“Diversity in the Workplace”

By

Ralph Ramirez, CCT, CEH
Certified in Leadership and Management
Certified Human Resource Generalist
Certified Corporate Trainer
Certified Continuing Education Instructor
Certified Executive Housekeeper
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rramirez.cct@gmail.com
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Introduction:

Our workplace is an ever-changing, ever-evolving environment. As business needs change so do the skills, competencies and attitudes of our workforce need to change in order to stay competitive.

It is estimated that by the year 2040 one half of the US population will be people of color representing various ethnic groups.

Understanding and embracing changes and diversity in the workplace can make a difference in how successful both you and your organization are going to be.

Diversity in the Workplace training is ideal for supervisors, team-leads, and employees at all levels who are interested in gaining a better understanding of what some of the challenges that a diverse workplace environment pose and provides suggestions for managing diversity.

Diversity Defined

What is Diversity? It’s those things that make us different. It can be described as our individual, group, or organizational differences that are based on race, color, religion,
national origin, gender, age, disabilities, physical appearance, sexual orientation, marital status, job title, or culture.

What impact does diversity have on our workplace?

It’s estimated that between 1990 and 2005, about 50 percent of new entrants to the workforce were women and ethnic groups such as African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians. At the same time those 55 and older make up about 15 percent of our entire workforce. It’s important to understand how these added dimensions affect performance, motivation, interaction with others, and ultimately success.

1. Stereotyping by placing an individual or group of individuals into a category which can then lead to discrimination. Illegal discrimination can place the organization and even individuals at a greater risk to lawsuits.
2. Ignoring diversity can lead to conflict in the workplace which leads to a loss in focus and ultimately decreased productivity.
3. On the positive side, embracing diversity can widen viewpoints, promote creativity and new ideas, and provide additional opportunities to increase a customer base.
4. Valuing individual differences leads to a greater acceptance of all viewpoints which reduces workplace conflict, stereotyping, illegal discrimination, and reduces the risk of lawsuits.

**Learning Point:** Diversity is “those things that make us different”

*Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended)*
1. Title VII: Although diversity itself is not legally mandated by any federal laws, title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the very embodiment of diversity in the workplace because it bans discrimination in employment.
   a. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a body of federal laws that protect the rights of different or diverse groups of people.
   b. Title VII, is the part of the Act that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.
   c. Title VII also created the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) which was established in 1965. The EEOC oversees and enforces laws against workplace discrimination.

The bill was called for by President John F. Kennedy in his civil rights speech of June 11th, 1963 however his assassination in late November 1963 threatened passage of the bill until his successor Lyndon B. Johnson supported and fought for bi-partisan support and in 1964 the bill was eventually signed into law.

EEOC laws have been amended to also make it unlawful to discriminate in employment decisions on the basis of age, disability, pregnancy, genetic information, and also make retaliation illegal.

Diversity in the workplace is not just a fairness issue, it is a legal issue.

**Learning Point: Title VII: “The very embodiment of diversity in the workplace”**

**Managing a Diverse Workforce**
Managing Diversity: Emphasizes an appreciation of differences in the workplace by recognizing that we all have something positive to contribute.

1. Test your assumptions before acting on them.
2. Get to know your co-workers.
3. Keep your viewpoints open to new opinions.
4. Examine your department or organization’s procedures and policies.
5. Take immediate action against potentially offensive comments, jokes, or behavior that disrespects people.
6. Solicit feedback from various diverse people.
7. Start a suggestion box.
8. Acknowledge and utilize different employee talents.
9. Work to resolve conflicts and consider employee perceptions.
10. Remember the golden rule and treat others the way you would like to be treated.
Multicultural Conflict Mediation Skills

Once conflict in the workplace happens it is important to apply conflict mediation skills in order to limit the severity of the possible negative affects to the individual, team, department or organization. Mediation requires a systematic process to better prepare to handle conflict.

Mediation Skills:
   a. Identify- is the problem people, performance, or attitude related.
   b. Insure communication is as effective as possible between all parties.
   c. Apply H.E.A.T model.
   d. Logic vs. emotion.
   e. Focus on the similarities and not the differences.
   f. Involve diverse individuals in problem resolution teams.
   g. Offer a compromise whenever possible.
   h. Use the sandwich technique when coaching.
   i. Address the behavior, not the person.

Learning Point: “Mediation requires a systematic process”
Diversity Training:

Diversity training is the process of educating managers and employees to successfully function in diverse environments.

The goal of diversity training should be to:

1. Emphasize the similarities between individuals at all levels of the organization.
2. Explain how diversity contributes to an organization by having a variety of views, approaches, and actions to strategic planning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

The training focus should be on:

1. Interpersonal skills- civility in the workplace.
2. Acceptable behavior- outlines what is and is not acceptable.
3. The work environment- how this relates to promoting the over-all vision of the organization.
4. Explanation of workplace laws directly affected by diversity.
Summary:

Workforce diversity is those things that make us different. Our workforce in the United States is becoming more diverse and understanding how to effectively define, comply with applicable laws, manage our resources, recognize and resolve multi-cultural conflict when it appears, and provide diversity training can improve our over-all effectiveness and ultimately our bottom line.

The challenge for all of us in today’s work environment is to not only perform our individual job duties to meet expectations, but to work together to meet all of the changing workplace expectations.
About the Presenter:

Ralph Ramirez currently works and resides in San Antonio, Texas. He has been employed by the Alamo Colleges in San Antonio, Texas, since 2003. He has over 25 years experience in leadership and management positions in the operations, support services, workforce training, and customer service environments.

In addition to his full-time job, Mr. Ramirez is a training consultant, presenter, and frequent guest-speaker at various venues that includes local, regional, national, and international conferences, work-shops and seminars.

Trained as an Instructional Systems Designer, Mr. Ramirez has authored, developed and presented training programs for various organizations.

Professional Certifications include:

Certified in Leadership and Management
Certified Human Resource Generalist
Certified Corporate Trainer
Certified Continuing Education Instructor
Certified Executive Housekeeper

For additional information contact: rramirez.cct@gmail.com