

# WHAT IS DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

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The United States is considered a melting pot of people. The American society does not cater to a single group of people. Every year thousands of immigrants flock to the US in search of a better life. Mixing with people from different races, nationality and religious background is unavoidable. Therefore, the issue of diversity in the workplace needs serious consideration.

## **Diversity in the Workplace Defined**

Being a melting pot, each immigrant that enters the country contributes to the cultural, religious or ethnic diversity of America as they assimilate into the society. Diversity is particularly evident in the workplace. This is especially true with the current trend of globalization, where companies venture out abroad for expansion purposes.

Diversity in the workforce means employing people without discrimination on the basis of gender, age and ethnic or racial background. Since globalization is the current overwhelming trend in business, diversity in the workplace is a better accepted and applied concept now more than ever.

## **Benefits of a Diverse Workforce**

It is believed that companies employing a diverse workforce would be in a better position to understand the demographics of the customers they serve much better making them better able to thrive in the marketplace than companies that hire only a limited group of employee demographics. Also, a company that supports diversity of workforce is better able to address employee satisfaction and retention issues.

An important part of diversity in the workplace is how a company uses its diversities. This is called inclusion. If the company has a diverse workforce yet the employer does not take advantage of the wide range of experience within the organization, then it could not enjoy the advantages offered by background diversity.

Diversity issues change with time. Implementation of diversity is more often than not limited to the human resources department. UK companies see it as a tool to a good economic case that enables them to reach new markets. Diversity then becomes an extra marketing tool to bring in new customers.

## **Difference between Superficial and Deep-level Diversity**

Diversity could either be superficial or deep-level. Superficial diversity refers to differences in gender, race and nationality. Deep-level refers to differences brought about by knowledge and cultural values. It is often noted that in a company setting, increased interaction among a diverse workforce lessens the significance of superficial diversity and increases the importance of deep-level as the team learns how to function as a unit.

According to studies, in deep-level diversity, the informational diversity or the differences in knowledge contribute positive results to the performance while value diversity or differences in cultural views could lead to negative results.

In a group setting though, members tend to discuss what they have in common rather than their differences. In order to encourage sharing of unique knowledge, it is important to let the group know who has knowledge on certain things. Also, instead of group information sharing, debate should be encouraged so as to allow members to challenge the ideas of other members. Processing deep information that way could lead to positive results.

Learning to accept the diversity and uniqueness of each employee will in turn generate feelings of trust and respect that could further lead to more productivity among employees, higher morale in the workplace and less conflicts and the time involve resolving them. Diversity is a fact of life. Learning to deal with it effectively and not fight it is the best way to advance the causes of business.