QUOTES ON DIVERSITY

Purpose

- To stimulate participants' thinking related to key points and issues about diversity.
- To enable participants to express their views and concerns about diversity.

Special Note

This activity works particularly well as an opening activity when some participants may arrive five to ten minutes after the designated start of the session. Select other quotes that focus on the specific objectives of the session. Be sure all quotes are appropriate for your organization or client organization. For example, avoid a quote by a CEO of a rival organization, especially if anything that rival organization does is regarded as negative.

The quote charts in this activity—and other similar quotations on diversity—can create a stimulating atmosphere in any diversity workshop if they are displayed on the walls of the meeting room. Facilitators and participants can spontaneously refer to them throughout the session.

When to Use

- To open a session.
- To close a session. This works particularly well if the facilitator has referenced the quotations throughout the session.

Group Size

- Twelve to twenty-four participants.
- Unlimited (see “Variations”).
Time Required

Thirty minutes is average, but time varies according to the number of participants.

Materials

- Prepared charts (see “Prior to the Session” Instructions 1 and 2 and the sample charts provided at the end of this activity).
- Masking tape for posting charts.

Physical Setting

A room in which participants can comfortably be seated at tables and view charts.

Handouts

Quotes on Diversity.

Instructions

Prior to the Session

1. Prepare one chart for each of the diversity quotations in the handout, Quotes on Diversity, or substitute other quotations for both the chart and the handout. Be mindful of the level and special interests of participants. Gear quotes to special organizational issues. Post the charts around the room, spaced so that a group of participants will have ample room to stand before a quote and discuss it.

   In preparing the charts, use photographic equipment (if available) to enlarge the sample charts at the end of this activity. Otherwise, use the samples to inspire you in creating the charts. Add color to the charts for visual interest. The graphics greatly add to the positive tone and excitement; so even if you do not consider yourself an artist, follow the samples and you will create interesting charts.

2. Prepare an instruction chart, similar to the one shown on the next page, and insert the time—approximately ten minutes after the official start.

At the Session

1. Place the instruction chart so that participants see it as they enter the room.

2. Nine minutes after the official starting time, announce that participants have one minute to make a decision and return to their places. (Ten minutes.)

3. Announce the purpose and give a brief overview of the activity.

4. Ask for a volunteer to give a self-introduction by stating his or her name, brief information about his or her job, the quote selected—reading it aloud—and why the quote was meaningful.
Welcome to Diversity Session

1. Sign in, find a place to sit, and help yourself to refreshments.
2. Stroll around the room and read the quotes on the charts.
3. Introduce yourself to participants you don’t know, and talk about the quotes as you stroll.
4. Select the quotation that is most meaningful to you, and be prepared to introduce yourself to the group, when we convene, with:
   - Your name.
   - Your job title and organization.
   - The quotation you selected.
   - The reason you selected that quote.
5. Introductions will begin at ______ a.m./p.m.

5. After the first introduction, invite others who selected that quote to describe why it was meaningful to them. Remind these volunteers to state their names and brief information about their jobs. (Five minutes.)

6. Add important or interesting information about that quote. Tell how the concept in the quotation relates to objectives of a previous session or to agenda items to be covered later. Or simply acknowledge and thank the participants. Then ask for other volunteers. (Ten minutes.)

7. (Optional) After the introductions are completed, comment on any of the quotations that were not selected.

8. Debrief the activity by asking participants to share their observations, learnings, and insights as they read the quotes and listened to the responses of participants. You can expect to hear comments such as:
   - It doesn’t surprise me that so many of us selected the quote about..., because that’s such a hot issue here.
   - It is fun to hear everyone’s different insights.
   - It is interesting to see that some of us selected quotes that are more interpersonally oriented and some selected the management quotes.

(Five minutes.)
9. Use participants’ comments as an opportunity to reinforce the following points, which can also be used for summary statements:

- It is important to have open discussion on issues related to diversity, because that is how we can learn.
- It is important to have a safe atmosphere for discussing comments about diversity and not making judgments as to whether someone’s comments are right or wrong.

Tie in any of the participants’ comments to the session agenda. Distribute the handout.

Variations

- Ask for the self-introductions before announcing the purpose and giving an overview of the activity.
- For large groups, post a quotation chart near each table and ask participants to sit at the table near the quote that they selected. Instruct them to make the self-introductions to others at their table and to discuss among themselves the significance of the quotation. Ask participants at each table to select a spokesperson to summarize their reasons for choosing the quote. (The instruction chart would reflect these changes in procedure.)
QUOTES ON DIVERSITY

“What does diversity have to do with the Quality Process? Just about everything... The Quality Process should not be viewed as rigid and mechanical but as open, flexible, and with many options—a process, like a tapestry, that is woven out of strands that are diverse and humanly controlled.”


“It's obvious to us that managing diversity is not just a work issue; it is a business issue. Affirmative action is a work force issue; managing diversity is a competitive issue. It's a competitive and a business issue because it touches both customers and employees.”


“People and their differences make up the foundation of an organization's ability to develop broad perspectives and to approach business problems in new and creative ways.”


“There's no question that it's easier to manage people who are the same, but we are not—and it is not our similarities that cause our problems.”

Source: Jim Braham. (1989, February 6). No, you don't manage everyone the same. Industry Week, p. 29.

“...what is needed is to move beyond the 'one-size-fits-all' model of management.”


“Workforce 2000 could easily be renamed Workforce 1990. Diversity, at least by gender, race, ethnic background, and age, is already an organizational fact of life.”

"...if companies are to compete in the changing marketplace, and if they are to treat all employees with equal respect, diversity is essential."


"Change occurs only when there is a confluence of changing values and economic necessity."


"Every person is, in many respects, like all other people, like some other people, like no other person."


"Anthropologists and social scientists once predicted that people of all races would become assimilated and acculturated to such an extent that people would symbolize a melting pot.

"The melting pot theory is losing ground. The new terminology refers to the mix of people in the workplace as a salad bowl. Emphasis for now and in the future is being placed on valuing the distinctive difference of people."


"Creating and managing a diverse workforce is a process, not a destination."


"We may have come over on different ships, but we're all in the same boat now."

References
