Workforce Diversity

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ABSTRACT   The substance of the paper is workforce diversity. The study is to discover in what way companies manage workforce diversity and its significances to the company's existence as well as observe by what means companies' pact with challenges that comes with employees from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the research answers the question `Has workplace diversity contributed to organizational success`. Because diversity covers a wide range of human attributes and qualities, The research is limited to the required tools for managing workplace diversity, advantages and disadvantages of managing a diverse workforce.

KEYWORDS :

Introduction

The world's increasing globalization requires more interaction among people from diverse backgrounds. People no longer live and work in an insular environment; they are now part of a worldwide economy competing within a global framework. For this reason, profit and non-profit organizations need to become more diversified to remain competitive. Maximizing and capitalizing on workplace diversity is an important issue for management.

Supervisors and managers need to recognize the ways in which the workplace is changing and evolving. Managing diversity is a significant organizational challenge, so managerial skills must adapt to accommodate a multicultural work environment.

This document is designed to help managers effectively manage diverse workforces. It provides a general definition for workplace diversity, discusses the benefits and challenges of managing diverse workplaces, and presents effective strategies for managing diverse workforces.

Diversity Defined

Diversity can be defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, and valuing differences among people with respect to age, class, race, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, etc.
(Esty et al. 1995).

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Companies need to embrace diversity and look for ways to become inclusive organizations because diversity has the potential to yield greater work productivity and competitive advantages (SHRM 1995). Stephen Butler, co-chair of the Business-Higher Education Forum, believes diversity is an invaluable competitive asset (Robinson 2002). Managing diversity is a key component of effective people management in the workplace (Black Enterprise 2001).

1. This document is HR022, one of a series of the Food and Resource Economics Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date June 2002. Revised October 2015. Visit the EDIS website at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

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Demographic changes (women in the workplace, organizational restructuring, and equal opportunity legislation) will require organizations to review their management practices and develop new and creative approaches to managing people. Positive changes will increase work performance and customer service.

The number of dual-income families and single working mothers has changed the dynamics of the workplace. Changes in the family structure means that there are fewer traditional family roles (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 1998).

Significant changes in the workplace have occurred due to downsizing and outsourcing, which has greatly affected human resource management. Globalization and new technologies have changed workplace practices, and there has been a trend toward longer working hours (Losyk 1996). Generally speaking, organizational restructuring usually results in fewer people doing more work.

Changes in federal and state equal opportunity legislations have made discrimination in the workplace illegal. These laws specify the rights and responsibilities of both associates (employees) and employers in the workplace and hold both groups accountable.

Benefits of Diversity in the Workplace
1. Increased creativity

Didn't they say two heads are better than one? In a diverse workplace, this saying becomes two different people are better than one. When people in different cultures, backgrounds and beliefs come together to work for a common goal, increased creativity can be achieved. What is already artistic can become even better. What already works can evolve into something else.

2. Increased adaptability

In order to address problems of workplace diversity, an organization has to develop a variety of solutions, forcing them to adapt to a diverse workforce. It will be a long process, but totally worth it. Moreover, people from diverse backgrounds can provide ideas for adapting to ever-changing customer demands and fluctuating markets.

3. Melting Pot of ideas

No two people think exactly alike, and a company that knows how to exploit varying viewpoints of each individual can create a large pool of ideas and experiences. They can then draw from the pool

strategies to effectively deal with business concerns and customer needs.

4. Increased productivity

Globalization and internalization are two of the gifts that workforce diversity brings to the table, which is why foreign executives are very successful in the corporate world in America, while citizens from Europe find their place in high-level jobs. Put them together in one place and what you get is increased productivity.

5. Increased range of services

A diverse collection of people with different experiences, skills, cultural understanding, languages and other differences enables a company to provide customers services on a global basis. A hotel, for example, that employs people of different races will have the confidence to accommodate guests from different races as well. This is because language and cultural gaps are avoided. If management gets an in-depth understanding of the culture of a particular race, they can also provide services that would appeal specifically to them

Challenges of Diversity in the Workplace

When diverse people start to work together, it has been observed that they face initial hiccups in communicating with each other. That's natural when you consider that all of them are from different backgrounds but this initial lag in communication decreases productivity in the workplace and causes a lot of issues in team-meetings.In addition to the issues discusses above, there is always a culture clash in the beginning of the training. While cultivating a mutual respect for one another's culture is the main idea behind implementing workplace diversity, it could be a huge task to accommodate every diverse employee's request based on cultural and religious beliefs.There have been cases where companies had no other choice but to hire other full-time staff to keep a track of their diverse employee's preferences and needs. These cases happen in large organizations with very diverse workplaces. For example, many Muslim employees decide to not work on Fridays, as it is a special day for prayers in their religion. To accommodate this request of theirs, the company now has to hire additional staff who would work on their behalf.

Required Tools for Managing Diversity

*   **Emphasize communication:** Ensure that all employees understand your policies, procedures, safety rules, and other important information. Work to overcome language and cultural barriers. Have key materials, such as safety information, translated when possible. Use pictures and symbols on warning signs so that everybody can understand.
*   **View employees as individuals:** Avoid both positive and negative stereotypes. Don't make assumptions about employees from different groups. Judge successes and failures individually. Respond promptly and firmly when employees express prejudices or stereotypes. Remind them of your policies that prohibit discrimination. Encourage employees to view co-workers as individuals and judge them on their work, not on personal factors.
*   **Encourage employees to work in diverse groups:** Assure that work teams reflect the diversity of your workplace. Diverse work teams let employees get to know and value one another as individuals. Diverse teams also expand the experiences and views of all the workers on the team and help them recognize the strength of their combined talents and perspectives.
*   **Base decisions on objective criteria:** Expect all employees of all backgrounds to meet required standards and perform to the best of their ability. Don't set different criteria for different groups. Don't make excuses or allow employees to make excuses for shortcomings. Base all employment actions, including discipline, on specific, performance-related criteria. Always focus on job-related issues, not personal issues, when

dealing with employees.

*   **Be open-minded:** Recognize, and encourage employees to recognize, that one's own experience, background, and culture are *not* the *only* ones with value to the organization. Set an example of encouraging diversity by developing relationships with colleagues whose backgrounds differ from yours. Look for ways to incorporate diverse perspectives and talents into efforts to achieve organizational goals.

Conclusions

A diverse workforce is a reflection of a changing world and marketplace. Diverse work teams bring high value to the power elite: Have women and minorities reached the top? New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. organizations. Respecting individual differences will benefit the workplace by creating a competitive edge and increasing work productivity. Diversity management benefits associates by creating a fair and safe environment where everyone has access to opportunities and challenges. Management tools in a diverse workforce should be used to educate everyone about diversity and its issues, including laws and regulations. Most workplaces are made up of diverse cultures, so organizations need to learn how to adapt to be successful.

REFRENCES

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