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Title of the Paper:
a+b+c+....+y+z > 26x : The Power of Diversity

Theme:
PROJECT MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP > HARMONY IN DIVERSITY & MILLENNIAL GENERATION

Keywords:
Diversity, Millennial, Working Mothers, Distributed Delivery, Work life Balance

Abstract:
Our project teams today are very diverse. Resources differ in terms of age, sex, marital status, religion, language, economic background, expertise, skill-sets etc. It's obviously difficult to manage the diversity, however if controlled properly, a diverse team can yield much better output.

The paper demonstrates how each of the diversities can be mapped across parameters like Flexibility, Expertise, Multi-task, and Commitment in a Matrix format. This will help understand how and where to utilize each of the diversities in best manner. It's important to understand need and psychology of each of the diverse groups to quickly pass them through forming-storming-norming phases and lead them to performing state.

The paper talks about Project Management challenges faced during each of the 5 Process Groups because of Diversity and how they can be mitigated. Choosing the right kind of resource for the right task at right time can help the Project Manager to ensure smoother delivery providing better quality.

The paper showcases 2 case studies based on author's strong Project Management experience on how in real life these theories were applied and benefits reaped.

Finally the paper will summarize the pros and cons of diversity and conclude why having a diverse team is more beneficial thus establishing the "The Power of Diversity". There are uncountable words possible today because we have 26 alphabets in English. Had there been only a single alphabet, there would have been no dictionary. Similarly possibilities are infinite when you have a diverse team.

Intent: (Mandatory)
Having 26 DIFFERENT letters in English create opportunities for uncountable words. The paper will in similar line explain how having a DIVERSE team lays path for infinite possibilities. It will help audience understand the benefits and challenges of managing a diverse team and how to make the best out of situations.

Table of Contents

Introduction
According to 18th Annual Global CEO Survey, 82% of the CEOs in India stated that they had a strategy to

promote Diversity & Inclusion. Further, 82% of those who said they had a strategy claimed that it has helped them enhance business performance. That includes industry leaders like Michael Dell, Dr. Vishal Sikka, D Mark Durcan and many others. As organizations move towards building diverse workforce, it ultimately trickles down to Project Managers to harmonize and steer them towards successful project execution.

Common types of Diversity:

Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. That sounds simple, but **diversity** encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more. Figure 1 represents common types of diversity observed in today's workplace and how they all coexist together.

Figure 1: Common types of diversity

Diving deep into Diversities:

While each of diverse set of resources brings in unique flavor to the project, they also bring into a lot of chaos. Each group of individuals needs to come out of their comfort zone to understand each other and work in a harmonious manner. A methodical 10 step approach can help streamlining this process and make the journey easy.

1. Understand Firm's Diversity Policy and Guidelines
2. Understand Project needs
   a. Type of skillset required
   b. Work Timings

  c. Work Locations
  d. Language
  e. Cultural Need
3. Estimate cost for Implementation of Diversity
4. Procure resources based on Diversity Plan
5. Understand needs or preferences of Resources of each Diversity Group
6. Set common rules and specific expectations for each Diverse Group
7. Arrange Team Events to bridge Gap
8. Monitor synergies between Diverse Group & Control ambiguities
9. Document Best Practices to be followed by other teams

Let us now dive deeper into each of these 9 processes to understand better:

1. Understand Firm's Diversity Policy and Guidelines

The first and most important step into implementation of diversity starts with understanding of Firm's policies and guidelines around Diversity. This includes not only the project delivering organization but also the policies of the end client. It is equally important to understand any local or country-wide policy around diversities since Diversity Policy and Guidelines vary locality to locality, country to country. These documents are generally available with HR.

- **Inputs:** Project Charter, Enterprise Environmental Factors, Organization Process Assets
- **Tools & Techniques:** Document Review, Expert Judgement
- **Output:** Project Documents around Diversity Policy

2. Understand Project needs

Specific project needs will drive the type of diversities that can be considered for delivering the project. This basically defines the boundary for choosing diversity for the Project Manager. Without identifying and knowing these boundaries, there may be lot of confusions in team during project executions leading to either employees being unhappy and leaving the firm or the deliverables getting impacted. Some examples can be as below:

- If the project requires delivering from a restricted entry Delivery Center or Client Location, it may not be possible to select expecting mothers or resources who need to work from home.
- For a highly critical project which requires advanced skillsets, it may need only Experienced Resources with specialized skillsets.
- Lot of clients especially in Latin Americas or Northern Europe or Japan prefers communications in their local language. It's thus important to have local native resources who are familiar with the language. If there is a need of remote delivery, there would be a need of resources with knowledge of dual languages.
- Firms like Café Coffee Day, KFC hire deaf resources diversifying their resource base and promoting a good culture.
- Most of Govt. Sector Jobs in India have reservations based on Caste and Gender to encourage diversity and uplift people belonging to low castes and women.

- **Inputs:** Project Documents around Diversity Policy, Project Charter
- **Tools & Techniques:** Stakeholder Discussions
- **Output:** Update Project Documents around Diversity Needs

3. Estimate cost for Implementation of Diversity

Nothing comes free, and obviously that applies to Diversity as well. A project manager needs to consider the cost for Diversity while Estimating Project Cost. This additional cost should be added to the overall cost of the project thus updating the Project Budget. Note that not all Diversity aspects lead to additional cost. Some examples can be as below:

- Some organizations charge project for late drop-offs for employees specially women employees leaving office late.
- If some resource needs work from home, he or she may require the project to bear cost of Internet Access expenses.
- A diverse team needs more teaming events to familiarize resources with each other. Cost for the same should be accommodated as part of the budget.

- **Inputs:** Project Documents around Diversity Needs, Project Management Plan, Organizational Process Assets
- **Tools & Techniques:** Expert Judgement, Cost Analysis
- **Output:** Updated Cost Estimate

4. Procure resources based on Diversity Plan

Once project needs are clear and budget is approved, Project Manager can request for Diverse Resources as part of Project Human Resource Management. This includes:

- Creating the plan for Human Resource needs and adding it as part of the Human Resource Management Plan
- Acquiring the Human Resources as per the plan

Sometime some diversity is determined after Human Resources are acquired. In case of unplanned introduction of diversity post acquiring resources, the next phase "5.Understand needs or preferences of Resources of each Diversity Group" becomes extremely important.

- **Inputs:** Project Management Plan, Resource List
- **Tools & Techniques:** Interviews
- **Output:** Update Project Documents around Diversity Needs, Updated Cost Adjustments

5. Understand needs or preferences of Resources of each Diversity Group

This activity should be done as part of Developing the Project Team. Each individual is unique, and it's thus important to have one-to-one conversations with each of these resources so that their individual needs can be understood. It's preferred to have the conversations in an informal manner since the resources will be able to open up and share their personal needs more easily under these circumstances. Remember you would be performing this activity towards the start of your project right after acquiring the resource and it may need a bit of ice-breaker sessions to get the resource speak freely. Explain the need of the conversation and show how you will be using the information shared by the resource to plan ahead.

The need of this activity is even more when there is some diversity in the team that you have planned for. While understanding the needs and preferences here are some of the questions that you should plan to ask. The list is not exhaustive and there may be more questions based on specific scenarios or project needs.

- Are the working hours fine for the resource? Do they need any flexibility?
- Does the employee need transport facility in case of late or odd-hour?
- Specific leave plans for any regional, religious, life events or festival needs
- Any constraints a resource may have which he/she needs the project manager to consider

After each conversation, it's important to log all responses in Diversity Need Register so that you do not forget the points and can plan which needs can be accommodated and which cannot.

- **Inputs:** Project Management Plan, Resource List
- **Tools & Techniques:** Interviews, Discussions
- **Output:** Diversity Need Register

6. Set common rules and specific expectations for each Diverse Group

Once the Diversity Need Register is updated based on conversation with all resources or at least representative from each diverse group, the project manager needs to sit with the Diversity Need Register and rationalize the needs. They need to be matched against the project needs. After identifying the needs as per the project, a common set of rules need to be chalked out based on majority of the needs. Specific exceptions should also be planned according to some non-negotiable needs. Some examples can be:

- Typically project work timings (unless specified by the Firm or Client) can be worked out based on common understanding and preference of the resources.
- Working mothers may need to leave by 4-5 pm to provide care-giving to their kids, their timings can be adjusted based on specific need
- Certain resources who are providing support late hours may choose to come late, exceptions can be created for them.

An important part of setting the common rules and expectations is communications. Wherever the expectations can not be matched or need to be compromised, a candid conversation helping the resource understand why the needs can not be adhered can help. If conversation fails, it is better to identify another resource instead and replace the existing resource.

Another important aspect is communicating the final flexibility expectations with all stakeholders specially the project leadership and if needed end customer to set right expectations from their standpoint. Example:

One leading cosmetic store decided to have transgender as their sales representatives. However the customers were not appraised about this. What resulted were initial shocking reactions from customers since they were not expecting such change. Thus communications and keeping stakeholders informed about diversity is critical to the success of implementation of diversity.

- **Inputs:** Project Management Plan, Resource List, Diversity Register
- **Tools & Techniques:** Discussions
- **Output:** Updated Diversity Register, Resource Orientation

7. Arrange Team Events to bridge Gap

The key to smooth execution of project with diverse team depends on how fast PM can cruise through forming-storming-norming phases and lead them to performing state. For this the Team Events comes as a great aid. Based on budget, team events can be either organized through external agencies or even simple in-house team lunches / dinners, team games can help. It is important to consider team games

where everybody can participate considering the diversity of the team. Please consider the location and timing of lunch / dinners that suits everybody.

It may also be a good idea to involve customers during team events especially if you would like your customers to get introduced to the diverse team that you have.

- **Inputs:** Project Management Plan, Resource List, Diversity Register
- **Tools & Techniques:** Team Events
- **Output:** Updated Diversity Register, Synchronized Team

8. Monitor synergies between Diverse Group & Control ambiguities

Once the team bonds well and understands each other's need well, they will start accepting the diversity. Chances of ambiguity and conflict between resources are rare if all above methodologies are followed, it's important to monitor the common and specific rules that a project manager has set to see how they are working. Some common instances that are noticed are sometimes resources mis-use the flexibilities that you provide them. You may need to take revise the common rules or specific expectations based on the project phases or need of the hour. Again, communication and having informal relationship with all resources will help the project manager to be appraised of such situations.

It is also important to consider how different other projects are managing diversity and implement suggestions based on their inputs.

- **Inputs:** Project Management Plan, Resource List, Diversity Register
- **Tools & Techniques:** Discussions, Supervisions
- **Output:** Updated Diversity Register, Updated Resource List, Updated Project Management Plan

9. Document Best Practices to be followed by other teams

During project closure, a project manager should document the best practices and lessons learned as part of Diversity Implementation that can be used by other teams. This data can also be used to roll up at program or firm level and revise firm guidelines and policies around Diversity.

- **Inputs:** Project Management Plan, Resource List, Diversity Register
- **Tools & Techniques:** Documentation
- **Output:** Organizational Process Assets

Diversity Steps across PMI Process Groups

	Initiation	Planning	Executing	Monitoring & Control	Closing
Diversity Management	1. Understand Firm's Diversity Policy and Guidelines	2. Understand Project needs 3. Estimate cost for Implementation of Diversity	4b. Acquire resources based on Diversity Plan 5. Understand needs or preferences of	8. Monitor synergies between Diverse Group & Control ambiguities	9. Document Best Practices to be followed by other teams

		4a. Plan resources based on Diversity	Resources of each Diversity Group 6. Set common rules and specific expectations for each Diverse Group 7. Arrange Team Events to bridge Gap		

Case Studies

2 case studies based on author's experience are listed below:

Case Study 1: Religious Prayer leading to poor rating

One of the Muslim resources within the team always attended prayers around Friday afternoon. The project manager was not aware about the fact, and there were project meetings set during that time where the resource was absent. The resource was not communicated about the outcomes of the project discussions. The resource gradually got secluded from the team and it was somehow perceived that the resource is willfully doing all these. His technical acumen got oversighted by the perceptions resulting into poor rating for the resource. The resource was eventually rolled-off from the project highlighting commitment issues.

During his next project, at the very onset, the project manager discussed with the resource his diversity needs. He communicated his prayer timings and couple of other preferences for work. It also came into notice that he had an ailing brother for which he needs some time off in the evening. A plan was chalked out and the whole team and other stakeholders were appraised about his needs. The project manager arranged some team events and made sure that he is felt as part of the team. He gradually started have a good professional relationship with all other team members. His technical acumen started to come into notice. His flexibility to work little late hours instead of the evenings helped the team get work done faster during overlap time with US & India Timezones. His deliverables and commitment were appreciated and he ended up having the best rating in the project.

This clearly demonstrates how a proper Diversity Planning can help making a resource and project successful.

Case Study 2: When coming late to office becomes a practice

During the development cycle of an IT project, a resource was working late hours from office to cover overlap hours between India and US. His dinner and transport were arranged and it was planned that he will come to office late afternoon. He was a junior unmarried resource and thus he was fine with the arrangement. After almost a month, the need for late hours ended. The resource still continued coming late and staying late availing all benefits on dinner and transport.

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The Project Manger had made a diversity plan and monitored all flexibilities around diversities. Soon this came into her notice while she was monitoring and controlling the implementation of diversity. She had an informal conversation with the resource explaining the situation and the resource obliged getting back to normal schedule.

This demonstrates how monitoring and control of diversity is equally important along with planning of diversity.

Conclusion

Like a musician plays with 7 notes, like we have innumerable words by combining 26 letters, a project manager with right aid of planning and management of diversity can harmonize a diverse team converting challenges to success.

References