

A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND USING DIVERSITY

Successfully managing diverse workforces requires the efforts of many people and the deployment of many resources. You as a manager may need help, or may be in a position to recommend professional interventions in your organisation, you may simply want to lobby for greater awareness of diversity and the tools to manage it. Culture is both conscious and subconscious and a part of people's identity, dealing with cultural differences can be both difficult to initiate and may unleash strong emotions once it starts to be addressed. Be prepared!

can be more effective and profitable than they would be if the differences did not exist. The bottom-line question for leaders and managers today is, "How do we create, sustain and direct a workforce and effectively manage an organisation in this diverse and global environment?" Diversity and globalism are two sides of the same coin. The diverse composition of today's workforce and the growing need for workers of every kind, makes people a treasured resource and requires us to pay attention to people's differences, characteristics and needs much more than we did in the past. Here is a partial list of differences among people where diversity efforts address. You may be able to add to the list from your own experience.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

Diversity work enables people of different origins and backgrounds not only to work together successfully, but also to value and take advantage of their differences. Their organisations

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(100-100)

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|--------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| • Age & generation | • Education | • Religion |
| • Ethnicity | • Social class /orientation | • Sexual preference |
| • Gender | • Regionality | • Marital status |
| • Language group | • Organisational background | • Political party |
| • Physical ability | • Profession | • Race |
| • Trade Union Membership | • Family structure & parent status | • Nationality |

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Equal opportunity and the law is not diversity. It is important and sometimes difficult, particularly in Ireland, to distinguish the larger field of diversity work from long standing equality concerns (equal employment and affirmative action, etc.) that constitute only a part of diversity. Your primary goal is not to simply have a visually diverse workforce, but a productive one.

WHAT KIND OF DIVERSITY WORK DO ORGANISATIONS REQUIRE?

While each organisation's workforce and environment will determine the answer to this question, there are three general categories into which diversity interventions tend to fall.

1. AWARENESS PROGRAMMES.

Programmes that help the organisation to become aware of, respect and positively value the diversity that exists within or around it. This includes awareness of cultural groups (including one's own), their values, behavioural tendencies and lifestyles. It may also involve raising consciousness about inequities and clearing up prejudices that inevitably occur when differing groups begin to work side-by-side or newcomers enter an organisation that is unfamiliar with them. Awareness programmes can range from top management briefings and retreats to international food days in the cafeteria. Awareness programmes are usually followed by trans-cultural skills training and/or organisational development interventions.

2. TRANS-CULTURAL SKILLS TRAINING.

Awareness of differences, needs to be complemented by appropriate changes of behaviour, which enable individuals and teams to work with each other more successfully. Many of these behaviours do

not come naturally to people even though they have become aware of how they are different from each other. There is usually a need for communication skills in which people learn how to speak and listen to each other across cultural boundaries more effectively. Communication skills and training may focus on interviewing, feedback, performance appraisals, motivation, selling and negotiating across cultures, conveying information and mediating disputes between people of backgrounds different from one's own, etc.

3. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION.

Every organisation has a culture all of its own, shaped by the people who founded it and form part of it. Each adds its own unique layer of in-company culture to the dominant national, regional and industry cultures in which it functions. When markets become more global and the nature of the workforce shifts, organisational structures, policies and culture must shift to accommodate the change. On its own, culture is conservative - it changes very slowly, thus special "transition management" interventions may be required to move the organisation into full effectiveness in the post-industrial work culture with all its diversity. You may find it necessary to create or reinterpret the organisational vision and mission, to examine motivational and reward systems for inconsistencies, and to ferret out unfair and dysfunctional institutional biases. As a result, all interventions, training or otherwise, must be an integral part of your organisation's long-term strategy. While short-term progress can be made, culture changes can often take months and years, not days.

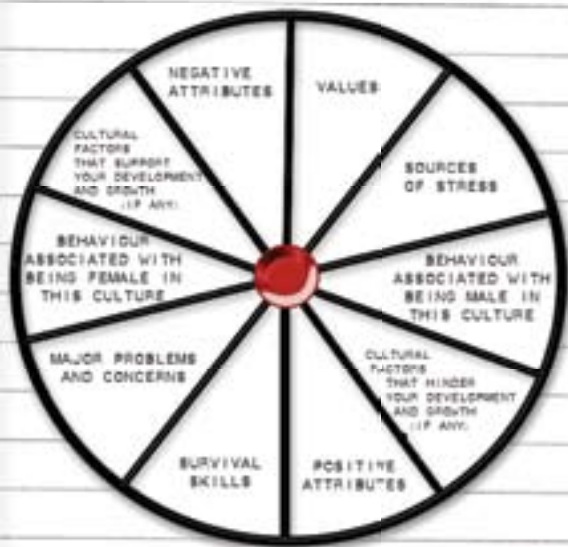
HOW DO I GET STARTED WITH A DIVERSITY PROGRAMME?

Most diversity work in organisations follows a four-stage pattern common to



many consulting and training interventions. Here is a brief summary of those steps with some specific issues raised by diversity.

CULTURE SPECIFIC ISSUES



1. NEEDS ASSESSMENT.

Depending on the size and scope of the task, this may be anything from a short series of meetings and interviews with individuals and focus groups to an extensive in-depth assessment with instrumentation designed for the situation. There are three things you can do yourself to conduct a needs assessment, or at least to get focused:

- You can ask people how they feel, not just one group, but a combination of management and workers, both the native born, minority groups and immigrants;
- You can also study your organisation's own records for information which suggests how diversity is playing itself out in problem areas, e.g., grievances and complaints, absenteeism, performance appraisals, promotions and disciplinary action, departures and outplacement reviews, etc.;
- Finally, you can look for yourself, i.e., spend time in the workplace and observe how it goes. What is the climate like? Who talks to whom and collaborates with whom? Who sticks together? Very few workplaces today are as overtly prejudiced as they were in the past, but spending time on the scene will usually give you a sense of what the problems are. OMT Group's Questions of Diversity assessment can be of assistance

should you decide to initiate the assessment phase of the diversity programme.

A good consultant will enable you to perceive your situation from several points of view. They enable you to see how your own cultural framework functions and perhaps limits you as you seek to define your diversity problem or challenge. And they are able to assist you with the "internal selling" of the project, enabling you to reach others in the organisation whose support is required to ensure success.

2. PROJECT DESIGN AND PILOT.

Your chosen consultant, in collaboration with you, produces a design or sequence of events and activities that are aimed at achieving the results that the needs assessment has found critical. This design is then customised to your organisation and is normally tested in a "pilot" programme.

3. IMPLEMENTATION, PROGRAMME DELIVERY AND ADMINISTRATION.

The tested programme or programmes are now implemented. To continue the programme developed, particularly if the intervention is a large one, the consultant may train and certify a client's internal trainers to facilitate the programme. In such cases they would troubleshoot and coach those new trainers to the work.

4. EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP.

What an organisation has learned and accomplished, particularly in the area of diversity, needs review and evaluation so that appropriate next steps can be identified, planned and ultimately taken in the ensuing cycle of interventions. A focused evaluation

can, in addition, cap and complete what has been accomplished. This gives all involved a sense of progress, ownership and empowerment as they look at their successes and celebrate together.

openness and flexibility in thought and action, "the agility factor." Tomorrow's successful organisations are those who have the ability to change based on the demands of its customers and society and who know that global awareness, supported by solid diversity skills, is key to leadership excellence and productivity.

IN SUMMARY

As always, the bottom line is effectiveness, which today can only be achieved by forms of situational management. In a diverse workforce this means training individuals to exercise considerable

"WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?"

- 24 REASONS IN FAVOUR OF DIVERSITY

- 1. Less Conflict between Employees**
Reduced employee conflict and tension mean less energy is diverted from work.
- 2. Managers Become More Effective**
The elimination of the diversionary and distorted spotlight on minorities liberates managers and supervisors to be more consistent, professional and performance-based in their relationship with, and evaluation of, employees.
- 3. Employees Are More Motivated**
Higher trust means more open opportunities for advancement. Witnessing organisational attitudes change increases employee incentive and initiative. More people are ready to take risks, and assume greater responsibility.
- 4. Morale Improves**
Increased camaraderie means better employee morale.
- 5. Teams Are More Successful**
Teamwork and collaboration can add to the individual effort.
- 6. Employees Become Participants**
Greater employee readiness to challenge old assumptions and the status quo.
- 7. Greater Employee Loyalty**
Greater loyalty to, and identification with, the organisation, because they develop a sense of inclusion, ownership and investment in the organisation's success.
- 8. Less Absenteeism Occurs**
A sense of being part of a cohesive team and valued for one's uniqueness decreases absenteeism and increases productivity.
- 9. Increased Cooperation**
People who know how to collaborate better will take steps to do so.
- 10. Fewer Lawsuits**
More loyalty to the organisation,
- the ability to air grievances and openness by the organisation to remedying employee concerns; all reduce the probability of general and discrimination-based litigation.
- 11. An Improved Recruitment and Promotion Policy**
Improved "talent radar" helps to more effectively recruit, train, assign, evaluate, mentor or coach, and promote the best.
- 12. Performance Can Become the Criterion for Success**
Changing the focus from diversity to innovation, productivity, effectiveness and unique contributions makes clear to employees that their productivity is the organisation's most important criteria for success.
- 13. More Suitable Job Assignments and Evaluations**
Reducing personal and professional stereotypes helps to more effectively match job descriptions with actual job functions, organisational needs, employee competencies and performance appraisals.
- 14. Savings in Training Costs**
Greater retention and reduced attrition save training Euros.
- 15. More Effective Training Programmes**
Diversity-aware trainers become more effective trainers, and develop training programmes with instructional strategies that motivate and more accurately meet diverse employee needs.
- 16. Improved Client Relations** Increased employee to employee sensitivity transfers into better relationships with clients, other colleagues and employees.
- 17. Greater Customer Loyalty**
The organisation's culturally aware policies and practices increase client or customer loyalty among diverse groups.
- 18. Better Access to Facts**
The data needed to successfully produce and complete effective plans are more objective and more empirically based.
- 19. More Information Is Shared**
People who accept and respect each other will be likely to embrace more open information sharing.
- 20. More Problems Get Solved**
Greater openness to creativity and alternative ideas and solutions improve problem-solving and overall productivity.
- 21. A Safer Working Environment**
Greater system-wide information sharing, improved cooperation, morale, organisational loyalty and teamwork positively help prevent accidents and improve the organisation's safety record.
- 22. Better Mentoring and Coaching**
Emphasising potential and performance, rather than style and diverse identity, supports a more effective mentoring and coaching process that better serves the need for new leadership resources.
- 23. More Commitment to Professional Growth**
The diversity training process emphasises personal and professional development, reinforces organisational norms of self-improvement and professional growth.
- 24. Upper Management Gets New Ideas**
When upper managers experience the diversity training change process, they are more willing to reevaluate basic assumptions in other areas, such as work teams, power sharing, marketing strategies, personnel supervision and productivity alternatives.