



Diversity in the Workplace: Benefits, Challenges, and the Required Managerial Tools

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The world's increasing globalization requires more interaction than ever before among people from diverse cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds. People no longer live and work in an insular marketplace; they are now part of a worldwide economy with competition coming from nearly every continent. Maximizing and capitalizing on workplace diversity has become an important issue for management today.

Supervisors and managers need to recognize the ways in which the workplace is changing, evolving, and diversifying. Since managing diversity remains a significant business challenge, managers must learn the skills needed in a multicultural and diverse work environment. They must also be prepared to teach themselves and others within their organizations to value diversity in both associates (employees) and customers so that all are treated with dignity.

Diversity Defined

Diversity is generally defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and public assistance status. Diversity issues are at the forefront of today's workplace and are projected to become even more important in the future due to increasing diversity in the U.S. population. Companies need to focus on diversity and look for ways to become more inclusive be-

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Tip of the Month



Tips for Balancing Work and Family Life

Spring has arrived! Families have adopted different spring rituals for cleaning out the old to make room for something new. We are busy cleaning windows, houses, closets, removing the winter rubble from our landscapes and creating to do lists to prepare ourselves and our operations for the approaching summer season.

There is no single formula for balancing all the components of our lives. Some of the same strategies we use at work to plan, organize, delegate, set limits and

communicate can be used to achieve a well-balanced life both personally and professionally.

1. Build a support network. Allow yourself to ask for help.
2. Establish limits and boundaries. Boundaries are an imaginary line of protection that you draw around yourself. Boundaries and limits define how you take charge of your time and space and get in touch with your feelings. Without boundaries it is difficult to say "no," they are critical for balancing work and family.
3. Create time for yourself. Being a good parent, partner, and professional necessitates taking care

of yourself.

4. Use a master calendar which is centrally located to schedule both family and business activities.
5. Allow yourself to be flexible. Balancing work and family requires flexibility.
6. Let go of guilt. Guilt is one of the greatest wasters of emotional energy.
7. Revisit your personal and professional goals regularly. Spend time doing what matters most.
8. Clear out the clutter. "Clutter accumulates where energy stagnates and likewise, energy stagnates where clutter accumulates."



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cause diversity has the potential of yielding greater productivity and competitive advantages. Stephen G. Butler, co- chair of the Business-Higher Education Forum, believes that diversity is an invaluable competitive asset that American business cannot afford to ignore. Managing and valuing diversity is a key component of effective people management, which can improve workplace productivity.

Traditionally, diversity in the workplace has focused on gender and race. However, in today’s workplace, diversity also includes issues such as non-English speaking employees, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) workers, generational differences among workers, employee religious practices and more. In addition, federal and state equal opportunity legislation makes discrimination in workplaces illegal. These laws specify the rights and responsibilities of both employees and employers in the workplace and hold both groups accountable.

Benefits of Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity is beneficial to both associates and employers. Although associates are interdependent in the workplace, respecting individual differences can increase productivity. Embracing diversity in the workplace can also reduce lawsuits and increase marketing opportunities, recruitment, creativity, and business image. In an era when flexibility and creativity are keys to competitiveness, diversity is critical for an organization’s success.

Challenges of Diversity in the Workplace

Managing diversity is more than simply acknowledging differences in people. It involves recognizing the value of differences, combating discrimination, and promoting inclusiveness. Managers may also be challenged with losses in personnel and work productivity due to prejudice and discrimination and complaints and legal actions against their business.

Negative attitudes and behaviors can be barriers to organizational diversity because they can harm working relationships and damage morale and work productivity. Negative attitudes and behaviors in the workplace include prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination...which should never be used by management for hiring, retention, and termination practices. This could lead to costly litigation.

Required Tools for Managing Diversity

Effective managers realize that certain skills are necessary for creating a successful, diverse workforce. First, managers must understand discrimination and its consequences. Second, managers must recognize their own biases and prejudices. Diversity is not about differences among groups, but rather about differences among individuals. Each individual is unique and does not represent or speak for a particular group. Finally, managers must be willing to change the organization if necessary.

Unfortunately, there is no single recipe for success. It depends on the manager’s ability to understand what is best for the business based on the dynamics of the workplace. Managing diversity is a comprehensive process for creating a work environment that includes everyone. When creating a successful diverse workforce, an effective manager should focus on personal awareness. Both managers and associates need to be aware of their personal biases. Organizations need to develop, implement, and maintain ongoing training because a one-day training session will not change people’s behaviors. Managing diversity is about more than equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. Managers should expect change to be slow, while at the same time encouraging change.



