

Diversity Wins

I'm pretty sure I believe in diversity for the right reasons. That's Diversity with a capital "D": gender, race, nationality, or what have you. But I want to talk about a different kind of diversity for just a minute, and that different kind of diversity is what I call lowercase "d" diversity. The shorthand of what I'm about to say is if you mix stuff up on any dimensions whatsoever—short people, tall people, left-handed people, right-handed people, people from universities, people with third grade as their last year of education—mix it up and you get a better way to address problems, better answers, etc.

There's a guy by the name of Scott Page, who wrote a book called *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. And what it boils down to—and you're going to think this is absurd and you're not going to buy my act when I first say it—but read the book, think about it, whatever. What he says is that random groups of human beings, more or less dragged off the street, will do a better job of solving problems than a group of experts.

And we could go on about this for hours, about the problems with experts. They are very, very narrow. They tend to do group-think. Often as not, they all came from the same six universities or what have you. But let me read one thing of his out of this book, called *The Difference*, now.

“Diverse groups of problem solvers—groups of people with diverse tools—consistently outperformed groups of the best and the brightest. If I formed two groups, one random and (therefore diverse) [by definition], and one consisting of the best individual performers, the first group, the diverse group, almost always did better.” Bottom line, as he puts it, “*diversity trumped ability.*”

Wow, is that counterintuitive, and, wow, is it ever important. Diversity, remember, left-handed, right-handed, short, tall, came from America, came from Jamaica, came from China, every race, every gender, left-handed, right-handed—I don't care what the difference is. If you sit down with a group to work on something and it is not a diverse group, you are really screwing it up big-time. And never, ever, ever let a group consist entirely of insiders from your organization or part of the organization. Diversity with a lowercase “d”—absolutely imperative to doing good work, and 9 out of 10 times we just don't come close.