



The Battlefield Guide to D&I

21 Rules for managing Diversity and Inclusion successfully

Iwan Jenkins

Website
Email

theriotpoint.com
iwanjenkins@theriotpoint.com

Rule #1: Homo sapiens is facing a diversity of problems that need to be resolved if the species is to survive.

And the source of these 'problems?' You, me and every other human. All humans have never-ending requirements, live in an ever-changing environment, and carry ever-increasing expectations of social satisfaction.

To solve these problems our species is limited to physical equipment designed 300,000 years ago, and devoid any hardwired instinct to aid us. Consequently, every human has to learn how to do everything; how to mate, how to hunt, how to collaborate, how to lead self and others.

Rule #2: Homo sapiens has been incredibly good at managing diversity even if not all of the individual problem-solving contributors have benefitted equitably in the past.

By any measure (population growth, life span, technical achievement) Homo sapiens has been outrageously successful. None of this achievement can be attributed to one person. The species has tapped into a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience. In fact, our species has been so good at managing diversity, we're now dealing with the consequences our success. Waves of increasingly complex problems are rushing at us with increasing speed. We need to tap into the problem-solving resources of all peoples otherwise we are doomed.

Rule #3: The management of diversity is (mostly) set in the context of group problem-solving. Whenever a person asks for another's help and gets it, each person now has two problems;

- Problem A, the original (main) problem over which the group has formed, and
- Problem B, the added (subsidiary) problem – that of managing each other effectively.
- Successful groups expend considerably more effort on Problem A than Problem B.



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Rule #4: Homogeneous teams (those with minimal diversity) are easier to recruit, easier to manage, and more efficient in a limited area.

Their weakness is the possibility of their main problem changing radically. They work best in relatively stable environments, bringing about change at a safe measured pace.

Rule #5: Heterogeneous teams (those with wide diversity) are more difficult to recruit, more difficult to manage, and are more efficient over a wide range of problems.

Their weakness is that more effort needs to be expended on Problem B (possibly at high cost). They work best in more turbulent environments, coping with more rapid, radical change, on more than one main front.

Rule #6: If we don't collaborate well, we die.

Which parent has never been relieved to see 'plays well with others' on a report card? Collaboration for mutual benefit is a core skill which must be learnt and taught. We are just as reliant on others for survival and success as they are on us.

Rule #7: Diversity, like all biological diversity, is either useful, neutral or threatening.

Newcomers to a team should be trained to show that they are willing to accommodate to the existing members (that they are not threatening and represent more mutual gain than cost); existing members should be trained to look for useful diversity (leading to more mutual gain than cost).

Rule #8: Teaching tolerance of diversity is not the same thing as teaching that a new diversity should replace an existing one.



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Rule #9: Attacking people for not accepting some particular diversity often leads to backlash.

Most people can readily appreciate there is a wide diversity of problems to solve. Having access to a diversity of approaches and a diversity of people that can readily manage them for the common good is useful. Yet we need to acknowledge that people have to be convinced a particular diversity is not threatening but potentially helpful.

Rule #10: Humans have acquired specialist roles, not by instinct or by splitting into subspecies, but by learning both a specialism and how to deploy it for advantage within a group.

The more diverse the range of specialisations available to the group, the more diverse the range of problems the group can solve. Exploitation of a specialisation needs group acceptance and mutually perceived opportunity. The more immediately relevant an individual's specialisation is to the problem at hand, the more positive the person's diversity will appear to the group.

The importance and awareness of specialisation is not new. Specialisation at performing tasks occurred during the hunter-gatherer period (hunting and defence versus gathering and nurturing) and this led to a learnt understanding of the advantages of additional specialisations. If you have the ability to knap flint arrowheads, you will be highly valued by your fellow hunters. Being big and brutal are no longer the only way to be useful to the group.

Rule #11: Everyone wants to be part of a problem-solving group yet everyone wants to be recognised and valued uniquely within it.

This is the paradox of independence and interdependence. There's little more central to one's image of self than one's problem solving skills and its usefulness to the group.



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Rule #12: Converting the significant but unfamiliar (they) into the familiar and predictable (we) is a basis for successful management of diversity.

To get some specific diversity accepted it may be more rewarding to appeal to mutual enlightened self-interest rather than an abstract principle that is not well understood but sounds unsettling.

Rule #13: Humankind is not only able to assess whether a specific diversity is neutral or hostile, but also to weigh the advantage or disadvantage of accommodating surplus neutral diversity.

As a result, individuals learn how to present their unique brand as an attractive opportunity to others, rather than as costly baggage or plain threat. In our ever-increasingly complex world, this learning is a priority — and has to be taught.

Rule #14: If you are to collaborate effectively with others, you need to have some understanding of yourself and others, assisted by a common language.

Humans are able to discriminate (see patterns) in others' behaviour. This allows us to predict how others might act. Studies have shown that people on a training course, who did not know each other beforehand can, after a day or so of interaction, rank order each other in problem-solving style with some accuracy; rank order correlations averaged circa .4. However, team members who know each other well can reach correlations of circa .8 i.e. prediction that is four times more accurate.

Rule #15: The first requirement in the teaching of the management of diversity is that diversity needs to be acknowledged.

Managing diversity involves turning diversity into advantage for ourselves. Small differences are readily noticeable and often require effort to be accepted and integrated into one group.



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Rule #16: If differences are not ignored or denied, the next step is to determine if they are useful.

Two classes of difference cause problems that make them unwelcome. A difference

- not immediately required by the group but which the owner insists on exercising (e.g. the input of innovative ideas in the closing stages of the implementation of an adaptive solution is an obvious distraction).
- aggressively deployed for the prime benefit of the displayer (and supporters) regardless of whether it is perceived within the group as a distraction, a disadvantage, or even whether it threatens the group's survival as an ultimate consequence.

Rule #17: Once diversity is found useful, such as to team's survival or dramatic success, it is a lot easier to perceive other diversities as potentially useful rather than as divisive.

Rule #18: When diversity is perceived as an irritant or a threat, emotion may lock in this assessment and prevent a ready reassessment in cool logical terms.

Reversing negative discrimination is likely to involve emotion, which may need to be taken into account (on both sides) before logical reappraisal begins. One way is to show that there is potential mutual profit in tolerance and to give time for the point to sink in.

Rule #19: Leaders of the search for management of diversity should not themselves be seen as protagonists of one partisan group.

The aim of intervention is to try to find value in all the diversity, not replace the dominance of one variant with another, however popular the new views have become.



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Rule #20: If the diversity is neutral, then its presence should be seen as yielding more reward than cost.

To worry about diversity that is neutral or to spurn one that has a net advantage are the prime ways of mismanaging diversity. Tolerance of neutral diversity is a long-term strategy of survival; acceptance of the cost of managing diversity is a price of survival.

Rule #21: Emotion is attached to most appraisals of diversities in people – reversals of appraisals are best approached by reviewing the benefit of diversity to the group. Righteousness tends to be divisive.

Action items to aid education, tolerance and exploitation of problem-solving diversity

- Get the group to consider that the first requirement in managing diversity is to accept its existence. Accepting diversity means acknowledging that although no person or group should be unfairly exploited, no person can expect to perform uniformly well at all times in all circumstances.
- Each person in a group has to balance efficiently an appropriate degree of independence (identity) with a willing interdependence (exploiting diversities) to make useful contributions to the team and acquire the benefits of being in it.
- Get the group to undertake a diversity failure audit. Estimate the costs of the failure to accommodate diversity, defined as unwillingness to accept different roles and responsibilities that might capitalise on differences of styles, skills, attributes, temperaments, and background experience that may leave the surviving elements short of diversities. If this happens the variety of tasks that need to be done may not diminish but some potential help has – those left still need to do these tasks without this help.

Final thoughts for the individual

- Be a pleasure not a pain
- Be useful to others and aim become even more so.



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