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Managing Diversity

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What Is Diversity?

Valuing diversity is defined as understanding, respecting, and viewing basic human differences as an asset.

Aspects of Diversity

Primary Dimensions of Diversity: The core of our individual identities, the things that we can't change.		Secondary Dimensions of Diversity: The things that we can more easily change. (List partial.)	
Age	Sexual orientation	Income	Geographic location
Ethnicity	Physical abilities	Religion	Work experience
Gender	Race	Marital status	Parental status
		Education	

What Is a Diverse Organization Like?

Traditional Organization	Diverse Organization
Norms, habits, traditions shaped largely by members of dominant group.	Norms, habits, traditions shaped by desires and needs of all employees.
Success linked to assimilation.	Success linked to unique contribution.
Diversity = liability.	Diversity = unique asset.
Leadership unaware.	Leadership values diversity.
Underlying assumption: Change the people , not the culture.	Underlying assumption: Change the culture , not the people.

The Business Case for Diversity

- Unlike affirmative action, workforce diversity is driven by economic necessity, not by laws. Not legality, but profitability, is the motivation.
- Changing demographics are obliging the workplace to become more hospitable to a broader employee population:
 - The workforce is growing slowly.
 - Growing proportions of workers are women, people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, and older people.
- What workforce changes mean for organizations:
 - Depending on young, single, straight, white, male employees will be a disadvantage.
 - The inability to retain diverse employees will be a disadvantage.
 - The ability to recruit, retain, motivate, and advance a diverse workforce will be a competitive edge.

(over)

- The need to maintain quality and continuous improvement in order to be globally competitive will require that managers have the skills to develop all their employees to their fullest potential:
 - The domestic marketplace is changing—there are more Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, disabled people, gay/lesbian/bisexual people, and older people.
 - International markets are of increasing importance to many companies, and the focus is changing from Europe to other parts of the world, especially Asia and Latin America.
- A workforce that is diverse and aware of issues of diversity can:
 - Cultivate access to new domestic and international markets.
 - Better see and optimize new business opportunities.
 - Utilize the most effective marketing strategies.
 - Design products to fit different customer needs.
 - Generate multiple viewpoints to enhance problem-solving abilities—avoiding “groupthink.”
 - Maintain strong, enduring customer relationships.
 - Avoid costly design and marketing mistakes.
 - Value, utilize, promote, and retain all employees.
 - Avoid costly employee turnover.
 - Be better positioned to receive government contracts.
 - Avoid expensive discrimination claims.

What Can I Do to Promote Diversity?

- Personal:
 - Increase your own diversity awareness through reading, study, cultural activities, travel, community involvement, etc.
 - Do not tolerate stereotyping of women and minorities in the workplace.
- As a manager, work to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce:
 - Advertise job openings in diverse publications and locations.
 - Recruit at schools and colleges with diverse enrollments.
 - Attend recruiting functions at diverse professional organizations.
 - Speak on careers in technical communication before diverse audiences.
 - Hire interns in your department.
 - Support training programs to advance diverse employees.
 - Make certain that job duties, compensation, evaluations, promotions, recognition, etc. are equitable.
 - Support staggered work hours, telecommuting, and other flexible work arrangements for people with special needs.
 - Support diverse communications styles, making sure that quieter, less aggressive employees are heard.
 - Establish a mentoring relationship with a diverse employee.
- Organizational:
 - Support the establishment of a formal diversity-awareness program in your organization.
 - Encourage your organization to be involved in the community through grants, volunteerism, etc.
 - Encourage your organization to celebrate diverse holidays—Chinese New Year, Cinco de Mayo, Gay Pride Day, etc.