

# CONNECTIONS

*Communicating in Culturally Diverse Settings*

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## 5 More Ways to Create a Climate for Diversity

In an earlier issue of CONNECTIONS (Creating a Climate for Diversity - Volume 1, Issue 2), I described five steps organizations can take to create environments where a diverse range of individuals can be successful:

1. Create opportunities for culturally different individuals to interact with each other on a continuous basis.
2. Help employees develop the skills they need to communicate, resolve conflict and solve problems in diverse settings.
3. Develop, implement and enforce anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies.
4. Actively work to recruit a high quality, culturally diverse workforce.
5. Ensure that organizational policies and practices support a diverse workforce.

In this issue, I describe five additional steps managers, supervisors and employees can take to create a positive climate for diversity.

1. **Formally assess the diversity climate and make changes as needed.** The best way to evaluate the diversity climate is to ask employees how they feel about the organization and the environment. Many organizations do this in the form of employee attitude surveys. The most important element of this process is to analyze the results on a demographic basis. In other words, determine how employees from different groups (e.g., age, race, gender, tenure) feel about the organization. Once this is complete, you can use the data to implement specific changes in organizational policies and practices that will result in a more positive climate for diversity.

2. **Start an organizational diversity program.** According to a study by the Society for Human Resource Management, over 75% of surveyed organizations engage in some type of diversity program. This includes activities such as diversity recruitment, training, community outreach, career development and the celebration of cultural events. When properly facilitated, a diversity program can improve individual and organizational performance, enhance internal and external service, and contribute to the organization's bottom-line. However, to facilitate a successful diversity program, make sure you are clear about the benefits you hope to achieve, and identify diversity goals that are tied directly to the organization's strategic objectives (e.g., increased market share or reduced turnover).

COMMUNICATING IN  
CULTURALLY DIVERSE SETTINGS

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## 5 More Ways to Create a Climate for Diversity (continued)

3. **Facilitate a “brown bag” educational series.** This lunchtime activity is a good way to facilitate social interaction across cultural differences, and to provide employees with a helpful learning experience. The participants bring their lunch and take part in an educational seminar of interest to the group. You can enhance the success of the series by identifying topics of interest in advance, and then identifying effective speakers to present each topic. Keep in mind that the seminar topics do not have to be diversity-related. In fact, you should include a diverse range of topics that will appeal to a broad array of individuals. The most important aspect of the process is to provide an opportunity for a diverse group of people to interact in a positive setting.
4. **Start a giving program and target diverse communities.** In addition to helping worthy causes, this can provide several benefits for the organization such as increased customer loyalty and brand recognition, increased employee connection to the organization,

## 5 More Ways to Create a Climate for Diversity (continued)

and the opportunity to develop a pipeline of potential job candidates from diverse communities.

5. **Hold your meetings and events at a local cultural center.** Many organizations hold off-site meetings, conferences and seminars. Consider holding some of these events at a local cultural institution such as a museum of African American History, a Latino Art Museum or a museum of Native American History. These facilities generally offer meeting services and the participants will have an opportunity to interact in a culturally diverse climate.

## NEW - Diversity Coaching

Diversity Coaching is a ‘one-on-one’ educational experience that will improve your ability to communicate, resolve conflict, and solve problems in culturally diverse settings. Through the coaching experience, I introduce a core set of diversity competencies that are essential for becoming a **Culturally Competent Professional**. By developing these competencies, culturally competent professionals are able to respect differences, develop knowledge of different cultures and groups, communicate effectively with people from different backgrounds, and create environments that facilitate the success of a diverse range of individuals. To learn more, visit my website at [www.doctorholmes.net](http://www.doctorholmes.net) and request a FREE consultation.

## About the Author

Dr. Tyrone A. Holmes, LPC, CPT is a speaker, trainer, consultant, fitness & cycling coach, author and competitive cyclist.

