



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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A Globally Multicultural Outlook

Diversity recognizes existence of differences in a work force with regard to race, gender, physical ability, lifestyle, tenure, age, religion, geographic origin, education, attitude/behavior, functional expertise, and personality. A study of one of the Fortune 500 companies, a multi cultural organization, showed that implementing a multicultural policy gained immense popularity from its employees. The policy ensures that there are no discriminatory issues in an organization with regard an employee's nationality.

Diversity management is considered a new organizational paradigm. Companies have realized the need to move beyond a human resource model to a model with inherent value in a diverse workforce. Globalization has brought the 'diversity' factor into focus. Employers feel that diversity should be given significant importance since complications on such issues are unwarranted at work place.

Many Indian companies have expatriates occupying senior management positions and find it difficult to deal with the rest of the employees. Management should formulate anti discrimination policies to cater to such problems. To be a global player, it is imperative to have a diversity initiative program in place.

The Diversity Program

Dow Chemicals with plants and offices all over the U.S. was designated a multicultural organization. It made substantial progress towards 'inclusion'. It identified certain key areas, which influenced diversity initiatives.

Initiation and support from the top management

Dow Jones, an organization that has its offices all over the U.S., has an anti discriminatory policy, which focuses on serious commitment towards the diversity initiative. Though it was considered 'frivolous' for some, the top management's initiative made a big difference to employees across the board. Employees started taking the issue more seriously than before.

Another company with a good track record of diversity management is Xerox. The top management's objective was to convince employees that managing diversity was not an obligation but a business imperative.

Companies looking to tie up or acquire global companies should ensure that a diversity management policy is in place.

HR initiatives

Several inconclusive measures were made sub functions of the human resource department. A committee called '**The Preferred Employer Quality Action Team**' and comprised of a cross-section of managers at corporate headquarters spearheaded policies. The team identified five categories for improvement: overall compensation, employment security, operating environment/culture, policies and values, and personal dimensions. It



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was believed that these areas affected employee satisfaction and were derived from general attributes that the company hoped to achieve.

Organizational communication

Employee involvement in HR policy making was the highest point of the diversity initiative the organization could have come up with. The Equality Council comprising of a cross-section of employees met once a month to discuss issues related to a diverse workforce. Membership rotated every two years.

Suggestions ranging from a diversity booth at the Family Day Picnic to offering discrimination refresher training sessions, preparing guidelines during performance appraisals, and creating an anonymous suggestion box titled "Dr. Equality" were conceived by this council.

The council also designed posters, calendars, and coffee mugs to promote the diversity theme. Employees collectively determined policies at work and could express disgruntlement with existing policies through the council. The HR manager moderated the discussion.

The council also helped design yearly employee opinion surveys. Diversity progress at plants within the organization was highlighted in an annual corporate diversity conference. The in-house and corporate newsletters encouraged employee involvement and helped to transmit the diversity message.

The organization had a corporate philosophy governed by diversity policies. The standardization of policies was in accordance with the desire to create a stronger organizational unity and identity among the employees. These policies created a "sense of linkage" and a feeling of unity by having a common cause.

A true commitment to diversity encompasses a variety of measures over a period of time. Creating a climate of acceptance requires major, systematic, and planned change efforts, which are typically not part of affirmative action plans. Efforts to address managing diversity must be supported by profound changes that are reflected in the day-to-day operation.