

PASS THE SALSA POR FAVOR



In the nineties when Salsa passed ketch-up as America's favorite condiment, it was hailed as a "multicultural breakthrough." But the best was yet to come! Corn chips are now better sellers than potato chips. They taste good, are good for you, and according to Frito-Lay, are more profitable! **So everybody wins!**

That's what real diversity is about. Everybody wins. Perhaps, that's why recent studies indicate that a team's diversity contributes to increased effectiveness and creativity. This explains why cross-functional teams produce such high results.

When people learn to respect each other and value different points of view, innovative ideas, higher productivity, and more personal satisfaction result. As the Chairman of Disney, Michael Eisner said,

*"I believe in diversity as a social and practical issue.
Diversity breeds creativity."*

Learning how to benefit from diversity is an ongoing process that requires **pro-active steps** and a personal commitment. As Robert Greenleaf stated in the *Servant as Leader*, "Everything begins with the initiative of an individual."

*Creating a community climate that values
the contributions of every individual begins with YOU!*

Below are ten steps to increase your ability to appreciate differences; thereby, ensuring that creativity and diversity are cornerstones of your leadership style.

1. **Be Yourself.** Honor your heritage. Explore and take pride your own culture. Share and celebrate your background with others.

To develop trust and work together collaboratively, people must take the time to learn about each other's backgrounds and share their stories. This begins by reflecting on your own heritage, learning about your ancestors, their journeys and the gifts you inherited from them. This allows you to appreciate the history and stories of others.

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2. **W**ork towards Synthesis - not sameness. Every one of us is a "*One of a kind design.*" Valuing diversity does not mean we all become the same. In fact, synthesis occurs when the best each one has to offer is integrated into shared action or the final product.

3. **E**xpress Appreciation. Muchas Gracias! Many cultures place a high value on politeness, "thank you's," cooperation and gratitude. As noted in, Zapp, *The Lightning of Empowerment*, sharing, praise, approval, encouragement, and support are also good management and people practices.

4. **E**ncourage inclusiveness. Take the initiative to get to know all types of people who work in your organization and reside in your community. Establish a reputation for having a "**diversity rolodex.**" Then, make sure diverse people and perspectives are included in meetings and projects.

"Have we considered ethnic and cultural preferences? We should invite someone who is new to the community! Have we included someone with a marketing perspective? How about a woman's point of view?" What do the young people think?

5. **E**ducate yourself about key differences in others. Find a ***Diversity mentor.*** Then, share information, resources, cultural, and ethnic activities that will broaden your understanding and perspective. Culture is learned, like many of our behaviors and habits. Valuing diversity offers a great opportunity to grow, stretch, and expand your awareness! Diversity is **LEARNING** new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

Cresting a Diverse Community or Organization begins with YOU!

Besides, in Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge, leaders are defined as life-long learners. So take a leadership stance and keep a curious and open mind about diversity!

6. **B**e open to other points of views. Just like Aretha Franklin sang, "Show me a little **R-E-S-P-E-C-T.**" Follow the Golden Rule and show others the respect you would like. Respect goes a long way in promoting understanding.

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7. **P**ractice empathy as reflected in the Native American adage: "Do not judge until you have walked in their moccasins for many miles." Greenleaf wrote "The servant always accepts and empathizes never rejects." Practice the skill of dialogue and suspend your judgments!

8. **B**e willing to listen attentively. Greenleaf advised Servant Leaders to practice the "sustained intentness of listening." Steven Covey in *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* urges leaders to: "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." This is particularly critical when communication styles are different. Ask for help, clarification, and coaching in learning how people can best hear you or want to be addressed.

9. **R**ealize diversity is a journey we are making together. Martin Luther King said, "*We may have come over on different boats, but we are in the same boat now!*" So be patient and tolerant with yourself and others. Compassionately point out when people are not respecting and allowing for differences.

10. **"Walk the Talk."** Start with yourself first. Make a commitment to be a "Role Model" for valuing diversity. Robert Greenleaf in the *Servant as Leader* said, "Everything begins with the initiative of an individual." So be PRO-ACTIVE about diversity and take the leadership in your community.

We must be what we want to become, we must in every step of the way, embody the future toward which we are aiming.

"Margaret Wheatley – Leadership and the New Science"

Be the one to suggest forming a "**Diversity Team**" to recommend proactive steps your community and organization can take to become more multicultural. Frito Lay includes "multicultural sensitivity" as one of twelve key leadership competencies in their individual development plan and then utilizes this in the employee evaluation process. Establish "diversity and inclusiveness" goals and then evaluate progress in achieving these.

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Here are some ways you can learn about others:

- * Set up a meeting with someone in a different profession, or department
- * Invite someone to lunch who is older or younger than you
- * Read a chapter in a book that expands multicultural awareness
- * Have coffee with someone from a different ethnic group
- * Attend a cultural event in your community
- * Look for groups that attract people from different backgrounds and then join in! It can be a church, a nonprofit, a community group, or a class that draws a diverse audience.

*Many organizations have "Casual Fridays."
"This same concept can be used to have - "Diversity Fridays" -
A one day commitment to expanding diversity awareness.*

"Paso a Paso" is a Hispanic saying that means take it one step at a time. Choose one of these steps. As you experience success, add another to your "diversity tool box." Above all step into diversity with **GANAS** - (Desire, commitment, tenacity!) Learning to value diversity is an exciting leadership opportunity - one that will expand your abilities and awareness - and prepare you for the challenges of the next century.

By working together "paso a paso," we can become what Martin Luther King envisioned - a society that values people because of their character not the color of their skin, and celebrates all people for the unique contributions and gifts they offer.



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