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Diversity At Work

Based on: *Managing Diversity* by Norma Carr-Ruffino



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Preface and History

Source: Mathews, A. (Summer, 1998). Diversity: A principle of human resource management. *Public Personnel Management*, 27:2, p.175.

- During World War II, America's human resources were stretched to the limits.
- Women remained home to operate the factories during World War II.
- Before World War II, diverse work groups did not exist.
- Legislation for equal employment opportunity and affirmative action laws created diversity managed by human resource management (HR).
- Equal employment opportunity and affirmative action programs alone do not create diversity in the workplace.
- Today, diversity is still not visible at all levels in most organizations.

Preface and History

Source: Mathews, A. (Summer, 1998). Diversity: A principle of human resource management. *Public Personnel Management*, 27:2, p.175.

- When establishing diversity as an organizational goal, a number of processes must be considered and decisions made regarding how to effectively manage diversity strategies.
- Before diversity strategies are implemented, the organization's cultural environment, management and evaluation systems should be examined to ascertain if existing personnel/human resources processes will support or hinder diversity in the organization.
- Then, appropriate strategies can be designed to develop and manage diversity based on these findings.

Overview

- Creating a workplace for everyone.
- Understanding diversity issues.
- Managing diversity

WHY DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT

Source: (2002, March 7). *HOW TO...TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DIVERSITY*, *People Management*, 8:5, p.52.

There are three important reasons for looking at diversity:

1. Law
2. Ethics
3. Business practice.

WHY DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT

- **Legal**: Anyone with management responsibility needs to be aware of their legal duties. Claims for discrimination often lead to large awards and take up much HR time, as well as being bad publicity.

WHY DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT

- **Ethical**: Many organizations have developed values that require ethical behavior in all staff. Potential recruits often look closely at the culture of an organization before they make a career decision.
- ***“Employees who believe they have been treated unfairly on the job are likely to steal from their employers and to reject the policies of their organizations than those who are treated with kindness, dignity and respect*** (Benavides, F.G., Benach, J., Diez-Roux, A.V., & Roman, C. (2000). How do types of employment relate to health indicators? Findings from the Second European Survey on working conditions. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 54, 494-501.).”

WHY DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT

- **Business practice:** An organization must recognize changes in its customer base or catchments area and capitalize on them. Half of the ethnic minority population in the UK is under 25, and last year 79 per cent of those joining the European job market were women. Companies that take advantage of this will have the opportunity for increased sales, new ideas and a better future.

WHY DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT

Problems that may arise if diversity is ignored will include:

- difficulties with recruitment,
- failure to win certain contracts,
- a rise in grievance claims or an imbalance in the ethnic, gender, age or disability mix of applicants for jobs or promotion.

Research Suggests:

Situations reflecting serious overt and subtle discrimination continue to exist in the work environment. Grossman (2000) suggests that in spite of organizational efforts to manage diversity, very little has changed in the experiences of culture, ethnicity, race, and gender groups. To effectively integrate diversity in the workplace, leadership must rely on proven theory based approaches.

Source: Grossman, R. (March, 2000). Race in the workplace. *HR Magazine*, pp.41-45.

5 SUCCESS FACTORS

1. As with any business change process.
2. It is important that the program is led by management.
3. Communication is vital.
4. Employees need to be convinced of the need for change, not just see this as another HR initiative.
5. The process needs to be ongoing and subject to regular measurement -- don't expect a change overnight. A second (or annual) audit may be necessary.

Ten Payoffs For Managing Diversity Well

- Attracting and retaining the best available human talent
- Increasing organizational flexibility
- Gaining and keeping greater market share, locally and globally
- Reducing costs
- Improving the quality of management

Ten Payoffs For Managing Diversity Well

- Creating and innovating more powerfully
- Solving problems more effectively
- Increasing productivity
- Contributing to social responsibility
- Bottom line: increased profits

Source: Carr-Ruffino, N. (2002). Managing Diversity: People Skills for a Multicultural Workplace.

Boston, MA: Pearson Education Company.

Attracting and Retaining the Best People

As qualified employees become more scarce, employers are becoming more flexible. This is done by:

- Meeting employees' needs
- Showing respect for them as individuals
- Using multicultural skills in working with them

Increase Organizational Flexibility

Companies are teaming up, forming alliances to pool their resources and to tighten relationships with suppliers and customers. Having diversity on your side is essential.

Greater Market Share

Companies that manage diversity effectively are better able to expand their share of markets both locally and globally.

- Spending power of African Americans, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans was estimated to at \$650 billion in 2000.
- About half of all business travelers are women
- Experiences and perspectives are valuable in building sales.

Reducing Costs

- A multicultural approach saves money in the long and short run.
- Diversity efforts reduce high turnover and associated costs.
- When a non-traditional manager is included in a development program or gets promoted, other employees notice, feel more hopeful and become more committed to company.
- Greater morale, higher productivity and lower legal fees and time losses result.

Improving the Quality of Management

- Knowing they must compete with all comers can encourage all managers to perform better.
- Diversity prods managers to learn fresh approaches, see issues from new perspectives and adds new contacts.
- What organizations learn in training programs for diversity purposes can be applied to all employees. (Show appreciation for uniqueness and treat all people with respect.)

Creating and Innovating More Powerfully

- If people from diverse backgrounds are treated with respect, supported and appreciated, they will be willing to contribute their ideas to group sessions.
- A broader range of diverse ideas to choose from increases synergy.
- Excessive conflict interferes with productivity, communication and morale.

Solving Problems More Effectively

Culturally diverse workforces solve problems better because:

- A greater variety of perspectives brings a higher level of critical analysis of alternatives
- Lowers probability of groupthink
- Creates a higher probability of generating many alternative solutions.

Increased Productivity

- Learning about each employee's unique values, expectations, and goals is essential.
- It is essential to help others with job objectives, performance and career plans.
- Job performance, dedication and attendance are boosted when employees perceive they are valued by their organization.

Contributing to Social Responsibility

- Creating a multicultural organization will make the world a better place.
- An effective diverse workplace will model a diverse world.
- Help communities outside of workplace in efforts to advance minorities in their communities.

Bottom Line: Increased Profits

- Setup informal networks where many workers can instantly interact with less bureaucracy and a less homogeneous groups running the show.
- Work teams and individual workers should motivate each other to be more productive by setting own goals and making own plans.
- All benefits of a diverse workplace builds productive relationships, increased career successes and greater talent pools.

How to Build Diverse People Skills

- Become aware of culture's impact through self awareness activities.
- Learn about your own culture's values and ways.
- Recognize your own culture biases through reflections of your past.
- Build interaction skills with education, case studies and applying new knowledge at work.

Laying the Groundwork

- **Step 1. Become aware of culture** —its elements, pervasiveness, and impacts, as well as similarities and differences among major cultural groups.
- **Step 2. Learn about your own culture** — recognize that the beliefs and customs that you may accept as reality are only one way of viewing the world, the way of your culture.

Laying the Groundwork

- **Step 3. Recognize your own biases**, the ways in which you stereotype, assume, judge, and discriminate, so you can own them and move beyond them.
- **Step 4. Learn about other cultures**, the environments of people you encounter in the workplace, so you can recognize when cultural differences may be at the root of problems and so you can appreciate the contributions people from diverse cultures can make to the work situation.

Laying the Groundwork

- **Step 5. Build interaction skills** and practice new behaviors through self-awareness activities, skill builder case studies, interviews, and applying your new understandings to actual people situations at work, school, anywhere you encounter diverse groups.

Six Steps to Making Diversity Work

Based on: Bearden, K., (2002, April). Six Steps to Making Diversity Work. The Next Step Magazine. Retrieved January 16, 2003 from <http://www.nextstepmag.com/nsm/nsm/issues/article.html?a=48>

- **STEP 1: Create a Vision**
- **STEP 2: Conduct an Audit**
- **STEP 3: Educate Senior Management**
- **STEP 4: Revise Procedures**
- **STEP 5: Train the Entire Workforce**
- **STEP 6: Establish a Task Force**

STEP 1: Create a Vision

In creating or altering a vision statement, your leadership should establish a definition for diversity for the rest of the organization to use as it goes about its various divisional and departmental changes. The definition should be broad enough so that no employee feels excluded. One example is "all the ways which we differ." You also must constantly communicate the vision to all employees.

STEP 2: Conduct an Audit

An audit of how your people operate is the genesis in making a business case for diversity.

Before you know the profile of who to hire, who to promote or what new markets to target, you must know what works and what does not work for your company. Specifically, an audit is a thorough examination of your company's culture. It tells you what needs to be fixed. It will reveal current and past practices, both good and bad. You need this information in order to form a strategy for change, for diversity. The audit should include most, if not all, of the following:

- Employee survey to understand how the organization feels about the corporate diversity efforts
- Focus groups with representative sample of employees to determine important issues to address
- Assessment of time managers spend on issues related to barriers in the workplace
- Review of past employee attitude surveys to identify trends and common problems
- Review of the EEO plan to measure the organization's progress
- Review of the policy and procedures manual and employee handbook to determine who is negatively affected
- Examination of employee exit interviews to analyze turnover

STEP 3: Educate Senior Management

Training, especially for senior management, is fruitless without making the business connection. In fact, getting the first executive to agree to participate is a process itself. Therefore, education begins prior to any executive group, diversity session.

- **Starting at the top, you must present your findings of the audit and clearly identify the problem areas and opportunities.**
- **Next you should discuss your proposal of rolling out a plan to change the culture, the diversity initiative, and how the company will benefit.**
- **Emphasize how the plan will only work with their involvement.**
- **Remember, the more you link everything to dollars and cents the greater your chances of moving forward.**

STEP 4: Revise Procedures

At this stage, you fix what is broken.

- With information you gathered through the audit rewrite, delete, and edit any rules, policies, and practices that are biased, unfair or discriminatory toward any group.
- Repair or eliminate systems that may impede progress toward your diversity objectives, as tied to the corporate objectives. These policies and procedures may be written or unwritten, formal or informal, obvious or subtle.
- You can only pull this off with a clear vision and blessings of senior management. (That is why Steps 1 through 3 are important.)

STEP 5: Train the Entire Workforce

- **Most organizations fail at this because of moderate executive commitment.**
- **Masses do not buy into the vision.**
- **They are resistant to change.**
- **They do not believe the company is serious.**
- **Corporations comprise individuals who make up teams, business units, departments and divisions. Each group has its own bureaucracy, subculture and political power base. Each individual has his or her own biases, family influences, career goals, personal agendas, etc.**
- **Communicate why change makes good business sense.**
- **Convince everyone of what's in it for them, personally. Gain their confidence and support, which not having can derail any diversity effort regardless of the level of executive commitment.**
- **Setting new goals and create new norms for the company.**

STEP 6: Establish a Task Force

- The task force should represent a cross-section of the organization, consisting of several, well-respected individuals.
- A good number is between 10 and 14.
- The task force should report to the senior management team and not human resources.
- The extent line managers and executives are involved will determine the degree the entire organization accepts change.
- By limiting the group's reporting to the human resource department, the rest of the company may infer that diversity is merely a project and not something that will last.
- Finally, the task force should allow as much input as possible from the other employees. The more each person is involved in the change process the greater their commitment will be in making it work.

Seven Common Mistakes Undermine

Corporate Diversity Programs

Based on: Morrison, L. , (2002, October). Seven Common Mistakes Undermine Corporate Diversity Programs. The Next Step Magazine. Retrieved March 10, 2003 from <http://www.nextstepmag.com/nsm/nsm/issues/article.html?a=81>.

- 1. Failing to address diversity as a business issue.
- 2. Making diversity HR's responsibility.
- 3. Considering diversity just an issue of race and gender.
- 4. Regarding diversity as a recruitment challenge only.
- 5. Assuming diversity is just a training issue.
- 6. Treating diversity as an individual problem, not an organizational issue.
- 7. Celebrating diversity, instead of taking action.

1. Failing to address diversity as a business issue

- The biggest and best employers have embraced diversity because they know it's good for business.
- It's been shown that inclusion improves employee performance, increases productivity, reduces turnover, and may also help with recruitment and marketing.
- A positive and proactive approach to diversity is also the best defense against bias-related litigation, and that's a business issue too.

2. Making diversity HR's responsibility

- If diversity is really a critical business issue, senior management itself must not only buy in, but also take responsibility for success.
- While a diversity manager may have a key role to play, no one can replace a personal commitment from the CEO.

3. Considering diversity just an issue of race and gender

- Diversity shouldn't be a special rights program.
- It should be a mission to develop all employees in an organization and provide them with equal opportunities to grow in their careers.

4. Regarding diversity as a recruitment challenge only

- While hiring is surely important, it's just the first element of an inclusion program.
- Effective diversity also involves development, mentoring, advancement and retention.

5. Assuming diversity is just a training issue

- Sometimes senior management thinks diversity can be achieved by a one-day training, or similar event.
- Diversity isn't a stand-alone issue, however, and needs to be central to an organization's employee development strategy.
- While training is essential, effective diversity requires an ongoing commitment from management at all levels.

6. Treating diversity as an individual problem, not an organizational issue

- A diversity concern may arise initially due to the behavior of a particular manager or work group.
- Invariably the challenge is organization-wide and requires a comprehensive solution.

7. Celebrating diversity, instead of taking action

- Serving national dishes or sponsoring an ethnic celebration may contribute to inter-group understanding.
- These are no substitutes for policies that promote equal opportunities for growth and advancement.

Everyone Should know:

- Senior management needs to get in touch with what's actually going on at the middle level.
- Management shouldn't be naïve and presume everyone knows what they must do to recognize and develop talent.
- A frank assessment of policies and practices is necessary. Identifying talent is where career opportunities are given, or not given.
- The bottom line is that management can't take for granted that everyone is playing fair, that they know how to identify and develop talent, or even whether they understand why it's important to do so.

Challenges of leading a diverse workforce

Source: Joplin, J. R.W., Daus, C. S. (1997). Challenges of leading a diverse workforce. *Academy of Management Executive*, August, 11, 3, pp. 32: 48.

- **Challenge One: Changed Power Dynamics**
- **Challenge Two: Diversity of Opinions**
- **Challenge Three: Perceived Lack of Empathy**
- **Challenge Four: Tokenism, Real and Perceived**
- **Challenge Five: Participation**
- **Challenge Six: Overcoming Inertia**

Challenge One: Changed Power Dynamics

- As the daily management of diversity consumes more time than originally calculated and leaders feel serious time pressures, a feeling of inertia can set in--especially for leaders accustomed to rapidly agreed on solutions and implementations.
- Inertia will be especially problematic for leaders in organizations in the tolerant stage, because an inordinate amount of time will be spent on the previous five challenges and solutions are sought for both major and minor diversity issues.
- To tackle the challenge of inertia, a leader must change his or her mindset and have very strong and clearly communicated organizational vision and goals

Challenge Two: Diversity of Opinions

- As the face of an organization's **workforce** changes, the number and range of perspectives increase exponentially and leaders must synthesize a diversity of opinions from individuals' unique values, cultural grounding, and the resulting accepted behaviors.
- Two people can view the same event with very different interpretations and formulate opinions on the basis of those perceptions and interpretations. For managers, getting to the crux of critical issues while respecting and maintaining the core integrity and dignity of participants is essential. Even in the best of circumstances, miscommunication will almost inevitably occur, because each employee has a unique social frame of reference.
- The challenge for the leader will be to identify and recognize, at least implicitly, the different frames of reference that are represented and to extract common denominators that may serve as a foundation for issue resolution.
- In traditional homogenous organizational settings, agreement on important topics may have been readily achieved, at least in part because the participants had similar demographic, educational and cultural characteristics. Synthesizing **diverse** opinions, finding the shared ground, and reaching agreement may be one of the most time-consuming, emotionally-wrenching, and energy-draining activities a leader undertakes. Each differing perspective is likely to reflect the emotional attachments of the bearer. Leaders must separate substance from rhetoric and determine the true content of the message, rather than get lost in the manner of delivery, or the particular characteristics of the delivery person.

Challenge Three: Perceived Lack of Empathy

- The challenge of integrating **diverse** viewpoints and opinions is integrally linked with the third challenge, overcoming a perceived lack of empathy. The ability to establish an emotional identification with followers from a variety of cultures is an attribute that distinguishes leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Mahatma Ghandi, who recognized the needs of their followers and incorporated those needs into their convictions.
- Perceptions that the leader does not have the capacity for empathy with the followers may be most disruptive in organizations characterized as intolerant. In some intolerant organizations, there may actually be a lack of empathy with minority subgroups. Appearing empathetic will not be a priority.
- Less extreme organizations face the dilemma that one group may preempt empathy from other groups.

Challenge Four: Tokenism, Real and Perceived

- A traditional barrier faced in the early stages of a more *diverse workforce* is that of real or perceived tokenism.
- Real tokenism occurs when an employee is hired over other clearly more qualified candidates in an effort to address stakeholder concerns, or simply to fulfill numbers.
- Quota systems, which often communicate tokenism, are rarely in the best interests of an organization. In intolerant organizations, however, quota systems may be the only method to ensure that *diverse* individuals are included in recruitment and selection processes. Yet it is at the intolerant stage where organizational members are likely to feel the most resentment toward members hired under a quota system and where tensions between individuals are likely to be exaggerated.
- Tolerant organizations and organizations that appreciate diversity are not as likely to need quota systems to ensure the selection of a *diverse workforce*. We advocate that all organizations phase out quota systems and replace them with active recruitment across *diverse* categories. Organizations that continue to use quota systems to fulfill numbers will find it difficult to move beyond the stage of intolerance because of the resentment created by the system.

Challenge Five: Participation

- In a *diverse workforce* setting, employee participation in critical organizational processes is necessary to enable the organization to capitalize on new, different, and creative ways of thinking. Such participation can ease the tension resulting from the issue of power sharing and changed power dynamics; the expression and gathering of different perspectives and opinions; the building of perceptions of empathy; and the reduction of real or perceived tokenism.
- Without participation of all members to arrive at plausible, workable solutions to these *challenges*, the goals of capturing the best that diversity brings will not be achieved.
- Ensuring that everyone has a voice is a critical first step toward a full appreciation of *diverse* organizational members.
- At an intolerant stage, however, organizations often misuse employee participation to dispel rumors that *diverse* employees are not being accepted as fully participating organizational members. Meetings are called to gather employee input on issues, but the input is promptly dismissed by those ultimately responsible for the decision.
- Employees learn that their input is not used, experience a lack of empowerment, and subsequently retreat from full participation. They come to believe that future participation is futile, and an atmosphere of learned helplessness is created. Often the only way for a leader to turn this situation around is to make a concerted effort to gather representative input on an important issue, and then take strong action.

Challenge Six: Overcoming Inertia

- As the daily *management* of diversity consumes more time than originally calculated and leaders feel serious time pressures, a feeling of inertia can set in--especially for leaders accustomed to rapidly agreed on solutions and implementations.
- Inertia will be especially problematic for leaders in organizations in the tolerant stage, because an inordinate amount of time will be spent on the previous five *challenges* and solutions are sought for both major and minor diversity issues.
- To tackle the challenge of inertia, a leader must change his or her mindset and have very strong and clearly communicated organizational vision and goals.
- Leaders need excellent conceptual, analytical, and interpersonal skills to devise these visions and goals. They must have the ability to communicate their visions in ways that maximize their significance, generate great intrinsic appeal, and inspire.
- Leaders must also have the ability to gather input on organizational issues and integrate them into action plans. This requires keen timing skills to know when to set the wheels in motion. Without action that leads to implementation, an atmosphere of malingering develops and inertia overtakes the organization.

Helpful Questions to Ask

- **What stage is my organization currently at on the intolerance-appreciation continuum?** An organizational diagnosis should be conducted before moving forward with any diversity initiative to avoid creating more harm than good.
- **What methods or initiatives should be used in my organization?** Careful consideration should be given to the available training initiatives and various methods used in each initiative.
- **How should implementation occur?** Leaders need to carefully consider the modes of delivery--whether it is mass delivery or small-group; across the organizational hierarchy with top *management* taking an active role, or targeted at specific levels without the presence of superiors or at specific units. Should the approach be one-shot or sequenced? A critical factor for successful implementation is that top *management* actively and verbally supports the diversity initiative.
- **How should monitoring and evaluation of organizational operations be conducted?** Leaders need to determine who should be conducting monitoring and evaluation activities and how those activities will be undertaken within the organization. This includes determination of appropriate measures and methods to use in monitoring and evaluation.

Thoughts to ponder...

- Leaders in *diverse* organizations must possess attributes and sharpen skills that were not as critical for survival and success in organizations with traditional, homogeneous constituents. Current informal methods for choosing team or group project leaders and the formal selection and promotion criteria should be revised. Otherwise, organizations will continue to do business as usual, failing to capitalize on the competitive edge diversity offers.
- Organizations should actively address leader selection process issues, rather than being pressured reactively as a result of grievances or litigation.
- Each organization will have a unique blend of constituencies that should, in part, determine organizational criteria for leader effectiveness.
- Forethought should be given to matching group needs with leader skills and attributes.

Create a Place where Everyone Likes to Work

Based on: Judge, T.A., & Church, A.H. (2000). *Job satisfaction: Research and practice*. In C. A. Cooper & E. A. Locke, *Industrial and organizational psychology: Linking theory to practice* (pp. 166-198). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

- People who are satisfied with the way they are treated on their jobs are generally more pleasant to their coworkers and bosses, and are less likely to quit than those who are dissatisfied with the way others treat them.

Ways To Tell if a *Diversity* Program Is Measuring Up

Source: Leonard, B. (2002, July). Ways To Tell if a *Diversity* Program Is Measuring Up. HR Magazine, 47:7, p21.

A study conducted by J. Howard & Associates, a consulting group based in Boston, examined the diversity-based problems faced by its client companies over the past 10 years and identified five key issues that can indicate if an employer's diversity management plan is working or falling short of its goals.

"Too often, companies don't realize they should review their diversity initiatives until a problem arises," says Mike Hyter, president and CEO of the Howard firm.

Ways To Tell if a *Diversity* Program Is Measuring Up

- **Organizational charts and reporting structures.** There should be both women and minorities reporting directly to senior managers, and both should receive their fair share of promotions into senior-level jobs.
- **Job assignments.** All organizations have certain jobs that are platforms for learning and can benefit a career path. Although key work assignments differ from employer to employer, women and minorities should have a share in such assignments.

Ways To Tell if a *Diversity* Program Is Measuring Up

- **International assignments.** In many large organizations, assignments in foreign countries are required for promotions. How many women and minorities in your organization are offered such opportunities?
- **Career development paths.** Employers should identify and place both female and minority candidates into management pipelines.
- **Turnover.** If turnover rates for female and minority managers are higher than those for white male managers, something might be amiss.

Bottom Line of Why You Must Tell if a *Diversity* Program Is Measuring Up:

- Many employers are reluctant even to examine these issues, much less to look for ways to solve any problems, according to Hyter. "Sometimes senior management doesn't want to know the answers, since they then might be compelled to do something.
- "But employers can't afford to wait for complaints to pop up on Internet bulletin boards, in the press or even an EEO [equal employment opportunity] lawsuit," he says. "Employers must tackle their diversity homework now, as they would any other business issue."

Create Happy Diverse Teams

- People who are carefully trained to work together in teams tend to be happier and more productive than those who are simply thrown together without any definite organizational support team effectiveness in theory and in practice.

Source: Hackman, J.R., Wageman, R., Ruddy, T.M., & Ray, C.L. (2000).

Industrial and organizational psychology: Linking theory and practice (pp. 109-129). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business

Source: McInnes, (1999). Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business. Retrieved from http://www.diversityworld.com/workforce_diversity.htm on January 15, 2003.

As we enter the 21st century, workforce diversity has become an essential business concern. In the so-called information age, the greatest assets of most companies are now on two feet.

Undeniably, there is a talent war raging. No company can afford to unnecessarily restrict its ability to attract and retain the very best employees available.

Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business

The term “Workforce Diversity” refers to policies and practices that seek to include people within a workforce who are considered to be, in some way, different from those in the prevailing constituency.

Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business

As a Social Responsibility

- Because many of the beneficiaries of good diversity practices are from groups of people that are “disadvantaged” in our communities, there is certainly good reason to consider workforce diversity as an exercise in good corporate responsibility.
- By diversifying our workforces, we can give individuals the “break” they need to earn a living and achieve their dreams.

Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business

As an Economic Payback

- Many groups of people who have been excluded from workplaces are consequently reliant on tax-supported social service programs.
- Diversifying the workforce, particularly through initiatives like welfare-to-work, can effectively turn tax users into tax payers.

Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business

As a Resource Imperative

- The changing demographics in the workforce, that were heralded a decade ago, are now upon us.
- Today's labor pool is dramatically different than in the past. No longer dominated by a homogenous group of white males, available talent is now overwhelmingly represented by people from a vast array of backgrounds and life experiences.
- Competitive companies cannot allow discriminatory preferences and practices to impede them from attracting the best available talent within that pool.

Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business

As a Legal Requirement

- Many companies are under legislative mandates to be non-discriminatory in their employment practices.
- Non-compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity or Affirmative Action legislation can result in fines and/or loss of contracts with government agencies.
- In the context of such legislation, it makes good business sense to utilize a diverse workforce.

Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business

As a Marketing Strategy

- Buying power, particularly in today's global economy, is represented by people from all walks of life (ethnicities, races, ages, abilities, genders, sexual orientations, etc.)
- To ensure that their products and services are designed to appeal to this diverse customer base, "smart" companies, are hiring people, from those walks of life - for their specialized insights and knowledge.
- Companies who interact directly with the public are finding increasingly important to have the makeup of their workforces reflect the makeup of their customer base.

Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business

As a Business Communications Strategy

- All companies are seeing a growing diversity in the workforces around them - their vendors, partners and customers.
- Companies that choose to retain homogenous workforces will likely find themselves increasingly ineffective in their external interactions and communications.

Workforce Diversity: Changing the Way You Do Business

As a Capacity-building Strategy

- Tumultuous change is the norm in the business climate of the 21st century.
- Companies that prosper have the capacity to effectively solve problems, rapidly adapt to new situations, readily identify new opportunities and quickly capitalize on them.
- This capacity can be measured by the range of talent, experience, knowledge, insight, and imagination available in their workforces.
- Successful companies recognize conformity to the status quo as a distinct disadvantage.
- Employees are increasingly valued for the unique qualities and perspectives that they can also bring to the table.

A STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

Source: (2002, March 7). *HOW TO...TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DIVERSITY*, *People Management*, 8:5, p.52.

- **Why are you doing this?** Recognize the need for ***diversity***. What is happening within the organization, in the local community or within the customer base that has initiated these thoughts?
- **Research the starting point.** Identify key internal areas for concern. Ask the people who work with you to tell you what is going on. Ask your customers and suppliers how they see you.
- **Communicate what it is about.** Make sure you have the buy-in and understanding of the leadership within the organization. What you are starting will make a difference and benefit the company.

A STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

- **How are things done at present?** Audit strategies and procedures (if they exist) against internal and external perceptions. Check processes for their adherence to current minimum legal standards.
- **Concentrate on people.** Develop a program to change people's attitudes. Lip service is a start but is, by and large, useless. Persuade people that "open, fair and creative" are more than just words.

A STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

- **Get buy-in from all people all of the time.** Engage people in the process. Involving as many people as possible throughout the process will ensure it sticks. Training need not be dull.
- **How did you do? Check for success.** Monitor.
- **Celebrate.**
- **Remember the process is ongoing so reassess and start again.**

Bottom Line About Workplace Diversity

Companies that diversify their workforces will have a distinct competitive advantage over those that don't.

The greatest benefits of workforce diversity will be experienced, not by the companies that that have learned to employ people *in spite of* their differences, but by the companies that have learned to employ people *because of* them.

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