



International Federation of
Training and Development
Organisations

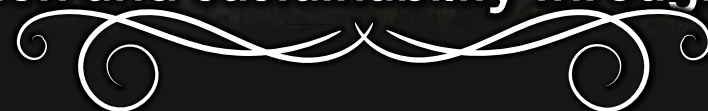
IFTDO NEWS

No. 3 of 2025 | July 2025

52nd IFTDO World Conference & Exhibition 2026, Bahrain 24-26 November, 2026



**Theme
Empowering future leaders:
Innovation and sustainability through people**





International
Federation of
Training and
Development
Organisations

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IFTDO does not necessarily agree with the comments expressed in this newsletter and does not accept responsibility for any views stated therein.



Dr. Avinash Chandra Joshi

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Editorial

The 51st IFTDO World Conference & Exhibition, held from June 17–19, 2025, at the Jakarta International Convention Centre, marked a historic milestone as Indonesia hosted this global gathering for the first time. Under the theme **The Future of People and Adaptive Organizations in the Digital Era**, the event convened over 20 countries' HR professionals, business leaders, policymakers, and innovators to address the transformative impact of digitalization on human capital.

The conference was inaugurated by Indonesia's Minister of Manpower, Prof. Yassierli, Ph.D., who in his keynote address set a transformative tone for the event. Titled “Shaping Future Workforce: A People-Cantered Transformation,” his speech underscored the profound shifts reshaping work globally and called for a bold, inclusive approach for preparing the workforce of tomorrow.

Jakarta, a vibrant hub of innovation and cultural richness, set the stage for three days of inspiring keynotes, thought-provoking panels, and hands-on workshops. The theme resonated deeply in an era where artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and digital disruption redefined the workplaces. Dr. Patti Phillips, CEO of ROI Institute and IFTDO Chairman, emphasized the need for HR to drive strategic change by aligning talent development with business goals. Mark Nation, founder of NATION LEADERSHIP Group, captivated attendees with his session on reclaiming human purpose in a disruptive world.

This issue's theme, **Harmony in Diversity**, resonates profoundly with the insights from IFTDO 2025. The conference exemplified cross-cultural collaboration, bringing together diverse voices from over 20 nations to address universal HR challenges. In today's globalized workforce, embracing diversity is no longer optional—it's a strategic imperative. Jakarta's melting pot of cultures served as a powerful backdrop, reflecting how organizations can harness varied perspectives for innovation and excellence. A standout feature was the exhibition, where global training providers and edutech companies unveiled cutting-edge solutions for workforce development.

IFTDO 2025 was more than a conference; it was a call to action. As Sheikh Faleigh bin Sheikh Mansor, IFTDO President, noted, “Resilient leadership is critical in a transforming business landscape.” The discussions underscored that AI is not a replacement but a tool to amplify human potential. HR must prioritize reskilling—40% of the global workforce will need it within three years, per IBM's 2023 report—while fostering adaptive, inclusive cultures.

The baton has now been transferred to Bahrain, which will be hosting the next conference in 2026. Mr. Ahamed Al Ziani President of Bahrain society for Human Capital Management has taken over as the new President of IFTDO, heartiest congratulations and best wishes to him.

Dr. Avinash Chandra Joshi

Editor



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Chair, IFTDO

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IFTDO Board Chair's Message

In a world where organizations are no longer bound by geography, culture is both the bridge that connects us and the lens through which we interpret one another. This edition of the IFTDO Newsletter brings that truth into focus. Across every story, case study, and reflection, one message rings clear: diversity is not the destination — the real power comes when we transform it into genuine collaboration that drives innovation, resilience, and impact.

A Global Gathering with a Shared Purpose

The 51st IFTDO World Conference in Jakarta provided the perfect stage for this message in action. Leaders, practitioners, and visionaries from over 20 nations came together to explore The Future of People and Adaptive Organizations in the Digital Era. This was not simply a gathering of professionals; it felt like a family reunion of “Citizens of the World.” Delegates spoke with sincerity, shared ideas with authenticity, and demonstrated that even across vast cultural differences, alignment on shared goals is possible — and powerful.

Keynote sessions underscored this point. Indonesia's Minister of Manpower called for a people-centered transformation to prepare the workforce for a fast-evolving digital future. Other presenters tackled the intersection of human purpose and technology, emphasizing that AI should not replace human potential but rather amplify it. As several articles in this issue remind us, adaptive leadership — grounded in respect for different perspectives — is the cornerstone of thriving in a globalized workplace.

Models, Strategies, and Technologies for Collaboration

This edition moves beyond philosophy to highlight practical models for success. Dr. Anubha Walia's PRISM™ Model — Prepare, Respect, Implement, Share, Maintain — offers a structured framework for building cross-cultural collaboration into the DNA of an organization. From intercultural awareness training to global mentorship programs and shared learning rituals, the model shows how HR leaders can embed inclusive behaviors into systems, policies, and daily interactions.

Our feature article contributed by Polinode founder and CEO Andrew Pitts and North American Partnerships Manager, Chad Taberner describing how Organizational Network Analysis (ONA) maps informal relationships. These maps reveal hidden cultural silos, identify “bridge builders,” and inform targeted interventions. By understanding how information, trust, and influence flow across cultural boundaries, organizations can design more effective collaborations and avoid the isolation that stifles innovation.

Other contributions explore the “silent catalysts” of organizational excellence — the often-overlooked dimensions of diversity, such as neurodiversity,

generational perspectives, or intersectional identities. These pieces remind us that inclusion begins in the unseen spaces: in the values we uphold, the voices we amplify, and the psychological safety we create. Leaders are called to move from token representation to authentic engagement, ensuring that differences are honored, not merely managed.

Partnership in Action

This issue also celebrates examples of cross-cultural partnership in action. The recognition of Covenant University for its sustained collaboration with IFTDO-CYWEE highlights how institutional alliances can advance youth and women's empowerment. Similarly, global case studies — from managing diversity in a California university classroom to applying transformational leadership in the AI era — show that while contexts vary, the underlying principles of respect, adaptability, and shared purpose are universal.

Throughout these pages, you'll find practical strategies for building inclusive cultures: creating employee resource groups, implementing bias-aware recruitment, embedding cultural agility into leadership KPIs, and sustaining collaboration through continuous learning. You'll also find a shared conviction that harmony in diversity is not a “nice-to-have” — it is a strategic imperative for any organization seeking relevance and resilience in a complex world.

As You Read Consider This

How might these insights apply in your context. What barriers could you dismantle? What cultural bridges could you strengthen? How might you shift from viewing diversity as a challenge to embracing it as your organization's greatest strategic asset?

The call to action is simple yet profound: move beyond diversity to harmony. In doing so, we not only unlock organizational excellence — we take a step toward a more connected and innovative world.

Patti P. Phillips
Chair, IFTDO



Ahamed Al Ziani
President IFTDO

President's Desk

It is with deep gratitude and a strong sense of responsibility that I accept the role of President of IFTDO for the coming term.

Therefore, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the IFTDO Board of Directors and the General Assembly for their trust and support.

I am especially honored by the unanimous approval for the Kingdom of Bahrain to host the 52nd IFTDO World Congress & Exhibition, scheduled for 24–26 November 2026. This is a proud moment for Bahrain and for all of us who believe in the transformative power of human development. Please note that it is the third time that Bahrain is hosting the IFTDO World Conference and Exhibition as it was held in 2002 and in 2016.

The theme of our 2026 Congress will be:

"EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS: Innovation & Sustainability through People", we look forward to bringing together thought leaders, practitioners, and organizations from across the globe to engage in meaningful dialogue and share actionable insights that will shape the future of leadership and development.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, with its rich history, strategic location in the heart of the Gulf, and long-standing tradition of openness and hospitality, offers a unique and welcoming environment for global exchange. Bahrain is known for its flexibility, resilience, and commitment to excellence—making it an ideal host for an event of this magnitude.

We promise you a Congress that reflects IFTDO's mission of advancing global human development, while celebrating the diversity, innovation, and spirit of collaboration that Bahrain is proud to offer.

We look forward to welcoming you all to Bahrain in 2026.

Warm regards,

Ahmed Al Zayani

President

IFTDO

President of Bahrain Society for Human Capital Management

**Dr. Uddesh Kohli**

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HONORARY SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT

51st IFTDO World Conference– The 51st IFTDO World Conference was successfully held in Jakarta (Indonesia) on June 17–19, 2025 at the International Convention Centre. It was hosted by The Futurist Foundation (TFF), Malaysia & Yayasan Futurist Indonesia, jointly with PT. TODAK NUSANTARA GROUP, Indonesia, and DIBTA, on the Theme **The Future of People and Adaptive Organisations in the Digital Era**. Details appear elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Board Meeting and AGM – The Board had second meeting of 2025 on June 16, 2025 and AGM was held on July 18 at Jakarta.

Following future IFTDO World Conferences were approved:
52nd Conference, to be hosted by Bahrain Society for Human Capital Management, at Bahrain on November 24–26, 2026

53rd Conference to be hosted by Impakt Investment Foundation, at Serbia in 2027. (Dates to be decided)

In principle approval was given to launch following IFTDO Chapters, in addition to existing Chapter in Africa:

- (i) ASEAN
- (ii) South Asia
- (iii) Americas
- (iv) Oman

The AGM approved the Annual Report and Accounts of IFTDO for 2024. Following were elected as Board members for the term 2026–2027

1. Dr. Helmi Sallam, Egypt
2. Dr. Vinayshil Gautam, India
3. Dr. Ghalib Hosni, Oman
4. Dr. Wafaa Haidamous, Lebanon
5. Mr. Roy Lai, Singapore

New Members: Following new Members have joined since last Newsletter:

Full Member

Impakt Investment Foundation, Bosnia–Herzegovina, June 2025

Associate Members

1. Talentuum Experts Conseils, Canada– May 2025
2. Celis Learning Architects, USA–July 2025
3. Divatharv Vikas Foundation, India, August 2025

Webinars: Following Webinars have been organized:

1. May 27, 2025– 'The Contemplative Leader: Thriving in a Rapidly Changing

World' Presented by The Flourishing Circle, led by members of The Flourishing Circle—a global team of leadership coaches, psychologists, and mindfulness practitioners trained by experts such as Dr. Ryan Niemiec (VIA Institute), Otto Scharmer (Presencing Institute), and Jon Kabat-Zinn

2. June 24, 2025 - 'Inviting Individual Change with the Prosci ADKAR® Mode', by Sudeshna Basu Roy

3. July 29, 2025- 'Equipping Technical Professionals to Communicate with Confidence', by Neil Thompson

IFTDO Global HRD Awards 2025– The Awards were presented during the 51st IFTDO World Conference at Jakarta to the following Organisations:

Value for Money

Energy Fiji (Fiji) for the Project–Fueling Potential, Empowering Growth: EFL's Apprentices Development Program

Innovation in Practice

Workforce Development Agenda, Ministry of Labor (Taiwan), for the Project Innovative Strategies for Regional Talent Development and Investment

Omantel (Oman), for the Project FIKRA

An IFTDO Special Award was presented to Dr David O. Oyedepo, Chancellor and Chairman Board of Regents, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria, for Outstanding Leadership and Partnership with IFTDO CYWEE Africa

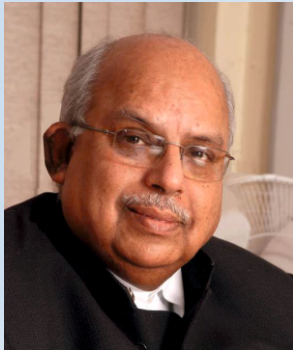
Accreditation Manual

CCC Chair Wafaa Haidamous Hallasou and the CCC committee members have developed the IFTDO Accreditation Standards Manual. The next step includes pilot testing of the standards implementation.

Dr. Uddesh Kohli

Hony. Secretary General

PERSPECTIVE COLUMN



**Vinayshil Gautam, PhD; FRAS
(London)**

**Founder Director, IIM-K; 1st Head,
Management Dept, IIT-D
Leader Consulting Team, IIM-Shillong;
1st Hon. Dean KPMG Academy)
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Culture is a bond between individuals and people in subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways. It covers everything from what one eats to how one eats to how one cohabitates. Not to forget how one passes away (dies) and indeed the rituals after one has breathed one's last. It is simultaneously a bond and a dividing line. It has to do with identity and expression.

Much work has been done on the cultural dimensions of people to establish that what puts people together also puts people apart. One of the biggest areas in which cultural dimensions manifest themselves has to do with gender and the rituals of life. Yet, the law of nature requires that there should be cross-cultural collaboration. It also manifests itself on the platform of other human needs.

Illustratively, culture in flourishing agricultural products would need collaboration with the culture of those who deal with industrial products because, for agriculture, a plough would be needed, as would something to dig the ground for plantation without the help of animals. Each instrument requires a production unit which is not related to agriculture, but at the same time, collaboration between agricultural efforts and industrial efforts becomes a must.

Suffice it to say that fostering organizational cultural collaboration is essentially at the root of a civil society.

A little bit of reflective thinking makes it obvious that the

Harmony in Diversity: Fostering Cross Cultural Collaboration for Organizational Excellence

culture elaborated above, in relatively specific terms, has subtle overtones in one's behaviour and conduct. This means that every employee in an organizational system brings to his job a cultural orientation which determines his behaviour. This has to do with values. The values, in turn, relate to identity and personality formation. This determines the sense of right and wrong, something that often acquires spiritualistic overtones also. The above narrative makes it obvious that complexity becomes ingrained in interpersonal relationships.

When one sees the making of an organization, which may have any number of people from various cultural backgrounds, weaving organizational cultural unity amongst them is a demanding task. It needs insights, skills, and certainty of an extraordinary order. It cannot be left to find its way on its own. A goal-directed effort becomes essential. This has to be led with caution, care, and foresight. Many organizations have developed an approach, to such issues which is inherent in the philosophy and understanding of the top brass of the organization, both in a formal sense and in an informal sense.

This is a no-choice situation because the organization has to pursue its viability with clarity and vigour. Any jeopardy on this will have problems in the optimal utilization of organizational resources for organizational goals.

This brings us to one of the key ingredients of organizational excellence.

Working across cultures or pursuing organizational goals requires harmony in diversity; it requires subsuming the differentiators for a common purpose. Its coupling requires an unified orientation approach to work. It requires creating work designs where interdependency is recognized as not only a cultural requirement but also an operational need. The top management and its support system have to enable this.

The contributions to this number highlight certain aspect of this pursuit. This is something which IFTDO has one of its prime challenges and objectives. Everyone needs to help focus on this and take the cause of harmony in diversity further towards making it worthwhile for everyone to offer one's best.

Bahrain: Where Modernity Meets Ancient Heritage - A Jewel of Arabian Tourism

Ahamed Al Ziani, President IFTDO

The Kingdom of Bahrain, an archipelago nestled in the Arabian Gulf, is rapidly emerging as a compelling tourist destination, offering a unique blend of rich history, vibrant culture, and modern attractions. With its strategic location, warm hospitality, and a growing array of experiences, Bahrain is captivating the attention of travelers seeking an authentic and diverse Arabian adventure.

For centuries, Bahrain has been a crucial trading hub, its shores witnessing the ebb and flow of civilizations. This legacy is palpable in its UNESCO World Heritage sites, such as the Qal'at al-Bahrain (Bahrain Fort), a testament to the Dilmun, Portuguese, and Persian influences that have shaped the islands. Wandering through its ancient stones offers a captivating glimpse into Bahrain's storied past. Similarly, the Dilmun Burial Mounds, an extensive necropolis dating back millennia, whisper tales of ancient rituals and beliefs, offering a profound connection to the region's earliest inhabitants.

Beyond its historical treasures, Bahrain pulses with a contemporary energy. The capital city, Manama, boasts a dazzling skyline punctuated by architectural marvels like the Bahrain World Trade Center. Its bustling souqs, such as the Bab Al Bahrain souq, are a sensory delight, overflowing with the aroma of spices, the gleam of gold, and the intricate craftsmanship of local artisans. Here, visitors can haggle for traditional wares, savor local delicacies, and immerse themselves in the vibrant atmosphere of Bahraini life.

Bahrain's commitment to modern tourism is evident in its world-class facilities and attractions. The Bahrain International Circuit hosts the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix, drawing motorsport enthusiasts from around the globe. Luxury resorts and spas dot the coastline, offering havens of relaxation and rejuvenation. Water sports enthusiasts can indulge in activities ranging from diving and snorkeling in the clear Gulf waters to jet skiing and sailing.

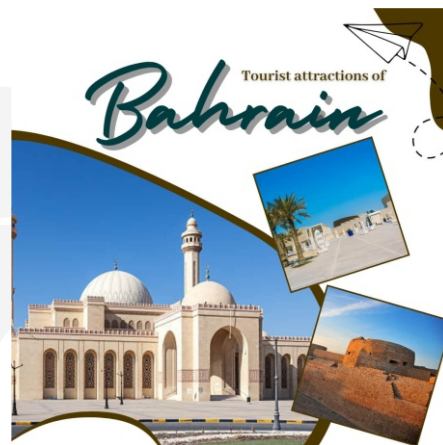
The Kingdom also places a strong emphasis on

cultural preservation and promotion. The Bahrain National Museum houses a rich collection of artifacts that narrate the country's history and heritage. Numerous art galleries and cultural centers showcase the burgeoning contemporary art scene. Traditional music and dance performances offer glimpses into Bahrain's artistic soul.

Furthermore, Bahrain is increasingly recognized for its family-friendly attractions. The Lost Paradise of Dilmun Water Park provides hours of aquatic fun, while the Al Areen Wildlife Park and Reserve offers encounters with diverse animal species. Numerous parks and beaches provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and leisurely family outings.

Connectivity is another key advantage for Bahrain. Bahrain International Airport serves as a major regional hub, with excellent connections to destinations worldwide. The compact size of the islands makes it easy for visitors to explore its various attractions with ease.

In conclusion, Bahrain offers a compelling and multifaceted tourism experience. Its seamless blend of ancient heritage and modern dynamism, coupled with its warm hospitality and diverse attractions, positions it as a rising star in the Middle East's tourism landscape. Whether you are a history buff, a thrill-seeker, a culture enthusiast, or simply seeking a relaxing getaway, Bahrain promises a memorable and enriching journey. As the Kingdom continues to invest in its tourism infrastructure and promote its unique offerings, it is poised to become an even more sought-after destination for global travelers.





Sheikh Faleigh Bin Sheikh Mansor

A People-centered Transformation: Indonesia's Minister Of Manpower Sets The Vision At Iftdo 2025



POWERED BY TODAK

At the opening of the 51st IFTDO World Conference & Exhibition 2025 in Jakarta, Indonesia's Minister of Manpower, Prof. Yassierli, Ph.D., delivered a keynote address that set a transformative tone for the three-day event. Titled "Shaping Future Workforce: A People-Centered Transformation," his speech underscored the profound shifts reshaping work globally and called for a bold, inclusive approach to preparing the workforce of tomorrow.

The Minister began by outlining the pressing global challenges confronting labor markets today: the rise of artificial intelligence and automation, increasing informality in employment, outdated labor relations models, and a growing search for meaning and purpose among younger generations. He emphasized that 44% of core skills are projected to change within the next five years, and that without rapid and large-scale reskilling, millions of workers could be left behind. In response, he introduced the People-Centered Approach (PCA)—a framework that places human dignity, aspirations, and potential at the center of all policy, organizational, and national workforce strategies. PCA, he argued, is vital for ensuring that transformations remain equitable, empowering, and resilient.



The Minister of Manpower delivered a keynote speech at the 51st IFTDO World Conference & Exhibition 2025, held on Tuesday (June 17, 2025) at the Jakarta International Convention Center (JICC), Senayan, Jakarta.

To address these challenges, Indonesia is pursuing a national workforce transformation strategy anchored in three pillars: strengthening human capital foundations, reforming labor institutions, and leveraging digital innovation. This includes modernizing vocational training centers (BLK) to align with industry needs, advancing inclusive workforce policies for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, and launching a National Productivity Movement. Simultaneously, labor relations are being reimagined to move beyond compliance and conflict, toward collaborative models based on shared vision and value creation. On the digital front, platforms such as SIAPKerja are being enhanced with AI to provide real-time labor market data and targeted policy support.

In closing, Prof. Yassierli called upon all IFTDO members and global stakeholders to take decisive action through three key pathways: fostering a growth mindset across all levels of society, scaling inclusive reskilling initiatives, and transforming industrial relations into cooperative ecosystems. He stressed that the role of human resources must expand beyond organizational performance to serve as a catalyst for national development. His keynote stood as a powerful reminder that, amid uncertainty and technological disruption, it is shared values and collaborative spirit—especially those embodied in Gotong Royong—that will shape a more inclusive and sustainable future of work.

"I congratulate IFTDO," he concluded, "and look forward to the ideas that emerge from this conference."



Award presented to the Minister of Manpower during the 51st IFTDO World Conference & Exhibition 2025, held at JICC, Jakarta.

What made this vision uniquely Indonesian was the invocation of Gotong Royong—the traditional national value of mutual cooperation. Prof. Yassierli described Gotong Royong as the "strategic DNA" of Indonesia, a cultural philosophy that must guide not only government initiatives but also collaboration between employers, labor unions, training institutions, and society at large. "This spirit of collective action," he noted, "is essential for building trust, ensuring inclusivity, and advancing shared prosperity."



Group photo with the Minister of Manpower at the 51st IFTDO World Conference & Exhibition 2025.



Dr. (Mrs.) Janet I.K. Jolaoso

Co-Chair Elect Women & Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Committee

Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria, has consistently demonstrated exemplary support for the activities of the International Federation of Training and Development Organisations – Committee on Youth and Women Empowerment and Entrepreneurship (IFTDO-CYWEE).

Over the years, the University has graciously hosted our annual Women's Empowerment Forum on no fewer than five occasions, offering complimentary access to its state-of-the-art event facilities. In addition, Covenant University extends warm hospitality by accommodating to our team at its Guest House during these events, further underscoring its commitment to community impact and youth/women development.

Beyond hosting, the University has continually provided skilled and dedicated staff who actively contribute to the success of our initiatives through logistical support, coordination, and volunteer services.

Covenant University also plays a key role in advancing entrepreneurial capacity among youth. Through its partnership with IFTDO-CYWEE, the University has granted us access to engage with its 100-level students—providing orientation sessions on academic success, career development, and

Spotlight On STRATEGIC Partnership: Covenant University's Dr. David Olaniyi Oyedepo, Was Recently Honoured With A Prestigious Award By IFTDO



entrepreneurial thinking right from the onset of their tertiary education journey.

Notably, Covenant University maintains an international presence within IFTDO-CYWEE by having a board-level representative actively contributing to global strategic discussions. The institution also fulfills its obligations by remitting annual membership dues.

In recognition of these numerous contributions, the Chancellor of Covenant University Dr. David Olaniyi Oyedepo, was recently honoured with a prestigious award at the IFTDO International Conference and Exhibition held at Jakarta, Indonesia. The Award was delivered by the Chairman of IFTDO-CYWEE, Dr Janet I. K Jolaoso and some team members(Prof Tayo George IFTDO Board of Directors member, Engr Richardson Adesuyi, Dr. Femi Bolaji) and was received by the Deputy Vice Chancellor and some leadership team members.

This gesture reflects the organization's deep appreciation for the University's unwavering support, visionary leadership, and alignment with IFTDO's mission to empower youth and women through training and development.

Covenant University remains a shining example of institutional partnership that truly drives sustainable impact in youth and women entrepreneurial development across Nigeria and beyond.





Hon. Prof. Roy Lai

Founder & Chair, R&A Group
President, Singapore Training & Development Association
Executive Board Member,
International Federation for Training and Development (IFTDO)

I begin by extending my deepest thanks to all my friends, colleagues, and everyone who attended the 51st International Federation of Training and Development Organisations (IFTDO) World Conference, held on 19th and 20th June 2025 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

To me, it was an unforgettable experience — filled with countless magical moments that will stay with me forever. It was truly Harmony in Diversity at its peak.

As I've always said, IFTDO is not just another international body — it is perhaps the most genuinely inclusive organisation in the world. At the board level, it is represented by one of the most diverse groups of professionals I've ever had the privilege to serve with, each one bringing unique experiences, cultures, and ideas from across the globe. The conference began with the opening remarks by Prof. Gautam in his inimitable style.

Among the many people I encountered, one particularly memorable meeting was with Raed from the Dead Sea region. Though we had interacted before, this was our first in-person conversation — and we ended up talking for over an hour! Soon after, others started to stream in: Sheikh from Malaysia, Patti from the United States, and many other esteemed members. As I looked around, it struck me — we had individuals from dozens of countries, all gathered in one breakfast hall, sharing food and stories.

And at that moment, as I looked down from a higher floor at the open breakfast area below, something profound occurred to me: despite our different cultural backgrounds and languages, we are all from the same world. Different, yes — but ultimately, we are all Citizens of the World.

Reflections from the 51st IFTDO World Conference in Jakarta



I want to make it clear that I write this article not as a teacher, but as a learner — this is a reflection, a sharing of a learning journey, not a lesson. It is something for us to ponder together.

In that one hotel, in that one city, we had delegates from Fiji, Australia, the United States, Portugal, Serbia, the United Kingdom, China, Oman, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mauritius, India, Bangladesh, Taiwan, several parts of Africa, and many more — all under one roof.

What I saw in everyone's eyes was not "What can I get from you?" but instead, "What can I do for you?" There was sincerity, an eagerness to build real connections, not transactional ones. Each morning, I witnessed people asking one another, "How are you doing?" — not out of politeness, but from a place of true authenticity.

This wasn't just a conference. It felt like a family reunion.

Every participant shared the same agenda — to contribute to the success of the event. I say this with conviction: having travelled the world and participated in many global conferences, served on numerous boards, and taken part in countless initiatives, I have never before witnessed such a high level of collaboration across so many different cultures. It was a powerful display of what's possible when sincerity and purpose align.

The effectiveness, efficiency, and excellence demonstrated — all within diverse and complex contexts — was nothing short of remarkable. Despite the many layers of context, execution, deliberation, decisions, and

operations, everything went smoothly. Flawlessly, in fact. It was simply unbelievable.

One phrase kept emerging in my mind as the conference went on: International Family of Training & Development Extraordinaire. That's how I left Jakarta — not feeling like I was part of a federation, but like I was leaving family. Brothers and sisters united by a shared purpose. One participant even put it beautifully: "We are not just professionals. We are Citizens of the World."

On a personal note, I fell ill at the end of the conference. Yet, what touched me most was learning afterward that many of my colleagues had spent the night praying for my recovery. Their concern and care lifted me, and I recovered. Their kindness reminded me once again of the extraordinary spirit of this global family.

Together with the success of the 51st IFTDO Conference in Jakarta, what I witnessed was not just a theme — Harmony in Diversity: Fostering Cross-Cultural Collaboration for Organisational Excellence — but that very message in action.

As I reflect, four key thoughts emerged in my mind — principles that made all of this possible:—

1. Acknowledgement and Acceptance

We must first acknowledge our differences — in culture,

background, beliefs — and then fully accept them. Only then can true collaboration begin.

2. Agreement in Difference

It is possible — and necessary — to find agreement even in our differences. The biggest challenge is not to erase diversity, but to embrace it while still coming together for shared goals.

3. Sincerity and Authenticity

These two qualities stood out to me throughout the entire conference. The sincerity in every handshake, every conversation; the authenticity in every interaction — they weren't staged, they were real. And they made all the difference.

4. Family and Citizens of the World

When we live the above three values, we become more than colleagues. We become a global family. We become Citizens of the World — united not by geography, but by purpose, respect, and humanity.—

In closing, the 51st IFTDO Conference in Jakarta reminded me that when hearts connect, and when diversity is celebrated rather than feared, excellence follows naturally. It was not just a conference. It was a living testament to what cross-cultural collaboration can truly achieve.

Thank you, Jakarta. Thank you, IFTDO, Thank you Family





Dr. Ranjan Kumar Mohapatra

Advisory Committee
Chairman

In the symphony of today's globalised world, organisations are no longer monolithic entities bound by geography, language, or even sector. They are living ecosystems; interconnected, pluralistic, and increasingly diverse. From gender and ethnicity to age, ability, and thought, diversity is not a tick-box exercise. It is the silent, often underappreciated, catalyst that propels organisations toward sustainable excellence.

Yet, diversity alone is not enough. Without intentional efforts to foster inclusion, without mechanisms that promote collaboration across cultural and identity lines, diversity can just as easily breed division as it can drive innovation. The key lies in harmony, not in uniformity, but in the art of respectful difference.

The Expanded Definition of Diversity

Often, conversations around diversity get reduced to visible markers: gender ratios, racial representation, or physical accessibility. While these are crucial, true diversity spans a wider spectrum. It encompasses neurodiversity, socio-economic backgrounds, language, generational perspectives, educational journeys, sexual orientation, cultural norms, spiritual beliefs, and even personality types.

Imagine a team meeting where one person thinks in visuals, another in data, and a third in metaphors. Or a project group where some members are highly structured while others thrive in ambiguity. The richness of such a team is not merely in the variation; it's in the synergy that can emerge if each is heard, valued, and leveraged meaningfully.

Moving Beyond Representation to Inclusion

While representation is the first visible step, inclusion is the harder, quieter journey. It requires systems and leadership that ask deeper questions:

- Whose voice is missing at the table?
- Who speaks, and who is listened to?

Harmony in Diversity: The Silent Catalyst for Organisational Excellence



- Are decision-making structures equitable?
- Do our policies reflect lived realities?

Inclusion is about psychological safety, the assurance that individuals can bring their whole selves to work without fear of being marginalised or misunderstood. It is in mentorship programs that support women returning from maternity leave. It is in adaptive technologies for colleagues with visual or auditory impairments. It is in rethinking meeting formats so that introverts and those less fluent in the dominant language can contribute fully.

Culture as the Invisible Thread

Culture shapes how people interpret authority, express disagreement, view time, or even define success. A multicultural team, while diverse on paper, may struggle with misalignment if these differences are not acknowledged and understood.

Consider a scenario where a Western manager interprets silence as disengagement, while their Asian team member sees it as a sign of respect. Or where a German colleague values punctuality to the minute, while a Latin American team views time more fluidly. Without cultural intelligence (CQ as it is now termed), these nuances can lead to judgment and friction.

Cross-cultural collaboration requires conscious unlearning as well. It asks leaders and teams to suspend assumptions and approach difference with curiosity rather than correction. Training programs in cultural sensitivity, diverse representation in leadership, and the embedding of intercultural values in onboarding processes are vital steps in this direction.

The Power of Intersectionality

It is also important to understand that identities are not siloed. A young, queer, disabled woman from a rural background brings with her a web of experiences shaped by the intersection of multiple identities. Her lived reality differs vastly from someone who shares only one or two or even none of those identities.

Policies, therefore, must go beyond single-axis thinking. For instance, gender-neutral hiring practices are laudable; but are they also accessible to candidates with disabilities? Diversity audits, feedback loops, and employee resource groups (ERGs) that reflect this layered reality can help make organisational frameworks more inclusive and just.

The Leadership Imperative

Leaders must not only endorse diversity; they must embody it. Inclusive leadership is not a soft skill; it is a strategic imperative. Such leaders do not simply tolerate dissent; they invite it. They reward diverse viewpoints not because they are politically correct, but because they know that in complexity, only multiplicity wins.

Great leaders know when to speak and when to amplify. They interrupt bias in performance appraisals, challenge monocultural hiring pipelines, and create spaces for dialogue where discomfort is not avoided but engaged constructively.

Importantly, inclusive leaders are learners. They are not threatened by what they don't understand; instead, they lean in, with humility and openness.

Tangible Outcomes of Cross-Cultural Collaboration

The business case for diversity and inclusion is well-established. Studies by McKinsey, Deloitte, and Harvard have shown time and again that diverse teams outperform their peers in innovation, profitability, and decision-making quality. But numbers, while persuasive, only tell half the story.

What truly shifts the needle is human experience:

When a visually impaired coder writes breakthrough software because her needs were accommodated;
When a trans employee feels safe enough to transition openly at work;

When an Indigenous wisdom keeper is consulted for a sustainability strategy in a multinational corporation. These are not just good practices. They are the milestones of moral leadership.

Challenges on the Path

The road to harmony in diversity is not without its thorns. Resistance to change, unconscious bias, "diversity fatigue," and fear of tokenism are all real hurdles. Moreover, global organisations face the additional challenge of reconciling local cultural norms with universal human rights.

There are no perfect answers. But progress does not lie in avoidance; it lies in active engagement. Honest conversations, willingness to make mistakes, and an adaptive mindset are the fuel for the journey.

Building the Inner Architecture of Inclusion

At its core, fostering cross-cultural collaboration is not only about strategy. It is about mindset. It demands inner work; of recognising privilege, re-examining assumptions, and rebuilding narratives.

It is about seeing difference not as something to manage, but something to honour. About shifting from "How do we make them fit in?" to "How do we expand our space to include?"

Inclusion begins in the invisible realms; values, language, intent. And when anchored well, it flourishes into policies, systems, and everyday practices.

A Closing Message

In an increasingly fragmented world, building harmony in diversity is not merely an organisational aspiration. It is a societal responsibility. It calls upon each of us not only as professionals but as human beings, to walk the talk of equity, empathy, and shared excellence.

Let us remember: Diversity is the fact. Inclusion is the act. And harmony is the art.

It is an art worth learning, living, and leading by.

Improving Cross-Cultural Collaboration Through Organizational Network Analysis

Chad Taberner and Andrew Pitts, Polinode

Introducing ONA as a powerful tool

Organizational network analysis (ONA) is a tool - used both internally within companies and also by consulting organizations - that measures the informal relationships that exist within that organization and then maps and visualizes those relationships as an interactive network. Network analysis can be used for a variety of different applications, including leadership development, identifying change agents, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. One important application is improving collaboration, and that is what this article focuses on. More specifically, how ONA can be used to improve cross-cultural collaboration.

As organizations have increasingly become globalized and driven by knowledge work, effective cross-cultural collaboration has risen in importance. It's an issue that we see fairly regularly as we collect and analyze data on relationships, and it's one deserving of more attention and some suggestions for how we can tackle it. ONA is a powerful tool in this context.

What do we mean by cross-cultural collaboration challenges?

At the most basic level, there are often communication barriers that exist because of language barriers. Even where language is not an issue, there are often cultural differences that go beyond language such as:

- High-context versus low-context communication styles;
- Differences in decision-making processes and expectations that exist around hierarchy; and
- Different approaches to how trust is built, in particular, relationship-oriented approaches versus task-oriented approaches.

We have a natural tendency towards homophily - to connect with those who share similar traits to our own - and that creates challenges in the workplace. It can impede innovation, reduce productivity, and impact employee engagement (including, in some instances, feelings of isolation).

Utilizing ONA to improve how cross-cultural teams function

The first step, as is so often the case, is measurement. Fundamentally, there are two types of ONA - Active ONA and Passive ONA. Active ONA is where we ask respondents questions about their relationships with others. These questions can be as simple as asking every member of a team to list their 20 most important working relationships. In the context of identifying and resolving issues around cross-cultural collaboration, we would also suggest collecting (or adding) information around identity, such as country, location, language or those dimensions that are particularly relevant. It's also possible to drill into some of the potential relationship issues we have highlighted above, such as around decision-making and trust or approachability. Passive ONA is where we utilize the digital exhaust of an organization to collect data on the informal relationships that exist and how it is functioning in reality. We never analyze the content of the communications, only ever the metadata. As is often the case, there are advantages and disadvantages of each approach, with one approach often being the better option.

After the data has been collected, what does the process look like, and how can we use it to understand and start to break down the kind of cultural barriers that often exist? Well, typically, we will visualize and analyze the data as a network, including calculating a range of different network metrics such as the informal groups and communities that exist, as well as different types of centrality to identify those individuals who have an outsized influence compared to their peers. This approach then allows us to, for example:



1. Identify cultural clusters and potential isolation of minority cultural groups;
2. Discover informal leaders and cultural bridges who can facilitate cross-cultural connections; and
3. Map patterns of knowledge flow and decision making in order to identify where cultural barriers may impede one or the other



Figure A: Illustrative network diagram where the circles represent individuals and have been sized by the total number of incoming connections they have

Beyond Analysis and Towards Strategic Interventions

When ONA is done well, it's about more than just identifying and understanding any issues that may exist. It's about designing and executing on strategic interventions that have a lasting impact and help to address those issues. Things like getting people into a room and running a workshop where the (anonymized) network is shown and a sense-making discussion held can be incredibly impactful. In the context of improving cross-cultural communication, some interventions that are worth considering include:

1. Targeted relationship-building initiatives aimed at connecting relatively isolated cultural groups;
2. Encouraging individuals in key network positions to proactively serve as cultural bridge-builders and to understand the strategic importance of their role;
3. Redesigning team structures to ensure cultural diversity and connection, and providing a decision-making "map" to group leaders; and
4. Designing and delivering training programs focused on individuals identified as potential cultural connectors.

Final thoughts

ONA is an incredibly flexible tool - collecting the network data often sheds light on issues that you weren't entirely aware of or might have suspected, but had no concrete evidence of their existence. It allows you to pinpoint what and where the issues are and to design focused interventions. It's rarely a "set and forget" exercise, though. Once you start mapping an organization's network, you will inevitably see other opportunities for improvement. That is when you will fully appreciate that organizational networks are complex and evolving structures that rarely stand still.

Chad Taberner



Chad Taberner is the North American Partnerships Manager for Polinode, a leading provider of organizational network analysis software and solutions for enterprises. Chad joined Polinode in 2019 to help ensure the success of Polinode's Enterprise and Partner customers in North America.

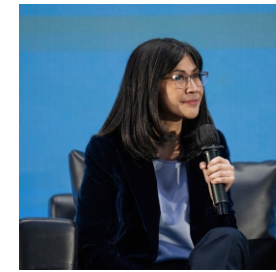
Andrew Pitts



Andrew Pitts is the Founder and CEO of Polinode, a leading provider of organisational network analysis software and solutions for enterprises. Polinode is used by over twenty large enterprises and consulting organisations around the world for a variety of applications including:

identifying emerging and/or hidden talent; improving collaboration; finding influencers; succession planning; organisational design; and diversity and inclusion. Since founding Polinode in 2013 Andrew has enjoyed working at the intersection of technology and HR and is passionate about using technology to help optimise and improve modern organisations.

IFTDO 2025 PICTORIAL JOURNEY



51ST IFTDO WORLD CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION 2025



51ST IFTDO WORLD CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION 2025

**Shen, Chien-Chung Ph.D**

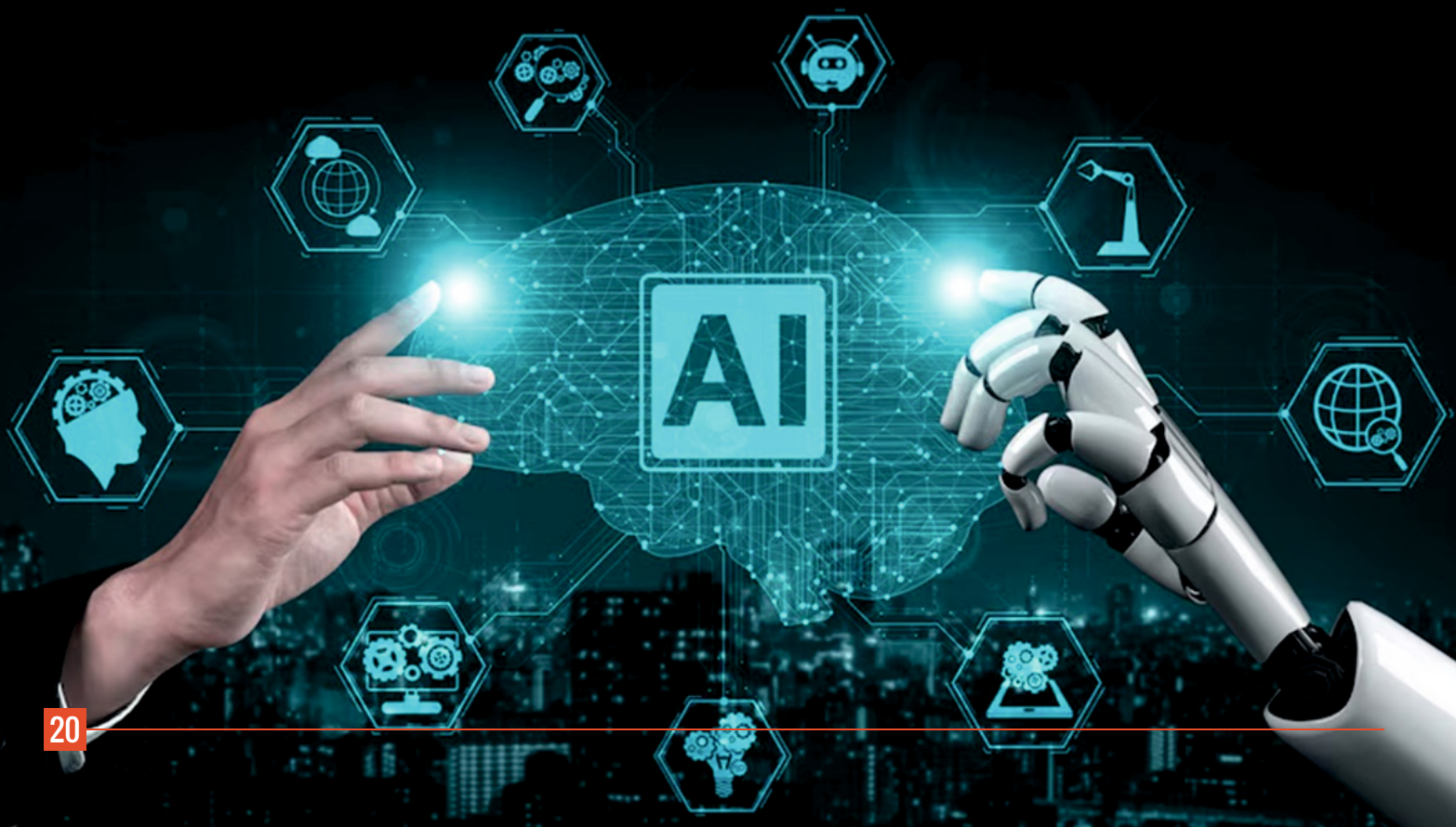
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The Use and Advancement of Transformational Leadership for Civil Servants in the Transforming Era of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

has been crucial in addressing the complex problems of industrialization and fostering social welfare and sustainable development. Together, these shifts have laid the foundations for the emergence of the contemporary digital governance state.

The sweeping changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution fundamentally redefined the functions and roles of governments across the world. By dismantling traditional agricultural economies and long-established social structures, the Industrial Revolution gave rise to new societal challenges and development imperatives. In response, governments evolved from playing the limited role of a “night-watchman” to becoming active “interveners,” “service providers,” and ultimately “digital governors.” Government functions are no longer confined to maintaining basic law and order but now extend to economic regulation, social welfare, public health, environmental protection, and the promotion of universal education. This expansion of responsibilities

In tandem with this transformation of governmental roles, the civil service has also undergone profound change. Civil servants have gradually moved beyond their traditional identity as mere administrative executors to become multifaceted professionals who play diverse roles in governance. They are no longer solely responsible for executing laws and regulations; rather, they now act as policy designers, providers of public services, facilitators of collaboration, and drivers of organizational innovation. This evolution reflects the rising expectations placed on public servants to respond flexibly to complex societal needs and to actively shape governance outcomes.



In the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI), civil servants must cultivate transformational leadership qualities to guide public institutions through digital transformation. Such leadership is essential for enhancing administrative efficiency and improving the quality of public services. By articulating a clear vision, inspiring and empowering teams, offering individualized support, and fostering intellectual stimulation, civil servants can leverage AI technologies to advance government innovation and societal progress. AI is reshaping industries worldwide at an unprecedented speed, and the public sector is no exception. Faced with the opportunities and challenges brought by AI, civil servants must embrace transformational leadership to navigate this rapidly evolving landscape. This requires leaders to craft and communicate a compelling vision for AI adoption, motivate teams to pursue common goals, and enhance efficiency and service quality.

Transformational leaders stimulate intellectual curiosity by encouraging civil servants to explore innovative uses of AI, develop new skills in data analytics, and engage in digital collaboration. At the same time, they provide personalized support, understanding and addressing employees' concerns and needs during the transition process. By leading by example and actively learning about AI, these leaders foster an organizational culture that values openness, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Through such leadership, the public sector can thrive in the AI era, delivering higher-quality, citizen-centered public services.

Today's society is rapidly advancing into the age of artificial intelligence, placing unprecedented pressure on the public sector to transform. Confronted with the surge of digital technologies, traditional administrative models often struggle to keep pace with demands for adaptability and innovation. In this context, transformational leadership has become an indispensable capability for civil servants tasked with guiding organizational change. By establishing a clear vision, communicating with inspiration, encouraging creative thinking, and providing individualized care, transformational leaders can drive deep internal change and help their institutions embrace intelligent governance.

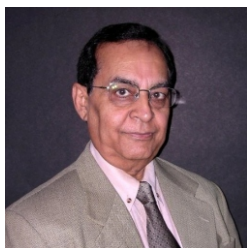
Transformational leaders within the public sector play a vital role in fostering a culture of continuous learning and proactive adaptation. They champion the strategic

use of AI to streamline processes, enhance decision-making, and deliver services that are more responsive and citizen-focused. By promoting intellectual stimulation, they empower civil servants to challenge outdated routines, experiment with new solutions, and co-create innovative approaches to generating public value. By offering personalized support and understanding individual needs, they build trust and psychological safety—essential conditions for successful transformation.

Moreover, transformational leadership extends beyond hierarchical authority. It embodies a mindset that values cross-sector collaboration, recognizing that the complex challenges of the AI era demand collective intelligence and shared expertise. By forging partnerships with technology experts, academic institutions, and the private sector, transformational civil servants can draw upon diverse sources of knowledge to co-create governance solutions that are agile, ethical, and inclusive.

Ultimately, as governments navigate the uncharted territory of the AI age, transformational leadership will be pivotal in determining whether public institutions can move beyond bureaucratic inertia and fully embrace digital innovation. Through visionary direction, empathetic engagement, and an unwavering commitment to public value, civil servants who possess transformational leadership capabilities will help shape a future in which technology enhances human welfare, strengthens democratic governance, and serves the greater good.





MANAGING DIVERSITY IN A STATE UNIVERSITY IN CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.



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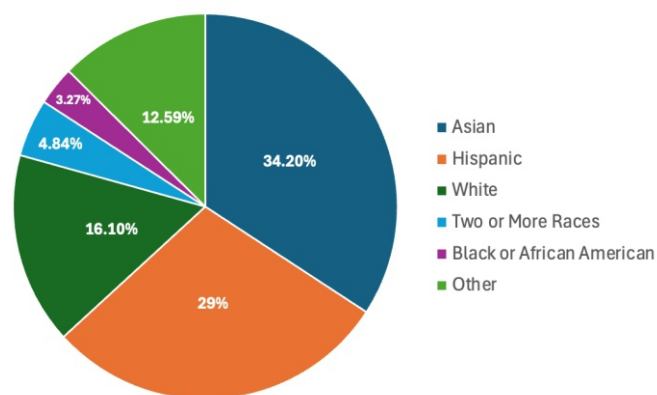
The author had the privilege to connect himself and serve San Jose State University (SJSU), a major academic center of California State University, U.S.A. through a Conference organized by the International Federation of Training and Development Organization (IFTDO) in 2004 in Delhi, India. A golden opportunity came his way by chairing some sessions and meeting the Professors from SJSU. Indeed, a great opportunity to “Show the Value of What You Do” as demonstrated by Patti* in her book came on his way and he grabbed this golden opportunity about two decades ago through his background and experience of managing international training programs at the global level and academics in Business Schools in India, Thailand and U.S.A. The overall impact of this assignment is: ALWAYS KEEP ACTIVE WITH POSITIVE MINDSET. OH, MIND RELAX PLEASE**.

When you teach in a US State University classroom, one must face and meet students from all over the world, other cultures and cultivating respect for many perspectives and prepare global citizens to lead better lives. The fact is that Colleges and Universities across the United States work hard to create welcoming environments for all students, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, ability, age, economic status, or sexual orientation. Depending on where they call home, international students coming to the United States for the first time may not be used to seeing so many different types of people, customs, and beliefs, especially in a classroom. Others come to university and feel isolated, unable to find a comfortable community so far away from familiar faces and activities. These are normal reactions and are often lumped together under the term culture shock. While this work is ongoing, the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion inform just about every decision made by a university. But the million-dollar question is “What is Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Education.” The practice of recognizing individual differences and involving people from a wide range of backgrounds by creating a safe, positive, and respectful community “is called **DIVERSITY**. “The act of

treating people from different backgrounds fairly and impartially” is called **Equity**. And it recognizes that “there is inequality in the world and that adjustments need to be made to foster balance. **INCLUSION** is the “action of involving and empowering people with diverse identities, and promoting and sustaining a sense of belonging, with respect for different talents, backgrounds, and ways of living.” Diversity, equity, and inclusion are not just good ideas, and they are not just charitable acts or feel-good concepts that go away once a student graduates. Committing to these values, in both personal and professional settings, can have a positive impact on a student's overall well-being and on the greater community and society. Let us realize that learning, growth, tolerance and friendship come from exchange of ideas on a university campus. Let us now share our experiences at SJSU.

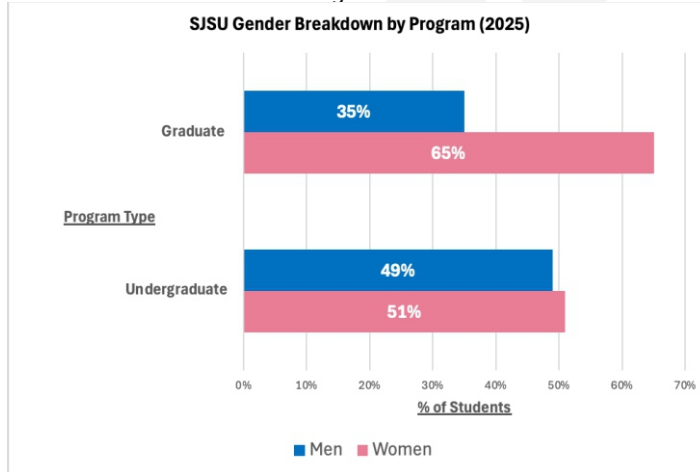
San Jose State University is known for its diverse student population. Notably, Asian and international students' enrolments as well as graduate students' enrolment, were the highest among all CSU campuses. The university student body is recognized as one of the most authentic diverse student bodies. San Jose State total enrollment is approximately 36,208 students. 23,317 are undergraduates and 4,123 are graduate students. The enrolled student population at SJSU is 34.2% Asian, 29% Hispanic, or Latino, 16.1% White, 4.84% Two or More Races, 3.27% Black or African American, and 12.59% identifying with other ethnicities. (See figure 1).

SJSU Student Demographic Breakdown by Ethnicity (2025)



The full-time San Jose State undergraduate population is made up of 51% women, and 49% men. About 65% of full-time grad students are women, and 35% men (See figure 2). The age profile of students is quite diverse: 18-25 years (69%), 25-29 years (18%), 30-34 years (6%) and 35+ years (7%). This profile changes towards higher age groups for evening classes with more working students coming from industry but full of diverse experience which adds to total learning.

Figure 2



International Students at San Jose State are from 97 countries with the majority coming from India, China, and Vietnam. While it was a joy and thrill to teach large classes of 120 students and that too in Management Science/ Quantitative Business Analysis, it was a real challenge to manage diversity of various kinds both in the classroom and personal meetings with students during office hours.

To add further on diversity, SJSU has a diverse faculty, with a significant international presence, particularly from India. While the exact breakdown by nationality for all faculty is not readily available, approximately 48% are White, 22% Asian, 4% Black or African Americans and the remaining other nationalities. Diverse faculty experience is another challenge to learn, deal with and contribute to collective responsibility of managing the Departments, Colleges and University.

To conclude, there is a lot of learning and development through diversity and results in overall improvement of human-being in real life and social interactions with people in organizations, family and social life.

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In an era defined by globalization, organizations are not just multinational — they are multicultural. Workplaces today host individuals from diverse ethnicities, nationalities, belief systems, generations, and work styles. As this mosaic of human capital continues to grow, so does the complexity and opportunity it brings. For HR leaders, the ability to foster cross-cultural collaboration is no longer optional — it's essential to achieving organizational excellence.

At its core, **harmony in diversity** isn't about assimilation but **appreciation and alignment**. It's about leveraging the richness of varied perspectives while fostering shared goals and mutual respect. To this end, the **PRISM™ Model — Prepare, Respect, Implement, Share, Maintain** — offers a pragmatic and human-centered framework that HR leaders can apply to build inclusive, collaborative, and high-performing global organizations.

Prepare: Build Cultural Awareness & Strategic Readiness

Cross-cultural collaboration starts with preparation, both at an individual and systemic level. HR leaders must build a culture that **recognizes cultural intelligence (CQ)** as a core capability.

Strategic Steps for HR:

- Conduct cultural audits to assess current diversity, inclusion, and cultural capability levels.
- Create learning paths that include training on unconscious bias, intercultural communication, and global team dynamics.

Develop policies that acknowledge diverse cultural needs — such as holidays, dietary considerations, or communication preferences.

Organizational Case-in-Point:

A global financial services firm prepared for its merger by mapping cultural value differences between its APAC and European teams using Hofstede's cultural dimensions and training leaders to navigate uncertainty avoidance and power distance.

“Diversity in Action: A Prism Model for Inclusive Organizational Success”

Insight:

Preparation also includes self-awareness. HR leaders must encourage employees to reflect on their cultural identities, values, and biases. Tools such as the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) or Cultural Orientations Indicator (COI) can be insightful during this stage.

Indicator (COI) can be insightful during this stage.

R –Respect: Cultivate Empathy and Inclusive Behaviors

The heart of harmony is **respect**. In multicultural workplaces, respect extends beyond courtesy — it means validating diverse lived experiences, communication styles, and work approaches.

Tactics for HR Leaders:

- Embed inclusive leadership behaviors into performance metrics and leadership development.
- Facilitate empathy-building workshops using storytelling, reverse mentoring, and employee resource groups.
- Promote psychological safety in meetings and decision-making forums so all voices feel heard.

Micro-Practices to Promote Respect:

- Use inclusive language and avoid jargon or idioms that don't translate well.
- Rotate meeting times to accommodate global time zones.
- Provide feedback training that respects cultural sensitivities.

Cultural Scenario:

In a global design firm, misunderstandings arose between direct-speaking German teams and harmony-oriented Japanese counterparts. HR introduced “Culture Circles” where teams shared expectations and aligned on communication protocols.

Quote to Reflect:

“Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.” — Jawaharlal Nehru

FOSTERING CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION FOR ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE



I –Implement: Design and Embed Cross-Cultural Collaboration Systems

Respectful intent must translate into consistent, visible action. This is where HR systems, tools, and practices must reflect and **reinforce cross-cultural collaboration**.

HR Design Elements:

- Design diverse and inclusive hiring panels and job descriptions.
- Create cross-cultural mentorship programs pairing employees from different geographies.
- Launch global collaboration playbooks with guidelines on emails, meetings, conflict resolution, and leadership behaviors.

Cross-Cultural Implementation Example:

A tech MNC designed a “Global Buddy System” to support new hires by assigning a buddy from a different culture and region. This created early bonds and reduced onboarding attrition by 18%.

Digital Enablement:

Use collaborative platforms like Slack, Teams, or Zoom with features like live translation, shared whiteboards, and asynchronous communication options for inclusivity.

Inclusive Decision-Making Tools:

- “Six Thinking Hats” to incorporate multiple perspectives.
- “Consensus Circles” to prioritize harmony-oriented voices.
- “Cultural Compass Maps” to align behaviors across teams.

– Share: Celebrate, Communicate & Learn Across Cultures

Sustainable cross-cultural collaboration thrives on continuous sharing — of best practices, lessons, success stories, and recognition.

HR Practices that Encourage Sharing:

- Feature cultural spotlights in internal newsletters or town halls.
- Recognize teams that demonstrate effective cross-cultural collaboration.
- Conduct Global Learning Days where employees present a cultural insight or experience.

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Reflection as a Practice:

Encourage leaders and teams to maintain **reflection journals** capturing:

- What did I learn from working with a different culture?
- What went well?
- What can I do differently?

Global Peer Learning:

Organizations like Unilever and Tata Consultancy Services create internal TED-style talks where employees share cross-border projects, highlighting challenges and wins.

Metrics to Watch:

- Frequency of cross-border projects.
- Engagement scores across geographies.
- Internal mobility across cultural regions.

– Maintain: Monitor, Measure, and Evolve Cultural Agility

Harmony in diversity is not a one-time initiative; it requires **continuous cultivation**. HR leaders must create feedback loops and accountability mechanisms to ensure cross-cultural collaboration becomes a **norm, not an exception**.

Long-Term Strategies:

- Use **pulse surveys** and **focus groups** to assess inclusion and collaboration effectiveness.
- Integrate cultural agility into **leadership KPIs**.
- Host annual “Culture Maturity Reviews” to identify gaps and set next-level goals.

Learning Platforms and Apps:

- Use tools like **Glint**, **Culture Amp**, or **TINYpulse** to track inclusive behaviors.
- Platforms like **MURAL**, **MIRO**, or **Notion** can support transparent and inclusive ideation sessions.

Red Flags to Watch:

- “Us vs. Them” narratives in distributed teams.
- Microaggressions or dominant cultural norms prevailing.
- Lack of representation in decision-making roles.

Sustain through Rituals:

- Monthly cultural lunches (virtual or physical).
- Inclusion retrospectives after every major project.
- DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging) Champions Council across business units.

Role of HR as Culture Architect

In the journey of fostering cross-cultural collaboration, HR leaders act as **culture architects, bridge-builders, and transformation catalysts**.

.They must:

- Create systems that reward inclusion, not just diversity.
- Enable leaders to listen, learn, and lead across boundaries.
- Coach teams to navigate ambiguity and difference with confidence.

When cross-cultural collaboration is embedded as a **strategic capability**, it leads to:

- Higher innovation through diverse perspectives.
- Better market reach with inclusive product/service design.
- Enhanced employee engagement and reduced attrition.
- Stronger employer brand in global talent markets.

Poster Launch of the 4th International Conference Organised by IFTDO CWYEE in Association with Divatharv Vikas Foundation



Ms. Anita Chauhan

Co-Chair IFTDO CWYEE Director,
Divatharv Vikas Foundation

association with Divatharv Vikas Foundation .

JAKARTA, INDONESIA – The International Federation of Training and Development Organizations (IFTDO) made a landmark announcement on the second day of its 51st World Conference in Jakarta, officially launching the promotional campaign for the upcoming 4th International Conference organized by IFTDOCWYEE-India (Committee for Women and Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship-India) in association with Divatharv Vikas Foundation .

The first-look poster for the conference, themed "Global Awakening: शक्ति से समृद्धि की ओर (Strength to Prosperity) - Women and Youth Leading a Resurgent and Empowered Transformation," was unveiled to great acclaim. The highly anticipated event is set to take place from February 13-14, 2026, in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. The poster release was a moment of great celebration, marked by the presence of key leaders and dignitaries who will guide the conference to success.

The momentous announcement was led by a distinguished group of IFTDO leaders and collaborators. Dr. Patti Phillips, the esteemed IFTDO Chair, was a central figure in the announcement. She highlighted the organization's commitment



to empowering women and youth globally, and spoke passionately about the conference's themes and sub-themes, encouraging everyone to participate.

IFTDO President Dr. Sheikh Faleigh's presence underscored the conference's international importance and its core themes of empowerment and sustainability. He highlighted the impactful women's empowerment initiatives undertaken by his team in Indonesia and pledged a collaborative effort to further these goals.

As a Co-Chair of IFTDO-CWYEE-India and a co-organizer, Ms. Anita Chauhan

shared the vision and enthusiasm of the Divatharv Vikas Foundation. She highlighted that Jaipur, the heritage city of India, is all set to host a dynamic and impactful event. Ms. Chauhan also initiated a call for collaboration with Indonesia for the upcoming 5th International Conference.



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“Harmony in Diversity” is the bedrock for creating a unified, collaborative environment where people of different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives can work together effectively and efficiently. It is more than just a wish; it is a **critical business strategy**.

What does 'Harmony in Diversity' truly mean for a Corporate workplace?

Harmony implies cohesion, balance, and a sense of mutual respect.

**01****Cultural Diversity**

Encompasses differences in traditions, customs, languages, and beliefs among people from various ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. It can improve organizations by exposing employees to new worldviews and practices.

02**Gender Diversity**

Recognizes the continuum of gender identities beyond the binary understanding of male and female. It includes individuals who identify as transgender and non-binary.

03**Generational Diversity**

Involves the differences between age groups. Each generation brings distinct values, work styles, and levels of technological literacy to the table.

04**Cognitive Diversity**

Also called neurodiversity, it centers on variations in thinking styles, problem-solving approaches, and learning preferences. Embracing cognitive diversity leads to more innovative solutions and comprehensive decision-making.

05**Socioeconomic Diversity**

Reflects differences in income levels, educational backgrounds, and social opportunities. It recognizes that people's life experiences and perspectives are often shaped by their economic circumstances.

06**Disabilities**

Encompasses variations in physical abilities and neurological conditions. Recognizing and accommodating these differences promotes inclusivity and equal participation for all.

In a musical orchestra, harmony doesn't require all instruments to play the same note at the same time; instead the instruments are to play in a way that complements each other to create a memorable symphony.

Relating to this analogy, for a harmonious workplace, diverse individuals should be able to bring together, their unique abilities, competencies, and strengths to strive towards a common shared goal.

Why does Harmony in Diversity Matter?

1. For fuelling Innovation and Creativity

Organizations that harmonize diverse viewpoints are better at solving complex problems and generating new ideas.

2. For strengthening Employee Engagement & Retention

Different personal experiences and backgrounds often bring a wider variety of diverse perspectives. In short, an inclusive culture reduces employee turnover and improves performance.

3. For enhancing Corporate Reputation

Highly inclusive companies attract superior talent, inspire investor trust, and have higher probability for global collaborations. The consumer of today, is more likely to support brands that reflect their values of equity and inclusion.

4. For improving Decision-Making

Diverse teams bring different problem-solving approaches and varied points of view which helps in anticipating risks and designing corrective measures. Harmon ensures all perspectives are respectfully integrated and constructively executed

Challenges to Creating Harmony in a Diverse Workplace

While the benefits are clear, building a harmonious culture within a diverse workforce is not without its challenges:

- ➔ **Unconscious Bias:** These biases can influence hiring, promotions, and day-to-day interactions, negatively impacting employees through no fault of their own.
- ➔ **Stereotyping and Microaggressions:** Stereotyping coupled with Microaggression destroys the individuality of the people in the group.
- ➔ **Communication Barriers:** Managing conflicts arising from cultural differences in a diverse workforce is a huge hurdle towards creating harmony in diversity.
- ➔ **Tokenism:** The superficial or symbolic inclusion of individuals from underrepresented groups without granting them real power, voice, or opportunity to influence decisions is Tokenism.
- ➔ **Resistance to Change:** Individuals in majority often perceive diversity at workplace equivalent to reduction in their status or dwindling of opportunities.

Strategies to Foster Harmony in a Diverse Workforce

- **Create and Support employee resource groups**
Voluntary, employee-led groups that bring together individuals with shared characteristics, identities, or interests to provide a platform for networking, support, and advocacy lay the foundation for establishing harmony in diversity.
- **Develop an inclusive recruitment process**
Promoting diversity begins with an inclusive recruitment process that actively seeks out and strives to welcome candidates with a wide range of backgrounds and life experiences.
- **Institute an Inclusive Leadership Team**
The bedrock of organizational culture and value system is laid by the Leadership team. Truly inclusive leaders establish metrics to passionately track and sustain diversity and be personally accountable.
- **Encourage coaching and mentorship**
Coaching and mentorship programs provide support and guidance for underrepresented employees and allows Senior and Middle management to identify unconscious biases and work towards eliminating them.
- **Establish Diversity training programs**
Continuous Diversity training programs provide much-needed education and awareness to employees about diverse perspectives, experiences, identities of people and benefits of embracing diversity as a social being.

The Way Forward

For people to truly experience the joy and harmony of diversity in a corporate workplace, the efforts have to be much more than bare initiatives. Thriving workplaces require **championing harmony within diversity.**

True innovation, sustainable growth, and organizational resilience can happen only when individuals of different identities collaborate seamlessly.

When diversity is harmonized with equity and inclusion, the workplace becomes a thriving ecosystem of creativity, purpose, and collective achievement.



Emile Dumont,
Founder and
CEO of Bodynetic

Reflections from Jakarta: A CEO's Insight

Standing in Jakarta's International Convention Centre, I was struck by the extraordinary mosaic of people sharing a single vision: leaders and professionals from across continents, each bringing their own heritage, work experiences, and aspirations. It was a vivid reminder—not only of our differences but of how these differences, when tapped with respect and intention, spark innovation and unity at levels I've seldom witnessed elsewhere.

Over the days, interactions flowed as naturally as the city's river: people connecting over shared ambitions and unfamiliar customs, respectful curiosity dissolving boundaries. As a leader, I witnessed the most powerful catalyst for progress—genuine, open collaboration among cultures, not just in message, but in authentic daily action.

The Real Value of Cross-Cultural Collaboration

What resonated most from my conversations and observations is that organisational excellence is driven by collective strength—by teams that challenge each other's thinking, draw on varying perspectives, and unite through clear intent. In moments where traditional attire mingled with modern business dress (as seen in the accompanying photo), the symbolism was clear: our stories and solutions are richer when built together.

Harmony in Diversity: Fostering Cross-Cultural Collaboration for Organisational Excellence



International delegates in diverse attire at IFTDO 2025, Jakarta, exemplifying cultural unity and collaboration.

Learning through Shared Experience

Co-creation: International teams huddled to spark new collaborations, drawing on methods and mindsets from every corner of the globe.

Connection: Ideas flourished not despite our differences, but because of them—bridging culture, language, and sector to create true synergy.

Respect: I noted how leaders let local customs shape their approach, not as a concession, but as a powerful asset, making people feel truly seen and heard.

Bodynetic Alignment: My Organisational Philosophy

At Bodynetic, we align global ambition with local wisdom—a philosophy I call bodynetic alignment. This approach pushes us to:

Set universal purpose: Anchor every initiative in a vision understood and owned at all levels, regardless of geography.

Foster cultural fluency: Equip leaders and teams to engage openly with cultures different from their own—leveraging traditions and viewpoints as levers for creativity.

Embed well-being into business: Ensure a holistic focus, integrating physical, mental, and social wellness as non-negotiables in our organisational playbook.

These principles were evident everywhere in Jakarta. Colleagues who invested in authentic well-being—respecting both global standards and local nuances—built environments where performance and personal health advanced together.

Health & Well-Being: More Than a Trend

A recurring theme—surfacing in dialogue after dialogue—was the imperative of health and well-being for cross-cultural teams. The message was consistent: real organisational progress is only sustainable when built upon the genuine care of people.

Why It Matters

Authentic engagement: People are more willing to contribute and innovate when they feel their needs are acknowledged and addressed.

Retention and loyalty: More than ever, employees across all cultures seek workplaces that prioritize true well-being—not just as a slogan, but in daily practice.

Tailored strategies: Effective wellness programs are those that speak to local realities, customs, and expectations.

Our work at Bodynetic has shown that wellness, aligned with cultural sensitivity, results in stronger bonds,

increased trust, and higher performance—outcomes every CEO should prioritise.

Moving Forward: Action, Not Rhetoric

Jakarta was more than networking. It renewed my commitment to champion partnership and impact—not by imposing a vision upon diverse teams, but by co-creating one together. As we continue to engage globally, three convictions guide me:

Listen deeply: Every voice matters, and every context enriches.

Act authentically: “Tick-the-box” initiatives are exposed quickly. Lasting change demands genuine follow-through.

Scale with heart: As we aim to impact one million people, each program and policy is shaped with human need, not just numbers, in mind.

Conclusion

Witnessing such cross-cultural engagement firsthand reaffirmed my belief that our potential is greatest when we move in harmony, not uniformity. Organisational excellence isn’t the result of unanimity, but of unity built on diversity, respect, and shared purpose. The work ahead—my personal mission and Bodynetic’s north star—is to keep building bridges, fostering belonging, and championing well-being as we pursue impact at scale.

Member Benefit

IFTDO has joined forces with **Sidecar** to offer IFTDO association members and their members an opportunity to develop AI skills.

By subscribing to Sidecar's Learning Hub through the **IFTDO–Sidecar portal**, you will have access to a series of specialized lessons focusing on practical solutions for association-specific challenges at a **15% discount**. By subscribing you will receive lessons on:

- Foundations of AI for Associations
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- Data & AI
- AI Agents
- Strategy in the Age of AI



Not an association? No problem. The content, while using examples relevant to associations, is suitable for any individual who wants to learn more about AI.

To learn more, visit the IFTDO–Sidecar portal at: <https://learn.sidecar.ai/iftdo-members>



**Cosiamo (Peter) Bavuso
and Paolo Vizziello**
UMANIAMO

Case Study: Strengths-Based Human Performance Architecture at Work - A Strategic Experiment in Cognitive Diversity and Leadership Agility

Background:

In early 2025, a U.S. federal agency undertook a bold initiative to prepare a select group of senior leaders for executive service. The effort focused not just on competencies or compliance—but on developing a culture of strategic collaboration, adaptive thinking, and purpose-aligned leadership. This cohort of 17 leaders formed the second wave of a program called the SES Readiness Leadership Experience.

The foundational framework behind this initiative was the Human Performance Architecture Framework (HPAF)—a predecessor to several current programs including the New Leadership Covenant™, SMARTER Castle™, REDISCOVER U®, and Essential Courageous Agility™. At its core, HPAF promotes a shift away from deficit-based models of leadership development, favoring strengths-based strategies, systems thinking, and cognitive diversity as leverage points for cultural transformation.

Designing for Whole-Person Leadership

Instead of starting with what's broken, HPAF asked a different question:

What happens when we build systems around how people actually think and contribute at their best?

To execute the SES Readiness Leadership Experience, a 32 hour “leadership lab”, Essential Courageous Agility™ was deployed. Essential Courageous Agility™ is a globally relevant leadership certification designed to help emerging and established leaders build high-performing teams by tapping into cognitive divergence and agile thinking. Structured in real-world practice and human-centered design, the program equips leaders to navigate complexity, foster collaboration, and accelerate innovation all while building a powerful network of support.

At the beginning of the Each participant in the SES Readiness Leadership Experience program completed an Emergenetics® Profile identifying four key cognitive preferences: Analytical (data-driven), Structural (organized, process-driven), Social (people-focused), and Conceptual (visionary, big-picture). These were paired with

behavioral preferences—such as expressiveness, assertiveness, and flexibility—to identify each leader's unique strengths-based signature.

The Experiment: Culture in Motion

Original Cohort Configuration:

- 64% of participants were “tri-modal thinkers”—those who naturally balance three distinct ways of thinking. This rare configuration often correlates with advanced problem solving and adaptability.
- Social and Conceptual thinking were dominant, suggesting an empathetic, future-focused culture.
- Only 50% had a preference for Structural thinking, pointing to potential blind spots in planning, accountability, and execution discipline.

The Cultural Archetype:

“Vision-Fueled Collaborators”—capable of innovation and inclusive leadership, but in need of clear scaffolding for follow-through.

Team Design & Cognitive Symmetry

The cohort was divided into three teams. Each team was assigned a real-world policy or systems challenge to solve over the course of the program. Their performance offered valuable lessons in cognitive agility—the ability to listen across styles, think through ambiguity, and pivot collaboratively.

Key Observations:

- **Team 1** started strong in Conceptual and Social thinking but lost members midstream who carried Structural and Analytical strengths. Their output remained creative, but lacked grounding in practical implementation.
- **Team 2**, initially high in energy and pragmatism, also lost Conceptual and Structural members. Their solutions became shorter-term and less transformational as a result.
- **Team 3** retained all members and maintained full-spectrum cognitive balance. Their final presentation demonstrated deep synthesis, high engagement, and a grounded strategy—eventually garnering agency interest for implementation.

Findings: Why This Matters for HRD Professionals

This case reinforces a critical insight for HRD and learning leaders globally:

Diversity in how people think—not just what they know—is a key driver of strategic success.

From the SES Readiness Leadership Experience cohort, we saw that cognitive symmetry, the presence of balanced thinking styles across Analytical, Structural, Social, and Conceptual preferences—was a strong predictor of both solution quality and leadership uptake. Team 3, which maintained full-spectrum diversity and behavioral balance, delivered the most implementable, Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) aligned proposal. Their work directly led to agency endorsement and pilot approval.

Critically, Team 3 also followed structured guidance to apply the D.E.E.P. framework—Details, Evidence, Empathy, and Prospective—in both shaping and delivering their final presentation. This intentional use of whole-brain communication allowed them to connect with every cognitive style in the audience, ensuring their proposal was not only well-conceived but also well-received. By addressing tactical specifics (Details), data and ROI (Evidence), stakeholder impact (Empathy), and strategic alignment (Prospective), their message resonated across senior leaders with varied thinking preferences.

Key lesson: Cognitive divergence (varied thinking styles) must be paired with cognitive agility—the ability to flex, integrate, and decide across those differences—and with delivery methods that speak to the cognitive needs of the audience.

What Got in the Way—and What HRD Can Do Differently

Where Teams 1 and 2 stalled, it wasn't for lack of intelligence or creativity. The breakdowns were structural:

- Ambiguity in decision rights led to diffused ownership and slower team velocity.
- Loss of key cognitive types diminished the ability to reframe strategically and operationalize effectively.
- Over-emphasizing diagnosis without clear “so what / now what” translation reduced leadership interest.

For HRD professionals, these breakdowns reveal common traps in high-collaboration environments—and offer immediate countermeasures:

- Develop Structural and Process Anchors to encourage timelines, progress, and visibility.
- Conduct regular D.E.E.P. check-ins (Details, Evidence, Empathy, Prospective) to ensure every cognitive lens is activated in decision-making.

- Explicitly map recommendations to Executive Core Qualifications or other appropriate standards with success metrics, ownership, and timeframes.
- Shift from “problem discovery” to “case for action” narratives that emphasize risk, cost, and mission impact, not just insight.

Participant Impact

“We leave this experience with a stronger sense of self-awareness and confidence to lead with courage, agility, and purpose ... deeply connected and better prepared to drive transformation.” Essential Courageous Agility™ – SES Readiness Leadership Experience, Cohort 2

Final words

This case reinforces a critical insight for HR and learning leaders globally:

Diversity in how people think—not just what they know—is a key driver of strategic success.

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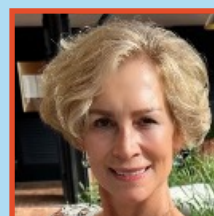
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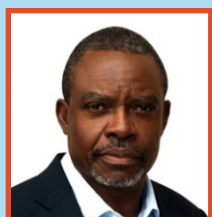
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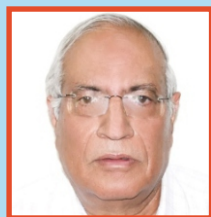
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