

Is diversity really so scary?

By [Peter Horszowski](#), issued by [Pert Industrials](#)

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PERT has exhibited at several trade shows over the last few years. We often hear the following: "I can't believe that you make this all here in South Africa. It looks imported!" But why should imported stuff be better quality than local material? I know we have our messy diversity down here. But, whatever the results from the Brexit and US Presidential election might suggest, I believe that diversity presents a real advantage.

Here's something interesting about the recent US election. It now appears that Donald Trump got more votes than the previous two Republican presidential candidates: Mitt Romney and John McCain. But it was all within a percent or so. What the stats tell us is that every 4 years approximately 60 million Americans will vote for the Republican candidate, whomever that may be. Even Donald Trump. I mention this, because much has been made of his anti-immigration and xenophobic campaign rhetoric. But the stats show that this message was hardly decisive. In fact, more people voted for the opposing Democratic candidate. My belief is that most people realise the value of diversity and, while we are all threatened to some extent, most of us are up for the challenge. Back to those new stats on the US election. About 6% of the vote went to the independents. Just over 46% went to Trump and around 48% to Clinton. Now, don't forget that half the country didn't vote at all! So, in a roomful of 10 eligible voters, only around 2 of them actually voted for Trump. This is important to remember when you hear Trump's divisive and xenophobic campaign labelled as "populist".

Why I am harping on about this? Well, at a working day at PERT you could hear any of the following languages: English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Xhosa, Italian, French and Linguala. This may have been a terrible problem for the builders at Babel, but we manage. Sure, I am a bit biased here, but I would say that we not only manage, we thrive! It seems to me that we are actually better off for this multicultural influence. Johnny Clegg once defined a culture as a different way to solve the same problems. Well, at PERT we have many ways of solving technical and commercial problems. As you can imagine, this does not always run smoothly. It is not always harmonious. But for the most part we celebrate our diversity and it gives us a breadth of resources we wouldn't otherwise have.



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