

# Performance *In Practice*

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## Hidden Diversities

By Dee Kinder

One of the most common sources of stress and conflict in the workplace is what I classify as "hidden diversities." Hidden diversities are the ways in which individuals think and behave.

For example, some people prefer to see information while others want to hear about it and still others have to have direct experience or "get their hands on it." Another example is how some people prefer to see only the big picture while others want all the details. These differences in preferences are often seen as making people difficult to work with. Learning to deal effectively with hidden diversities can lead to stronger teams, departments, and companies.

### Difficult versus different

One way to deal with hidden diversities is to see others' preferences as differences rather than difficulties. We often define a difficult person as anyone who thinks or acts very differently from us. So, if your preferences are similar to mine, I don't see you as someone who is difficult to work with. But, if your preferences happen to be very different from mine, you may easily make my "difficult" list when, in fact, your preferences are simply different from mine.

Consider for a moment the people you define as difficult to work with. Is it possible that they simply have different preferences than you? If so, are you flexible enough to become more like them in order to build rapport and work more effectively with them? Are you flexible enough to see different preferences as a way to help you

fill in the gaps left by your own personal preferences? Remember, one of the presuppositions of neurolinguistics is that the element in a system with the most flexibility will have the most influence on the system.

In order to build rapport and trust with others, we must realize that the preferences of others don't make them difficult, just different.

*For more information read Training with NLP: Neuro-linguistic Programming Skills for Managers, Trainers, and Communicators by Joseph O'Connor and John Seymour, published in 1994 by Thorsons.*

**Dee Kinder** of Omaha, Nebraska, is a certified master and trainer of neurolinguistic programming. She can be reached by email at [dee@success-enterprises.com](mailto:dee@success-enterprises.com) or by phone at 402.597.6981.