

Don't Treat Others In The Workplace As Equals, Treat Them As Unique Individuals

Within a family unit you find little in the way of equality, as first-born children have clear advantages over succeeding siblings. First-born children are higher achievers, born leaders, and have higher IQs on average. They are 30% more likely to be CEOs because first born are doubly blessed—lavished with their parents' attention and then entrusted to act as the rules enforcer of the family, which builds in them intelligence, discipline, and leadership qualities.

Thomas Sowell, economist, social theorist and senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution extrapolates on this reality when he asks, "If you cannot achieve equality of performance among people born to the same parents and raised under the same roof, how realistic is it to expect to achieve it across broader and deeper social divisions? If there is not equality of outcomes among people born to the same parents and raised under the same roof, why should equality of outcomes be expected—or assumed—when conditions are not nearly so comparable?"

Instead of focusing on equality of outcomes in the workplace or on equality in general under the guise of the belief that "we are all the same," we should focus our efforts in growing and developing employees' unique gifts and talents.

Former attorney, Elad Sherf Ph.D., currently an assistant professor of Organizational Behavior at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, published in Management Innovation Exchange an article titled "*We Are Not Equal... Let's Stop Treating Each Other as If We Are.*"

In his text, Sherf states that "we have different talents, skills, perspectives, life experiences, likes and dislikes, and work habits. All men are not born equal but all men deserve an equal opportunity to excel and use their comparative advantage, maximizing it and letting other people do what they are better at than them."

Sherf proclaims, "It is time we leave equality to the human rights field and start treating people as unique beings and

not as cogs in a productivity machine."

Five changes to management are proposed by Sherf to maximize individuals' abilities in the workplace:

1. Change the options for development so management is not the only option to develop in a company.
2. Focus on making the most out of the uniqueness of each individual instead of trying to make everyone be mediocre at everything.
3. Treat each employee different in line with their needs (especially time).
4. Stop practices that are based on the pretense of equality (everyone speaks equally for example). In some areas and some situations some people are more important than others.
5. Stop appraising each employee on a standard scale and focus on ways in which each employee could make the most of his/her unique talents and skills.

Sherf asserts that implementation of such changes will result in each employee getting a chance to use their comparative advantage where they can contribute much more to the company. It would also result in happier and better-engaged employees, and brings better and more innovative solutions as true diversity is tapped. These changes would allow employees to leverage their unique skills as they get the specific support they need in lieu of standardized support. Most importantly, it would create a real connection between people as it implies that each of us is special.

It's time we focus not on seeing each other as a collective, needing everything to be doled out equally as if we are ants maintaining an ant hill, but rather as unique individuals with gifts, talents and intelligence that we want to develop and contribute to the workplace.