Delivering Results in Diversity & Demographic Differences

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ABSTRACT

An organization’s success and competitiveness depends upon its ability to understand environmental changes and embrace diversity and realize the benefits. When organizations actively assess their handling of workplace diversity issues, develop and implement diversity plans, multiple benefits are reported such as: Organizations employing a diverse workforce can supply a greater variety of solutions to problems in service, sourcing, and allocation of resources. Employees from diverse backgrounds bring individual talents and experiences in suggesting ideas that are flexible in adapting to fluctuating markets and customer demands. A diverse collection of skills and experiences (e.g. languages, cultural understanding) allows a company to provide service to customers on a global basis. A diverse workforce that feels comfortable communicating varying points of view provides a larger pool of ideas and experiences. The organization can draw from that pool to meet business strategy needs and the needs of customers more effectively. Companies that encourage diversity in the workplace inspire all of their employees to perform to their highest ability. Company-wide strategies can then be executed; resulting in higher productivity, profit, and return on investment. This calls for high level of integration of global competencies for delivering best results in the competitive environment.

Keywords-- Environmental changes, competitiveness, work place diversity and demographics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Diversity in the workplace is a reality in modern organizations with work force from different cultural backgrounds. Integrating the efforts of such a diverse work force towards organisational goals is the challenge of present day organisations. Taking full advantage of the benefits of diversity in the workplace is not without its challenges. Some of those challenges are: Communication - Perceptual, cultural and language barriers need to be overcome for diversity programs to succeed. Ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion, lack of teamwork, and low morale. Resistance to change -

There are always employees who will refuse to accept the fact that the social and cultural makeup of their workplace is changing. The “we’ve always done it this way” mentality silences new ideas and inhibits progress. Implementation of diversity in the workplace policies - This can be the overriding challenge to all diversity advocates. Armed with the results of employee assessments and research data, they must build and implement a customized strategy to maximize the effects of diversity in the workplace for their particular organization. Successful Management of Diversity in the Workplace - Diversity training alone is not sufficient for your organization’s diversity management plan. A strategy must be created and implemented to create a culture of diversity that permeates every department and function of the organization.

II. ASSESSMENT OF DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Top companies make assessing and evaluating their diversity process an integral part of their management system. A customizable employee satisfaction survey can accomplish this assessment for your company efficiently and conveniently. It can help your management team determine which challenges and obstacles to diversity are present in your workplace and which policies need to be added or eliminated. Reassessment can then determine the success of you diversity in the workplace plan implementation. Development of diversity in the workplace plan - Choosing a survey provider that provides comprehensive reporting is a key decision. That report will be the beginning structure of your diversity in the workplace plan. The plan must be comprehensive, attainable and measurable. An organization must decide what changes need to be made and a timeline for that change to be attained.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE PLAN
The personal commitment of executive and managerial teams is a must. Leaders and managers within organizations must incorporate diversity policies into every aspect of the organization’s function and purpose. Attitudes toward diversity originate at the top and filter downward. Management cooperation and participation is required to create a culture conducive to the success of your organization’s plan.

IV. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Today while organizations are striving to get the best performance out of Employees, and deliver results consistently, they have to contend with workplace diversity, which is a reality. The present study and research is to understand how present day organizations cope with the situations and meet the challenges of diversity in the work force. With this in mind following research objectives have been identified for the purpose of this research work:
1. To assess present business environment and evaluate the reality of diversity.
2. To study and highlight the key issues arising out of workplace diversity.
3. To understand how organizations are coping with diversity issues.
4. The impact of demographic differences in the work force on diversity.
5. To suggest ways and means for organizations to cope with this problem.

On a detailed Literature search and Analysis, it has been observed that the amount of published information through previous research papers on this and related issues is enormous so a separate field investigation through questionnaire survey or other methods was not found necessary to arrive at conclusions for the present limited research objectives as cited above. A detailed analysis and classification of data from various sources was, of course, necessary to focus on the research problem and arrive at the conclusions at the end of this paper.

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To create a corporate culture that values diversity, workplace diversity has become an increasingly important part of the global workplace. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was created in 1965 to open the door for women and minorities to find better employment opportunities in workplace. New visa categories and programs facilitating entry of information technology professionals, technical consultants, scientists, and business and management professionals from a cross section of countries have made the workplace even more diverse. Businesses benefit in many ways from having employees with differing backgrounds and perspectives. Access to a larger talent pool is one of the biggest advantages of having an employment recruitment policy that values diversity. Employees from all races, classes, creeds, religions, ages and political viewpoints should be recruited based on competencies and skill sets, without regard to gender or disability. Teams working on complex and expansive projects can draw on the varied experiences of fellow workers from diverse backgrounds. This can aid in understanding new markets -- foreign or domestic. When human resources channels and harnesses varied skills, specialized competencies and distinctive capabilities of employees of multiple races and minority classes, it can result in creative solutions for problems and better organizational productivity.

Regular interaction with people from different countries or backgrounds can help reduce discrimination, prejudice and misunderstandings from earlier eras. Taking time to celebrate of fellow workers’ cultures and holidays can boost morale and create a better team bond among diverse employees. Cultural multiplicity, ethnic diversity and multiple viewpoints bring vibrancy to the workplace. Fostering workplace camaraderie and a humanitarianism spirit shape employees to be better citizens of tomorrow.

VI. LIST ADVANTAGES OF DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Workplace diversity refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. That sounds simple, but diversity encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more. Diversity in not only how people perceive themselves, but how they perceive others. These perceptions affect their interaction. For a wide assortment of employees to function effectively as an organization, human resource personnel need to deal with issues such as communication, adaptability and change. Diversity will increase significantly in the coming years. Successful organizations recognize the need for immediate action and are ready and
A diverse workforce that feels comfortable communicating varying points of view provides a larger pool of ideas and experiences. The organization can draw from that pool to meet business strategy needs and the needs of customers more effectively. An organization’s success and competitiveness depends upon its ability to embrace diversity and realize the benefits. When organizations actively assess their handling of workplace diversity issues, develop and implement diversity plans, multiple benefits are reported such as:

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. Companies that encourage diversity in the workplace inspire all of their employees to perform to their highest ability. Company-wide strategies can then be executed; resulting in higher productivity, profit, and return on investment.

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. Organizations employing a diverse workforce can supply a greater variety of solutions to problems in service, sourcing, and allocation of resources. Employees from diverse backgrounds bring individual talents and experiences in suggesting ideas that are flexible in adapting to fluctuating markets and customer demands. This also means that an organization has to develop a new process for people with different ideas to collaborate and work together. They must also learn to think cross-culturally and to quickly adapt to new situations.

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. A diverse collection of skills and experiences (e.g. languages, cultural understanding) allows a company to provide service to customers on a global basis.

![Figure 2: Diversity in work place](image)

**VII. LIST OF DISADVANTAGES OF DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE**

1. **Communication Issue**

   Effective communication is a driving factor for success. Unfortunately, diversity can be in the way, and can directly impact productivity because of a lack of cohesiveness. This explains why some companies catering to international customers hire multilingual or bilingual customer service reps. It is easier for Spanish-speaking customers, for example, to communicate with someone who understands their culture and knows their native language. So unless effective communication is achieved, workplace diversity can be a problem.

2. **Lack of freedom of speech**

   In a diverse workplace, an employee must be sensitive to others’ race, cultural background, beliefs, etc. So you don’t just crack jokes about the Chinese or Indians, because it won’t be as acceptable as when a stand-up comedian would do it. People can’t freely state their opinions or tell stories whenever they want for fear of being judged as discriminating. So it’s not only effective communication that is a disadvantage in a diverse workplace, but also freedom of speech. Imagine working in an environment where you need to always tread carefully. Not exactly a fun and attractive workplace.

3. **Increased cost of training**

   Apart from the usual training, an organization must invest in seminars, programs and lectures designed to promote diversity in the workplace. If unity is to be
achieved, such training is essential as they will teach employees how to accept thoughts, ideas and personalities of others in the workplace. It will also provide information on how to deal with prejudice and conflict in a civilized and professional manner. As it is possible that you are likely to continue hiring employees, you will continue to spend on training.

4. Integration issues

Even in a non-diverse workplace exclusive social groups or cliques naturally happens, more so in a diverse workforce. When such groups form, informal divisions can occur, which will impede social integration. It will also lead to a situation where culturally diverse employees will avoid each other. This can hinder the effective sharing of knowledge, experience, skills, resulting in decreased productivity, team efficacy, and business growth.

5. Increased competition

Competition in the workplace is good as it can drive success and higher productivity. But when employees do not accept other culture, they are likely to compete against each other, rather than become collaborative members of a team. These results in divisions where people prefer to work separately, prolonging the process of task or project completion. This can have a negative impact on business because progress will be slow moving. There is strength in numbers, after all.

6. Breeds disrespect

The same people who don’t accept other cultures are likely to openly show disrespect and indifference. This can lead to unnecessary tension and can inhibit communication in the workplace. The problem with a highly tense or hostile workplace is that everyone is affected, including those that accept and respect diversity in the workplace.

7. Demographic differences

World over, the demographic Composition of population in general and particularly the work force population is undergoing a serious change. The average age of working population is increasing in the western world where as the younger population is growing in the South East and Asian counties. This has a profound influence in the qualified and technical work force migrating to developed countries from developing or less developed countries. The policy makers in western countries are possessed of this situation! We may see a lot of policy changes in the immigration rules of these countries and how far and what segment of population is allowed to migrate, some racial prejudices, adding to the drama.

VIII. CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Taking full advantage of the benefits of diversity in the workplace is not without its challenges. Some of those challenges are: Communication, Resistance to change, Implementation of diversity in the workplace policies, Successful Management of Diversity in the Workplace, Assessment of diversity in the workplace, Development of diversity in the workplace plan and Implementation of diversity in the workplace plan.

Perceptual, cultural and language barriers need to be overcome for diversity programs to succeed. Ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion, lack of teamwork, and low morale. There are always employees who will refuse to accept the fact that the social and cultural makeup of their workplace is changing. The “we’ve always done it this way” mentality silences new ideas and inhibits progress. This can be the overriding challenge to all diversity advocates. Armed with the results of employee assessments and research data, they must build and implement a customized strategy to maximize the effects of diversity in the workplace for their particular organization. Diversity training alone is not sufficient for your organization’s diversity management plan. A strategy must be created and implemented to create a culture of diversity that permeates every department and function of the organization.

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Individual differences are important moderators of relational demography and work group diversity effects. Openness, need for cognition, learning goal orientation, and diversity beliefs were found to promote social integration via positive intergroup contact.
and enhance performance through information-elaboration in demographically diverse work groups performing tasks with a strong informational and decision-making component in particular. Extroversion, self-monitoring, and positive stereotypes were shown to safeguard against negative affective-evaluative responses towards demographically dissimilar group members and, in turn, prevent lower social integration. As Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Emotional Stability are also likely to aid individuals and teams in expediting and coping with demographic differences (because Agreeableness and Emotional Stability may promote positive interpersonal relations, and Conscientiousness may facilitate information-elaboration), future research should examine whether these factors also moderate workplace diversity effects on social integration, well-being, and performance.

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In the present globalized environment of business work place diversity is a reality. Companies local or diversified are becoming global with the embracing of globalization philosophy and advantages thereof. Recommended diversity in the workplace solutions include: Ward off change resistance with inclusion. - Involve every employee possible in formulating and executing diversity initiatives in your workplace. Foster an attitude of openness in your organization. - Encourage employees to express their ideas and opinions and attribute a sense of equal value to all. Promote diversity in leadership positions. - This practice provides visibility and realizes the benefits of diversity in the workplace. Utilize diversity training. - Use it as a tool to shape your diversity policy. Launch a customizable employee satisfaction survey that provides comprehensive reporting. - Use the results to build and implement successful diversity in the workplace policies.

As the economy becomes increasingly global, our workforce becomes increasingly diverse. Organizational success and competitiveness will depend on the ability to manage diversity in the workplace effectively. Evaluate your organization’s diversity policies and plan for the future, starting today. In an increasingly global economy, the workforce becomes increasingly diverse. Organizational success and competitiveness will depend on the ability to manage diversity in the workplace effectively. Ward off change resistance with inclusion. - Involve every employee possible in formulating and executing diversity initiatives in your workplace. Foster an attitude of openness in your organization. - Encourage employees to express their ideas and opinions and attribute a sense of equal value to all. Promote diversity in leadership positions. - This practice provides visibility and realizes the benefits of diversity in the workplace. Utilize diversity training. - Use it as a tool to shape your diversity policy. Launch a customizable employee satisfaction survey that provides comprehensive reporting. - Use the
results to build and implement successful diversity in the workplace policies.

Individuals often initially judge others based on surface-level diversity. Over time, this effect tends to fade and is replaced by deep-level traits such as similarity in values and attitudes. See Figure 3. Build a Culture of Respecting Diversity: In the most successful companies, diversity management is not the responsibility of the human resource department. Starting from top management and including the lowest levels in the hierarchy, each person understands the importance of respecting others. If this respect is not part of an organization’s culture, no amount of diversity training or other programs are likely to be effective. In fact, in the most successful companies, diversity is viewed as everyone’s responsibility.

Companies need to understand he two basic levels of diversity – Surface level diversity and Deep rooted Diversity as depicted in the Figure 4. Gender, Age, Race and Physical disabilities are easy to discern and resolve. But deep rooted diversity in the form of Values, Attitudes and Beliefs are the ones companies concentrate on. These can be oriented and reinforced to achieve the company culture and corporate goals through systematic and well designed training programs.

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Figure 4: Level of Diversity

Figure 5: UPS operates in 200 countries, including Italy. Where a boat is carrying packages on the Canal Grande in Venice. At UPS, 58% of all senior officers are women or minorities.

The United Parcel Service of America Inc. (UPS), the international shipping company, refuses to hire a diversity officer, underlining that it is not one person’s job. Companies with a strong culture—where people have a sense of shared values, loyalty to the organization is rewarded, and team performance is celebrated—enable employees with vastly different demographics and backgrounds to feel a sense of belonging.

Diversity is one of our country’s core strengths. The economic data clearly show that our nation—and, by extension, our workforce—will continue to become increasingly more diverse, as racial and ethnic minorities make up a larger portion of the population, as women continue to enter the workforce, and as gay and transgender individuals, as well as people with disabilities, continue to play a vital role in growing our economy. Going forward, businesses should continue to capitalize and embrace diversity as the workforce itself becomes more diverse. Our economy and our society depend on it.

REFERENCES


WEB REFERENCES