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COVER STORY

## Different = unique

Companies that promote diversity achieve better results because creativity and innovative ideas are built on a foundation of diversity. The concepts that can transform a company's business come from diversity, especially in moments of tectonic change such as the shifts taking place in the energy industry today. People who are too alike tend to think the same way and make the same kinds of choices over time.

In her speech at Enel's Cascade of Human Resources on March 28, 2017, **Saadia Zahidi**, Member of the World Economic Forum's Executive Committee and Head of the Education, Gender, and Work System Initiative, put it this way:

*"Groups with more diversity make better decisions because they represent a variety of viewpoints and can better analyze and manage long-term risk."*

*"A number of interesting studies show that minorities can influence the mindset in the contexts in which they find themselves."*

It is well known that diversity creates value even in fields such as science and technology. Men and women working together can improve results, but it's up to businesses to lead the way to this change.

**The minimum diversity threshold for obtaining results within a company is 30%. Lower than that, and the minority group feels they have to over-compensate or, alternately, adjust to the established way of thinking."**



**Strategic,  
Necessary,  
Profitable**

*An interview with* **Michael Stuber**

### 1 Why is an investment in Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) so important for businesses?

Making the most of workforce diversity serves three purposes. First, it provides a strategic boost to business in an increasingly complex and fast-changing world. Second, it is operationally necessary if a business intends to respond effectively to the shifting expectations of stakeholders, including job applicants, politicians, investors, and the public. In that respect, D&I leverages the diversity that increasingly exists in labor and consumer markets. The third reason is return on investment. **If managed well, diversity drives business performance and delivers more benefits than the effort it requires.** We can measure these advantages in terms of improved engagement of personnel, better teamwork, and organizational effectiveness. We've published a bibliography of 205 studies that prove it.

### 2 Can you give us some specific examples?

We've just completed a biannual analysis of reporting among top European firms, which includes Enel and provides an overview of D&I practices. Large internal promotions and events, for example, can be an excellent means to bring previously hidden but positive aspects of D&I to light. If a company has different business divisions, a specific strategic analysis will be most

Successful companies, which tend to fare better in periods of economic crisis or rapid technological change, are also those that manage to implement “radically diverse” business models. Apple is one company that has made diversity of ideas the driving force behind its business, and it has relied on “lateral thinking” to revolutionize the way we work, stay in touch, listen to music, and take pictures. When **Steve Jobs** launched the iMac through the *Think Different* campaign in 1997, he opened with these words:

*“Here’s to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The trouble makers.... The ones who see things differently.... Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do.”*

Enel won’t bury its head in the sand. **The world of energy is radically changing, and any company that cannot innovate will**

**Betting on a diversity of ideas is a strategic investment that no company can afford to do without**

**fail.** Tomorrow’s leaders won’t be those capable of producing kW at a low cost, but those who can think outside the box and taking the lead during this enormous transition. They will be those who identify, before anyone else does, needs that must be met with services that have yet to be invented. Today, betting on a diversity of ideas is a strategic investment that no company can afford to do without.

*The sun is about to come up on the Atacama Desert. Soon, it will begin to warm the vast expanse of solar panels at Finis Terrae, the result of the “thinking different” that brought a technological marvel 4,000 meters high, to one of the most barren places on Earth.*

Juan has just awakened, ready for a new day at work. **Little by little, the sun will also rise on Enel’s more than 60,000 colleagues around the world.**

effective, including open discussions with employees, case-study research, and alignment work.

Workshops that focus on exploring the value of proactively managing diversity have also proven to be effective, especially if they allow the sharing of concrete insights into best practices. Support networks for men and women, mutual mentoring, dialogue sessions with employees, and robust corporate governance can also lead to very useful results.

### **3 What obstacles are most difficult to face?**

**O**ur analysis and our experience show that individuals, teams, and organizations trying to improve their diversity levels come up against six major challenges bias: similarity bias, out-group bias, evaluation bias, communication bias, monocultural assumption bias, and reproduction bias.

**Each of these must be addressed intelligently and coherently** or the system will revert to the traditional monoculture. We’ve seen that happen in numerous cases in which companies over-focused on isolated aspects of D&I.

### **4 Is there reason for optimism?**

**M**y twenty years of experience in the field have convinced me that the situation is extremely encouraging, and D&I practices are more relevant all the time. Moreover, the fact that more and more companies strive to embed D&I into their processes and policies shows widespread commitment.

When embedding D&I practices is the only strategy, however, it will not create the momentum needed for change. **In order to design effective strategies, companies must understand what their specific organization requires in establishing and meeting diversity and inclusion objectives.**

### **Who is?**

**Michael Stuber** is an EMEA-level pioneer for D&I using a unique combination of innovative, international and evidence-based approaches to work with International companies. He is extensively published and runs the European D&I knowledge platform [en.diversitymine.eu](http://en.diversitymine.eu) which currently offers 1,800+ articles.