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What Should Managers Know About Cultural Diversity

Managing diversity has been something that has been a focus in the United States since the eighties. As we know almost all over the world, there is an upsurge in workplace diversity. Employees from various nations, background, culture, beliefs, and experiences have been working together. Therefore, the emergence of anti-discriminatory laws was put in place, especially in the United States. In human resource one of the hottest topic organizations have to deal with is of workplace diversity due to the increase in globalization; therefore in this paper will present what managers should know about cultural diversity. Under the light of this discussion, we will analyze the importance of how a good understanding of culture helps managers to be successful in achieving their goals and targets. To begin with, the biggest problem arises when the managers are not aware of or lack of knowledge of a different culture. It creates a lot of confusion and misunderstanding; as a result, the team members feel lost and see the leadership to be missing which indirectly hits the performance.

The acceptance of the differences among employees working in an organization is a significant development for managers today. “An issue of managing diversity has become essential in both private and public sector organization” (Brannen, np). The most important thing that higher management needs to focus on these days is to tap into the communicative, cultural, and innovative talents of all the workforces in an organization Managers and employees both should have respect and understanding of different cultures. Scholars argue that differences of any sort, may it be cultural, language, believes, etc. has the capacity to diminish group cohesiveness and intensify clashes among team associates (Stone et al., 141). It also results in hostility. Managing cultural diversity in the workplace is a challenging task for managers. They should know in order to deal with this challenge or overcome it; they should make an effort to encourage a more mixed environment by promoting cultural tolerance among team members, by effective communication skills, and by developing strategies that will help in dealing with conflicting issues. In order to deal with a culturally diverse team, managers should primarily know that there are two aspects of culture. One is general cultural knowledge that is how culture works, how it affects a person's behavior, believes and decision making. The second aspect is specific cultural knowledge which is facts and information about a particular culture. When a manager is aware of the fact that culture has its influence on each individual, then it helps the manager to understand the background of the people and this, in turn, helps the manager to lead a team efficiently and effectively.

Another important aspect of effectively managing a culturally diverse team is effective communication skills. No matter where the person works whether outside the country or within with a diverse group of people effective communication is important. When one is trying to put across an idea to people from different culture, then one does it according to their own cultural influences and assumptions. Likewise, the person on the other end can interpret that idea according to his or her own cultural influence and assumptions that could result in a lot of misunderstanding. For instance, in Mongolia, when individuals purchase something, they do not offer the card or cash by having space amongst their fingers to vendor or counter. If someone does, then it is considered rude or disrespectful. However, in many countries, it is not considered to be rude or disrespectful. So, a lot of things assumed can be good in one culture and wrong in another. Managers should also be careful in making assumptions, because a problem arises when one assumes wrongly and judge a person according to their assumptions. Stereotyping also causes one to assume a lot of things which might not be true. However, they should also not forget the key fact that assumption and perception are shaped by cultural influences. Assumptions can have advantage and disadvantage, but when a person is well versed with different cultures, then it becomes easy not to assume. Therefore, managers should strongly promote acceptance of cultural differences, communications skills, and develop strategies will reduce the issue that arises from a heterogeneous team. Managers should make sure that everyone in the team is on one page. They should design policies, procedures and other information in a way that it no one on the team feels lost due to language and cultural barriers.

Cultural context is something that a person will understand easily from the same culture, but it will vary culture to culture. For example, in Korea or Taiwan people depend more on actions then verbal communication because they have a high context culture, likewise in China people do not directly communicate the message to the listener; in fact they use indirect language to convey their message, which can be a different experience for person raised up in low context culture like the United States. In low context culture, people prefer to put their message across directly and verbally instead of actions or speaking between the lines. Managers leading a culturally diverse team should be aware of the contextual cues because these cues help a person understand the differences in behavior, negotiation skills, and decision-making skills of the team members. Normally, one would not think that each culture has such different verbal and non-verbal ways of communication, and by understanding it makes communication very effective. If we look at the negotiating style in North America, we see that it is very candid and they think more in terms of economic terms and trust the other party. However, in high context culture such as Japan, we see people deal more on personal terms and try to build up their personal ties more than concentrating on economic terms. Similarly, we see that in high context culture people take longer to take a decision because they thoroughly look into the minutest detail before they can come to a decision, whereas people from low context culture are much quicker in making decisions because they are more concerned with the main points first and then working on the minute detail later. Managers should also know that problem-solving techniques also differ among cultures. In low context culture, it is okay to talk, discuss, debate, or argue while trying to solve a problem, whereas in high context culture higher management avoids such strategy (Tjosvold, np).

It will also be helpful for managers to see the cultural difference in context with Hofstede dimension of individualism and collectivism. Individualistic cultures promote freedom, more autonomy where dependency is not considered to be very good. In individualistic culture, people are expected to solve their own problems to accomplish their goal without depending on others. Therefore, individualistic culture focuses on personal welfare rather than the groups, and in collectivist cultures, people are more likely to depend on others. People who have been raised in collectivist society are seen to sacrifice their own comfort for the greater good of everyone. In terms of rewards and appreciation also, the team is rewarded and not an individual. Rewards are shared with the whole team as opposed to individualistic culture, where each person is rewarded individually according to their performances. Once the managers are aware of these above points mentioned, they can then use the method of D-I-E which means to describe, interpret, and evaluate, but managers should be careful when dealing with a diverse team they should be careful in evaluating or interpreting from their perspective, which one might falter at since people do it unconsciously. Therefore the rule of thumb is to describe in detail, consider interpretation as a hypothesis and reach a conclusion after taking into consideration any other interpretation as well.

Organizations should develop strategies to manage cultural diversity and managers and employees should recognize it too. Adler had proposed some strategies for managing cultural differences. According to him, managers should know how to ignore the difference. Most managers are completely unaware of cultural dissimilarities and its influence on the organization. They consider their way is the most suitable to organize or manage. They believe diversity to be pointless. However, according to Adler ignoring the difference leads to effective management of cultural diversity and reduced negative impact. Second, the approach which Adler identified was of minimizing the difference.Managers in Organizations who follow this approach are the ones who think that their way is the best way and all another way to manage and organize is inferior to theirs. This attitude is called as ethnocentric. When a problem arises, they try to minimize diversity and prefer to work in a homogenous team rather than a heterogeneous team. However, managers should understand that working in a heterogeneous team can be challenging yet has many advantages. Lastly, Adler identified that managers should adopt the strategy of managing differences. This creates synergy for the organization (Kundu, np). Managers who adopt this approach believe there is no good or bad way. Neither way is superior or inferior. With this approach, it helps to minimize the problem and maximize the advantages which in turn create synergies for the organization. Organizations that use this approach train their management personnel and other staffs to recognize cultural dissimilarities and realize its advantages.

Organizations should always promote cross-cultural training to its managers and other employees. It helps the employees to be more aware of discrimination and biases that they come across. It also helps the team members and the manager themselves to realize what diversity is, its importance. They will also be able to understand the concept of equal opportunity in employment which will help in decreasing the effect of partiality. Managers should or rather organizations should make it a rule to make sure that starting from the top management to the bottom everyone is required to do the cross-cultural training. In fact, training on the importance of diversity should be done periodically so that both the manager and his team know that the company values diversity and their actions make the company's corporate culture stand out. As, mentioned that in this era of globalization, companies need really skilled managers. Managerial skills such as understanding of culture and intercultural skills is an important skill that is valued by organizations. Intercultural skills are valued by the organization because it helps managers to understand, develop, and execute the strategies which are developed in the context of culture. It is very important for international managers to analyze the internal and external environment both because there is so much interconnectedness, a variety that makes it difficult for managers to understand the cause and effect. Also, since there is so much information available nowadays, it is also become difficult to judge if the information is reliable or not. The managers should have the ability to see the opportunities in their environment. They should also be able to see and analyze situations from a different angle and make or develop opportunities from a situation.

Communication and language obstacles are the biggest challenges to effective organizational diversity. Employees may communicate in dissimilar primary languages, making communication hard for other employees. Cultural differences and perspectives on different points result in many conflicts and may hinder effective decisions as well. It is very hard for managers as well as employees to understand each other viewpoints and way of work. Many individuals from different cultures might not get along well with each other resulting in issues or poor productivity. Therefore, it is very important for an organization with the diverse workforce to equip its employees with the effectively communicate knowledge and train them on how to effectively work and communicate with coworkers, irrespective of their dissimilarities (Hajro et al., p. 353). Diversity training can also assist in reducing interpersonal issues within the organization.

Because of globalization, diversity can be witnessed more than ever before. Managing diversity and co-existing with different people under the same roof with the same goals to achieve certain objectives is of great importance now a day. Organizations with diverse workforce should train their employees on how to communicate effectively with other coworkers and staff members. Also, new hires must be introduced to his or her coworkers so break the ice and have some understanding. Any communication issues or conflicts should be immediately reported and resolved. For this reason, it is imperative for an organizations success and productivity prepare its teams, and personnel's to successfully work and connect with each other, regardless of all the differences.

Benefits of cultural diversity

Because of the following benefits of cultural diversity, it is essential for managers in current business scenarios to know about these benefits and act accordingly to successfully manage his or her subordinates and achieve organizational objectives as well.

More ideas more solution

Cultural diversity can be very valuable for any organization, the more assorted an organization is, the more it has the capacity to resolve a diverse range of issues and opportunities effectively. This means that people from varied backgrounds, experiences, social statuses, regions, and other characteristics are able to offer various skills sets that can help an organization cope with issues or take advantage of those differences in any other way. Likewise, dialogs and debates among diverse people will usually produce a wider variety of ideas. Furthermore, in current globalized marketplace organizations having a diverse range of employees can more effectively serve that global market as the employees will be able to speak different languages and wider cultural understanding that is required.

Less racism more understanding

There are multiple levels of diversity namely, surface level diversity and deep-level diversity. According to experts' characteristics such as age, ethnicity, religion, race, disability, and gender are demographic characteristics, and they are just the tip of the iceberg as they reveal surface-level diversity, and they do not reveal any feelings and thoughts processes. This level of diversity can lead workers to see one another through assumptions and stereotypes. Nonetheless, studies have illustrated that with time as individuals or groups get to know each other and intermingle, they become less anxious about regional and ethical dissimilarities if they see the more significant features or individualities like values and personalities, that symbolize deep-level diversity. Having more cultural diversity in the workforce, most of the employees tend to devote more time regularly with individuals from cultural upbringings that they are usually not open to. Consequently, employees pick up new cultural understandings that in turn, diminishes destructive emotions, for example, prejudice, homophobia, sexism, etc.

Greater opportunity for employees and organizational growth

Diversity in an organization is very advantageous for the employees and the organization. An organization with staff that belongs to different backgrounds and have unique personality traits add a lot of new sights and unique ways of work that usually is not possible with the same workforce. For instance, an individual from Africa can provide the organization with the insight or method of managing people of resolving a specific conflict in a way that is unique, very effective and not practiced in the home country of the organization. Moreover, people from various regions with various languages are able to communicate more effectively with a diverse range of customers or businesses, contributing to the effectiveness and productivity of the organization. Moreover, diversity is also very beneficial for employees. Working in an organization with dissimilar workforce adds tremendously to employees overall experience, especially, communication skills. Employees get hands-on experience working with different people; they learn and gain knowledge from people from around the world. Through cultural diversity, employees and managers acquire managing and relationship skills that cannot be learned from books usually. In addition, diversity increases organization and its staff confidence and moral and are in particular beneficial for organizations that operate on a global or international marketplace.

Improved employee engagement

There is no better way to acquire knowledge about other cultures and ethnicities than from coworkers or subordinates that belong to different upbringings than your own. One can ask, discuss, and pick up new things from staffs during lunch breaks, etc. If the organization has a pool of culturally diverse workforces, everyone will learn more about one someone else's way of life and ethos. When the employees share their particular know-how with each other, they not only learn from each other but build a trusting as well. This is very valuable as it upturns employee engagement and also may result in increased employee motivation.

## Language skills can open doors for a business

Language obstacles and cultural dissimilarities can frequently be an impediment for an organization that wants to grow their business over seas or in different regions; however, by contracting workforces who are well versed in various languages can make it promising for the organization to work in a global context and network with a larger client-base.

Reduced employee turnover

An organization that is enriched with cultural diversity in the place of work would instantly attract a broader pool of applicants for its job openings and more applicants that apply for jobs with the organization. Organizations that are able to recruit from an assorted pool of applicants means that they are more likely to employ the most qualified and relevant applicants for the openings. In a continuously increasingly competitive frugality where talents, skills, and diverse services are vital to progress the organization, the organizations are trying to put together the most culturally diverse set of applicants in order to be successful in the current market scenario. Many studies have revealed that most of the job seekers are drawn to organizations that are culturally diverse as it is visibly understandable that these organizations do not practice employment discrimination.

Positive reputation

Another advantage of cultural diversity in an organization is that it receives a positive reputation. Organizations that motivate and recruit candidates from a wide variety of upbringings usually gain status for being a good employer. Prospective clients frequently feel more cherished and hence give more business to these companies.

In short, the managers should know that cultural diversity in an organization can have tremendous benefits and the organization can enjoy an extensive range of benefits, for instance;

* Reduced employee turnover
* Improved employee engagement
* Improves cultural insights
* Increased productivity
* Improved creativity
* Increased profits
* Improved company reputation
* Wider range of skills

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