

Diversity in the workplace

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity exists in many types. It could be there on account of age, career experience, color, communication style, culture, disability, educational level or background, employee status, ethnicity, family status, function, gender, language, management style, marital status, national origin, organizational level, parental status, physical appearance, race, regional origin, religion, sexual orientation, thinking style, speed of learning and comprehension, etc. In the era of globalization, when MNCs prefer to take advantage of multi-location facilities, lower costs of production, expertise from the world over, diversity is bound to be there at the workplace. It is for the organization to manage the diversity by recognizing, appreciating, valuing, encouraging and utilizing the unique talents and contributions of individuals from across a wider spectrum of society. But circumstances sometimes create peculiar conditions which brings to the fore the inherent weaknesses prevalent in our society. There are rules and regulations which provide broad guidelines for keeping a delicate balance in dealing with such matters so that mutual harmony is maintained amongst the workforce. The guiding principle behind this thought is that the world is a rich and diverse place, full of interesting cultures and people who should be treated with respect. Skirmishes arising out of ‘discriminatory’ behavior often result in tensions amongst colleagues. Though there are federal laws in place, but it is the human character and nature which has to do the implementation part.

One such incident recently took place in a corporate office of a multinational company located on the 4th floor of a multistory office complex. Since the complex more than one office, so there are many employees working for

different companies. On a Friday afternoon, when a young executive of one such company was working her way to get into her car, she had a peculiar experience, which highlighted the inherent fear is us. As she swiped her car card inside the garage, she found a tall guy speedily approaching her from behind. When she noticed him, she was scared and hurriedly sat into the car and started the car. But thereafter the lady gathered some courage and as she passed the tall man, she asked him the reason for his being at the place and asked him to furnish his id proof. The incident would appear to be a trivial one, but it became a big issue, hotly discussed in the corridors of the office complex and the media. Reason, the lady happened to be a ‘ white’ lady while the gentleman was a ‘ black’ American. The incident took racial overtones and the black gentleman complained in his office about the ill-treatment meted out to him. He questioned the very motive for being asked for the id proof. His contention – he was being insulted and discriminated against for his being ‘ black’.

This incident highlights two basic issues;

One, howsoever hard we may try to appear as liberal; there remains an element of presumption in most of us. In this incident, perhaps the lady got scared more because she noticed the tall ‘ black’ man running towards her. And just to show that she is not scared, she asked for the identity proof from the gentleman. Similarly, the ‘ black’ gentleman too lodged a formal complaint, perhaps only because he encountered the ‘ white’ lady, and took it as a discriminatory policy, when the lady asked for his identity card.

Secondly, the media might not have taken any note of it, had it not been a case of ‘ black’ Vs ‘ white’. Even for that matter we might not be discussing

it, had it been an all white affair.

Organizations need to handle such issues with utmost caution, without allowing them to flare up in big controversies. Diversity consists of visible as well as non-visible factors, which require to be handled with care. Harnessing these differences (diversity) is bound to create a productive environment in the organization in which everybody feels valued, their talents are fully utilized and organizational goals are met Therefore, the way to place this on the corporate agenda is to see the concepts as providing both tangible as well as intangible benefits, besides being socially and morally right.