Intercultural Conflict at Gordon Foundry

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The incident encountered by Mr. White Deer at Gordon Foundry depicts the problem of intercultural conflicts in the workplace. This describes the conflicts or disputes that arise due to intercultural communication i.e. interaction either verbal or non-verbal among the people belonging to different cultures and nations. The purpose of intercultural communication is to reduce the disputes among the transcultural groups and help them to understand each other’s differences and discover their commonalities. This directly impacts the employee's behavior and organizational performance at the workplace.

However, many intercultural concerns prevail in the workplace including non-verbal gestures and body language, social constructs, authoritarian views or notions, ethnicity and discrimination based on different determinants such as gender, race, age, color, religion, and others. The workplace comprising of diverse group of employees have different opinions regarding their cultures, political views, religious obligations and racial biases towards each other.

Moreover, the differences in age, education, and social status also play an imperative role in causing workplace conflicts as they vary culture to culture. The increase in workplace diversity demands interpersonal communication to overcome these differences and develop professional associations at the workplace. Employee's gestures, body language, verbal language, choice of words and reactions vary in different cultures and are significant in intercultural communication to understand the co-workers and their approach towards different concerns at the workplace. The increasingly global reach has made workplaces more diverse due to which employees and employers need to work on cultural diversity among other related issues. The employees need to learn how to behave and interact acceptably at a diverse workplace. Conversely, employees may face complications in global business interactions if they fail to understand people's social values, norms and behaviors at the workplace. Globalization indicates the organizational changes related to the multicultural workforce which demands different skills to manage them and increase their productivity.

In the Gordon Foundry case, Mr. White faced problems in his initial days at work due to the following critical issues:

1. **Workplace diversity**

In the provided case study, Mr. White and his colleagues at the Gordon Foundry belong to two different groups. The co-workers are Canadians with a French origin, whereas Mr. White is an American. Moreover, the difference in age and education also exists. Such dissimilar characteristics among the employees of the company led the majority group to a rebellious and discomforting behavior towards their new fellow employees. The distinctive skills of Mr. White also instill a sense of jealousy and disrespect among his co-workers.

1. **Ethnic and Cultural Differences**

The two groups of employees belong to two distinct cultures and nations. The American culture differs greatly from Canadian culture in terms of its values, beliefs, and behaviors. The Canadians jealousy seeks privacy and personal space which makes them reserved people. They take the time to welcome a new employee. On the other hand, the majority group of co-workers have some family members, as well, which might play authoritative tricks on the newcomer to harass and bully him or her without the fear of upper management. Canadians are quite fond of their natural settings and are keen to differentiate them from the Americans.

1. **Lack of communication and difference in common language**

In a bilingual workplace, language is the biggest factor in dividing the employees. The use of two different languages among the majority French-Canadian group and Mr. White is a critical issue that leads to a lack of communication and interaction between the two groups. Francophone Canadians are more likely to socialize and work together in a group of monolingual people (Canada, 2014).

To reduce the intercultural conflicts, the two groups need to work on their communication and enhance their interactions using both verbal and non-verbal languages. They should be made aware of the importance of communication and how the drawbacks of cultural conflicts can impact the organizational performance. This option would not cost much for the company but may lead to personal grudges or failure to resolve the issues on their own. Also, every group view their culture as normal and others’ as strange which leads the groups to evaluate their differences incorrectly.

The second suggestion to resolve intercultural conflicts is to appoint a mediator who manages cross-cultural conflicts among the employees and train them by involving them in related activities. Hiring a conflict mediator may cost the organization but will prove to be effective when a person will be viewing the conflicts neutrally. However, the mediator must avoid daunting their cultural opinions on the conflicting parties.

In a multicultural company, I suggest that a conflict manager should be appointed, who may act as a mediator between the conflicting groups and resolve their disputes through dialogue. It is imperative that the two groups communicate and come to an agreement in relevance to their cultural considerations. Moreover, the mediator will work on their cultural sensitivity and how to respect the culture and traditions of other groups which will positively affect employees’ performance and maximize their capabilities in a diverse workplace. However, the conflict mediator should belong to a different culture than the conflicting groups in order to act and resolve the matters on a neutral ground (Prause & Mujtaba, 2015). It is recommended that the direct confrontations should be avoided and matters should be resolved in order to prevent desperate circumstances from arising.

In order to evaluate the success of suggested alternative, the following steps are advised:

1. Firstly, identify the conflict causing issues
2. In case of confusions and problems, look into the cultural dissimilarities
3. Resolve disputes through problem solving techniques and consider the cultural sensitivity
4. Work on the similarities and promote awareness regarding cultural sensitivity
5. Address the issues and propose a solution
6. Take feedback from the involved parties

I have learned the following concepts:

1. Intercultural conflicts
2. Workplace diversity
3. Ethnic and cultural differences
4. Intercultural communication
5. Conflict management
6. Cultural sensitivity

**References**

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