

Thriving on Diversity: How to succeed without conforming to the 'norm'

It is often observed that a glass ceiling hangs over anyone who, because of certain physical characteristics or cultural traits, does not match the profile of the great majority of those at the top of the civil service. It is less often remarked that the way put forward for getting round that ceiling frequently turns out that to be an injunction to adopt a similar office persona as the 'norm' and behave like the majority. But narrow conformity cannot be a sound basis for inclusion. Instead, we need a genuine alternative that recognises strength in differences.

Aim

To provide participants with a clear understanding of:

- The Unspoken 'Norm': a look at the profile of 'club members'
- The Curious Conformity Model: how one is encouraged to 'fit in'
- The Advantage of Having Diverse Perspectives: a reminder of how teams thrive
- The Art of Building a Diverse Team: the role of manager and team players
- The Test for Discounting Differences: understanding when it may become unnecessary to measure the representation of particular groups
- The Key Elements of Inclusive Leadership: how to champion diversity
- The Gestalt Switch from Disguise to Pride: how to shift one's mindset from trying to hide one's differences, to confidently utilising them for the wider team

Methodology

The training approach to be used, which governs the design and delivery of the training is based on the following principles:

- To actively involve the participants throughout the training
- To enable participants to share their thoughts and enquiries
- The training is designed based on the needs and expectations of the participants that are reflected in the pre-training questionnaire

Workshop methods and tools

In order to achieve the objectives of the training, the following tools and methods will be utilised:

- **Presentations:** presentations will be used in order to provide the background of each subject and create discussion and questions.
- **Discussions:** throughout the training, participants will be encouraged to contribute to discussions and share their experiences and thoughts with the rest of the group. The discussions will be facilitated and coordinated by the facilitator in order to maintain the focus in the key areas of interest
- **Case studies:** case studies will be used so as to facilitate and trigger discussion, as well as allow external benchmarking so as to achieve competitiveness
- **Group work:** group work will be used in order to facilitate practical understanding of the issues and in order to enhance team working, team building and cooperation amongst participants

Sample programme

13.00 Introduction

- What are participants' views on diversity in the civil service and what would you like to get out of the session?
- The Unspoken 'Norm' – what is the profile of current 'club members'? A discussion of what counts as the 'norm' in your area of work
- The Curious Conformity Model – the unspoken invitation to 'fit in' as a pre-condition for getting on

13.45

- The Advantage of Having Diverse Perspectives – a review of the relationship between diversity and team effectiveness
- The Art of Building a Diverse Team – exploring what it takes to make diversity integral to team effectiveness
- The Test for Discounting Differences – an examination of why the representation of particular groups is important, and why mechanical 'diversity' analysis can only take us so far

14.45 Refreshment break

15.00

- The Key Elements of Inclusive Leadership: four elements to remember and cultivate
- The Gestalt Switch from Disguise to Pride: four characteristics of a pro-diversity outlook

15.45 What is to be done?

- For civil servants who are under-represented in the higher government positions

- For managers who want to be more supportive of their staff
- For human resource professionals

16.45 Conclusion

- Opportunity for final questions
- Concluding remarks

Our trainer

Dr Henry Tam

Henry Tam has over twenty years' experience as policy advisor, programme director and political theorist in support of the development of inclusive communities. He has written extensively on the subject and led government initiatives on delivering wider democratic empowerment, promoting civil renewal, and improving community-based regeneration.

From 2000-2002 Henry was the Home Office's Director for Community Safety & Regeneration in the East of England, responsible for developing and implementing Government policies on neighbourhood renewal and community safety in the region. He was formerly the Deputy Chief Executive at St Edmundsbury Borough Council where his work on democratic engagement with young people won a *Best Practice Award* from the Prime Minister.

Henry was the UK Government's Head of Civil Renewal & Deputy Director for Community Empowerment between 2003 and 2010, with lead responsibility on national policies for the involvement of citizens in shaping public decisions. He devised and delivered the cross-government 'Together We Can' action plan for civil renewal. This programme was showcased at the 2008 international meeting of the Global Network of Government Innovators (USA).

From 2010 to 2011, he was the UK Government's Head of Race Equality, and Deputy Director at the Department for Communities & Local Government.

Henry is currently Director of Cambridge University's Forum for Youth Participation & Democracy. This establishment aims to draw together practitioners, young people, policy makers, and researchers from Cambridge University and around the world to explore the problem of youth exclusion in decision-making.