

Strategic policy for the strengthening Shaping and Empowering the diverse workforce

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Abstract

Globalization of Business, changes in the economic conditions and political scenario, geocentric and polycentric staffing policies, changing workforce demographics has created a diverse workforce. The main purpose of this study is to create a Strategic Policy for the Strengthening, Shaping and Empowering the Diverse Workforce. Employees from different countries, background, caste, culture, must be welcomed and accepted. The policies of the organisation should focus on managing work force diversity is to improve productivity, performance of business, to remain competitive, to form better work relationship among employees, to enhance social responsibility and to address legal concerns. The study is conceptual and focuses on the best strategies for managing diversity and future trends related to diversity which can lead to more committed, better satisfied, better performing employees with better performance of an organization. The industry as a whole has to necessarily update its strategies to be competitive and survive. The demand for a competitive product in the market, is the fundamental driving force to keep the Workforce competitive and updated.

Keywords: workforce, diversity, organizations, globalization, strategies, policy

Introduction

The present diversity that is seen in the Workforce in every industry is progressive, the demands of the specialisations that exist in the industry make it imperative to diversity. Hence the competence of the workforce is a demand based on the dikats of the market forces that shape the growth of an industry. Every organisation finds its relevance to needs that determine the demands of the consumer, which in turn defines the market. The industry as a whole has to necessarily update its strategies to be competitive and survive. The demand for a competitive product in the market, is the fundamental driving force to keep the Workforce competitive and updated.

Definition and Meaning

"Diversity includes all characteristics and experiences that define each of us as individuals."

A common misconception about diversity is that only certain persons or groups are included under its umbrella, when in fact, exactly the opposite is true. Diversity includes the entire spectrum of primary dimensions of an individual, including Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Religion, Disability, and Sexual orientation. Secondary dimensions commonly include: communication style, work style, organizational role/level, economic status, and geographic origin (e.g., East, Midwest, South). It is a simple fact that each of us possesses unique qualities along each of these dimensions. Diversity makes the work force heterogeneous. The management of workforce diversity is a tool to increase organizational effectiveness in order to meet current changes which is sweeping across the globe.

Dimensions of diversity

Diversity is a subjective phenomenon, created by group members themselves who on the basis of their different social identities categorize others as similar or dissimilar: "A group is diverse if it is composed of individuals who differ on a

characteristic on which they base their own social identity" [O'Reilly, Williams, & Barsade 1998, p. 186] ^[8]. Loden & Rosener [1991] ^[4] define diversity as that which differentiates one group of people from another along primary and secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions of diversity, those exerting primary influences on our identities, are gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age and mental or physical abilities and characteristics. The primary dimensions shape our basic self-image as well as our fundamental world views. Additionally, they have the most impact on groups in the workplace and society. Secondary dimensions of diversity are less visible, exert a more variable influence on personal identity and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity. They include: educational background, geographic location, religion, first language, family status, work style, work experience, military experience, organizational role and level, income and communication style. The secondary dimensions impact our self esteem and self definition. There is a definite trend towards definitions of a multiplicity of diversity dimensions; Arredondo [2004] ^[2] adds culture, social class and language to the primary dimensions and healthcare beliefs and recreational interests to the secondary dimensions. She further adds a tertiary dimension, which encompasses historical moments experienced. Maier [2002, pp. 132–134] ^[5] lists 38 possible diversity dimensions, and further suggests that his item "character traits" is "infinitely expandable". He illustrates this multi-dimensionality by reference to the individual as a kaleidoscope. The analogy of an iceberg comes to mind in the face of these potentially endless dimensions; the obvious characteristics of race, ethnicity, gender, age and disability relate to the small, visible portion of the iceberg, and are the basis of much anti-discrimination legislation around the world. Other dimensions such as religion, culture and political orientation are less obvious, and could be said to constitute the secondary dimensions lying just below the surface, which may be revealed with time. The tertiary dimensions are often the

core of individual identity and lie deeper below the surface. It is the vast array of qualities that lie beneath the surface that provides the real essence of diversity to be tapped into, and these have not until recently been acknowledged.

Review of literature

McGath, Berdahl & Arrow (1995) [6] conceptualized workplace diversity by developing a five cluster classification. This often cited categorization is as follows: demographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical status, religion and education; task-related knowledge, skills and capacities; values, views and attitudes; personal, cognitive and attitudinal styles; Status in the organization such as one's hierarchical position, professional domain, departmental affiliation and seniority.

Diversity refers to the co-existence of employees from various socio-cultural backgrounds within the company. Diversity includes cultural factors such as race, gender, age, color, physical ability, ethnicity, etc. The broader definition of diversity may include age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, lifestyle, beliefs, physical appearance and economic status Went ling and Palma-Rivas, 2000 [9].

Effective diversity management has historically been used to provide a legally defensive position; that is, a firm with a diverse workforce could argue that they were not guilty of discrimination because of the prima facie case based on their workforce demographics representing the demographics of the local community. However, in more recent years, the view of diversity has dramatically changed to a more proactive concept. Many business leaders are now beginning to believe that diversity has important bottom-line benefits. Diversity in the workforce can be a competitive advantage because different viewpoints can facilitate unique and creative approaches to problem-solving, thereby increasing creativity and innovation, which in turn leads to better organizational performance Allen *et al.*, 2004 [1].

Benefits of diverse workforce include

- Innovation and productivity increases and creates an excellent world class culture.
- A multicultural workforce facilitates service to diverse external clientele in the arena of globalisation.
- In research-oriented and hi-tech industries, the broad base of talents generated by a gender-and ethnic diverse organization becomes a priceless advantage. "Creativity thrives on diversity" (Morgan, 1989).
- Diverse workforce are found to be better at problem solving, possess better ability to extract expanded meanings, and are more likely to display multiple perspectives and interpretations in dealing with complex issues.
- 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 workforce includes 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. a sense of harmony is recreated when a company recognizes and accommodates the differences within its diverse workforce.

- A diverse workplace increases productivity, increases creativity, and improves problem solving

Strengthening the work force includes

- Stability in wages
- H. R. policy
- Fringe benefits
- Preventing of attrition
- Welfare Measures
- E. P. F.
- Wage Revision
- Annual Revision
- Awards based on Performance
- Compatibility
- Encouraging social meetings periodically
- Creating a secular atmosphere
- Fitness programmes
- Distress entertainment events periodically like – games, sports, picnics etc.

Shaping the workforce includes

- Conducting Refresher Courses
- Talks on advanced technologies
- Social responsibilities like maintaining anti- pollution drives involving the work force.
- Maintaining gender equality on the premises.
- Creating mutual trust, respect among staff and management.
- Identifying areas of weakness predominant among the staff and offering solutions.

Empowering includes

- Permitting staff to participate in educative programmes, conducted by other related industries, etc.
- Providing a video library to learn better and latest techniques in any field of knowledge concerned.
- Recognition of staff who have acquired better qualifications.
- Empowerment by permitting the work force to make self – appraisals at the end of every quarter.
- Research and Development wing to interact with staff at all levels to improve knowledge base for better results.

Managing the diverse workforce

The organisation will need to invest wisely and spend a considerable amount of resources in diversity management in order to better equip their companies to handle the issues that accompany a diverse workplace. "A strategy must be created and implemented to create a culture of diversity that permeates every department and function of the organization" (Greenberg, 2012) [3].

Greenberg lists two recommended steps that an organization must address in order for a company to successfully manage diversity in the workplace, as Assessment and implementation of diversity in the workplace.

1. Assessment of diversity in the workplace.

- a. Assessing and evaluating the diversity process should be an integral part of your organizations management system.

This can help your management team determine challenges and obstacles to diversity which are present in your workplace and which policies need to be added or eliminated.

- b. Pass out flash cards to employees to write down their most valued co-workers on a quarterly basis. The employee's name that does not show up in most cards should be monitored. A conversation should be held with this worker to find out what is going on. This way, you will know whether there is discrimination or conflict going on.

2. Implementation of diversity in the workplace plan

- a. Personal commitment of executive and managerial teams is a must. It is imperative that leaders and managers within organizations must incorporate diversity policies into every aspect of the organization's functions and purpose.

Suggestions

- Recognize the range of factors that create instability for employees
- Understand the connection between workforce diversity, instability, employee performance, and profitability.
- Identify the most effective strategies to strengthen diverse workforce.
- Create an action plan best suited to your business and its culture and diverse employees.

Conclusion

Diversity will be the culture of future work environment, as the factors of globalization and international human resources management will foster a diverse workforce everywhere. Only a strategic policy to strengthen, shape and empower the diverse workforce is the need of the hour. Each of the different companies will have to create a diversity management plan that will fit them and their unique needs. Respecting individual differences will benefit the workplace by creating a competitive edge and increasing work productivity. Thus diversity management benefits associates by creating a challenging environment where everyone has access to opportunities

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