40% in the past ten years alone, the number of persons of Hispanic origin is expected to more than triple in the first half of the 21st century, nearing 100 million persons in 2050 (almost 25% of the U.S. population).

   This population growth is expected to be influenced more as a result of natural population increase than immigration in the coming years and will likely be the major element in the total population growth of the United States in the next fifty years.

   While the Asian population is also projected to grow rapidly as well, from 4% of U.S. population to 7% between 2000 and 2050, much of that growth will result from increased immigration.

3. **A.** Asians/Pacific Islanders

   Asians/Pacific Islanders as a group have the highest median income in the United States at a little over $46,000 per year. Whites have a median income of almost $41,000, blacks a little more than $25,000, and Hispanics show a median income level of just over $28,000.

   Median income is that level of income earned by the 50th percentile of the population group. It represents the midpoint of the group. In other words, half the people in the group make less than that income, and half the people in the group make more than that income.

4. **B.** 10%

   At approximately 25.8 million persons, the foreign-born population represents almost 10% of the U.S. population and is the largest recorded foreign-born population in U.S. history. Of these foreign-born residents, about 35% are naturalized U.S. citizens. The number of foreign-born U.S. residents has increased rapidly since 1970 from approximately 9.6 million to 25.8 million in 1997. This rapid increase in the foreign-born population reflects the high levels of immigration experienced in the past generation.

   As a percentage of population, however, the ratio of foreign-born to native-born residents is actually less than it was in 1910. In 1910, almost 15% of the population was foreign-born. The century's low point in foreign-born residents as a percentage of population was reached in 1970, when less than 5% of the population was foreign-born. In addition to the 25.8 million foreign-born residents, almost 29 million native-born residents have at least one foreign-born parent, meaning that almost 21% of the current U.S. population is of foreign birth or parentage.

5. **B.**   Los Angeles

Los Angeles is home to more foreign-born residents than any other American city, with 4.8 million foreign-born residents, just barely passing New York's 4.6 million.

In addition to having the largest number of foreign-born residents, Los Angeles also has the highest percentage of foreign-born residents, at 31% of its population.

As of 1997, Mexico was the leading country of birth of foreign-born U.S. residents. Almost six times as many foreign-born residents were born in Mexico as were born in the next highest ranked country of birth.

6. **C.**   4 out of 5

As of March 1997, over four-fifths (82.1%) of the adult population aged 25 or older reported completing at least high school. One out of five adults (23.9%) had attained at least a bachelor's degree. Almost 90% of young adults, aged 25 to 29, had completed high school.

Differences in educational attainment between white and black young adults (age 25 to 29) had all but disappeared in 1997. Hispanic adults showed the lowest percentages of high school completion, with only slightly more than half (54.7%) having graduated high school. Asians showed the highest proportion of college graduates. One-half (50.5%) of the Asian young adult population had completed a college degree, compared to 1 in 3 whites (28.9%) and 1 in 7 blacks (14.4%) in the 25 to 29 age range.

Nearly 1 out of 10 adults 18 years of age or older have no better than a 9th grade education.

7. **C.**   56%

Over 110 million adults (56.6%) were married and living with their spouse according to 1998 data. About 10% were "currently divorced." Among those between 25 and 34 years old, about 35% had never been married.

About 28% (20 million) of all children under 18 years of age in the United States lived with just one parent. The majority of children who lived with just one parent in 1998 lived with their mother (84%). No other adults were present in the household for 56% of children living with single parents. About 4 million children, nearly 6% of all children under 18, lived in their grandparents' household.

8. **D.**   14%

Based on 1990 census data (the most current data available), almost 14% of the population use a language other than English within their home. Of these adults, almost half of them report that they speak English less than "very well." More than 1.6 million adults report that they speak English "not at all."

Spanish is the most commonly used language other than English used in the home, followed by French, German, Italian, and Chinese.

Of those adults reporting that they speak English less than "very well," Chinese is the second most common language spoken in the home, following Spanish.

9. **B.** 1 out of 3

As of October 1997, more than 1 out of 3 American homes (36.6%) contained a home computer. This is a substantial increase from 22.8% in 1994. This growth, however, has not occurred to an equal extent across all income levels, demographic groups, and geographic areas.

In fact, a "digital divide" exists between certain groups of Americans, and has even increased between 1994 and 1997 so that there is an even greater disparity in access to basic communication tools and services. Over 75% of homes with an annual income of $75,000 or more had home computers, while only 15% of homes earning less than $25,000 per year owned computers. Even though all racial groups own more computers now than they did in 1994, whites are twice as likely to own a PC as either blacks or Hispanics (40% versus 19%). Persons living in central cities and rural areas both lag behind their urban neighbors in PC ownership and online access. The more educated are more likely to own a computer than the less educated. Only 25% of households headed by a female single parent owned a computer.

10. **D.** Adults aged 85 and older

The population age 85 and over is projected to be the fastest growing age group, doubling in size between 1995 and the year 2030, and increasing fivefold by the year 2050. In 1995, an estimated 3.6 million people were 85 years old or older. By 2050, this number is projected to grow to 18.2 million. In fact, the population aged 100 and over, although small in number, will also increase dramatically. In 1995, about 54,000 people were aged 100 or greater. There are projected to be over 800,000 centenarians living by the year 2050. Increased life expectancy and the large number of people entering these age groups (especially as the Baby Boomer generation ages) contribute to these exploding populations of the eldest of the elderly.

The 18 to 24 age group, the primary ages of new entrants to the laborforce, peaked in the early 1980s at 30 million persons. Between then and now, the number of persons in that age group has shrunk to around 25 or 26 million currently. This age group is projected to climb back slowly toward 30 million by 2010. In contrast, adults aged 25 to 44 will actually decline both in total number and as a percentage of the population.

Different from What?

In order to truly accept differences we must ask ourselves exactly what these differences are. To do this, please do the following exercise:

In this program we are talking about differences in people for diversity training purposes. Right now, take a moment to imagine people who have these differences. Please answer this question: "These people who are different are different from what?"

The answer most likely is, "Different from me." (The answer might also be, "Different from the norm," in which case you must ask yourself what this norm is.)

Now, thinking about these people who are different from you, please describe yourself below in detail. In this description please include values and beliefs that you have.

Example: While thinking, "People who are different from me are male," write, "I am female."
Example: While thinking, "People who are different from me are not Christian," write, "I am Christian."

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Now, consider the importance of each of these characteristics, values, and beliefs. For example, if you wrote, "I am very liberal politically," consider how important that is to you.

Go back to your list of characteristics, values, and beliefs and put one star by characteristics that are somewhat important to you, two stars for moderately important characteristics, and three stars for very important characteristics.

       *   Somewhat Important

     **   Moderately Important

   ***   Very Important

The more important a characteristic, especially a value or belief, is to you, the more difficult it will be for you to accept those who are different from that characteristic. Characteristics that describe us externally, such as gender, age, race, or cultural background, are usually important to us, and it may be difficult for us to work with others who are different from that characteristic. But differences in internal values and beliefs that we have rated very important more often than not create conflict in the working environment. Again, if you are very liberal politically, and that is very important to you, it will be difficult for you to accept someone who is extremely conservative politically. Take a look at the characteristics you rated "very important." Think about people who are very different from you in those characteristics. How do you feel about those people? How do you get along with those people?

We all feel that we get along better with people like us. Consider this: When you are choosing a person to work with you, who would you rather have—someone similar to you or someone different from you?

So what is the problem with choosing similar people to work with? In the past, in the white-collar workplace, white men chose other white men to work with. This worked out fine when the vast majority of the white-collar workforce were white males, when the vast majority of qualified candidates for jobs were white males, and when white men represented the vast majority of the buying power. Our country and our workforce have changed drastically since that time. For example, the Hispanic population is expected to nearly triple in the first half of the 21st century. The Asian population continues to increase rapidly. Almost 30 million Americans are foreign-born—the highest number in history. Over the next decade the percentage of white males in the workforce will decrease from almost one-half of the workforce to just over one-third of the workforce.

Despite the fact that we may be more comfortable working with people who are similar to us, in the 21st century we will frequently be working with people who are different from us, with a variety of experiences and backgrounds. Since the workforce is changing so drastically, it is important that we consider that those who are different from us may be valuable to our organization. If we want our organization to be successful, we must learn to accept differences and consider the merits of different ideas, opinions, and ways of doing things.

Video Scenarios for Discussion

That's Icky!

Consider the scenario on the video in which the two women are talking about the man with dreadlocks. When watching them and listening to their conversation, they seemed very immature.

What stereotypes or prejudices are they portraying?

What fears are they portraying?

What might be the results of their comments?

If they simply speak about him to each other, is any harm done? If so, what?

They're All Alike

Next, let's examine the scenario in the video in which the supervisor is expecting a new employee from Puerto Rico to work for him. He already feels that this employee is going to be a problem even though he hasn't even met him.

What stereotypes or prejudices is this man portraying?

Why is it easier for him to accept that in a shipment of computers from the same factory there will be a lot of differences between computers than to accept that all Hispanics are not the same?

What could he do to help himself accept the new employee?

The Right One for the Job?

Think about the video scenario in which the woman was interviewing candidates for a job. She seemed to like the person with the external characteristics that were very similar to her own.

Why do we choose people to work with us who are like us?

What are the problems with choosing employees to work with us that are a lot like us?

What could this woman have done differently?

She's a Jerk!

Think about the scenario on the video in which the employee assumed the female employee had a problem with him because he was gay, and his co-worker suggested that it might be because he was black.

What was the actual source of the problem?

What should have happened instead of the employees talking about each other to their friends?

Say Again?

Think about the video scenario in which one employee sits down next to the employee with the strong accent. It is clear that the first employee cannot understand the other.

What fears do you think each employee had about talking to the other?

How do you think each employee felt?

What could each employee have done differently?