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Birkman International Re-defines Diversity for Global Organizations

Move beyond ‘equality by category’ to ‘value through individuality,’
capitalizing on unique skills, behaviors and perspectives

HOUSTON, TX (September 20, 2010): The traditional meaning of diversity – based on race, gender, age or disability – is being redefined. The new definition expands to include personality traits, interests and the motivating interpersonal needs that drive productivity and profitability.

The world’s more successful organizations have already discovered this new kind of diversity. They recognize the impact of work styles, personality types (introvert or extrovert, impulsive or calculating, competitive or cooperative) and adapt appropriate management tactics, based on each, to increase productivity. Professional personality assessment plays a crucial role in achieving such understanding.

“Leaders have their own styles and often it’s a dominant style,” says [Sharon Birkman-Fink](#), President and CEO of [Birkman International, Inc.](#) “But as they become more aware of the styles and needs of the people they manage, they learn to temper those dictatorial instincts. These enlightened managers can better understand and adapt their behaviors, so they interact more effectively and their teams respond with increasing productivity.”

[Birkman International](#) uses its own proprietary personality assessment, [The Birkman Method®](#) to help organizations measure internal needs, motivating behaviors, occupational preferences, strengths and stressors. [Birkman](#) consultants have found that traditional diversity data is relatively insignificant, while personality traits among individuals in the workplace exhibit tremendous diversity. This newer way to view diversity can be a key tool in management training.

“To gain productivity and effectiveness, organizations must move away from labels or treating people by category,” says [Birkman-Fink](#). “The key is to address those unique skills, behaviors and perspectives that individuals bring to the enterprise. After decades of study and millions of interviews, we’ve seen that people possess a very broad range of attributes that simply cannot be accounted for by gender, age, racial, ethnic or other traditional diversity criteria.”

Further, organizations benefit from different types of leaders. The charismatic leadership that motivates a sales team is very different from the analytical leadership needed to motivate a team of product researchers – there is no “one size fits all” solution.

Personality assessment can also be used to discover leaders capable of inspiring others to change and improve. Personality testing can accurately identify individuals who fit the needed

leadership categories. By selecting candidates with the best potential to be leaders, and recognizing the type of leader they are likely to be, testing establishes a systematic program for leadership development that benefits the entire organization.

“If a business requires a specific type of leader, the search should include all potential candidates, irrespective of gender, ethnicity and so on,” says [Birkman-Fink](#). “Non-biased personality assessment is the fastest, surest way to spotlight the strongest candidates.”

[Birkman-Fink](#) urges organizations to shed old ideas of diversity and be more open-minded when looking for talent. She says that one can lead from a variety of perspectives and styles; there is no one ‘right style’ that works in every circumstance. Understanding this concept does a great service to the newer and broader goals of diversity.

“At the end of the day, diversity is really all about acceptance,” says [Birkman-Fink](#). “Accurate understanding promotes acceptance, and this new and deeper kind of acceptance frees everyone in an organization to be more effective.”

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