

# Strategy to increase diverty in the organization



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## **Problem Identification**

The major problem, in this case, is increasing diversity and inclusion at X-Tech's Japanese subsidiary, wherein only 5% of the employees were a foreigner (i. e. non-Japanese) and only about 30% of the workforce were women (Clausen & Kruise, 2015). The workplace conditions that required improvement at X-Tech were recruitment, employee development, retention, work-group community, and marketing so that the proportion of female employees increased, every employee irrespective of their unique style was respected and accepted, and they could all fully demonstrate their capabilities.

## **Identify the Causes of the Problem**

There were both external and internal causes of relatively low diversity and inclusion at X-Tech's Japanese subsidy, and a general shortage of working age employees in Japan. The external causes were demographic factors such as a stagnation in the economy, a rapidly ageing population that was posing

several challenges to the nation, a birth rate which had reached the lowest ever recorded levels so far, and low female participation in the workplace evident from the country's poor score on the same in OECD statistics. The causes that were internal to the organization included a focus on harmony and putting their own group (i. e. Japanese employees) first; and a tendency of letting employment conditions be greatly influenced by the norms of Japanese society. For instance, the long working hours within the company dissuaded female employees from joining the organization, whereas low awareness among female employees about the assistance or training courses available to them for helping advance their careers within the company resulted in lesser women managers at X-Tech.

The main cause for the low diversity and inclusion at X-Tech's Japanese subsidiary started when the organization was formed, and its leaders brought into the organizational beliefs, values, and norms that were deeply rooted in Japan's collectivist and masculine society (Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly, & Konopaske, 2009). Hence, these problems were not new but instead issues that were common in almost all organizations in Japan.

Moreover, the gender gap existed not just in the Japanese subsidy of the company, but in its subsidies all over the world. However, the issues related to diversity were not observed in the US or the UK, it was particular to Japan and the rest of Asia. Therefore, the organization should have been undertaking active measures to increase diversity and inclusion by improving workplace practices and policies, such as reducing working hours and increasing awareness among female employees about the assistance or training courses available to them for helping advance their career. Yet, it

has failed to do so. This is because the antecedents of the problem were actually the key elements of the Japanese culture itself, which included aspects such as a male dominance in the society, a tendency to exclude those who were different from them, as well as a practice among women to leave their jobs upon marriage to raise children and return when they became older.

### **Alternative Solutions**

The first solution that X-Tech can undertake is to support female employees include the provision of career sessions so that they are clear about their advancement at the present workplace, and creating a working environment that is favorable for new mothers. The latter may involve measures such as providing a parent network so that new parents may connect and help each other to resolve similar workplace issues, distributing regular emails and newsletters so that employees who are on maternity and childcare leave may be kept in the loop. Further, similar to Rakuten, X-Tech can also design and build a Mother's Room (comfortable and private in-house child care center and nursing area) in the office premises to support mothers returning to work after maternity leave (Rakuten, 2019). The advantages of these measures are that it will firstly ensure that the career paths of female employees are not affected by life-stage changes; and secondly, it will encourage new mothers to return to full-time work soon after their maternity leave. However, the disadvantages of this solution are that although it will help retain existing female employees, it will not be sufficient for minimizing the gender gap entirely. Moreover, this solution will not be effective unless it is supported by other positive changes in the work environment, such as

policies that focus on creating a work-life balance and flexible work arrangements for female employees.

The second solution is to host corporate events focused on increasing diversity in the workplace. For instance, X-Tech can host a ' Diversity Week' similar to that held by Sony Global, wherein seminars, workshops, and panel discussion are conducted by employees from different ethnic and generational backgrounds to discuss the diversity and inclusion related issues that they face in the workplace (Sony, 2019). The advantage of these measures is that it will help bring people close to each other irrespective of their diverse backgrounds. It will also enable employees to understand the various values of their colleagues based on different viewpoints and experiences. However, employees may not become culturally sensitive simply by attending these events and choose to hold on to their prejudices and intolerance.

The third solution is to undertake an initiative for making English the official company language. This is also a step that is designed in support of workplace diversity, which is inspired by the ' Englishnization' initiative adopted by Rakuten to make it easier for employees to communicate with each other irrespective of their nationality or origin (Rakuten, 2019). The advantage of this measure is that it will help X-Tech to exponentially expand its pool of potential hires from only those who can speak Japanese to over 1 billion people who speak English worldwide. Resultantly, the percentage of foreign (non-Japanese) employees in its workforce will grow both significantly and organically. However, this initiative is not by itself sufficient to increase diversity and inclusion at the workplace, since it requires the implementation

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of cross-cultural training as well. The letter will help in promoting a constructive understanding of cultural differences between employees in addition to better facilitating communication.

## **Selection of the Best Alternative**

The best solution, in this case, is to implement the first alternative, i. e. to create a workplace environment that is supportive for female employees. The reason for this is that the gender gap in X-Tech's Japanese subsidiary is quite significant, and reducing it will drastically improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace. It will also enable the company to retain existing female employees, secure a future talent pool of women employees in face of a shrinking workforce, as well as ensure that more female employees are facilitated into managerial roles. The increase in diversity created at X-Tech, as a result, an increase in female employees will subsequently pave the way for greater inclusivity for other ethnic groups and minorities in the workplace.

## **Implementation Steps**

The primary steps that should be undertaken to implement a ' Gender Equality Action Plan' (adopted from Shiseido's initiatives for supporting women's empowerment at the workplace) include setting the implementation period from April 1st, 2019 to March 31st, 2020; and ascertaining the target as increasing the number of (i) female employees by twofold and (ii) females in managerial positions by threefold. Following this, the actions that will be undertaken are (adapted from Toyota Global):

- Action 1 - Maintain a hiring rate for female graduates (Administrative: 30%; Technical: 10%).
- Action 2 - Providing support to female employees so that they can maintain a balance between work and childcare by promoting the participation of male employees in childcare (paternity leave) and creating/expanding a teleworking system (flexible work arrangements).
- Action 3 - Creating a workplace environment that enables them to make an early return to work from maternity leave by offering a Mother's Room and promoting the use of subsidy for child care cost.
- Action 4 - Developing career awareness and systematic personnel training so that female managerial appointment can be undertaken from an early stage (holding female-oriented roundtable discussion, group exchange meetings) (Toyota, 2018).

Following the implementation of these steps, X-Tech should monitor the progress of the Gender Equality Action Plan on a quarterly basis by conducting gender breakdown reports. If the company finds that the quarterly targets are not being met, then precautionary meetings need to be arranged among the managerial team to brainstorm determine the reasons for failure and possible solutions. Assistance can be procured from the human resource department of the company to ensure hiring and managerial training targets for female employees are met.

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