

## THE MORE CULTURAL DIVERSITY, THE BETTER

BY JOANNE MEYER – HEAD OF TALENT AT PRESCIENT

In a book I was recently given, *The Culture Map* by Erin Meyer, I was struck by a comment in the book that resonated with me: “If your goal is innovation or creativity, the more cultural diversity the better, as long as the process is managed carefully”. As a talent professional, I was reassured that I am working in the right place and with the right people.

Innovation and creativity are part of Prescient’s DNA, and like Erin Meyer, we believe the more diversity, the better. We have a strong and diverse team and believe that acknowledging where we all come from as individuals allows us to build a stronger sense of purpose, closer integration, and higher levels of empowerment in our teams. As a values-driven business, we proudly follow a team approach, with individual freedom to grow. We believe that our values bind us together, and our diverse thinking sets us apart.

It is important to note that diversity comes in many forms, from diversity of background, experience, skills and training to diversity of ideas, cultural and gender diversity, and even geographic diversity. Diversity not only includes how individuals identify themselves but also how others perceive them. At Prescient, we value our differences. We believe that innovation flourishes when individuals are allowed to challenge boundaries and stretch themselves. Our flat organisational structure and team collaboration enable data scientists and quantitative analysts to work alongside those with fundamental research skills, partnering together in an aligned, transparent, systematic process. Our investment approach is built on the cornerstones of consistency, accountability, and conviction. While we are all different, we can trust that the investment process will ensure our clients achieve the consistent investment growth and reliable protection they need.

However, one can’t gloss over a key element in the quote, which is that the process must be managed correctly. A diverse team may be great in theory, people with different experiences coming together to share new ideas, but, it could cause problems and challenges if not managed well. So how do you intentionally manage a diverse team?

The key for any talent individual or people leader looking to use diversity to enhance performance is to authentically value people’s differences and recognise what makes us unique can also make us stronger. Look for where the team is similar and intentionally seek talent with different backgrounds, training, or skills to complement the current team’s makeup.

How well you know yourself will also play a role in the success of diverse teams. In every leadership training session I have ever attended, the facilitator will always emphasise the importance of leading yourself to be then able to lead the team. So, it must be true! Being aware of your own style, strengths and development areas will help you understand and accept those of your team members and colleagues.

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Leaders need to encourage team identification. This happens when team members identify themselves as part of a group and are proud to be a part of it. This happens when employees feel they are working with one another, not against one another and for the same future. A sense of purpose and direction about where the team and company are heading is critical.

You need to focus on what brings you together, not what makes you different. And for this, we all have a role to play. At Prescient, we all feel we are owners of this business and that every individual contributes to building a positive company culture and strengthening our employee value proposition. It's not only on our leaders but also on all of us. We celebrate our differences and believe that our rigorous process and collaborative approach contribute to a greater whole.

And finally, communication needs to be prioritised. Diversity may cause confusion when we do not communicate clearly. Teams with differences in skill sets, experiences, ideas, and culture need to be aligned through shared purpose, which holds them together. They also need to trust their colleagues to create this cohesion. Communication is central to this. As the leader of a diverse team, creating environments that foster open communication across the board shows that you value varied voices, ideas and opinions.

At Prescient, we embrace diversity and focus on what brings us together - our shared DNA and the values that unite us and our collective purpose of creating successful investment outcomes and sustainable value for our clients and communities.

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