DIVERSITY

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Abstract

This paper is about diversity in the workforce. But diversity is not just about race and gender. We will talk about race, gender, ethics and benefits and problems in the workforce. I think that you will find valid information that will help you understand about a diverse workforce and the importance of it. You will also get to read an interview of a woman by the name of Susan Helms. A business owner of a trucking company in the construction field and also an owner of a bar and grill. In today’s world and how global we are I think diversity training is always important.

Diversity

What is diversity? What does it mean? Diversity can be defined in many different ways. Diversity is a commitment to recognizing and appreciating the variety of characteristics that make individuals unique in an atmosphere that promotes and celebrates individual and collective achievement. Examples of these characteristics are: age; cognitive style; culture; disability mental, learning, physical; economic background; education; ethnicity; gender identity; geographic background; languages spoken; marital/partnered status; physical appearance; political affiliation; race; religious beliefs; sexual orientation. For an example we will use google to show you their diversity with race and gender. Frist is going to be race.

Now I will show you gender at google.

Diversity takes place everywhere in the world. The United States was founded from immigrants. This country is a mixture of races and cultures probably more than any other country. Frequently, diversity is viewed in a limited fashion, primarily addressing issues of race, ethnic or gender differences, and linked to the laws providing protected status to certain groups. Every human being is different in their own way. Some are tall, some are short. Others are book smart and others are street smart. There are a lot of different categories where diversity can take place. In this paper we will talk more about age diversity in the workforce, as well as gender and ethics and also the benefits and problems of diversity in the workforce.

“Advances in technology and the advent of a global economy bring the people of the world closer together than ever before”. (Sadler,D. 2013) Given this fact, businesses, educational systems and other entities are investigating ways to better serve their constituents. This includes being able to attract and retain the best and most qualified workers. “Organizations that can develop and employ the necessary policies and procedures to do this will maintain a competitive advantage among their counterparts and increase their effectiveness” (Sadler,D. 2013) The private sector competitive model may not squarely fit Federal departments and agencies, given the lack of profit motive as the reason for their existence. Yet, Federal organizations must compete to recruit and retain the best talent if they hope to achieve their bottom line, their statutory missions.

A generation is defined by demographics and key life-events that shape, at least to some degree, distinctive generational characteristics. “Although sources disagree on the exact birthdates that define each generation, there is a consensus that employees over 60 in 2006 belong to the Traditionalist generation” (Henneman, T. 2012).. Those in their mid-40s to 60 are Baby Boomers. Employees in their late 20s to early 40s are Generation X. The new generation entering the workplace, in their early 20s or younger, is generally called Generation Y.

Cultural generational changes create trends that can be noticed over time. Looking at the background and characteristics of each generation can be useful in understanding the distinctive talents and challenges each individual brings to the workplace, as well as identifying long-range trends that are changing the culture of the workplace. “There appear to be distinctive trends toward dual-career families and an interest in having flexible work arrangements that help employees achieve balance between their work and family life” (Henneman, T. 2012)..

Traditionalists may be credited with the typical work environment, where individuals work in the office from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., along with frequent evening and weekend work and extended work hours during tax season. Traditionalists are frugal, hard-working conformists who respect authority and put duty before pleasure. They spent most of their careers with one or two employers. Nonworking wives typically tended to family matters to support the long hours husbands spent at the office. Although they are steadily retiring from the workforce, Traditionalists remain connected and influential.

The newest employees entering the workplace are members of Generation Y, also called the millennials, the Internet generation, and Echo Boomers, because they are the relatively largest generation since the Baby Boomers. They were exposed to diverse lifestyles and cultures in school at an early age, and tend to respect different races, ethnic groups, and sexual orientations. “They are exceptionally comfortable with diversity, one-third are members of a minority group, and they are accustomed to computer technology, immediacy, and multitasking” (Castro, A. 2013). They have short attention spans, but value professional development and strive to work faster and better. They want creative challenges and projects with deadlines so they can build up ownership of their tasks. They want jobs with flexibility, telecommuting options, and the ability to work part-time or to leave the workforce temporarily when having children. As Generation Y enters the workforce, employers will need to adjust to their demands.

I have had the pleasure to sit down with Susan helms and ask her a few questions about diversity. Susan helm’s is a women businesses owner that owns a bar and grill and also a trucking company in the construction field. I first wanted to ask her what her definition of diversity is. “I feel diversity means fairness to all, no matter race, religion, age, gender, and past actions. Everyone always starts on a level playing field with me” Susan replied. Next I asked, How has age and gender affected you in your workforce? “Diversity has played a very different role in each of the businesses. (Pondering) Susan replied, “The trucking company was started in 1986 at this time gender in this field was a big issue, my meaning is that was known as a man’s world. This is when the state started minority percentage on state work and the men were forced to give up this ten percent to minority owned company. This forced minorities to work harder to earn and prove to the trucking industry that we ran great reliable companies also.” Next we discussed, is diversity a good thing in the workforce? (Smiling) Susan said, “Diversity is needed in a workplace and is a good thing when properly managed”. Last I asked, do you think diversity has changed over time with the generations? “Yes, diversity will always change from generation to generation, she replied (S.Helms, personal communication, April 17, 2013). I hope this interview has helped you understand how everyone has their own definition and opinions about diversity. This is a pie graph of Susan Helms workplace staff, showing number of male and female employs.

Workplace diversity seems to be a simple concept, referring to the variety of different people all working together within an organization to reach the goal of success (Greenberg). On the contrary diversity is complex and is more than just mixing cultures, backgrounds and males and females (Greenberg 2013). Diversity not only involves how individuals perceive themselves but also how each individual perceives those they are surrounded by (Greenberg 2013). Each of these perceptions affects the interaction between two people or two employees (Greenberg 2013).

Organizations that are successful recognize the need for immediate attention to potential problems and are not afraid to use the resources to fix the problem (Greenberg 2013). Even though trying to be a diverse company can be difficult and cause problems throughout the workplace, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages (Greenberg 2013).

Increased adaptability is one of the many advantages in having a diverse workplace (Greenberg 2013). Organizations with a diverse work force are more adaptable to the diverse problems that will arise while trying to target a diverse market. Diverse organizations are better equipped to provide greater service, because different cultures and backgrounds comes with different talents and experiences (Greenberg 2013). Pulling and bouncing ideas off of each other in a diverse group can also improve a company’s productivity and responsiveness to a market that changes every day (Ingram 2013).

When properly managed, a diverse work force can strengthen an employee’s weakness and leverage their strengths to make the impact that they have on a company’s success greater together than the sum of its parts (Ingram 2013). Another advantage to having a diverse workplace is each employee’s opportunity to grow as a person (Ingram 2013). When a person is exposed to new ideas, different cultures, and perspectives; that individual has the opportunity to reach new horizons intellectually and get a broader view on the world around them and their place in it (Ingram 2013). Being surrounded by people outside of an individual’s culture and removing them from the “comfort zone”. Can allow for subconscious barriers to be broken down and the idea of ethnocentrism will be removed, and will encourage more employee’s to be more well-rounded employees (Ingram 2013). With all the benefits of having a diverse organization and the potential success a company could have by implementing diversity into the workplace, problems can and will arise.

“If a manager gives instructions about completing a certain task to an employee who fails to fully comprehend the instructions, the employee may make mistakes if he tries to complete the task without receiving clarity. Sometimes it helps for companies to hire bilingual employees who can mediate and reduce language and communication barriers” (Johnson 2013).

This is one example of a possible problem with diversity in the workplace, communication maybe the main concern of organizations implementing diversity into the workplace (Johnson 2013). When organizations within the United States hire outside the borders of the States and bring in employees whose native language is not English or if Americans decide to work abroad in different countries, they may encounter a language barrier with co-workers, management and customers (Johnson 2013). In the long-term the potential communication barrier can be broken down, but could cause problems with first-impressions and co-worker orientation periods when cultures begin to clash (Ingram 2013). Even though having a diverse workplace benefits the company as a whole, there still will be some employees and managers that react negatively to the changes made (Ingram 2013).

Social integration can only be influenced to a certain degree, it is nearly impossible to control the formation of cliques and exclusive social groups (Ingram 2013). Since this is a natural process and is going to happen in every situation it is a small problem and if properly managed won’t cause a problem in productivity (Ingram 2013). But if mishandled this can cause small divisions in the work staff and employees with culture differences can begin to avoid each other and can cause difficulties in knowledge sharing, skills, and experience, thus slowing productivity increases (Ingram 2013). When dealing with employees and managers opposing changes, top-level management should explain to their staff the reasoning behind the changes and express the benefits in having different backgrounds mesh together in the same work place (Johnson 2013). Now we well talk about ethics in the workforce.

The more global the world becomes, the bigger the issue of ethics become. This is because ethics refers to the specific values, standards, rules, and agreements people adopt for conducting their lives. What one individual deems as right or wrong, the next person may not, depending upon their values, life experiences or up bring. For these very reasons, a corporation’s business ethics must be clearly defined. When working for an employer, personal or individual ethics cannot be put before the business ethics of the company. The wrong ethical decision in business can soon become the loss of a customer, investor, and even lead to lawsuits.

Discrimination remains a significant ethical issue in business despite decades of legislation attempting to outlaw it. According to the book, *Business Ethics; Ethical Decision Making*, authors O. C. Ferrell, John Fraedrich & Linda Ferrell (2013) confirmed “Although a person’s racial and sexual prejudices belong to the domain of individual ethics, racial and sexual discrimination in the workplace create ethical issues within the business word” (p. 73). Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, public assistance status, disability, age, national origin, or veteran status is illegal in the United States. Additionally, discrimination on the basis of political opinions or affiliation with a union is defined as harassment.

Authors Ferrell et al. (2013) stated, “A company in the United States can be sued if it 1) refuses to hire an individual, 2) maintains s system of employment that unreasonably excludes an individual from employment, 3) discharges an individual, or 4) discrimination against an individual with respect to hiring, employment terms, promotion, or privileges of employment as they relate to the definition of discrimination. Between 75,000 and 100,000 charges of discrimination are filed annually with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)” (p. 73).

Race, gender, and age discrimination are major sources of ethical and legal debate in the workplace. Once dominated by white American men, the U.S. workforce today includes significantly more women, African Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities, as well as disabled and older workers. Ferrell et al. (2013) pointed out, “These groups have traditionally faced discrimination and higher unemployment rates and been denied opportunities to assume leadership roles in corporate America. For example, there are only six African American chairs/CEOs of Fortune 500 companies” (p. 73).

As women have entered the workforce in record numbers, corporations have a need to address the specific ethical problems that working women face. According to the book, *Human Resource Management; Gaining a Competitive Advantage*, authors Raymond A. Noe, John R. Hollenbeck, Barry Gerhart & Patrick M. Wright (2013) wrote, “A major development issue facing companies today is how to get woman into upper-level management positions, how to break the glass ceiling” (p. 427). The glass ceiling refers to the unseen, yet un breach able, barrier that keeps women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements. Noe et al. (2013) noted that surveys show that in Fortune 500 companies’ women represent less than 3% of CEOs and approximately 14% of executive officers.

The experience of a handful of trailblazing companies shows that women can break into the upper ranks of management. According to, do women make the best CEOs? (2001) in Health Progress, a growing body of evidence indicates that companies recruit their leaders from the wrong gender. Women, not men, make better CEOs, these studies say. If CEOs want to make the best use of all the available talent, they should take the right steps to do so. Study after study proves that companies with more women board members perform better, proclaimed the article.

Why, then, do so few women run big corporations? According to the article, Six Paradoxes Women Leaders Face in 2013, in the Harvard Business Review, authors Jill Flynn, Kathryn Heath, & Mary Davis Holt (2013) stated “Women were better educated than ever, we continued to claim coveted CEO roles at companies such as IBM and Yahoo, and one study even reported that women were the primary breadwinners in a majority of households in the US. That sounds like progress”. The authors confirmed that there are “the mixed messages and uncomfortable realities that complicate an arguably positive picture of progress”. Some of the “difficult paradoxes that women leaders continue to face” are listed as; **“The Double-Bind Paradox -** Women must project gravitas in order to advance at work, yet they also need to retain their "feminine mystique" in order to be liked. **The Networking Paradox -** Women are consummate relationship builders, yet we don't use our contacts to get ourselves promoted. And **The Careful-What-You-Wish-For Paradox -.** Women have more opportunities to work today, yet they are opting-out in high numbers. Recent statistics illustrate that more women than ever aspire to walk away from work to stay home full-time to raise children” Flynn et al. concluded. These paradoxes are important to address for a great many reasons, fairness being the most obvious. But even beyond creating a fair and ethical system that allows more women into the leadership pipeline, the practical problem created by mixed messages is that it robs women of confidence and squashes their desire to jump into the scrimmage and become leaders. The world needs the best qualified women to step up to the plate, and women need to be able to weave their way through these most difficult of challenges according to the article.

The “glass ceiling” barrier that women deal with is likely caused by lack of access to training programs and developmental mentoring. Noe et al. (2013) suggested that “Women often have trouble finding mentors because of their lack of access to the “old boy network” (p. 427). Research has shown that the lack of mentoring is not only from the antics of the “old boy network” that is preventing women from succeeding, but it appears women themselves have added another layer to the “glass ceiling” called the “queen bee syndrome”. An article in the Wall Street Journal titled, The Tyranny of the Queen Bee, author Peggy Drexler (2013) defines queen bee syndrome as “The female boss who not only has zero interest in fostering the careers of women who aim to follow in her footsteps, but who might even actively attempt to cut them off at the pass.” That is correct; the same women who have complained for years of unethical treatment from their male counterparts, are now maintaining many of the same unethical problems by turning on their own. The article noted that as the old male-dominated workplace has been transformed, many have hoped that the rise of female leaders would create a softer, gentler kind of office, based on communication, team building and personal development. Drexler stated “But instead, some women are finding their professional lives dominated by high school "mean girls" all grown up: women with something to prove and a precarious sense of security.”

In the article, Drexler referenced a study conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan; Graham Staines, Toby Epstein Jayaratne and Carol Tavris in the 1970’s. Drexler stated the researchers found that women who achieved success in male-dominated environments were at times likely to oppose the rise of other women. “This occurred, they argued, largely because the patriarchal culture of work encouraged the few women who rose to the top to become obsessed with maintaining their authority.” What makes these queen bees so effective and aggravating is that they are able to exploit female vulnerabilities that men may not see, using tactics that their male counterparts might never even notice. Drexler gave this example, “Erin’s boss, Jane, would gossip about Erin's personal life. Or another woman, Kelly, her boss would comment on her outfit: "Who are you trying to impress today?" Or not-so-gently condescend: "Did you take your smart pill today, sweetie?" Their assaults harm careers and leave no fingerprints.” That is one reason many victims never see such attacks coming and are powerless to prevent them.

Though it is getting easier to be a professional woman, it is by no means easy. Drexler states, “Some women, especially in industries that remain male-dominated, assume that their perches may be pulled from beneath them at any given moment (and many times, they are indeed encouraged to feel this way). Made to second-guess themselves, they try to ensure their own dominance by keeping others, especially women, down.” Men use fear as a tool of advancement. Why shouldn't women do the same? Drexler explains “In a world where there are still relatively few women in positions of power, it is an understandable assumption that the rise of one would mean the ouster of another. One for one, instead of one plus one.”

Until top leadership positions are as routinely available to women as they are to men, freezing out the competition will remain a viable survival strategy for women to use.

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