

Ethics And Workforce Diversity

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Abstract:The twenty-first century workplace features much greater diversity than was common even a couple of generations ago. Individuals who might once have faced employment challenges because of religious beliefs, ability differences, or sexual orientation now regularly join their peers in interview pools and on the job. Each may bring a new outlook and different information to the table; employees can no longer take for granted that their coworkers think the same way they do. This pushes them to question their own assumptions, expand their understanding, and appreciate alternate viewpoints. The result is more creative ideas, approaches, and solutions. Thus, diversity may also enhance corporate decision-making.

1. INTRODUCTION

Company culture and the underlying values of the culture are understood as drivers for performance. Cultural audits and their measurements of change are critical indicators from a company's workforce. Cultural surveys, assessments, and audits are standard tool barometers for change.

To that end, companies should recommit themselves to a formal process of values developed around diversity and inclusion that is embraced across the company, including the following:

- The values the company embodies
- The company mission
- The company vision
- The ethics by which they and all employees conduct themselves

Companies are naming chief diversity officers, chief ethics officers, and chief culture officers, and in some cases are combining all three functions into a single "C-level" officer position. Meanwhile, cultural components and diversity and inclusion values are being included in employee surveys.

- 360° evaluations are being deployed from top management all the way to entry-level employees. The assessment of individuals by their colleagues, based on how they "live" diversity and inclusion values, is being established as a performance measurement that has an impact on employees incentive pay
- Employee advocacy is being added as a function and competency of the D&I and/or ethics officer
- Strong tie in from the general counsel's office to ensure that every aspect of values related expectations is clear and cogent

- Inclusion of the company's communications team in strategy formulation

2. WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

3. DEFINITIONS OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Workforce diversity has been defined in numerous ways. It varies from narrow definitions of diversity which mainly reflects those categories addressed by the prevailing laws - like gender, race and disability (EEO legislation of US) to all inclusive broader definitions which describe diversity as all the ways in which we differ (Hayles,1996). Diversity dimensions can be Internal or external (Loden and Rosener, 1991). The internal dimensions include age, gender sexual orientation, physical ability ethnicity and race and work experience, educational background, income, personal habits, marital status, appearance, perceived status, geographical location, parental status comes under external dimensions. This way of thought is once again reflected in Griggs evaluation of workforce diversity (Griggs, 1995) .He classified diversity into primary and secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions according to Griggs shape our self-image and how we perceive the world. Primary dimensions include age, ethnicity, gender, Physical

abilities or qualities, race and sexual affection/orientation. Primary dimensions are inborn or acquired in early stages of life and has a lasting impact throughout our lives. Secondary dimensions are those which can be changed and include educational back ground, Geographic location income, marital status military experience, Parental status, religious beliefs and work experience. Another definition (Carnevale, A.P., Stone 1995) states that diversity implies differences in people based on their identifications with various groups.

All the definitions about workforce diversity deal with the element of heterogeneity among the workforce but the fact stands out that there is a lack of consensus on the scope of diversity in these definitions. It is on the dimensions and breadth of the outlook of the concept that they differ. Scholars who back a definitive stand on diversity and its dimensions puts forth the argument that diversity definition should stick to definitive traits which mainly pertain to demographic dimensions .They feel that mixing up these dimensions without categorizing (Race, Gender, ethnicity with dimensions like cognitive differences and differences in abilities) will lead to confusion as the causes and effect dynamics of these dimensions are different and cannot be understood in similar way. Another argument is that broader definitions is based on the premise that the differences among people are the same and that it does not take into account the issue of deliberate discrimination in organizational settings .On the other hand propagators of a broader outlook in terms of diversity feels that narrow definitions limits and restricts the scope of diversity. Scholars upholding this line of thought believe that the employee along with the definitive traits also brings in the less definitive or difficult to measure dimensions of their personality and cognitive abilities to an organization and that it is the interactions of all these heterogeneous dimensions that truly represent diversity. So an approach which encompasses the broad differences which is based on the realisation that these differences are not equivalent would be the best course to follow.

As pointed out (Tomverik ,1995) there is no one definitive definition that fully describes the broad range of differences diversity includes, the evolutionary nature of the process it represents and the far reaching impact it has on individuals and corporations. Thus we can infer that the concept of diversity is an ever evolving one and is not limited to what people traditionally think of it.

4. DIMENSIONS OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Diversity can be classified into two dimensions. The primary dimension such as age, gender, sexual orientation and so on, exhibits the main differences between various individuals. These primary differences also has the most impact on initial encounters and can be easily noticed and serve as filters through which people view the world. The secondary dimensions such as religion, education, geographical location, income etc, are those qualities that are not noticeable in the first encounter and can even change throughout different encounters. These qualities are only noticed after some interactions occur between individuals. (Ashton 2010). Globalization in this recent time has triggered more interaction amongst people from different cultures and backgrounds than before. People are now more open-minded in the marketplace worldwide with competition coming from almost everywhere in the continent. Diversity can be a problem to an organisation but could also be a solution, It also comes with its disadvantages but also benefits and dangerous but also constructive. The challenge then is to extract the very essence of diversity and tactically manage it for the improvement of the people and the organization.

Most organizations in their own perspective, adopt diversity at their workplace or organisation to become more creative and open to change. Increasing and improving workplace diversity has become an important issue for management in the recent years due to the recognition of how the workplace is changing. Since managing diversity still remains a challenge in organisations, managers tend to learn managerial skills needed in a multicultural working environment and prepares themselves to teach others within their organizations to value cultural differences and treat all employees with dignity. For some business leaders and managers point of view, diversity is a big challenge to them although it knows no organizational boundary and has no limitations

5. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

There are some advantages and Disadvantages that come with managing a diverse workforce of which management must be aware of to guide them in the decision making processes in the organisation. They also reflect on the findings on the research conducted on the case companies. Below are some of them:

6. ADVANTAGES

High level of Productivity: Increasing productivity at the workplace has been one of the major challenges for managers and leaders and to the company in general. Due to the fact that every organisation has its own unique company structure and objectives, different strategies may be used to challenge or address the company in order to increase productivity. One of those strategies involves adopting workplace diversity and managing it effectively. When management takes the welfare of its workers at heart by means of offering them proper compensation, health care and employee appraisal, it enables workers to feel they belong to the company irrespective of their cultural background by remaining loyal and hardworking which helps to increase the company's productivity and profit.

Exchange of varieties of ideas and Team work: In recent times teamwork is increasingly advocated by businesses and organisations as a means of assuring better outcomes on tasks and also for the delivery of goods and services. A single person taking on multiple tasks cannot perform at the same pace as a team could; therefore each team member brings to the table different ideas and offers a unique perspective during problem solving to effectively arrive at the best solution at the shortest possible time.

Learning and growth: Diversity at the workplace creates an opportunity for employee's personal growth. When workers are being exposed to new cultures, ideas and perspectives, it can help each person to intellectually reach out and have a clearer insight of their place in the global environment and hence their own surroundings. The more time spent with culturally diverse co-workers can slowly break down the subconscious barriers of xenophobia and ethnocentrism, thereby encouraging workers to be more experienced members of the society.

Effective Communication: Workplace diversity can immensely strengthen a company's relationship with some specific group of customers by making communication more effective. Customer service department is one of the areas where effective communication is crucial. A customer service personnel or representatives can be paired up with customers from their specific area or location, making the customer feel at home with the representative and thus with the company.

Diverse Experience: Employee and their co-workers that come from a diverse background bring to the table some amount of unique perceptions and experience during teamwork or group tasks. Pooling the diverse skills and knowledge of culturally distinct

employees together can immensely benefit the company by strengthening the responsiveness and productivity of the team to adapt to the changing conditions. Every diverse culture has its own strengths and weaknesses, therefore in addition to their individuality, every diverse employee possesses a unique strengths and weaknesses that is derived from their culture. When each workers' unique trait is managed properly and effectively in the organization, it can leverage the strengths and complement its weaknesses to highly impact the workforce.

7. DISADVANTAGES

High Cost of Diversity Management: To increase job satisfaction, workplace diversity management could sometimes be very costly, when an organisation strives to effectively manage the diverse workforce, it undergoes a mandatory diversity training during which supervisors, employees, and managers receive lessons on the best way to interact with employees and clients. In recent times, there are lots of Diversity management programs available where companies could choose from, taking into account the size of the company and its employees. Some training programs require a high travelling and participation cost.

Discrimination: One significant disadvantages of working with a diverse workforce is discrimination in the part of both managers and employees. It can exist but hidden aspect of a poorly managed workplace. When a worker is being discriminated, it affects his ability to perform well and it also affect the perception of equity and raises issues of litigation.

Communication issues: Workplace diversity can negatively impact communication in the company. It can place an obstacle in the way of effective communication, which can cause a decrease in productivity and dampen the cohesiveness among workers. Even though spending time with employees by getting to know them helps reduce and in some instances eradicate communication barriers during a long-term, co-workers orientation periods and an individual's first impressions can be difficult to control when culture clash.

Myriad Accommodation: Although the premise of workplace diversity is mutual respect, making way to accommodate each diverse worker's request can be burdensome of employers, which makes it difficult to manage diversity. Some employee work constraints such as race, religion, country of origin and gender can sometimes be overwhelming if the diversity in the organisation tends to be so much to the extent that the company has to employ a fulltime staff to keep track of accommodating the employees needs.

Incorporation issues: Social incorporation at the workplace cannot be influenced to the maximum degree. Forming exclusive social groups is often a natural process that cannot be controlled sometimes. Therefore, companies tend to experience some degree of informal divisions amongst their workers thereby creating conditions where diverse employees avoid having contact with each other during leisure times and when work is over. Although this scenario doesn't seem fundamentally wrong, it can reduce the effectiveness of knowledge sharing amongst teams and hence decreasing productivity.

In the current corporate scenario with an increasingly diverse workforce, it is imperative that in order to attain levels of employee satisfaction and delight, the workforce should be constantly monitored, appeased and accommodated. Thus in the run up to the future, the increasing diversity should effectively managed. Taking each minute aspect into consideration and also with a birds eye view, the management of the organizations should be able to balance a dual perspective in keeping with the organizational goals. To this end, the diverse workforce will not only add fresher perspectives but inclusively develop organizations to be global in every sense of the word unto the smallest unit of each individual human resource.

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