



By prioritizing excellence,
we naturally create an environment
where diversity can thrive.
It doesn't come from imposed
rules, but from ensuring that
everyone has an equal opportunity
to showcase their talent.

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**MERIT
EXCELLENCE
INTELLIGENCE**

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MUST WE CONFRONT DIVERSITY AND MERIT?

We are living in a time of deep questioning of social and organizational models. In this context, the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion—grouped under the acronym DEI—have become essential values in our institutions, businesses, and public discourse. Their goal is to address historical imbalances, promote fair access to opportunities, and create environments where everyone can feel legitimate and represented.

This intention is undeniably noble. It stems from a concern for humanity and justice, aiming to address the persistent divisions in our modern societies. Yet, over time, many voices have begun to question the actual effectiveness of these initiatives. Too often perceived as symbolic, superficial, or leveraged for image purposes, DEI approaches struggle to convince that they lead to lasting and meaningful change.

It is in this climate of doubt and polarization that a new model of thought is emerging MEI—Merit, Excellence, and Intelligence. Unlike DEI, MEI chooses to focus on selection, recognition, and advancement criteria on competence, performance, and individual potential. The central idea is simple: to move away from identity-based criteria in favor of a merit-driven approach, founded on talent and effort, and presented as a pathway to natural equity.

However, MEI is not without controversy. It raises questions, provokes discussion, and at times divides opinion. Rather than closing the debate, its emergence broadens it. It prompts us to reflect on the values that underpin our societies, as well as the mechanisms in place to enable each individual to fully realize their potential.

MEI represents a true shift in perspective—a break from traditional approaches rooted in identity-based criteria. It asserts with conviction that recruitment, promotion, and recognition processes should prioritize competence, performance, and individual potential, rather than origin, gender, or any other personal characteristic.

Through this lens, the goal is to restore a form of equity through meritocracy. Raw talent becomes the reference point, and intelligence in all its forms—whether analytical, creative, or emotional—becomes the driving force of advancement. MEI thus promotes healthy competition based on merit

rather than quotas, where each individual can aspire to succeed according to what they are capable of achieving.

This model is based on a core belief: placing excellence at the heart of the criteria allows diversity to flourish naturally. A form of authentic diversity—not imposed by artificial mechanisms—but revealed through the removal of barriers and the opportunity given to each individual, regardless of their background or identity, to demonstrate their talent.

This model reshapes our reference points. It invites us to rethink our understanding of equality and justice. Above all, it raises a central question: are we truly willing to acknowledge each individual's real talents and skills, rather than stopping at what they represent or symbolize?

But as appealing as this vision may be, it raises fundamental questions. Can we truly speak of meritocracy in a world where individual paths are still shaped by countless invisible barriers? Where the starting point isn't the same for everyone, and the conditions for success are unevenly distributed?

Unconscious mechanisms, often subtle, influence our daily decisions without us fully realizing it. They play a role in recruitment, evaluation, and recognition decisions. If not identified and corrected, they risk distorting the processes and compromising the integrity of the merit we claim to uphold.

Educational-access inequalities remain stark. How can we claim to measure a person's potential without considering the resources they were granted—or denied—to develop it? Talent does not thrive in a vacuum: it requires support, opportunities, and encouragement. Without these, competition becomes unequal from the outset, and the very notion of merit loses its legitimacy.

Turning a blind eye to practices and policies that, despite their apparent neutrality, perpetuate inequality is to deny their true impact. These invisible mechanisms of exclusion trap certain individuals in marginalized paths, often without recognition or recourse. And their persistence does not simply disappear because we choose to look the other way.

In this context, the promise of a model based solely on merit can become a dangerous illusion. Not because merit is inherently unjust, but because, if misunderstood or poorly applied, it can serve to justify pre-existing inequalities.

The real challenge, then, is not to choose between MEI and DEI, but to recognize the limitations of each, and to build a hybrid system—clear-eyed and demanding—where merit is celebrated, but equity is ensured.

It is precisely for this reason that the debate between MEI and DEI must not become an ideological battleground. It's not about choosing sides or dismissing one in favor of the other, but about initiating an honest, pragmatic, and constructive conversation. These two approaches, far from being antagonistic, can complement, correct, and enrich each other.

Merit, when truly grounded in objective and transparent criteria, must be protected as a cornerstone of social justice. It reflects the recognition of hard work, rigor, inventiveness, and perseverance. Yet for that merit to be legitimate and accessible to all, equity must also be present.

For what is merit worth if only a few have the means to prove it? Equity must guarantee the fundamental conditions that allow everyone—regardless of their background—a real opportunity to express their potential. This means removing invisible barriers, ensuring access to education, neutralizing bias in evaluation, and creating environments where talent can emerge and thrive.

MEI and DEI must not stand in opposition but rather collaborate. Together, they can help shape a fairer future—one where we don't choose between excellence and inclusion, but recognize that true excellence cannot exist without genuine inclusion.

The real question today is not to decide between inclusion and excellence, as if these principles were irreconcilably opposed. Rather, it's about envisioning a future model—whether social, entrepreneurial, or educational—where these values are not mutually exclusive but instead coexist and enrich one another.

Inclusion without rigor can slip into complacency. Excellence without fair access can become the privilege of a few. But together, they form a subtle and powerful balance—one that allows each person, regardless of origin, resources, or background, to rise according to their abilities, not their advantages.

We must imagine environments where talent is not determined by the luck of being born in the right place, at the right time, into the right background. Environments where merit is truly earned—because the conditions for developing it are genuinely shared.

Only by bringing these conditions together can we truly aspire to a society that is both equitable and efficient—a society in which inclusion fuels excellence, and excellence serve as concrete proof of what inclusion makes possible.

This is not about making an exclusive choice, but about building collectively—with clarity, ambition, and a sense of responsibility.

Merit, when fair, does not erect barriers. It is neither a privilege reserved for the few, nor a verdict that invalidates unconventional paths. True merit recognizes the diversity of talents and journeys. It brings out the best that each individual has to offer—not based on a predefined mold, but in recognition of each person's unique potential.

Because it is built on fair conditions, just merit does not discriminate—it uplifts. It encourages us to rise above social determinism and to believe in the value of effort, progress, and resilience. It does not select to exclude; it distinguishes to inspire.

From this perspective, merit asserts itself as a truly inclusive force—a lever of empowerment accessible to all, rather than a mechanism that perpetuates inequality.

Whether you are an entrepreneur, executive, HR expert, or a student seeking direction, you share a common ambition: to promote merit, nurture intelligence, and strive for excellence in building a solid and equitable future. When fully understood, meritocracy becomes a powerful engine—capable of unlocking potential, overcoming obstacles, and shaping environments that are as fair as they are effective.

In « Merit, Excellence, Intelligence, » you'll find a strategic guide that invites you to turn ideas into concrete action, strengthen your authenticity, and shape an organization or personal path aligned with your deepest values.

Unlike self-help books that promise quick results, this book offers a structured, rigorous, and intelligent program to help you reach your full potential.

It will guide you in crafting a clear life plan—focused on your growth, success, and fulfillment. By highlighting the core principles of individual excellence, it will help you initiate your transformation today toward a future that is both authentic and accomplished.

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To learn more about how to inspire the MEI (Merit, Excellence, Intelligence) model, visit WebTech Management and Publishing Incorporated (www.webtechmanagement.com) and click on the blue image labeled « Wise whiz » at the bottom right of the screen.

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In addition to his work as an author, Germain Decelles serves as a Change Management Strategist. With over 40 years of business and consultancy experience, he has worked with both local and international markets in a wide range of sectors, including retail trade, distribution, information technology and communications, transportation, manufacturing, financial services, and government organizations.



Other publications by Germain Decelles include:

- ISO Pour Tous
- Le manuel d'information ISO
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