

Diversity Awareness

If you were born before the 1970's, you would have witnessed the demographic change that North America went through. Your neighbors were not all American anymore; your colleagues and superiors were no longer just Americans. Living and working in today's society requires each of us to become increasingly aware of the challenges of cultural changes.

What is Diversity Awareness?

Diversity awareness is about identifying and respecting differences that exist within your organization, and understanding how they affect your organization. Being aware of workplace diversity means that you view individual differences and behavior - be it a person's religion, culture or sexual orientation - as a benefit to your organization, rather than dismissing it as abnormal behavior or inappropriate. Diversity awareness helps us to appreciate that others are "not like us"; we stop complaining and instead learn to respect differences, and perhaps even embrace some of it ourselves.

Would a Muslim woman clad in black muslin be treated at par with other individuals in your company? Or would she be isolated? Are the people in your organization accepting of people with different sexual orientation, or do they treat them with hostility? If the answers to these questions do not satisfy you, diversity awareness is an issue that your organization must address in order to harness its true potential. Enhance problem-solving efficiency



Advantages of Diversity Awareness

Know your employees better

Employee diversity is like an undiscovered gold mine. Diversity brings with it a host of different skills, talents and ideas. Being aware of diversity in an organization helps you understand the potential that lies within it. Diversity awareness means that you identify and tap latent potential. For example, the more experienced employees in your organization may be suited best to tackle a certain type of work problem. If you are aware that you have employees who speak Italian, you can better satisfy your Italian customers' needs. Unless you make an assessment of your organization's diversity, you are likely to underutilize human resources accumulated within it.

Formulate Diversity policies

Diversity awareness is the first step for you to formulate your company's diversity policies. Every entrepreneur and business person understands that the success of organizational policies depends on policy-maker's ability to understand the organization properly. Without a strong foundation built on the knowledge of the diversity within your organization, diversity policies, training and goals will be less efficacious.

Improve communication

Being unaware of likely differences between two individuals is one of the key reasons for poor communication. Diversity awareness is a way to overcome miscommunications, confusion and lack of team work.

Foresee and avoid conflicts

The root of every conflict is difference. Not all differences within an organization can be monitored. However, it is within your power to manage conflicts that arise out of diversity issues within your organizations. Conflict can be ugly. It reduces individual, and ultimately company performance, leads to attrition and makes an organization less attractive in the eyes of prospective job-seekers. The deeper appreciation for people's differences, as learned through diversity awareness, can make employees better equipped to resolve their differences amongst themselves.

Practical Ways To Become Aware Of The Diversity In Your Workplace

Training is the key step for diversity awareness. There are very effective courses and programs available that can teach your employees the value of diversity.

- Your people make your organization. It is time that you got to know them better. Identify various factors on which employees can be classified. There are no hard and fast factors to go by, as each organization has a unique workforce. However, some common ones include age, gender, religion, nationality, education, marital status and sexual orientation.
- Have a clear understanding of how diversity in your organization is beneficial to you and your organization.
- Formulate sessions where employees at all levels are made aware of the diversity around them, using collected statistics and data. Take pride in, and encourage others to be proud of, being part of an organization that represents world populations and fosters a work environment for all with equal opportunities.
- Understand the effect that current and historic distrust has on inter-personal interactions. For example, because of the threat of terrorism on world security, a common negative phenomenon has been a change of attitude and increasing hostility towards Muslim employees in an organization. Your employees may need to be sensitized towards such issues.
- Diversity awareness is not just about difference. Recognize similarities among people in your organization and among people in general, irrespective of creed, customs and culture. Security, health, education of children, self-esteem, privacy and recreation, transcend all cultural and social boundaries. People understand each other most on these issues, and discussing the builds bonds and relationships.

- Create a diversity committee in your office, to create periodic theme events based on diversity. For example, your organization could celebrate the Chinese New Year, during which employees would have a chance to further understand and appreciate Chinese culture, cuisine and custom.
- Invite professional and community experts to talk about diversity to your employees.



About David McLaren, Ph.D.

David is a diversity specialist who speaks five languages. He brings a wealth of education and expertise to businesses and brilliantly helps companies increase their profits and productivity through diversity.

A highly sought-after keynote speaker, facilitator, and expert on diversity, inclusion, and multi-cultural issues, David consistently energizes, educates, and empowers his audiences.

Call today to book him for your next conference! **888.897.4224**

Helping you maximize diversity through connector,

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