All The Right Things

By Craig Storti

[Second in an occasional series on culture and management]

A WOMAN OF Indian origin works for one of my clients, a large insurance company in the Midwest. She has lived in the United States more than five years and was recently promoted, but she had expected to be promoted at a much faster pace, as indeed she had been back home in India. "I did all the right things," she said, laughing, "and nothing happened." When I asked her what some of the right things were, she listed three:

- "I never exceeded my authority; if I was not specifically told to do something, I did not do it."
- "I never responded to requests from internal clients without checking with my boss, even if that meant a delay."
- "I did not speak up in meetings unless my boss called on me."

The observation that a lot of American readers would make right about now: No wonder she wasn't promoted!

All the right things in one culture may not be the right things in another. In this instance we are dealing with differences in management style between India and the United States, specifically the degree to which managers empower their subordinates. Simply put, the difference is this: American managers generally empower their direct reports and Indian managers generally do not.

This is precisely the cultural difference that tripped up my Indian colleague, for she had indeed done all the right things *in a culture where subordinates are not routinely empowered*:

- She followed instructions and did not presume to use her own judgment and do something she was not specifically told to do. In the United States, we might call this not taking ownership or not taking responsibility; in India they would probably call it not stepping on the manager's toes. You can never make a mistake, after all, if you do exactly as you're told.

- She always checked with her boss before responding to requests from internal. In the United States we would call this micromanagement; in India they would call it….actually they would call it micro-management too, and celebrate its wonders. (But what about the delay, you ask? If the internal clients need something right away and our friend—let's call her Priyanka—waits to respond until she can check with her boss, won't the clients be annoyed? Probably not; they'll just assume Priyanka hasn't been able to contact her boss yet.)

- Finally, Priyanka did not presume to speak up in a meeting unless she was called on or otherwise given permission by her manager. If she did speak up on her own, that would imply that she was at the same level as her manager, that she had the same right to speak as those above her. And that would be presumptuous and even disrespectful.

In the U.S. workplace, managers delegate responsibility and empower their direct reports. There is the sense that you hire smart people and you get their best work if you leave them alone and let them use their smarts. They may be expected to keep their managers in the loop, but they certainly would not get into trouble for using their own judgment, getting back to internal clients without consulting their manger, and contributing freely at a meeting. Indeed, they would be expected to do these things and be suspect if they did not.

This is probably the place for a disclaimer about India and Indians: India is changing fast, especially the information technology sector where many western business paradigms have been adopted, in theory, anyway, if not always in practice. Indeed, empowerment is almost as much of a buzz word in many Indian corporations as in American ones. But I have not seen it that much in practice, or, more

"All the right things in one culture may not be the right things in another."

accurately, I haven't seen empowerment practiced quite the same way it is in the United States.

Being an empowered subordinate in India doesn't mean you don't check things routinely with your boss; it means, rather, that he or she usually approves whatever you had in mind. It doesn't mean you express your opinions spontaneously in a meeting with your boss; it means your boss always make sure he/she calls on you. Being empowered in India, in short, doesn't involve putting direct reports on the same level as their bosses; it means the best bosses know they don't have all the answers.

If you're a U.S. manager or team leader, you're going to confront the empowerment issue with employees/team members from many of the world's cultures, not just India. If Priyanka works for you and you expect her to take initiative, use her own judgment, and speak up in meetings—if you need or depend on Priyanka to do all these things, what happens when she doesn't? You get upset, and at the end of the day, she doesn't advance in the workplace.

Assuming Priyanka wants to advance and you (her boss) would like to help her, what should you do? First, it helps if you understand better where she's coming from, why she is behaving the way she is, and especially that this is at least in part a cultural issue and not a personal one. In other words, Priyanka probably doesn't realize that she's performing poorly and is certainly not trying to do all the wrong things. If she knew what was expected of her, she might be able to rise to the occasion.

So your next task as her boss is to lay out your expectations of her. This may be something you've never or only rarely had to do before, especially if most of your staff are Americans. After all, they grew up in the same culture you did, and they already *know* what you expect of them.

Setting Expectations

This advice, to spell out your expectations [to non-US staff], isn't as easy as it sounds. Expectations are deeply subconscious, the products of years of conditioning; the only time most of us ever become consciously aware of them is when they don't pan out, when something we were expecting doesn't happen. Most American managers, for example, probably don't know they go around expecting people to speak up freely in meetings *until a direct report fails to speak up*.

So it's easy to say you should spell out your expectations of Priyanka; the hard part is getting in touch with them. Hence our third piece of advice: When Priyanka, through no fault of her own, fails utterly to live up to expectations she has no idea you're harboring, go easy on her. She's not like some of your other staff who should *know* better.

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Finally, you may have to coach and mentor Priyanka to make her more aware of and help her develop the behaviors that will be rewarded in the US workplace, again something you'd never have to do with your Americans staff. **PDJ**

Craig Storti, a consultant and trainer in the field of intercultural communications, is the author of seven books. His latest, Speaking of India, describes the common cultural flashpoints when Indians work together with North Americans and western Europeans. He can be contacted at: craig@craigstorti.com or learn more at his website: craigstorti.com.

Are We In a Post-Racial America?

By Linda Jimenez

Chief Diversity Officer and Staff Vice President – Diversity & Inclusion
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A POST-RACIAL AMERICA arefers to a society that has moved beyond racial preference, discrimination and prejudice. In the days following the election, Gallup reported that more than two-thirds of Americans viewed President Obama's election as "either the most important advance for blacks in the past 100 years, or among the two or three most important such advances." President Obama embodied the notion of a post-racial America—an era in which the term civil rights should no longer be needed. After all, the election was proof that we had finally overcome discrimination in this country. Or was it?

While we have had a remarkable journey during the past few years with respect to race, I agree with Attorney General Eric Holder that we remain "a nation of cowards" for not talking enough about racial tensions as he stated during the 2009 Department of Justice African American History Month program. In fact, many of the racial disparities noted in the National Urban League's 2009 State of Black America remain—differences in public policy such as employment, housing, education, criminal justice and health. Perhaps the gaps aren't as wide as in years past, but they are still there. The debate about race-based affirmative action highlights the fact that racial issues are still with us.

Some basic facts disprove the notion that America has entered a post-racial age. There are sizeable gaps between blacks, Hispanics and whites according to many socioeconomic measures. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports show

> *"Perhaps the gaps aren't as wide as in years past, but they are still there."*

that minorities still bear the brunt of economic hardship. Blacks and Hispanics are unemployed at a rate that is up to two times greater than that of whites. Young blacks have been especially hard hit by the economic downturn. Nearly a third between the ages of 18 and 24 are unemployed. According to a report released last year by a group of scholars led by Brandeis sociologist Thomas Shapiro, the black-white wealth gap has quadrupled in the past 25 years.

Similarly, there are disparities in health and health treatment among Caucasian, African American and Hispanic Americans. For example, last year Cancer, an international publication of the American Cancer Society, published a study conducted by HealthCore demonstrating disparities in breast cancer treatment between commercially insured African-American and white women. The study found that African-American women were generally diagnosed with breast cancer at a younger age, but in later stages of cancer, when chances of survival are much lower. In addition, minorities face more difficulties in communicating with physicians than whites, according to The Commonwealth Fund 2001 Health Care Quality Survey. Thirty-three percent of Hispanics reported having communication issues with their physicians, compared with 16 percent of whites.

So, are we in a post-racial America? The historic presidency of Barack Obama certainly brings us a step closer to that ideal. But there remain significant disparities in unemployment, health care, education and housing, among others, which offer a different picture. We must recognize not only what has changed in the Obama era, but just as importantly, what has not. **PDJ**

* Short, Louise J., Fisher, Maxine D., Wahl, Peter M., Lawless, Grant D., Kelly, Monique B., Rodriguez, Nancy A., and White, Sandra, Race-Based Comparison of Treatment Patterns among Patients Newly Diagnosed with Breast Cancer. Cancer (2010).

Linda Jimenez *is a native of San Antonio, Texas, and attended the University of Texas at Austin where she received her BA with honors. She is also a graduate of the University of Texas School of Law and has spent 20 years specializing in labor and employment law.*

Creating Equitable Leaders To Maximize Human Capital

By Trevor Wilson

Author and Global Human Equity Strategist, TWI Inc.

OVER A DECADE ago, a leading law firm looked to merge with another established firm. At the celebration event for the merger, a senior partner of one firm sexually harassed nine female partners from the other firm. The next day these nine women jointly took their complaint to the CEO and gave him an ultimatum – "It's either us or him and if it is us, we will not be going quietly."

Within a week the partner's letter of resignation appeared on the front page of one of the largest newspapers in the country. The firm had accepted his resignation, acknowledging that his behaviour was inappropriate and violated the firm's policy against sexual harassment.

Organizations that tolerate this type of behaviour fall into a common trap. The trap occurs when individuals reach positions of influence where few employees have the power to tell these leaders about their unacceptable behaviour without fear of reprisal or retribution. This leads to a continuation and possible escalation of the unacceptable behaviour, causing employees to either physically leave the organization or, more dangerously, mentally quit their jobs but stay for monetary or other reasons. This is a phenomena frequently referred to by industrial psychologists as "psychic absenteeism"—the antithesis of the holy grail of employee engagement.

An answer to this dreaded trap is the creation of equitable leaders, who exhibit professional behaviour. The equitable leader seeks to create equitable and inclusive work environments where people feel valued, respected,

> *"Equitable leaders believe that human equity, maximizing on human capital, is the most sustainable route to better business outcomes."*

and included. Equitable leaders seek to develop a work environment and atmosphere of mutual trust, support and respect and a place where people feel they have a place at the organizational table that really matters.

The equitable leader ensures that employees are valued because of, not in spite, of their differences, so that each person is recognized and developed, and their talents are routinely tapped in to.

Equitable leaders believe that human equity, maximizing on human capital, is the most sustainable route to better business outcomes. They understand that human equity means not only putting people first, it leads to increased profitability, improved efficiencies, reduced costs and reduced unwanted turnover.

The equitable leader exhibits a different set of core leadership competencies. These eight competencies known as the equitable leader competencies were identified a decade ago by organizational psychologists at the Western School of Productivity. To aid the development of equitable leaders, TWI has created the equitable leader assessment (ELA) based on those eight competencies. In the next article, I will discuss the equitable leader assessment as well as an assessment that covers behaviours of the lowest ten percent the so called dirty dozen behaviours. **PDJ**

In 1996 **Trevor** *started TWI Inc. to specialize in the area of equity and diversity as a business issue. In the same year, Trevor published a highly acclaimed book titled* Diversity at Work: The Business Case for Equity. *The firm's clients include some of the most progressive global employers. TWI's Human Equity™ approach was instrumental in catapulting Coca-Cola's South African division to the top performing division worldwide. Visit www.twiinc.com for more information.*

Re-evaluating Work-life Balance Strategies In An Inclusive World

By Mary Martinéz

Senior Leader
Mercer's Global Equality

WHEN WORK/LIFE HIT the corporate scene in a big way twenty plus years ago, it was all about making it possible for women to do it all— have a career and raise a family. Work/life balance is again top of mind, but the old solutions are no longer sufficient in the new world. It is time to re-evaluate.

Here are questions you might find helpful as you review the approach to work/life balance in your organization. Work-life balance is more about the culture than it is about the programs that are offered.

Is it acceptable in your organization to work part-time, in different places, on different time tables, using different methods or leadership styles? Can employees leave and return to the workforce or, perhaps, chart a different kind of career path that is not a straight ladder to the top?

Are people's careers derailed when they step out of the traditional mode of working? Are they perceived differently, as less loyal, less committed, less worthy of key assignments or promotions?

Flexibility means more than flextime or telecommuting. It may mean actually redesigning the way work is done. Look at functional areas or specific jobs where attraction or retention is a particular issue: is work design a barrier to finding/keeping individuals in those jobs?

In units with a poor record of retaining women or younger people, are there characteristics of the culture that might be unfriendly to work/life balance? For example, are meetings often scheduled at inconvenient times? Is putting out fires valued and rewarded more than avoiding them in the first place?)?

Traditional work/life services, such as child care (espe-cially emergency care), on-site dry cleaning, referral to elder care resources, and so forth can be very valuable if they are used. Have you received full value of programs you have in place? As your workforce has changed, are you offering the right services? Do you measure usage and satisfaction?

How will your workforce be likely to change in the future, and will your services still be the right ones to appeal to new generations or other new populations of employees? Are services well-communicated?

Good work/life balance programs leverage synergy with other initiatives. Are you thinking broadly about what you can include under the work/life umbrella? Have you sought linkages between work/life and other programs such as health and wellness, corporate responsibility (e.g., opportunities for breaks to do volunteer work), company branding?

"Good work/life balance programs leverage synergy with other initiatives."

To make work/life balance a reality, managers need training and coaching on how to create a positive, balance-friendly culture and implement work/life policies. Do managers know how to evaluate performance based on contribution rather than face time?

Is competition among colleagues over-emphasized? Are requests for flexible arrangements from men or people without families given the same consideration as those from women with families?

Armed with the answers to these questions, you will be well equipped to adopt or design work/life practices best suited to your organization's business needs, to defend the investment in work/life programs, and, most importantly, to make a real difference to the organization's performance. **PDJ**

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The New EEOC Regulations For Disability And The Americans With Disabilities Act

By Nadine Vogel

President, Springboard Consulting LLC

THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued its final revised Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations in order to implement the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA). The regulations are designed to simplify determining who has a disability and shift the focus of employers from deciding whether the individual has been discriminated against to whether the individual needs an accommodation. These regulations will become effective in May 2011.

Some employers are concerned that these new regulations will mean that virtually everyone will be considered disabled. Though not nearly that dramatic, many more individuals will now be able to request accommodations from their employers under the ADA.

The ADAAA and the final regulations keep the ADA's definition of the term "disability" as:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- A record (or past history) of such an impairment;
- Being regarded as having a disability.

However, the ADAAA contains significant changes in how those terms are interpreted such as:

- Employers should focus on accommodations, as opposed to questioning whether someone is disabled.
- Mitigating measures including medicine, other treatments, and prosthetic devices must be set aside in analyzing whether an individual is disabled.
- "Major life activities" includes "major bodily functions," such as functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, and brain, neurological and endocrine functions.

- Coverage is extended to individuals with episodic impairments or conditions in remission, if the impairment would substantially limit a major life activity in an active state.

Temporary impairments are protected. As under the original ADA, not all impairments constitute a disability but those that are include: HIV infection, diabetes, epilepsy, Autism, blindness, post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar disorder.

Now more than ever, employers should focus on reasonable accommodation, and on whether an individual with a physical or mental condition is otherwise qualified to perform essential job functions. Employers should reassess their job descriptions, job qualification standards, and their reasonable accommodation process—something many employers don't have. The same goes for all forms of tests and testing procedures including physical ability tests, which may adversely impact persons with disabilities, or at the very least require accommodation upon request.

Now more than ever, documentation is key as is training. If a supervisor fails to recognize an employee's request for accommodation, the employer may well be liable—even absent evidence of intentional discrimination.

If you need 24 hour turnaround on your most pressing ADAAA and accommodations questions, then subscribe to Springboard's ADA Hotline. Contact us at 973-813-7260 x102 or email us at info@consultspringboard.com to inquire about the hotline, tool kits, training and more. **PDJ**

Nadine Vogel is President of Springboard Consulting LLC. Springboard (www.consultspringboard.com) is considered a global expert; working with corporations, governments and organizations on issues pertaining to supporting the disability community in the workforce, workplace and marketplace. She is also the author of DIVE IN: Springboard into the Profitability, Productivity and Potential of the Special Needs Workforce.

Cracking The New And Improved 21st Century Glass Ceiling

By Marie Y. Philippe, PhD

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ON APRIL 12, we were once again reminded of Equal Pay Day. According to the National Women's Law Center, American women who work full-time, year-round are paid only 77 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts. African-American women make only 62 cents, and Hispanic women only 53 cents, for every dollar earned by white, non-Hispanic men.

How can that be true in a time when the media sells us the success of so many women? If you ignore some key government leadership roles, the truth is that only a dozen Fortune 500 companies are run by women CEOs.

Has the ceiling been cracked? Yes, some. However sluggish progress suggests that an adaption of the rules is taking place. Many of the proven approaches that have pushed some women through the glass ceiling may no longer be sufficient as levers for incremental change for the future.

Have you or someone you know tried to break that ceiling with the traditional hammers: getting that MBA, securing influential mentors, asking for the toughest assignment nobody else wanted, working ungodly schedules, putting work ahead of family no matter what, etc.? What can women do?

It may be time for the new rules to be better understood. Maybe, but what are the rules? Here are some tips that may increase your chance for answers, while keeping gainful employment in the process.

Get safety in numbers. Identify a group of hard-working women who have their credentials and proven track records in order but have unsuccessfully used the traditional hammers.

Arrange a dialogue with the CEO. Prepare very well with the same zeal and seasoned strategy you use when doing your best work. Carefully craft an agenda that screams the constructive desire to understand the company's career growth rules from its ruling god.

Practice the role each woman will play during the conversation. Practice how the statistics and anecdotal information will be presented. Be clear about who is the point person on each topic, from who is most qualified to present historical trends, salary gaps, etc., to who will take notes on what topic.

Plan on having a series of meetings before you begin to understand the rules as they are.

Test the rules that you are being told. Beware that you may be fed some lines to appease you. Remain mentally agile to test, observe, record and report the disconnect you experience.

Above all, remain calm. Frustration due to impatience may at times show up unexpectedly if emotions are not kept in check. The big rule for finding the rules is to stay true to yourself and to stay on task.

Be prepared to accept that the rules may change as soon as you know the rules.

There is no telling when that glass ceiling will be broken. One thing is certain, unless some women are willing to pioneer new ideas, pushing hard for change, that glass ceiling can become concrete. Then what? **PDJ**

"Be prepared to accept that the rules may change as soon as you know the rules."

Marie Y. Philippe, PhD, *is well known for her leadership contribution in corporate culture transformation through strategic diversity initiatives and organizational change management. She can be reached at marie.philippe@lifethc.com.*