
DIVERSITY DELIVERS!

Embargoed until 0001 hours Wednesday 8th July 2009

The Aziz Corporation calls for UK-based academic research into "the business case for diversity" as civil service officially launches new flexible working scheme

Press release from The Aziz Corporation

Recent US-based research¹ shows that diversity does indeed pay - big time! Now it's time to conduct academic UK-based research to support our belief that there is tremendous value in "diversity in business".

And not just in business, but also in the Public Sector. A new scheme to facilitate flexible working (a key tool in quest for increasing diversity) across the whole civil service is officially launched today, and one of the guest speakers is The Aziz Corporation's Diversity Consultant, Bella Mehta:

"Gender diversity being associated with increased sales revenue, more customers, and greater relative profits was just one of Professor Herring's findings," says Mehta. "It's a hunch we've had for a while, but now Herring's research is a fillip to the pro-diversity, pro-"flexible working" brigade who have long-felt that diversity adds value.

"This research confirms what I've seen", says Mehta, "organizations that value diversity, that embrace flexible working, are more self-aware, creative and astute at winning business or serving their country". However, diversity doesn't come without issues that need to be resolved.

Even new-generation companies are finding it hard....

"Internet companies hired lots of bright young things in their twenties - international, top of class, high achievers - now they're in their thirties and starting families," says Mehta, "and they're now realizing that the world isn't equal for men and women". Indeed, The Aziz Corporation's recent research² shows that 77 per cent believe the gender balance in the working environment has a significant effect on its culture.

To keep the talent in the company, organizations have to respond culturally, and the individuals have to transform too, to understand the differences between one another.

It's the personal transformation that we have direct control over. "When I work with clients, I always ask them to examine their own stereotypes, try to elicit our unexamined thought patterns about other groups. Then I give the client choices about how they can deal with other groups - are they holding themselves back from being promoted by their very own behaviors and how they stereotype others".

We are inherently biased against groups we're not naturally part of... the trick is to embrace this diversity on a personal level, to build a sense of both self-belief and belief in others who aren't mirror images of ourselves.

And now there is a business case for embracing this change – albeit American. "What I would welcome is similar academic research in the UK" says Mehta. "Diversity doesn't need to be daunting. We need to show that diversity delivers: if it can deliver increased sales revenue, more customers, greater market share and relative profits in the US, let's show it can deliver all these in the UK!"

Author: Virginia Phillips

- ENDS -

Notes for Editors

1. Professor Cedric Herring's research reported in the recent American Sociological Review.

<http://www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/Apr09ASRFeature.pdf>

2. The Aziz Corporation's recent survey on "Macho risk-taking culture at the heart of the financial crisis"

<http://www.azizcorp.com/2008-12-30.html>

Bella Mehta

Bella Mehta is an engaging facilitator, best-selling author and diversity consultant. She has worked for a wide range of companies including Deloitte Consulting, BBC News and Virgin Media, and has been a speaker at numerous events including the Conservative's 2008 Conference and Labour LDA's 2007 Women in Business Conference. Her interest is in making organizations a fulfilling place for men and women to work, and in advancing self-awareness, communication and equality.

She is also a member of the CIPD Senior Diversity Network and author of the best selling book "Make It Your Business" which was voted best of its' kind by Management Today.

The Aziz Corporation

The Aziz Corporation is the UK's leading independent executive leadership and development consultancy. Its mission is to add value to businesses by ensuring their people are effective communicators. Consultancy services offered by The Aziz Corporation include presentation skills, media training, crisis management, image consultancy and voice development.

<http://www.azizcorp.com/>

Contact:

Virginia Phillips
The Aziz Corporation

Tel : 01962 794 543 / 07710 907817
Email: virginiap@azizcorp.com

Professor Khalid Aziz
The Aziz Corporation

Tel: 01962 794 540 / 07703 345 401
E-mail: khalid@azizcorp.com