

Adding Diversity Awareness to Your Leadership Skill Set

Greater understanding leads to greater trust, which leads to greater appreciation of others.

To effectively manage in today's workplace, leaders must understand that diversity has many facets and is not limited to gender or race. To ensure safety in the workplace and to improve the quality of life in all of its aspects, SH&E professionals must understand and embrace diversity, and respect differences.

ASSE is committed to supporting diversity within the Society. To that end, ASSE formed the Diversity Committee. The committee's goal is to provide inclusion without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, personal beliefs, age, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or physical challenges by providing advice and guidance to the Society to:

- encourage an inclusive and diverse membership, leadership and staff;
- promote a culture of inclusion and cooperation;
- address diversity-related issues for the SH&E professional, workforce and community.

eties, range, assortment, etc. Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. That sounds simple, but diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more.

Diversity involves not only how people perceive themselves, but how they perceive others. Those perceptions affect their interactions. For a wide assortment of employees to function effectively as an organization, human resource professionals need to deal effectively with issues such as communication, adaptability and change. Diversity will increase significantly in the coming years. Successful organizations recognize the need for immediate action and are ready and willing to spend resources on managing diversity in the workplace now.

Rixio Medina (RM): Diversity is the acceptance and inclusion of people of different gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, language, nationality, work style and experience, education, culture, organization function, approach to problem solving, physical appearance, personality type, liberal or conservative thinking and socioeconomic status, using the strength of their differences to improve the group's output while working toward a common goal.

Terrie Norris (TN): Growing up I did not know about diversity—I just knew that I was different because of the way I was treated. My father was in the military, which meant frequent relocations, so I was always that new kid who “wasn't from around here.” I spoke differently. I dressed differently. I did not have the shared childhood memories—I was an outsider.

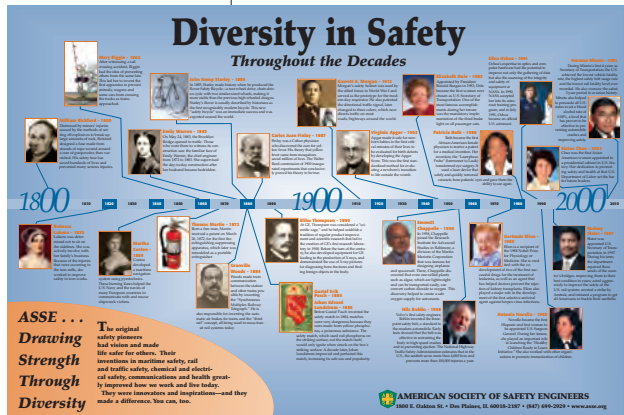
Diversity goes beyond the most frequently recognized race and gender. It also involves geography, language, accent, age, life experiences, education, heritage, disabilities and religion.

PS: How does diversity affect communication?

JA: It affects communication in so many ways and often leads to misunderstandings. Every one of us comes from a different background with different experiences that lead to different results. Because of this, each of us brings something different to the table. We each bring a set of skills, knowledge and experience that makes up the diversity of us all. It's in this diversity that we can flourish as a group and enhance our environment. Communication is the most important part of success of any group or organization.

AG: Every organization takes full advantage of diversity. In this process, they will face many challenges particularly related to communication. Perceptual, cultural and language barriers need to be overcome for diversity programs to succeed.

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Today's leaders must understand cultural norms and traditions, disabilities, religious traditions and practices, and the influence history has had in shaping generations. In this interview, which is based on a presentation at and pro-

ceedings paper from ASSE's Safety 2008 conference, members of the Diversity Committee and ASSE member Ashok Garlapati share insights and personal experiences relating to diversity.

PS: How do you define diversity?

Jamal AbuSneineh (JA): Diversity is the presence of a wide range of variation in the qualities or attributes of cultures, societies, communities, companies and workgroups. It is the state of being different or diverse. Diversity is used to describe people and populations. It encompasses such things as age, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, and religion, as well as education, professional background and marital and/or parental status. It carries with it an array of subject matter and connotations. It has also been defined as the full use of human resource potential. Diversity is understanding, respecting and valuing differences while translating commonalities toward effectively achieving a common objective or goal.

Ashok Garlapati (AG): If you look into the dictionary, it provides a definition of mixture, vari-

ASSE's Diversity Committee developed a "Diversity in Safety" poster last year. To request a copy of the poster, contact ASSE's Geri Golonka at ggolonka@asse.org.

Ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion, lack of teamwork and low morale. This leads to negative impact on the overall objectives of the organization if the communication issues are not handled properly.

Kelly Bernish (KB): Effective communication is one of the biggest challenges we all face. Diversity, or the experiences, characteristics, beliefs and cultural differences that we all bring to the table, adds to that challenge. The tendency for people to project their beliefs onto or to stereotype people who are outwardly diverse or different from them may affect the way communication happens—or doesn't happen.

The same can be said for the person receiving the message and the filters they may apply to the message. Additionally, hand gestures, body language and slang language styles may have a completely

different meaning in diverse populations. For example, in our parks we have guests from all over the world each day. To me, thumbs up means everything is okay, but to someone else it may mean the number one. It can be as simple as that.

Dale Brito (DB): There are many different ways to say the same thing, just as there are many different ways to interpret what is said. Each of us hears things differently, based on our beliefs, cultural background, etc. Effective communication hinges on knowing our audience and being able to make adjustments to suit them. People will translate what they hear into ideas based on their own beliefs and cultural background. Diversity introduces a variety of views, ideas and thoughts into a conversation, expanding a single idea in many directions.

Nonverbal communication is another aspect that must be considered. It, too, is affected by beliefs, cultural background, etc., and can be easily misinterpreted. Everyone uses mannerisms and body language when speaking. Because of this, although an individual may intend to say one thing, the spoken message may be interpreted as something totally different because of the nonverbal message.

RM: A diverse group will face communication challenges. One challenge I have experienced is the problem-solving approach common in American society. We talk over an issue and usually want to quickly define the problem and find a solution for it—the quicker the better. Safety professionals are trained to recognize hazards, evaluate them and compare options, and take immediate corrective actions when needed. Other cultures and professionals may see and understand the same problem, but generally want to evaluate the issue in more detail before attempting to fix it. They are not slower thinkers, they simply want to understand more details before acting.

Our typical communication style is to get to the point and to move directly from point A to point B, in a logical manner without digression. Other cultures' communication patterns are not driven only by efficiency; they might also want to explore the context, taking time to explore related matters. I must discipline myself not to let this learned skill affect my communication efforts with individuals who don't have the same sense of urgency I usually have. We need to recognize that other people may be different from us and may not respond to a given situation the same way we do. Understanding and keeping in mind those individual differences will help us be more effective when interacting with a diverse group.

TN: In today's mobile world, most of us have experienced language barriers. If we do not speak the same language it interferes with sharing our experiences and knowledge. It creates hazards within the workplace when we cannot communicate expected behaviors or warning signs cannot be read. However, diversity's effect on communication is much more subtle than mere language differences.

Take the U.S. for example; the differences in regional accents and speed at which English is spoken in those regions can make it difficult for someone in the northeast region of the country to communicate with someone from the southeast. I learned Arabic for a trip to the Middle East, but found that while the accent I acquired from my language tape was perfect in Egypt, it was slightly off in Jordan. I had the opportunity to live in England as a child, and the language was the same and the accent not too difficult, but the words did not always have the same meaning. For example, when I asked for chips, meaning potato chips, I was served French fries; when I wanted a cookie, I needed to ask for a biscuit.

The diversity in nonverbal communication adds another nuance. In many cultures, the comfort zone for communication is at a distance, bows are exchanged rather than handshakes, and direct eye contact is not accepted in one

Meet the Panel

Jamal AbuSneineh is a risk specialist, loss prevention consultant with the City of Portland. He was born and raised in Jerusalem, Palestine. AbuSneineh holds a B.A. from Bethlehem University and an M.S.T. from Portland State University. He is the immediate past president of ASSE's Columbia-Willamette Chapter.

Kelly Bernish is a graduate of Kent State University and has spent her SH&E career with SeaWorld/Anheuser-Busch in three different locations in the U.S. Currently, she is director of environmental, health and safety for SeaWorld of Florida Inc. Bernish has been a member of ASSE since 1997 and is currently Chair of Women in Safety Engineering, one of ASSE's common interest groups. She is also a past president of ASSE's Central Florida Chapter.

Dale Holly Kahaukapu Brito is a risk control consultant for First Insurance Co. of Hawaii Ltd. Born and raised in Honolulu, she currently lives in Kailua on the island of Oahu. Her diverse heritage includes ancestors of Hawaiian, English, Irish and Spanish descent. An ASSE member since 1993, Brito has held several officer positions in ASSE's Hawaii Chapter.

Rixio Medina, CSP, is vice president of health, safety, security, environmental protection and shared services for CITGO Petroleum Corp. in Houston, TX. He served as a presidential appointee on the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board and served two terms as safety representative on the National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health. For 2 years, Medina chaired the Civil Service Commission and was vice-chair of the Civil Service Board for the City of Corpus Christi, TX. Medina is the recipient of an ASSE President's Award for his work as an international emissary.

Terrie Norris, CSP, ARM, is risk control manager with Bickmore Risk Services, working in the firm's Southern California office. During her formative years, Norris lived as an Air Force dependent in New York, the Phillipine Islands, Hawaii, Ohio, England and Michigan. An ASSE member since 1987, she has served as an officer in the West Michigan and Orange County chapters. Norris is ASSE's Region I Vice President and she recently completed her term as chair of the Diversity Committee. She is a recipient of ASSE's Charles V. Culbertson Outstanding Volunteer Service Award for her work on the Diversity Committee.

Linda Rhodes, CSP, is general manager of system safety for the Chicago Transit Authority. Rhodes holds an undergraduate degree in industrial and systems engineering from Ohio University. Her participation in athletics and various volunteer organizations over the years has exposed her to diverse cultures, as has her employment in industries such as manufacturing, food, not-for-profit and transportation. Rhodes is currently Chair of the Diversity Committee.

Ashok Garlapati, CSP, QEP, G-IOSH, was born in the State of Andhra Pradesh, India. His studies and work in India exposed him to many languages and cultures. He moved to Kuwait in 2000 to work with the Kuwait Oil Co., where he interacts with a workforce of more than 50 nationalities. Garlapati, the immediate past president of ASSE's Kuwait Chapter, was a guest panelist during the Diversity Committee's Safety 2008 presentation.

culture while it is expected in another. These differences increase the need for communication training and increased self-awareness. Successful leaders will develop an understanding of the language, the meaning of commonly used phrases, and the acceptable nonverbal communication characteristics of the workforce and business place in which they work and live.

PS: How do you encourage diversity within ASSE?

AG: ASSE's Kuwait Chapter membership consists of people from more than 15 countries and their experience level ranges from 1 to 25 years' in different industrial sectors such as construction, mechanical, petrochemicals, and upstream and downstream oil industries. Therefore, membership needs are completely different and diverse in nature.

An organization's success and competitiveness depends on its ability to embrace diversity and realize its benefits. We have used their expertise levels to our benefit in the following ways:

- Encourage experienced members to share their experience with junior members by conducting technical meetings, seminars and training programs.
- Encourage junior members to take part in leadership roles through partici-

pation as committee members, volunteers for professional development conferences and outreach activities.

• Publish technical articles and bulletins in several languages to reach our diverse membership.

• Provide membership renewal for volunteering activities, subsidize training programs, host recognition programs to increase the involvement of members in Society activities.

KB: My passion is WISE, the Women in Safety Engineering group. I have been blessed with the opportunity to chair an incredible organization of women—all diverse in their own right—working in the SH&E field. So, I get to influence that each day. Through this group, we have the opportunity to influence recruitment and networking within our field and provide a platform for everyone to be exposed to incredible diversity. I also work with someone through the WISE mentoring program, and it is valuable and educational for both of us.

And, there is my involvement with ASSE's Diversity Committee. It has been nothing short of an amazing and fulfilling opportunity to meet and interact with people from all over the world. Finally, there is my ongoing effort to support endowments and scholarships for people of diverse backgrounds.

RM: I have had the opportunity to help ASSE and the profession in their efforts to be more diverse and inclusive. When recommending the appointment of members to committees, I have identified individuals from different backgrounds and I have encouraged several Hispanic safety professionals from overseas to join ASSE and have mentored them in pursuing professional certification.

The ASSE Foundation has also allowed me to join others in providing scholarships and professional development grants. I am thrilled to support the Hispanics in Safety and the Diversity Committee scholarships.

ASSE has also given me the opportunity to be the face and the Spanish voice of the Society at several professional conferences in Mexico and in presentations to the secretaries of labor, union leaders and businessmen of five countries in a tour through Central America with representatives of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Finally, through the Diversity Committee, I have been able to work with volunteers and staff members to develop strategies and implement actions to help ASSE improve its diversity standing.

TN: As chair of the Diversity Committee, I was faced with the challenge of finding new volunteers for the committee. I

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reached out to members who could bring new voices to the group. The committee is diverse in its age groups, genders, ethnic heritages, education, life experience, religions, work experiences and length of membership within the profession and the Society. We are tasked with understanding the makeup of ASSE and encouraging its continued diversity.

As Region I Vice President, I have tried to balance the needs of the chapters throughout the region by ensuring geographic representation on the region's Executive Committee. In my day-to-day living, I encourage safety professionals—wherever I meet them—to join ASSE. I have worked hard to change ASSE's image from a national organization to an international organization. The goal is to be inclusive and to make all members feel welcome and part of ASSE.

Linda Rhodes (LR): I encourage appreciation for the value that is added by long-service members and I encourage their active participation. Within my chapter, I also take opportunities to recruit members who are underrepresented.

My activity on the Society level has given me an opportunity to mentor others. Those of us who look different than "traditional" leaders get many questions from members and potential members who are trying to decide whether they fit. We have to be open and honest about the benefits and the challenges associated with active involvement.

A member once approached me at the Leadership Conference and asked how I could be so active on the Society level without compromising my work/life balance. We had a great conversation about choices and priorities and she ultimately committed to get more involved. Her concerns were based on misperceptions about how much time it would actually take to participate on chapter, regional and/or Society-level committees.

PS: How have you personally dealt with diversity and inclusion?

JA: On a personal level, I am married to a woman who is not from my culture or society. My children are trilingual. I have been a chairperson of a Montessori preschool, which has students from more than seven cultures and teachers from various backgrounds. I am the only male on the school's board; the rest are females of Indian, Middle Eastern, American and Pakistani heritage. I promote understanding and appreciation of other cultures and their heritage.

AG: More than 50 contracting companies work for my company's Exploration and Production Development Directorate, and contractor employees represent many nationalities. This presents many challenges, so I have adopted these steps to deal with diversity at my workplace:

1) Assess diversity in the workplace. The first step dealing with any issue starts with the assessment of it. We conducted the assessment through employment satisfaction and needs surveys.

2) Develop a diversity in the workplace plan. The initial assessment and survey provided information on diversity issues as an integral part of the management system. The plan has been made comprehensive, attainable and measurable.

3) Implement the plan. The diversity plan in my organization has been implemented through management commitment and line management. This has been incorporated in every aspect of the organization's function and facilities.

4) Reassess the diversity plan. Periodically reassessing the plan has helped us evaluate and improve it.

KB: I am lucky and thankful that I was raised in a diverse community and under diverse circumstances. I grew up in a college town that celebrated diversity. My mom is a journalist who exposed me to many incredible experiences. I now have the same opportunity with my children.

I think we can all recount negative experiences as a result of personal, organizational or governmental prejudices. For me, it was just another challenge to make myself and those around me better. I now have the responsibility of influencing the minds of my two daughters to be open. Each day at work, I am blessed to work with people of such tremendous diversity. One of my most rewarding opportunities is to work on initiatives of accessibility for people with disabilities. Our goal is to make our parks as accessible and inclusive as safely possible.

DB: Living in an area with an extremely diverse cultural base, I have learned (perhaps unconsciously) to understand and appreciate the diversity of others and how this understanding can benefit me. Where I live, the majority of people can be considered a "mixed plate"—very few individuals are of a single race or background. This forces us to learn a variety of traditions and histories. That understanding has made it much easier to work effectively with others.

Living in Hawaii—on what we fondly call "the rock"—we tend to travel around the world more than most. In our travels, we encounter various problems because of our visual appearance and our tendency to speak rapidly. My ethnic background is Hawaiian, English, Irish and Spanish, and my children inherited Portuguese from their father. Stereotyping is a

problem. To many in other places, a Hawaiian is perceived to be of Asian ancestry, which we are not. Depending on where we visit, we encounter changes in attitude and treatment because of how we look and speak. When we tell them we are from Hawaii, things change.

Two of my children have attended college on the mainland and they have related to me things that have happened to them and things they have observed. They have grown up understanding and accepting the differences in people and appreciating the diversity around them, so they sometimes find it hard to understand why others do not feel the way they do. They are proud of their multicultural heritage, and they share their experiences as often as they can. They have not let prejudices and misunderstandings affect them.

RM: When I first came to the U.S. to attend college in 1974, I was one of the few Hispanics among several thousand students at Oklahoma State University. For a couple of years, I was the only Hispanic in the School of Protection and Safety. I had to work hard to understand others and to make myself understood. I started as "the Hispanic guy," but my performance in school and my social interactions with other students helped me gain their acceptance.

I joined the International Student Association and became an officer to learn how the system worked. Later I organized and became the first president of the Latin American Student Association. The activities we conducted helped others at school and in the community better understand the Hispanic culture, food, music and art.

I have experienced a few unpleasant situations that happened because I am Hispanic. Today, they are insignificant memories. I concentrate on the excellent opportunities and rewarding experiences this great country and ASSE have blessed me with and dedicate my efforts to continue the improvement of diversity.

TN: The way I handle diversity has changed as I have grown. As a child, I became adept at being a chameleon to fit in. I changed my accent, I learned new languages and I learned to keep low to avoid becoming a target.

As an adult, I continued to use the skills I developed as a child—and I added education and communication skills to my toolbox. I learned to stand up for myself and what I believed in. Because of my educational and personal experiences, I was able to teach my children tolerance. I work hard to ensure that people feel included and that they have a voice. In addition, I support diversity by earmarking my annual ASSE Foundation donation for the ASSE Diversity Committee Scholarship.

LR: Teaching my kids to value diversity and inclusion is ongoing and rewarding. There are frequent learning opportunities for me to help my kids understand situations that encourage diversity and inclusion and those that do not. Recognizing this is only half of the lesson though; the other half involves teaching my kids how to handle both.

My 14-year-old son was recently offended because he approached a museum employee for information and received none. He then watched as another guest approached the same employee, who then nearly tripped over himself to provide information to this guest. Maybe the employee snubbed my son based on his race and age, maybe not. Either way, I showed him how to focus on the information he was requesting as opposed to the potential personal slight. Upon approaching the employee a second time—with me in tow—my son received the information.

During the same outing, my kids and I encountered two people who provided—unsolicited—a wealth of information. They were impressed with my kids' quest for knowledge and did all they could to provide them what they needed.

Within the span of a few hours, my kids felt excluded, then included. Our society is made up of people who believe they never experience exclusion,

those who believe they never experience inclusion and those who experience some of both. These perceptions and experiences contribute to our diversity.

PS: Why is diversity a good thing?

JA: Let's start by saying that it is not a bad thing. I can't think of anything bad associated with increased diversity. Open-mindedness, finding out why people behave the way they do, leads to solving many problems. There is no downside to diversity. Greater understanding leads to greater trust, which leads to greater appreciation of others.

KB: Diversity is not just a good thing, it is a necessary thing. How can you be your best without the help and influence of others? Without people who challenge you and stretch you? In my opinion, people who do not embrace diversity and inclusion are missing a big piece of life's puzzle.

DB: The world is diverse—how boring it would be otherwise. Diversity forces us to think outside ourselves, to hear opinions of others, yet still allows us to form our own, possibly new, opinions based on a larger view of things. Diversity contributes to the forming of new opinions and to strengthening the positive ones we already have. Diversity can even change a negative opinion to a positive one.

Diversity in the workplace is mandated by global communications. To continue to be successful, companies must diversify to compete. Boundaries have changed significantly and some no longer exist. The only way to see the big picture is to have more than one view or opinion from several sources, to listen to what is being said/communicated and act on it. Diversity brings understanding, encourages participation and opens doors to expanded ideas.

TN: Diversity provides us with a rich, vibrant environment. It provides choices. However, it is the acceptance of diversity that is critical to success in business and the creation of a world at peace. Diversity is not a choice; it is a fact. We need to understand the benefits and strengths that diversity offers in order to take full advantage of it.

Take age differences as an example. We need the knowledge that only experience can provide, but we also need the innocence and enthusiasm brought to the table when failure has not yet been experienced. We also need the knowledge that newly educated people bring to the mix. We need diversity in our leadership to ensure not only the inclusion of diverse segments of the population, but also the

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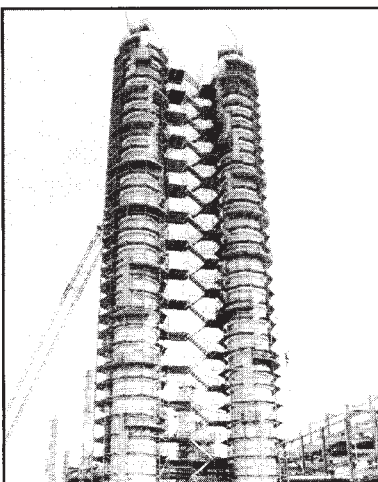
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buy-in of those segments that support our goals and objectives. Nothing is achieved in a vacuum, and success depends on the support of all the diverse populations affected by the decisions made.

LR: Without diversity, we're all redundant—same ideas, same solutions to problems, no growth, little creativity, etc.

A diversity professional with a consumer products company tells an interesting story. Just before her company launched a new food product line targeted at a specific ethnic group, the company decided to consult members of this ethnic group within its organization. A special task force was formed and thanks to tapping into its own diverse resources, the product line was a resounding success.

PS: How do you work with, lead or manage a diverse group and how do you do so in an inclusive fashion?

JA: Each individual is unique and has a set of norms that drives him/her. With that understanding, I consider everyone with whom I interact to be unique, and I work hard on my assumptions and removing biases from my work. With that, I lead and encourage others to do the same. I champion the concept of diversity and understanding to everyone with whom I work and I hope this will lead to a greater understanding.

DB: I consider all groups I work with as diverse. Every person's opinion is important, and I encourage group members to openly express themselves. I do not form judgments based on opinions or views, and neither does the group. Instead, we work together to have an understanding of each individual's perspective and create a solution that will satisfy all. No one person has all the answers. Conversations can get rather heated, but that is expected when people are passionate about their beliefs. The results are a true reflection of everyone involved.

RM: This is very simple for me. I try to follow the golden rule: "Treat others as you would like to be treated." For example, I like to be involved in decision making and I let others participate in the process. I like to be heard and, therefore, let others express themselves. I like to be challenged and offered opportunities, and I continuously find ways to do that with those willing to accept challenges and opportunities. That said, the key is not to force someone to do something s/he doesn't want to do but to create and maintain an environment where individ-

uals can participate, make contributions and be recognized for their efforts.

LR: By trying to understand everyone's strengths and challenges and figuring out how to use them to accomplish objectives. The key is to appreciate (not just tolerate) the differences, and understand that it's not enough to invite everyone to the table. The environment has to be such that all members of a group recognize the desire for and benefits of their contributions.

PS: Why is diversity such a challenge?

JA: Because people make it so. Because of wrong assumptions. Because of ignorance and lack of understanding and the unwillingness of many—people, companies, groups and committees—to accept our ever-changing world. The world is not big anymore. Advancements in communication and technology have made it easier for us to watch, learn and communicate with others, which has the natural outcome of learning, understanding and appreciating others. To categorize and place others in a box never leads to productive results. Unfortunately, that's what often happens. To learn about other cultures and backgrounds, we have to abandon our comfort zone. If we do that, then we can begin to see the beauty and the rewards of diversity.

AG: There are many challenges in handling diversity issues in big organizations. These include:

1) Resistance to change. There are always employees who will refuse to accept the fact that the social and cultural makeup of their workplace is changing. The "we've always done it this way" mentality silences new ideas and inhibits progress.

2) Implementation of diversity in the workplace policies. This can be the overriding challenge to all diversity advocates. Armed with the results of employee assessments and research data, they must build and implement a customized strategy to maximize the effects of diversity in the workplace for their particular organization.

3) Successful management of workplace diversity. Diversity training alone is not sufficient for any organization's diversity management plan. A strategy must be created and implemented to create a culture of diversity that permeates every department and function of the organization, which is a big challenge.

DB: Diversity is a big challenge because it is impossible to understand everyone's point of view. Not everyone is exposed to diversity. While diversity is valuable in obtaining a variety of information, it does cause conflicts because of opposing viewpoints. To overcome such conflicts, we need to understand why we have opposing viewpoints that are usually a direct result of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Because cyberspace presents us so easily with so many ideas and the expansion of joint ventures throughout the world, we all must accept and learn to understand the differences in each of us to better communicate and grow.

As individuals, many people do not understand or accept diversity and do not feel they need to. In some companies, it is a corporate problem not an individual problem. Accepting diversity as a learned response takes time and effort. To be a truly diverse world, it will take time and education. Much of the challenge to accepting diversity involves getting past the misunderstandings and differences that make us diverse in the first place.

TN: One of the greatest challenges is gaining an understanding of diversity. In a meeting I attended when diversity was being discussed, one member stated, "Well, we don't have to address women's issues, since that is no longer a diversity issue." I thought the room would implode from the sudden intake of breath from the other committee members. Diversity is often reduced to a head count or a checklist, without a true inclusion or understanding of what the issues are. We need to create a greater understanding of diversity in order to gain a greater acceptance of our diversity. We need to come out of the Dark Ages where the fear of something different was great, to accepting our differences as a gift that enhances our world.

LR: If by being a challenge we mean maintaining diverse and inclusive environments, diversity is not a big challenge for many people. Such people have invested efforts to understand how their lives can benefit from diversity and inclusion and in creating mechanisms that support a diverse and inclusive environment. For other people, diversity is a big challenge—and very much resisted—because of their misperceptions about consequences and benefits.

Diversity in the SH&E Profession

ASSE's Diversity Committee encourages readers to ask themselves the questions posed in this interview. Consider how you will encourage diversity and inclusion in your personal and professional life. The Diversity Committee has taken a positive approach by establishing a Diversity Committee Scholarship fund through the ASSE Foundation. What will you do? Share your ideas and action plans with the Diversity Committee by sending an e-mail to twilkinson@asse.org.