Your next leaders aren’t up there.

Yet.

Our world-class resources and expertise pinpoint where your next leaders are today to drive the growth and success of your business tomorrow.
The Korn Ferry Succession Matters report series

Trends, issues, and challenges regarding succession practices at leading organizations worldwide.

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“I am putting myself to the fullest possible use, which is all I think that any conscious entity can ever hope to do.”

—HAL 9000, 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)

Respect the Bot
People aren’t the only ones who will need to be included in the workplace of tomorrow.

About the cover: Pietari Posti works from Barcelona. His art appears internationally in magazines, advertising, and even a series of dinnerware. In 2011, the Finnish Post released a series of stamps with his designs.
Features

Home-Baked Success
Featuring Daniel Servitje, chairman and chief executive of Grupo Bimbo.

Bias: Why Old Habits Die Hard
Prejudice and other behaviors antagonistic to diversity result from mental shortcuts.

Flying Through Cultural Turbulance
An overseas flight inspires one leader to recognize the cultural differences on her team.

Second-Generation Gender Bias
Why the glass ceiling is so durable—and what to do about it.

Diversity of One
Rethinking the conventional dimensions of identity and inclusiveness.

PLUS

CEO LETTER
From Diversity and Inclusion to Interconnectedness.

THE LATEST THINKING

Understanding Bias and the Brain
Neural pathways may offer clues.

Building the Best C-suite Teams
Counterintuitive characteristics make a difference.

The Precision Search Revolution
The science behind what you do and who you are.

IN REVIEW
How a novice rowing team won gold during the 1936 Olympics.

PARTING THOUGHTS

ersity Issue

TALENT + LEADERSHIP
The world is more diverse than ever before, a multicultural mosaic of endless variety.

Across this landscape, there are dozens of ways in which we differentiate and define ourselves: by gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, orientation, marital status, education and geographical location. Add to that professional diversity, such as job title, industry, work experience, management status and a host of views and styles regarding work, leadership, communication and conflict resolution. The possibilities are seemingly endless.

Diversity acknowledges what makes us who we are as individuals. Celebrating the richness of that diversity is the heritage of trailblazing societal changes that have empowered people to stand up for themselves and their identities. But diversity, alone, is not enough.

Inclusion is diversity’s companion. While diversity honors our differences, inclusion bridges them. When a particular work environment or society is inclusive, there is a seat for everyone at the table. Conversations become enriched and exchanges of ideas gain texture as people contribute viewpoints and perspectives from how they see, experience and participate in the world.

Across a diverse global landscape, it is only human nature to seek out affinities with others, whether they have the same nationality, religion, language or other commonalities from political beliefs to socioeconomic backgrounds. Connections can be fleeting or they can be deep and long-lasting. My son, Jack, experienced this the other day when he struck up a conversation with someone who had a different ethnic background, but with whom he shared a strong commonality. Both fluent in Spanish, they were able to literally speak each other’s language.

The desire to connect is encoded in our human DNA. As we become interconnected, we complete the cycle that begins with diversity and inclusion. When we reach the point of interconnectedness, we do not lose the richness of diversity; rather, we see how diversity becomes inclusion and then interconnectedness as part of the greater whole.

One of the most powerful ways to establish interconnectedness is with a common vision. Within an organization, this is achieved around purpose—the “why” of its existence. While a for-profit enterprise obviously exists to make money, that cannot be its only purpose. Rather it must define the
ways in which it is uniquely changing the world on behalf of others. Otherwise, its purpose will not be compelling enough to bring employees together and keep them aligned.

It takes leadership to define and communicate a purpose that pulls people together. When team members understand the “why” of what they are doing, self-interest is transformed into shared interest. The more participants understand that purpose, the more they will become aligned with it. They will find their place within that purpose in a way that honors their individuality, their uniqueness, their diversity.

Interconnectedness around purpose also preserves the fabric of an organization no matter what change it encounters, externally or internally. Over the past several years, Korn Ferry has completed several acquisitions—all strategic in terms of expanding our global footprint as the leader in executive search and talent management. Numbers on paper, no matter how good they look, are not what makes an acquisition successful. It’s all about alignment with the purpose—bringing co-workers together to pursue the greater “why.”

acquisition, I take pains to communicate purpose. I personally make as many as 100 or more calls to employees in the acquired firm to explain our “why”—our purpose—which is all about changing people’s lives. These communications start a conversation among those who are new to our firm, helping to spread the word about what differentiates our culture and what it means to be part of it. This conversation is echoed within Korn Ferry, too, to remind us why we do what we do—

“With purpose as the true north to which everything is oriented, diverse pieces come together in a greater whole.”

Without that alignment, culture clashes can derail even the most strategic-looking merger.

When one company acquires another, the result is often “Noah’s Ark”—two of everything, and very often in key positions. Aware of the overlap, staffers become nervous. Uncertainty about what will happen to their jobs can quickly lead to mistrust and departure of key employees. The same professionals who made the acquired firm attractive in the first place could very well be the first ones heading to the exit!

For that reason, when Korn Ferry makes an
Understanding Bias and the Brain

How quickly does the brain make judgements?

What do patterns have to do with making assumptions?

Can the brain self-regulate and correct our thoughts?
FROM THE STREETS OF FERGUSON, MO., to the boardrooms of Silicon Valley, the concept of unconscious bias has become increasingly topical. Yet it is a difficult notion for many to accept, especially for those who consider themselves unbiased. Bias in all its forms—based upon race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, politics or any other group affiliation—is more readily seen as a deliberate choice than as an unintentional predisposition. Nevertheless, research indicates that we human beings innately perceive anyone different from us as a threat because our brain has an evolutionary requirement to do so.

“The capacity to discern ‘us’ from ‘them’ is fundamental in the human brain,” wrote David Amodio, associate professor of psychology and neural science at New York University, in his 2014 paper, “The neuroscience of prejudice and stereotyping.”

“Although this computation takes just a fraction of a second, it sets the stage for social categorization, stereotypes, prejudices, intergroup conflict and inequality,” he wrote.

Neuroscientists have begun to probe the neural basis of prejudice and stereotyping in an effort to identify how these biases form and influence behavior and how they might be regulated. What they are finding is a complex process underpinned by a network of neural structures in multiple regions of the brain. The research has frequently focused on the amygdala, a structure in the medial temporal lobes. The amygdala receives direct input from all sensory organs, enabling it to respond rapidly to immediate threats in advance of more elaborate cognitive processing. It plays a central role in arousal, attentiveness and triggering the flight-or-fight response, reacting to social threats in exactly the same way it reacts to physical ones. Unconscious bias, then, is the immediate, reflexive, defensive reaction to the “other.”

Stereotyping, on the other hand, represents the cognitive component of social bias. It is the deliberate conceptual linking of social groups to a particular set of perceived inherent and immutable qualities—a process known as “essentializing.” This involves the encoding and storage of stereotypical concepts and their application in judgments and behaviors. As such, it employs a different neural network from that of the snap judgments of prejudice and incorporates structures in the cere-
bral cortex that support conscious thought and semantic memory. This mirrors the idea, developed in psychologist Daniel Kahneman’s book “Thinking, Fast and Slow,” that we have two systems of thinking: one that is fast, intuitive and impressionistic (System 1), and one that is slow, deliberate and systematic (System 2). System 1 is automatic and efficient, but it’s in a hurry and prone to mistakes. It seeks to quickly identify patterns, a skill that has been key to human survival and evolution. But in doing so, it jumps to conclusions of causality based upon even the sketchiest of information, and tries to interpret scant input by creating a narrative, however flawed it may be. System 2 thinking, on the other hand, seeks to test concepts and detect complexity and nuance. “The attentive System 2 is who we think we are,” wrote Kahneman. “System 2 articulates judgments and makes choices, but often endorses or rationalizes ideas and feelings that were generated by System 1.”

So, although prejudice and stereotyping are rooted in largely distinct neural systems roughly comparable to System 1 and System 2, the two act in concert with their effects converging in cognition and behavior. That means, among other things, that unconscious bias can cause our higher-order thinking to malfunction.

According to Manie Bosman, CEO and primary leadership consultant at the Strategic Leadership Institute in Johannesburg, South Africa, “when the amygdala is activated, the cognitive tendency is to generalize more, which increases the likelihood of accidental connections. There is a tendency to err on the safe side, shrinking from opportunities. People become more likely to react defensively to stimuli. This means that our ability to understand, make decisions, remember, memorize, plan, inhibit impulses, solve problems and communicate is impaired. You struggle to see the big picture, and ultimately your overall productivity drops.”

In a 2013 paper, “Not Just for Stereotyping Anymore,” Carmit Tadmor, a psychologist at the Recanati School of Business at Tel Aviv University, and her colleagues showed that prejudice can play a direct role in making people less innovative and creative: “Essentialism appears to exert its negative effects on creativity not through what people think but how they think. Stereotyping and creative stagnation are rooted in a similar tendency to over-rely on existing category attributes. Across studies, we found that an essentialist mindset is indeed hazardous for creativity.”

Fortunately, the same neural structures that trigger and reinforce bias are closely tied to the ability to self-regulate. Although the unconscious spark of prejudice has been shown to be difficult if not impossible to extinguish, a number of studies clearly suggest that human brains are plastic enough to be nudged in the opposite direction by even gentle cognitive cues, both internal and external. Just being exposed to more diverse environments can often provide those cues and counteract the deleterious cognitive effects of bias.

In a 2014 study, “Reducing Implicit Racial Preferences: A Comparative Investigation of 17 Interventions,” psychologist Brian Nosek of the University of Virginia and his colleagues found that the most successful techniques for mitigating unconscious racial bias employed the simple power of suggestion. Merely introducing subjects to examples and narratives that ran counter to stereotypes dramatically reduced their implicit bias.

Similarly, Carmit Tadmor and her associates undertook a variety of experiments to try to bring about what they called “epistemic unfreezing.” In one study, subjects exposed to a 20-minute multimedia presentation illustrating a multicultural perspective were later found to be significantly less likely to endorse stereotypes.

In their paper “Bringing Automatic Stereotyping Under Control: Implementation Intentions as Efficient Means of Thought Control,” Brandon Stewart of the University of Queensland and Keith Payne of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, concluded that the “cognitive monster” of stereotyping is indeed malleable and may be countered if an individual can link positive intentions to the rel-

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evant situation or group in advance of an interaction.

Sometimes perceived expectations are enough to nudge individuals’ intentions in the right direction. In their recently published paper in Consulting Psychology Journal, Shirley Braun of the California School of Professional Psychology and Rebecca A. Turner of Alliant International University found that managers who believed their company had a reputation for favorable practices toward women in the male-dominated fields of science, engineering and technology were more likely to express intentions to hire, develop and promote women.

Researchers caution, however, that reframing individual cognition is only part of an effective strategy for reducing prejudice. “That’s not the same as — nor can it be a substitute for — broader cultural or institutional change,” says Manie Bosman. “After all, there is ample evidence that culture feeds directly into the mind’s process of generating prejudices and adopting stereotypical beliefs.”

Neuroscientists have begun to probe the neural basis of prejudice and stereotyping in an effort to identify how these biases form and influence behavior and how they might be regulated.
Building the Best C-suite Teams
In the final stages of a CEO succession we were managing for a multibillion-dollar company, the field of candidates narrowed to three, all of whom were assessed to determine their leadership styles, strengths and weaknesses. The strongest candidate was “John” who, despite being the frontrunner, was the least interested in becoming CEO. Although he had a strong track record and a stellar career, John was concerned that his current skill set might not be sufficient for running such a huge operation. Sitting down with John, we explained the results of his assessment, especially how highly he rated on learning agility, which Korn Ferry defines as the ability to learn from past experiences and apply that learning to different, first-time situations. We also laid out a process that would help him develop greater competencies in those areas in which he was not as strong. We were confident that, given our firm’s succession capabilities, including identifying diverse talent with varied skill sets to complement John’s strengths and weaknesses, he would be successful in the top leadership role. Having a diverse team in place to balance the capabilities of the board and executive team is always a priority—and an imperative when there is an executive transition at the top.
Being very open to receiving feedback, eager for further development and comfortable with the overall succession and team development plan, John became increasingly comfortable with the prospect of taking the CEO role and shortly thereafter was promoted to that position. Today, with ongoing coaching, John is doing a great job and exceeding expectations, including his own. John's success is not surprising. In my own career and in my work with numerous leaders over the years, I've seen that what truly elevates leadership—making someone a strong candidate today and a strong performer in the future—are the counterintuitive traits of self-awareness and humility. Humility is not about being unsure or scared to try something new; rather, it speaks to a person's openness to feedback, continuous development and lifelong learning.

Leaders who exhibit self-awareness and humility tend to create a balanced organization with representation across all forms of diversity—gender, ethnicity, culture, race, age and orientation, as well as professional background, education, geography, experiences and more. Rather than building a “team of me,” these humble, aware leaders understand that greater diversity in all forms promotes robust discussion of pressing issues and opportunities.

All too often, people think that becoming a leader means assuming the role of an expert. Aspiring to top leadership positions, they put all their focus on what they
know and what they can do, underestimating the importance of self-awareness and humility. Without humility, though, leadership development easily gets derailed. It takes a good deal of self-awareness and modesty to seek out and embrace the feedback that will uncover weaknesses and guide developmental needs, as captured in the acronym FIRST:

**Focus.**
Prioritize the two or three areas where developmental progress would make a significant impact on becoming a more effective leader.

**Implement.**
Put new skills and habits into practice every day, especially to turn weaknesses into strengths.

**Reflect.**
Ask yourself about the effectiveness of what you are putting into action. For example, if you’re implementing “managing by wandering around” to be in touch with more employees more often, what results have you observed thus far?

**Seek Feedback.**
Ask others whether they have noticed changes in your areas of focus. Show openness to their suggestions for how you could become even more effective by starting, stopping or continuing the different approaches that you’ve mapped out or tried. It takes a good deal of humility to be open to and accepting of the perspectives and opinions of others.

**Transfer the Learning.**
Once you’re making progress in one area, it’s time to introduce another developmental need into the process.

Although seemingly simple, these five steps can be challenging. Driven, results-oriented individuals who like to win often hesitate to admit they have developmental needs. They are more comfortable posturing as “experts” rather than addressing their weaker areas and building on strengths. And, let’s face it, human nature makes it difficult for any of us to admit we are fallible and imperfect and struggle with things we’re not good at! We have to avoid the temptation to focus on those things that we’re already good at and put the necessary time and effort into developing competencies in areas in which we are not as strong. This won’t be possible without self-awareness and humility, which could help open new and unexpected opportunities.

Consider the example of the large multinational company that, as part of its reorganization, put 60 of its top people through a developmental assessment to analyze their strengths and identify their needs. Among them was “Linda,” who after a long career with the organization did not see herself moving further up into leadership; instead, she was thinking of retiring in a few years. The results of Linda’s assessment, however, told another story. Her skill set was remarkably strong. She scored high in learning agility and was very humble. These qualities made her an excellent candidate who, by her personal background, also brought an important diversity perspective to the executive team as she took on a challenging new assignment.

As her story shows, expertise is essential to career development, and having a strong track record will get you noticed. But they are not enough. Even when managers are charismatic, hard-charging, results-oriented and well-liked by others, if they are low in self-awareness, humility and learning agility they will most likely plateau before they ever get to the C-suite. Those who are weaker in their ability to generate results and also low on self-awareness, humility and learning agility will most likely derail.

It’s the counterintuitive characteristics that lead to the C-suite: self-awareness and humility. If you are strong in these areas and rate high on learning agility, you’ll stand out in assessments for your ability to take on new challenges and lead a diverse team. Then the doors will open—perhaps all the way to the C-suite.

“Rather than building a ‘team of me,’ these humble, aware leaders understand that greater diversity in all forms promotes robust discussion of pressing issues and opportunities.”
Aston Martin blends iconic design, exceptional engineering and timeless craftsmanship to create the finest, most beautiful cars in the world. From thrilling sports and GT cars to sublime four-door luxury, our range is the essence of Power, Beauty and Soul.

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How the Invisible Becomes Visible

Korn Ferry’s Four Dimensional Executive Assessment brings together science, data, innovation, art and accessible design.

Prior to 1608, stargazers relied on a keen eye and a dark night to chart the celestial realms. But thanks to the creativity and curiosity of a Dutch eyeglass maker named Hans Lippershey, we have telescopes. Today, the powerful Hubble telescope takes incredibly sharp images of distant galaxies from its moving perch 350 miles above.

For far too long, humanity made do with incremental gains as it strived to make the invisible visible. Now, with the advent of new analytical tools, often called “big data” and sometimes “predictive analytics,” science is again bringing clarity to what was once obscure. Human behavior—specifically, human behavior inside groups—is being subjected to the sharp eye of analysis.

The aim of this analysis is to find the right person for the right role inside an organization. But instead of examining job candidates through the blurred lenses of the past, Korn Ferry has approached the problem by harnessing the power of analysis.

Korn Ferry’s Four Dimensions of Leadership and Talent Framework:

**Competencies**
The skills and behaviors required for success. Competencies can be observed in others, and they can be assessed, tested and taught.

**Experiences**
Assignments or roles that prepare an individual for future opportunities. They are life and work incidents that develop a person in measurable ways.

**Traits**
Individual inclinations, aptitudes and natural tendencies that are inherent in a person. These often include intellectual capacity as well as their personality traits.

**Drivers**
Values and interests that influence a person’s career path, including their motivation and engagement, and shape the way they make decisions.

KF4D (Korn Ferry’s Four Dimensional Executive Assessment) transforms the firm’s powerful storehouse of executive knowledge from static to active. Instead of simply warehousing data, KF4D is capable of conducting “live” assessments and making predictive judgments based on years of research and the results of Korn Ferry’s assessments of 2.5 million people. It does this in data-rich ways while presenting that data in visually rich ways. KF4D marries art and science with highly disciplined analytics in an intuitively insightful way.

This three-part report explains the evolution of predictive analytics as an important tool in the identification of talent and the rise of the agile leaders. It will also show how cultural fit trumps experience in evaluating talent and developing tomorrow’s highest performers.

—Stacy Levyn Korn Ferry, Los Angeles
The ways most search firms did their jobs and measured success focused far less on the candidates than on the firm. At Korn Ferry, this traditional approach, despite having ongoing critical value, was increasingly deemed insufficient. When new analytical methods began to appear, the firm began investing in state-of-the-art techniques for augmenting the search process by taking into account candidate psychology, as well as the diversity of roles across levels, functions, industries and regions, as well as the influence of organizational culture on job fit.

The result of this effort—now called Korn Ferry’s Four Dimensional Executive Assessment—has been to enable the firm to target the dimensions most critical to measuring fit and predicting success. KF4D is a precision tool that translates job and cultural analysis into best-in-class benchmarks focusing on four critical dimensions: Competencies, Experiences, Traits and Drivers.

Though there are some predictors of success with stable utility across executive job variables, we also recognize the nuances that make the difference between success and derailment in a particular role and in a unique organizational culture. KF4D draws from more than 2.5 million assessments, collected worldwide, to integrate the details of a role with universal predictors of top performance across levels, functions, industries and regions. This scalable model provides a consistent yardstick for measuring talent across the enterprise, while staying attuned to the unique aspects of any given role and culture.

The fact is, executive leadership roles are often similar. They typically involve making high-stakes
decisions, having a large scope of responsibility and having high-profile accountability for company or business-unit outcomes. Yet high-level managerial roles also vary within and across organizations. Consider, for example, that some leaders are tasked with making broad organizational changes to improve efficiency or productivity, or to help guide organizations in ways that will facilitate growth and sustainability in the face of market or economic volatility. Moreover, some executive roles require higher levels of expertise than others, while some rely more heavily on social behavior for success. Some roles are characterized by clearly defined reporting relationships, while others are characterized by loosely defined or lateral relationships among co-workers, co-leaders and stakeholders. Some roles are more strategic. Some are more tactical. Some involve tackling quick-changing and multiple objectives, while others focus on maintaining stability and making improvements toward accomplishing well-defined, stable or more-limited objectives. In short, despite all the similarities that may exist, executive leadership roles are often markedly diverse.

Organizational cultures in which executives are employed can also vary considerably. Some cultures emphasize internal outcomes, including the development, retention and well-being of organizational members. Others are more concerned with market-facing objectives and outcomes than internal ones. Some cultures are shaped by a need to closely adhere to internally or externally driven standards and policy, while others may operate with limited regulation. Some organizations are bureaucracies more than meritocracies, and some are the other way around.

The KF4D was designed to respond to increasing assertions by psychologists and leadership professionals that understanding executive traits and motives adds considerable value to the process of answering these questions. However, given the variable nature of leadership roles and contexts, the answer concerning “fit” can vary in considerable ways. Our own analysis of data on 2,000-plus upper-management personnel underscores the notion that one size does not fit all. As shown in Figure 1, among C-level executives whose roles involve making significant organizational changes, providing strategic vision and relying heavily on social skills for success, the best performers typically have a high degree of risk propensity and ambiguity tolerance. They also tend to be highly adaptable and curious, and they eschew detail orientation. Yet in another category—C-level executives whose roles involve maintaining organizational stability, being tactical and relying on expertise and deep knowledge—those who
are most successful and engaged have notably different profiles. They are more detail-oriented. They embrace risk and ambiguity at levels closer to the average for high-level managers. They are also far less adaptable and have less propensity for novelty-seeking and curiosity.

Moreover, the relationship between success and trait variables can vary across job roles and contexts. While detail orientation among the most successful and engaged C-level executives is generally lower than average for both job types, the relationship between detail orientation and success is different for each type. More specifically, for the role that emphasizes change management, strategy making and a reliance on social skills, detail-orientation trends downward as success rises. For the other role type, however, the opposite is true.

Psychologists delving into the “person-environment” fit literature often identify individual values, motives and drivers as key components of optimal matching of company cultures and potential managers. We find in our own data that, indeed, company cultures vary considerably, and they impact the extent to which individuals are optimally matched to their jobs. In Figure 3, for example, we find that highly successful and engaged executives working in cultures characterized by the need for accountability, efficiency and adherence to regulations have notably different motive/driver profiles than those high-success executives working in cultures more primarily characterized by a focus on profitability, earnings, revenue, growth and market share. The latter executives are markedly more driven by a preference for collaboration and interdependence, by being challenged by their roles and by a greater interest in acquiring “power,” status, influence and high compensation.

High-success C-level executives in the structured culture place similar relative emphasis on these drivers but score generally lower. They also clearly prefer roles that are characterized by greater structure, meaning jobs having more work-related stability and roles that more often require depth and specialized knowledge and skills relevant to known problems and best practices.

Overall it seems important to understand the nuances of company culture and nature of executive jobs in order to zero in on the right fit. Though executives share many characteristics, there is more diversity than perhaps meets the eye, and the process of matching the right person to the right role will remain a complex undertaking. However, understanding these differences, both across seasoned leaders and across organizations, can go a long way toward ensuring leadership success.
Giant Leap Forward

In the modern business world, the technologies of analysis never stop evolving. At Korn Ferry, science—from the advanced social sciences to those that focus on analytics and big data—has merged with the art of understanding how people work together culturally.

At one time, helping to place an executive at the highest levels of a client’s organization was an intricate dance made up of “gut feel,” intuition and personal knowledge. Candidates were vetted through a series of phone calls made to contacts whose networks touched the candidate’s own networks. But we knew that technology could offer better solutions.

So to improve its industry-leading ability to combine expert intuition with candidate testing, Korn Ferry set out to reimagine its digital tools. The existing methods for assessing candidates and communicating results were out of date, complex to use and hard to understand. Korn Ferry wanted a partner to design a new suite of tools that could capture client needs, test candidate abilities, integrate analysis with expert experience and intuitively communicate the combined results to clients. To do this, Korn Ferry needed a partner that understood how human
experiences are impacted by design and technology. We turned to frog, a product design and strategy firm with studios around the world.

Making meaningful experiences is frog’s mission, and we apply this ambition to a diverse set of industries from health care to automotive to banking. Our client diversity is matched by our own internal breadth. We’ve harnessed our expertise in research, design, strategy and technology as well as our backgrounds in business, anthropology, programming, technical architecture, art and more—integrating the arts and the sciences in the innovations for our clients.

This diversity and DNA enable frog to approach challenges from multiple perspectives. The resulting collaboration enables fast, iterative concept creation, balanced thinking and identification of valuable (and feasible) solutions.

This was demonstrated on the Korn Ferry–frog Search 2020 program. Collaborating deeply with Korn Ferry’s data scientists and IT team, frog went back and forth to ensure that the interactions we were designing to be useful and beautiful remained faithful to the deep science behind the assessments.

We conducted four stakeholder workshops over a five-week period in two cities, establishing design principles, conceptual direction, redefined user flows and our technical approaches. It was a team effort in bringing the best talent to the table. Korn Ferry’s chief marketing officer, Michael Distefano, told CEO Gary Burnison that this was “the most collaborative project I’ve been part of.”

The workshops clarified the key design challenges for the project, including:

- **How to make rigorous and thought-intensive candidate testing feel as easy and enjoyable as possible.**
- **How to balance the depths and complexities of scientific analysis with expert intuition and compelling candidate stories.**
- **How to create a design and development framework that could be intuitively extended into the many other Korn Ferry applications.**

“**The tool itself was built with extensibility in mind; the visual and interactive design, as well as underlying code, are being shared across multiple aspects of Korn Ferry’s digital presence with clients.**”

frog created simulations on iPads that allowed stakeholders to get a feel of the applications, making their feedback rich, specific and valuable. frog continued seeking input by using the simulations with a global user council, which provided real-life usage and cultural feedback.

The tool will not—nor should it—replace the high-quality human interaction that is a hallmark of the Korn Ferry brand and experience. This is a supporting player, not the leading role. Overall, the user experience (“UX”) hinged on making it easier for Korn Ferry search consultants to have authentic conversations with their clients about a set of candidates, while simultaneously allowing clients to understand the candidates’ stories more easily.

Using insights from Korn Ferry consultants, frog worked hard to ensure that this was a UX that required no advance training, was intuitive for candidates and clients, and added value to the process. frog tackled these challenges by prototyping how the conversation would progress between consultant and client—simulating typical interactions both face-to-face...
(using tablets) and remote (using Web prototypes). Even our frog/Korn Ferry stakeholder interactions over the course of the program, which were in-person as well as remote, helped develop and refine the UX. Adjustments were made based on the dynamics that emerged.

Iconic data visualization, an interface design that references the familiar cards Korn Ferry has used for years in placement conversations and progressive disclosure (a design principle that enables users to go as high-level or deep as they like and still have a meaningful experience) were further honed for ease of use and for fluid, accurate interpretations and extensions.

Simultaneously with the design efforts, frog worked side-by-side with Korn Ferry to architect and write the code that would bring the applications to life. An agile approach (software development methods that flexibly and quickly build and refine software in collaborative, cross-functional teams) was used to guide and demonstrate progress, again affording frequent feedback from business and technical stakeholders.

In order to leverage the investment in frog across Korn Ferry’s digital experience, the tool itself was built with extensibility in mind; the visual and interactive design, as well as underlying code, are being shared across multiple aspects of Korn Ferry’s digital presence with clients.

The results excited Korn Ferry stakeholders and users, creating internal demand for the applications and prompting one user to say, “I was so busy liking [the new tool and its design], I was humming to myself.” The applications are being rolled out this year.

*Agile software development is a group of software development methods in which requirements and solutions evolve through collaboration between self-organizing, cross-functional teams. It promotes adaptive planning, evolutionary development, early delivery and continuous improvement, while encouraging rapid and flexible response to change.

Teaque Lenahan is Executive Director, Innovation Strategy and Kevin Wick is Creative Director at frog Design.

Ever seen a master carpenter’s tools and hands? If you talk to the carpenter, chances are he or she will acknowledge it takes years—sometimes more than a decade—to break in a well-made chisel. During that time, the carpenter’s hands change. They become calloused and creased. They become rough. And yet, surprisingly, they also become more sensitive. The hand conforms to the tool; the tool conforms to the hand. They are one.

If that’s the case with an object that is little more than a slab of steel and a block of wood, shouldn’t we expect to see something similar with people, computers and data? Shouldn’t we see as deep a relationship form between an analyst and his or her computer? Between his or her software and the way he or she sets up and analyzes problems?

We do. UX, short for user experience, is changing everything, including professional services. Long gone are the days of relying on an “old boys” network to find a company’s next generation of executives. “I know a guy who knows a guy who knows a guy” has become an overworked trope in TV humor, but business professionals can do much better nowadays.

Complex algorithms and enormous data sets have given us the power to augment and comple-

ment the human process of recruiting, using statistically validated tools. These new tools help us understand the complete person and gain an understanding of how well he or she will fit not just into a new role, but into a new organization.

I sometimes say people get hired for what they know, and fired for who they are. Recruiters are great at determining whether someone has the right experience for the role. Now, by using today’s cutting-edge tools, they also have the means of identifying the type of culture in which a candidate will perform best. With these new instruments, they can immediately discover what drives candidates in their careers and in which areas they are most competent.

Having access to statistically validated instruments is one thing, but making those complex tools dynamic so users will have an easily understandable, highly interactive set of reporting dashboards is something else.

frog Design has been leading the charge in UX for years. From their earliest days helping Steve Jobs design the Apple iMac, driving innovation at Disney Cruise Lines and adding excitement and flair to Louis Vuitton, frog has transformed complexity into simplicity.

With frog, our ambition was straightforward: to take a data-dense process and leverage it into something the world would like to embrace. In other words, our goal was to make analytical tools fit effortlessly into a knowledge worker’s hands.
Patience, Persistence and Treating Associates Like Family.

THE BEST THING SINCE

Chairman & Chief Executive of Grupo Bimbo
HOW CAN MEXICO; THIS NATION—ITS BUSINESSES, ITS PEOPLE—REALIZE ITS POTENTIAL? HOW WILL THE NEEDED LEADERS EMERGE? Can answers, if not clues, be found with one Mexican chairman/chief executive whose company now claims more than one-fifth of the world’s population as its customers and Forbes magazine ranks as one of the world’s most innovative, ahead of General Mills? What can we learn from Daniel Servitje, who has taken Grupo Bimbo, a bakery business founded 70 years ago with 34 employees by his father, uncle and four partners, and grown it from $2 billion in sales to $14 billion in sales and 129,000 associates in 22 countries?

Grupo Bimbo supplies its products to retailers ranging from mom-and-pop stores to Wal-Mart and Costco, in the Americas, Europe and Asia. Its better known brands in the U.S.—Bimbo’s largest market by sales—include Sara Lee, Oroweat, Entenmann’s, Thomas’ English Muffins and Arnold’s. Bimbo is the U.S.’s largest bread seller, employing 22,000, and sells in more U.S. market areas than any competitor. Grupo Bimbo is the third largest Mexican multinational according to Expansion magazine.

Yet, Servitje’s views on leadership differ from most CEOs in the United States, though he might be a kindred spirit of Warren Buffet. At ease with himself and his values, and though we were told he’s shy, Servitje let down his guard enough to share a teenage story that he said he’s never told before, as well as some candid insights about his country and his own role and legacy.

Servitje also has the confidence to set aside concerns about 90-day profit performance, paying dividends and analysts carping over debt levels. He extends the value of culturally strong family ties to his associates (never referred to as employees), cultivates a diverse and inclusive work force and makes big bets on chasing environmental sustainability in Grupo Bimbo’s operations. He enjoys these freedoms because the company is still run on the principles and values of its founders. While the organization has a board of directors with many outside members, and is run

This cuddly brand ambassador...

Was born on the 4th of July, 1945, when the company charter was signed. The founders had received a Christmas card with a drawing of a cub bear, later they added a baker’s hat and apron. Today the iconic cub represents the softness and purity of Bimbo products.
like other public companies, the legacy built by Daniel’s 96-year-old father, Lorenzo Servitje, and 87-year-old uncle, Roberto Servitje, is still felt especially in the company’s ability to maintain a consistent long-term view.

Daniel served as Chairman of the Board since 2013, a position he took on top of his role as Chief Executive Officer, which he had held since 1997.

Grupo Bimbo has been named one of the “World’s Great Multinational Workplaces,” based on an employee survey and an audit of company policies and practices, by Great Place to Work, a human resources consulting, research and training firm that advises companies on how to change their corporate cultures. Grupo Bimbo has also been ranked No. 1 in reputation in Latin America for the last two years by MERCO, a business monitoring organization.

Q&A

Daniel Servitje spoke in Grupo Bimbo’s board room with Horacio J. McCoy, Korn Ferry’s president, Mexico, and chairman, Latin America; Jose Raul Guerrero, Korn Ferry’s director general, Mexico; Michael Distefano, Korn Ferry’s senior vice president and chief marketing officer; and Neal Koch, a contributor to Korn Ferry’s Briefings on Talent & Leadership magazine. Also present were Luis Rene Martinez Souvervielle, Grupo Bimbo’s vice president for public and government affairs; and Monica Breton, Grupo Bimbo’s corporate communications manager.

You grew up breathing the spirit of the company your father founded. How did you develop a global outlook that’s led you to extend your family’s enterprise into 22 countries across three continents? And how do you foster a global mindset among your employees?

● While I was at Stanford, working on my M.B.A., it was Japan’s global heyday—marketing, manufacturing. That led me to wonder about our company, “Where will we go after Mexico? What does it take now to build a global mindset in our teams?” One practice we’ve established since, is to place a premium on mobility: We encourage our associates to travel or take stretch assignments in operations where they’ll learn something new to find ways they can do better back home. We have tried to remain curious and continue to learn from what happens around the world.

We understand the need to nurture new generations of global leaders; for example, we have approximately 120 management trainees who are expected to be fluent in English and completely mobile internationally.
How do you appeal to food tastes in 22 countries on three continents?

- We’ve acquired 53 companies in the last 15 years. Each time, it’s very important for us to retain the talent, the wealth of local knowledge and insights they have, and so enrich our company’s culture. In some cases, we’ve even done a virtual “reverse takeover” where the acquired company ended up being the one that helped us lead our own operations in a market, as was the case when we acquired George Weston Foods in the United States.

  Having a diverse workforce and an inclusive approach brings the best ideas to the table. By focusing on our consumers, and relying on local expertise, we have been able to innovate in every market we operate in.

  We also experiment and try ideas from one country to another. Grupo Bimbo is unlike other multinationals in the fact that we are headquartered in Mexico City—that certainly gives us a different view of the world.

How would you advise leaders of other companies concerned that adopting such values might be at odds with profit?

- Our company’s philosophy, if you will, the basis of our culture, lies in our aspiration to be both a highly productive, yet deeply humane organization. We always strive for profitability, but we pursue productivity while being centered on the person. Our Golden Rule is to treat everyone with respect, fairness, trust and caring. This allows the businesses to prosper and, as this is a universal value, it sits well in all cultures.

  Having a longer-term view on the business allows us to make bets that may take more time to pay off, but which enable us to build market positions that are more sustainable. That’s a competitive advantage. And because we engage our associates, fostering a place where they see opportunity to grow both personally and professionally, they in turn are fully committed and see the business as their own, and so their relationship to the company is in many cases not just about having a job, but a long-term career. Because of that, they go the extra mile for the company. And, of course, with a public float of around 25 percent, we’re blessed that we’re not as pressed to hit quarterly returns and can focus on the long term sustainability of our growth.

“Our Golden Rule is to treat everyone with respect, fairness, justice, trust and caring. We value the person more than anything else... it’s universal—it sits very well in all cultures.”
Does that approach breed complacency among employees?

● At Grupo Bimbo, you can have a long-term career, but you have to deliver on the goals that you set with your leaders, and you need to change what you must, to make things happen. We are driven by the daily execution of our operation, so focus on performance does not allow for much complacency. Whenever we’ve needed to restructure, closing plants or when we reorganize distribution, we try to find opportunities for repositioning the people as much as possible. But when we can’t do that, we try to look our associates in the eyes and treat them fairly. We don’t try to save the last dime. At the end of the day, for us, it’s important that they see the story behind what’s happened and that we’ve done everything we could do.

Mexico is a country with natural resources, a young, vibrant work force and strength in nearly every industry sector. But it’s also been weighed down by legacy issues that have stymied its growth. What is your vision for Mexico’s leadership? How can the country develop the leaders it needs among its young people?

● The work ethic of our Mexican teams is one of the highest, if not the highest, in the world. This is a country where people work the most days in the year. The view that Mexico is sort of a lazy country is not true at all. And their ability to not only work hard, but commit themselves to do the job, to bring ingenuity and a fresh perspective is great. That’s the reason why Mexico’s manufacturing base is expanding so rapidly and why we’re increasing our exports to the U.S. and other countries in many industries. But we’re coming from behind. We have a very bad educational system. That will take years to change. I’m part of a group that is trying to change public policies in education, and it’s been a huge battle, but I think the needle is moving in the right direction. We also need to become English-fluent. Mexico and the rest of Latin America lags badly behind there. Additionally, our problem is that we need to find more and better jobs for our younger generations, given our country’s demographic profile.

Mexico’s president proposed economic, political and social structural reforms when he took office in 2012, promising they would produce economic and employment growth, reduce poverty, improve health and narrow the economic and social gap between the nation’s wealthiest 1 percent and Mexico’s remaining 120 million citizens, 60 percent of whom were classified as poor. He also allowed for increased foreign investment in oil and gas exploration and production, and increased competition in the electric energy sector. Are these reforms working?

● Much has been accomplished in the past two years to transform this country. We’ve been through 11 structural reforms, very deep changes that held us back for 60, 70 years and now we’ve turned the page and have a new set of rules for industries such as telecommunications and energy that really opened the possibility for the country to grow.
Recent events in Mexico changed the perception of the country and I would say that we are at a stage where half of the body [politics] has changed, while the other half, which probably wasn’t in the minds of the government or the politicians to change, is also changing for the better. We need to establish the rule of law in this country to build institutions that can help us turn into what I and many others envision: a developed country in, say, 15 years. But in order for that to occur, things that weren’t in the plan are now happening, such as the coming transparency and anti-corruption legislation in the next few weeks. The challenge then will be making it real and implementing those pieces of legislation, which will be the work for the next four years. Someone was saying that what is lacking in the country is trust. I think that with these actions, with this work, we’ll build trust among ourselves to invest in the capabilities to make Mexico a much better country. I don’t obviously imagine that we’re seen like this at this stage, but we’re making profound changes that were not envisioned and they are very positive.

You got your M.B.A. at Stanford. How prevalent is Mexico’s American-educated business elite compared to the past?

- It’s changing. We have many more people from U.S. universities now than 20 or 30 years ago. I know that the two governments are pushing to link us dramatically more than in the past in the flow of students, hopefully both ways, but certainly from the Mexican side. I think this is a great opportunity to also learn about the great parts of the U.S. culture that can be brought more to Mexico.

You and Paul Polman, Unilever’s CEO, co-chaired the food security task force of the Group of 20, a bloc of developing nations. What is your vision for achieving food security as the world heads toward a predicted population of 9 billion from its current 7 billion?

- The world will have to feed the equivalent of twice today’s population of China in 30 or 35 years. At the same time, price volatility for food is here to stay. We’ve been blessed by lower commodities prices for two years, but eventually we’ll have a higher price for food, since there is no more land to produce it and not much water. That’s because 70 percent of the water is going to agricultural uses and 20 percent of arable land is degraded. And yet, we have to increase food production and consump-

“**We use rainwater... design our own electric vehicles... All the electricity we use in Mexico is from wind.”**
But you know what? I learned a lot about how to manage a business by racing pigeons because to win you had to be the best in everything—food, pairing, genetics and training. So I had between 60 or 80 pigeons, and it took me a lot of time to complete a system for being successful in winning the races. I was proud of my team of winged heroes.

**And what about leading a balanced life?**

- Certainly we need to have a balanced life. It’s the only life you have, so you better enjoy it to its fullest. I try to take—which is something that I encourage my U.S. team to do—all the vacations that I’m allowed to take. There’s sort of a cultural thing in the U.S. that you cannot take the number of days that you have as a benefit. Here we do, like in all the rest of the countries. Balance, however, is not just a matter of number of days or hours one spends at work or at rest, it is more about having priorities that are balanced: personal, professional, familiar, social and spiritual to name a few, and to be able to be present enough to take care of all of them.

**What do you like to do when you take your vacation?**

- I like to visit new places and discover the world. For example, we went hiking to Atacama in Chile last December, up a 5,600-meter mountain. I’ve gone to Nepal in the past, to the Everest Base Camp. I never thought I would climb so high. And I did it with my kids and my wife, so we were very proud of that moment.

**Do you see a role for yourself and your fellow corporate chiefs in Mexico to change the country?**

- I think we have a major responsibility for our country and I try to participate in that role as someone who can probably help move the agenda on some issues. There was this new anti-corruption pledge from large and small companies. We contributed on that, and I think it was a good thing for the country.

And also sustainability, I’m also very committed to this issue. I sit on the board of the Latin American Conservation Council. We try to do as much as we can in the company to have a smaller environmental footprint. For example, we collect and use rainwater. We treat wastewater from our plants and sales centers. We work hard to minimize waste, recycle garbage and design our own electric vehicles. All the electricity we use in Mexico is from wind and is renewable. That was a big bet. Hopefully it will go in the right way. But if not, at least we’ll do the right thing.

I think that’s something we owe to our country, and we’re doing as much as we can.

**Can you make a difference?**

- It depends on the subject, it depends on the moment. But hopefully, yes.

**Is there more that you want as your legacy?**

- This has been a marathon: I’ve been in this position 18 years, much longer than the average CEOs in the U.S. I’m 55 years old and I still have energy to go, but I’m definitely thinking that I also want to have another part of my life doing different things. That’s in my head every day. What I’ve told our board is that’s why we focus so much on talent. A measure of my success will definitely be the team that replaces the existing senior leadership. The other one is that I see us—everybody—as in a relay race. In some ways there are so many opportunities around us that I also see the company as a 70-year-old startup. We have to question everything—all our paradigms and all of our views. We have to keep trying new things, experimenting and learning. That’s my role: To take the company as far as I can, and then pass the baton to other relay racers and that when I do, it will be in a better position than when I received it. That’s as much as I can do. If I accomplish that, I will certainly be happy.
Around the world, genders are a near even split between men and women. 50.4% male, 49.6% female.

—GEOHIVE

Today, per every 10,000 employees, 437 industrial robots are in operation.

—INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ROBOTICS

Size of Major Religious Groups
% of global population (2010) —PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- Christians: 31.5%
- Muslims: 23.2%
- Hindus: 15.0%
- Buddhists: 7.1%
- Unaffiliated: 16.3%
- Other: 6.7%
- Jews: 0.2%
Malcolm Forbes said:

“Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.”

7 billion people live on Earth. China, India, Brazil and the U.S. are among the most populated countries.

—WORLDOMETER

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The number of women in the computer workforce is declining.

—NCWIT

23% 2005

20.7% 2010

20.2% 2013
WHY OLD HABITS DIE HARD

BY DAVID BERREBY
So how are your diversity initiatives going these days?

Perhaps Legal is reporting that you’re compliant with rules and regulations in all relevant jurisdictions, and HR can tote up members of various social groups who have been recruited and hired. Marketing can take you smoothly through campaigns that offend no one and target everyone. Maybe all employees have had diversity-appreciation workshops and sensitivity training, while higher-ups have worked on “cultural competence” skills. With all that happening, things must be going well...

“Not really,” is a common answer, even among leaders of organizations that are doing, or trying to do, everything right. Many, while justly proud of their progress in this area, live with the feeling that they should be doing more, or doing differently.

Diversity, our ability to live and work with people who differ from us, is as old as civilization. But “diversity,” the universally lauded effort to bring difference into once-homogeneous workplaces, is only in its late 20s. (Many date its birth in the corporate world, for example, to the Hudson Institute’s 1987 “Workforce 2000” report, which opened the eyes of many executives to demographic changes in their labor force.) And, like many human beings around that age, “diversity” today is a somewhat awkward and ungainly creature. It is full of hope, energy and promise, and proud of its achievements—but also a bit vague on specific accomplishments and actual returns on investments.

The case for diversity has never been stronger, nor more widely accepted. Diverse workforces are more innovative and, generally, more profitable. And the sheer number and variety of efforts to achieve it are also at an all-time high. No serious observer thinks that these efforts will, or should, slow down. Yet many are uncertain about what diversity means, how to reach the goal, and what measures indicate real success. Why? The answers lie in the difference between what seems obvious about diversity and what is actually true—and in the complexities of the human mind.

A central aspect of the uncertainty is the fact that when it comes to fostering diversity, we still don’t know what works. In an exhaustive review of work on reducing prejudice, published in 2009, the political scientist Donald P. Green of Yale and the psychologist Elizabeth Levy Paluck, now at Princeton, concluded that very few efforts had been proven effective. “Of the hundreds of studies we examine, a small fraction speak convincingly to the questions of whether, why, and under what conditions a given type of intervention works,” the researchers wrote. “We conclude that the causal effects of many widespread prejudice-reduction interventions, such as workplace diversity training and media campaigns, remain unknown.”

One reason it is hard to tell if a diversity effort is succeeding is that the definition of “diversity” is variable. Consider, for example, the sharp differences in the meaning of the term that emerged among 68 human resources
executives from around the world during a 2009 series of working groups at the Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies at Cornell University. The conversation for New York executives focused on race and gender, while San Franciscans were more prone to discuss LGBT inclusion, and those from the United Kingdom focused on generational divides as well as gender. In China, meanwhile, the important groupings were expatriates versus homegrown talent, Beijing versus Shanghai, and urban versus rural. From elsewhere in the world comes more testimony that diversity means different things to different people, from India (where caste must be considered) to Brazil (where disability is keenly appreciated as a category for inclusion) to many other Latin American nations, where the need for more diversity regarding higher education (whether and where a candidate went to college) is often mentioned by recruiters and employees.

Diversity across time has been as variable as diversity across territories. Women were not included in many first-generation diversity efforts, which focused on racial and religious identities. And efforts to include gay people in diversity efforts, now standard in many parts of North America and Western Europe, were almost unheard of until recently. The same could be said about efforts to include people with disabilities. Sometimes it seems that just as your diversity materials catch up with the latest cultural change, a new one appears on the horizon.

New identities—the kind that were not on the radar a decade or two ago—arise from the same source as old, familiar categories like race, religion and gender. That source is individuals’ thoughts and feelings about themselves and others. Each of us has many different group affiliations. An employee may be “the older person” in the morning meeting, “the mom” at lunch, the “bean counter” on the afternoon teleconference and “the Asian American” in a train car filled with non-Asians, all in the course of one day.

As time passes, some identities count for less in concerns about diversity (for example, the distinction between Catholics and Protestants in the United States) and others count for more (like the distinction between straight people and gays). Some categories can exist for a long time before

“Employees like the idea of a diverse workplace, but are actually more comfortable in a homogeneous setting.”

Employees like the idea of a diverse workplace, but are actually more comfortable in a homogeneous setting.”
they are seen as social groups who were excluded in the past and should not be in the future. For example, the concept of “neurodiversity” so defines people with attention deficits, autistic traits, Tourette’s syndrome and other non-typical brain conditions.

All this explains why “diversity” is a moving target. It cannot be reduced to specific measures aimed at specific groups of people. What works in one place will fail in another; what is cutting edge in one time may be inadequate a decade later. This is why bean counting, pep talks and good intentions will not automatically lead them to the benefits of diversity. It simply isn’t enough to make sure that your organization has (or is trying to have) enough members of x or y or z social group. It isn’t effective simply to put the staff through the familiar rituals of sensitivity training or “cultural competence.” The reason: Diversity isn’t a static trait like pregnancy or a measurable organizational capacity like the Six Sigma process. It is a characteristic whose indicators change from place to place and decade to decade.

Of course, the challenges of diversity are not limited to the difficulty of pinning down what it means for your particular time and place. However you define the social groups that you wish to welcome into your organization, employees will resist including those whom they are not used to working with. A generation ago, this was seen as an unfortunate flaw that afflicted bad apples among us. Today, psychologists understand that resisting the unfamiliar isn’t a trait, like red hair, but a state of mind, like fear: We all spend some time in it. The reason is that we are all disposed to protect our “social capital.”

“Social capital”—networks, friendships, norms of behavior, levels of trust that make it easier for teams to function smoothly and individuals to be effective—is often described as a key to better performance. The reasons are obvious: Employees who don’t trust one another or know how to behave around each other aren’t as able to get things done.

As diversity increases, social capital decreases. Among the things that individuals of different backgrounds don’t have in common is an easy understanding of each others’ beliefs, customs, hot buttons and human ties. The pattern is well established by researchers, who have found it in neighborhoods (where neighbors are less trusting in diverse areas) and in organizations of various sizes.

Yet one lesson of diversity is that the comfort of social capital is not the best thing for an organization.

The sociologist Alejandro Portes of Princeton recently concluded that the familiarity, predictability and ease of understanding that characterize non-diverse organizations produce mediocrity at best—and disaster at worst. It turns out there is such a thing as too much comfort and too much trust in the judgment of people who are like you.

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Portes’s comments stemmed from a study published last year in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, in which Sheen S. Levine, a sociologist at Columbia, and his co-authors created stock-trading markets in Southeast Asia and North America, and recruited business and finance professionals to trade on them for real profits (or losses). Some volunteers, picked at random, were placed in markets run by the majority ethnic group in their area (which they knew because they would see the identities of their fellow players). Others were assigned to markets with at least one member of an ethnic minority. The difference between ethnic sameness and diversity was striking: Stock pricing on the exchanges “fit true values 58 percent better in diverse markets,” the authors write. Moreover, the homogeneous markets were more vulnerable to bubbles and suffered worse crashes after inevitable corrections. In the hard numbers of balance sheets, the experiment had shown, as the researchers note, that ethnic diversity “may be beneficial not only for providing variety in perspectives and skills, but also because diversity facilitates friction that enhances deliberation and upends conformity.”

Gender diversity, like ethnic inclusion, causes the same sort of friction and yields the same sort of benefits, according to a recent study by economists Sara Fisher Ellison and Wallace P. Mullin. The partners analyzed eight years of employee survey results from a large (and unnamed) global company. The researchers were interested in data that showed how diversity affected the performance of each office.

Higher levels of gender diversity were also associated with less cooperation among employees. Social capital (Ellison and Mullin called it “social goods”) decreased with gender diversity.

Yet offices where workers perceived the firm to be more accepting of diversity were more cooperative than those whose employees are more skeptical. Employee morale and satisfaction were also higher in such offices.

The explanation? The authors believe “employees like the idea of a diverse workplace—and may therefore provide social goods more readily in a setting that they think is supportive of diversity—but are actually more comfortable in a homogeneous setting.”

Whatever the comfort levels, though, the study found that revenues for the firm’s typical office improved with gender diversity. That suggests, as the authors write, that the loss of social capital due to gender diversity was made up for by the boost it gave to behavior that helps the bottom line. In fact, their analysis suggests that an office in this firm that moves from single-sex to gender-diverse should have a revenue gain of more than 40 percent—though, as they note, this is an abstract number drawn from their data. Real-world performance would be affected by the other changes necessary to shift staffing so dramatically. Yet, as they understatedly put it, “the relationship uncovered in the sample is still of interest.”

The research suggests, then, that diversity exchanges some social ease for a more profitable and dynamic organization. That should be a no-brainer, especially given that morale in these stimulating places seems to be higher, despite—or perhaps because of—the friction. However, we do have brains, which interfere with our ability to appreciate a diverse environment. Diversity imposes its burdens right here, right now for employees, while its benefits will appear in the future. Emphasizing the business case for diversity may not help here—it can make it appear that the benefits are going to go only to far-off shareholders. Employees sometimes take an “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” attitude.

At its ugliest, this kind of resistance can be expressed in hateful words and acts. But, as someone almost invariably points out after every shocking incident, today’s environment has changed profoundly, in a simple and important way: Where leaders once condoned racism, sexism and other kinds of discrimination, in much of the world they now condemn it. For millions of people who wish to appear educated, modern and employable, it is important to be unprejudiced—and many are sincere in this goal.

Yet even as the conscious mind accepts the value of diversity, the unconscious mind tries to protect its social capital, quite outside our awareness. Much of the behavior that forestalls diversity is entirely unconscious. In our minds, dealing with those who are like us—who understand what we mean without needing much explanation, who share experiences and an outlook—feels comfortable and reassuring. It is not consciously hostile to those who aren’t at the table, but it has the same effect. The biases that keep us from including new kinds of people exert their effects outside of our field of awareness.
Consider, for example, the latest continuing education catalogue from the University of North Georgia, titled “Success: Why Follow When You Can Lead!” The publication features a photo of four people in business attire on a race track. A white man is breaking the ribbon at the finish line; another white man is close behind him. In third place is a woman, while in last place, just behind her, is an African-American man. No one in the school’s administration, it is safe to say, believes white men will or should win all of life’s competitions. Yet none found the photo problematic. Neither have other publications that used the stock photo over the years.

Similarly, very few drivers around the world would be comfortable with the thought that they’re less careful about the lives of some pedestrians than others. Yet research shows unconscious bias exists. In 2014, researchers at Portland State University and the University of Arizona repeatedly went to an intersection in Portland to see if race made any difference in the way drivers treated them as pedestrians (there were three white experimenters and three black, all dressed identically). Across 168 instances, nearly twice as many cars passed a black pedestrian waiting to cross the street before yielding as they did passing a white one. This meant the average wait time before crossing safely for the black men was more than 30 percent longer than for the white men.

This is the kind of bias that subtly works against diversity, as people lean—without being aware of it—toward the familiar, and away from the different. The effect is to reinforce the traditional relationships between groups of people in society, even among those who, in their conscious beliefs, say we need change.

An amusing example of this kind of unconscious inertia occurred recently at a discussion on, of all things, diversity, at the South by Southwest conference in 2015. The incident was viewed millions of times on social media. In speaking at length about the need for more women and non-whites in the tech sector, Eric Schmidt, Google’s executive chairman, several times interrupted and talked over his fellow panelist, Megan Smith, who is the federal government’s chief technology officer. What, someone asked in the Q-and-A afterward, did this say about the dynamics of a gender-diverse workplace? The answer was clear: Even among those determined to create a better future, old habits die hard.

Those aspects of diversity work that can be quantified—the number of women in upper management, or the number of employees who have gone through training—are necessary but not sufficient for success. The process also requires flexibility, openness to change, self-awareness and self-discipline. True diversity, which lets an organization welcome all talent and thus benefit from inclusion, is a state of mind.

“Where leaders once condoned racism and sexism, they now condemn it. For millions of people who wish to appear educated, modern and employable, it is important to be unprejudiced.”
CASE STUDY

BY DAVE EATON

FLYING THROUGH
As Gabriella Venucci settled into her business-class seat departing Changi Airport in Singapore, she thought about the challenging week she had just completed. She had assembled her global project team in the Southeast Asian capital to get back on track after a difficult first month in her role leading this new joint venture. The flight attendant handed her a warm towel to wash off the travel grime, while another thanked her for selecting Singapore Airlines and handed her a gift and a vanity kit. “I wish I could wash off the bad feelings I have about where this project stands. Gabriella thought. She tried to figure out what she was going to say to her boss Monday morning at her firm’s offices in Los Angeles.
Gabriella, whose background was in engineering from her native Italy, gazed out the window, thinking about the players on her team: Gustavo Olan, Bolivian-born, leading the engineering function; Sophia Chen, born in China and raised and educated in Singapore, leading communications; Sophia Stengaart, a native of Germany, heading up marketing; James Smith, from the U.K., director of finance; and finally Ganesh Gupta, from India, leading the operations and information technology functions. On paper, this team, on assignment in the U.S. for the past 18 months at this cutting-edge robotics company, should have been amazing.

The joint-venture partner from Malaysia had promised the moon and the stars, having committed to building a manufacturing facility on a greenfield site outside of Kuala Lumpur in the new tech center. The plan would feature state-of-the-art technology, including newly patented robotics from Gabriella’s company. So why were they off to such a bad start?

The flight attendants began their service as the captain announced they had ascended to 38,000 feet. Gabriella was amazed at how smoothly this Singapore Air team worked, flowing from passenger to passenger, sharing tasks in some prearranged sequence, without a spoken word required. Her team certainly didn’t run like this well-oiled machine.

While she considered the “why” behind the cabin crew’s performance, Gabriella recalled the challenges facing her team:

Meetings were difficult.
Some members were blunt and challenged every point she or others made, while others seemed to shrink into the background. She wished she had more tools to draw the shyer ones out and at the same time curb the more-aggressive members who seemed to dominate.

Toward the end of the week of team meetings, she became so frustrated that she let her emotions get the best of her and stormed out. The group stared in disbelief at one another, not sure of their next move. When she returned, she was obviously angry and demanded that each participant come up with a list of missteps they would “own” and a step-by-step plan to regroup and move forward.

Some team members came fully prepared with notes and were able to represent the input from their subteams, while others arrived seemingly clueless, appearing to wander from topic to topic.

When her team met with their joint-venture partner, the more she pushed for information, the more they changed the subject or avoided eye contact. If she asked for commitments to get the project timeline back on track, they made excuses about how their company was unable to commit.

She asked why the team was behind schedule in building the manufacturing facility with their joint-venture partner, only to receive vague answers. In other cases, key members seemed to yield to her, awaiting direction and reticent to offer their opinions.

The sluggish progress threatened to doom the project. At the present pace, the facility might open six months behind schedule. Opportunity costs would equal more than $80 million due to cost overruns and loss of income. What was once considered a dream project for the company had become a nightmare.
As Gabriella passed her dinner tray back to the flight attendant while another crew member served her coffee, she couldn’t help but wonder what enabled the Singapore Air team to work so well together and what she could learn from it.

As the lights went out and the airplane went into night mode, she stared out at the orange and red hues of a beautiful sunset and searched for answers. She remembered a course she took in college about intercultural management, the study of cultural dimensions and how people from different backgrounds often act differently based on their upbringings.

Like a sequence of six-second Vine videos in her brain, she recalled images her professor had chalked on the board in that musty classroom in Cambridge:

In some cultures, individuals are encouraged to yield to status and hierarchy with no expectation of being treated equally without regard to money, title, age or gender.

Certain cultures encourage students to speak their minds and be prepared every morning in class to represent both sides of an argument. They are graded heavily for their debating or argumentative skills. Other cultures are expected to revere their elders and not challenge the status quo or the views of their parents, teachers or superiors.

Her professor drew chalkboard illustrations to explain these dichotomies, imploring students to use them to open a dialogue, to seek the “why” behind the behavior they were observing and learn to build bridges between stylistic differences.

As she began to grow weary and give in to the dark side of fatigue and stress from a difficult week, Gabriella felt a positive emotion run through her body; she may have happened upon the ingredients of a new plan.

She awoke some eight hours later with newfound energy, partly due to the captain announcing they were beginning their descent into Los Angeles. More importantly, a plan began to form in her mind. Gabriella quickly pulled out a pad of paper and her favorite pen and began to sketch out her path forward.

She realized she had been expecting her teammates to know what she wanted, to step up and show initiative and voice their concerns. She wanted them to treat her

"SHE HAD DONE ALMOST NOTHING TO BUILD A HIGH-PERFORMANCE INTERDEPENDENT TEAM THAT WAS ABLE AND WILLING TO RISE ABOVE SELF-PROMOTION..."
as an equal member of the team, and she assumed that if problems arose, team members would work with one another and ask for help. But her team was not meeting her expectations.

Reflecting on her professor’s lecture years ago, she recalled why:

Those team members raised in a status-based, hierarchical culture may not feel comfortable challenging their leadership, let alone sound the alarm when work is behind schedule. This is due to reverence, respect and desire to maintain group harmony.

If students are graded in school for their sparring and debating skills, they are likely to become adept at arguing—and expect others to defend their points. But that is not likely to happen if other team members shy away from conflict and candid speech to preserve relationships and save face.

While she was able to share her emotions, perhaps believing it made her “human,” others on the team may have lost respect for her perceived inability to maintain control.

And—unlike the flight attendants who seemed to operate as a finely tuned Cirque de Soleil cast, measured and rewarded for overall team effectiveness and customer satisfaction—she had done almost nothing to build a high-performance interdependent team that was able and willing to rise above self-promotion and put the collective group ahead of their individual needs.

This team-building workshop would be designed to:

- Recognize where team members are similar and where they’re different along those dimensions her professor had illustrated.

- Gauge which “differences make a difference” in their work going forward (for example, communications styles: direct versus indirect; decision making processes: autocratic versus consensus).

- Use the team profile to build a “team culture” with guidelines or principles to steer their work.

- Practice leveraging these new “human operating systems” on real-time deliverables that her team had to address.

Gabriella also knew that she needed to examine her own leadership styles and work hard to get better at creating an inclusive climate for individual and team participation.
She would hire a coach to help her develop a leadership style that creates an environment of trust, collaboration and seamless contribution.

In the end, she would get more discretionary effort from team members, leverage their individual strengths to the overall team’s benefit and develop a culture of innovation that would no doubt produce superior results.

She also knew best-laid plans go only so far, so she had to work with her team to improve support mechanisms to better ensure sustainability, well beyond the hype and high of a team-building session.

This meant baking the new team culture into rewards and talent recognition systems, performance management needed to track and hold participants accountable for these new behaviors, even the success profiles and competency models needed to reflect the “new normal” to ensure that the change sticks.

As the plane began to land, a calm came across Gabriella’s body as she envisioned the Monday meeting with her boss. On the surface, he would appear frustrated with the lack of an immediate turnaround, but she felt confident she could convince him that this trip was for data gathering and damage assessment, and that she had gauged the capacity of her team (which was quite positive, she realized) and would continue to build higher levels of trust with them. The goals had been partially met; she also was smarter knowing this could take longer in a multinational team.

Gabriella also used the trip to assess the joint-venture partner, what it could or could not influence and control, and how to factor the realities of working with a cross-border partner into her “next steps” plan. In the short term it would cost more to “right the ship,” but in the long term, it was “short money” to build the right infrastructure (better done in advance next time, admittedly) and set the project up for success for many years to come.

A few minutes after the jet pulled up to the gate, Gabriella walked out of the terminal and got into her Jeep Cherokee. She was still a bit daunted by the thought of meeting her boss in three days, but she felt equally as assured that she could express her new plan to him in a way that would retain his confidence in her as the lead.

As she drove home, Gabriella felt her approach was becoming more definable. After all, the aim of any team is to work as smoothly, quickly and gracefully as the Singapore Airlines team that just flew Gabriella halfway around the world without spilling a drop of coffee or leaving any passenger dissatisfied. Achieving that kind of result for her team would become Gabriella’s goal. And, if she could describe, define and convince her teammates of the same thing, her trip would have been one of the wisest investments her company could have made.

Gabriella’s predicament is not unique. In our work on global projects and with global teams, we often find executives and other senior leaders underestimating the importance of building a team culture before they start their work. In the absence of a common culture, workers revert to the culture they know. As that happens, they become in some ways blind to the limitations they are creating. In this context, cultures represent styles. It is critical to form operating guidelines that are mutually agreed upon, to ensure team members are adopting a common set of behaviors for key areas including decision making, communications, meeting management and time orientation. Gabriella needs to recalibrate with her team around these issues and realign expectations for what is acceptable behavior. She needs to get her project back on track by running a series of meetings, making decisions on critical changes with the joint-venture partner and setting a project plan in place.

By defining the rules and coordinating each team member’s approach to those rules, team members and team leaders develop a joint understanding of what to do and what to avoid.

“THE FIRST STEP WOULD BE TO DO A ‘STYLES INVENTORY’ OF EACH MEMBER OF THIS TEAM, TO BEGIN TO LEVERAGE DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT, BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE TO THEIR BENEFIT.”
SECOND-GENERATION

Gender

WHY THE GLASS CEILING IS SO DURABLE—AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.
There are plenty of other eye-opening statistics that illustrate this remarkably resilient state of stalled gender diversity in the U.S. and abroad. Just 5 percent of Fortune 500 CEO’s are women. In the U.S. only 17 percent of corporate board seats and 25 percent of senior management positions are held by women, even though women make up nearly half the workforce. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women made 82 cents on the male dollar in 2013. A report released by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research projected that a girl born today in Massachusetts will be 43 years old by the time the gender wage gap in the state is closed. In five states, that gender wage gap won’t be closed until the next century!

Given that the modern women’s movement began in earnest in the late 1960s, it is nothing short of remarkable that nearly a half-century later, many of the same gender issues remain on the table. By 2015, one might have expected significant leaps forward in corporate gender diversity. But the numbers don’t lie, and the barriers, both overt and subtle, seem to be stuck in place. For example, in one of the most dynamic industry sectors—high technology—the dearth of women leaders is glaring. Catalyst, a nonprofit research organization, released a study in 2014 in which it tracked the career paths of nearly 10,000 MBA graduates from 2007 to 2014 in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Asia. The study found that 53 percent of the women chose to leave high-tech professions for other jobs, compared to 31 percent of the men. In the related field of venture capital, only 6 percent of the partners are women, a figure that famed Kleiner Perkins venture capitalist John Doerr said was "pathetic."
When we think about how leadership is defined, do we tend to think more naturally about men as leaders than women? Yes.

For Robin Ely, a Harvard Business School professor who studies gender issues and leadership, the failure to have achieved significant change lies in what she calls “second-generation gender bias.” In contrast to first-generation bias—the explicit discrimination that is no longer legal in most industrialized nations—second-generation bias is more subtle, less explicit and often unintentional. It derives largely from gender stereotypes and conventional expectations of men and women, about what society perceives that people want, how they behave and who they are.

“For example, when we think about how leadership is defined, do we tend to think more naturally about men as leaders than women? The answer is yes,” Ely says. “These things just leak into how we interact with people. We have stereotypes about what constitutes leadership, and it is much aligned with our stereotypes about who men are and who women are.”

Not surprisingly, men are expected to be confident, opinionated and assertive, while women are expected to be nurturing, compassionate and passive. Women therefore are not top-of-mind when we think about leadership, and because these inbred second-generation biases are insidious and infect men and women alike, the ability to move ahead toward gender diversity is hindered.

The irony is that study after study has shown that empowering women is good for business. A McKinsey report on gender diversity and corporate performance found that the 89 European companies with the highest proportion of women in senior leadership positions and at least two women on their boards significantly outperformed industry averages. These companies, listed on the Stoxx Europe 600, showed 10 percent higher return on equity, 48 percent higher earnings before interest and taxation, and 17 percent higher stock price growth.

With that in mind, Germany recently passed a law requiring that at least 30 percent of corporate directors be women. Norway, Spain, France and Iceland have quotas set at 40 percent of board directors, and Germany joined Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands to require 30 percent female representation. Widespread resistance in the U.S. has halted efforts to legislate board composition, and the average percentage of women on American boards is a mere 17 percent.

According to a diversity report compiled by Richard Branson’s Virgin Group and Boston Consulting Group, “a number of quantitative studies confirm that diversity does in fact have a correlation with business results, including one report that points to a 53 percent higher return on equity for companies ranked in the top quartile of board diversity compared with those in the bottom quartile.”

A study from the University of Illinois that examined more than 500 American companies determined that gender and racial diversity were associated with increases in sales and revenue and the number of customers. In addition, a report by the Center for Talent Innovation found that when teams had one or more members who represented target customers, the team was as much as 158 percent more likely to understand customers’ needs, which increased the probability of effective innovation.

For New York–based Catalyst, gender diversity has been its primary mission for the past 50 years. According to Laura Sabattini, vice president of research, progress has been painfully sluggish. “When it comes to senior leadership roles, it’s really very slow,” she says. “Given the analysis about how long it will take to reach priority projections at this pace, it will be decades.” Though there are slight changes in the numbers, Sabattini noted that when women reach the middle management level, the gap starts to widen between them and “higher power positions.” “It gives us a lot of work to do,” she says. (See “Catalyst Awards,” page 51.)
Amid this disheartening inertia, however, a raft of organizations have shattered the status quo and found laudable ways to address gender diversity. Catalyst, for example, has given annual awards since 1987 to companies around the world that have initiated innovative efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. Companies such as Procter & Gamble, AstraZeneca, Marriott, Chevron and others have embraced corporate-wide efforts to transform entrenched cultures and install innovative programs. Two of these, Kimberly-Clark Corp. and Bright Horizons Family Solutions, have come at the issue from markedly different points of view. And in their stories, there are lessons to be learned.

Kimberly-Clark...

In 2009, Thomas J. Falk, the chairman and CEO of Kimberly-Clark Corp., had an epiphany. Despite a predominantly female customer base, Kimberly-Clark’s leadership team had a glaring lack of women executives. Of the top nine corporate officers, only two were women. Women were also underrepresented in the company’s business units. Even the feminine hygiene unit was headed by a man.

“Women are directly responsible for about 80 percent of purchases across our business,” Falk says. “We must cultivate a diversity of perspectives to drive innovation and business results.”

Up to then, the $19 billion global corporation treated gender and diversity as a human resources responsibility and addressed the issue with one-off events and conferences. The company didn’t have a diversity inclusion office, and diversity efforts were made by individuals but not on a corporate-wide basis. It wasn’t until late 2009 that the company, led by Falk and the board, began to tackle the issue, according to Sue Sears, vice president of global diversity and inclusion.

“We looked at where we were going on our business plans for the next five years, and we knew we were not going to get there by just doing it the same old way,” Sears says. “We really needed to have a totally different approach to our people philosophy.”

The company brought in an outside consultant to pinpoint the concerns and formed a diversity inclusion team to begin a deep dive into the issue. Based on extensive research and analysis, it seemed as if women inside the company were convincing themselves to avoid trying to move up to the next level. Many opted out because they felt they were not qualified for the position. They believed they required 100 percent of the necessary skills, whereas a man would be comfortable taking the job with 50 percent of the skills. “There was a confidence issue where women felt they weren’t good enough for the role,” Sears says.

In addition, there were family concerns, the burden of balancing work and home life that often falls harder on women. And beyond that was a “velocity issue”: men were entrenched in senior positions, blocking upward mobility for women. “It’s a very nice place to work.

SECOND-GENERATION GENDER BIAS

A MCKINSEY SURVEY OF 89 STOXX EUROPE 600 COMPANIES WITH THE HIGHEST PROPORTION OF WOMEN SENIOR LEADERS AND AT LEAST TWO WOMEN ON THE BOARD OUTPERFORMED EVERY OTHER COMPANY ON THE INDEX.

GOOD FOR BUSINESS

A MCKINSEY SURVEY OF 89 STOXX EUROPE 600 COMPANIES WITH THE HIGHEST PROPORTION OF WOMEN SENIOR LEADERS AND AT LEAST TWO WOMEN ON THE BOARD OUTPERFORMED EVERY OTHER COMPANY ON THE INDEX.

- HIGHER RETURN ON EQUITY
- HIGHER STOCK PRICE GROWTH
- HIGHER CORPORATE EARNINGS (BEFORE TAXES AND INTEREST)

HIGHER CORPORATE EARNINGS (BEFORE TAXES AND INTEREST)

HIGHER RETURN ON EQUITY

HIGHER STOCK PRICE GROWTH
They had lifetime employment, so the roles were not available,” Sears says. “Women would get stuck right under that director level and they couldn’t break through, so they would either leave the company or they stayed and were very dissatisfied.”

Realizing that this “passive-aggressive” environment was toxic for its female employees, Kimberly-Clark decided to remake its people philosophy. Falk instituted a corporate-wide initiative called “Unleash Your Power,” and it set off a culture shift that is continuing to evolve today. According to Sears, everyone in the company had to experience culture training, but more importantly, Kimberly-Clark got serious about identifying critical roles, instituting succession plans, identifying its top talent—some 500 senior-level employees around the globe—and making that talent visible to its senior leaders.

For example, if a critical job opens up, there is now a slating process to ensure that at least one diverse candidate has a fair shot at the position. Individuals who were declared “top talent” were informed of their status. “It used to be a secret club,” Sears says. “We never really told people they were top talent.” An accelerated development program was also instituted so that these emerging stars could move up much faster.

In the intervening four years, the changes became palpable. Of Falk’s nine direct reports, five are now women. Business units focusing on women’s product lines are now run by women, which has had a significant impact.

The results have been dramatic. Kimberly-Clark revenues and profits have soared from 2009 to 2013, rising from $19.1 billion in sales and an operating profit of $2.6 billion to $21.2 billion in sales and an operating profit of $3.2 billion. The company’s shares rose from $50 on Dec. 31, 2009, to $114 on the last day of 2013. At the same time, the number of women in director jobs or higher has risen from 17 percent to 31 percent. From a high percentage of women in human resources positions or other “softer” jobs, the number of women in “hard-core P&L jobs” has risen significantly.

According to Sears, the focus on professional development and career counseling has been hugely successful for women. Honest conversations with team leaders have opened up a dialogue with women employees that previously was absent.

“In a typical exchange, an employee asks “Where do you see me in five years?” The team leader will focus on career goals and discuss the best route to attain the goals in relation to training and other gaps in a résumé. In turn, she will ask, “Where do you want to be in five years?” In a culture of accountability, these open and constructive two-way conversations have been highly effective. Career counseling adds to that success.

In addition, mentoring programs, job-shadowing opportunities and sponsorship programs are now up and running. A reverse-mentoring program, in which Millennial women coach senior leaders about what they are looking for in the organization, has opened some eyes about gender issues across generations. Having senior leaders identify and then sponsor an individual on their team for six months has allowed both parties to decide if they are comfortable working together. If not, the woman can opt out and go to another part of the organization. Sears says that thus far 90 percent of the women have remained in the sponsored relationships.

“It is one of the most important things we do for women in order to have them stay with the company,” Sears says. “If they feel they are being invested in, being developed, and they can see the path forward, that is crucial. Because 60 percent to 70 percent of our women are working moms—and it is a big sacrifice, balancing work and family—if they don’t feel their contributions are valued, they’re going to leave.”

To succeed on this level, Sears suggested several takeaway lessons. First, the business case for this kind of radical change must be made using hard data. “If you just bring opinions and anecdotal information, it doesn’t work,” she says. The effort must be driven from the top and cannot be a human resources activity or diversity program. “This has to be sitting down at the table with the leaders of the business and saying, ‘Here’s the data, here are the gaps we see, here are the problems. Now what are the two or three strategies we’re going to work on?’” she adds. And finally, “you need to develop an action plan with two or three key initiatives that you are going to work on,” she says. “And you make the senior leaders of these teams accountable.”
Since its founding in 1962 by pioneering feminist Felice Schwartz, Catalyst, a New York–based nonprofit, has promoted diversity and inclusion for women in business. For the past 27 years, the organization has given its Catalyst Award to honor companies with innovative initiatives in gender diversity. Given the difficulty of resolving gender issues in the corporate world, Catalyst puts a spotlight on programs within companies that are successful in promoting diversity. Among its winners over the years are Chevron, Lockheed Martin, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, Nissan and Goldman Sachs. Kimberly-Clark, a 2014 winner, unveiled a program called “Unleash Your Power” in 2009 that spearheaded a successful initiative aimed at rethinking the company’s culture.

The award is aimed at creating models of fruitful gender diversity programs for others to emulate, according to Laura Sabattini, Catalyst vice president of research and chair of the Catalyst Award Evaluation Committee. To understand and analyze the value and impact of such programs, Catalyst solicits entries from companies, winnows down the list and then sends teams to visit, inspect and conduct interviews with employees, from the CEO and down, to determine how effective the initiatives have been.

“What we see a lot is that there is really no silver bullet in creating change,” Sabattini says. “It’s a lot of different bits and pieces that have to work together.” Catalyst often sees work-life balance programs or networks that were implemented with the best intentions but don’t fit into the corporate culture. If a program butts up against an entrenched culture and is not supported effectively by the leadership, employees may ignore it, and it is doomed to become a “program du jour.” The criteria for the award include:

**A CLOSE LOOK AT THE BUSINESS RATIONALE.**
A gender diversity program must be integrated in the business model and succeed within the way the business operates and the work gets done.

**SENIOR LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT.**
Unless the CEO and the senior executives are on board and role-modeling the behaviors and activities, change will not happen. If leaders are merely paying lip service to diversity, there is no accountability. Without visible support from top leadership, it is difficult to create change.

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS.**
If a company implements a great work-life program but too few employees know about it, it will have little chance for success.

**ENGAGEMENT.** How many women are participating in the program? Are the activities helpful and do they provide the tools for an employee to rise within the company?

Catalyst has found that gender diversity programs work better if both women and men act as role models for the behaviors the company seeks. “It shows that it’s really not just about advancing women, but it’s about making the way work gets done more inclusive,” Sabattini says. “It’s great when there are male executives getting engaged with a women’s network. If you have a male-dominated industry where there are only a few women at the top, it cannot be all on their shoulders to make change happen.”

Most important, she adds, is accountability. The most potent programs, such as a professional development initiative at Procter & Gamble, hold senior managers responsible for results. “We find that the strongest and most effective initiatives are ones where there’s a very clear and transparent accountability linked to results. So it really becomes part of the way you do your work,” Sabattini says.
Bright Horizons . . .

While Kimberly-Clark had a dearth of women in senior positions, Bright Horizons had plenty of women in management roles. What it had to foster was a culture where women were given the support and flexibility to drive their careers.

When Mary Lou Burke-Afonso joined Bright Horizons as corporate controller 19 years ago, the company, based in Watertown, Mass., was known mostly for its child-care centers, and the majority of its employees were early-childhood educators, a field overwhelmingly populated by women. Back then, the company had 60 child-care centers and was just beginning to tap into the burgeoning need for quality child care and work-life balance solutions.

Today, Burke-Afonso is executive vice president in charge of U.S. operations for the company, which now has $1.35 billion in revenues, 20,000 employees and 900 child-care centers around the world. Of that employee roster, 95 percent are women, and the corporation has expanded its scope to include early education and preschools, employer-sponsored child care, backup care, educational advisory services and other services. In a world where gender diversity remains a thorny issue for most corporations, Bright Horizons has long been a welcoming and nurturing environment for women. In fact, this year the company was named to the Fortune magazine list of “100 Best Companies to Work For” for the 16th time.

Solving a major global challenge, getting women back to work, and trying to bring some value and respect to a group of educators who were generally dismissed as glorified baby sitters, was no easy task. “We’re still on that journey,” Burke-Afonso says, “teaching people and helping them understand the professionalism that we’re dealing with and respecting the early educators of our children who will be the future of our world.”

In January, in his State of the Union Address, President Obama helped solidify the point when he called child care an economic imperative for the country, “not a ‘nice to have’ but a ‘must have.’ ”

Ironically, in a company so woman-centric, the CEO is a man. Dave Lissy is a Bright Horizons veteran who has been the chief executive for 10 years. He replaced Roger Brown, who founded the company in 1986 with his wife Linda Mason. But 56 percent of the Bright Horizons executive team is made up of women. In addition, all the division vice presidents are women, four of whom started with the company as teachers.

For Burke-Afonso, diversity is reflected by career path. She mentions how many women left not-for-profit jobs to join Bright Horizons as the company became more and more associated with the value and respect it brought to the child-care profession. “They really believed what we were doing was right,” she says. “And they also believed in the career path they would have within our organiza-

**Women in Science**

UNESCO: relatively few women around the world pursue careers in scientific research.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
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<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>North America/Europe</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<td>South Asia</td>
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Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

“Every person has different needs for work-life balance, and we should work with them to help them achieve their goals while not sacrificing our business goals.”
“In the high-tech industry, we hear about the ‘pipeline problem.’ If we get more women into STEM, the numbers will go up. But you have to remind people that this is exactly the narrative we heard 25 years ago in law firms and accounting firms.”

needs something different. It’s not a balance but a work-life integration. I’m a mother with a 13-year-old and an 8-year-old. My family will always come first, and there are times when I have to leave because the baby sitter can’t come or my child is sick. Some women see me and think, ‘I don’t know how you do it.’ And I’m thinking, ‘Well, it’s not easy. It’s the same life you live.’ It’s about flexibility, and not just for women but for men, too.”

Working for a company that respects this reality is a huge motivation. “Employers that allow that flexibility will earn more loyalty and respect,” she says. “And I actually work harder because of it.”

Painting a complex issue with a broad brush is always risky. But despite the shining examples of organizations that get it, the movement toward widespread gender diversity remains glacial. Harvard Business School’s Ely noted that in many industry sectors, the workforce hasn’t changed much in 25 years.

“What’s interesting about some of these so-called feminine fields is that they still tend to be dominated by men,” she says. “The numbers might rise a little bit, but they don’t rise as much as you think. In the high-tech industry, we hear about the ‘pipeline problem.’ If we get more women into STEM [science, technology, engineering and math], the numbers will go up. But you have to remind people that this is exactly the narrative we heard 25 years ago in law firms and accounting firms. ‘We don’t have that many women in the partnership because they haven’t been around long enough. We’ve got this 10-year partnership track, and once you’ve been around for a while, we’re going to lick this problem.’

“In fact, women have been entering those fields at rates of 50 percent or more and at the very top in terms of preparation, test scores, education. They are very competitive, sometimes outscoring the men. And yet, 20 or 30 years later, they are not moving into partnerships at these firms. They stall out at about 15 to 17 percent.”

For substantial, sustained change to occur, Ely believes that organizations must examine their cultures and analyze the long-held assumptions about what it means to be a leader, to make a contribution and to be competent. “What is the mission of the organization, and is our culture consistent with our mission?” she asks. “If they think about changing the way they do things, they can go about creating a place and a culture where all employees can thrive, not just one segment of the workforce.”

Be the Change
As minorities become majorities, organizations must rethink the conventional dimensions of identity and inclusiveness.

DIVERSITY OF ONE

By Andrés T. Tapia

Art by Neil Webb
WHAT the scientists are witnessing at the genetic level is also taking place in society. Demographic changes have been so massive in the past generation—in nearly every country in the world—that while diversity is more relevant than ever, the way we think about it is obsolete. The stalwart paradigms of group identity based only on race, gender, age, sexual orientation or disability no longer cover the scope of our multidimensional identities. No one is just black. Or Latino. Or female. Or gay. Or blind. We are much more complex than that. We have entered the age of ultradiversity.

This ultradiversity leads to intersected identities such as GayVeteranXer. Or an ElderlyPersonwithaDisability. Or a MillennialIntrovertedFemaleManager. Or a BoomerAfricanAmericanGeneralManagerMalewithAdultKids. Or a LesbianSingleMother. Or ...

In this era, we need to invent “precision talent” strategies applying principles analogous to what pharmacologists are doing with drugs. We must be ready to address the “Diversity of One.”

But there is a counterforce that seeks to minimize differences. The intentions may be benevolent or sinister, but either way they have a damaging effect on societal wellness as well as talent strategies. If we ignore the reality that these differences exist and are only getting more complex, and that they must therefore be addressed, we will contribute to mounting social and work force pressures. Think #Ferguson. #BlackLivesMatter.

As we grapple with Diversity of One, we must rethink basic assumptions about diversity. What does “minority” mean when “minorities” are majorities? What does it mean that those who are young have more experience with the supernova-hot trends of digitization, social media and globalization than 25-year careerists do? What does it mean that it’s still a “man’s world” when two-thirds of undergraduates in the U.S. are women and by 2025 in the U.K., for example, women are expected to possess 60 percent of all personal wealth? What does “disability” mean when there are plentiful examples of people with disabilities outperforming those who are supposedly able-bodied? What does it mean to be “closeted” in sexual orientation when Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, the biggest, most valuable and arguably most influential company in our daily lives, comes out as a gay man? Or that the president of the United States is biracial?

The answers to these questions also challenge many current talent strategies that are failing to address the implications of ultradiversity. Let’s look at some of these new aspects of diversity within three well-established dimensions (race/ethnicity, gender and disability) and what new and innovative human capital strategies are needed to address them. These then can serve as templates for exploring the implications for a much broader set of diversity issues such as globalism, nationality, faith, generational thinking styles and personality, to name just a few.

DEEP IN THE pristine laboratories of pharma giant Roche in Basel, Switzerland, molecular scientists are experimenting with and achieving breakthroughs on a new understanding of diversity. NOT THAT THEY WOULD characterize their quest for blockbuster designer drugs in terms of understanding diversity. But their work is now guided by a scientifically evolved understanding that human beings are so genetically diverse that the future of curative and palliative care lies in moving away from the manufacture of mass-application drugs, in favor of drugs that are personalized to each individual patient’s chromosomal profile. In their parlance, this is “precision medicine”—in essence, it is individualized medicine.
The world is in the midst of a major demographic tsunami. Consider the United States. In 1950, 90 percent of the U.S. was white. By 2040, only half will be white. Already racial and ethnic minorities make up more than 30 percent of the population. Today, “minorities” are majorities in 50 U.S. cities. In 10 U.S. states, whites are a minority group. In California, Latinos are the largest ethnic group of all.

In the U.K., ethnic Britons are expected to be a minority by 2060. In Latin America, the new economic majorities of the emerging middle class are indigenous and darker-skinned. It was so much easier to discriminate against them when they earned $2 a day. Now, with their newly earned financial resources, their children are competing for scarce seats in private schools with those from “old money” families.

So Miami is now the “capital” of Latin America. The United States is the second-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. São Paulo, Brazil, has the second-largest Japanese population after Tokyo. Chicago has the second-largest Polish population after Warsaw. Toronto has the most foreign-born percentage of any city in the world.

While these demographic shifts are upending politics, economics and workplaces, plunge into the waters of change and note that even these new majorities defy traditional labels and categories. Just ask the “Blaxican” or the “Mexipino.” Or the biracial household names Barack Obama or Soledad O’Brien.

Even when talking about Latinos, which Latino are we talking about? The Spanish dominant? The English dominant? The Spanglish dominant? The one who grew up in the United States or outside of it? The Mexican, the Puerto Rican, the Cuban or the ones from 20-plus other Latin American nationalities?

Diversity of One challenges us to see race and ethnicity as single threads interwoven in the fabric of a person’s identity, recognizing that the cloth contains many other “fibers.”

Current diversity strategies are not set up to address this complexity. For example, we have affinity groups structured unidimensionally. There is a Latino group, a black group, an Asian group. But for those individuals who fit all three categories, which group do they “join” to have their needs met?

Multidimensional identities also affect diversity strategies in talent acquisition. Take sourcing and recruiting of Latinos as an example.

A major U.S.-based wealth management and insurance company has set out to attract Latino talent and build up a larger Latino clientele. Korn Ferry is helping this company with learning and strategies that are multidimensional and are based on a foundation of building cross-cultural agility. These skills involve teaching members of the majority culture to recognize they have preferred views that affect how they navigate and understand the world.

In addition, we must consider the vast diversity that exists under the umbrella terms “Latino” and “Hispanic.” Which Latino talent or consumer is this client is trying to attract? In addition, Latinos within the organization need to become more attuned to their own biographies and to understand the forces that shaped them into the unique Diversity of One Latinos that they are. Their self-awareness, which they can share with their non-Latino counterparts for mutual learning, is just as important.

Women: Yes, but which woman?

It is the Decade of the Woman not just because it was declared so by the United Nations, but because women are truly advancing. In most developed countries, women are better educated, participate to a greater extent in the workplace and are more ambitious than any previous female generation. According the research conducted by the Global Summit of Women, there are several countries, including France, Norway and Finland, whose full roster of blue-chip companies have boards that are comprised of at least 30 percent women. And with 22 countries now having established quotas for women on boards, this will accelerate the ascension of women in leadership.
Gender is one of the most common diversity issues around the world, but that does not mean it can be addressed the same way everywhere. Chinese, French, Afghan and American women face circumstances and attitudes quite unique to their countries.

Also, women of different ethnic groups or socio-economic classes within the same country face correspondingly varied challenges. It is not enough to talk about “women’s issues.” It is possible that “women’s advancement” has narrowly and unconsciously focused on white women, who indeed are making strides, albeit not nearly fast enough. In the past decade, women have achieved 50/50 parity as managers, yet reflect fewer than 18 percent of senior leadership positions. But if you dive below the surface you see the rising tide has not lifted all women. Within senior leadership positions in the U.S., Asian, African-American and Latina women represent 1.7 percent, 1.2 percent and 1 percent, respectively, for a collective total of just 3.9 percent of all senior managerial roles.

Further, a baby boomer professional woman with adult children may have little in common with her Gen Y counterpart who is just starting a family and is dealing with issues of child care and balance. Or a Gen X without children. Or the growing number of women who are choosing not to have any children, ever.

“It was 10 years ago that I was contemplating both motherhood and my career, and how I could potentially balance both,” said Jeanine Amilowski, director of research at Korn Ferry. “I grew up living in a very close extended family with a strong belief in the African proverb ‘it takes a village to raise a child.’ When the career choices of my husband and I took us 900 miles away from our family, the village I grew up in didn’t appear. Access to child care and workplace flexibility were not openly discussed in the work environment, and it influenced my personal decision not to have children. And even when women affinity-group programs emerged, they are mostly designed around work-life balance, maternity issues and breastfeeding.”

This also upends gender dynamics between men and women. More professional women in developed and emerging economies postpone marriage and children, while in certain societies men are sharing more household duties and an increasing number of women earn more than their partners. Male identity—for centuries associated with “breadwinner,” “protector” and “leader”—is shifting. Men, particularly Gen Xers and Gen Yers, are assuming identities such as “nurturer,” “supporter” and “primary parent.”

TALENT STRATEGIES

A few years ago a large consumer goods corporation came to us for help because their women of color were reporting significantly less job satisfaction, lower trust scores and markedly higher intention to leave compared with all other demographic groups of employees.

This had to be tackled in a multidimensional way, looking at the intersection of race and gender. Women of color cited difficulties developing authentic relationships with their managers. In response, we implemented a multiyear diversity and inclusion initiative, which included coaching sessions that paired women of color with their managers for reciprocal learning. These sessions focused on solidifying relationships, discussing workplace challenges and talking about advancement opportunities.

After the four-year program, managers saw changes in their own behaviors. They ended up helping their direct reports gain exposure to key decision makers in the company, were more aware of their similarities to and differences from their direct reports (45 percent increase), understood better how to motivate and inspire their direct reports (35 percent increase) and had regular discussions with their direct reports regarding career paths (31 percent increase). Conversely, women of color reported gains in understanding how they uniquely add value to the company (24 percent decrease in unfavorable responses and 17 percent increase in favorable responses).
responses), significantly higher levels of job satisfaction and significantly lower levels of intention to leave than they had before. Their positive perceptions of the company’s commitment to their long-term growth and development increased from 51 percent to 70 percent.

Most tellingly, the program also sped up their rates of promotion by six months or more and decreased turnover by 50 percent. Within four years, the number of executive-level women of color doubled from 60 to 120, and representation increased from 4 percent to 6.7 percent.

Diversity of One demands recognizing the realities of gender dynamics as well as the choices and circumstances that lead to the vast diversity of women throughout the work force.

DIVERSITY OF ONE

Disability Diversity: Who Is Truly Disabled?

We now have athletes with prosthetic legs competing for gold in the Olympics, and it’s not the Paralympics. I know a proofreader who is blind who outperforms her seeing peers in accuracy, an industry-shaping chief diversity officer who is 4 feet tall and leaders of social-change movements who use wheelchairs for mobility.

But today, still, walk into the corridors of most companies, and it is rare to see a student or employee with a visible disability. Given the types of skills and talents that can be found among people with disabilities, we should be seeing them by the dozens. But the resistance is fiercely passive. Few believe that people with disabilities are viable employees. And while few will say it aloud, most also worry about the potential costs of accommodation.

Even when the intentions are good, there is a dearth of understanding of how to make things appropriately accessible, which goes much further than providing “handicapped” parking spaces and wheelchair ramps. Based on focus groups we have done, people with partial vision impairment need training enrollment forms that enable them to easily indicate they need an accommodation so they are not trapped in a Koosh ball–tossing exercise that can end up humiliating them. Or employees with hearing impairments who resent having to beg IT to upgrade their accessible computer or telephone when new software comes out. Or worse, having to educate IT about technology that has been available but untapped for years. (How many have to worry about keeping track of whether it’s time for IT to upgrade our Microsoft Office suite?)

TALENT STRATEGIES

Companies small and large are figuring this out. When it comes to hard-core business operations, the Danish software quality-check company Specialisterne (the Specialists) hires for the competence of autism, seeking those with photographic memory and obsessive attention to detail who can spot an error in millions of lines of code.

Walgreens is learning this at a massive scale. A few years ago they decided to build their new distribution center (the size of 10 football fields serving 800 stores in eight states throughout the South and mid-Atlantic regions) in Anderson, S.C., using “universal design,” an architectural approach that takes into account the vast diversity of needs across the whole ability-disability spectrum. They also provided disability inclusion training to all, even employees with disabilities who needed to learn about disabilities different from their own.

The results were stunning. With 40 percent of employees having some form of physical or cognitive disability, the center benefited not only from the positive feelings of authentic inclusion but also financially. Of all the distribution centers in the Walgreens system, Anderson is the top performer, by 20 percent or more.

In both of these companies, disabilities are not detriments—rather, they are the very thing that has driven...
them to high-impact effectiveness as the commitment to
disability inclusion leads to higher engagement, presen-
teeism, loyalty and continuous improvement. Compa-
nies now are emulating the Walgreens model, including
Brazilian cosmetics multinational Natura as they build
their new distribution center outside of São Paulo.

This also makes me think about those of us who
believe we have no disabilities. Don’t we all need chairs
to give us stamina, lights to see, amplification systems
to hear, climate control for comfort and weekends to
unwind? Our physical and mental limitations are being
accommodated every moment of every day at great
cost... a cost that no one questions. And yet when it
comes to access and opportunity for the disabled, in
nearly every place around the world we hear business
leaders balk and resist because it’s deemed too costly and
too difficult.

Diversity of One. Stop and think about it. Who is
disabled? It is, indeed, each and every one of us.

Contemporary diversity is laying waste to Diversity
1.0’s simplistic categorizations. So as molecular sci-
entists design drugs for individuals, how do we affordably
design human performance systems that allow for
Diversity of One?

For innovative help, we need look no further than
our smartphones. Apple’s iTunes platform provides the
inspiration.

In the days of the mass-produced compact disc, music
industry executives had the final say on the set list, and the
masses had no choice but to buy “as is.” But, as we have all
experienced via iTunes, that limitation has been obliter-
ated as we customize our music collections. iTunes allows
music fans to create highly personalized multidimen-
sional genre mixes that make us groove, bop and thrive. It
was digital technology that made possible what had in the
past been impossible to do in a cost-effective way.

Human capital management must find its equivalent
and use the available technology to address Diversity
of One. Our systems need to be about ultraflexibility to
meet the needs of ultradiversity.

We need platforms that all talent can access online,
tailored to meet their career ambitions and needs. But
these tools need to churn out customized assessments,
profiles and developmental plans that the talent,
leaders and their managers can mold into a “set list”
that captures their Diversity of One.

But there is one major caution before we charge up
this hill: The rethinking of diversity does not release us
from the obligation of tending to the unfinished busi-
ness of Diversity 1.0.

There will always be room for programs and ap-
proaches that address the needs of groups that have
been stigmatized and marginalized by society. While
ultradiversity is the new game in town, it is undeniable
that the social constructs that lead to racism, sexism,
homophobia and ableism are still alive and well.

Race still matters for the young black male driving
or walking down the street. Gender still matters as
long as women are earning 80 cents to the man’s dollar
in the U.S. and even less in other countries. Disability
still matters when those who need access face the lack
of wheelchair ramps or braille signs or closed captions.
Homophobia still matters as long as there are laws that
allow some who are LGBT to be fired, refused services,
fined, jailed or even put to death.

But even here, we must get past the unidimensional
labels. The past’s simpler notions of how to resolve
inclusion of blacks and other minorities (eliminate seg-
grated lunch counters and seating areas in buses, pro-
tect the right to vote, outlaw workplace discrimination
on the basis of race and gender) are no longer enough.
Today the processes of talent assessment, high-potential
identification, leadership development, advancement
and onboarding must avoid not only “old fashioned”
explicit discrimination but the invisible forces of uncon-
scious bias as well.

Instead of thinking about the diversity
of groups in simplistic ways we must think
about the diversity within each individual.
Because when all is said and done, it’s a
Diversity of One world. We must ensure
that we make every one count.

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PEOPLE AREN’T THE ONLY ONES WHO WILL NEED TO BE INCLUDED IN THE WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE. CYBORGS AND OTHER FORMS OF MANMADE MECHANICAL CREATIONS WILL HAVE A PLACE WITH US.
The common wisdom is that artificial intelligence has overpromised and underdelivered, and it is surely one of the most-hyped technological developments of all time. Your first robotic colleague will probably not resemble the paranoid HAL of Stanley Kubrick’s “2001: A Space Odyssey,” or the sultry-voiced Samantha of Spike Jonze’s 2013 film, “Her,” but it could be something more akin to an artificial administrative assistant. That was the goal of CALO, or the “Cognitive Assistant that Learns and Organizes,” an SRI International project funded by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. CALO ran from 2003 to 2008 and produced many spinoffs, most notably the Siri intelligent software assistant now included in Apple iOS.

Siri is not especially human-like, but successors currently in development will be much more so. As the interface with these devices moves from command-driven to conversational, our relationships with them will inevitably become more interactive, even intimate. Even if the devices are not truly sentient, or conscious, research shows that we will experience them as if they were. Firms now provide diversity training for working with different races, gender identities and nationalities. Will we need comparable workplace policies for human-robotic interaction?
Illustrator Russell Cobb exhibits and lectures on art and design throughout Europe. His appreciation for things mechanical (and futuristic) is apparent in these illustrations for Briefings.
Any good article about robots should mention Isaac Asimov’s three fundamental Rules of Robotics, and this is as good a place as any: One, a robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. Two, a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. Three, a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws. Asimov first postulated the rules in a 1941 short story, “Runaround,” which happened to be set in the year 2015, surely a sign that the time has come to at least think about fundamental rules of human-robotic interaction.

What will it be like to work side by side with robots? Actually many of us already do every day; we’re just not always aware of it. When you run the spelling and grammar check on a document you produced with Microsoft Word, an artificial intelligence is doing the job of copy editor. If you drive one of the new Volvos equipped with IntelliSafe, the car will hit the brakes or steer its way out of danger far faster than a human being can respond. You may be holding the wheel, but at critical moments, the robot is driving. Google’s self-driving cars take over driving entirely — no need to hold the wheel at all.

And if you use one of those clever scheduling apps that pluck dates, times and phone numbers from your e-mails to set up meetings and articulate goals and objectives, congratulations, you already have an artificial intelligence on your project team. It may lack a face, a voice and a personality, at least for now, but it is already performing important tasks that once required a human co-worker.

All of the systems just described are the products of fairly mainstream artificial intelligence programming. The reason they work now when they didn’t work in past decades is primarily due to the explosive growth in processing power available at an ever-lower cost. When your laptop or smartphone has more processing power than the Apollo mission, amazing things become possible. That doesn’t give systems feelings, or give them the power to learn the way the human brain does, but it does make them very capable machines.

While conventional AI has been about programming ever-more powerful computers to tackle ever-more complex problems, an emerging technology called artificial general intelligence, or AGI, is about developing systems with less ingrained knowledge, but with the capacity to learn by observation. You may well need to mind your manners around these machines.

“Whether you’re polite to your software will actually make a difference in the future,” said Pei Wang, a professor of computer science at Temple University. “But that assumes that the system will actually learn. It will need to have general intelligence, the ability to evaluate someone’s performance, some form of emotion.”

Even without emotion, which even AGI advocates say is some distance away, learning computers may respond more productively when they are treated better. Even if the robot does not care about your rude behavior, your human co-workers will feel uncomfortable, which is not conducive to team solidarity. Owing to something computer scientists call the ELIZA effect, people tend to unconsciously assume computer behaviors are analogous to human behaviors, even with quite unsophisticated systems, like the ATM machine that says “thank you.” Teammates may assume you have hurt your artificial admin’s feelings, even if she has none.
shall we treat the robots in our midst as our masters, our slaves or our partners? It’s more a question for Hegel or Nietzsche than the technologists, but it’s worth considering. The sociopathic superintelligences of science-fiction doomsday narratives are easy enough to dismiss; your laptop is not going to develop autocratic tendencies anytime soon. We could program robots to be our complacent slaves, but history shows that slavery dehumanizes the master along with the slave, hardly a happy prospect. As artificial intelligence becomes more humanoid, a kind of partnership seems the most likely outcome. Technology always seems to outrun policy, so why not consider diversity programs for non-human colleagues now?

Not so fast, say some AI experts. “Of course, people will experience robots as in some ways human, but I feel that applying concepts from human diversity will do a disservice to both,” said Terry Winograd, a professor of computer science at Stanford University, and co-director of the Stanford Human-Computer Interaction Group. “The point of diversity training is learning to treat other people with the same respect as those of your type. I just don’t believe that’s applicable to computers.”

Winograd said he does see the need for rules and procedures for working with artificial intelligences whose outputs have a direct impact on human life, such as a program that interprets financial and personal information to determine who qualifies for a home loan. “How you relate to machines that are making decisions in spheres that have a human outcome is a huge policy problem that needs to be worked on,” he said. “The problem is the AI can’t tell you what the criteria are. They don’t have any introspection at all. They run the numbers, get an answer.”

Winograd said that an AI’s response to rudeness will simply be the one it is programmed to have, and it has no “feelings” to hurt. Robots are valuable assets, so they will require protection from abuse, but there will be a wide range of human-robotic interactions, and which ones will be considered appropriate will depend on circumstance. He sees a parallel with animal rights, in which some activists see any human use of animals as abusive, while other interest groups, such as laboratory scientists, apply something like a cost/benefit analysis to how non-human animals are treated. But neither rises to the level of a human-human interaction, he said.

Yoav Shoham, another Stanford computer scientist, teaches a freshman class called “Can Computers Think? Can They Feel?” At the beginning and end of the course, he polls students on those questions, noting the evolution in their answers. Along the way, they also explore questions regarding computers and free will, creativity, even consciousness, and their responses inevitably shift from predominantly noes to more yeses. Shoham readily concedes that he doesn’t know the right answers, but adds that at least he knows that he doesn’t know. He says his Socratic goal is to make the students doubt their automatic responses, and to at least start to question some of their biases. But he doesn’t see a need to regulate human-robotic relations.

“I don’t think that having Asimov rules for ethical treatment of robots is something that’s needed now, any more than we need rules for our GPS or our smart watch,” Shoham said. “It’s well documented that we tend to anthropomorphize objects. I think there’s a reason to be polite in communication with software, but not for that reason. I will occasionally cuss at my computer, and my wife is very upset by it. She doesn’t like me to use that language, because I’ll get used to it, and it will reflect on me. What if my kids hear me? We have social norms to use language in a certain way, and breaking it in one context will have spillover effects in different ways.”

The Robot Told Me You Were Coming

WILLIAM GIBSON, the great science-fiction novelist, once told The Economist, “The future is already here—it’s just not evenly distributed.” Gibson has a knack for apt aphorisms, and that one hits the mark in Redmond, Wash., just outside Seattle. If you go there to visit Eric Horvitz, director of Microsoft Research, you will be greeted by an affable robot, which gives directions and uses casual language, like “No problem.” Outside Horvitz’s office you will meet Monica, his virtual admin, an attractive redheaded avatar with a British accent. “I was expecting you,” she says. “The robot told me..."
you were coming.” She might say that Horvitz is not in now, but she can schedule a meeting.

While you won’t mistake the greeter or Monica for a human, they are personal and personable to a degree not commonly seen in robotics. After all, most robots in the modern enterprise are faceless mechanical muscle, performing one rote task day and night. They may be ruthlessly efficient, but there is not even a suggestion of personality or consciousness. The greeter and Monica are intentionally human-ish, providing a vision of a near future populated in part by well-informed, if not actually smart, artificial co-workers.

Horvitz has captured many hours of video showing that people usually speak to Monica in a polite way, even apologizing for misunderstood words and saying “thank you, nice to meet you,” when they leave her. He says he thanks her, too, without thinking about it.

“We show the system working and the courtesy people have to it, then I walk up and the system recognizes me,” Horvitz said. “The system always smiles when it sees me, and I tell folks that I enjoy the fact that it smiles only at me. These natural courtesies you extend to a system are pretty interesting. At the highest level, if we have systems that are anthropomorphic, like the kind, attractive British assistant at my door, and this system is working with multiple people, there are subtleties and nuances that make it an appropriate social actor in multiparty situations. The courtesy with which you treat the agent is the same you apply to other people.”

While Monica cannot “think,” and she really doesn’t “know” anything, the system has been programmed with detailed data about Horvitz’s schedule and priorities and has adequate analytical capability to make informed decisions about whom to grant time with him, how soon and how much. Add to that a set of responsive facial expressions, natural language and instant interactive response, and it is easy to believe there is an intelligence at work. Horvitz and his team are creating a code base—software—that enables many forms of complex, layered interaction between machines and humans.

The system has situational awareness, meaning that it can take into account the physical space, people’s comings and goings, their gestures and facial expressions, and the give and take of conversation between individuals. Horvitz said the goal is to build systems that can coordinate and collaborate with people in a fluid, natural manner. “I believe that systems will get so good, when you call up to work with a human entity on the phone, instead of someone saying to you ‘this call may be recorded for quality assurance purposes,’ it will say, ‘I have to by law tell you that I am not a person.’ When will that happen, when will that be important, is an interesting question to ask.”

Microsoft Research is not a place for dreamers. The intent is to create technology for future products, and elements of Horvitz’s work can already be encountered in Cortana, Microsoft’s new virtual assistant for smartphones, which is named for the curvaceous AI heroine of the video game series Halo. Cortana is not as “nice” or knowledgeable as Monica, but she can set reminders, recognize a natural voice without the user having to input a predefined series of commands, and answer questions using information from Bing, Microsoft’s search engine.

That sounds a lot like Siri, and it is, but at least Microsoft’s engineers have given Cortana a sense of humor. The question, “Who’s your daddy?” gets this response: “Technically speaking, that’d be Bill Gates. No big deal.”

No Known Commercial Application, Yet…

While a visit to Redmond provides a vision of the near future, a journey to Reykjavík, Iceland, offers a glimpse of what’s coming in a bit more distant tomorrow. A robotic agent, built by an international team led by researchers at Reykjavík University, is pushing the boundaries of artificial intelligence by automatically learning socio-communicative skills. The recently completed project, dubbed HUMANOB, is not programmed in the conventional sense, but learns by observing and imitating humans in social situations.

“We essentially ditched all of engineering and computer science methodology wholesale, and approached it more from psychology and biology,” said Kristin Thórisson, founding director of the Icelandic Institute for Intelligent Machines. “The starting point for those domains is really nature rather than mathematics. We set out a bunch of goals for the project that we thought we would achieve some of; we achieved all of them. The goal was to come up with an independent general learner that could be programmed by very high level goals.”

In an ominous development for a still-working journalist, the HUMANOB system’s first achievement was to learn how to conduct an interview, simply by watching 20 hours of two humans in a mock-TV interview. Thórisson said that after just two or three minutes of observation, the system starts to understand what’s going on, how to structure and conduct such an interview, and has generalized some of the main principles of human communication to a point that it can be asked to take over the interview, either in the role of the interviewer...
or interviewee, and will continue to interact with the other person. Thórisson said current workplace policies would suffice for interaction with learning systems, at least in the near term. “We have the etiquette for how we talk to our co-workers, and there’s a lot of legal precedent,” he said. “This technology is going to stir up that pot a little bit, but I think it’s going to be very similar. If you don’t want your co-workers to know something, don’t tell your digital assistant. But if you think a bit further into the future, when the machines become harder to distinguish from humans, when you’re at the point where you would feel a deep sense of loss if it got erased, like when you lose a pet or a loved one, then you might see something very different. But by then we’ll see so many different things that I don’t think this will be our main concern.”

Pei Wang, the Temple University researcher, is developing systems similar to HUMANOBS, and he believes such machines will learn to differentiate between more and less pleasant human interactions. An AGI, or artificial general intelligence, he said, differs from an AI in that it initially knows nothing, but like a human baby, it is constantly learning. Like the baby, it is naïve, but it rapidly begins to evaluate the reliability of the many sources bombarding it with information. Those sources it deems more reliable will have greater influence, and in time, get better responses.

“In AGI, more and more people believe that emotion is a necessary aspect of high-level intelligence,” Wang said. “It’s nothing fancy. It will have a different attitude to other people or systems because of their relationship to it. If someone it likes makes a request, they will get more attention than others. I don’t believe future AI will have emotions exactly like us, love and hate. But the basic motivation behind the emotion will be very simple: if you are polite, it will be polite. If you are mean, it will be mean.”

When might we expect such systems? “If you force me to make a number, I will say something like 10 years,” said Wang. “In the beginning, of course, it will be very simple. Five years is not enough, but I don’t think we need 20. Because the basic principle is not magic. It’s already understandable.”

Machines of Loving Grace

Prognostications of emotional robots make some people profoundly uncomfortable, and it’s not hard to see why. The science-fiction treatment of robots, which is the only one most of us know, has reliably veered between super-intelligent machines that will enslave humanity to seductive droids that will offer a pleasant but empty alternative to human intimacy. In her book “Alone Together,” MIT psychologist Sherry Turkle frets about “sociable robots, which promise relationships where we will be in control, even if that means not being in control at all.”

Will we have to worry about sexual harassment of AIs in the workplace? Perhaps. The author was astonished to be hit on while playing World of Warcraft using a female avatar. When the would-be suitor’s advances were rebuffed, he—presumably it was a he—became abusive. Keep in mind that World of Warcraft avatars are two-dimensional and can only speak in text. An attractive artificial administrative assistant is bound to receive a certain amount of amorous attention. Is that good or bad? Who knows?

But best to be ready for it, sooner than later. “As these systems become conversational, our relationships with them will inevitably trend toward intimacy,” said John Markoff, author of “Machines of Loving Grace: The Quest for Common Ground Between Humans and Robots,” which will be published in August. People will rapidly accept closer relationships with robots, he said. “Today we are right where society was when ATMs were first introduced, when people refused to use them because they preferred to interact with a human teller. Almost overnight that preference reversed.”

So if you’re one of those people tempted to say, “you’re welcome,” when the ATM says, “thank you,” don’t worry. Your manners are just a little ahead of your time.
The Boys in the Boat
Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics

REVIEW BY GLENN RIFKIN

FOR MOST PEOPLE, rowing is a sport out beyond the edges of popular attention. Unless you’ve rowed crew in high school or college, it is difficult to imagine the lure and the beauty of the endeavor. Mostly, rowing is a cutaway shot in movies set in Boston or Philadelphia and its esoteric nature is elusive at best.

Then along comes a book, out of the blue, propelling to best-seller status by nothing more than word of mouth, and readers discover the remarkable blend of the physical and the cerebral, the spiritual and the ferocious, that lies at the heart of rowing. Set as the backdrop the rugged Depression-era Northwest, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and the 1936 Berlin Olympics in Hitler’s Germany, and add a group of Seattle-area farm boys and a taciturn Scandinavian coach and British boat maker, and suddenly, you have a story as compelling as “Unbroken” and “The Right Stuff.” “The Boys in the Boat” by Daniel James Brown, a Seattle-area writer, has done what every author dreams of: it has struck a chord and sparked a widespread buzz. Beyond the fact that it’s a terrific read and a great story, “The Boys in the Boat” is a paean to the idea of selflessness, sacrifice and dedication, of sublimating the individual’s ego for the sake of the team in order to reach unprecedented success.

Ulbrickson built his teams with working-class boys who worked on Depression-era farms or as fishermen and lumberjacks and could barely find the money for tuition. Daniel James Brown had a chance encounter with one of those boys when he was an old man near death. Joe Rantz, whose strength and spirit rivaled that of Louis Zamperini, the hero of “Unbroken,” is the central character in “The Boys in the Boat.” Brown listened to Rantz’s remarkable story, a tale of a heart-breaking boyhood, of his introduction to rowing and shells and oars, and the redemptive qualities that rowing brought to Rantz’s life. The book is built around Rantz and his teammates, who begin as wide-eyed, naive freshman and eventually coalesce into Olympic champions, a journey both improbable and inspiring.

In the mix is a Yoda-like figure, George Yeoman Pocock, a British boatbuilder who made his way from England to Seattle and set up his workshop in the University of Washington boathouse. There, he built the world’s best shells, shells that were in demand around the country at every university rowing program. Pocock is a legend in the world of rowing and his skill as a boat maker was rivaled by his deep...
love and philosophical commitment to rowing. He believed that rowing made a man more of himself, fashioning a lifelong mix of strength and discipline that would form the foundation of a successful life.

"Rowing is perhaps the toughest of sports," Pocock said. "Once the race starts, there are no time-outs, no substitutions. It calls upon the limits of human endurance. The coach must therefore impart the secrets of the special kind of endurance that comes from mind, heart and body."

As Brown writes, the physical demands of rowing, especially in the eight-oared shell, are exacerbated by the complicated sequence of movements that each oarsman must execute with precision, a precision that becomes more and more complicated as the race heats up and the stroke rate increases.

But beyond the strength and coordination lies the paradox at the heart of the sport.

"Great oarsmen and oarswomen are necessarily made of conflicting stuff—of oil and water, fire and earth," Brown writes. "On the one hand, they must possess enormous self-confidence, strong egos, and titanic willpower. They must be almost immune to frustration. Nobody who does not believe deeply in himself or herself—in his or her ability to endure hardship and prevail over adversity—is likely even to attempt something as audacious as competitive rowing at its highest levels. The sport offers so many opportunities for suffering and so few opportunities for glory that only the most tenaciously self-reliant and self-motivated are likely to succeed at it."

"And yet, at the same time—and this is the key—no other sport demands and rewards the complete abandonment of the self the way that rowing does. Great crews may have men and women of exceptional talent or strength; they may have outstanding coxswains or stroke oars or bowmen; but they have no stars. The team effort—the perfectly synchronized flow of muscle, oars, boat and water, the single, whole unified and beautiful symphony that a crew in motion becomes—is all that matters. Not the individual, not the self."

It is Rantz’s journey to self-awareness and this sublimation of his own raw strength into the symphony of the crew that carries the narrative forward. Abandoned by his father and shrewish stepmother when he was just 15, Rantz grew to be a strapping, 6’3” athlete who probably would have succeeded in football or basketball. But his place as an oarsmen for Washington, the torment of being demoted and placed in a lesser boat, of finding a life balance amid unspeakable hardship, is Shakespearian in scope. Rantz was just one of nine Olympic champions in the Washington boat in Berlin but he epitomized the extraordinary effort it required to be on that water, in front of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi propaganda machine, against hand-picked German oarsmen, and power its way to the gold medal.

The race is actually available on YouTube because it was part of the notorious "Olympia," the Leni Riefenstahl documentary released in 1938 as an homage to the Nazis and the Aryan dream. The Nazis did everything they could to ensure German victories in rowing, especially in the eight-oared shell, before the British doubles shell rowed to victory in the sixth race. When the eight-oared American boat, despite being placed in an extremely disadvantageous position on the course, still managed to win the gold in the signature event, Hitler stood and stalked off the viewing platform in a fury.

Like track star Jesse Owens, the Washington eight showed up Hitler on his own turf. They eventually became lost to time and history and their story more than deserves this resurrection. For Joe Rantz and his eight teammates, the endless hours on the water, in the cold, the rain, the wind and the snow, became indelibly etched into their souls and they stayed in touch and held reunions as long as they lived. Having experienced the joy of melding into a selfless, singular unit, a part of them held on to that joy for the rest of their lives. They believed deeply in Pocock’s tribute to rowing.

"Where is the spiritual value of rowing?" Pocock wrote. "The losing of self entirely to the cooperative effort of the crew as a whole."

— www.danieljamesbrown.com

**TALENT + LEADERSHIP**
It’s not about stars. It’s about teams.

To function without an organization means you don’t have to conform to many norms. To work within an organization requires skills, training and the ability to get along with others who are different. People working in groups need to embrace a common set of customs. If you can’t achieve a goal on your own, you need to spread the work among team members, and they have to know what you want, when you want it and how you want it done.

Given our differences, it’s amazing that we get anything done at all. But the good news is we do, and we do it really well. We’re so good at working together that when we don’t do it, people question our motives.

Individually, human beings have a few I.Q. points on chimps and crows, but if you connect people and give them a language with which to share ideas, those I.Q. points multiply quickly. Put enough specialists in a room and wire them together, and it doesn’t take long before they are plotting trajectories and sending their colleagues into space.

The key to doing wonderful things is getting people to form robust organizations. That means individuals need to learn new skills and abandon bad habits. Diversity and inclusion are powerful aids to getting that done. Fortunately, humans are genetically predisposed to working together toward goals set by others. If that weren’t the case, there would be no companies, no militaries, no politics. But it’s a trade-off. To gain the power of the group means giving up certain individual things.

Think about it as a paradox. Many motorcyclists see themselves as individualistic, even iconoclastic. They think of themselves as modern day “cowboys.” But they ride the same motorcycles, which they customize in the same way. They have their motorcycle’s (iconic) brand tattooed on their arms. These “iconoclasts” get the same haircuts and wear the same boots. They ride along the highway wearing the same patches on the backs of the very same jackets—these “iconoclasts” have replaced society’s “respectable” icons with icons of their own.

Human beings are successful not because of what we can do alone—which is not much—but because of what we can do together. We embrace political parties, religions and organizations whose belief systems might even be irrational, delusional or scientifically incorrect, and yet we stay in those organizations. We do it through thick and thin. To join an organization and make that organization work, we pursue the same goals.

It makes a lot of sense to operate this way. When individuals join an organization, they become similar. They give up some of their best individual moves for the sake of the team. To be inclusive means adding skills and ideas from all participants to make the whole team better. Great teams, no matter the endeavor, require discipline. You can’t have a team where everyone is a star, even if they were stars before they joined the team. Inclusiveness really is about “all for one, one for all,” no matter how diverse the players.

Joel Kurtzman is author of the new book Unleashing the Second American Century. kurtzmangroup.com
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