



SKILLS ARE THE KEY TO DIVERSITY

CONDOLEEZZA RICE AND ANJA MANUEL REVEAL
SKILLS AND CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS ARE
ESSENTIAL FOR DRAWING ECONOMIC VALUE FROM
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

—

JUNE 2021



POWERED BY

NUTANIX[™]



Dr. Condoleezza Rice



Anja Manuel

Leadership teams with a wider range of skill sets deliver greater economic value, and this diversity of skills frequently stems directly from greater diversity and inclusion, according to Dr. Condoleezza Rice, 66th US Secretary of State and the director of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, and Anja Manuel, diplomat, author, and advisor on emerging markets. In a recent conversation with Nutanix and CXO community members, Rice and Manuel revealed they are confident that wider capabilities in leadership will bring about more women at the top table.

“You have to look outside of your normal network and look for specialist skills,” Dr. Rice says. Her skills as a leading academic in Soviet and Eastern European affairs led to her becoming the 66th Secretary of State and the 20th US National Security Advisor. Following her terms working with the first President Bush, Dr. Rice joined the board of oil firm Chevron as the business had a concession in Kazakhstan and needed expertise on the region. “I had the key that they needed, and sometimes specialist knowledge is that key,” she says. Manuel agrees and adds: “We do too much in boards looking at titles and looking for a board member who has



been a CEO, when in fact a unit leader in a much larger organization will bring far more. So, look a bit harder.”

“Diversity is not just in how you look, but in terms of your perspective, history, and knowledge, and then you can question group thinking,” says Anja Manuel, who has become one of the world’s leading experts on emerging markets, and in particular China. Both leaders believe it is their skills that have been instrumental in their success, as well as a certain steeliness. “You have to be the first, and we have to stop looking for buddies at every step. If I was waiting for a black female Soviet specialist, I would still be waiting,” Dr. Rice says. In her career as a black academic, Dr. Rice discovered that it is important to reassure peers, and for them to see her as a member of the team. “Don’t just wait for them to make you comfortable; try to bridge it and make them feel comfortable too.” She says this leads to working together as a team with “a common purpose from your diverse backgrounds.”

On diverse backgrounds, Dr. Rice challenges existing thinking on gender and race. “We forget that people may come from different backgrounds, but not always; they may have been to the same schools.” If organizations really want to ensure their leadership teams have diverse voices at the table, then a deeper look into the backgrounds and skills of those being considered for top jobs will need to be deployed.

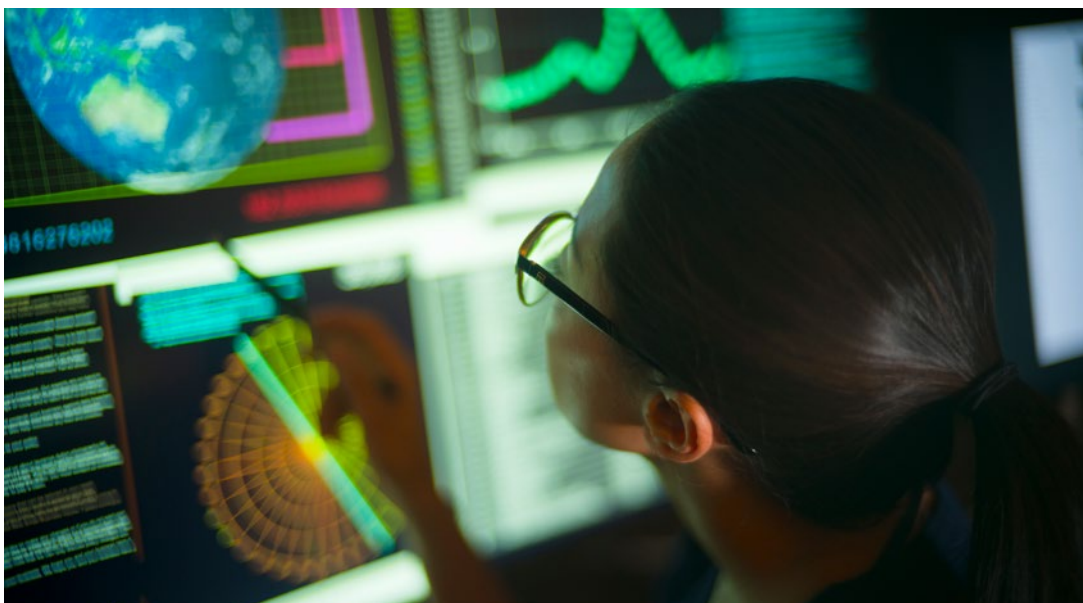
Manuel advises women business and technology leaders to ensure they are working with people they respect, which in turn can lead to enabling change towards greater diversity. In her legal career, she says her female peers managed to get the business to agree to equal parental leave, as they had identified that women took the full amount, men did not, and this prevented women from securing a partnership.

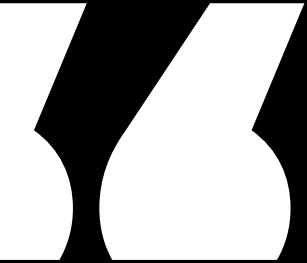
Dangers ahead

“The most effective thing is not to mandate the quota, but for every recruitment slate to be diverse,” Manuel says of building a diverse culture in an organization. Dr. Rice adds that work needs to be done to attract more women to engineering roles in technology, which in turn will correct the pipeline of future leadership roles, she believes. “The technology sector will still be dominated by engineers.”

“In the 60s and 70s, there were a lot more women working in computer science. There’s no reason that it should not be a topic that suits women.” Rice adds that education must keep standards high and work towards personalized education, which will increase economic benefits and diversity. Both agree that the rise of China as an economic powerhouse will demand that education is central to policy making. “China is a serious competitor in areas like payments, 5G, AI, and semiconductors; if competition develops, then let’s compete and build ourselves up rather than tearing them down,” Manuel says.

Manuel reminds us that retention is as important as recruitment: “We need to help women through the difficult times. A lot of organizations focus on the recruitment of women, but not helping them stay.” Referring to the pandemic, she adds, “Working from home has helped.” But even here, women are carrying a larger burden than their male partners. “You cannot home-school full time and do your job well and this is a discussion we need to have with our families,” Manuel says, adding that she created a task chart to demonstrate to her husband of all the jobs required to raise a family. This visualization helped her husband see the difference in volumes and tasks he could take on.





China is a serious competitor in areas like payments, 5G, AI, and semiconductors; if competition develops, then let's compete and build ourselves up rather than tearing them down.



Better and better to come

“We are starting to see a bit of an old girls network - in a positive way,” Dr. Rice says of how trailblazers such as herself, Manuel, and Anne Neuberger, US deputy national security adviser for cyber and emerging technologies, have broken the glass ceiling. “If you would really like to serve on a board, you have to let it be known, prime your own network so that they know, bring it up with the CEO and the head of board recruitment,” she says. As someone who worked with both Bush presidents and sat on the board of tech challengers such as Dropbox, Dr Rice is confident: “The circumstances are better now than they have ever been. There are a lot of opportunities out there. Let’s seize it.”





KEEP UP TO SPEED
WITH THE LATEST CONTENT

[NUTANIX.COM/CXO](https://www.nutanix.com/cxo)

POWERED BY

NUTANIX™