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The Best Foot Forward!

The corporate world is expanding and shrinking at the same time. This is a self-contradictory statement, yet it crisply states the essentials of today's global economy. While on the one hand, the business world is expanding to accommodate various diversities and cultures, on the other it is shrinking as a result of diminishing geographical boundaries.

The corporate fraternity has borne the challenge of managing workplace diversity by gracefully accepting the differences among employees from various nationalities. However, identifying and accepting differences is the first step towards managing diversity. The purview of diversity management goes beyond friendly co-existence of employees from different backgrounds. The crux lies in building a global corporation that effectively communicates a common set of values to people from all nationalities.

A corporate culture that preaches a common set of principles and values is critical in establishing a diversity-friendly workplace. One US-based software firm, for instance, generates sixty percent of its revenue from employees based offshore. The software firm attributes its success with diversity to its philosophy of consistently building on a global corporate culture. It has a common template for business execution and workplace policies across its global offices.

The process of formulating a global culture is complex and is benchmarked on four components. These components form the basis of a global culture that can be used by any firm irrespective of its business. However, organizations can alter the component prerequisites to suit their business needs.

Global culture-components

Effective communication

The exercise of framing common values and principles to leverage diversity and its objectives can work if it's communicated effectively to people concerned. The software company mentioned above, for instance, has successfully instituted a communication channel to deliver the principles that govern its corporate culture world over. There, the corporate culture is based on three core principles - character, commitment and competence. Their implementation of the three principles represents 'practice what you preach' philosophy. Since the headquarters issues the charter of values, the management ensures that the employees posted at the headquarters first demonstrate their commitment to these principles in their daily work. Only then these values can be communicated to the regional and international operations.

Besides this, they have also adopted a literary character, Don Quixote, as the unofficial mascot of its values. This character embodies the same values that their organization represents.



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The organization has also been successful in conveying its working philosophy to all its employees globally. They have also borne the wrath of certain critics for being non-accommodating and insensitive to certain cultural differences. However, they have moved on, taking criticism in its stride. It believes that compromising on cultural imperatives would sabotage its global approach.

Spanning the globe

In addition to effective communication of principles and values, companies must conduct global meetings intermittently, to reinforce its working philosophy. The software company, for instance, has instituted a global employee recognition program. Under this program, they recognize the contribution of employees globally in a common forum. This greatly motivates employees since it gives them a platform to prove their metal. Annually at least ten percent of the total workforce is rewarded for their commitment to corporate values. Winners are given diamond studded gold rings and with each award a diamond gets added to the ring.

Apart from recognizing employee efforts on a global platform, they also hold annual conferences to discuss global expansion plans, management practices and change management initiatives.

Think globally, act locally

As clichéd as the saying may sound, thinking globally and acting locally is a foolproof strategy for companies with worldwide operations. The software company has been very tactful and deliberate in managing its global leadership. They have wisely learned from its past mistakes. Their first principle for global leadership is never to pull out people from headquarters to man regional operations. Most companies have tried and failed at their attempt to get an experienced head at their local locations. The second principle for global operations is never to run the regional offices like an extension of the headquarters. There, the regional operations are decentralized units sharing common culture and values with the headquarters.

Constant peer-peer communication

Apart from sharing a common set of values and principles, employees across locations share information, knowledge and concerns. The software company provides its employees with facilities such as video conferencing, computerized white boarding and shared collaboration software that enables people to share and exchange information.

Communication can be crowned as the “chief” concern among companies that are dealing with the challenges of a diverse workplace. This case study provides an insight into how companies can capitalize on their global reach without being irreverent towards any culture or nation.