Unique Contributions: An Experiment

Facilitator – Research Notes

Insights from Strategic Explorations

Summary

This note describes an experiment in which teams of diversity professionals explored the exact same set of "arcs,' containing structured and "seeded" implications. The teams generated a very high percentage – 82% -- of "unique" implications. The experiment raises, for discussion and further research, the possible value of having teams explore the same "arcs."

Independent Contributions to the Implications Wheel®

An Experiment

A design question for Implications Wheel consultants and facilitators is whether to have multiple teams explore the same first-order implications. In most situations, there are more than enough first-order implications to assign to the available teams. Often, one of the most difficult tasks is selecting which first-orders will be explored. But the question remains: is there value in having multiple teams explore the same first-order implications? In our scouting metaphor, would there be value in having a second – or third – scout team go out to scout the same territory? Would the scouts see different things?

It appears that the answer is yes. In 2007, an Implications Wheel demonstration was conducted with the Minnesota Diversity Council. With an audience of approximately 60 participants, a very structured Implications Wheel exploration was conducted on the center: "What are the possible implications of implementing a workplace diversity program?"

The exercise was very structured in that each team contributed implications to the same set of four arcs:

- Arc 1 was a "completed" arc with 30 implications (five second-orders and five third-order implications for each second-order). *(This arc gives participants the opportunity to read through a complete example of an arc – to understand the structure and see examples of well written implications.)*
- Arc 2 was structured offering participants the opportunity to contribute up to 10 implications – 1 second-order and 9 third-orders (20 "pre-set" implications).
- Arc 3 was structured offering participants the opportunity to contribute up to 19 implications – 2 second-orders and 17 third-orders (11 "pre-set" implications).
- Arc 4 was structured offering participants the opportunity to contribute up to 24 implications – 4 second-orders and 20 second-orders (6 "pre-set" implications).

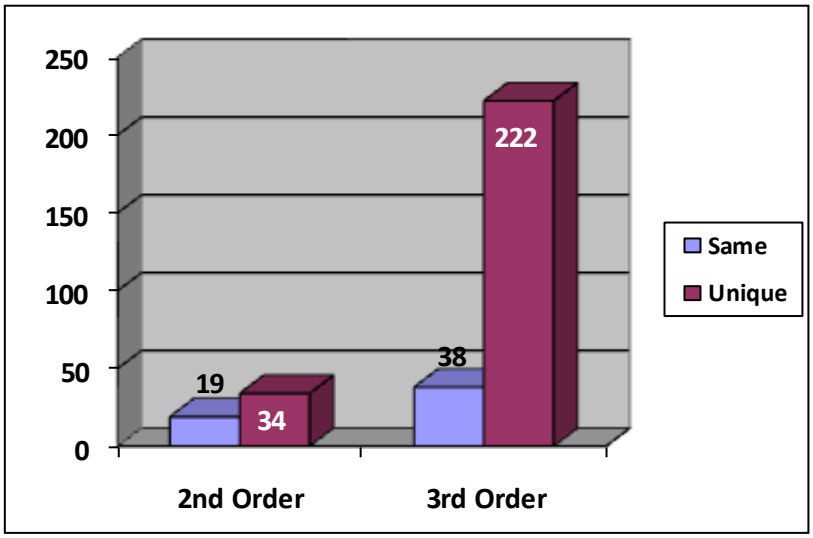

Figure 1
Similar – Unique Contributions

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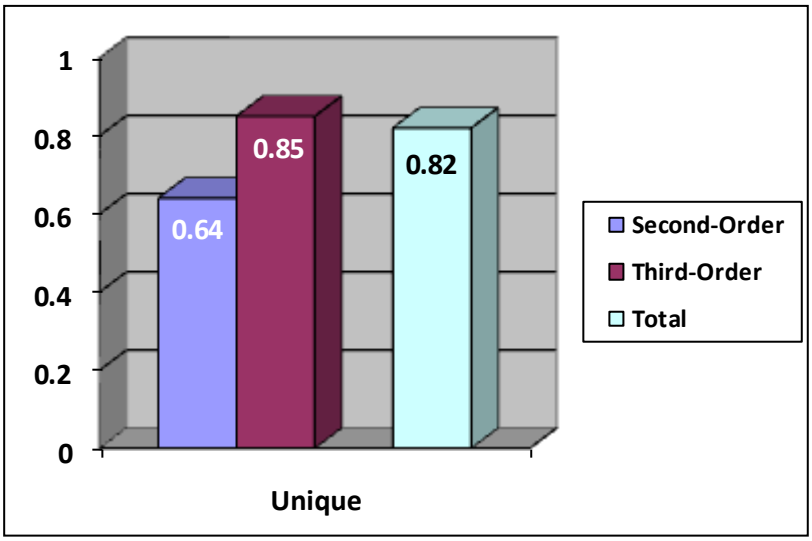

Figure 2
Unique Contributions
Second – Third Order

This experiment was very controlled – because of the use of the "structured" arcs. It was controlled in some other important ways. While the group of participants was very diverse on some dimensions, age, gender, race, it was also a homogeneous "expert" group of diversity professionals. Given these dynamics, the percentage of "unique" implications contributed by these professionals is a welcome, somewhat surprising results. Based on an identical "center" and "first-orders," these participants generated 222 "unique" third-order implications – 85%.

This experiment does, of course, leave as many questions as it does provide insights. The most important is the question of how valuable these different implications would be to leadership. The implications are assessed as "unique" – that does not measure their value to enhance the decision-making of leaders. Most of these implications were not scored by participants because of time limitations. However, they were all independently contributed by teams – unaware and unaffected by the contributions of other teams.

Conclusion

It appears the allowing multiple teams the opportunity to explore the same "arcs" will yield significantly different implications. The diversity of the scouting teams, based on their perceptions, experience, the dynamics of the scouting effort, will apparently lead to a very high number of "unique" implications.

"No one will thank you for taking care of today
if you fail to take care of the future."

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