

## **Diversity, the richness of Collective Intelligence.**

### **A managerial point of view**

This is Diversity and Inclusion Month for the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications Management. It is an opportunity for me, as a manager, to reflect on the importance of diversity as a basis for collective intelligence for greater performance and efficiency. Diversity is a source of richness for a team; it must be encouraged to perform better together and multiply results. Here is my feedback on 6 dimensions of diversity which are important to me from a managerial point of view.

#### **1/ Diversity of profiles**

A team has different profiles. This may seem trivial, but it is still not easy to fully recognize the differences in skills, personalities, cultures, backgrounds, ages, experiences and to create synergies between them continuously. Welcoming into the team, understanding and accompanying people who are not like us requires more time and energy from the manager, but the effort can be positive because they bring an unexpected point of view. Diversity can only be rich if everyone feels accepted and integrated with their differences. It seems important to me to collectively value their complementarity and contribution to the common project. This avoids comparisons, frustrations and tensions and promotes the total integration and fulfillment of everyone in the team.

#### **2/ Diversity of opinions**

We all have different opinions, but we do not dare to express them all openly. This is a reality in many committees and manager-employee relations. The manager's responsibility is to create a safe environment and a tolerant ear for free speech. Sometimes it is not easy to have to slow down in order to address a divergent opinion; we would like to get on with our project, our meeting, in the interests of efficiency. It is necessary to take time in order to gain time afterwards, especially when having to make complex decisions. A different opinion is not a criticism and a criticism is often a gift to question oneself, an opportunity to do better. Good decision making often takes into account different points of view. A good collective dynamic allows everyone to feel appreciated as a "resource" for the manager and the group, legitimate to contribute whether or not they are experts in the area of discussion, with responsibility and autonomy.

#### **3/ Diversity of skills**

For a manager, the diversity of skills is beneficial for their projects and employees. First of all, attributing several well-coordinated skills to the realization of a project leads to a better quality delivered. Secondly, allowing employees to increase their skills in their field or to develop several skills according to their wish or interest, leads to greater motivation. Among the various skills of an employee, the soft-skills are, in my opinion, the essential complement to the technical know-how. This implies being able to work in a team, to feed off others, to be daring, agile and flexible in order to adapt and exchange in a constructive way. In our communication profession, these soft-skills are just as valuable to me as technical skills.

#### **4/ Diversity of responsibilities**

I find it effective to assign several responsibilities to each employee: the obvious responsibility for their individual work and, moreover, a collective responsibility beyond the employee's own project. In this way, everyone feels co-responsible for the overall quality that the team delivers. To this end, the manager develops and promotes transversality, cooperation and mutual aid within the team. This also involves to enhance co-construction in the course of the project and during annual appraisals. Each person is recognised for their contribution to each other's projects and also for their ability to allow others to participate in their own work by sharing information in a transparent manner and agreeing to feed it with different opinions.

### **5/ Diversity of encounters**

One of my greatest learning experiences as a manager has been the importance of regular moments of sharing, information and exchanges with the teams. One-on-one, team, managerial and community meetings, as well as friendly get-togethers are essential for a better quality of relationships. In addition to monitoring and driving forward projects, these are moments to say things, call for help if necessary, recognize the employee and reflect together on how to improve collective performance. It's difficult to set them up, I admit, with our busy agendas and working remotely which increases the distance, but with good discipline and the help of an attentive PA, we must be able to fit them into our schedule and make sure they are maintained. Setting up rules of collective intelligence proves useful during these meetings to better free up open speech: start with a quick personal round table so that all the participants can be recognized by the group, encourage short speeches with added value for the group by avoiding what I call the "beauty contest" or self-valuation, ensure equal speaking time and frank speech, without forgetting the pleasure of exchanging in a relaxed way. With healthy and transparent exchanges, a real collective dynamic is established which brings coherence of values and actions and team cohesion.

### **6/ Diversity of dimensions**

I end by the importance of taking into account the global dimension of the team member, be it professional, personal, cultural or social. The porosity of these dimensions is obvious to me, even more so with teleworking where the boundaries between the professional and the personal are blurred. As a manager, I strive to take them into account and to accept the individual as a whole, to recognize the human being with his emotions, his environment, his beliefs and his societal commitments. Also, being able to help others to be themselves in the group is beneficial for a successful team.

I have been trying to apply these 6 dimensions for several years now. It's not always easy or perfect, there is always room for improvement but the intention is always there. After a lot of testing & learning, the efforts pay off and the result is now visible for our team: a recognized efficiency and quality, a reinforced collective spirit, mutual trust and support and a positive atmosphere.

For me, a team is not just people working together, but people who trust each other and help each other to overcome obstacles, amplify creativity and multiply results. This team is enriched by its diversity and openness.

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