

8. Winter 2009: Adapting to Change

Basic ecological and social concepts include change and adaptation. This installment focuses on the current environmental leaderships' ability to adapt to the new approaches and solutions in addressing our local and global problems.

- Articles of Interest, Winter 2009: Dahvi Wilson, Associate, Commonwealth Institute, and Fellow, Redefining Progress provided a chapter in Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement titled: We Are Bridges. Excerpts from this article are found below. A link to both the book and article can be found at the end of this piece.
- Assessment, Winter 2009: In the article Inclusive from the Beginning, Engaged to the End, Authors Perry Alter and Greg Morris of Novations proposed some behavioral interview questions that can demonstrate inclusiveness practices.
- Mini-Lesson, Winter 2009: There are several cultural factors that influence the values, rules, norms, and beliefs you adopt. These in turn have an impact on your life and work.
- Vignette, Winter 2009: Does business as usual always work? How will you know?
- Success Stories, Winter 2009: University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative serves as a mentor for minority environmental professionals and those of us that value from new perspectives.

Assessment, Winter 2009

In the article Inclusive from the Beginning, Engaged to the End, Authors Perry Alter and Greg Morris proposed some behavioral interview questions that can demonstrate inclusiveness practices.

Behavioral interview questions that directly target inclusion

These questions can be used with prospective employees or as a self assessment for the organization.

Below is an excerpt from this article.

The behavioral method lends itself well to hiring for inclusive behavior. The following questions target a candidate's inclination to capitalize on the range of diverse talent and experience that others can offer.

- Describe something you've done that shows how you try to learn from people who approach things differently than you do.
- Tell me about a situation where you assigned a project to people with different styles or backgrounds so they could work together and learn from one another.
- Describe an example that shows how you mentor people from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives.

To see the full article [Inclusiveness from the Beginning, Engaged to the End](#), click the title

Articles of Interest, Winter 2009

Dahvi Wilson, Associate, Commonwealth Institute, and Fellow, Redefining Progress provided a chapter in *Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement* titled: *We Are Bridges*. Excerpts from this article are found below. A link to both the book and article can be found at the end of this piece.

...We are reaching a moment in modern history when new solutions are desperately needed. Old strategies of organizing, educating, and communicating are proving incapable of addressing such immense global problems as climate change, species extinction, the ever-increasing income disparities between rich and poor, and the rise of a global corporate oligarchy.

...I believe that the tendency of the Boomer generation to hold on so tightly to their power and control has hindered them, their successors, and the movement as a whole. By stifling new styles of operating, new ideas, and new ways of addressing the problems we face as a society, the Boomer generation has severely handicapped its ability to innovate and adapt to the new reality.

... We realized that none of the social problems we had come to discuss,... were independent of each other. All were connected. Just as the loss of any single component of an ecosystem can unravel the delicate balance maintained there, so too can the loss of any single issue in a larger suite of progressive ideals similarly disintegrate our dreams for a more perfect world. The world we were hoping to create could not be simply “environmentally friendly,” solely “socially just,” or purely “economically sound.” It had to be all of these things.

Excerpt from [We are Bridges](#)

Dahvi Wilson, Associate, Commonweal Institute, and Fellow, Redefining Progress

[in Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement](#)

by Editor Emily Enderle

Vignette, Winter 2009

Does business as usual always work? How will you know?

Knowing When you Need to Adapt

In an attempt to be more inclusive, you invite staff from a Hispanic serving community organization to help plan your seasonal nature program. To show them you really mean to do something concrete, you get right to work. You try and solicit input and feedback by explaining how you have done things in the past and asking what they think. Their answers are supportive. You invite the Institute staff back for another meeting, everyone says that it sounds good, but few show up the next meeting. Pretty soon, you are alone planning the program yourself.

Discussion Questions:

- What are the values of the coordinator of the planning session?
- How do these values reflect in the style and format of the meetings?
- If the community organization staffs' values are different than that of the coordinator, how might they react to the coordinator's style?
- How might the coordinator adapt their style to the community organization staffs' values?
- If a culture's values discourage any verbalization that might offend someone, how would you need to adjust your style of working with people who don't openly share their opinions?

Mini-Lesson, Winter 2009

There are several cultural factors that influence the values, rules, norms, and beliefs you adopt. These in turn have an impact on your life and work.

You may have informally discussed these factors and impacts with coworkers and participants. Solicit others' stories to learn how culture has influenced the choices that they have made in their life and work. Chances are you will learn more about why others different than you are, or are not, participating in activities that protect the environment. Perhaps your definition or values for protecting the environment have only been a subset of a broader range of potential answers.

How has...

- Your family (parents, siblings, grandparents, extended family, spouse or children)
- Geographic location (country, neighborhood, childhood, present residence)
- Religion (early years, currently)
- Education (school, college continuing)
- Friends (childhood, current, colleagues, co-workers)
- Professional Life (field of work, status)
- Age (view of those older, the same age, or younger)
- Other

...influenced your values, rules, norms, and beliefs that you have adopted. How has that impacted the way you think and operate in your life and work?

--Adapted from the work of cross cultural trainers and authors. Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe

Success Stories, Winter 2009

University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative serves as a mentor for minority environmental professionals and those of us that value from new perspectives.

The Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative (MELDI) is a project at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE). The project aims to enhance the leadership and career development opportunities available to minority students and minority environmental professionals. The project seeks to provide information that will help more minority students embark on careers in the environmental field. It is also designed to help minority students and professionals in the environmental field take advantage of networking and mentoring opportunities.

One MELDI publication, [The Paths We Tread](#), contains profiles of minority environmental professionals.

The [MELDI Career Resource Guide to Environmental Jobs](#) contains a variety of environmental jobs that may be listed in various organizations and agencies. More than 220 jobs are described. The guide lists the skills and qualifications required for each job, salary ranges, and years of experience desired. In

some cases there are multiple job titles that are listed under one heading. The qualifications and salary ranges vary for these jobs based on seniority.

The [MELDI Guide to Negotiating the Job Market](#) features articles and tips on how to write resumes, search for jobs, prepare for interviews, negotiate salaries, network, and utilize mentoring opportunities.