

MANAGING WORKPLACE CULTURAL COMPETENCE

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ABSTRACT

Among the opportunities arising from workforce diversity is the application of a pool of diverse ideas created by the several backgrounds and viewpoints of employees. By combining the numerous approaches and points of view, the directors can tap this new source of innovation and put it into execution. A diverse workplace also provides administrations with a broader range of keys for all kinds of difficulties. The variety of specific talents and experiences in a varied workplace provides directors with more flexible thoughts, which can help the corporate adapt to changing marketplaces and customer demands.

The variability of viewpoints offered by different personnel can prove to be a treasured source of thoughts for new products and services. A broader range of products and services, in turn, will allow industries to meet the wants of many clients and do this more efficiently, while also meeting their own tactic needs. A workplace that replicates the diversity in society will deliver the employer with a better understanding of its customers and permit it to offer more adequate services. Furthermore, a pool of abilities and skills created, thanks to workplace multiplicity, will make it probable to reach customers in more marketplaces around the world and help the corporate on its way to globalization.

KEYWORDS: *Cultural Diversity, Workplace Culture, Cross Culture, Skill Creation*

INTRODUCTION

The term "diversity" is used generally to refer to many demographic elements, including, but not limited to color, religion, race, gender, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, education, age, geographic origin, and skill features. 'Diversity' refers to human attributes that are from your own and from those of groups to which you belong. Each person is diverse from another in some way or the other and that forms a part of their cultural diversity.

The phrase 'Cultural Diversity' means a range of different societies and humanities or people with different heritages, beliefs and ethnicities all living and interrelating together. The clothes we wear, the music we listen and the food we eat have all been influenced by different cultures. As groups of people worked and lived together, they developed distinguishing cultures. Together the cultures of the world create a rich and varied tapestry. The resulting cultural diversity expands choices, nurtures a variety of skills, human values, and worldviews and provides wisdom from the past to inform the future. Cultural diversity is a driving force for sustainable development for countries, communities, and individuals.

Why is Cultural Diversity Important?

Culture is the source with which we evaluate everything around us; it is the eye through which we see others and others see us; we evaluate what is normal or abnormal, proper or improper, through our culture. If we are engrossed in a culture that is unlike our own we may experience culture shock and become confused when we come into contact with an essentially different culture. People obviously use their own culture as the standard to judge other cultures; however, a passing decision could reach a level where people begin to distinguish against others whose “ways of being” are different than their own—basically, we tend to fear that which we do not understand. One individual has to understand that if his or her culture is unique, the other has the same feeling and we should respect that feeling and sentiment of each other.

Cultural diversity is important because our schools, workplaces, and a country increasingly consist of various racial, cultural and ethnic groups. We can learn from one another, but first, we must have a level of understanding about each other in order to ease cooperation and collaboration. Learning about other cultures helps us understand different perspectives within the world in which we live, and helps disperse negative stereotypes and personal biases about different groups.

Workplace Diversity

Workplace diversity is a multi-faceted thought that continues to change as more businesses move towards a global market. Most people hold the confidence that every human being is of equal value, entitled to the same rights and opportunities, without regard to gender, disability, age or race. This essential faith has led to changes in management practices. A diverse workplace is winning increased appreciation among companies as one vibrant element of competing positively in the present and the future. Managing diversity is vital to unlocking its benefits, but failing to do so can be fatal to the achievement of the business. In the most noticeable sense the organization of diversity is a business' response to quick ethnic and sociological changes. Internally, diversity management implies providing an environment where all personnel feels that the association is flexible and judicious about fluctuations happening in the world marketplaces. The hard fact is, however, that dissimilarities exist for workers within administrations due to stereotyping and defined thoughts about one based on gender, cultural origins, race, religious or cultural origins, and age, physical or mental boundaries.

Elements of Diversity

Interactions of Elements of Diversity

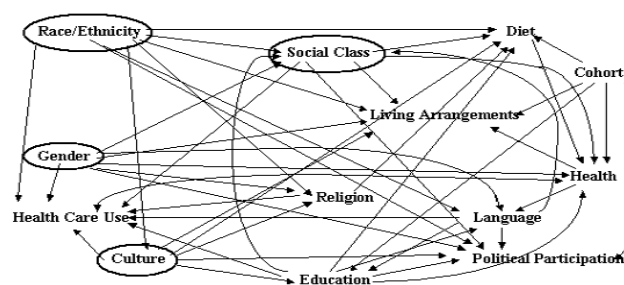


Figure 1

- Age
- Race
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Physical Abilities
- Parental Status
- Education
- Geographic Location
- Religious Beliefs
- Military Experience
- Class/Income
- Ethnicity

Theories for Cross Cultural Communication

The main theories of cross-cultural communication are based on the work is done looking at value differences between diverse cultures, especially the works of Edward T. Hall, Richard D. Lewis, Geert Hofstede, and Fons Trompenaars. Clifford Geertz was also a contributor to this field. Also, Jussi V. Koivisto's model of a cultural crossing in internationally operating organizations expands from this base of research.

These theories have been applied to a variety of diverse communication theories and settings, including general business and administration and marketing. There have also been several successful educational projects which focus on the practical applications of these theories in cross-cultural circumstances.

Edward Hall Theory

Hall describes culture as a set of behavioral rules gained during the socialization process which determine the way in which individuals perceive their environment and use verbal and nonverbal communication. He divides cultures into two kinds, according to its framework and they are as followed:

- **High-Context Culture:** Here context rather than content is of importance. Fewer legal papers are used in these cultures.
- **Low-Context Culture:** With clear and explicit messages in which written words transmit most of the information. Legal papers are considered vital. Europe and the USA are examples of these cultures.

Hofstede Theory

Hofstede theory can be well-defined as the collective encoding of the mind, which differentiates the associates of one group or category of people from another. His theory is based on the assumption that countries can be compared with

each other. Hofstede's work established a major research tradition in cross-cultural psychology and has also been drawn upon by researchers and consultants in many fields relating to international business and communication. It remains to be a major source in cross-cultural fields. It has encouraged a number of other major cross-cultural studies of values, as well as research on other aspects of values, such as social opinions.

Fons Trompenaars Theory

Trompenaars is more concerned with the concept of culturally relative meaning at the individual level of study, later describing seven magnitudes of values, which resemble well with national variances. He identifies seven fundamental magnitudes of culture, which are:

- Universalism v particularism
- Individualism v collectivism
- Neutral v affective
- Specific v diffuse
- Achievement v ascription
- Sequential v synchronous
- Internal v external control

RESEARCH: MANAGING DIVERSITY AT WORKPLACE

Problem Statement

What is cultural diversity in the workplace? Culture refers to the customs, traditions, and values that affect the way an affiliate of a group typically observes, interrelates, thinks, performs, and makes decisions.

What does Cultural capability or competence imply? In brief, it is the skill to interact effectively with people from diverse cultures. This skill depends on a consciousness of one's own cultural worldview, information about other social practices and worldviews, tolerant attitudes towards cultural variances, and multiethnic skills.

The more diverse cultures work together, the more cultural ability training is vital to avoid difficulties. This dissertation is to do a research on "How can Human resource directors or managers efficiently manage diversity in the multinational firm?"

Aim/ Purpose of the Study

- To study how human resource managers effectively manage a group of different culture people
- To analyze and understand the kind of effective communication within the work
- To understand how the manager influences team's performance and motivates them
- To study how the manager helps a group of different cultured people to learn and develop themselves as a team and get good results from them

Methodology

The research design used will be the descriptive research design because this study is concerned with describing how the managers' deal with the people of different cultures and what according to them is the most effective strategy to make them work as a team.

The data are collected through oral face to face interviews with various managers and service leads of various teams working in Deloitte Hyderabad.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Article 1

Diversity Management is the Key to Growth: Make it Authentic

Diversity management is the key to growth in today's fiercely competitive global marketplace. No longer can America's corporations hide behind their lack of cultural intelligence. Organizations that seek global market relevancy must embrace diversity – in how they think, act and innovate. Diversity can no longer just be about making the numbers, but rather how an organization treats its people authentically down to the roots of its business model. In today's new workplace, diversity management is a time-sensitive business imperative.

To better understand this fast-changing terrain, I reached out to three notable diversity executives — pioneers within their respective industries – to share their insights and perspectives regarding the future of diversity and some of the new best practices that will allow diversity to play a more strategic role in cultivating sustainable business growth:

- Dr. Rohini Anand, Chief Diversity Officer, Sodexo
- Ron Glover, Chief Diversity Officer, IBM
- Kathy Hannan, National Managing Partner, Diversity & Corporate Responsibility, KPMG LLP

Make it Real or Lose Your Authenticity

Corporate leaders pay lip service to diversity, but they don't really live it. Diversity is more than employee demographics and support for a few non-profits. You can't buy diversity, and organizations that continue to embrace this approach will tarnish their brand. America is changing, and the new population carefully evaluates how organizations relate to it. If you are not authentic, consumers and employees will begin to question the authenticity and leadership of your organization.

As Rohini Anand says, "The traditional representation perspective originated from the Civil Right era. This will never go away entirely. However, diversity must go beyond this mentality. At Sodexo, diversity is embedded in our brand. The Sodexo brand is synonymous with diversity. Though the Sodexo brand is not a known consumer brand, diversity, leadership defines our brand – it's all about talent. Diversity is about responding to the needs of our clients in a holistic way.

And Kathy Hannan adds, "Companies must take a long-term strategic approach to engage diverse talent. Companies must define their role in the global marketplace. The train has left the station. You may not be where you want to be with your diversity strategy, but you need to get started!"

By Forbes, 2011

Web URL: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/glennllopis/2011/06/13/diversity-management-is-the-key-to-growth-make-it-authentic/>

Article 2

For progressive organizations seeking financial soundness and solid growth, workplace diversity is a vital part of their commercial decision-making and strategic planning. Today, it is widely recognized that diversity is on every CEO's priority list.

Diversity-inclusion in the workplace is a commitment to recognizing, appreciating and retaining the variety of characteristics that make individuals unique, in an atmosphere that champions individual and collective achievement.

Workplace Diversity is part of Business Exchange, suggested by Tory Clarke.

Web URL: <http://bx.businessweek.com/workplace-diversity/>

Article 3

Diversity: No Longer Just Black and White

Diversity in the workplace used to hinge upon the level of responsibility, pay, and respect that one could receive based upon the color of skin and ethnicity. But, these days, diversity in the workplace has become much more than that. Most CEO's and executives alike have come to discover that diversity is what often makes for better business.

The More the Merrier

Every one of us comes from a different background with different experiences that led to different results. Because of this, each one of us brings something different to the table. We each bring a different set of skills, knowledge, and experience that makes up the diversity of us all. It's in this diversity that we can flourish as a company.

Instead of everyone in an organization offering the same, general aspect, diversity gives us more to work with. People with different backgrounds have different sets of skills or knowledge that can be lent to the workplace. This gives a company more variety to choose from when it comes to employee results. Understandably, any company can flourish when it has more resources. The more it has the better.

What's Good for the Goose Is Good for the Marketplace

As it turns out, a diverse population in a company's workforce is not only good for the company but the market in which the company provides for. To be precise, a company that is capable of managing a diverse population of employees most often attracts a diverse range of customers. It doesn't take a strategic planner to know that the more diverse a company's customer base is, the better it prospers in popularity and sales.

Diversity Happens in and Out of a Company

And, because diversity is always taking place outside of company walls, this fact addresses another variable that cannot be overlooked. The general public, a company's market, is forever changing and re-changing in its diversity. As an example, one such change grabbed the attention of most customer service companies in 2000 when census results

showed that African Americans were no longer the largest minority. Hispanics had officially moved into this position and now companies had to plan how to appeal their services to and attract this new group that would dominate in a new way, verse the previous minority majority that marketing strategies had been crafted around in the past.

Web URL: <http://www.business-marketing.com/culturaldiversityartcile.php>

Each of the articles above implies that businesses today are realizing the need and importance of investing in diversity and inclusion. Today, diversity has become a part of their management practices and also one of the reasons to continually challenge the organization and to keep them going in this highly competitive world. Diversity has become very crucial and vital in today's world because employees have to interact with people and client globally sitting in various geographic locations belonging to different cultures.

Diversity and inclusion are not a negative aspect of any company; rather they are an opportunity for the company. Today a company cannot progress or succeed or bring themselves up to the international standards if they do not open up and globalize themselves. And wherever the question of globalization occurs, there comes interactions and networking with people belonging to different cultures, traditions, mindsets, and generations.

The above articles clearly depict that diversity in the workplace is an opportunity for a company to grow and not just the company but also the individuals to grow professionally and personally. It comes with many benefits and negative aspects too, but if dealt in a proper way and effectively the negative effects of diversity are nullified. Some of the benefits of diversity which the above executives talk about our the increase in productivity, creativity and problem -solving. Diversity brings in, different talents; different skill sets wherein people work towards a common goal and increase retention and productivity. According to the above executives, diversity helps in attracting and retaining talent. When a person feels included and appreciated for his work, no matter where he is from the loyalty and the feeling of belongingness increases. It propels the organization forward to compete in either the international global world or to increase its diverse customer base and in turn increase its market share.

Primary Research

Global Talent supports Deloitte and its member firm's efforts to be viewed as one of the top organizations in the world for evolving leaders and for providing a unique talent experience. Global Leadership and Learning aim to provide a reliable learning experience. The team supports the development of the current and next generation of leaders and world-class professionals with deep technical, industry, and professional skills. By leveraging global programs, and new and existing technologies, build consistent skills and knowledge across borders, functions, industries, in a cost-effective way.

There are several subteams in the global learning team, i.e. virtual team, reporting and analytics, e-content team, learning operations, etc. On a day to day basis, we need to interact with the employees and member firms across worldwide. To study the cultural diversity and to understand how human resource managers effectively manage a group of different culture people. This research focuses on the following issues that were discussed with managers and employees:

- How managers and employees deal with people of different cultures
- What is the communication within the work

- How do managers manage diversity and equal opportunities within the service
- How does a manager influence the team performance
- How does he help his team learn and develop
- How does he motivate his team

Views of Various Deloitte Managers and Employees on Managing Cultural Diversity at Workplace

“Diversity needs to be seen as an integral part of the business plan, essential to successful products and increased sales. This is especially true in today's global marketplace, as organizations interact with different cultures and people. We work on a virtual tool which is used by the employees and member firms at Deloitte for learning purpose. I am the manager of the team who works on the business front of the tool. On a daily basis, I and my team have to interact with member firms across the world and they also visit us twice in a year; so we need to deal with this cultural diversity every now and then. It is just not people coming from outside India are culturally diverse, but my own team is diverse. I have 8 members of my team and all from different parts of India. They have different traditions, mindsets, ideas, different ways of working, the different set of responsibilities, some are experienced few are fresher; so all these also form diversity. Diversity in a team has its own set of advantages such as it increases creativity and productivity to a very large extent.

What ideas I or my experienced colleagues might not get it, these fresher on my team have it all. They are fresh out of college and have a very different style of work and have many new ideas which make our day to day activities very simple and accurately. And when all the people from different parts are working hard to achieve one goal not just in one way, but many different creative ways, productivity is bound to increase. Someone in the team is a good follower and someone has strong leadership skills. So this is how the team works thought to be culturally diverse.

To keep up the enthusiasm and motivate the team we have quarterly team outings with our leadership and all the team members, we have very frequent team dinners and lunches and we also have a custom of rewards and recognition on the spot for employees performing well as a team. So this gives a lot of focus on teamwork. Apart from this, our members have to converse with people from different countries across the globe, for that we have language classes, cross communication trainings, etc., which keep them updated and help them to manage with people from different countries.”

“I work in the financial advisory service line at Deloitte Services. I have been into the firm for 12 years and have worked with people from varied cultures and backgrounds. I believe that today, cultural diversity plays a very important role in the businesses and if an organization has to succeed it should clearly understand what the term implies and how it should be dealt with. It is just not the role of managers or leads to understand the term but also for each employee and member of the team should understand what it means and there has to be a necessary contribution from every member of the organization.

New attitudes - are brought to the business by people from diverse cultures. In most other countries around the world time is for building relationships and an integral part of getting to know that are considering doing business with before starting a transaction. We provide diversity training and education to our employees that are needed in today's

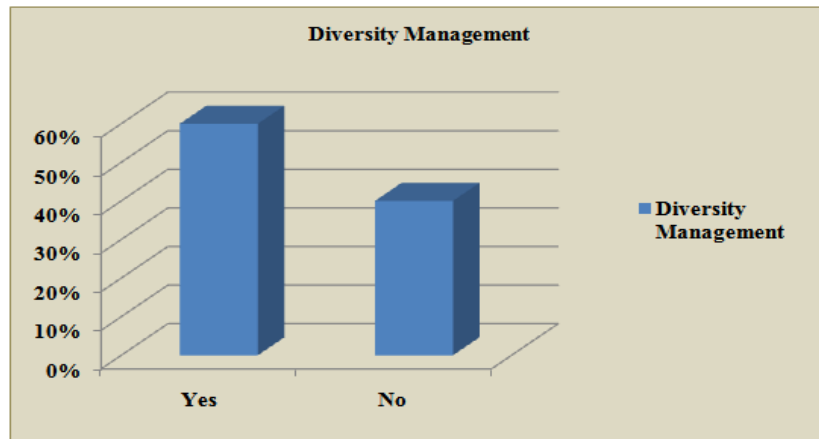
global market. Every company needs specific knowledge or language skills where the international job seekers have the advantage.”

“When we have to address the diversity issues, we have to think what kind of policies, practices, and ways of thinking have differential impacts on different people in the firm. What organizational changes should be made to meet the needs of a diverse workforce as well as to maximize the potential of all workers, so that firm can be well positioned for the demands of the 21st century? We in Deloitte believe to treat others the way we want to be treated by them. But when we consider the same rule from a diversity perspective, it makes us think whether what is good for me, is I the same for everyone. Some gesture or expression may be fine for me, but might not be accepted by the culture. Hence we train our employees that treat others the way they want to be treated. This one rule helps us and our firm builds the relationship and grows as one big family. For this, we have multiple levels of cross-cultural trainings that each employee of Deloitte has to go through. There is three stages i.e. foundation, advanced and mastery. There are different levels of training for employees at different levels of positions.”

“I have 4 years of experience in IT industry. I started my career with Deloitte 4 years back when I was fresh out of college. For me corporate life was completely new and it took me quite some time to understand this transition. But what took me longer to adjust to is the different people. I have been exposed to nearly 5 projects in past 4 years and each time I was assigned to I got to meet different people. Each time I had my manager sitting with me in the same geographic location as mine, so anytime I had any issue I would address to him and discuss things with him from my career prospective, but it so happened twice that my manager was an American sitting in United States whom I had to report directly. When I join a new team, it’s a new atmosphere and I have new responsibilities. Apart from understand my new work; I need to understand who my manager is, what kind of a person he is and how he likes the work to be done. It is easy to understand a person when we meet them face to face, but a person whom I have never met and I have to report to him, gets challenging sometimes. Every manager expects the work to be done in a different way. It so happened at times I had made some mistakes unintentionally which hurt my colleagues from another culture, but I didn’t know about it. Slowly and gradually I started growing in the firm and started understanding and dealing with people from diverse cultures. I am really thankful to this organization for providing me with the required trainings and coaching me for cross cultural communication which had helped me deal with people from different cultures. And now I enjoy this diversity. I know about so many places, their cultures, traditions where I have never been to; but I know it all. I really enjoy working with different people now since it helps me grow not only personally but professionally.”

Responses of the Questionnaire

Following are the results of the oral survey conducted across one specific service line in Deloitte and following are the responses:

Question 1: Is Working With Different Culture People Easy? How Comfortable are You Dealing With Diversity?**Figure 2**

Most of the managers agree that to work with people of different cultures is easy. About 60% of the managers agreed that it is not really difficult to work with people of varied cultures. A person just needs to be careful and attentive and know a little bit about other's culture so an individual does not hurt the other people. 40% of the managers said they always have a tough time dealing with people of different culture, either the senior leadership or the employees. The managers had a say that diversity and inclusion helps to build synergy in teams and enhances communication skills that brings in new attitudes and processes which benefit and profit the whole team. They also say that it helps the companies build in a diverse customer base and increase their market share on an international front.

The other 40% of the managers had to say that there are many issues when working with a diverse workforce. They agree that diversity and inclusion helps to get the most talented and qualified workforce for the company, but also brings many challenges such as communication barrier, opposition to change, implementation and then managing the diversity. Communication barriers lead to big problems in the work. The managers had to say sometimes it happens that when in the U.S. office of Deloitte, an employee is hired and his first language is not English, he might fail to understand what the manager is trying to say and hence there will be a decrease in productivity. In such cases, mediators need to be hired who can translate the language and the work can be carried out. Sometimes it so happens that people are not ready to accept the changes surrounding them.

Question 2: How Effectively a Company Should Follow the Diversity Policy to Stay Competitive with Other Organizations?

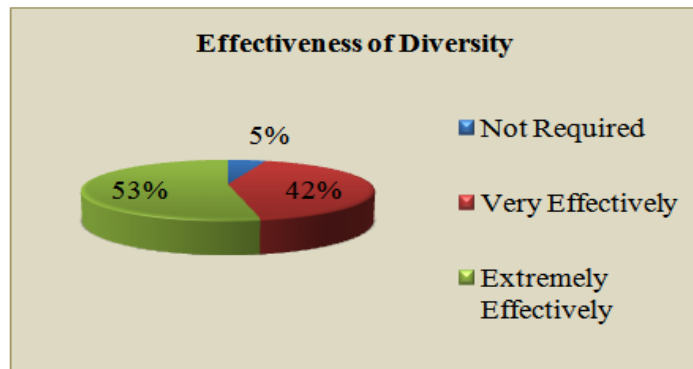


Figure 3

All the managers believe that the company or the organization should effectively follow the diversity policy because if the diversity management is appropriate only then the business can do wonders across the globe and give others an edge in the market. In this era of globalization, no firm that wants to grow on an international level can escape diversity. They agree that today diversity and inclusion in the workplace is necessary to create a competitive economy in a globalized world.

Question3: Have you ever been Offended or Felt Hurt By Any of Your Coworkers of Different Culture. If Yes, How did you Deal with It?

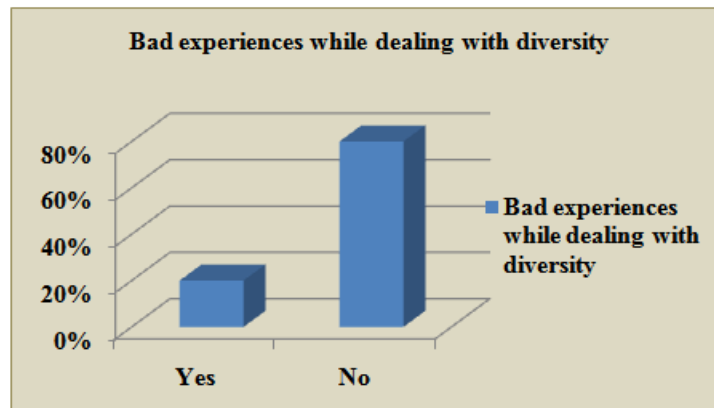


Figure 4

80% of the responses were no. That means people are very happy and satisfied to work with their coworkers who belong to different cultures. Today ,people are more open minded and are ready to learn new cultures, about new places, new traditions which helps them get up with their coworkers really well. About 20% of them responded yes, but all of them mentioned that had a discussion with their coworkers on the same and sorted the matter since they understood the fact that both the people in the dialogue belonged to completely opposite sets of culture. So we understand that people are taking this concept in a really matured manner and are dealing with it really well.

Question 4: Any Comments and Suggestions to Make Diversity Management Much Better in Deloitte?



Figure 5

People responded that they need more frequent cross-cultural training and also suggested that it would be nice if they get to meet their coworkers working from different geographic locations. Not always possible, but still some had this suggestion. Few of the managers also suggested that people should be made to work more and more with different cultured people, which will give the practical exposure and help to manage the diversity in a better way.

Also, there were a few suggestions wherein the employees suggested that they would like to have some inclusion initiatives taken in the company that would just not motivate the employees, but also change their attitude and feeling toward the whole situation and in turn make them more loyal towards the company. Many women were in the favor of having women's initiatives being taken up in the company for the betterment and ease and motivation of the female employees. The initiatives will just make the company a better place to work with and make them feel comfortable. Diversity training was another widely suggested option.

FINDINGS

Each employee in a diverse workplace possesses unique strengths and weaknesses derived from their culture in addition to their individuality. When managed properly, diversity in the workplace can leverage the strengths and complement the weaknesses of each worker to make the impact of the workforce greater than the sum of its parts.

Another advantage of workplace diversity is the opportunity for employees' personal growth. Being exposed to new ideas, cultures and perspectives can help individuals to reach out intellectually and gain a clearer view of their surroundings and their place in the world. Spending time with culturally diverse co-workers can slowly break-down the subconscious barriers of ethnocentrism and xenophobia, encouraging employees to be more well-rounded members of society.

Between co-workers, diversity can place impediments in the way of effective communication, which can directly dampen productivity and the cohesiveness of small groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Diversity Training should be provided in every group that will help succeed in an increasingly diverse, global and competitive workplace through engaging stories, and collaborative exercises, learners can explore the importance of diversity and they will understand better how they can support the organization's efforts for diversity. Following fundamentals to be covered for all employees and managers during diversity training:

- The value and benefits of diversity inclusion
- Dimensions of diversity
- Respectful and inclusive language
- Impact of behavior on others
- Micro-inequities
- Being a diversity ally and owning the culture
- Using internal resources to improve the culture
- Appropriate conflict resolution
- Building productive and respectful working relationships
- Personal behaviors that can foster inclusion
- Roles and responsibilities
- The business case for diversity
- How to support and advocate for diversity and inclusion efforts
- Personal behaviors and biases
- Dealing with reluctant employees
- The importance of diversity training
- Managing conflict and improving team dynamics
- Engaging diverse employees
- Recruiting diverse employees
- Leveraging differences to achieve business objectives

More crosscultural projects should be initiated in the organizations which will generate opportunities for people to work on a global front with people across the world and help them understand the diversity. If a person has never been exposed to diversity and is suddenly expected to behave in an expected manner, it is not easy for the individual. Every employee in the company should be exposed to such diversity so that his mindset and attitude can be altered accordingly.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, diversity should not be a program or an initiative within a corporate association. Rather, diversity should be comprised as the way of doing business as an attitude of managing the workforce and serving customers. When an employer runs a company or a business on the grounds of inclusion, diversity is a component of everything. It is a thread that is interlaced through everyday trade, and is integrated into short-term and long-term thinking. Once a viewpoint of diversity and inclusion has been fit into the minds of the employees working in an organization, it must be communicated regularly to the workforce. Constant strengthening is necessary for a society where all of us are attacked by so many thoughts, ideas and commercial messages each competing for our attention and many in the struggle with another. As our workforce becomes more varied and as our economy expands to allow the greater economic opportunity for more individual, we must also upsurge the volume of our mutual respect for each other. Incorporate today, programs come and go, and management priorities tend to change from one quarter to the next. Diversity and inclusion should be combined naturally into the total association, constant and unailing. This will facilitate our success as we encourage diversity to flourish in the workplace.

Once workplace diversity is very well established, businesses must efficiently manage the changes in policies. This presents a challenge for many administrations. Challenges in managing workplace diversity can stem from several reasons, such as taking the wrong approach to solving diversity issues. For example, a company may adopt positive action policies in an attempt to crack diversity glitches. A Positive act is about giving a chance to previously disadvantaged personnel. Hiring based exclusively on race may not solve multiplicity issues. According to Lawrence Herzog of Careers, directors face challenges when new personnel from varied backgrounds interact with long-standing employees. Many businesses offer training packages to directors to help them efficiently accomplish their newly varied sections.

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