19.7: Diversity in Human Resources

Learning Outcomes

• Discuss how business benefit from diversity in the workforce

What Is Diversity?

diversity often generates controversy, confusion, and tension. What does it mean? Is it the same as affirmative action?

Workforce America! Managing Employee Diversity As a Vital Resource, does a good job of capturing the subjective nature of the term: Diversity is “otherness or those human qualities that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet present in other individuals and groups.” In other words, diversity can apply to anyone you perceive to be different from yourself. Dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to age, ethnicity, ancestry, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, religious beliefs, parental status, and work experience.[1]

How Businesses Benefit from Diversity

Innovation. It is widely noted that diverse teams lead to more innovative and effective ideas and implementations. The logic behind this is relatively simple. Innovative thinking requires individuals to go outside of the normal paradigms of operation, using diverse perspectives to reach new and creative thinking. A group of similar individuals with similar skills is much less likely to stumble across or generate new ideas that lead to innovation. Similarity can cause groupthink, which diminishes creativity.
**Localization.** Some theorize that, in a global marketplace, a company that employs a diverse workforce is better able to understand the demographics of the various consumer markets it serves, and is therefore better equipped to thrive in that marketplace than a company that has a more limited range of employee demographics. With the emerging markets around the world demonstrating substantial GDP growth, organizations need local talent to enter the marketplace and to communicate effectively. Individuals from a certain region will have a deep awareness of the needs in that region, as well as a similar culture, enabling them to add considerable value.

**Adaptability.** Finally, organizations must be technologically and culturally adaptable in the modern economy. This is crucial to reacting to competitive dynamics quickly and staying ahead of industry trends. Diversity fosters creative thinking and improved decision making through a deeper and more comprehensive worldview. A company willing to diversify draws from a larger talent pool and hires individuals with diverse skill sets. The value of this, particularly at the managerial level, is enormous.

**Practice Question**

https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...essments/14516

**Role of Human Resource Management**

- Hiring
- Promotion
- Compensation equality
- Training
- Employee policies
- Legal regulations
- Ensuring accessibility of important documents (e.g., translating human resource materials into other languages so all staff can read them)

**Challenges to Diversity**

- **Stereotypes.** One challenge of creating diversity is the biases individuals in the organization may have about others similar to or different from them. This is essentially a tendency to stereotype, which significantly narrows the worldview of the individuals within the organization.

- **Culture.** Managers must understand the customs and cultural norms of employees and ensure that they don’t violate important cultural rules. It is the role of the managers to change the existing organizational culture to one of diversity and inclusion.

- **Communication.** Whether via language or cultural signals, communication can be especially challenging in the interpersonal arena. Ensuring that all professionals (human resources, management, etc.) have access to resources for localizing or translating issues is a significant challenge in many situations. Poor cross-cultural communication can lead to employee misunderstandings or workplace inefficiencies.
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