THE INCREASING CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF THE AMERICAN WORKFORCE: MANAGEMENT'S CHALLENGE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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OVERVIEW

This paper is an experiential exercise that has been successfully used in principles of management classes to expose students to not only the issue of cultural diversity in toady's workforce, but also projections for diversity in the Mum. The paper that follows is divided into two major sections. The first, for lack of a better title, is called "THE EXERCISE." This section, the actual experiential exercise, has five parts. The 'Introduction to the Exercise" emphasizes that many college graduates at some point in their careers will become managers and that one of their greatest challenges will be managing a diverse workforce. "Exercises 1" asks participants to identify what they believe various diverse groups want from work and personal relationships at work. "Exercise 2" asks participants to evaluate their degree of success in predicting these wants, to make generalizations regarding the usual lack of accuracy in predicting wants, to group with 4 or 5 other students to assess why many participants do so poorly in predicting what diverse groups want, and then to identify the terminology reflecting the technical definitions for this lack of accuracy. "Exercise 3" asks participants to develop strategies to overcome their lack of predictive accuracy. Finally, "Exercise 4" involves participants in self-assessment regarding the exercise they have just been through.

The second major section of the paper, entitled "INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES," is further divided into "Purpose of the Experience"(objectives of the exercise), "How This Experience Can Be Used" (tips on how to successfully and effectively utilize the exercise), and "Sample Results" (the kinds of responses/answers to the various parts of the exercise that might be expected from exercise participants).

THE EXERCISE

Introduction to the Exercise

Most basic management classes, such as the one for which you are currently registered, are made up not only of individuals with diverse backgrounds (i.e., different cultures, ages, genders, ethnicity, etc.), but also with diverse professional interests or inclinations. From a university perspective, diverse professional interests or inclinations translate into different college majors. The chances are good that the person sitting to either side of you will be majoring in a specialization that is different from yours. In addition, the chances are good that none of the three of you (you or those sitting to either side of you) are management majors. While this class is made up of students with diverse backgrounds, including many different professional inclinations (from accounting, to marketing, to finance, to agri-business, to nursing, to library science, and so-on) and, in addition, most class members are non-management majors, there remains one common thread that bind together most, if not all, in the class. Strangely enough, this "thread" will forever link virtually all in the class to management. When I identify this factor (what all in the class have in common), your initial reaction will more than likely be: "Uh, uh, I don't believe that l" But the more you think about what I am going to tell you, the more you will come to agree with me. Ok, here it is:

No matter what your college major or specialty, if you have a desire to improve yourself, you will eventually become a manager. Your college degree, your technical specialty (i.e., accounting), will get you your first job or position; and your initial performance in that specialty will get you your first promotion. But, every other

promotion throughout your entire career will be primarily dependent on, not so much what you know about or how to perform in your technical specialty (i.e., accounting), but rather what you know and how you perform as a manager.

Think about it! With your first promotion, to what will you be promoted? Will you not be someone who now SUPERVISES/MANAGES others that are doing the task that you once did so well? And even more importantly, if you cannot effectively manage that group that is doing what you once did so well yourself, someone else--not you--will be the prime candidate for the next higher job--the next promotion. You see, it is true; assuming that in your career you will seek more challenge, more responsibility, more authority, more status, and so on, you will be spending most of your working life managing other human beings.

And, whether you like it or not, the individuals in the workforce for which you will be asked to accept responsibility (that you will manage) will be a diverse group. For example, during the next decade women and people of color are expected to fill 75 percent of the 20+ million new jobs created in the United States. In addition, by the year 2010, white men are expected to account for less than 40 percent of the total American labor force. Furthermore, diversity in age, ethnicity, physical ability, religious belief, sexual/affectional orientation, and work and educational background also are increasing in the workforce (Loden and Rosener, 1991).[1] The picture of YOUR future should now be becoming increasingly dear; you will be functioning in diverse groups. More importantly, **YOU WILL BE A MANAGER THAT WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO MANAGE THAT DIVERSITY II**

Exercise 1

An important step to effectively managing diverse work groups is understanding what others (possibly even potential future subordinates) want out of work and personal relationships. What people want, what they find rewarding, can very likely be what moves them to action to be productive. Unfortunately, diversity is one factor that can significantly complicate a manager's ability to link rewards to performance. What do individuals with diverse backgrounds want from their jobs. If you polled people from a variety of different races, sexes, ages and sexual/affectional orientations, as well as able-bodied and disabled individuals, what do you think each of these different employee groups would say they want or value out of work and personal relationships at work?

For each group below, you list the three wants that you believe would be the most obvious and dominant:

a. Younger and older employees want:
   1.
   2.
   3.

b. Women want:
   1.
   2.
   3.

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[1] Marilyn Loden and Judy B. Rosener, Workforce America! Managing Employee Diversity as a vital resource, (Homewood, IL: Business One Irwin, 1991), p. xvi.

c.   Men Want
  1.
  2.
  3.

d.   People of color want:
  1.
  2.
  3.

e.   White people want:
  1.
  2.
  3.

f.   Disabled people want:
  1.
  2.
  3.

g.   Physically able-boded people want:
  1.
  2.
  3.

h.   Gay men and lesbians want:
  1.
  2.
  3.

Exercise 2

Your instructor will share the research finding of two well-known researchers who after conducting numerous workshops and interviews with the same diverse groups listed above have identified the three most dominant tomes for each group. Your next task is to compare your answers to the researchers findings and then count up the total number of wants (out of a possible 24) that you correctly identified. Give yourself half-credit if you identified at least some component of each time.

a.   Write the number of correctly identified wants (x" out of a possible 24) hers. _____ (number correct)

b.   What generalizations can you draw from the percent of themes (x out of a possible 24) that you correctly identified? Use the space provided below to record your response.

c.   Form a discussion group with 4 or 5 of your fellow-classmates. Each member of this group needs to sham his/her scorn in part a above (don't artificially inflate your score just to impress others in your group or protect yourself). Discuss why some in your group may have done better and others more poorly in identifying dominant tomes for the various groups listed above. Then record, in the Waco provided below, the three reasons identified by your group that appear to most logically explain why many group members met with such little success:
  1.
  2.
  3.

d.   In round-robin fashion, your instructor will call on groups to identify one of its listed masons for members' lack of predictive accuracy. After a mason is called-out, the instructor will ask "how many other groups also identified this reason and will record the reason and

tally the number of groups identifying. This process will continue until all three masons from ail groups are called out. Record in die space provided below (using the instructor's tally) the tire. Most identified masons for lack of predictive accuracy:
  1.
  2.
  3.

e.   What text terminology/concepts reflect the technical definition/explanation for the masons identified in part d above?. Use the space below to record this terminology.

Exercise 3

Knowing your lack of predictive accuracy (and that of many members of the class) and some of the reasons for this lack of accuracy, what do you (a manager of the future) intend to do to overcome this shortcoming? Meet once again in your group and develop a short list of actions that could be taken to overcome identified shortcomings. Use the space below for your groups response. Once the class has discussed the various identified strategies for overcoming a lack of predictive accuracy, your instructor will share with the class her/his views and those of other experts. Add other strategies and action plans (shared by other groups and your instructor) to the initial list below that your group generated.

Exercise 4

Explain what you have gained (learned about yourself and about others) from involving yourself in this experience.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES

Purpose of the Experience

This exercise was designed to help participants become more aware of: (1) the ever-increasing diversity in the American workforce, (2) their own personal lack of understanding of the true wants of various segments of this diverse workforce, (3) what various diverse groups have actually reported to want from work and personal relationships at work, and (4) what participants themselves and the organization needs to do to become better prepared for managing diversity in the 21st Century.

How This Experience Can Be Used

As is obvious from a quick perusal of the experiential exercise above, Exercise I should be assigned on an individual basis, Exercises 2 and 3 require the building of discussion groups or teams, and Exercise 4 is an individual self-assessment activity. The instructor can assign Exercise 1 as an out-of-class assignment to be prepared for an upcoming class session or should set aside approximately 10 minutes of class time for its completion. Once the instructor has reported-on or, better yet, placed on an overhead projector Loden and Rosener's (1991) lists of What Diverse Employee Groups Want" (see Table 1 below), the instructor should allow 5-10 minutes for individuals to compare their lists to those of Loden and Rosener, calculate their number of correctly identified wants, and develop generalizations from the percentage of

"want" themes correctly identified (part "a" and "b" of Exercise 2) all discussion of exercise issues should be discouraged until groups have been formed (Pan "c" of Exercise 2).

Once groups have been formed, allow approximately 10 minutes for groups to debate "Why some group members may have done better and others more poorly than others in identifying dominant themes for the various groups listed" in Exercise 1. In Part "d" of Exercise 2, the instructor, in round-robin fashion, will collect and record from groups the masons for members' lack of predictive accuracy. Once a reason is called-out by one group, one representative from other groups will need to be prepared to indicate, by a show off hand, if their group also identified that reason. A blackboard, flipchart, or overhead acetate will be needed so that all in the class can observe the tallies being formulated for recorded reasons. Once all reasons are recorded and tallies completed, the three most identified reasons for lack of predictive accuracy should be recorded in the space provided in Part "d." In Part "e" of Exercise 2, groups are asked to identify text terminology that reflects the technical definition or explanation for the mason cited in part "d." Allow approximately 5 minutes for groups to prepare a response. Then randomly choose groups to report on identified concepts.

In Exercise 3, allow 5 to 10 minutes for groups to again meet to identify the actions that could be taken to overcome identified shortcomings--to make them, as future managers, more accurate in predicting what diverse employees want from their work and personal relationships at work. Conduct a 5-10 minute class discussion on strategies identified in small groups. Then share your own views and the views of the experts" provided in Table 2. Finally, ask students to complete Exercise 4 on their own outside of class. To increase the probability that all participants will take the assignment seriously, you could ask (and announce) that students will be expected to submit their notes/observations in a subsequent class period.

Sample Results

In Exercise 1, participants were asked to list what they believed that 8 diverse employee groups would say "they want or value out of work and personal relationships at work." In Exercise 2, participants were asked to compare their lists generated in Exercise 1 with Loden and Rosener's (1991) list of "What Diverse Employee Groups Want" in Table 1, calculate their own score (number correct out of a possible 24 wants) [Part "a"], and then draw generalizations from the number of wants that they correctly identified [Part "b"].

Generally, the number of correctly identified wants is quite low (2-5 correct). Some of the generalizations that usually come forth in Part "b" are:

- I must not know very much about what groups of which I am not a member really want.

- Maybe my individual prejudices have not permitted me to think logically and rationally about what diverse groups want

- I may have more difficulty managing diverse groups than I had originally thought since I did poorly in identifying the wants of these groups.

  The greater the diversity in a group, the more difficult it will be to link rewards to performance.

In Part "c," participants were to discuss and record why some group members did more poorly than others. Some of the typical responses to this question include:

- Lack of exposure to members of some diverse groups

- Lack of Empathy
- Individual prejudice

  Stereotyping

- Ethnocentrism

In Parts "d" and "e" of Exercise 2, the three most identified reasons for lack of predictive accuracy were to be determined from the instructors tally of group responses and the appropriate text terminology for the "layman's reason or argument" was to be attached. In the two times that this experiential exercise was previously administered, the three most cited reasons for lack of accuracy were (1) lack of exposure to/involvement with members of diverse groups. (2) individual prejudice, and (3) stereotyping.

Exercise 3 asks participant groups to develop a short list of actions that could be taken to overcome the shortcomings identified in Pan "d." Table 2, entitled "Managing Diversity in Organizations," lists some of the actions that have been taken by individuals and organizations to overcome the problems associated with having diversity in the workplace--to effectively manage diversity.

Finally, Exercise 4 asks participants to identify what they have gained from involving themselves in this exercise. Hopefully, participants will not only become more acutely aware of the issues related to diversity, they also will begin to develop a strategy for dealing with the problems that workforce diversity could create for them as managers in the 21st Century.

TABLE I
WHAT DIVERSE EMPLOYEE GROUPS WANT[2]

a. **Younger and older employees want:**
   1. More respect for their life experiences.
   2. To be taken seriously.
   3. To be challenged by their organizations--not patronized.

b. **Women want:**
   1. Recognition as equal partners.
   2. Active support of male colleagues.
   3. Organizations to proactively address work and family issues.

c. **Men want:**
   1. The same freedom to grow/feel that women have.
   2. To be perceived as allies, not as the enemy.
   3. To bridge the gap between dealing with women at home and at work.

d. **People of color want:**
   1. To be valued as unique individuals, as members of ethnically diverse groups, as people of different races, as an equal contributor.
   2. To establish more open, honest working relationships with people of other races and ethnic groups.
   3. The active support of white people in fighting racism and colorism.

e. **White people want:**
   1. To have their ethnicity acknowledged.
   2. To reduce discomfort, confusion, and dishonesty in dealing with people of color.

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[2] From Marilyn Loden and Judy B. Rosener, Workforce America! Managing Employee Diversity as a vital resource, (Homewood, IL: Business One Irwin, 1991), pp. 76-78

3. To build relationships with people of color based on common goals, concerns, and mutual respect for differences.

f. **Disabled people want:**
1. Greater acknowledgment of and focus on abilities, not just on disabilities.
2. To be challenged by colleagues and organizations to be the best.
3. To be included, not isolated.

g. **Physically able-bodied people want:**
1. To develop more ease in dealing with differently abled people.
2. To appreciate abilities--in addition to understanding disabilities.
3. To give honest feedback and appropriate support--without being patronizing or overprotective.

h. **Gay men and lesbians want:**
1. Recognition as whole human beings--not only as sexual beings.
2. Equal employment protection--like all other groups have.
3. Increased awareness among straight people regarding the impact of heterosexism in the workplace.

TABLE 2
MANAGING DIVERSITY IN ORGANIZATIONS[3]

Individual Approaches for Dealing with Diversity:

- **Encourage open communication regarding diversity issues.** For example, diversity problems may become magnified because a female staff member is unwilling or afraid to openly discuss how she feels about male gender-related jokes being told in her presence.

- **Encourage empathy**. Ask employees to try to understand the perspective of the other. For example, ask employees to put themselves "in the other person's shoes" to see how that person might feel regarding some action or statement before that action is taken or statement made.

- **Encourage application of the "Golden Rule."** "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Assuming reasonable moral convictions from all parties involved, this philosophy can go a long way to instilling a climate that supports diversity.

Organizational strategies for Managing diversity:

- Create an organizational climate that nurtures diversity in the workforce. Pluralism refers to an environment in which differences are acknowledged, accepted, and seen to be a significant contribution to the whole.

- **Secure top management support and commitment for the organization's diversity effort.** Incorporating the organization's perspective toward diversity into the corporate mission statement and strategic plans and objectives and, then, compensating management for accomplishment of diversity objectives, will go a long way to assuring management commitment.

- **Establish recruiting practices and policies that recognize and support diversity in the workforce.** Recruiting policies and practices (equal employment opportunity statements and supporting statistics) and alternative employment practices (such as alternative work schedules) will go a long way to "putting teeth" in a diversity philosophy.

- **Establish a diversity module or segment in all employees' development efforts.** Diversity training programs attempt to identify and reduce hidden biases and develop the skills needed to supervise a diversified work force. Awareness training, a special subset of diversity training, attempts to sensitize employees to the assumptions they make about others and how these assumptions affect their judgments, decisions, and behaviors. Awareness training often involves familiarizing the trainee regarding myths, stereotypes, cultural differences, and organizational barriers that inhibit employees from making their full contribution to the organization.

- **Establish special programs to encourage retention of employees.** Mentoring and support-group programs, along with recognition of special needs/interest of the diverse groups in the company's workforce, also can favorably impact employee retention. Mentors are individuals who help ensure that individuals are exposed to management and its philosophy and are socialized into the norms and values of the organization. Support groups can provide emotional and career support for members who traditionally have not been included in the majority's informal groups and do not understand work norms and the corporate culture. Diversity can be further recognized by attending to the special needs/interests of diverse groups. For example, recognizing cultural and religious holidays with their special modes of dress and dietary restrictions, or accommodating the needs of disabled individuals can significantly impact the retention of such special employee groupings.

- **Organizational performance appraisal and reward systems must reinforce the importance of effective diversity management.** If the diversity effort is to succeed, managers must be held accountable for work force development.

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[3]The suggested approaches/strategies outlined in Table 2 were assembled from materials presented in S.C. Certo, *Modem Management Diversity Quality Ethics, and the Global Environment* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994), pp. 510-588; T. Cox and S. Blake, "Managing Cultural Diversity: Implications for Organizational Competitiveness," *Academy of Management Executive* (August 1991) pp. 45-56; L Foxman and W. Polsky, "Cross-Cultural Understanding," *Personnel Journal* (November 1989), pp. 12-14; R.W. Griffin, *Management* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), pp. 516-593; and T.S. Bateman and C.P. Zeithaml, *Management Function & Strategy* (Homewood, IL: Irwin, 1993), p. 316-395.