

The Hidden Connection: Innovation and Diversity

Innovation is key to growth

Whether you represent a country who wants economic and social growth, or a small company that wants increase your sales, innovation is a “critical success factor”. To innovate simply means to develop new ways of thinking about a challenge and develop new and better solutions. As a country, you may ask, “How do we create more jobs? Or improve our education programs?” As a small business, you may ask, “How do we make our products better, or get them to the customer faster and cheaper?” These are all innovation challenges.

The Hidden Connection

Innovating starts with *thinking differently* – about the problem or the possible solutions. If you put seven men of a similar age in a room who think the same, talk the same, and grew up in the same area, they are going to have a more difficult time innovating than a room of seven men, and women, of different ages, with different backgrounds. It makes sense – different backgrounds lead to different ways of thinking which leads to better innovation. So, one key to innovation is to focus on *increasing and leveraging diversity*.

How To

Start by looking at who you hire. Hire for diversity for the sake of innovation. Then ensure that all people, no matter their age, gender and background are treated with equal respect and included in problem solving and decision making. *Include* these diverse people during innovation activities and make it easy for them to express unpopular ideas. “The crazy idea today, is the brilliant idea of tomorrow.”

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