The “Four Layers of Diversity”

The relevance of commonalities and differences

Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe, both trainers and the authors of numerous books and materials on the subject of diversity, developed this model – which is based on an earlier model by Marilyn Loden and Judy Rosener – and have expanded it with two additional levels.

The model describes four levels. The inner core is the personality: innate characteristics that provide us with our inimitable style. The character of this core pervades all other influences. They call the second level “internal dimensions”: aspects of our life over which we have little or no influence, such as gender, skin color etc.

The third level, the “external dimensions,” describe influences through society and one’s own life experiences, e.g. family status, education etc.

The fourth level includes one’s status and experiences within the organization. This includes one’s department, place of work, management status or work content.

Team members possess commonalities and differences, although the latter are more likely to cause difficulties in cooperation. Different life experiences and value systems lead to different decisions and behaviors.

The model is ideally suited to enhance one’s own awareness of what characterizes an individual and for self-description. It is complemented by further categories which each person can add. These dimensions can also be used as the basis for organizational analysis.

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