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Forward Momentum - Global Diversity and Inclusion are Game Changers and Major Factors Impacting Successful Sustainable Development

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FORWARD MOMENTUM

Global Diversity and Inclusion are Game Changers and Major Factors Impacting Successful Sustainable Development

By Effenus Henderson

There is an emerging social construct in global human relationships that will guide the way governmental leaders, human resource practitioners, diversity and inclusion consultants, management coaches, and forward looking change agents perfect their craft in the 21st century.

This new construct, which I refer to as “the new normal” will dictate the way investors, activists, government leaders and civil society will carry out their work in the 21st century. Relationships and work will be enhanced, shaped and driven by the new wave of technology and social media available to an increasingly global workforce.

A critical competency that all global leaders will need to enhance is their ability to engage an increasingly diverse set of stakeholders in accomplishing mutually beneficial outcomes and goals. Societal and organizational outcomes will be accomplished by this new type of stakeholder who has become less satisfied with the status quo, more vocal and impatient.

Societal leaders will need to be more adaptive and flexible as organizational, governmental and customer expectations constantly evolve and change. These expectations and requirements are being exacerbated by globalization, a growing desire by youth for freedom, environmental sustainability concerns, and information accessibility and sharing.
The theme of this paper is “Forward Momentum” and addresses the question: How do global diversity and inclusion serve as game changers in driving progress and momentum forward in this period of increased global competitiveness, growing anxiety about freedom, concern over environmental degradation, and the pace of organizational change and societal unrest.

THE SOCIETAL CONTEXT - TRANSITION AROUND THE WORLD

The 21st century will be defined by how effectively people all around the world foster and value diversity in their societies. Diversity is often defined as the characteristics and attributes of people in the society including such differences as ethnicity, race, color, religion, sexual orientation, class, cognitive differences among a host of others. Geographic, tribal heritage and socioeconomic status can define this diversity as well. Inclusion is the intentional processes, behavior and actions that help to make this difference work for the good of society as a whole.

According to UNESCO, people in the Middle East and North Africa Region are placing greater demands for personal freedoms and political reforms. Citizens are feeling more empowered and educated and are making informed choices through free and fair elections. These rights are being safeguarded by an independent, professional media and a vibrant civil society.

UNESCO is supporting efforts to create more open, pluralistic and knowledge-based societies and have developed an action plan in the region guided by the following strategic objectives:

- **Improving the quality of education** – The region has significantly increased access to and investment in education, but quality of education services needs to be better addressed.
- **Enhancing freedom of expression and access to information** – Egypt, Tunisia and Libya are transitioning from restrictive media freedom toward a professional and independent media environment that can enable freedom of expression, pluralism and independence of media.
- **Protecting and preserving cultural heritage** – The region’s cultural heritage includes seven UNESCO World

The Euro-Mediterranean University of Morocco will be a new International Centre of Higher Education and Research with a focus on Euro-Mediterranean issues. Its mission is to promote and develop education and research in science and technology as well as humanities and social sciences in Morocco and in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

‘For decades there have been ceaselessly discussions about all that unites the societies around the Mediterranean basin. In the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean, there is an opportunity to put all our energies into fostering the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the fields of social and civil affairs, and to promote better understanding between the peoples of the region. The Division of Social and Civil Affairs will focus on the development of human affairs and civil protection, giving due attention and focus to the people-to-people dimension, and promoting better understanding and exchanges between societies.’

Source: Union for the Mediterranean Website
Heritage Sites in Egypt, eight in Tunisia, and five in Libya. Cultural heritage is not only a source of national pride but also of income generation, with cultural tourism one of the most important sectors of the economy. Cultural Heritage remains endangered by the risk of looting, conflict or volatile security.

- **Generating skills and economic opportunities** – the region has among the world’s highest youth unemployment rates, with one in four young people out of work.
- **Fostering democratic societies and assisting social transformation processes** – UNESCO’s activities promote tolerance, good governance and rule of law; strengthening human rights and supporting civil society, including youth and women’s organizations.

(UNESCO WEBSITE 2012)

**Inclusive Governance: Leveraging Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development**

The growing demographic changes around the world will shape how we think of sustainable development going forward. Respect for cultural heritage and traditions, an increased appreciation and respect for the many differences found in civil society has become a very important marker going forward.

The 21st century will be defined by how effectively people all around the world foster and value diversity in their societies. Diversity is often defined as the characteristics and attributes of people in the society including such differences as ethnicity, race, color, religion, sexual orientation, class, cognitive differences among a host of others. Geographic, tribal heritage and socioeconomic status will usher in new period in which relationships will matter as much as outcomes.

In the recent elections in the United States, the demographic changes that have accelerated over the past decade have ushered in a new period of change with new coalitions and players at the table. The election was about diversity. If you look at who voted in the United States for each candidate, the demographics shaped up as older and whiter versus younger and multiethnic, according to Luke Visconti of Diversity, Inc. magazine.

Some of the major victories included women candidates elected at historic numbers (At least 19 women will occupy seats in Congress increasing the number by 12 percent). It was also a landmark election for LGBT candidates as seven of eight running for seats in the Senate and Congress won.

Additionally, many of the multiethnic voters supported the President by large margins. African Americans and Hispanic Americans supported him at historically high levels. Seventy five percent of Asians voted for the President. A sizable number of American youth voted for the
President. In the end, youth will win over age as the country becomes more diverse. It is estimated that the US will become 50 percent nonwhite by 2043.

What are the lessons for leaders who govern? Why is inclusive governance important? The simple truth is that what is occurring in the US and in many parts of the world is a growing cultural and demographic change. Leaders must seek to understand the implications of these changes, address organizational and institutional barriers that impede progress, and expand the circles of influence to communities often left out of the decision-making and change process.

Sustainable development success will depend on how well leaders build relationships grounded in respectful behavior and trust to these new and emerging markets and communities.

Understanding the Implications - The Regional Economic Context and Relationship to Inclusivity (MENA Region):

Diversity is a critical component of the change occurring in MENA. The societal attributes are different – class, religion, ethnicity and gender differences cannot be defined or exampled in the same way as in Western societies. However, leaders in this part of the region must understand the growing restlessness of youth, women and underrepresented ethnic groups and their desire to have a larger voice in issues impacting their lives. The economy and sustainable development will be challenged if inclusion is not considered satisfactorily.

Consider the following economic drivers:

- MENA regional economies are characterized generally by a high dependency on oil, low growth and job creation. A regional imperative is to diversify national economies, enhance competitiveness, accelerate growth, and create job opportunities (annual labor force growth: 3.4% twice all other developing countries)
- Tourism has emerged as key driver of economic growth being the main service export of the MENA region (Egypt 27%, Morocco 20%, Tunisia 17%, Jordan 20%, and Lebanon 35%)
- The world tourism trade has expanded fivefold in the past 20 years and is projected to continue growing: Opportunity for MENA tourism sector (Hedi Larbi, 2007).

The “New Normal and Social Construct” Emerging Globally

There is a “new normal” of social interaction occurring globally. As a result it is creating an new social construct for behavior, societal change, and economic inclusion. It is my belief that the new normal will be defined by four major social construct areas which I have developed. They
Emerging Cultural Gauntlets

include: emerging cultural gauntlets, shifting morality and civility, unprecedented global competitiveness, increasing focus on sustainable business development around the world, and global societies with more diverse cultural traditions and heritage. Failure to address these any of these social challenges puts a society at greater risk of not sustaining itself.

"The New Normal," is a term that Bill (William H.) Gross, an American financial manager and co-founder of Pacific Investment Management (PIMCO), coined in March, 2009, to define the economic landscape for years, or decades, to come. "When the U.S. and global economy reset after the crisis, the global economy will look different," says Mohamed El-Erian, CEO of PIMCO. "This has implications for investment strategies, how you run a business and what you offer your clients." (Wikipedia, 2012)

The implications go beyond the economic and financial considerations. They go directly to core of human interaction and beliefs. Historically, these beliefs have shaped the way we have created and sustained relationships.

Social constructs are generally understood to be the by-products of countless human choices rather than laws resulting from divine will or nature. Peter L. Berger (Austrian-born American sociologist) and Thomas Luckmann (German sociologist), wrote about it in their book, The Social Construction of Reality, and published in 1966. Their work introduced the term social construction into the social sciences and was strongly influenced by the work of Alfred Schütz. The central concept of The Social Construction of Reality is that persons and groups interacting in a social system create, over time, concepts or mental representations of each other’s actions, and that these concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played by the actors in relation to each other. When these roles are made available to other members of society to enter into and play out, the reciprocal interactions are said to be institutionalized. In the process of this institutionalization, meaning is embedded in society. Knowledge and people’s conception (and belief) of what reality is becomes embedded in the institutional fabric of society. Reality is therefore said to be socially constructed. (Wikipedia)

Emerging Cultural Gauntlets

Civil societies around the world are rising up to challenge historical traditions and autocratic legacies which have operated on an exclusive, privileged model of social interaction. The institutional fabric of society mentioned earlier, becomes challenged by those whose wish is to change it to become more inclusive.

The challenges to the status quo are enhanced and accelerated by the use of technology, shifting demographic societal composition, cross cultural migration, and the disproportional impact of economic change on those feeling marginalized. These four “gauntlets will highlight most significant areas of change. Merriam Webster dictionary defines a gauntlet as “an open challenge (as to combat).”
Growing Use of Technology will be used as a tool to communicate, to organize opposition and enlist change agents in a relentless pursuit of a targeted outcome whether it be raising the voices of the grassroots on public policy or in helping to accelerate society change and inclusion. A key outcome in certain societies will be motivated by a desire for freedom and democracy.

Steven Johnson author of the book, *Future Perfect: the Case for Progress in a Networked Age* makes the case that a new model of political change is on the rise, transforming everything from local governments to classrooms, from protest movements to health care. Johnson paints a compelling portrait of this new political worldview -- influenced by the success and interconnectedness of the Internet, but not dependent on high-tech solutions -- that breaks with the conventional categories of liberal or conservative thinking.

Johnson describes the creators of institutions modeled after the Internet as “peer progressives.” Like their 20th-century forebears, these are doers intent on solving social, political, civic, and economic problems using readily available tools—in this case, the Internet, mobile phones, and mashable data. They value equity, participation, diversity, and choice. They believe in the power of innovation and are concerned by the dominance of big business and big government.

Is there a new political philosophy emerging from things like open source software development; massive community sharing hubs like Wikipedia, Kickstarter, and Reddit; peer-to-peer social networking; experiments in "Liquid Democracy," and the rapid spread of resource sharing tools like ZipCar, AirBnb and Car2go? Is it time to start talking about replacing the "welfare state" with the "partner state"?

### Shifting Global Demographic Composition

The accelerated pace of global demographic change will also become a major gauntlet driving change. As more people of color populate the planet, they will demand to be included in civil society, government, and private enterprise. Those being governed will challenge traditions that have survived for centuries which have had the effect of keeping them impoverished and in many instances viewed as second class citizens.

This gauntlet will be aimed at imperialist leaders, religious zealots, and those who have controlled significant percentages of the society’s wealth whether royalty, government, or private enterprise.

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Policymakers cannot afford to ignore the impact of demographic trends and indicators on the achievement of major development goals, including poverty reduction, old-age and health security, and provision of public services and infrastructure.

Scientific and popular debate about the causes of climate change and strategies to mitigate its effects has been relatively silent on the subject of demographic change. At least three demographic trends are relevant to climate change: (1) age structure transitions and attendant changes in consumption patterns, a relevant development for both industrialized countries as well as many populous emerging markets which by mid century will have age structures resembling those of the developed world; (2) population movement and increases in consumption associated with urban residence; and (3) in-place population growth, a driver of greenhouse gas emissions.²

The world will be older and far less Caucasian, and it will be far more concentrated in urban areas; these population shifts will demand concessions of political influence at the expense of the young and middle aged and at the expense of traditional rural constituencies, as well as from traditional US allies and toward states currently outside our orbit of influence.

Global demographic trends will have far-reaching consequences for the key elements of national power: economic, military, and political within the larger global community. Allies and rivals alike will cope differently—some better than others. Reforms require advance notice and gradual implementation that, given the immediacy of many of the world’s demographic challenges, leave no room for complacency.

Former President Bill Clinton spoke of some of the changes at the One Young World Summit in October of 2012.³ The summit plenary topics focused on education, global business, health, human rights, leadership, sustainable development and transparency. The important message is that youth ambassadors and leaders will play a significant role in global diversity and inclusion.

Cross Cultural Migration. Additionally, the movement and migration of this increasingly diverse global population will require that governments, civil society, and private enterprise adapt their practices so that they are much more inclusive and respectful.

Leonore Lobe Adler writes that “migration has been a major source of human survival, adaptation, and growth across the centuries and millennia. This was true in the earliest days of human existence, when hunters and gathers roamed as individuals and bands across Africa to Eurasia and then across the Bering Straits to North America and South

² [http://www.cgdev.org/doc/Demographic_and_Development/DD_background_12_10_08.PDF](http://www.cgdev.org/doc/Demographic_and_Development/DD_background_12_10_08.PDF)
America. This was true as early sea voyagers followed coastlines and then crossed oceans to unknown worlds, and as nations colonized new lands in pursuit of power and wealth moving citizens, servants, and slaves around the globe.

It was true during the great period of migration when Europeans left their homes for the promise and possibilities of America — for freedom, hope, and identity. And, it is true today as new migrants from Asia and Central and South America move to North America, Europe, and Australia.”

In the age of globalization, a new configuration of forces is promoting migration. Globalization is that process and product by which the lives of all human beings on our planet are being drawn into greater interdependency and consequence. The driving forces of such globalization are global communications, global transfer of wealth and money, and global political and natural events (terrorism, trade, global warming, etc.) (Taran). Seven reasons for migration were advanced by Taran. They include: increasing armed violence, ethnic and racial conflict, aspects of globalization such as unemployment and culture conflict, environmental degradation, development induced migration, denial of democracy and large scale corruption. (Leonore Adler and Patrick A. Taran).

As civil societies become more diverse, especially due to migration patterns of minorities, effective governance of migration requires coordinated intervention and regulation that is inclusive. Only a comprehensive and integrated approach to policy formulation, implementation and evaluation covering a broad range of areas will secure the benefits of migration for origin and destination countries alike. Inclusion or social cohesive strategies must be considered on the regional and national levels.

Disproportionate Economic Impacts. Because of the force of these gauntlets, they will create growing economic insecurity, particularly in emerging economies or in societies where a small minority of exclusive leaders have ruled by terror and fear and where significant percentages of the society’s wealth has been controlled by these hands. The people will increasingly rise up to demand greater participation in the economic spoils being created and challenge existing patterns of governance and fight for increased transparency in the way their society is being led.

Erik Thorbecke and Chutatong Charumilind, Cornell University wrote in an article entitled: Economic Inequality and its Socioeconomic Impact: Income inequality is regarded as the crucial factor leading to social conflict, and political instability. High inequality could lead to a lower level of democracy, high rent-seeking policies, and a higher probability of revolution. An economy could fall into a vicious cycle because the
breakdown of social cohesion brought about by income inequality could threaten democratic institutions⁴.

Social responsibility and social media are two important trends impacting business. David Jones, creator of the Social Business Idea and CEO of Havas Media, writes that:

*Even before the current economic turmoil, business was moving toward greater social responsibility. Then, as the global economic crisis worsened, social media helped the world see the true cost of the ruthless pursuit of profit and its impact on economies, people, and the planet. Now, in our new world of radical transparency, people can find out anything about a company or brand and share it with one another, fast and far. Social media gives people the power to support companies that are socially responsible and to punish those that aren’t.*

*The rules of engagement with consumers have changed. Businesses need new thinking to generate strategic ideas that put social responsibility at the heart of business strategy. We call these Social Business Ideas⁵, because they make a positive contribution to both society and to a company’s profitability. We look for these ideas at the intersection of social responsibility and social media; they’re ideas that embrace a genuine, credible role for the company and tackle the social issues that consumers care about.*⁵

**Morality and Civility**

As the growing tension between the governed and those governing increases brought on by greater demands for a share of the pie, tension between those who would protect the status quo and those who want societal change, the discussion and the debate will grow increasingly hostile. And, as technology grows as a tool for social change, examples of leaders who have not led responsibly will be highlighted and their reputation and integrity questioned by their behavior.

Vaclav Havel, first president of the Czech Republic, in a New York Times Op-ED entitled *Our Moral Footprint*⁶ writes:

> Whenever I reflect on the problems of today’s world, whether they concern the economy, society, culture, security, ecology or civilization in general, I always end up confronting the moral question: what action is responsible or acceptable? The moral order, our conscience and human rights — these are the most important issues at the beginning of the third millennium.

⁴ [http://www.arts.cornell.edu/econ/et17/Erik%20Thorbecke%20files/Socioeconomic%20impact.pdf](http://www.arts.cornell.edu/econ/et17/Erik%20Thorbecke%20files/Socioeconomic%20impact.pdf)


We must return again and again to the roots of human existence and consider our prospects in centuries to come. We must analyze everything open-mindedly, soberly, unideologically and unobsessively, and project our knowledge into practical policies. Maybe it is no longer a matter of simply promoting energy-saving technologies, but chiefly of introducing ecologically clean technologies, of diversifying resources and of not relying on just one invention as a panacea.

I’m skeptical that a problem as complex as climate change can be solved by any single branch of science. Technological measures and regulations are important, but equally important are support for education, ecological training and ethics — a consciousness of the commonality of all living beings and an emphasis on shared responsibility.

Without due consideration to the power of inclusive governance and leadership, a certain breed of leader may emerge who will want to “gut” the role of government in the lives of people. They mantra will be: “I am not my brother’s keeper – let him fend for himself.”

This belief is grounded in the leader’s world view that government cannot solve or fund solutions focused on helping people out of poverty, providing them ways to earn a respectable income, or for caring for their medical, health, or retirement needs. In the United States, the “tea party” leaders have been characterized as presenting this point of view.

“In today’s America, incivility is on prominent display: in the schools, where bullying is pervasive; in the workplace, where an increasing number are more stressed out by coworkers than their jobs; on the roads, where road rage maims and kills; in politics, where strident intolerance takes the place of earnest dialogue; and on the web, where many check their inhibitions at the digital door,” says Pier M. Forni, author of “The Civility Solution: What to Do When People are Rude” and director of The Civility Initiative at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. (Diversity, Inc.)

The question to be examined is this: “Can we make progress in solving the challenging issues of our time if we lack moral courage and if we display a lack of respect for those who are different from ourselves? How will this play out in the many halls of governance around the world?

**Competitiveness**

There is a shift of economic productivity to emerging market as western societies experience a marked decline in leadership in this area. This trend is placing significant pressure on US based corporations to reduce costs, pare down staff, and improve operating efficiency and to seek new and innovative ways to “delight” their customers.

According to the recently released “The Global Competitiveness Report (2012-1013), Policymakers are struggling to find ways to cooperate and manage the current economic challenges while preparing their economies to perform well in an increasingly difficult and unpredictable global landscape. Amid the short-term crisis management, it remains critical for

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countries to establish the fundamentals that underpin economic growth and development for the longer term.

We define competitiveness as the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country. The level of productivity, in turn, sets the level of prosperity that can be earned by an economy. The productivity level also determines the rates of return obtained by investments in an economy, which in turn are the fundamental drivers of its growth rates. In other words, a more competitive economy is one that is likely to sustain growth.

Even in government, unions are being attacked and viewed as impediments to organizational and structural change, and some leaders are advocating unprecedented strategies to strip them of their power and role in being an agent for employees. This “disruptive” leadership style will likely lead to more confrontation and challenge by government workers who are impacted by these policies and decisions.

Sustainable Business Development

In emerging economies, there is increasing pressure to operate business in ways that do no harm to the community or the environment and which help to promote the healthy growth of jobs in the local economy.

According to the 2012 – 2013 World Economic Forum Report: In recent years, citizens, the business community, and governments have become more cognizant of the impacts that the economic growth model of the past decades may have on the natural environment and the development of cohesive societies. Data on economic growth and employment show that, in the period after World War II in Western economies, economic growth went hand in hand with improving living conditions, access to more and better goods and services for a growing portion of the population, and an overall enhancement of well-being.

More recently the sharp rises in economic growth in developing and emerging markets have pulled hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, dramatically improving their living conditions. However, aggregate statistics may not fully reflect the potential negative effects that these patterns of economic development might have had either on those portions of the population who find themselves unable to benefit from the overall improving economic conditions, or on the natural environment.

A company’s “license to operate” will be challenged by members of the community and its leadership, if the enterprise doesn’t operate in a responsible and respectful way. This is highlighted in recent discussions about the 3Ps – people, profit and the planet. Leaders who

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seek out members of the populations who have not historically benefited from the improving economic conditions must be at the table.’

The sustainability model must change. A number of events and trends have raised concerns about the social sustainability of the existing development model. These include the events that led to what became known as the “Arab Spring”; the rise of unemployment in many Western economies, particularly in segments of the population such as the young and the less skilled; and increasing inequalities of income and socioeconomic opportunities in both Western countries and fast-growing Asian economies. (2012-2012 WEF Global Competitiveness Report).

The Shape Shifters and Game Changers

Humanity is witnessing one of the most significant revolutions in global civil society helping to accelerate the shape of the change being experienced around the world. I refer to the people driving the direction the change as the “shape shifters.”

Shapeshifting is a common theme in mythology, folklore and fairy tales. In its broadest sense, Shapeshifting occurs when a being either (1) has the ability to change its shape or being into that of another person, creature, gender, species, or other entity, or (2) finds its shape involuntarily changed by someone else. (Wikipedia)

I define them as the forces, agents, defining events which will play a transformational role in shifting the direction of future global society. Listed below is a partial group of shape shifters.

- Corporate investors and stakeholders concerned about the profitability, sustainability and reputation of the firms they invest in
- Regulators determined to bring into balance the way financial institutions manage the assets of their clients (Reference the Dodd-Franklin Act in the United States)
- Demographic change resulting in more culturally and ethnically diverse societies
- Retrenched and heavily change resistant U.S. baby boomers who are overwhelming white and conservative (who want their country back)
- Impatient and significantly diverse youth populations dissatisfied with status quo and who are fueling the energy to change societies around the world toward democracy and inclusivity
- Looming ecosystem degradation requiring multilateral, global, coordinated solutions and responses.
- A growing middle class in many emerging societies
• China and India – leaders in the development of a new breed of science, technology, engineering and math professionals outpacing US yields who are driving innovation
• An increasingly more literate and activist global society requiring more transparency, respectful business conduct, and civility.
INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP - FACILITATING DEVELOPMENT, PROMOTING TRUST AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE, UNDERSTANDING, AND COOPERATION

Five Major Axes of Focus

Inclusive Leadership
Key Leadership Behaviors
Change Management Mindset
Engagement and Outreach
Cultural Competence and Understanding

Human capital engagement is increasingly the critical success factor in achieving desired business outcomes. Companies are recognizing the importance of investing in their human resources and how this investment can help them build competitive advantage in a global economy. Corporate leaders focus on and measure outcomes such as revenue, expenses, profitability, customer satisfaction, productivity of assets, market share, time to market, stock price, etc. The degree of success in accomplishing these outcomes will depend on how organizations leverage, engage, and deploy the resources with which they are entrusted.

As the world’s talent becomes more interconnected, mobile, and diverse, and as society becomes more expectant of its corporate citizens, organizations must constantly adapt to survive and prosper. This adaptive capability is dependent on the organization’s talent; it must be committed, engaged, and focused on increasing revenue, reducing time to market, increasing shareholder value and stock prices, minimizing costs, maximizing the efficient use of assets, and enhancing customer satisfaction.
To operate successfully in this environment, relationships and collaboration are imperative. The stakeholders — employees, investors, government leaders, customers, regulators, and communities in which we operate — have become much more diverse and as such require much more cultural agility and skill in building relationships. These stakeholders come from different religious, geographic, political, and other demographic backgrounds and value sets which have changed the paradigm for managing these diverse human relationships.

Operating in this new paradigm of cross cultural and diverse global value sets requires leaders that know how to leverage these differences. The leader’s awareness and understanding of inclusivity ensures that key stakeholders who need to be at the table when decisions are made are there. I refer to this concept as “inclusion”— how to make the mix of so many differences as well as similarities work for the good of the organization and society as a whole. Inclusivity is the process of ensuring that diverse perspectives that should be at the table when decisions are made are there. It is based on the belief that performance outcomes can be optimized when we value, respect, and engage a wide array of perspectives in problem-solving and decision-making.

Inclusive Leadership and Behavior – Its Growing Impact on 21st Century Governance

Shortly before the United Presidential elections were held, True Blue Inclusion, a US consulting firm, released the results of a survey that summarized the views of top U.S. chief diversity officers (CDO) on who is best positioned to lead the country over the next four years. The overwhelming consensus was that President Obama and Vice President Biden would be the better choice. As a CDO I believe that personal leadership behavior exhibited by both candidates was the game changer – not Hurricane Sandy, not the economy, or issues like the response to the Benghazi attack. They were very important, but not the pivotal game changer.

Over the past six months in 2012, I have followed the way both sides conducted their campaigns. Both were aggressive and quick to point out the weaknesses and flaws in the other’s platform. However, the President took a
more inclusive approach – inviting a wide and diverse array of stakeholders to share in the process and the journey. These stakeholders, many of them middle class and hard working Americans, were from every ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age demographic that makes up the growing diversity in America. The President was careful not to be disparaging or to encourage others who served in his campaign to not be disparaging as well. Unfortunately, Candidate Romney and his team, and others who supported the emerging Republican agenda, did little to denounce actions, commentary, or behavior that was extremely disrespectful.

It did not go unnoticed.

There are several lessons to be learned from the U.S. elections. First, that society is becoming more diverse. Secondly the tone and tenor at the top is critical to successful outcomes. Third in a society where an increasing number of voters are from diverse communities, words and actions matter a lot.

**Five Behaviors That Impact Success – Respect, Relationship, Results, responsibility and reverence**

**RESPECT:** So the first game changer is behavior that does not “respect” different points of view. The willingness to listen, to understand, and to encourage thoughtful dialogue was missing. The strategy was highlighted when Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell mentioned that the primary objective of the party was to defeat the President in this year’s election – not to work on pressing economic issues, winding down the war, or the looming deficit and others.

An unwillingness to build relationships with diverse communities by the Republican candidate was also a factor. As a former trustee of the National Urban League, candidate Romney turned down an invitation to address the organization. And, there were many other similar requests that appeared to have gone unanswered. Building an effective outreach and inclusion strategy to a broad swath of the American demographic did not appear to be in the organization’s game plan.

As a casual observer, it was very noticeable that people of color were sorely underrepresented at the National Republican Convention. They were not at the table. With such little diversity in attendance, it gave the perception that African Americans in particular and minorities in general, were not welcomed. Behavior by some of the conference attendees underscored a lack of sensitivity and inclusiveness as when several workers, who happened to be African American, had peanuts hurled their way.

While the behavior of these attendees was deplorable, the silence and the reticence to respond to these acts as unacceptable convinced many folks, especially people of color, that this party
was not interested in building healthy and positive relationships with these emerging demographic sectors.

The lesson for global leaders is to be respectful and inclusive and be intentional about inviting those members of civil society that have a stake in the outcome. With minorities and women a growing force in society, leaders must seek, value and respect their input.

**RELATIONSHIP:** The second game changer is the power found in fostering positive relationships with diverse communities.

Worlds and commentary can destroy trust and hamper engagement with diversity communities. For example, the 47 percent comment made by candidate Romney fortified a wall of privilege and exclusion. This marginalized a large portion of the electorate.

Behavior focused on casting dispersions, belittlement, and blame on the President for the lack of action on economic issues was not truthful in many instances. There was little recognition of the fact that a recalcitrant House of Representatives, bent on ousting the President, did not budge at all on the majority of issues brought forth by the President and other members of the Congress. As a result, little progress was made in solving the major challenges of the day. There were no win-win solutions, no collaboration, and very little give and take.

The overriding strategy of many Republican candidates was to get rid of this President even if it hurt the average American household. American families want a vibrant economy, jobs, education and reasonable health care to name a few priorities. But they also want their voices heard and to be respected. Citizens recognize that the economy and recession will not get fixed over night and that “one person cannot fix it.” If Romney’s mantra had been “We” can fix it, rather than “I” can fix it he might have caused more people to listen.

The lesson for leaders is that effective relationships with diverse constituents and communities can be a cornerstone to achieving desired results. Relationships have to be carefully nurtured and must represent the diverse voices of the governed.

**RESULTS:** The third game changer is how results are achieved. They must be a reflection of the will of the people and provide for shared outcomes that improve the lot of the average member of civil society.

Achieving desired outcomes requires a lot of “give and take.” It requires that the wishes and desires of the people are carefully considered and vetted. The process must be collaborative. Adversarial relationships fail to produce the desired outcomes that people want.

**REVERENCE:** The fourth game changer is ‘reverence’ for the office of the governmental leader.
In the US, the President was faced with a number of insensitive, biased and racially derogatory actions aimed at belittling his leadership and in so doing, the office itself. Our founding President George Washington’s “Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation” should be re-read for instruction. It provides very insightful guidance appropriate protocols.

The most striking example inappropriate behavior was in the way candidates and congressional leader displayed a lack of civility, respect and reverence for the Office of the President. A number of individuals routinely characterized the President as un-American, Lazy, a “birther,” and other language reminiscent of the Jim Crow era. It was ugly, distasteful, and demeaned the office of the President.

I believe there were a number of occasions when such behavior could have been “called on the carpet” by candidate Romney but sadly, such responses were few and far between. Language that was factually incorrect and which seemed to pander to the audience of the moment left many of us with a higher level of distrust for the motives and intentions of the Republican candidate. Trust and integrity became important considerations in who might be elevated to the office of the Presidency.

Governmental and business leaders must set a tone that is inclusive, engaging, respectful and uplifting. It must be done in way that invites rather than inhibits healthy relationships across cultural differences. Allowing inappropriate behavior through words, actions and other ways to go unchecked and condoned is not the mark of an effective leader in the 21st Century. By allowing the conversation to shift from the important public policy issues to personal assaults and attack, shines a light on the leader himself.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** The fifth and final game changer is personal responsibility to demonstrate leadership.

Our leaders are accountable to all of us. They are not omnipotent. Candidates who believe that they are accountable to no one move society towards exclusive and limited governance. America made a choice in their election as we are reminded by the following remark by Machiavelli: “There are two types of power: the one which feeds the weakness of the people and the one that nourishes their force.”

Inclusive leadership in the 21st century must “nourish” the force of the governed to be sustainable.
CHANGE MANAGEMENT – WHAT MUST BE DONE

Building more diversity and inclusive organizations and businesses doesn’t just happen. It is part of a multi-year change strategy. It starts with building commitment with organizational and societal leaders (governmental, business, educational, NGOs, etc.) At the start of the effort, senior leaders must decide if “diversity” was in the short list of priorities going forward.

Usually human resources professionals help to build the strategic imperative (or business case for diversity) and share it with the senior executives of the organization. Based on their discussion and debate, the senior executives decide whether to include it in a short list of priorities. Once decided, an initial strategic framework for action is developed.

In initiating the new strategy, the leaders will assess the current state (within the organization, business and society) and draw on prior work-system change efforts that had been successful in the past.

In the United States, a number of businesses have developed change strategies aimed at making their businesses and organizations more diverse and inclusive. Factors such as the talent completion, emerging markets, license to operate, corporate social responsibilities, along with existing regulatory requirements (governmental) helped in establishing the business imperative.

The President of the United States, Barack Obama issued an Executive Order requiring all Federal Government Agencies to develop Strategic Plans aimed at increasing the diversity in the workforce and making the workplace more inclusive.10 In the order, the President wrote: Our Nation derives strength from the diversity of its population and from its commitment to equal opportunity for all. We are at our best when we draw on the talents of all parts of our society, and our greatest accomplishments are achieved when diverse perspectives are brought to bear to overcome our greatest challenges. He went on to say: To realize more fully the goal of using the talents of all segments of society, the Federal Government must continue to challenge itself to

enhance its ability to recruit, hire, promote, and retain a more diverse workforce. Further, the Federal Government must create a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to participate to their full potential.

**UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT STATE** – When embarking on a multi-year change strategy to build a more inclusive organization, business, or civil society the organizational leaders must first understand the compelling drivers for change. This requires establishing the business case, examining the current gaps within the organization and developing an intentional strategy to close the gap. The business imperative must be owned and supported by the top leadership, including the Head of Human Resources.

The assessment must include an examination of leadership behavior, institutional policies, systems and practices that inhibit inclusion and diversity from becoming a part of the fabric of the organization, and areas where significant breakthroughs are warranted and needed.

**BUILD THE STRATEGY** – Under senior leadership guidance, a project team is usually established to develop the multi-year strategy. Input is sought from a variety of organizational stakeholders – Human Resources or Personnel, Human Capital Management, Training and Education, Legal Department, and Operating Units.

The team helps to ensure a clear line of sight to business and operating strategy. Leadership understanding and commitment to the strategy is examined and efforts to build increased commitment are implemented.

**CREATE A CHANGE FRAMEWORK FOR THE STRATEGY** – A framework is necessary to create ensure consistent communications for the effort. The framework includes high impact action areas based on the gap analysis and priorities for change. The focus is the development a multi-year framework for change. Outcomes include increased understanding, the development of action areas and indicators / milestones (metrics) for progress in each area.

It also includes as part of the systems change dimension the building of build partnerships with internal and external stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement is deemed critical to successful outcomes.

**BRING CLARITY TO ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS** – The implementation of the strategy cannot be successful without having clear accountabilities and responsibilities. As the high impact actions are identified ownership for results should be assigned to a senior leader and other roles and responsibilities identified.
Key relationships involving other stakeholders should be discussed and team members assigned to manage those relationships. Seek low cost, valued-added approaches which are bottom-line focused and which show a clear line of sight to the business and/or organizational objectives.

**ESTABLISH KEY SUCCESS FACTORS AND STRATEGIC MILESTONES** – Be clear on the objectives of the change process. Be intentional about the critical success factors, action areas, and annual milestones that are important. Don’t underestimate the need for leaders to set clear expectations, monitor progress and to whole leaders accountable for results.

The work in building more diverse and inclusive organizations takes time, focus and endurance in order to be sustainable. Oftentimes new and competing priorities will get in the way and cause momentum to slow. It is important to check progress often. Start by setting these key success factors with organization leaders such as – Return on investment, Retention/Turnover, Workforce Representation of underrepresented groups, Metrics and targets to assess rate of change as well as levels of employee engagement and satisfaction.

**IN SUMMARY – THE TAKE AWAYS**

Global diversity and inclusion are becoming significant game changers in human capital management and organization sustainability going forward. Business, governmental, NGO and civil society leaders must deepen their understanding and adapt their behaviours, processes and institutional systems to become more inclusive. Three points are important11:

1. **Knowledge** – It pays to be a good corporate citizen - diverse and inclusive. A leader needs to be keenly aware of the issues, practices and context situations that drive the change required and in some instances demanded by stakeholders. Circles of influence and key decision makers need to be a part of the change process.

2. **Understand Context** – Understanding demographic changes, cultural heritage, institutional systems and governance protocols helps in navigating the changing process. The context is volatile (there are no maps), expert diagnosis is advantage, and situational knowledge is important. Leaders need to understand cultural legacies and the impact on societal and organizational change.

3. **Structure** – Leadership is increasingly accomplished through connections and networks; it improves efficiency, flexibility and organizational stability. Change is organic and not hierarchical.

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11 Adapted from Katherine Smith’s presentation – Managing Many Environments – Center for Corporate Citizenship 2012 [http://bcccc.net/pdf/2012conf/KatherineSmith.pdf](http://bcccc.net/pdf/2012conf/KatherineSmith.pdf)
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Effenus Henderson is Chief Diversity Officer for Weyerhaeuser Company, Federal Way, Washington where he advises the CEO and senior management team on diversity, inclusion and affirmative action related matters. He is an internationally recognized diversity thought leader and has been invited by numerous companies and organizations to share his expertise. He has provided advisory and consultative support on diversity and inclusion to the Federal Government’s Environmental Protection Agency, USDA, NIH, US Forest Service and Office of Personnel Management.

He has addressed members of the General Assembly of the United Nations on intercultural and interreligious diversity, and also addressed a high level panel of the Alliance of Civilizations in Madrid, Spain in 2008, Istanbul Turkey in 2009, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2010 and Doha, Qatar in 2011. He also participated in a high level dialogue sponsored by the High Commissioner on Human Rights in preparation for the 60th Anniversary Celebration of the Universal Declaration of human rights in Paris, France.

He was part of a special panel on diversity at the VII Annual Inter-American Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility held in Punta del Este, Uruguay in December 2009. He has advised members of the United Nation’s Alliance of Civilization and Global Compact offices on emerging issues. Additionally, he has advised leaders of Club de Madrid’s Shared Societies Project (Madrid, Spain) on cross-cultural inclusion. In 2010, he was appointed to the Advisory Board of the Global Dialogue Foundation, located in Melbourne, Australia.

He was named one of the top diversity officers in corporate America by Diversity Best Practices / Working Mother Media and received its first Diversity Officer Leadership Award in 2007. He was among the finalists for the second annual global ORC Peter C. Robertson Award for Equality and Diversity Champions. He was one of 100 Global Diversity Thought Leaders invited by the president of the Society of Human Resource Management to a special forum in April 2008 to provide a perspective on the future of global diversity and inclusion.

He was named to Savoy magazine’s 2010 list of the Top 100 Most Influential Blacks in Corporate America and named the 2010 recipient of the National Urban League’s Collins Award for distinctive service and commitment. In May of 2011, he was named by Black Enterprise Magazine as one of the “Top Executives in Diversity” for his outstanding business achievements.

He is currently serving as co-chair of the Society of Human Resource Management’s Diversity and Inclusion Standards Taskforce which is leading to national diversity standards, approved by ANSI, in the areas of chief diversity officer competencies, diversity programs, and diversity metrics. The taskforce is also working with International Standards Organization (ISO) on extending the standards globally.
He serves on numerous boards including the International Society of Diversity and Inclusion Professionals (ISDIP) where he is a member of the founding board, the National Urban League Board where he currently serves as a trustee and president of the Council of Affiliate Board Members. He is also a member of the Institute for Inclusion, a US based group studying diversity and inclusion trends. He is also a past chair of the Attrition Retention Consortium, a national group studying turnover trends in Corporate America. He is also a member of the Board of Advisors, School Business, Florida A&M University.

He is a graduate of North Carolina Central University and the Stanford University Executive Program. He is married to Helen Skinner Henderson and is the father of three sons – Kevin, Justin and Marcus. He is also certified by SHRM as a “Senior Professional in Human Resources.”

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