



# Competence

**Hong DM\***

Former HR Generalist/Counsel of UDG Mgmt, a DSO, USA

**\*Corresponding author:** Dorothy M Hong, Former HR Generalist/Counsel of UDG Mgmt, a DSO, New York, USA, Email: [dms hong@gmail.com](mailto:dms hong@gmail.com)

## Opinion

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## Opinion

During my stay at a Taiwan based bank in the USA in Midtown Manhattan I had a chance to attend at a large synagogue a talk by Professor Randolph Kennedy during Clinton Administration, on competence and the cost of sustaining diverse work unit in the Federal government agencies because of competence or lack thereof exhibited by minority staff. On the one hand, his talk was in a way self-deprecating but, also, on the other hand, his narration betrayed an insider account of a person of color a black spec in a sea of white workforce as he perceived inert stagnation as he was carving out his role there.

Nobody wants to stay a mere token forever. A Pioneer designation, as the term denotes, means bravery, intellectual rigor, moral fiber and also pain and suffering whose vast volume of working knowledge the actor does not want to disclose in full breadth out of self-dignity reason and also for the sake of paving an avenue of continued social contract with all members of each community, industry and society. This takes work, tact, skill sets and patience and certainly opportunistic mindset. An opportunity means a chance to succeed, fail or else be cognizant of one's limitations and risks.

Recollecting from my survey course of Sociology 101 from Cornell days there are several themed approaches to assemble people despite apparent differences in characteristics:

Association formed out of commonality and traits by:

- Ancestry, race, ethnicity, heritage.
- Trade association, by licenses and certificates, industry, occupation, work experience
- Hobbies, talents, leisure time activity, career in transition

- Manifested achievements, by awards, other distinction designations, stellar track record of outstanding contribution
- By wealth and class, assets acquired and additional assets to acquire, investors
- Self-help program by self-selection with common and targeted goals
- Political, religious, other social themed organizations
- Sporting activities, Travel activities, leisure activities
- Similarly situated in interest, core values and missions and lifestyle, social or fraternal or benevolent associations

The above enumerated categories are by no means exhaustive, but they immediately conjure up an effort that is very unnatural to remain civil and curb anti-social jealousy out of competitive feelings and otherwise confrontational because of math permutation and combinations mixed in casual meetings. For example, what if a black member had more prestigious schooling or higher income than another white member who could have been multi-generational Mayflower boy or else, a self-made millionaire immigrant progeny out of Harlem Ghetto or else high born aristocrat from an Asian nation which ceases to recognize royalty and such aristocracy associated with the defunct dynasty whose nation turned to Communism because of national poverty and hunger. This kind of multi-faceted nuanced diversity affords contempt and antagonism precisely because each was reared with the principles out of Bill of Rights and the accompanying value and sense of liberty and equality.

Why is competence an issue? When a minority of colour has shown necessary skill sets, has been resourceful with grit and stamina and had achieved talent and attractiveness scores in achievements to move the company to the next



level upward and elevated his position from superior work performance. How do we measure merits. Is the merit score sheet totally neutral meaning bias free. How to cope when “black spider” factor creeps in disfiguring and fudging and forging work records with blackmails, threats, sexual quid pro quos and terrorism.

From the majority white perspective why is it more offensive and intolerable to inure to a new unpalatable reality where a woman, socially and economically disadvantaged, politically disenfranchised person of colour or outgroup to have surpassed his peers and had emerged as a new star and outstanding contributor. What is the overhead cost to maintain a safe and work ethic minded workplace ethos devoid of hostility and other bad morale adding to weight and venom in the workplace peer and hierarchical chain of commands? Overhead cost should be added as a necessary cost and regular expenses to run daily operation of any business unit. But at what cost? This is a weighty and delicate decision from HR and management perspective in isolating victims or bad actors or else reconciling differences by affording a chance to negotiate and air out grievances. Are meetings adequate. How many meetings are necessary? Should a grieved party be mandated to attend meetings, or alternatively DEI trainings or afford better health insurance coverage or other subsidized perks like a nearby gym membership or weight loss program or Zen meditation sessions?

After the novelty wears out from witnessing somewhat exciting and out of place anomaly experience, how does the minority pioneer then stay calm and work out his quota and meet the standard on par with regular white male peers. What about currying favors whose activity is unrelated to job descriptions but that which can easily be categorized as sabotage which could undermine everything the company stands for in reviewing the charter and mission statement. When sabotage schemes take reign, this is not only hostile work environment and possibly EEOC violation but also corporate governance issues and governability of managers, the company infrastructure and also the local neighbourhood and in diffuse sense the nation and its political system in place.

No corporation wants to be known or have reputation as overrun by “bandits and whore.” No management of any corporation should dismiss such name calling as an aberration to overlook and tolerate as in the “Waiting for Godot” story where people are gathered together for other reason, meaning complimentary and supplementary actions that is deemed necessary for the sake of reality check and continued “status quo” stability and picturesque appearance which entail disease ridden, crime ridden, pornographic and other silenced and unspeakable and completely outrageous workplace dynamics that put sex appeal, youth, and generally white people at top which generate and condone paranoid schizophrenia ethos as the work norm.