



**For Immediate Release**  
March 2002

## **April is Multicultural Communication Month: What Businesses Can Do NOW to Unite Their Increasingly Diverse Workforce**

***The United States of America is not a melting pot,  
but rather it is a mosaic.***

(Minneapolis, MN) – In a business climate reeling from the impact of recent layoffs, closings, cutbacks, and downsizing, there is little time to focus on “who” makes up the workforce and even less time to implement a plan to focus on “how” they can be united to maximize productivity. Yet, businesses, both large and small, operating within the United States or across borders, acknowledge the benefits of adopting a “mosaic” rather than “melting pot” perspective toward an increasingly multicultural employee workforce; it’s a perspective that ***maintains each individual’s uniqueness and, by doing so, adds value to the organization.***

Businesses no longer question the need to unite a multicultural workforce; instead, they ***seek effective ways in which their growing multicultural workforces can unite QUICKLY.***

So, is quick implementation of complex diversity issues and concepts possible? Not only is it possible, it can also be fun!

***Reversing the Ostrich Approach to Diversity: Pulling your head out of the sand*** is a ***timely answer to the renewed urgency for actionable diversity information.*** Presenting five, simple concepts for diversity awareness, the author, Dr. A. S. Tolbert, uses poignant, humorous examples and illustrations mirroring common behavior. “If we can get people to laugh at themselves,” says Tolbert, “much of the initial resistance to breaking stereotypical mindsets vanishes. People immediately become less defensive, more open-minded, and receptive to making a few changes.”

### **What is the “Ostrich Approach” to Diversity?**

Although the image of an ostrich burying its head in the sand is based on myth rather than fact, it is the perfect icon to depict the many avoidance tactics we use to deal with the tough stuff – including diversity. All the running, hiding and avoidance (a.k.a., the ostrich approach) won’t change what’s going on around us.

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Once each concept has been introduced and explained, Tolbert guides the reader through a series of exercises that jump-start individual action. “It’s irresponsible to introduce new concepts, suggest that people make personal changes, and then omit the “how to” for accomplishing their new goals,” says Tolbert. “The exercises at the end of each chapter reinforce the concept, and give readers a road map to complete the journey I’ve invited them to take with me.”

Dealing with diversity challenges ***doesn’t have to take weeks from already over-booked schedules.*** Tolbert’s direct approach combines to-the-point information with do-it-now action steps, to immediately set the wheels of change in motion. The result is unifying change leading to improved working relationships and opportunity for increased productivity and profit. Anyone against this concept? Didn’t think so...

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**Reversing the Ostrich Approach to Diversity:  
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## Headline and Story Ideas

### Diversity Training: Why You Need It and How to Make It Stick

Why is navigating through a diverse world so important?

The short answer is: because the world is changing, including your little corner of it.

With fast-paced changes facing each of us, the corporate sector, and the world, diversity and globalization issues are even more crucial to the success and survival of individuals, families, and businesses. Shifting expectations, differences impacting our day-to-day lives, and our shrinking world, all provide daunting challenges to the individual and families. Changing demographics, global competition, worker productivity, market niche focus, and employee recruitment and retention, all provide daunting challenges to organizations.

The good news is that these challenges also provide unique opportunities to the proactive, strategic-minded, diversity-aware individual and organization. These personal and professional advantages can – and should – be yours.

### Focus on Productivity: How to Get the Best from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Employee

The snapshot of today's workforce reveals diverse work teams that predictions say will become even more diverse as the demographics change. In studies conducted as far back as 1977, research found that diverse work teams are more productive in the long-term, are more innovative and creative, and are better at problem-solving and decision-making. However, initially there will be greater conflict, more attrition, and less cohesion. We need to be prepared for the initial bumps in the road knowing that, in the long term, the outcomes of diverse work groups are significantly better.

Think your current workplace isn't diverse? Wait a year. Or a week. Or a day. The people you work with in the future could be vastly different from the people you've worked with in the past or are working with today. We all need to adapt to get the most from all the people around us.

### How Are You Spending Your Human Capital?

What does it cost you to hire a new employee? How much do you spend to train that person to do the job he or she has been hired to do? Whatever those figures are, it's money well spent, unless ... that person decides to LEAVE.

Employee turnover is costing businesses billions of dollars every year. And, one of the top reasons employees leave is because they didn't feel valued. Not money. Not benefits. And certainly not logistics. It's personal. And, the more diverse our workforce continues to become, the more this "diversity stuff" is going to play a role that directly affects the bottom line.

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## What are the five concepts for honoring diversity?

- 1 ***Stop Walking On Eggshells: Define and use positive confrontation.*** Relationships are built, and you can influence how they are developed and shaped. Yet, there is often a lot of energy-draining, stutter-stepping going on that hinders relationship development with those of different cultures or abilities. You can stop walking on eggshells by taking risks, appropriately confronting difficult situations, and managing conflict. Once you do, you will benefit from strong, healthy relationships that can help you reach both personal and professional goals.
- 2 ***I'm Okay, But "They" Need Help: Why should I change?*** There are rewards for implementing personal change. However, change is unlikely without identifying those benefits and making a conscious choice to implement the changes needed to acquire them. You'll learn about and use the head, heart, and hand model to help make you more aware of the things you say and do. This model emphasizes that, in every situation, you choose your response. By recognizing your ability to change outcomes by making different response choices, you can begin to experience the benefits of those changes.
- 3 ***Help Others Matter: Unleash the power of diversity.*** You are either included or excluded by others, which causes you to feel and behave in certain ways. You also include or exclude others. Individuals who feel they are being excluded often respond with less motivation and productivity. You have the power to change that response by choosing words and actions that make them feel they matter.
- 4 ***Broaden Your World View: See things as they are not as you are.*** All of us have biases, prejudices, and stereotypical ideas of others; we are all ethnocentric. It's part of being human. However, not admitting to these negative social forces damages your relationships with others, the bottom line, and your potential to advance along your career path.
- 5 ***Which Way Out of the Desert: Progress is made with just one step.*** Take one tiny step forward. Take another. How about one more? Before long you'll discover you're a long way from where you started. When it comes to making changes the important thing is to just start. Risk-taking and moving into discomfort will move you away from a limiting view of the world and toward a broader, more enriching one. The goal is to overcome unconscious acts of exclusion and build more effective relationships.

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## What Others Are Saying About ...

### **Reversing the Ostrich Approach to Diversity: Pulling your head out of the sand**

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This book will help anyone stay clean and productive. Dr. Tolbert's use of humor makes reading and using the book enjoyable. Trainers looking for exercise ideas, leaders seeking great words to inspire, consultants building a case for their work, and individuals simply wanting to enhance their effectiveness will find delightful help with this book. It will reside in the "frequently used tools" section of my office.

**Robert Hayles, Ph.D.**

Effectiveness/Diversity Consultant

Co-author of The Diversity Directive: Why Some Initiatives Fail & What To Do About It

When organizations, institutions or corporations face economic challenges, diversity education and learning can have a positive impact on productivity and profitability. Truly, successful professionals are those who have learned to interact effectively with and motivate a wide variety of people. The practical techniques presented in this book guide the reader through a step-by-step process to achieve lasting success for both the individual and the organization.

**Davina Mosher**

Manager, Corporate Diversity Learning, 3M

Our law firm works with a diverse group of clients, vendors and independent contractors. For our business to grow and profit, it is essential to build and maintain strong, mutually respectful relationships. This book is a quick study course to help accomplish that goal. Every small business owner will experience bottom-line benefits from using the information in this book.

**Kevin A. Hofstad, Esq.**

Ledin & Hofstad, LTD, Attorneys at Law

The manufacturing industry serves an ever-widening global market, both in terms of customers and partnerships. *Reversing the Ostrich Approach to Diversity: Pulling your head out of the sand* is a refreshing, welcomed resource for small companies like ours that need practical — and applicable — diversity communications learning.

**Maureen Steinwall**

Owner/President, Steinwall Inc.

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## Tip Sheet

### *Three Simple Things You Can Do to Broaden Your World View:*

- 1 Find or create opportunities to connect with people different from you.* Invite someone to lunch whom you ordinarily would not ask. Join a different group for an after-work social activity. Get information from organizations that can give you history, culture, challenges and contributions of certain groups (e.g., Council on American-Islamic Relations). Attend diversity events and mingle with those from a diverse group.
- 2 Do a reality check with someone you trust.* Get some feedback on your behavior. Learn to recognize how your behavior makes an impact on others.
- 3 Don't assume, ask! Resist the impulse to assume you know something about another based on a stereotype.* It's not the responsibility of any minority to educate the masses about an entire group of people. Try, "How did you learn to cook so well?" instead of, "You people all cook so well. Why is that?"

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## About the Author

Amy S. Tolbert, Ph.D., develops multicultural organizations and individuals by bringing cutting-edge topics, such as, fun/results-driven diversity initiative, the leadership within, managing to style, and creating breakthrough teams to you. She is a principal of Effecting Creative Change in



Organizations (ECCO International), which specializes in creating a new sense of spirit and preparing people and organizations for sustainability in an ever-changing environment through e-learning, technology and facilitated learning.

Addressing diversity and multicultural issues, cross-cultural training, and managing a diverse workforce, Dr. Tolbert has co-authored and presented the "Discovering Diversity Profile," a popular self-assessment tool, at the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) International Conference and the Inscope (formerly Carlson Learning) Publishing International Conference. She has presented nationally and internationally at the International Human Resource Development Organization Conference; the International Management

Development Organization; the "Quality Workforce," a national conference co-sponsored by ASTD; and other national conferences. She also co-developed the "Integrating Diversity Profile," which assesses key areas for organizations to focus their time and energies regarding diversity efforts.

Dr. Tolbert consults and trains nationally in the areas of international training and development, e-learning/business television design and production, persuasive presentation/communication skills, managing within a diverse workforce, motivation and leadership skills. Her diverse client list includes 3M, Best Buy, Mayo Clinic, and the United Way.

Diverse experiences take Dr. Tolbert from the United States to Latin America, from Fortune 100 companies to non-profits and, from the cold winter climate of her home state of Minnesota to warm sunny climates whenever possible. Although she has many accomplishments, she considers her marriage and two inspiring daughters to be at the top of the list.

Dr. Tolbert received her doctorate in Human Resource Development, specializing in international/cross-cultural and diversity education and training, from the University of Minnesota.

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