

DIVERSITY TRAINING TECHNIQUE

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<http://www.suite101.com/content/diversity-training-techniques-a94993>

A good understanding of diversity issues enables employee teams to communicate more effectively and work through challenges. Creating a diversity training program typically provides examples of how diversity may impact interpersonal relationships that are necessary for project work. Including examples that demonstrate how different people manage common tasks help to illustrate that there are many approaches depending on cultural differences.

Examples of Different Approaches to Common Tasks

- How one pays for goods – negotiation and barter or pay the price
- How one gets on a subway – line up or survival of the pushiest
- How one communicates ideas – with a lot of context and detail or short and to the point
- How one looks at punctuality – nothing interferes with being on time or family and friends take priority and may make one late

Other areas where differences occur are:

- Architecture
- Clothing
- Art
- Beliefs
- Celebrations and holidays
- Customs
- Dance
- Food
- Games
- Language
- Music
- Sports
- Stories
- Traditions
- Career Values

Workplace Diversity Issues

Consider the following challenges and assess whether they are posing problems within your workplace:

- Aptitude testing – some aptitude tests do not account for cultural differences when offering choices for situations.
- Decision making with bias or prejudice – decisions such as who should be promoted (glass ceilings can be a problem within multicultural workplaces with diversity challenges), who should be recognized with an award or accolades and who receives preferential treatment or perks can be influenced by differences in culture, race, language or lifestyle.
- English-only communication – language barriers can effect proper inter-cultural communication with staff and customers.
- Recognition of religious holidays – some employers do not understand the importance of certain religious holidays and this can cause great tension.
- Bilingualism – the inability to speak both English and French can impede some employees from employment options and/or advancement.
- Unequal pay scales – inequities in salaries are often seen where new immigrants are hired to fulfil lower level roles regardless of their qualifications.

Examples of Diversity Training Exercises

Discussion Exercise: Diversity in the News

Use newspaper clippings of conflicts due to race, religion, culture, language, gender or lifestyle to encourage an open dialogue around the situations that occurred.

Activity: Intercultural party

Showcase various foods from around the world such as teas, coffees, desserts, foods associated with celebrations, rice dishes, breads and so on. Ask staff to bring a pot luck dish from their cultural background.

Case study: Diversity in Action

Using a case (preferably donated by someone in the company with a positive outcome that can act as a best practice example) describe a situation that involved a decision that could have cause a diversity challenge. Let the participants describe how they would act if they were in that situation. Then offer what did happen (i.e. the positive outcome).

The following is an excerpt from The New Brunswick Workplace Diversity Project Employer Resource Manual (April 2005):

"The following are some ideas one could consider in developing individual definitions [of diversity]:

- Diversity is effectiveness at using the talents of people of different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives
- Diversity is about more than what is visible
- Diversity is treating everyone with fairness and respect
- Diversity is about creating an environment that is inclusive, drawing upon the strength of the diversity of your workforce to exceed the expectations of your customers"

Diversity training is important as it helps employees understand and appreciate cultural differences and their impact in the workplace.