

## Summary of Comments on Valuing\_printable.pdf

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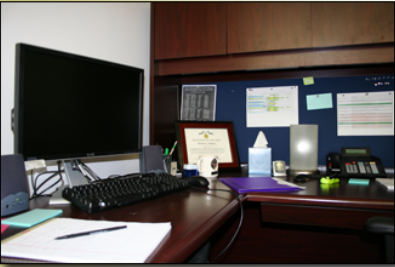
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Module 4: Supervising a Diverse WorkforceLesson 6: Valuing Individual Differences



### Lesson Welcome

Welcome to the lesson on valuing individual differences. Valuing individual differences involves the ability to value unique individual and group characteristics, embrace the characteristics as potential sources of organizational strength and appreciate the uniqueness of each individual. Your organization's success is determined by its ability to manage, understand and value individual differences in an effective manner.

### Lesson Learning Outcomes

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- After completing this lesson, you will be able to:
- Identify eight major characteristics that influence individual differences in others.
- Recognize the benefits of valuing individual differences
- Identify skills that open the lines of communication while fostering understanding of others.

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The importance of valuing and appreciating the differences in your workplace is not simply to make your employees feel good about one another but rather to build awareness, understanding and establishing a foundation of trust and mutual respect within your organization. The idea of valuing individual differences is nothing new. The goal of this lesson is to boost your understanding and sensitivity to the individual differences that exist within your workforce.

To be an effective leader, you must be willing to place a high value on seeing things through different lenses. With diversity comes the potential to gain new perspectives, increased creativity and expanded problem solving, all are important in meeting workplace demands. Any organization that can best deal with individual differences is an organization that will thrive.

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### Overview

Without differences or variety among people in the workplace, the ability to grow and learn is limited. As a supervisor, your first step in valuing individual differences is to observe and recognize that differences exist in your workplace. As a leader you should:

- Build awareness
  - Value diversity

*Mouse over each bullet for more information.*

"A workplace can only be diverse if the people who work there can be themselves."

*Connectedthinking, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC*


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### Perception and Acceptance

When you left for work this morning, what did you bring with you? Your....

- Opinions?
- Background?
- Native Language?
- Race?
- Politics?
- Ethnicity?
- Gender?
- Uniqueness?
- Ideas?
- Yourself?

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Communication is the key to creating an environment where despite individual differences, employees are motivated to do whatever it takes to get the job done. Provide expectations- give your policy, and reinforce your support of diversity in your regular meetings with employees (at least twice a year emphasize diversity). Coach, train and provide opportunities for your employees. Have regular team meetings where you can provide ongoing feedback. Depending on the size of your organization have one-on-one meetings for open dialogue between you and your employee. Always be sure that you listen intently to what it is they have to say. When appropriate, provide correction if an employee is not respecting other's differences. Talk to your staff, understand your employees, and develop a rapport with them to find out what hinders them from great success and what can make them succeed more. Enhance your own abilities to speak persuasively, listen accurately and write effectively. Lastly overcome any of your personal roadblocks to inspiring communication.

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**Communication is Key**


A wise supervisor realizes the importance of each one of their employees and knows that when his/her people feel good about themselves, they will set high performance standards. Knowing how to fully communicate with employees sets the foundation for an atmosphere of acceptance. Additionally, open communication is key to understanding each of the eight individual characteristics presented in this lesson.

As a supervisor, you should:

- Keep communication open
- Provide expectations
- Coach
- Meet on a regular bases and provide ongoing feedback
- Provide correction
- Enhance your own abilities
- Overcome roadblocks

 **Mouse over each bullet for more information.**

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### Individual Differences Characteristics

Demographics	Attitude	Values	Beliefs
Skills	Abilities	Perception	Personality

☀ Click on each characteristic for more information.

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Author: AMSC Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/24/2011 1:42:27 PM

You don't have to travel far to observe differences among others. You can scan your organization and quickly notice the demographic differences among your employees. Demographics are factual characteristics of a human population. Commonly used demographics include gender, race/ethnicity, culture, and age. These characteristics help differentiate groups of individual from others.

People often make false assumptions based on these demographic characteristics alone. Despite such stereotypes as gender in the workplace, research suggests that there are very few differences between the affects of men and women's work performance. There are no consistent differences in their learning, problem solving, analytical or motivation abilities.

Here's just a few points of what you can expect when you're able to embrace employees of different genders, races, cultures and ages:

Adopt new ideas, characteristics, talents and points of view that can broaden the team's perspective  
 Opportunities to learn about different customs  
 Increased knowledge of various topics  
 Opens the door for new and interesting opportunities


As a supervisor overseeing an intergenerational workforce, the need to understand and embrace demographic differences has never been greater.

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### Individual Difference Factor – Demographics

**What are Demographics?** Factual characteristics of a human population:

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Culture
- Age



Click the image for more information.

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**Individual Difference Factor – Demographics, Generational Differences**

Traditionalists	Baby Boomers	Gen-Xers	Millennials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1925-1945</li><li>• End of WWII</li><li>• Approximately 75 Million</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1946-1964</li><li>• Largest population ever born in the US.</li><li>• Approximately 80 Million</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1965-1979</li><li>• Smaller but influential</li><li>• Approximately 46 Million</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1980-1993</li><li>• Approximately 76 Million</li></ul>

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### Individual Difference Factor – Demographics, Continued

Generation	Workplace Traits Most Attributed to Each Generation	Workplace Traits Least Attributed to Each Generation
Veterans (born before 1945)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan to stay with the organization over the long term</li><li>• Respectful of organizational hierarchy</li><li>• Like structure</li><li>• Accepting of authority figures in the workplace</li><li>• Give maximum effort</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Embrace diversity</li><li>• Technologically savvy</li><li>• Like informality</li></ul>
Baby boomers (born 1945-1964)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give maximum effort</li><li>• Accepting of authority figures in the workplace</li><li>• Results-driven</li><li>• Plan to stay with the organization over the long term</li><li>• Retain what they learn</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Like informality</li><li>• Respectful of organizational hierarchy</li><li>• Need supervision</li></ul>
Generation X (born 1965-1980)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technology savvy</li><li>• Like informality</li><li>• Learn quickly</li><li>• Seek/work/life balance</li><li>• Embrace diversity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respectful of organizational hierarchy</li><li>• Like structure</li><li>• Plan to stay with the organization over the long term</li></ul>
Generation Y (born after 1980)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technology savvy</li><li>• Like informality</li><li>• Embrace diversity</li><li>• Learn quickly</li><li>• Need supervision</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respectful of organizational hierarchy</li><li>• Like structure</li><li>• Plan to stay with the organization over the long term</li></ul>

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### Individual Difference Factor – Attitude

#### What are Attitudes?

A person's tendency to respond in a positive or negative way based on a given situation. Attitudes are how values are manifested through our actions or views of others. Our personal attitudes are our feelings towards certain idea or issues. Attitudes are often expressed through what we say and do. The factors such as family, society, culture, peers and organizational factors influence the formation of attitude.

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### Individual Difference Factor – Attitude, Continued

What should you do about an employee who constantly displays a bad attitude in the workplace?

We all have bad days so if an otherwise upbeat employee displays a bad attitude, cut him/her some slack. Observe, take notes, and consider how their behavior could impact the team's morale. After several occasions, pull the employee aside to discuss recent observations of his/her negative attitude. Provide the employee with exact dates and the instances. Ask them to offer their perspective for the unwarranted attitude. Let your employee know how their attitude impacts the productivity of the team. Ask them what could be done to improve their attitude and offer any favorable suggestions. Together, agree on outcomes to improve their attitude. Once completed, let your employee know how you plan to follow up.

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Values define what is accepted as either good, bad, right, wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. Treating others with dignity and respect or the notion that everyone is equal are two examples of values. Family, friends, colleagues, genetics and personal experiences are all sources that help influence what a person values. What you value will manifest itself through your attitudes and beliefs.

A study done at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Agency revealed three principles fundamental to the relationship between values and group dynamics.

Personal values will always override organizational or operation values

Employee behaviors are based on their values and belief

Aligned personal and organizational values are key to maintaining a productive high performance team

You can ask 10 people the same questions and you may get 10 different responses. Apart of what makes each of person unique, is by what is valued most. Values are always a consequence of one's underlying beliefs. Values are ingrained during developing years by many earlier influences such as parents, friends, family teachers and religious leaders. Throughout a person's life, whatever is most important can and often will manifest itself at work. Your employee's values will guide their behavior at work. When you have a group of people working together, expect to see a range of varying values. Your organization's ability to co-exist is dependant upon the degree to which there is a set of aligned values which will form the framework for your organization.

Employees that display such values as integrity, teamwork, responsibility, respect, work ethic and trust are all examples of workplace values that are sure to positively impact your organization.

What values do you believe your workplace tries to maintain and promote?


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### Individual Difference Factor – Values

#### What are Personal Values?

Core beliefs that drives a person's attitude or behavior.  
Examples of things people may value are:



Click the image for more information.

- Helping others in need
- Owning a home
- Having a successful marriage
- Having lots of free time
- Becoming famous
- Being a good parent
- Having a high paying career

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### Individual Difference Factor – Beliefs


#### What are Beliefs?

A state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing.

Beliefs are defined as a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing. What we see, hear, read, think up or, experience, may cause us to develop a belief about something. Beliefs are firmly held opinion and may dictate how one assigns meaning and governs expectations. Ultimately, what you believe in, you will hold as truth. What one holds true will impact their behavior. It is important to note that beliefs may or may not be accurate.

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Individual Difference Factor – Abilities and Skills

What are Abilities?

A person's natural aptitude and learned capabilities required to complete a task. A person's ability influences his or her level of skill. Examples of skills would be: Information Management, Design, Planning, Research, Investigation, Communication or Critical Thinking.

What are Skills?

Skills are learned talents a person has acquired to perform a particular task. Skills are the ability to act in a way that allows a person to perform well. An employee's behavior or performance is highly influenced by his/her skills and abilities. Employees tend to perform better in an organization if his abilities and skills are matched with the job requirement. As a supervisory you play a vital role in matching your employee's skills and abilities with the particular job requirement.

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Our perception affects not how we understand the world, but how we understand people. Information is gathered from our cognitive functions which is often referred to as our five senses; touch, taste, smell, hear and sight. Perception is our way of forming impressions about ourselves, our life experiences and others. Our senses, personality, past experiences, education and even our demographic backgrounds influences our perception.

People bring with them, their personal experiences, biases, dislikes and preferences which are then translate to perceptions of others.

A part of your success as a supervisor managing a diverse workforce, is to understand the perceptual process and the impact it has on how you interact with your employees. What you perceive about them whether good or bad will ultimately impacts how you treat them, the way you manage them, and it will also affect the way you make decisions regarding them. And if you're not careful with your perceptions it can lead to unseemly supervisory behavior.

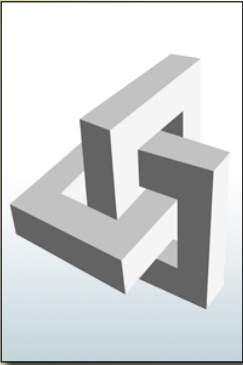
Check your perceptions. Any kind of perceptions that aren't checked can result in bad workplace behaviors. If not handled quickly, this sort of problem can fester into several workplace conflicts. We tend to make assumptions and act on our perceptions as if they were reality. Stand clear of jumping to conclusions and make a habit of checking the accuracy or validity of our assumptions of others and situations before making decisions.

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### Individual Difference Factor – Perception

#### What is Perception?

The process by which individuals select, organize, interpret, retrieve and respond to information. People can perceive the same things or situations differently. People behave on the basis of their perceptions. What you perceive in life including any judgments you have of others are often incorrect because we see what we are conditioned to see; not what is really there.



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A photograph of a man with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and red tie. He is standing with his arms crossed and a slight smile, in front of a modern building with large glass windows.

**Individual Difference Factor – Personality**


**What is Personality?**

A stable set of characteristics that influences the way individuals react to and interact with others. Personality is your personal interpretation of what you believe is reality. Understanding your employee's personality can help you predict your employee's behavior.

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### Valuing Individual Differences – Benefits Versus Costs



**Benefits**

- Increased teamwork and productivity
- Generates diverse view, ideas and experiences
- Challenges perspectives
- Attracts and retains a pool of talented employees
- Reduces turnover
- Increased adaptability and flexibility
- Fosters Understanding
- Creativity
- Problem Solving
- Less frustration in the workplace



**Costs**

- Lack of required talent to meet mission, goals and objectives
- Discrimination
- Litigation
- Low morale
- Increased Turnover

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### Positively Influencing the Work Environment

You are responsible for transforming your office so that it closely reflects a workplace that values differences in others. Valuing individual differences starts with acknowledging people's differences and recognizing their differences are valuable.


Some ways you can support an environment of valuing differences are:

- Check your perceptions before reacting.
- Encourage participation and open communication with your employees
- Individualize rewards. Know which award employees would appreciate more. For instance a brand new employee with limited amount of leave, may appreciate time off versus a monetary award.

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### Summary

"The mediocre manager believes that most things are learnable and therefore that the essence of management is to identify each person's weaker areas and eradicate them. The great manager believes the opposite. He believes that the most influential qualities of a person are innate and therefore that the essence of management is to deploy these innate qualities as effectively as possible and so drive performance."

-- Marcus Buckingham, *"The One Thing You Need to Know"*

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### Additional Considerations to Research

- How should you give negative feedback to someone who is culturally different from you?
- When you have open positions, how do you make outreach efforts to ensure that a diverse pool of candidates has applied?
- How do you make sure new employees not only understand the job responsibilities and expectations clearly, but also understand the department culture and unwritten rules?

 [Click here](#) to open a PDF file of this list. You can then print it and add it to your Supervisor Development Folder.



*Remember you can always click the FAQ button and/or the REF button to help you find answers.*

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### Lesson Takeaways

You have completed the Valuing Individual Differences lesson. As a supervisor, it's important that you understand that:

- There are eight major characteristics that influence individual differences in others
- You recognize the benefits of valuing individual differences.
- Master the skills that open the lines of communication while fostering understanding of others.




 **Click image for Supervisor Reflections**

Do you have a thorough understanding of the Lesson Takeaways? Do you still need to do some reading about the Additional Considerations listed on the previous screen? If you feel confident about your knowledge of Valuing Individual Differences, proceed to the next lesson. If not, use the flyout menu to review, or use the Reference tool or FAQ tool to gain more knowledge.


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### Reflections for a Supervisor

As a supervisor, consider the following...

- Do you rigorously examine your unit's existing policies, practices, and procedures to ensure that they do not differentially impact different groups? When they do, do you change them?
- Are you willing to listen to constructive feedback from your staff about ways to improve the work environment? Do you implement staff suggestions and acknowledge their contribution?
- Do you take immediate action with people you supervise when they behave in ways that show disrespect for others in the workplace, such as ethnic

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### Reflections for a Supervisor

As a supervisor, consider the following...

disrespect for others in the workplace, such as ethnic jokes and offensive terms?

- Do you ensure that assignments and opportunities for advancement are accessible to everyone?
- Do you test your assumptions before acting on them?
- Do you believe there is only one right way of doing things, or that there are a number of valid ways that accomplish the same goal? Do you convey that to staff?

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CERTIFICATE OF  
**Completion**  
THIS AWARD IS GIVEN TO  
**You**  
IN RECOGNITION OF SKILLS GAINED BY  
PARTICIPATION IN THE AWTY MANAGEMENT  
STAFF COLLEGE'S R.D.C. LESSON

### Lesson Complete!

#### Congratulations, .

You have completed the Creating an Engaging Work Environment lesson. Remember, you can always come back to this lesson to review.

By clicking the Next button, you will be given the opportunity to provide us with feedback on the lesson you have just completed. Your input is important to us, and will help us keep our content and playability at the highest level possible.

*Congratulations!*

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