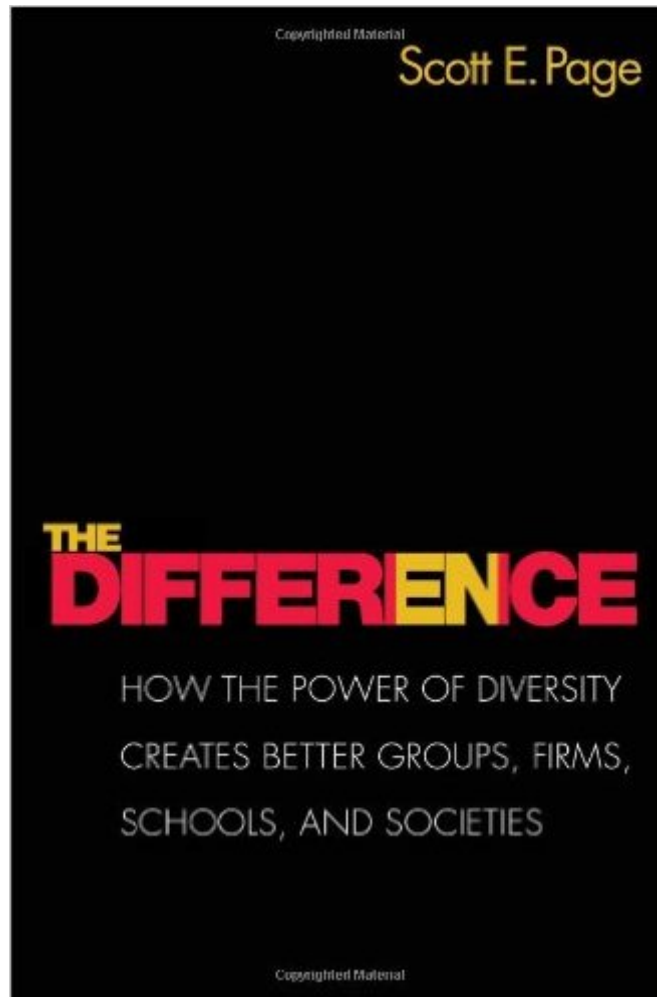


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The Difference: How The Power Of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, And Societies



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

In support of his main claim that diversity trumps ability (page 148, and elsewhere), the author cites

one real world example - Kasparov vs. 50,000 players - of a contest between ability and diversity. (page 138). But, Kasparov won. In a book with the subtitle "How diversity creates better groups, firms, schools and Societies, " one would expect at least a half dozen real world examples. Although he alludes to a few real world examples of group problem solving (Bletchley Park, DNA and Watson-Crick-Wilkins-Franklin) it's not clear that he claims the successful results are the result of diversity. With regard to the discovery of DNA, credit goes to four intelligent, well educated scientists - hardly a cross section of society. (I've just started Brenda Maddox's book on Franklin, and she is no ordinary person) The author does present some computer models, and some theoretical conjectures in support of his claim, but he does not support them with real world facts. He does begin to evidence some understanding that diversity has at least two dimensions - identity and cognitive, but I think he confuses informational ability with intellectual ability. Most chemists, physicists, engineers, biologists, and mathematicians share a high level of intellectual ability, but differ, because of their education and experience, in informational ability. It is no surprise, contrary to his statement on page 158, that a group of very able people with different informational ability are necessary to and often sufficient for the solution of difficult problems. IBM's development of the moving head hard disk drive in San Jose in 1956 was the result of a group of mechanical and electrical engineers, chemists, and physicists who were all extremely bright, but differed in their areas of knowledge.

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