

Session long affirmative action

Life



Gender discrimination has for long been the topic of hot ethical debate. Despite the growing awareness about the social implications and the consequences of discrimination, as well as financial and human costs of discriminative attitudes at workplace, numerous firms and businesses appear unable to change the traditional structure of their business relationships. Even the best and the most ethical organizations are not always willing to eliminate the barriers women face on their way to professional excellence. In case of KBR, diversity and female participation in labor seem to be the two critical elements of organizational culture.

Yet, KBR, Inc. has not done everything possible to involve women into all areas of its organizational and business performance. In reality, even at KBR, Inc. – the company well known for its ethical practices – gender remains an issue. Moreover, the majority of the present day American companies are either unwilling or unprepared to tackle gender discrimination challenges. “ For instance, for every dollar earned by white men in 1998, white women earn 78 cents, African-American women earn 67 cents, and Hispanic women earn 56 cents, according to Catalyst.

More than 85 percent of Fortune 500 companies lack even one woman among their five highest earning officers” (Social Funds, 2000). Objectively, KBR, Inc. is not an exception for even despite its growing commitment to diversity at workplace and its desire to eliminate the barriers which women face when trying to become a part of the company staff, the current Board of Directors at KBR does not have a single woman, comprising seven highly professional men (KBR, 2009).

Moreover, given the nature and specificity of work at KBR, women find it even more difficult to prove that they possess sufficient engineering and construction skills and are able to successfully fulfill their workplace obligations and tasks. Finally, when it comes to working in hotspots, women face even more opposition on the side of their potential employers, who view it as unacceptable for a woman to work in conditions of wartime. From the deontological perspective, gender equality should become a rule KBR will follow at all levels of its organizational performance.

Certainly, affirmative action can potentially become a good solution for the majority of gender discrimination problems, but affirmative action is just another form of discrimination aimed at establishing the new quality of gender relationships at workplace. Not gender discrimination, not affirmative action, but professionalism, education, and skills should serve the primary criteria the company will use when considering potential job candidates. Not gender, but individual preparedness to work in dangerous conditions and realization of the tasks and obligations should govern KBR in its job decisions.

From the viewpoint of utilitarianism, providing women with equal access to jobs will help resolve several essential issues. First, the company will improve its social corporate image. Second, it will bring in innovative looks and will substantially improve and speed up its decision-making processes. Third, it will provide women with a chance to realize themselves in professional fields, and finally, the company will avoid and secure itself from financial losses that result of continuous discrimination lawsuits.

Discrimination is an increasingly negative social and workplace phenomenon. Moreover, the more “ male” the nature of business seems to be, the less likely women are to become a part of such companies’ staff. That is why for the company to remain competitive, glass ceiling should be eliminated, to give women just another professional and individual try. Conclusion Even the most ethical companies face serious gender discrimination challenges and are not always able to eliminate the so-called “ glass ceiling”.

KBR, Inc. is not an exception. From deontological perspective, gender equality should become one of the primary company rules; from the utilitarian perspective, giving women a chance for professional self-realization will improve the quality of all decision-making processes and will protect the company from numerous discrimination lawsuits. Whether KBR, Inc. is able to preserve its positive corporate image depends on how well it copes with the challenges of gender discrimination at workplace.

References

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