

E Pluribus Unum

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There's been a lot of talk lately about diversity in America's workforce. I'm all for it, but it seems to me we ought to have preferences about the kind of people we want to work with. I know I do.

I prefer working with people who care about doing the best, not their personal best, but world-class best. If we're not all like this, then "But I did my best" will be our excuse for failing to achieve true excellence.

I prefer working with people who can and will work hard, who can and will work smart. If we're not all like this, then we will inevitably waste each other's time and effort.

I prefer working with people who will teach me when I need to learn, and who will learn from me when I have lessons to share. If we're not all like this, then perpetual on-the-job training will never become the status quo it needs to be to stay competitive.

I prefer working with people who have a sense of humor, which means that for the sake of a chuckle or laugh, they will suspend—but not abandon—their usual sensitivities. If we're not all like this, then the workplace is doomed to be unbearably dull and oppressive.

I prefer working with people who try to be fair and honest and trustworthy. If we're not all like this, then decent behavior becomes impossible. It's every man for himself.

The point is, any business enterprise must be sustained by a common and unifying mission to which individuals are willing to subordinate their personal differences. That mission must be compelling enough to make people want to work together for its sake and in spite of everything else that is irrelevant to its accomplishment. And that mission can only be to win in the marketplace.

Once that unity of purpose is established, diversity is not an issue. It is just a fact of life. We simply won't let all of the incidentals of our individuality get in the way. However we define and describe ourselves off the job, on the job we are just part of the team. Therein lies the power of industry and commerce to be a force for social progress and tolerance.

So there needs to be less talk about diversity and more about what can bring us together.

As it says on the back of every penny, *E pluribus unum*—Out of many, one. Let's make that our slogan for the workplace, too, and get on with the business at hand.