Best practices in promoting workplace diversity business essay

United States has been experiencing an increase in diversity throughout the years. Employees as well as consumers are becoming more diverse in organizations. Further, with technology advancements and globalization, diversity is an important issue each organization must acknowledge. Literature about workplace diversity gives recommendations about the best practices to achieve and manage workplace diversity. This paper will address the various definitions of diversity as well as provide recommendations in order for organizations to manage workplace diversity effectively.

Definition(s) of Diversity

The definition of diversity has been controversial with researchers. Some researchers use a broad definition whereas others use a very specific definition when using the term diversity. Kreitz (2008), states that" many current writers define diversity as any significant difference that distinguishes one individual from another" such as race and age. The U. S Department of Commerce and Vice President Al Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government Benchmarking Study (2010) states that " diversity includes all characteristics and experiences that define each of us as individuals" in which is described in two dimensions. The first dimension, the primary dimension, includes " race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, and sexual orientation" (U. S. Dept. of Commerce, 2010, Ch. 1). The second dimension, the secondary dimension, includes " communication style, work style, organizational role/level, economic status, and geographic origin" (U. S. Dept. of Commerce, 2010, Ch. 1). See Appendix A for the " 2008 EEO-1 National Aggregate Report" which provides statistics of various aspects of diversity in the workplace although it is limited and does not

include all dimensions. All of these dimensions must be considered while promoting the best practices in order to achieve workplace diversity.

Best Practices in Promoting Workplace Diversity

The majority of workplace diversity researchers can agree on the overall best practices to promote workplace diversity. The following is the overall list which has been concluded in which each will be addressed individually:

1. Top leadership commitment

2. Diversity as part of an organization's strategic plan

3. Diversity linked to performance

4. Measurement

5. Accountability

6. Succession planning

7. Recruitment

8. Employee involvement

9. Diversity training

Top Leadership Management

Top leadership management of an organization plays an important role to the overall organization as they set examples for others to follow. The top management in an organization must show commitment that they want to

initiate diversity management within the company. This commitment could consist of time as well as the resources needed to accomplish the diversity. Leaders create the change within their organizations inspiring employees. Top management can communicate diversity practices to the organization a variety of ways such as policy statements, meetings, speeches, newsletters, and websites. If the top management is serious about diversity, it sends a clear message to the organization of just how serious it is. One organization created an " Office of Diversity" in order to promote diversity efforts (U. S. Dept. of Commerce, 2010). The Diversity Office works directly with human resources of the organization and should have representatives throughout the company in order to achieve the ultimate goal. Therefore, diversity is addressed in every aspect of the organization. Diversity starts with top leadership management but it also includes employees. Employees need diversity management in order to " better serve their customers, increase employee satisfaction, and meet the needs of diverse communities" (U. S. Dept. of Commerce, 2010, Ch. 2).

Commitment is very important in order for diversity management to occur in a workplace whether it is from management or employees themselves. Commitment is reflected in several ways according to Cox (1994):

1. The commitment of resources to the effort

2. Inclusion of managing diversity as a component of the business strategy of the organization.

3. A willingness to change (if necessary) corporate wide human resource management practices such as performance appraisal and compensation systems.

4. A willingness to keep mental energy and financial support focused on this objective for a period of years, rather than months or weeks.

5. Establishment of valuing diversity as a core value of the firm that receives the same priority as other core values such as safety, integrity, and total quality (p. 230-232).

Leadership is the first step towards diversity management in organizations. If top management (CEOs, heads of organizations, diversity officers, etc) is committed to the efforts, it shows just how much the organization is trying to establish the best practices to promote diversity. By creating the vision as well as being personally involved, leaders can lead by example.

Diversity in the Strategic Plan

A diversity strategy and plan should be in the organization's strategic plan in order to promote diversity in the workplace. In Kreitz's (2008) article, " Best Practices for Managing Organizational Diversity", " an organization must develop a strategic plan which includes the following six elements in order to promote diversity":

1. " A compelling analysis of the business case identifying diversity's advantage(s) for the organization".

2. " Recommendations for involving all employees in the diversity effort".

3. " Institutionalization of the diversity initiative through an office or individual responsible for the strategic plan at the executive level".

4." Clearly defined goals tied to the gaps found through the diversity audit and the business goals".

5. " Diversity metrics to track progress toward those goals".

6. " Accountability metrics that hold managers responsible for meeting diversity goals" (p. 104).

Putting diversity management in the organization's strategic plan is beneficial for a company overall. Further, having an organization include diversity management in the strategic plan can eliminate some problems within the organization such as cuts when funds are tight. One organization, " built its diversity plan upon its core values of respect for the dignity of the individual, integrity, trust, credibility, continuous improvement, and personal renewal" (U. S. Dept.. of Commerce, 2010, Ch. 3). Another organization strategic plan was designed to provide a connection between the " vision" for diversity management and what was needed in order to accomplish that vision (U. S. Dept. of Commerce, 2010, l Ch. 3). " The first requirement was to define diversity and diversity management and once that was established, the definitions were used to form the foundation of the organization's diversity policy, vision statement, and strategic plan" (U. S. Dept. of Commerce, 2010, Ch. 3). Some elements included in the strategic plans were goals of the company as well as educational training for diversity in order to show effectiveness in the end. Overall, the strategic plan should incorporate

diversity management so that the organization has set guidelines in order for diversity management to be effective.

Diversity Linked to Performance

Diversity management literature has shown to produce productivity and innovation (GAO, 2005). With a more diverse workplace, organizations can expand their business to a wide variety of consumer's therefore increasing productivity. Literature has further stated that, " fostering a more diverse and inclusive workplace could help organizations reduce costs by reducing turnovers, increasing employee retention across demographic groups, and improving morale" (GAO, 2005, p. 10). Tony Martorano, vice president of Coral Springs Auto Mall, stated that " Employees are more productive and loyal if they feel their company genuinely cares about different points of view and has its heart in the right place and companies that are active in their communities are seen by their consumers as companies that care" (Frogameni, 2010). Diversity is important to some employees and they are more productive with companies in which they feel comfortable with.

Measurement

Measurement according to the GAO (2005, p. 10) is " a set of quantitative and qualitative measures of the impact of various aspects of an overall diversity program." An organization should keep track of data on the workplace to evaluate the efforts and effectiveness of diversity management. Organizations can keep track of the " return they receive on investments in such areas of diversity training and recruitment to evaluate the progress they are making in these efforts (quantitative)" (GAO, 2005, p.

11). Organizations can also use " qualitative data they receive from interviews, focus groups, and surveys to identify employee perceptions" (GOA, 2005, 11). This can be done by asking questions to employees in areas of climate, organizational commitment, promotions, job satisfaction, supervision, and performance evaluations (GAO, 2005). This should be done at least on a yearly basis in order to involve employees in diversity programs and make changes where needed. Once again, both management and employees are an important aspect of diversity including in the measurement of the progress.

Accountability

Accountability is another way to promote workplace diversity. Managers at all levels are made responsible for diversity in their organizations as well as evaluate the progress made towards promoting diversity to and within the organization (GAO, 2005, p. 13) Specific objectives must be met in order to make accountability concrete. First is to identify the specific conditions that define accountability for managing diversity and second is to identify why achieving genuine accountability seems so elusive in organizational change efforts for diversity competency (Cox & Beale, 1997). Different organizations can address these conditions differently such as include it in business plans, do a variety of tasks, as well as analyze accountability within the organization. Managers are ultimately responsible for their organization and their diversity efforts so they are accountable in promoting effective diversity efforts.

Succession Planning

" Succession planning is a comprehensive, ongoing strategic process that provides for forecasting an organization's senior leadership needs; identifying and developing candidates who have the potential to be future leaders; and selecting individuals from among a diverse pool of qualified candidates to meet executive resource needs" (GAO, 2005, p. 15). The outcome of succession planning is to create high qualified people at least for the critical jobs in the organization. Although typically succession planning is directed towards higher level jobs, some organizations also focus on middle management and/or lower management. According to Cox (2001), there are two steps that are essential to bring a priority on diversity in a workplace. First, " it is necessary to monitor the profile of succession planning candidate pools for diversity on key dimensions such as gender, race, national origin, and work specialization" (Cox, 2001, p. 123). The second requirement " is to ensure that possible successors for key jobs are diversity competent" (Cox, 2001, p. 123). This effort again must start at the top of the organization. Succession planning is important to all organizations as the workplace is becoming more diverse.

Recruitment

Recruitment plays an important role, a first step, in establishing workplace diversity. Recruitment can be done in many ways. The organization can reach out to diverse colleges where they can promote their organization to a wide variety of students. For example, a recruiter of the organization can go to a predominantly black or Hispanic college and promote their organization to them. Reaching out to a variety of diverse schools and building a relationship with these schools, can ultimately increase an organizations

diversity management and gain a more diverse pool of applicants. Recruitment can also be done by word of mouth. If a leader of an organization or even an employee thinks they know someone who is capable of working for the organization, they can recruit them to apply to the organization. Recruiting is very important in having a diverse workplace as this is ultimately the first step of getting an individual interested in an organization.

Employee Involvement

Employee involvement also plays an essential role in diversity management. Both top management as well as employees needs to be involved to promote diversity management. " Management can form employee diversity task forces, councils, boards, and networks which can identify issues, recommend actions, and help develop initiatives" (GAO, 2005, p. 19-20). Employees are a critical aspect of promoting diversity as they engage in the organization on a daily basis and could work with a diverse group of co-workers.

Mentoring programs have also been available in organizations. Mentoring programs are used to uplift employees and also have someone there to provide a support system. Overall, research has shown mentoring programs to have positive results such as " higher productivity and performance ratings for both mentor and protégé, more accurate selection and training of new personnel, greater retention of high qualified people, a greater probability of a person's being promoted to a senior rank, and higher earnings and job satisfaction for the mentored individual" (Cox et al., 1997, p. 251).

Lastly, organizations can encourage employees to volunteer in their communities. This will bring in community involvement as well as show the community what the organization does. (GAO, 2005). Management should also partake in volunteering in the communities with the employees. Involving the community could show the diversity within the organization as well as promote a diverse consumer. Employee involvement is a set in promoting diversity as management cannot do it alone.

Diversity Training

Diversity training is the last and one of the most important ways to promote diversity in the workplace. Training could help the top management understand how to effectively handle diversity as well as how to promote diversity to the employees. Training could help inform employees about the differences in cultural, work style and personal presentation and help them fully understand the different diversity perspectives. Social psychological research shows that giving people information about out-group members and about stereotyping may reduce bias (Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006). Training can further familiarize employees with antidiscrimination laws, suggest behavioral changes that could address bias, and to increase cultural awareness and cross cultural communication (Kalev et al., 2006). Diversity training can be done a numerous ways. Management can inform employees, seminars could be offered, as well as professional speakers. If a organization is committed to diversity management, some sort of training must be involved.

Conclusion

With the workforce being more diverse today than ever before, organizations must promote diversity. Leadership is the first step but it involves the organization as a whole to make these changes occur. Employees have a lot of impact as well on diversity efforts and training as well as recruiting must be included in diversity efforts. Research about promoting diversity is becoming readily available and organizations should take the time to research diversity and include it in their plans and policies. Diversity does not occur overnight, but all it takes is one person to begin the process