

Boston College Center for Work & Family

E X E C U T I V E B R I E F I N G S E R I E S

**Exploring Diversity:
Race and Culture in the Inclusive Workplace**

This presentation is a companion to the Boston College Center for Work & Family Executive Briefing Series. It is designed to be customized by your organization. Please feel free to cut and paste these slides into your own format, and to use the questions provided as a guide to develop your own presentation. If you do not have a copy of the full Briefing, please email: cwf@bc.edu.

Why Race and Culture?

- Increase in US racial and ethnic cultural demographics
- Although organizations have attempted to address these issues in the workplace:
 - Are we hitting the mark?
 - Are we doing a good job at recruiting, retaining, and providing a productive and supportive environment for our workers?
 - How can we seek to promote a work environment that embraces racial and ethnic cultural diversity and promotes inclusion?
 - How can we learn to appreciate and incorporate the values and strengths of our workers?

The Linguistics of Diversity

- ***Race*** ... the category to which others assign individuals on the basis of physical characteristics and the generalizations and stereotypes made as a result.
- ***Culture*** ... the belief systems and value orientations that influence customs, norms, practices, and social institutions, including psychological processes and organizations.
- ***Ethnicity*** ... the acceptance of the group mores and practices of one's culture of origin and the concomitant sense of belonging.
- ***Diversity*** ... individuals' social identities including age, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, workplace role/position, religious and spiritual orientation, and work/family concerns.
- ***Inclusion*** ... a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so than you can do your best work.

American Psychological Association, 2002

Miller, Frederick A. and Katz, Judith H. 2002. *The Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Real Power of Diversity*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Today's Diverse Workforce

- Today's workforce is more racially and culturally diverse than ever
 - It has been predicted that 57 percent of the labor force will be women and people of color by 2014 (NAS, 2007).
 - Foreign-born workers (including legal immigrants, refugees, temporary residents and undocumented immigrants) made up over 15 percent of the U.S. civilian labor force aged 16 and over in 2006 (Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- The growth of a global economy has had a significant impact on the makeup of today's workforce.
 - U.S. based companies doing business abroad
 - Acquisitions and mergers with international firms
 - Outsourcing to other parts of the world

The Inclusive Workplace

- An “inclusive workplace” is one that,
 - Values and uses individual and inter-group differences within its work force
 - Cooperates with and contributes to its surrounding community
 - Collaborates with individuals, groups, and organizations across national and cultural boundaries (Barak, 2000)
- It is important to understand the differences and similarities between “inclusion” and “diversity”
 - *“Diversity describes the spectrum of human similarities and differences. It refers to the composition of people associated with the organization. Inclusion, on the other hand, describes the way an organization configures opportunity, interaction, communication, information and decision-making to utilize the potential of diversity. It refers to the organizational environment.”*

Workplace Diversity Network, 2000

Attributes of an Inclusive Workplace

- A demonstrated commitment to diversity
- A holistic view of employees
- Access to opportunity
- Accommodation of diverse physical and developmental abilities
- 360 degree communication and information sharing
- Shared accountability and responsibility
- A demonstrated commitment to continuous learning
- Participatory work organization and work progress
- Alignment of organizational culture and process
- Collaborative conflict resolution processes
- A demonstrated commitment to community relationships

Workplace Diversity Network (2000)

What are the Driving Forces Behind Creating Inclusive Work Environments?

- Businesses are being challenged to develop strategies that meet the needs of changing demographics and a growing global economy. There are multiple drivers for creating an inclusive workplace:
 - Increased participation in the global marketplace
 - The attraction, retention and promotion of racially and culturally diverse top talent
 - Employees' desires to be a part of inclusive workplaces.

The Business Case for Racially and Culturally Inclusive Work Environments

- Racially and culturally inclusive work environments help facilitate the overall organizational growth of companies
 - **91% of employees reported that diversity initiatives helped their organizations compete in the marketplace**
 - **79% believed their diversity programs improved corporate culture**
 - **77% said that diversity programs improved recruitment efforts**
 - **52% indicated that diversity programs facilitated more effective client contact**

Society for Human Resource Management (Aghazadeh, 2004)

- Increased diversity in work environments has a positive impact on business profitability
- As customer bases and the labor pool becomes progressively more diverse, it is imperative for companies to be able to reflect their consumers' diversity amongst their own workers in order to remain competitive

Organizational Commitment to Diversity

- **Alcatel-Lucent** – We achieve our shared purpose by embracing the full richness of our people's differences. We believe the diversity of our people enriches our work experience and is the source of our innovation and our competitive advantage. We adhere to Alcatel-Lucent's core values and treat everyone with dignity and deepest respect.
- **Chevron Corporation** – We express our belief in the value of diversity through principles, practices and accountability. This begins with The Chevron Way, which states, "We learn from and respect the cultures in which we work. We value and demonstrate respect for the uniqueness of individuals and the varied perspectives and talents they provide. We have an inclusive work environment and actively embrace a diversity of people, ideas, talents and experiences." Our principles endorse a spirit of inclusion and foster an environment where everyone can reach their full potential. We are committed to being recognized as a global leader that backs its words with accountable actions and quantifiable results.
- **Ford Motor Company** – Diversity embodies all the differences that make us unique individuals. At Ford Motor Company we recognize diversity as a strategic advantage in today's global marketplace. We are committed to building an inclusive culture that leverages all of the many elements of diversity; encourages innovation; allows employees to perform to their fullest potential; and, ultimately, drives business results.
- **Turner Construction** – We will build and maintain an inclusive, diverse workforce that effectively accepts, utilizes and values our employees. We will maintain an environment where employees can contribute creative ideas, seek challenges, assume leadership roles and continue to focus on meeting and exceeding business and personal objectives. We will provide opportunities and training that allow each individual to achieve their maximum potential.

Strategies for Effective Inclusive Workplace Practices

- An organization must be willing to fully communicate its commitment to issues of race and culture in order to establish an inclusive work environment
- To recruit and retain workers, an organization must be willing to provide organizational supports:
 - Mentoring
 - Support networks, Employee Resource Groups or Affinity Groups
 - Training and career development opportunities
- Organizations should establish a system of rewards and consequences for affirmative participation and consequences for not participating

Challenges to Implementing Inclusive Practices

- Implementing effective inclusive practices comes at a monetary expense.
- Change, in any form, can produce resistance.
- Without support from the top, strategies for developing inclusive work environments are unlikely to succeed.

“Diversity policies are most successful when they are solidly integrated throughout the organization, with executive leadership, ongoing training and support and accountability as the vehicles.”

Vallario, 2006

Work-Life and the Inclusive Workplace

- Creating and maintaining inclusive work environments requires that companies not only foster diversity in the workplace, but also address issues of race and culture that impact employees' lives outside of work as well.
- Flexibility is rooted in diversity, looking at each individual and their unique needs.

“The increasingly diverse workforce brings to the workplace a wide variety of family arrangements and family needs. The balance between work and family responsibilities can be very distinctive in different societies. Accommodating the work-life needs of the global workforce is the most important challenge we face as researchers and as managers in the 21st Century.” Michàlle Mor Barak, Professor at University of Southern California, 2006 excerpted from interview for Sloan Work and Family Research Network

Summary

- Corporations must rapidly adjust to the growing needs and values of today's racially and culturally diverse workforce in order to recruit and maintain a pool of highly qualified and diverse workers in their organizations and to remain competitive in today's global marketplace.
- Racial and cultural diversity throughout an organization can bring in different perspectives in the organizations' management, leadership, executive decision-making and serve as a catalyst for increasing the company's diverse consumer base and meeting the needs of consumers from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds.

“Our commitment to diversity is a commitment to individuals and to the team. It's about creating an environment in which all associates can fulfill their potential without barriers, and in which the team is made stronger by the diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives of individuals. It's about giving all of us - individually and together - the best possible chance to succeed “

(CEO Kenneth Lewis of **Bank of America**, a company voted #1 in commitment to Diversity by Diversity, Inc. magazine, Visconti, 2007).