Chapter 27
Theoretical Frameworks and Models Supporting the Practice of Leveraging Workforce Diversity

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ABSTRACT

Generally defined, diversity is multidimensional, but the key to diversity is the "valuing and managing of differences in such a way that the results lead to inclusion"(Plummer, 2003, p. 10). The term diversity refers to the presence of a wide variety of cultures, ethnic groups, languages, physical features, socio-economic backgrounds, opinions, religious beliefs, gender identity, and neurology within one population. Diversity, in this chapter, will be defined as it is above, but within an organizational context.

When organizations became aware of the demographic changes in the workforce and customer base, organizational diversity became a key topic for success. As a result of legislation mandating Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, leaders and managers began to examine the minority representation within their own companies' (Plummer, 2003) organizational framework. Diversity refers to "making use of and leveraging human differences toward organizational effectiveness and productive business goals that maintain a high performing workforce" (2003, p.13).

Thomas (1991) shifted anti-discrimination initiatives from compliance to one that promoted diversity as a business imperative. He also argued that managing diversity went beyond race and gender and includes the primary and secondary dimensions of the individual (1991). On the organizational level, diversity management addresses issues such as business rationale, diversity strategic planning, recruiting, and retaining a diverse workforce (Plummer, 2003). According to Cox (1993), "a potential benefit

of diversity will be to promote organizational effectiveness in creativity, marketing, problem-solving, and quality of decision making by being conscious of individual identities" (p.251).

This chapter will include a brief description of the history of diversity; advantages of being culturally competent; paradigms/perspectives of diversity management; and a summary of the business case for diversity. In addition, theories and models of organization development and change management are further explained as a way to understand the organizational context surrounding diversity interventions.

INTRODUCTION

Diversity Defined

Cox (2001) defines "diversity as the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in a defined employment or market setting" (p. 3). Cox and Smolinski (1994) define diversity as "the representation of people of different group identities in the same organization social system"(p. 12). Generally defined, "diversity is multidimensional, but the key to diversity is the valuing and managing of differences in such a way that the results lead to inclusion"(Plummer, 2003, p. 10).

The term diversity refers to the presence of a wide variety of cultures, ethnic groups, languages, physical features, socio-economic backgrounds, opinions, religious beliefs, gender identity, and neurology within a one population. Diversity, in this study, will be defined as it is above, but within an organizational context.

When organizational leaders became aware of the demographic changes in the workforce and consumer base, it became apparent that a focus on organizational diversity was critical. As a result of legislation mandating Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, leaders and managers began to examine the employment demographics within their own companies (Plummer, 2003). Within an organizational framework, diversity refers to "making use of and leveraging human differences toward organizational effectiveness and productive business goals" that maintain a high performing workforce (p.

13). A potential benefit of diversity will be "to promote organizational effectiveness in creativity, marketing, problem-solving, and quality of decision-making by being conscious of individual identities" (Cox, 1993, p. 251).

When identifying individual diversity, it is suggested one distinguishes between the primary and secondary dimensions. Loden and Rosener (1991) defined "primary dimensions of diversity as those immutable human differences that are inborn and/or that exert an important impact on our early socialization and ongoing impact throughout our lives" (p. 18) such as age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, and sexual orientation. Secondary dimensions contain elements of control and are things that can be changed such as: educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious belief and work experience. Both are extremely important because they influence people's identity, how they define themselves in the world, and how others react to them (1991). Figure 1 shows both primary and secondary dimensions of diversity. The inner circle represents the primary dimensions and the outer circle represents the secondary dimensions.

Historical Background

Diversity can be one of the most controversial and least understood business topics because of the issues regarding quality, leadership, and ethics (Anand & Winters, 2008). Although its effectiveness has been questioned over the past 30 years, diversity training has become a common practice

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