

# Workforce diversity management: the art of effective communication

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Diversity is defined as "recognizing, appreciating, valuing, and utilizing the unique talents and contributions of all individuals"; regardless 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.

(Cross, p. 4) Diversity matters to every single one of us. Not only is there diversity of race and culture, but there is also diversity in religion, political view, age, financial class and more. By valuing diversity, recognizing, welcoming, and cultivating differences among people, we can develop unique talents and be effective members of the society. However, with diversity also comes misunderstanding, impatience, quick judgment and prejudice, therefore I had to learn not to form biased opinions based on my religious and cultural beliefs.

"Culture is the totality of values, beliefs, and behaviors common to a large group of people. A culture may include shared language and folklore, communication styles, and ideas and thinking patterns—the "truths" accepted by members of the group. Members of a culture have similar expectations of life." (Cross, p. 48). Because each of us is different, we see and interpret behavior through our own cultural filter. Diversity impacts me the most is at my workplace. I work in an organization that consists of a large diverse group.

According to Daft (2004), " Managing diversity is more than simply acknowledging differences in people. It involves recognizing the value of differences, combating discrimination, and promoting inclusiveness. Today's work force is becoming dramatically more diverse. Corporate leaders realize that creating an effective work place requires a commitment to increased mutual respect and appreciation among employees. " (p. 471). Although the existence of diversity in the workplace is now widely recognized in organizations throughout the world, it is too often viewed only in terms of legal compliance.

Because of my background, diversity provides a step-by-step approach to removing barriers between people. One of the concepts I have learned is to address the existence of differences in my workplace in a positive way and learn how to leverage the individuality of all team members creating a more cooperative and pleasant work environment. It has given me the tools to increase creativity among employees and improve problem solving. The issue of diversity and multi-culturalism is now a matter of importance for many businesses in the United States.

It is important that employers take into consideration the impact multi-cultural diversity can have on both the employees and harmony of the workplace. Introducing diversity training can help companies and organizations with their multi-cultural diversity issues in the workplace. These training programs and seminars should primarily aim to provide either an overview of multi-cultural issues in the workplace and/or to provide insight into a particular religion, race or nationality.

The causes of cultural diversity Most people work and live in familiar environment, in the surroundings we were brought up or places similar to this. Accordingly, people that we meet, work with and entertain, are similar to us, due to the fact that they have the same ethnic context, similar viewpoints and religion, the same framework of values, and the same language, that we speak. The experts describe it with the notion of “inhabiting a culturally homogeneous space”. (Hoerder)

Despite life in familiar surroundings is usual for the majority of people, there are some exceptions to the rule. Since the beginning of the humankind history, there were many groups of people or individuals that moved to foreign countries for multiple purposes – for work, getting education, teaching someone, to entertain or just to change the place of residence. Diaries of the most famous travelers, such as Christopher Columbus and Marco Polo are full of descriptions devoted to what the scientists now call “ culture contact”. (Hoerder)