

**By Nancy Steele Brokaw**  
For The Pantagraph

BLOOMINGTON- The definition of insanity, says motivational speaker and diversity specialist David G. Lewis, is doing the same thing day in and day out and expecting different results. Change, he adds, is the one constant in life and yet we fight it.

Resistance to change in the area of diversity can have more than social implications. It can have dire consequences for a company's bottom line profit.

Lewis, through keynote speeches, conference facilitating and writing, is out to change all that. As he travels throughout the country, Lewis begins by challenging his audience's definition of diversity.

"Diversity is so broad," Lewis says. "It's not just about race."

Lewis wants people to examine their long-held views regarding not only ethnicity but also sexual orientation, disability, gender, religion and, "the biggie of them all," he says, socioeconomic class.

Lewis says he's not out to change anyone's mind but simply "to make people think so they can make their decisions." He urges business people to think of diversity not as "a well intentioned, soft, politically correct, human-resources project" but as a factor critical to a company's long-term financial success.

"As the white majority ages, the next and future generations increasingly will consist of people of color," Lewis notes.

Marketing departments ignore this fact to their peril, Lewis says.

He gives an example. Lewis worked with a large car dealership in

Indiana. They had "stupid but clever" TV commercials that had served them well in the past but growth was flat. Lewis proposed that dealership dub the commercials into Spanish and play them at a time when 75-percent of the local Hispanic community was tuned in to a certain station. The ploy worked; sales spiked.

"Business must connect quickly with the marketplace," he says.

"If they ignore potential customers those customers will find other sources for their needs."

Lewis calls this multicultural marketing" and he is constantly challenging his audience to look beyond the obvious. "If everyone looks like me, are we all alike?" he asks.

"The differences are not always obvious." He answers.

"Fifty-four million people in this country have disabilities and not all of them are obvious." He cites an employee who has bipolar disorder. "Does the ADA (American Disabilities Act) require employers to make allowances for that?" he asks.

Before anyone has a chance to ponder that question for long. Lewis moves on. His speaking style is fast-paced, engaging. "People connect with me." Lewis says. Cites one of his favorite phrases, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

He says diversity "isn't a head issue, it's a heart issue."

Putting conviction into action isn't necessarily easy. While trying to reach a more diverse marketplace, business can stumble.

"This is an area where what you don't know can hurt you." Lewis says. There are many cultural differences to be aware of and respect. He ticks off some

examples. Americans consider the number 13 to be unlucky, Lewis says. In some Asian cultures, four is considered the taboo number. If a Realtor shows a house to a Muslim family, he or she may want to be aware of the importance of the directional placement of windows.

And then there's the whole negotiating thing. Most native born U.S. citizens don't do it except on cars and homes. In many other countries, bickering back and forth to decide on a price is part of doing business. Skilled American marketers need to understand how other people play the game and be open to new possibilities.

That's the way Lewis lives his life: open to possibilities. He didn't think he'd end up being a business owner and speaker. He spent four years in the Army. His first college degree was in criminal justice and Lewis worked as a probation officer before returning for a graduate degree in political science.

Lewis was pursuing a doctorate degree at Purdue University when he read Stephen Covey's "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." Lewis became so enamored with what he learned that he became a certified facilitator for that program. Lewis discovered that he loved public speaking.

He became a member of a Toastmaster's club, which Lewis said taught him how to speak. Lewis also joined the National Speakers Association, which he credits with teaching him how to make money with his speaking.

After winning some awards for his presentations, Lewis found himself in demand. He added writing to the list and founded a business Lewis Consulting Group, Inc.

Lewis recently celebrated his sixth year in business. He employs a full-time marketing director and a part-time employee.

Staying in the speaking business for six years is a bigger milestone than it might seem. "Most of us who do what I do are good at speaking but not so good at running a business," he says. Lewis with the help of a mentor has formulated a business plan.

The best part of his job, Lewis says, are the "phenomenal people" he meets. His hero is motivational speaker Zig Ziglar, who commands \$50,000 an appearance but began his career speaking hundreds of times for free.

Lewis usually travels to speak once a week. He recently addressed the Dayton Bar Association for the second time. When he's not traveling, Lewis is writing for publications, marketing himself on Tuesdays and Thursdays, teaching a government class at Heartland Community College.

While Lewis often focuses on teaching people how to "maximize the diversity that's already there and maximize their bottom line" he often reminds them of something else. "We can solve some of our biggest problems if we'll remember what our mothers told us: play nice and share."