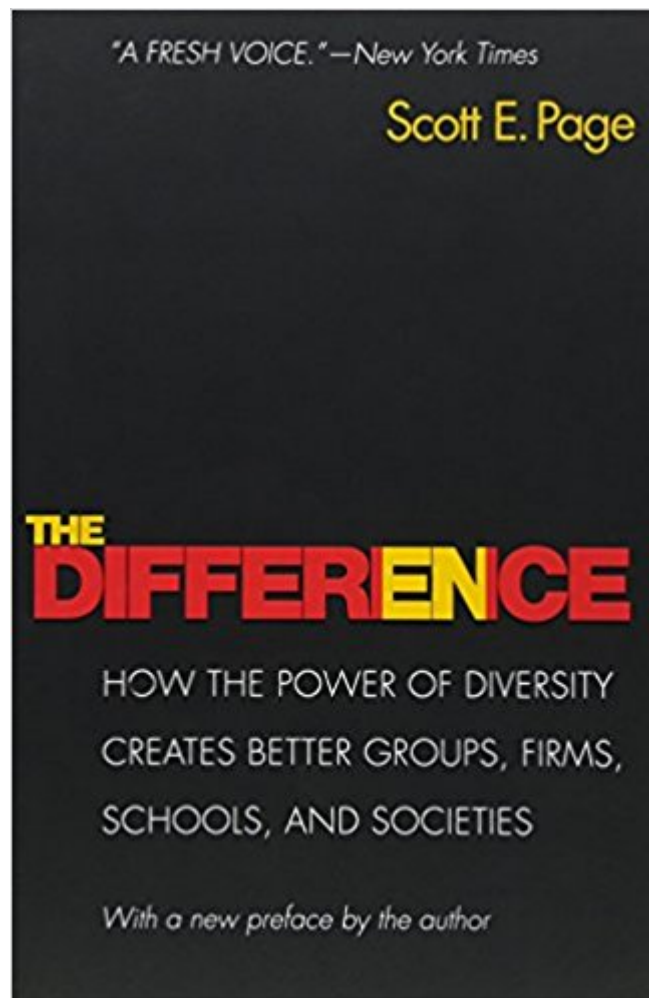




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The Difference: How The Power Of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, And Societies



Synopsis

In this landmark book, Scott Page redefines the way we understand ourselves in relation to one another. *The Difference* is about how we think in groups--and how our collective wisdom exceeds the sum of its parts. Why can teams of people find better solutions than brilliant individuals working alone? And why are the best group decisions and predictions those that draw upon the very qualities that make each of us unique? The answers lie in diversity--not what we look like outside, but what we look like within, our distinct tools and abilities. *The Difference* reveals that progress and innovation may depend less on lone thinkers with enormous IQs than on diverse people working together and capitalizing on their individuality. Page shows how groups that display a range of perspectives outperform groups of like-minded experts. Diversity yields superior outcomes, and Page proves it using his own cutting-edge research. Moving beyond the politics that cloud standard debates about diversity, he explains why difference beats out homogeneity, whether you're talking about citizens in a democracy or scientists in the laboratory. He examines practical ways to apply diversity's logic to a host of problems, and along the way offers fascinating and surprising examples, from the redesign of the Chicago "EI" to the truth about where we store our ketchup. Page changes the way we understand diversity--how to harness its untapped potential, how to understand and avoid its traps, and how we can leverage our differences for the benefit of all.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Rather than ponder moral questions like, 'Why can't we all get along?' Dr. Page asks practical ones

like, 'How can we all be more productive together?' The answer, he suggests, is in messy, creative organizations and environments with individuals from vastly different backgrounds and life experiences."--Claudia Dreifus, New York Times

"The Difference is brimming with so many intriguing insights and findings that I cannot do justice to them all."--Philip E. Tetlock, Science

"A fascinating and important book. . . . The Difference is a thought-provoking and stimulating read."--Diane Coyle, Business Economist

"[Page] redefines the way we understand ourselves in relation to one another. The Difference is about how we think in groups...and how our collective wisdom exceeds the sum of its parts. Why can teams of people find better solutions than brilliant individuals working alone? And why are the best group decisions and predictions those that draw upon the very qualities that make each of us unique? The answers lie in diversity...not what we look like outside, but what we look like within, our distinct tools and abilities."--Education Digest

"In The Difference, Page reveals how groups that display a range of perspectives outperform groups of like-minded experts. Diversity yields superior outcomes, and he proves it using his own cutting-edge research. Moving beyond the politics that often clouds standard debates about diversity, Page explains why difference beats out homogeneity. And he examines practical ways to apply diversity's logic to a host of problems."--Here is the City

"Page has written a book that offers a pragmatic defense of diversity practices, where having a diverse set of points of view in a group equates to better decision making. The book . . . illustrates the benefits of a different way of thinking about problem solving, providing people with conceptual tools to understand what lies behind some of the more popular treatments of topics and to reshape the public debate about the benefits and disadvantages of diversity."--Henry Farrell, Quality World

"The Difference is a very good book. I recommend it to all intelligent readers, especially to those who have not gone beyond the 'diversity' of political correctness. . . . Read this book."--Will Carrington Heath, Independent Review

"Though filled with three dimensional graphs, computer simulations, and other quantitative exercises that some will find intimidating, the book has the great advantage of being accessible to the nontechnical reader, at least one willing to invest considerable time and effort in following its clear but often complex reasoning. Where The Difference clearly succeeds is in bridging the gap between the more arcane technical literature found in the professional economics journals and writing intended for a general audience."--Russell K. Nieli, Academic Questions

"Scott Page has brought to our attention a practically important proposition: diversity of viewpoints is of the greatest importance in solving the problems that face us individually and collectively. Diversity among a group of problem solvers is more important than individual excellence. Page's exposition

remarkably combines lightness and breadth of knowledge with rigor and evidence."--Kenneth J. Arrow, Nobel Prize-winning economist"Scott Page knows more about diversity than anyone anywhere. In *The Difference*, he shows why diversity matters, how it leads to better outcomes, and most importantly why achieving the significant benefits of diversity requires thinking well beyond traditional categories such as race, gender, or ethnicity. Knowledge of this book should be a litmus test for educators and diversity trainers--if you haven't read it, you are just talking metaphor. Stop playing defense and start playing offense by buying this book."--Bill Miller, Chairman and Chief Investment Officer, Legg Mason Capital Management"The book is brilliant. Page has a dazzling eclecticism."--Max Bazerman, Harvard Business School"Does diversity trump ability when it comes to problem solving? Scott Page shows that the answer is, at least sometimes, yes. You'd do better to add more diversity of perspectives to your problem-solving team than to increase the average ability of individual team members. Diversity in both experience and identity can spark a group's creativity. Page pursues the logic of diversity and shows why and when hiring people who differ can lead to a better bottom line."--Ian Ayres, coauthor of *Why Not? How to Use Everyday Ingenuity to Solve Problems Big and Small*

Generally, I found the book most engaging for understanding perception, heuristics and decision making, although this did not seem to be the primary premise of the book. As for the writing, it was a bit long-winded, using analogies to make points, even though the concepts themselves are readily accessible without elucidation. As to its purported focus, it provides academic, empirical, and statistical support for diversity, not necessarily racial or ethnic, with the premise being that diversity of viewpoint within groups is powerful, so much so that it trumps individual excellence.

Not what I expected but it did make some big changes in the ways in which I think about things Well worth most people's time. Looking at some of the reviews now (2017) I see that a number of folks missed a critical item in team building/group selection: diversity of view point cannot come at the price of ignorance. If one is working in, say, genetic engineering, it is pointless -- and not within the paradigm of Page's "diverse group" -- to add an art student or a dog trainer if that person is without a useful background in genetics or engineering. As it has turned out, a knowledge of nanobots -- this year they are chemical but in a decade or four, perhaps they will be some other substance-- has proven to be very useful, as has expertise in virology. But both need to be combined with at least a speaking acquaintance with genetics.

Great, easy book to read. Very useful information on diversity and the importance of diversity in problem solving. For any philosophy student or anyone working with diverse/problem solving groups, this is a must read.

A great insightful look into why a broad spectrum of diverse folks and ideals gives new perspectives on problem solving

Written by a professor of complex systems, political science and economics at University of Michigan and a member of the Santa Fe Institute, this is well written and can be read for an overview of ideas or more detailed proofs. It covers in depth some of the ideas mentioned in Surowiecki's *Wisdom of Crowds*. The key idea is that appropriately structured diverse groups can be better at solving complex problems and making predictions than experts, or groups composed of highly capable but undiverse groups. Page provides a useful model for thinking about diversity involving Perspectives (ways of looking at things); Heuristics (simple rules of thumb through to complicated algorithms); Interpretations (ways of categorizing or making generalizations); Predictive Models (ways of inferring causation to make predictions). The author notes that to be diverse and effective groups mostly need to share Fundamental Preferences (common goals).

If you want true, mathematical proof that diversity leads to greater innovation and to better business solutions, Scott Page's brilliant book is for you. Feed your inner geek -- you will just love the bona fide mathematical equations complete with root numbers, co-efficients -- a trigonometric paradise. And if trigonometry was your high school academic Waterloo, Page is such a lucid, spirited writer that concepts of what he is proving will leap off the page and the seemingly incomprehensible equations will trigger a "Cool, I'm glad he proved that!" Finally, the payoff in the last fifth of the book -- which is all about application -- is sweet and powerful.

I am not a fan of much of the work on diversity. It tends to distort reasonable choices and is imbued with a host of PC language which makes gross leaps of faith. But I believe very deeply in assuring the widest range of people the broadest range of opportunity. Scott E Page, a faculty member at Michigan has done a wonderful book which in a careful way demonstrates significant benefits from encouraging a wide variety of backgrounds and approaches to participate in decisions. Page is a researcher, so he carefully lays out his research. But he also adds to it a thoughtful framework for his thinking. This book could be read in parallel with *The Wisdom of Crowds*, James Surowiecki's

excellent book on the increasing need for shared decisions and the ultimate ability of rightly structured groups to make better decisions than individuals. But Page adds to Surowiecki's original ideas. I bought several copies of Page's book for my friends.

Required reading for corporate HR leaders. The book explains how to use data to prove that diverse teams improve outcomes and innovation

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