

Inside the multicultural workforce essay



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Today the American workforce is made of many cultures and backgrounds. According to Koegel, Donin, Ponterotto, and Spitz, (1995) “ Undeniably, the United States has one of the most ethnically and racially diverse workforces of any nation” (p. 14). With the increasing multicultural workforce at Worldwide Telecommunications Inc, the potential for effective teamwork and communications maybe compromised by large diversity. Large corporations can capitalize on its potential by understanding the effects that a multicultural workforce has on its culture.

Teamwork and employee involvement is an essential part of developing positive work relationships among peers. Communication within a large company is vital for success. Success of a large company depends on an effective work relationship to meet a common goal; and achieving an affective workforce requires teamwork, employee involvement, communication, and work relationships. Companies must understand the effects of a multicultural workforce on teamwork and communications. Change of any kind can cause a potential barrier for success.

Over the next few years, the expectation of the changing nature of the workforce inside Worldwide Telecommunications is major expansion.

With these changes, the company foresees many challenges to arise, such as challenges in areas such as communication, teamwork, and employee involvement. In order for change to be effective inside of Worldwide Telecommunications, every member of the company needs to work in collaboration with one another. The most important thing to remember while

collaborating is that the company is undergoing a change in culture not in work procedures.

To grasp the concept of cultural diversity it is important to understand the basic dimensions of culture diversity.

“ Diversity is about learning from others about dignity and respect for all, and about creating workplace environments and practices that encourage learning from others and capture the advantage of diverse perspectives” (Susan Woods, pg. 2, 2010). Worldwide Telecommunications will have success by delivering the basic knowledge of cultural diversity throughout the company. One of the most critical differences in a diverse culture environment that may cause an incident is the language barrier.

Research has shown that when working in a diverse population language is the most common problem.

The need for communication in different cultures and language pose a barrier for a diverse company to succeed (Greenberg, 2004). Another critical difference within the company would be the different in cultural beliefs. The company needs to be conscious and aware that not all cultures celebrate nor believe in the same things. By acknowledging this, the threat of discrimination would be at its low. “ Ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion, lack of teamwork, and low morale” (Greenberg, pg. , 2004).

Communication comes in many forms, which includes verbal, nonverbal, formal, and informal. Good and effective communication is a vital for the

success of Worldwide Telecommunications. Mainly because communication is the way, all information is distributed and channeled. Additionally, effective communication is the way individuals build relationships and the way they establish the foundation for trust. This is especially true in a multicultural workforce because in a multicultural workforce, cultural differences and backgrounds can affect the communication process in a large way.

A multicultural workforce presents many barriers and challenges because not all cultures communicate the same way or have the same meaning in its communication.

In an interview conducted with Sharma, a former Human Resources Administrator for AT&T Communications, Sharma stated, "A successful multicultural workforce requires sensitivity for all cultures, tolerance, and a true understanding of effective verbal and non-verbal communication" (personal communication, July 1, 2010). Different cultures have different meanings to gestures, eye contact, and even use of personal space.

For example, in the Japanese culture, it is disrespectful to touch; bowing is the customary form of a handshake. Another example is the Muslim culture, women wear head wraps, long sleeves, and pants because they cannot show their head, arms, and legs to anyone but her husband.

Having a good understanding of cultural differences in communication can avoid conflict and misunderstanding in any organization. Misinterpretations can cause a hostile environment and affect the productivity of teamwork. Therefore, it is important for Worldwide Communications to create an

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awareness and tolerance for all cultural backgrounds. Establishing the boundaries for respect, acceptance, and humility will ensure a productive organization and avoid legal problems such as lawsuits and fines” (N. M. Sharma, personal communication, June 28, 2010).

Another sure way to achieve effective multicultural communication is to maintain an open line of communication and through feedback. Giving and receiving feedback is extremely important in the communication process. Feedback creates an opportunity to ask for clarification when a communication is not clear and it allows the sender to test for understanding of and to avoid misunderstandings or conflict.

It also identifies areas of opportunity for future training focus and improvement of the organization. This is essential and an advantage in the global communications market for Worldwide Communications. However, teamwork is also necessary to achieve success.

Teamwork and employee involvement in a cultural diverse work environment is important for corporations to meet goals in a productive work environment. Teamwork occurs when every member on the team is working together to reach a common goal.

Team members of diverse backgrounds can learn and teach one another different skills and strengthen weakness through diverse cultural experiences. Teaming is all about an open mind to suggestions and feedback in the form of constructive criticism. Constructive criticism may seem as a cultural attack if misinterpreted. “ By working and explaining issues to others, we clarify our understanding of a given topic, strengthen our ability

to organize our thoughts, develop our ability to think through problems, and learn to better articulate that thinking process to others” Harris & Sherblom, 2008).

Although not all team members may have the same culture view perspective, respecting and embracing all team members’ perspectives is critical. Members of a team can agree to disagree in a respectful manner. Members within a team should avoid personal attacks and always keep the goal of the company as the priority. Agreement before goal setting is necessary to ensure that every member of the team is contributing to the company’s success guidelines and deadlines. Having an agenda and delegating duties can be productive for successful participation of team members.

Motivation and helping others can encourage members to contribute to the team’s success.

Employees should set realistic goals and timelines to ensure completion of the delegated tasks. When working in diverse teams the leader will need to consider barriers that may prohibit a member of the team at reaching goals. Barriers could include religious observances, men and women collaborations, or differences in gender preferences. These barriers can cause Worldwide Telecommunications to lose valuable input from an employee because of cultural and diverse differences.

Having all members working as a team with valuable input is important for the team to succeed.

Developing effective work relationships intend to help supervisors and managers understand, appreciate and lead employees who may look, speak, act and behave differently from what they have been accustomed. The main objectives of managing a multicultural workforce include awareness education, and positive recognition of the differences among people in the workplace. To demonstrate respect for the other people's background, federal mandates require equal treatment regardless of race, sex, religion, national origin, and age.

In a multicultural workforce, there are many culturally issues. Some of the cultural issues are age, authority figures and hierarchy, body language and personal space, dress and personal hygiene, gender, time and punctuality. No single resource that can entirely deal with all these issues; however, a few seem to stand out in most multicultural workforce and demand immediate attention: new employee orientation, language, and religion.

An increase in the workforce consists of women, minorities, and immigrants that speak different languages. They have various customs and approaches in workforce.

The population is growing older, requiring different age groups with different generational values to work together. The government has been affecting welfare recipients, which will mean more low-income people will have to seek employment in jobs that they are not prepared.

In addition, the release of ex-offenders back into society. Therefore, the above-mentioned populations need some respect in society regardless of

their backgrounds. Identifying areas of common interest to develop rapport is important to all successful communications and in business.

Rapport is the most important process in influencing others to maintain relationships. Rapport will help to achieve a willing agreement to accomplishments.

By having excellent rapport with others, create harmonious relationships based on trust and understanding of mutual needs. Without rapport the chances of getting unconditional agreement to ideas and suggestions, full commitment from others, business, promotion, and friends will reduce (Farrington, n. d.). “ Cross-cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way that minimizes misunderstandings and maximizes the potential to create strong cross-cultural relationships” (Payne, pg 2.

, n. d.). Using cross-cultural communication skills in speaking English is one of the most divisive issues in a diverse workgroup.

Some employees get upset, building resentments and animosity toward one another affects productivity and relationships. Some suggestions have been made to communicate is to develop ways to communicate with limited English-speaking staff. For example to make it visual by using pictures, signs, diagrams, and symbols to spell out and clarify work rules, safety tips, break time, and so forth.

Additionally, leading by example can demonstrate and help get the message across. For example, the person can demonstrate how to do a task, do it together, and let the person do it on his or her own.

Try to use their language by learning to translate to English or vice versa. Take it easy to help the person to understand exactly is the communication (Vaughn-Lee, n. d.). The success and productivity in any organization relies heavily on effective communication. In a multicultural workforce, cultural differences can affect communication in a large way.

Individuals of different cultures tend to function on their own beliefs and values; therefore, Worldwide Communications must adapt and accept all cultural differences. Yet, communication is not only in verbal form but also can be non-verbal through written communication and body language. To build a more productive workforce,