Case Notes

# Chapter 2: Diversity and Individual Differences

## Summary

This case looks at the unique organizational structure and management style implemented at W. L. Gore and Associates. While counterintuitive to traditional management styles, Bill Gore’s approach to matching his organization’s operations to his personality and values has led to a successful company on both the profit front as well as in the satisfaction and commitment of employees. Providing structure via an unstructured environment and using personal interactions among employees to better understand unique differences, Gore has established a culture that is as exciting for his employees as it is a family feel for his people.

## Analysis

This case depicts many of the concepts covered in the chapter on individual differences. Bill Gore demonstrates the benefits of developing a culture that is true to his personality and sense of self-direction along with personal fulfillment. His approach validates the notion that instilling one’s core beliefs into the structure (or lack thereof) and fabric of a company can reap great financial and attitudinal benefits for those that are genuine in their leadership direction. The relationship focus at W. L. Gore and Associates, rather than rigid hierarchical approach, engenders a sense of camaraderie and *esprit de corps* that leads to profit and personal satisfaction for Gore and his employees.

## Case Questions

*1. How did Bill Gore structure management within his company, and why is this relevant to personality and individual differences?*

W. L. Gore did not believe in thick layers of formal management. He believed individual creativity was smothered by the formal management styles that other companies the same size used. Although many individuals referred to his management style as “unmanagement,” Gore found positive feedback in his workforce as well positive results for the company as a whole. By using this more laid-back form of management, Gore was able to cater to individual differences and learn how to better understand the decision making and behaviors of his employees.

*2. Explain why the diversity leadership program developed by W. L. Gore and Associates is a positive way to better understand and foster individual differences.*

The diversity leadership program was created around the sentiment that “understanding those who are different from us” is a very important element within a company. When developing this program, W. L. Gore and Associates realized that employee relationships were a major factor in the success and productivity of a company. Through this program, they strove to improve relationships in order to “decrease reactivity; increase professional capacity; and [help associates] learn about self while helping to make a more cohesive, diverse, and cross-discipline system.” By cultivating a feeling of intimacy and appreciation despite individual differences, the company was able to increase employee satisfaction.

*3. Describe how the sponsor program developed higher levels of employee satisfaction as well as maintained the “unmanagement” culture.*

This program allowed for current employees to take on the mentorship role to help newer employees work through conflicts, achieve professional goals, and evaluate personal contributions. This program also made the sponsor/mentor employees responsible for advocating for the newer employees in terms of fair pay and treatment as well as track the progress of the new employees. This program was set in place instead of more formal management to make a more cohesive and mutually beneficial workplace.