Should a company select new employees to build a cohesive culture—or to develop a more diverse workforce? Actually, both approaches are right.

Reinforcing and Extending Today’s Organizations: The Simultaneous Pursuit Of Person-O rganization Fit and Diversity

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When it comes to building a workforce that will contribute to organizational success, managers are often caught in a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don’t dilemma. If they select new employees who “fit” the firm, they are simultaneously praised for reinforcing the firm’s core values and condemned for preserving its historical demographics. Conversely, if they select new employees to increase diversity, they are simultaneously praised for broadening the firm’s perspective and condemned for eroding its cohesiveness.

Clearly, there are two very different perspectives on “fit.” Advocates of organizational cohesiveness favor hiring decisions that reinforce and develop the firm’s existing strengths, what we might call “reinforcing fit.” Advocates of organizational diversity favor hiring decisions that extend the range of the firm’s strengths, or “extending fit.”

This article explores the ways in which both reinforcing fit and extending fit can strengthen a business. First, it reviews both perspectives, considering the advantages and limitations of each. It concludes that neither perspective is wholly satisfactory and that a new, integrative view (called an “organizational effectiveness” perspective) is needed that builds on the advantages of both organizational cohesiveness and organizational diversity. The article then suggests principles to guide the simultaneous pursuit of reinforcing fit and extending fit.

IN SEARCH OF ORGANIZATIONAL COHESIVENESS

In many cases, a strong, values-driven organizational culture can become one salient ingre-
Cohesiveness Has Its Advantages

In their study of successful American companies, *In Search of Excellence* authors Tom Peters and Bob Waterman conclude, "Every excellent company we studied is clear on what it stands for, and takes the process of value shaping seriously. In fact, we wonder whether it is possible to be an excellent company without clarity on values."…

Virtually every corporate merger brings this principle into sharp focus. A merger’s success is influenced by the compatibility of the two organizational cultures and the ability of the merged company’s top management to address whatever incompatibilities in values may exist. For example, the merger of Allied and Bendix in the early 1980s succeeded in part because the top management of both companies adopted special procedures to deal directly with values differences immediately after the merger was announced. The merger of AT&T and NCR in 1990 is a very different story. Rather than considering how the two cultures could best be integrated, AT&T attempted to force its values on NCR by making its workers adhere to an AT&T code called the “Common Bond.” Former NCR employees who resisted were referred to sensitivity classes. By 1996, AT&T quit trying to integrate NCR into the rest of the company and divided itself into three separate companies, one of which became NCR again.

In efforts to avoid this type of schism within a company, advocates of organizational cohesiveness go beyond efforts to hire individuals simply on the basis of the best combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for a specific job. To do so, they emphasize person-organization fit by encouraging the hiring of “whole” people—i.e., people who represent the company’s underlying core values and otherwise demonstrate a high degree of compatibility. When the selection process yields this kind of compatibility, the result is a strong organizational culture. However, when the selection process does not achieve person-organization fit, the organization may be left with a weak culture that sends ambiguous messages about values and provides employees no clear direction.

Proponents of a strong organizational culture believe that a high level of person-organization fit is advantageous for all parties—employers, new and current employees, and job-seekers. Research documents this point. A study of eight large public accounting firms, for example, looked at compatibility between what the new staff accountants valued most in an organization and what their employers valued most. Researchers found that high compatibility on the part of new employees led to quicker adjustments, higher job satisfaction, and lower turnover.

Also, graduating college students tend to prefer jobs in organizations with a value orientation similar to their own. Furthermore, newer types of organizational designs stressing high involvement call for employees with high needs for personal growth and development—who are predisposed to be deeply involved in their work, whatever their current jobs may be. In their search for new employees, such organizations benefit from keeping the needs of the whole organization in mind, rather than the demands of a particular job.

But Cohesiveness Has Its Limitations

Although the idea of “fit” appears straightforward, it is actually an illusive concept that is difficult to pin down. As a result, organizations that seek to hire on this basis face several dangers.

First, they may deceive themselves into believing that they are hiring on the basis of fit when in actuality no such distinction is being made. A study of what college recruiters actually look for when they see they are looking for applicants who fit the organization demonstrates this self-deception. The study showed that the typical selection criteria favored "mom and apple pie" traits such as
good communication skills, cognitive ability, cooperative attitude, a strong work ethic, and self-confidence—traits that are hardly specific to one organizational culture.

Second, company recruiters who regard themselves as examples of "good" employees favor job candidates whom they see as similar to themselves. Job candidates who are ostentatious in impression management can sense what the interviewers are looking for and create the impression that they fit the organization when they actually do not.

Third, a vague definition of fit may result in selection decisions that favor the dominant demographic group in the organization, typically white males, and disproportionately deny entry to women and minorities. In addition, when the organization needs to adopt a new set of values to adjust to a new reality, pursuing new employees whose values fit with those of current employees may hinder efforts to change.

IN SEARCH OF ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY

There are other cases, however, where diversity in the composition of the organization's workforce leads to organizational success. Xerox, Gannett News Media, Merck, Pepsi-Cola International, Digital Equipment, and Grand Metropolitan are examples of companies that are regarded as having thrived, in part, because of their clear and consistent commitment to valuing employee diversity at all levels.

Again. There Are Advantages

The argument for attention to diversity is often preceded with statistics regarding the changing demographic composition of the labor force. The proportions of both women and members of various "minority" groups (Hispanic, Asian, Native American, African American, and others) are steadily increasing. By the year 2000, the labor force is expected to look something like this: The proportion of women, which was 42 percent in 1980 and 45
percent in 1990. is expected to be 47 percent. Minority group members, who represented 17 percent in 1980 and 21 percent in 1990, will comprise 25 percent (13 percent men, 12 percent women). White, non-Hispanic men, once the majority group in the labor force, are expected to represent only 40 percent; white, non-Hispanic women will constitute 35 percent. Given these statistics, organizations may have no choice but to accept demographic diversity as inevitable.

However, the ultimate effect of demographic diversity on an organization’s success depends in part on the extent to which the organizational culture values diversity. Taylor Cox distinguished between three types of organizations according to their attitudes toward diversity.

Monolithic organizations have a large majority of one demographic group (typically white males), especially in higher-level positions. Women and minority group employees are expected to adopt the norms and values of the majority group in order to survive.

Pluralistic organizations are more mixed in composition than monolithic organizations, primarily because they take more steps to hire and promote minority group members. Although organizations may adopt affirmative action programs that encourage placement of non-majority employees in different jobs and levels, they still expect women and minorities to adhere to the norms and values of the majority group. A pluralistic organization is one that simply contains many diverse groups of employees.

Multicultural organizations are more different still in that they value this diversity. In contrast to the assimilation approach practiced by monolithic and pluralistic organizations, they respond to employee differences by encouraging members of different groups to adopt some of the norms and values of other groups. A multicultural approach promotes appreciation of differences associated with the heritage, characteristics, and values of members of different groups as well as respecting the uniqueness of each individual.

According to proponents of organizational diversity, companies that adopt a multicultural approach have several advantages over those that take a different approach. They are able to attract and retain the most talented women and minority group members available in the labor market. They also do a better job of coordinating the efforts of different workers, generating a cost advantage over organizations that handle this less well.

Moreover, diversity helps these firms respond with more insight and sensitivity to a variety of markets in an increasingly global economy. Also, they are less rigid and quicker in their reactions to environmental changes and challenges. And if environmental conditions call for a shift in culture, the pursuit of new employees with personalities and values that substantially differ from those of current employees will support the shift.

In addition, diversity in points of view helps teams arrive at more creative solutions to problems than those that would be developed if employees’ perspectives were similar. This advantage is not solely one of demographic diversity. Diversity in other characteristics such as functional area and job tenure also contributes to more effective team performance.

Again, There Are Limitations

The pursuit of diversity can also pose a dilemma for organizations. On one hand, teams with diverse members tend to be more creative than uniform teams. On the other hand, they often exhibit dysfunctional team processes. Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s classic work documents what happens to “O’s” (representing “token” members of a minority) when they are in a team that has mostly “X’s.” Whatever the basis for distinguishing between Xs and Os may be, Os tend to experience greater performance pressures than Xs. They risk being classified according to the stereotype of Os, whatever that stereotype may be. Also, they tend to be excluded from informal activities in which Xs like to engage by themselves.

Kanter described these problems as more likely to occur when a team is skewed with respect to a noticeable demographic character.
DO DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS DETERMINE OTHER PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES?

A recent Harvard Business Review case study sheds light on the diversity-cohesiveness debate. In the case, Laura Wollen, a middle-level manager, is about to decide whether to promote a black subordinate (Charles Lewis) to an overseas assignment as a product manager. Lewis would be working for a boss (David Abbott) who is known for his resistance to black employees. In discussing the imminent decision, Abbott says to Wollen, "The only thing that matters is that my new product manager is able to work well with other managers and that he—or she—is able to adjust to the culture. Other managers like Lewis (i.e., other black managers) have been uncomfortable here...."

A commentator on the case, in encouraging Wollen to stand up for Lewis, notes:

"Many managers (such as Abbott) favor candidates who appear to be like themselves. It makes them feel that they understand the person and can trust him or her. They often use words like comfort, fit, and learn to express that desire. Those are code words for the "in group," the "club," or the "old boy's network." Concern about teamwork is, of course, legitimate, but personal prejudice can often cause managers to underestimate the interpersonal skills of those who are "different."

Although proponents of the organizational cohesiveness perspective do not advocate that organizations select applicants solely on the basis of demographic characteristics, the commentator is suggesting that this is in fact what happens. However, one of the primary arguments offered in favor of organizational diversity is that demographically diverse organizations will be more responsive to demographically diverse customers. This argument assumes a match-up between the demographics of the organization and those of critical customer or constituent groups. So, if the customers are demographically similar, the argument turns against itself.

There is a certain amount of irony involved when organizations are simultaneously blamed for tolerating personnel officials who prefer to hire individuals who are demographically similar to themselves and appraised for catering to customers who prefer to do business with demographically similar company employees and for assuming that such employees best understand the needs of these customers. This kind of strategy for responding to customer needs can make it difficult for employees to get jobs in areas not associated with their particular demographic characteristics. It also can lead to employees who are demographically similar to the largest group of customers being judged as best suited for top management positions, thereby limiting the opportunities for other employees to rise in the management ranks.

Indeed, both perspectives may be criticized for contributing to selection decisions that are based more on applicants' demographic characteristics than on their personal attributes such as personality, values, knowledge, skills, abilities, and whatever else they have to offer as employees. Even though demographic similarity may be related to similarity in other personal attributes, demographic characteristics do not determine other personal attributes. Searching for employees who fit the organization's culture is not equivalent to searching for employees who fit the organization's demographic profile.

On the one hand, searching for employees with personalities and values that represent good person-organization fit does not necessarily lead to the selection of new employees with demographics that match those of current employees. On the other hand, searching for employees with diverse demographic characteristics does not necessarily lead to the selection of new employees with perspectives on problems that are representative of their particular demographic group. Organizations need to ensure that selection decisions do not unjustly favor some demographic groups over others, whether such decisions are made in the pursuit of organizational diversity or organizational cohesiveness.

...
success. The organizational cohesiveness (or "strong culture") perspective recommends a selection strategy of searching for person-organization fit that enhances an organization's culture and thereby its effectiveness. The organizational diversity perspective recommends a selection strategy of searching for employee diversity that enhances an organization's overall creativity and responsiveness to diverse segments of the marketplace and thereby its effectiveness.

Both recommendations sound plausible. However, as we have seen, each has its limitations. The single-minded pursuit of either in hiring new employees is likely to be a flawed selection strategy.

We need to move beyond these two camps and adopt an organizational effectiveness perspective regarding the merits of fit. The organizational cohesiveness and organizational diversity perspectives are not necessarily in opposition to each other. Instead, they talk about different types of fit that can help the organization respond to different types of concerns.

Let's step back for a moment and consider what organizations are looking for when they hire new employees. There are two basic goals that firms may pursue in the selection process. One goal is to hire new employees who will help the organization continue to do what it already does well. When an organization reaches a certain level of expertise in the delivery of high-quality products or services with its current employees, it needs new employees who will be able to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors and maintain or, even better, surpass the level of quality previously achieved.

This goal focuses on reinforcing or developing further the firm's strengths. To achieve this goal, organizations need to search for reinforcing fit in employees—individuals who are similar to current employees in what they have to offer the organization.

The other goal of the selection process is to hire new employees who will help the organization do things that it has never done before. This may involve the design, marketing, or delivery of new products or services. It may also involve adding new features to existing products or services, reaching into new markets, or arriving at innovative solutions to old problems that have never been adequately solved before.

This goal focuses on extending the range of the firm's strengths so that it will be able to do more things well. To achieve this goal, organizations need to search for extending fit in employees—individuals whose characteristics round out or complement those of other organizational members. In this case, the company might seek newcomers who would otherwise be considered "misfits."

According to the cohesiveness perspective, organizations should search for employees who offer reinforcing fit, thus building a strong organizational culture. In contrast, according to the diversity perspective, organizations should search for employees who offer extending fit, thus benefiting from the variety in perspectives that results.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS PERSPECTIVE

The organizational effectiveness perspective suggests that both reinforcing fit and extending fit are appropriate goals for the selection process. As Exhibit 1 depicts, to determine when it is appropriate to pursue either a reinforcing or an extending philosophy, we need to address three questions:

1. Fit on what personal attributes?
2. Fit for employees in which jobs?
3. Fit in what situations?

Following are some basic principles to consider in determining when the pursuit of each type of fit is best for the organization. The first two principles relate to the first question, the type of personal attributes on which fit is being considered. The third principle considers the type of job and level of decision-making that job requires. The remaining principles relate to specific aspects of a company’s life cycle, environment, and type of product or service offered. Exhibit 2 summarizes this approach.
Search for reinforcing fit on pivotal values, but don’t bother searching for reinforcing or extending fit on peripheral values. The organizational cohesiveness perspective suggests the need for fit on values that are central to the organizational culture. However, not all values that may be represented in an organization’s culture are critical to its success. Edgar Schein distinguished between pivotal values, which are essential to the organization’s success, and peripheral values, which have become associated with the organization’s culture for historical reasons rather than for their contribution to its success.

For example, the pivotal values for business schools at leading universities include expectations that faculty members will keep themselves aware of state-of-the-art developments in their fields, contribute to these developments through their scholarship, communicate these developments effectively through their teaching, and help others to make use of these developments through their consulting.

In some business schools, it is also expected that all faculty will wear “normal business attire” during the conduct of their responsibilities. This expectation represents a peripheral value, because it is not essential for business faculty to dress in a particular manner to conduct the intellectual work that is critical to the success of the business school. Similarly, norms regarding work attire have been relaxed in many organizations in recent years. Even IBM, once known for having one of the strictest dress codes of any large organization, no longer stresses adherence to rigid standards of dress as a pivotal value.

Searching for reinforcing fit on pivotal values is a good way for an organization to preserve the key elements of its culture. In fact, adherence to similar process values such as mutual respect, openness, participation, and consideration of alternative points of view facilitates a multicultural approach to diversity. On the other hand, searching for either reinforcing or extending fit on peripheral values seems unnecessary. Employees need to be allowed to express themselves as they wish, as long as they exhibit the pivotal values that support the organization’s mission.

Using the business school example, neither variety nor similarity in faculty attire seems desirable in itself. Instead, business schools are better off paying less attention to whether faculty adhere to a dress code and more attention to whether they reflect the pivotal values that are critical to the school’s success.
### EXHIBIT 2
PRINCIPLES REGARDING THE PURSUIT OF FIT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>SEARCH FOR REINFORCING FIT</th>
<th>SEARCH FOR EXTENDING FIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fit on what personal attributes?</td>
<td>On values that are pivotal to the organizational culture</td>
<td>On specific types of knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed to perform different types of jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit for employees in which jobs?</td>
<td>For employees at lower levels who either hold or are expected to hold jobs with decision-making responsibilities</td>
<td>For employees at lower levels who either hold or are expected to hold jobs with decision-making responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit in what situations?</td>
<td>When the organization is at an early stage in its life cycle</td>
<td>When the organization is at a later stage of its life cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When the industry is in a state of equilibrium and is likely to remain so</td>
<td>When the industry is subject to periods of revolutionary change at short notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When the department or organization has a low degree of contact with customers</td>
<td>When the department or organization has a high degree of contact with customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When the department or organization serves similar customers</td>
<td>When the department or organization serves diverse customers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Search for reinforcing fit on general KSAs, but search for extending fit on specific KSAs that are needed to perform different types of jobs and to respond to different types of problems and opportunities.

The study of college recruiters cited earlier identified that the recruiters generally looked for such traits as good communication skills, cognitive ability, cooperative attitude, work ethic, and self-confidence. These traits are generally desirable rather than specific to the needs of any one organization. Thus, searching for reinforcing fit on that basis seems appropriate.

However, a variety of specific KSAs are necessary for specific work to be done well, and it is not necessary for any employee to possess all of them. To state an obvious example, an airline should have some employees with the KSAs needed to fly planes and others with the KSAs needed to provide information about flight schedules and sell tickets to customers using the airline’s ticket reservations system. But it is not necessary for pilots to be able to serve as ticketing agents or vice versa. Although the trend in high-involvement organizations is to encourage job rotation and sharing of KSAs, few organizations will ever apply job rotation to all jobs.

Variety in personal characteristics such as functional area and work experience can bring to the table different types of KSAs that...
are needed to enhance the organization's performance capabilities. When the problems
to be solved involve several functions, diversity in the kinds of expertise and experience
that employees possess can help the organization arrive at innovative solutions. The
same kind of diversity can also contribute to the organization's readiness to exploit new
market opportunities as they arise. Thus, it is appropriate to search for extending fit for the
organization as a whole so that employees collectively possess the various types of KSAs
needed to perform different types of jobs, solve different types of problems, and take
advantage of different types of opportunities.

Search for reinforcing fit for employees at lower levels who neither hold nor are
expected to hold jobs with decision-making responsibilities, but search for extending fit
for employees who currently hold (or are expected to hold) jobs with decision-making responsibilities. One of the benefits of diversity is that it brings a greater variety of perspectives to bear on problems and decisions. It would seem then that the more important the problem to be solved or decision to be made, the greater the benefits of diversity. Thus, the search for extending fit seems most useful for the top management team and for others who determine the organization's mission and strategy. Also, if the organization is centralized with most key decisions made at the top, the greatest benefits of diversity may be achieved at the top.

When lower level employees are primarily responsible for implementing decisions made by others, searching for reinforcing fit facilitates their acting in a consistent manner to implement these decisions. However, if responsibilities for decisions are delegated to lower level employees, then the search for extending fit becomes useful at lower levels as well. In addition, when lower level employees are seen as having a reasonable chance of holding positions with greater decision-making responsibilities in the future, the search for extending fit is appropriate. This will contribute to the development of a pool of employees who will be ready to move into such positions when the opportunity arises.

Search for reinforcing fit in early stages of the organization's life cycle, but search for extending fit in later stages of the life cycle. Having a strong culture may not be equally desirable for organizations at all times. An extensive study of 28 firms, for example, shows that a strong organizational culture is associated with better performance over the short run. However, over the long run, particularly when an organization's environment changes rapidly, a strong culture compromises the firm's ability to adapt effectively.

Consistency in employees' personalities and values, achieved by searching for high reinforcing fit, helps organizations to be successful early in their history because it creates the cohesiveness and sense of cooperation required for success; as organizations sustain their success over time, such consistency can result in inflexibility and inability to change when necessary. In other words, a company's core capabilities (including its knowledge, skills, systems, processes, and values) can become core rigidities unless adapted to changing conditions over time.

Sears, for example, developed a strong culture based on its successes through the 1960s that kept later CEOs from making radical changes that were needed to respond to shifting consumer preferences. On the other hand, Wal-Mart, which was less restrained by its past, prospered during the same time period.

Thus, searching for reinforcing fit may be more useful to organizations at early stages in their life cycles when they are struggling to achieve initial success; extending fit may be more useful at later stages as a response to changing conditions in the marketplace.

Search for reinforcing fit when the organization is in an industry that is expected to remain in a state of equilibrium, but search for extending fit when the organization is in an industry that is subject to periods of revolutionary change at short notice. Industries vary in the rates at which they
exhibit change, whether the change is driven by innovative technologies that transform the production process (e.g., new ways of making steel) or consumer demands that call for innovative products or services (e.g., digital television reception via satellite). Organizations characterized by reinforcing fit will be more successful when only gradual change is needed to keep up with the rest of the industry. When the industry is rapidly changing, organizations characterized by extending fit will be better able to anticipate these changes and to stay ahead of competitors.

However, many industries change at uneven rates. They go through long periods of equilibrium that call only for incremental changes, then enter periods of upheaval that call for revolutionary changes. Connie Gerick observed that the difference between the incremental changes of equilibrium periods and revolutionary changes is like the difference between changing the game of basketball by raising the hoops, compared with removing the hoops. The first kind of change leaves the basic structure of the game intact while calling for adjustments in how the game is played. The second type of change alters the essential nature of the game and calls for completely different rules.

To be ready to play fundamentally different games at short notice, organizations need to keep themselves from being overly committed to one particular strategy. Searching for extending fit, particularly in the top management team, will help to keep an organization ready to respond to revolutionary periods of change when they arise, even if the industry is in a state of equilibrium. However, searching for reinforcing fit will help to keep an organization successful when periods of revolutionary change seem unlikely.

Search for reinforcing fit when the department or organization has a low degree of contact with customers and serves similar customers, but search for extending fit when the department or organization has a high degree of contact with customers and serves diverse customers. Organizations differ in their degree of contact with customers, as do departments or work units within the company. In product organizations, no matter whether the product is soup or sailboats, production is carried out with an awareness of customers’ needs, but production employees typically do not interact with customers. In these same companies, however, employees in the marketing and sales departments are likely to have contact with customers. Conversely, in service organizations, no matter whether the service is health care or financial advice, employees in a variety of departments have the opportunity to interact with customers.

In addition, the potential customers for any product or service may belong to diverse groups with diverse needs for products and services, or primarily to one group with narrowly defined needs. For example, the average age of new Cadillac buyers is now over 60, with few people under 40 saying that they would even consider buying the car. This makes the base of potential Cadillac customers especially homogeneous compared with the potential customers for many other automobiles. When potential customers are concentrated in one group, employees who possess reinforcing fit are believed to know how to respond best to the narrow interests of the particular customer base. When potential customers are widely distributed across diverse groups, however, employees who possess extending fit may better understand the needs of such customers.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS**

The implications of the organizational effectiveness perspective are clear: *Managers should not declare themselves for or against either reinforcing fit or extending fit.*

The single-minded pursuit of either type of fit in hiring new employees is too simplistic a selection strategy for most organizations. Statements like “We need to hire new employees who fit our existing organizational culture to compete successfully” or “We need to hire new employees who increase the diversity of our workforce to compete successfully” are
insufficient guidelines by themselves. Instead, managers should consider the three basic questions about fit posed above. Answering these questions will help organizations diagnose their needs for either reinforcing fit or extending fit based on different types of personal attributes (pivotal or peripheral values, general or specific types of knowledge, skills, and abilities), different types of jobs (with decision-making responsibilities or not, at different levels), and different types of situations (organizational life cycle stage, likelihood of revolutionary change in the industry, extent of customer contact, extent of diversity in potential customers).

In implementing their selection strategies, organizations need to make sure that they are hiring people with the “right” characteristics to function well in their particular environments, not members of particular demographic groups whom they assume will possess the “right” characteristics. They need to take precautions to ensure that selecting officials’ biases do not lead to decisions that consciously or unconsciously discriminate against any demographic group. Such biases are most likely to prevail when decision makers are guided only by vague notions of fit. Organizations can avoid this by identifying their pivotal values as precisely as possible and then specifying ways to assess these values in job candidates through the use of personality measures or lines of questioning in interviews.

Organizations also need to caution selecting officials against assuming that applicants who are similar to themselves will make the best employees or that applicants with similar demographic characteristics will exhibit similar personal traits. Taking these precautions will enable organizations to hire new employees who possess good levels of both reinforcing fit and extending fit without sacrificing demographic diversity.

This article has primarily discussed the use of hiring practices to generate reinforcing fit and extending fit. However, socialization practices such as orientation sessions, management communications to employees, and employee development programs also influence the kinds of fit that exist in the organization at any time. Such practices may be used to stimulate both types of fit. For example, management communications and training programs may be used to stress the need for agreement on values that are pivotal to the organizational culture, or to stress the organizational benefits of diverse perspectives being brought to bear on problems. In general, managers should follow the same principles in designing programs for developing current employees that they follow in designing strategies for hiring new employees.

Managers of work teams should be encouraged to structure team activities such that the benefits of extending fit may be achieved, if majority viewpoints are the only ones that are heard in discussions and minority viewpoints are seldom aired, groupthink may prevail and the benefits of having different points of view will be lost. In addition, minority members may feel like unwanted tokens rather than full-fledged team members. Managers need to create conditions that promote free exchange of ideas as well as team cohesiveness by actions such as making members aware of each other’s expertise when the team is formed, assigning members with different points of view to work together on tasks, and working to keep communication lines open between all team members.

In conclusion, organizations do not need to choose between achieving the benefits of cohesiveness or achieving the benefits of diversity. Instead, they may simultaneously achieve the benefits of cohesiveness and sense of purpose that result from employees’ adherence to pivotal values and similarity in generally desirable traits and the benefits of diversity. Organizations that base their strategies for selecting new employees and developing current employees on the principles that have been outlined will fare well in competition against organizations that emphasize the pursuit of either organizational cohesiveness or organizational diversity to the exclusion of the other.

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