

Diversity, Team Building & The Search for The Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine

Rationale:

At random, a team is chosen to receive a resource that enables it to generate a better result in the game. The team getting this information can choose to keep it to themselves, share it with a team or two, or share it with all of the teams.

The goal of the game is to *"Mine as much Gold as We Can."* The "We" can be interpreted differently in the context of "we team" or "we group." This privilege and advantage given to one team can be a cause for celebration or a cause for difficulty, based on choices made.

We link this to the issue of diversity because historically and in contemporary society, the relationships between groups are often framed within a context of unequal power and how it is managed within organizations.

We believe that this framework will generate some useful thinking and behaviors that will assist us in examining and discussing these concepts. It is important to look at power and privilege, and how one handles it as a member of a group or how it can be shared with others.

The debriefing focuses on how this situation of privilege should be addressed, managed and handled in the workplace, along with links to issues of collaboration, leadership, motivation and performance.

A client wanted a teambuilding program that was fun and engaging. Then she also asked about building in some component to match with their corporate efforts on diversity. Since diversity is not one of the things I normally teach, I thought to ask some other users of the exercise what they might do.

A question to our **Dutchman** owners' listserve resulted in some welcome ideas and new possibilities. The result is what I think is a very nice match between the issues of teamwork and decision-making and the issue of privilege in the workplace. It also generates a new option for the delivery of the exercise, which we will call "The Assigned Video" or "**Diversity Dutchman.**"

This document was written to communicate the basics of this diversity framework for non-users of the game who are not familiar with the Lost Dutchman simulation. If you have come to this information from the website and find this to be of interest, please contact us for further information. PMC uses an owners-only listserve to support our purchasers with dialog and new revisions of the exercise.

The thoughts and ideas of this discussion are included herein for summation and archival purposes. This document will appear in the files section of the listserve as well as on the PMC Square Wheels website. For clarity sake, I will be a bit repetitious on some of the key factors and learning points.

And I will encourage anyone with additional thoughts on improving this dynamic to share them. If you want to get the set of debriefing slides that we will use, I can email it to Dutchman owners. (click here to [email the slides](#))

This focus on Diversity is aimed specifically at the issues surrounding the concept of privilege. This is a significant yet somewhat less emotional issue than other diversity frameworks, since it does not contain the prejudicial or racial overtones. But the issue of one group having privileges that are not shared by other groups is also a common one in the workplace, whether perceived or actual. What we desire to do is give one team special resources, see what they do with them, and then debrief along the lines of performance and feelings of the haves as well as the have not's. The focus on performance management remains our primary focus.

Please also view this as Version 1.0 of this framework. More to come...

Janice Pass, who helped invent the **Assay Office Option¹**, said:

The team that achieves the best ROI is the team that values diversity. Functioning together in a way that demonstrates positive outcomes (overall ROI) is best when true team interdependence is achieved.

Do the participants really believe they will achieve more through a diverse, inclusive outlook (and not just tolerate differences)?

Maybe each member of the team has a "secret" role/information that they are instructed to share only if asked (valued)...

Examples:

- The Team Trader knows that the Cave Cards mean extra Gold but the rules are that they cannot "tell" their team unless asked...
- Each role has an envelope of information that they can only share if asked directly (demonstrating they are valued).
- Set up a group of "characters" as a sideline team... These characters are described in simple roles (as a part of the game set up). However, each of these "characters" is given a legitimate/useful role as well as stereotyped roles.
- The teams will undoubtedly make "value" judgments "should we bother to see what they have to offer?" Some costs are associated with the decision... Does the team "include" all points of view?

This got me thinking about the dynamic. What I wanted to avoid was "blame" and I wanted to focus the discussion on performance and results. I also wanted to keep the situation clean and simple from a delivery standpoint.

Other useful background thinking and information came from John Hanson, Adrian Walsh and Kathleen Connolly, with comments from others, and are included at the end of this document. All these ideas were relevant to generating thinking about the proposed ideas and solutions herein.

Okay, so what did we come up with as a *Diversity Dutchman Framework?*

Philosophy:

Our thinking is that if we give only ONE of the teams (in a group of 3 to 6 teams) a different level of privilege than the other teams, we can create a nice dynamic for debriefing. The team with this special information has **choices** as to how they might share this information and power. It is also important to do this randomly, maybe with a roll of the dice. That way, we can eliminate a "blame frame" from landing on the leader, one team and/or the individual participants.

Privilege, in the case of the game, is information and resources that allow that team to perform better and have a distinct competitive advantage compared to the teams without this information. In the case of **Dutchman**, we are referring to “The Videos,” two optional pieces of information that allow for better planning and resource management.

The existence of this information is a normal occurrence in the game -- some of the teams will make the choice to acquire it for “planning.” Thus, they get special information and beneficial resources. *But it was the team’s choice to acquire it.*

In this Assigned Video framework, a team chosen at random; it has no choice. Thus, we remake this planning metaphor (specifically **The Tortilla Flat Video**) into one of privilege. In the information that follows, I will attempt to explain this advantage in a manner that is understandable to current **Dutchman** users as well as people interested in diversity and teamwork who have not experienced the game.

The Mechanics:

There are two “Videos” that any team can choose to acquire before they head toward the Mine to mine Gold. If a team chooses to get one, each costs one day of their time (a cost of planning) and they are mentioned in the context of, *“Teams find the information useful but getting a Video will cost one day for one or two days for both.”*

The most logical one to acquire would be, **“The Mine and Its Gold.”** This is because teams see that as part of their travel plans and it seems more relevant on the face of it. After all, they are going to the Mine.

The other video is about a place on the map called, “Tortilla Flat.” We are suggesting that one team be assigned the **Tortilla Flat Video**, although in a game of 6 teams, you might also assign that Video to one team and the Mine Video to another team, also selected at random. I am not quite sure of all the dynamics of this. But it does set the stage for privilege.

What teams discover in the **Tortilla Flat Video** is that **they have just acquired Turbochargers that will enable their vehicle to travel two blocks per day**. This gets them to the Gold Mine without any time penalty (no team will reach the Mine before Day 7 of the 20 days) but it allows them to spend three additional days there mining Gold because they can speed home and thus leave 3 days later. A team with this resource can mine 10 Days of Gold – an increase of 30 ounces of Gold in normal play.

This Video contains one Turbo for that team **PLUS** two additional Turbos that can benefit two **other** teams, also allowing them to also mine 3 more Gold. Thus, sharing a Turbo with another team adds more Gold to the overall exercise. Remember, the goal is to mine as much Gold as **“WE”** can. This sets up our privilege metaphor – one team now has an advantage over all the others – they have information they can share as well as a Best Practice – a better way to do the job.

The **Mine Video** contains **Cave Cards** which allow the team to change their resource consumption and reallocate their resources to improve their results.

Thus, we randomly assign a team (or two) this Video (or Videos), with the requirement that they must spend one day at Apache Junction and can only leave on Day 2. We can be pretty certain that the other teams will think it “funny” that a team(s) be forced to waste a day. This team will also (initially) feel that it is being punished. This feeling, however, will only be an first reaction until the team reads the information and understands the power they now have.

Because of the nature of the game and the value of information and resources, teams given the Videos will be more privileged than others. In other words, these teams will have extra resources (knowledge and power) because they spent that extra day at the home base (Apache Junction) before leaving for the Mine.

This extra information allows them to:

- Move two blocks per day after acquiring the Turbos
- Mine 3 more Gold with the same resources
- Share Turbos with other teams so they can also mine more Gold
- Know about the weather patterns and thus know the resources needed (Mine Video only)
- Have a set of cards that allows them to replace other resources (Mine Video only)
- Mine an extra ounce of gold each day and thus get better overall results than the others (Assay Office Version²)
- Have an opportunity, but not a requirement, to share both information and resources with another team or teams (either Videos)

Teams with information thus have an advantage over the other teams and what they do with the information and resources depends on their understanding of our overall goal of, “mining as much Gold as WE can.”

- A competitive team will be less likely to share the information.
- A collaborative team will share the information and resources AND suggest that the other teams also get the Videos.
- The responsibility for contributing to the overall results of the group is compromised by the desire to win the game and beat the other teams

The privileged team now has Choices! They can choose to share the resources (Turbos and Cave Cards), they can choose to *reciprocally* share resources and information with that other team selected for a Video (“*we’ll share ours if you will share yours*”), or they could simply choose to make the information available to ALL teams during the Planning period.

This privilege will give them a better overall result (“winning” the game, even though we are focused on overall success and not individual team success) and also “bestow on other teams of their choice” both information and resources.

The Delivery:

Playing with 5 or 6 teams, we force one of the teams to leave on Day 2 because they **MUST** review the Video of Tortilla Flat that they are assigned.

This would occur at some point in the Planning Time, probably about Minute 10 of 15 minutes. This will occur after they have already made some decisions about routes and plans for resource use. (The earlier they get the information, the easier it is to integrate it into their overall plan. The later they get it, the less time they have to understand it and share that information with other teams.) Getting the Video also helps them by adding 2 or 3 minutes to their planning time because they do not need to trade until Day 2.

Predictable reactions: Initial disgruntlement, followed by “The Ah ha!” (and even a bit of gloating!) as they then view the video and understand the concept. They now are the only ones with extra resources. They may also choose to hide this information from the Collaborators (one of the team job roles) of other teams who will be curious. The selected team is guaranteed to have privilege – and, they could choose to share the Turbos or Cave Cards (or not). If other teams choose to get one of the Videos, the privilege is diluted.

Overall, we would play with only Two of these Turbo Videos available for the 6 teams (a scarcity model). It also allows for a second team to get the Tortilla Flat Video (that must make a choice to stay to get the second set of three Turbos into play – there would only be these two Tortilla Flat Videos available. Should no team make the choice, then there would be only 3 Turbos used in the exercise.

A team with this information could also then choose to get the other Video and spend two days at Apache Junction. They would thus be in a position to optimize their own team results.

Sharing the information would allow the group to be closer to optimum results, which is the goal of the exercise.

The Goal is to Mine as Much Gold as We Can and maximize ROI.

With 6 teams playing, I suggest you also make only 4 of the Mine Videos if you are using the Assay Office Version 2. This version has Mine Videos with 16 Cave Cards each. That makes for 64 cave cards and enough for every team every day. But, 2 teams will not get the Mine Video (at minimum) and thus can only get Cave Cards when other teams decide to share them with these two teams.

Note, if they also get the Turbo information early – and head toward Tortilla Flat on Day 2, they could conceivably get ELEVEN Gold Cards. It's never happened, but this scenario appears on the Perfect Play powerpoint file.

And, by limiting the numbers of Videos available, let's say only 2 Tortilla Flat Videos and only 4 Mine Videos for 6 teams, we really set up a situation where sharing and collaboration maximize group results by not wasting extra days getting the Videos – on a few occasions, we have had a lot of the teams get both videos and not collaborate. They will still suboptimize results if they do NOT share the resources.

Debriefing:

Thus, with some simple restructuring of the delivery and no actual changes to the materials, we can reframe the discussion of The Videos (containing Turbochargers and Cave Cards) into the themes of diversity and privilege. Some teams initially get more power than others – it is how they use that power that determines the overall success of the initiative.

The key is the linking of the dynamics of what we got into the past experiences and training of these participants. If we produce a light, fun environment, we can be fairly likely to

generate a positive discussion of possibilities for change and improvement. After all, some teams in organizations ARE given different levels of power – it is how they use or share that power that is important.

I also envision asking the questions and then having the tabletops discuss the issues and key learning points, then doing small mini-presentations of how they think what we did is related to their workplace and what changes they would like to generate.

Overall, we do a fun, strong team building event with ties to collaboration, planning, motivation and leadership into. Linking the issues and opportunities to the existing diversity initiatives and goals.

My immediate plan is to continue to develop a debriefing package and include it in the games as an option.

Here are some other thoughts about this:

John Hanson added:

One of the classic studies of diversity had to do with separating a class of school children into groups by eye color, one being privileged and one not, and then watching how they interacted. The results were what you'd expect them to be: the privileged kids lorded it over the others, the non-privileged began to act out and so on. There were fights. There were tears.

Then they switched...and the behaviors totally reversed, only this time with "I knew I was better, so I'm going to get even" flair to it. Some of the things that they did to enforce the privilege was to give preferred seating, provide water fountains that were easy to get to (versus some a long ways away), required the use of titles (you must address blue-eyed people as Sir or Ma'am) and so on. They also had "punishments" for non-privileged kids who "got out of place."

As I remember (it's been quite a while) they lost points or had to stay after school. The end result was this it caused a huge disruption for the students, and it took them a long time to get over it...and by some reports it even began to affect the kids' self esteem. A lot of experts likened the experiment to child abuse, based on the impact it had on the kids.

I can't tell you how quickly this would begin to impact adults in a class...a day may not be long enough. But it is emotionally dangerous -- people tend to react quite strongly to this sort of thing, and you run the risk of creating a very heated session, especially if someone who has an issue with discriminatory behavior gets on the wrong side of things.

I'm not sure if Dutchman provides a controlled enough environment to do this in a way that doesn't run a lot of risk. I've known people who use this sort of set-up as a way of making their own point by jumping all over the instructor...which does take the "fun" element out of it.

Expedition Leaders need to be careful not to get over their heads with this one. If you do decide to try it out, I'd suggest "grouping" by lottery. If you use physical characteristics, you run the risk of hitting hot buttons (who was the last blue-eyed African American you knew?)

You can also consider giving more gold to the privileged group for each day they mine. This sets up an interesting dynamic, because while it better benefits the total group, the unfairness of it between teams will rankle.

Adrian Walsh in Australia added this:

We haven't used Dutchman with a specific "diversity" spin although we do some diversity-related work. It is often the sheer arbitrariness of our response to diversity and the way we manage that response which is the issue. While the need to protect the overall dynamic of the game is paramount, it seems there are several areas to add some arbitrariness:

Team formation (may depend on client and wider goals) but could be based on certain characteristics (gender, age, height, etc).

Team interactions – “Blue bandanna teams cannot receive turbochargers from red bandanna teams”.

Wider game interactions - When Team Traders arrive at the Trading Post, they are informed that the Provisioner will not deal with women (or people with blue eyes, or red hair, or whatever).

Special favouritism – (as already well explored by others) Could the Trader provide a “delivery service” to the team table?) – and also discrimination (Red teams may only trade when all other teams have completed and they have a window of only 30 seconds to do so).

Kathleen Connolly said:

I do agree with the nicer hat, "special attention" ideas you mentioned...I also see your point about not giving them extra resources because that would make the game less challenging, less motivational...

However, consider the impact of just that - that when others are perceived as "better than", "less than" when they are stereotyped, etc., the workplace climate does indeed suffer from low motivation, lack of challenge, lack of mattering...there are some really big cultural issues at play then, (how do marginalized groups experience their contribution to the workplace, do they feel less motivated when they sense that no matter what they do or don't do is for naught, and how does this inform collaborative efforts, etc.)

(These factors) may be beyond the scope of what your client is requesting in regard to diversity... yet I can wonder whether taking such a risk would be a way to model the impact of systematic discrimination in the workplace...again, maybe this is too broad, but I'm rolling. You may very well lose the "fun" aspect your client is requesting of you...although, diversity training is rarely deemed as fun...I'd be so interested in what you and other come up with.

Other general thoughts on teamwork and diversity:

When it comes to teamwork, race and gender interact along with personality style, thinking patterns, tolerance for risk, organizational

culture, age, and other factors. These individual factors add up to generate group behavior. Mix in perceived differences in resources and power and one has either a potential problem / time bomb / dissatisfier or limitless possibilities for real gains and improvement.

Understanding the multidimensional nature of these factors is important in optimizing the performance of diverse work teams. It is important to put these behaviors into the context of a workplace simulation so that issues and opportunities can be discussed and plans made for improvement with a lower likelihood of confrontation and hostility. We also believe that the goal of the activities should be on improving organizational results.

Diversity is not some benign hypothetical construct – it influences the way things work, team interactions, interdepartmental communications and collaboration and a wide variety of issues including quality of products and customer service. Harnessing these differences in perspective offers measurable impacts and results.

According to Joseph McGrath, Jennifer Berdahl, and Holly Arrow (1995), who proposed a framework for studying diversity in work groups, there are five clusters of attributes related to productivity:

- personal demographics;
- knowledge, skills, and abilities;
- values, beliefs, and attitudes;
- personality and cognitive and behavioral style; and
- organizational demographics.

And while we cannot affect the first and last with a team building exercise, we can certainly can set up an environment where the middle three can be addressed.

That is the shape of things to come as we continue to evolve our thinking about the linking of privilege and **Dutchman**.

Footnote

- 1 – In a new delivery paradigm, we set up “The Assay Office.” In this option, teams are given 16 Cave Cards in the Mine and its Gold Video because each Cave Card allows a team to mine an extra ounce of Gold each day.

Janice Pass worked up the original idea and we refined it.

The logic is that by not having to fool with a Tent each day, the team can mine more Gold. The Cave Cards replace the Tent Cards – *shelter is needed each day the team is mining Gold.*

What this sets up is a situation where not all teams know about the Cave Cards and especially the extra ounce of Gold. There is initial surprise and disgruntlement, sometimes an accusation of cheating. But the team getting that Video also has at least SIX Cave Cards that they can share. By doing so, they add Gold to the overall ROI with no additional costs.

If they choose not to share, there is no negative impact on another team. In 2 of 3 teams get one of these Videos, they can replace all the Tent Cards needed for these three teams. Thus, more resources are available to mine more Gold by remaining longer.

The Assay Office is a “stand-alone” option and can be used in any version of the exercise. We built this into our High Risk Version of the exercise because it makes for such a great dynamic and metaphor for debriefing.

- 2 The Assay Office Versions allows teams with Cave Cards to acquire an extra ounce of Gold each day in the Mine. Teams getting the Mine Video also get extra Cave Cards in this version of the exercise. This allows teams to collaborate even more, sharing a resource that enables them to mine more Gold. There is more on this in other places.