

Putting Our Differences to Work

DISCUSSION GUIDE

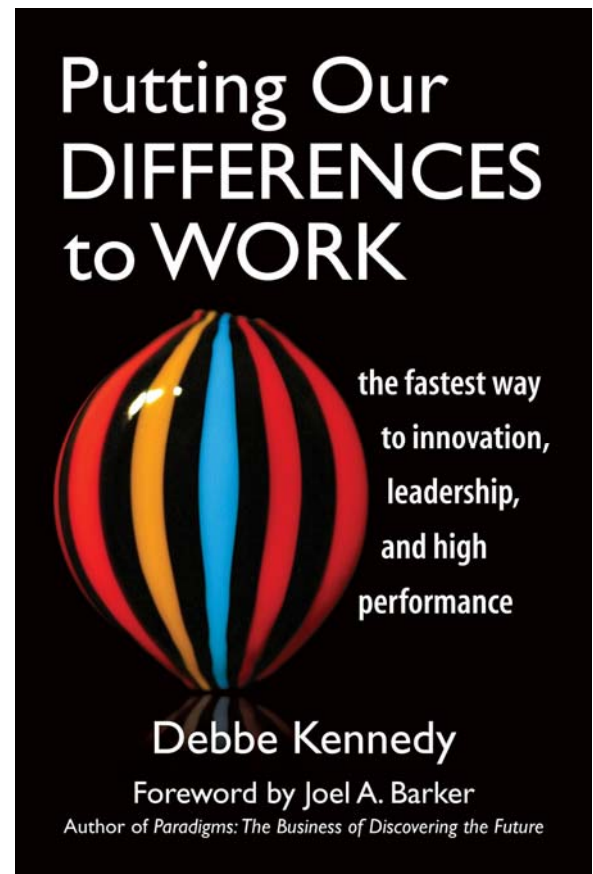
~ 2010 Axiom Business Book Award Winner ~
BRONZE for HR and Employee Training

FOREWORD and PREFACE

- Do you agree with Bill Gates' and Joel Barker's perspective on the role of INNOVATION in the US and global economy? FOREWORD
- What three themes did futurist Joel Barker identify that Kennedy uses to create change that results in increased innovation? FOREWORD
- In what three ways does Debbe Kennedy suggest that Putting Our Differences to Work as a practical guide changes the prevailing rules of how to think, behave, and operate as leaders and innovators? PREFACE
- Kennedy highlights seven sages that have influenced her thinking. Which of their quoted messages spoke to you and why? Can you add one of your own that broadens the message? PREFACE
- What areas of thinking and action align with the current strategies, intentions, and values of you and your colleagues?

INTRODUCTION

- What are organizations and individuals recognizing as the most powerful accelerator for generating new ideas? Do you agree? Can you share a story or best practices that demonstrates how you and your colleagues are working to accelerate and cultivate new ideas? INTRODUCTION
- When you look at the DIMENSIONS OF DIFFERENCE diagram (page 1), what are the TOP five dimensions of difference best describe what distinguishes you as a leader and innovator? INTRODUCTION
- Kennedy shares a story about an online dialogue (page 2) and identifies three main organizational issues that emerged from the group's discussions. How do these issues relate to your experiences in work, life, or even community? What actions or behaviors to you think are essential to create an environment for innovative thinking? INTRODUCTION



- What are the three key parts to Putting Our Differences to Work? Which part seems most meaningful to your present work or for ongoing reference?

PART 1 – Taking Your Leadership to a New Level

RECOMMENDED: Review the introduction to Part 1

CHAPTER 1 – The New Business Essentials

- What are your thoughts on why a genuine concern for people has slipped into obscurity in many organizations and communities today? How do you think we lose our focus on “people as our greatest assets?” How would you define current realities within your organization and among peers and colleagues?
- When you consider the notion of SAMENESS or DIFFERENCE, what does your organization value? Refer to the seven telling signs. Do any of these relate to your experience?
- What are your thoughts about the “proof-point stories” for “the fastest way”? Which one spoke to you (e.g., Habitat Jam, page 22-28; Global Innovation Outlook, page 29-30)?
- What is the most important point you will take away in Chapter 1?

CHAPTER 2 – Five Distinctive Qualities of Leadership

- Kennedy relates a story of being called to respond at a LEADER “because of all she’d enjoyed.” Do you feel called at this time in history as a leader and innovator? How about your peers and colleagues – do they give you the sense they feel “called”? How do you know?
- Which of the Five Distinctive Qualities of Leadership do you think drives all the others? How would you rate your personal level of proficiency in practicing each of these qualities day-to-day? *Refer to the attached worked sheet to graph your responses.*
- What are most important points you will take away in Chapter 2 about creating a “new beginning” for yourself as a leader and innovator from Chapter 2?

CHAPTER 3 – The Basics for Putting Our Differences to Work

- Kennedy introduces a six-step model. Are there any of its steps that you think are inadvertently or routinely overlooked in your organization or experiences? Which ones?
- Considering the seven areas of organizational influence on the Organization Snapshot, what are the *strengths* and *weaknesses* in your organization or team in creating an environment that values diversity and inclusion? Which area of influence do you believe is most influential? Why?
- Review the Principles for Successes and Common Mistakes Leaders Make. How do these relate to your experience, operating principles and unintentional mistakes? What would you add to them? Is there anything in them you need to practice more to be proficient?
- What is the most important point you will take away in Chapter 3?

PART 2 – Knowledge and Know-how to Guide the Way

RECOMMENDED: Review the introduction to Part 2 .

CHAPTER 4 – Step 1 – Assessment: Defining Current Realities

- What reminders or new learnings did you gain about the important role of *assessment*? Are there 1 or 2 ideas you plan to put into action?
- Consider the best practices stories of Bert Bleke, Sue Swenson, and Jan Swicord. What lessons did you take from their experiences and perspectives? What lessons would most benefit your peers and colleagues? Why?
- Is there a strategy or tactical idea that spoke to you? Do you have one to add from your experience?

CHAPTER 5 - Step 2 – Acceptance: Developing Support for Change

- What reminders or new learnings did you gain about the important role of *acceptance*? Kennedy offered six specific ideas (page 78) about gaining *acceptance*. Would you add anything based on your experience? Can you share a story?
- Alan Jones and Shirley Ann Jackson offer insights about diversity, acceptance, and its relationship to innovation. Which of their ideas broadened your perspective or challenged your thinking?
- Kennedy provides a perspective on *the basics* of men and women working together. What are your thoughts based on your experience or observations? What key behavior and actions would improve our ability to work more effectively together.
- Consider the best practices stories of Nana Luz, Donna Shirley, and Yehuda Stolov. What lessons did you take from their experiences and perspectives?
- Is there a strategy or tactical idea that spoke to you? How could it benefit your team or organization? Do you have one to add from your experience?

CHAPTER 6 - Step 3 – Action: Moving Forward

- What thoughts do you have about our need to TRUST our own judgment? From your experience, what have been the inhibitors to ACTION you've observed in yourself, peers, and colleagues?
- Consider the best practices stories of Sidalia Reel, Jerrold Tucker, and Charles Blodgett. What lessons did you take from their experiences and perspectives about the idea of ACTION?
- Is there a strategy or tactical idea that spoke to you? Do you have one to add from your experience?
- What is the most important point you will take away in Chapter 6

CHAPTER 7 - Step 4 – Accountability: Establishing Shared Ownership

- Kennedy contends that it is interesting how we so easily shy away from the notion of personal responsibility? Do you agree? What are your thoughts about the argument she makes? What would you add to it? How do you, your peers and colleagues stack up when it comes to holding personal responsibility as a core value?
- Consider the best practices stories of Sue Swenson, Bert Bleke, and Cindy Stanphill. What lessons did you take from their experiences and perspectives about the idea of ACCOUNTABILITY as it relates to putting differences to work?
- Is there a strategy or tactical idea that spoke to you? Do you have one to add from your experience?
- What is the most important point you will take away in Chapter 7?

CHAPTER 8 - Step 5 – ACHIEVEMENT: Measuring Progress; Celebrating Success

- Kennedy draws a parallel of *measuring progress* and *celebrating success* to *standing on top of a mountain* (page 127-129). What thoughts came to you as you considered the idea and Nelson Mandela's experience? How effective are you, your peers and colleagues at consciously measuring progress and celebrating success?
- Consider the best practices stories of Bob, Catherine DeVrye, and J.T. (Ted) Childs. What lessons did you take from their experiences and perspectives about the idea of ACHIEVEMENT?
- Can you think of time, when you experienced this valuable step and it worked to fuel momentum to achieve more? What did you learn from it? Do you have a strategy or tactical idea to add from your experience?
- What is the most important point you will take away in Chapter 8?

CHAPTER 9 - Step 6 – More Action: Keeping Momentum Alive!

- What are your thoughts about the ideas presented related to MORE ACTION? Have you ever consciously experienced this step as a core strategy? What did you learn? If not, what do you think was the key contributor to skipping this important step? How would you rate yourself, your peers and colleagues at keeping momentum alive?
- Consider the best practices stories of Jerrold Tucker, Sonia Melara, and Dr. Oguchi Nkwocha. What lessons did you take from their experiences and perspectives about the idea of ACHIEVEMENT?
- Is there a strategy or tactical idea that spoke to you? Do you have one to add from your experience?
- What is the most important point you will take away in Chapter 9?

PART 3 – Ever-Expanding Possibilities

RECOMMENDED: Review the introduction to Part 3

CHAPTER 10 – Innovation at the Verge of Differences

by futurist Joel Barker

- Joel Barker affirms why it is essential for all of us to learn to deal with diversity at all levels---in the boardroom, in the organization; in the field; in the marketplace; in our communities; and in our world. What did you learn from his insight on how DIVERSITY relates to INNOVATION?
- What one DIFFERENCE distinguishes you from other leaders and innovators? What distinctive qualities do you see in a peer or colleague that you would like to emulate?
- What do you know that others could benefit from?
(Consider things like skills, attributes, experiences, knowledge, processes and ???)
- Based on Joel's premise, can you think of at least one potential "verge" your work or life that might be of benefit?

CHAPTER 11 – Collaboration at the Verge of Differences

REVIEW: Page 162 Innovation at the Verge of Differences: Joel Barker and Debbe Kennedy Learnings

- Kennedy shares some of her own realizations about working at the "verge of differences" as she chronicles experiences in developing a "practice" of living your beliefs. What key points did you take from it? What thoughts do you have to add from your experience?
- What appears to be the key success factors for collaboration at the verge? What have you learned from your peers and colleagues that others might benefit from in their work?
- What role do you think MUTUALISM plays in collaboration when values, intentions, and leadership qualities are put to the test? Refer to the story on page 167.
- What lessons learned can you share from your successful collaborations at the verge of differences that others can benefit from? (Consider significant and seemingly insignificant experiences that might illustrate the experience of collaboration at the verge.)

CHAPTER 12 – The Power of the Virtual Gathering Place

- The WB Café and the HP Common Thread stories illustrate the power of virtual gathering. What spoke to you about these stories? Regardless of organization or field, what could we each take away from these experiences to apply to opportunities in our work and lives?
- What influence has social networking and virtual tools and gatherings had on your work and life? Can you share a story? How would you rate your current knowledge and know-how?
- What role do you think social and business networking and virtual tools play in INNOVATION based on your experience?

About the Author



Debbe Kennedy is a master problem solver; author; seasoned virtual speaker and dialogue leader; and founder, president, and CEO of the Leadership Solutions Companies, an award-winning women-owned enterprise since 1990, specializing in custom leadership, organizational, and virtual communications solutions. She is a pioneer and innovator in people-focused leadership—employee communications in virtual space, including creative uses of Web 2.0 technologies, and other social media. In 2004, Debbe launched Leadership Solutions Companies' first online entity, the [Global Dialogue Center](http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com). This virtual gathering place and [ONLINE conference center](http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com) for people throughout the world has an intentional focus on leadership, professional, and personal development. The Global Dialogue Center's commitment to expanding opportunities for inclusion throughout the world for all people, with a special focus on bringing its brand of excellence to women's personal and professional development, leadership, and mentoring, was the inspiration behind the 2005 addition of Women in the Lead, a unique resource center for women worldwide.

Debbe knows the leader's journey. She has experienced it as a successful entrepreneur, a change-leading strategic partner for Fortune 100 executives and managers, a pioneer of working in virtual space, and in a distinguished leadership career with IBM Corporation for over twenty years. Formerly, she had a distinguished leadership career with IBM Corporation for over twenty years.

Learn more...

www.puttingourdifferencetowork.com
www.globaldialoguecenter.com

More about Putting Our Differences to Work by Debbe Kennedy (Berrett-Koehler 2008):

- 2010 Axiom Business Book Award Winner – BRONZE for HR and Employee Training
- VIDEO Overview by Futurist Joel Barker: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=019ZsH1wBPs>
- Overview PDF Brochure: www.globaldialoguecenter.com/podtw-brochure-wt.pdf
- Buy a copy: Amazon.com Berrett-Koehler Publishers
- Also available in Large Print (7 font sizes), Braille, Daisy, mp3 from ReadHowYouWant.com

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