

The Different Hues of a Healthy Workplace



The focus in organizations which boast of a stable workplace essentially is two pronged—a culturally balanced and a gender neutral workforce

Today organizations the world over are emphasizing the importance of a balanced workforce. And this focus essentially is two pronged—a culturally balanced and gender neutral workforce. Cultural diversity is an over-riding imperative of an organization that essentially means mentoring individuals from different backgrounds so that they can be at a vantage point in terms of contributing to the organization. For an organization to ensure cultural diversity effective communication with individuals from diverse cultures is an irrefutable imperative. Organizations that are conducive to cultural diversity are essentially those that are sensitive to older employees, build foundations for teamwork and are equipped to deal with the varying perspectives of individuals from diverse cultures. These organizations also resolve conflicts by focusing on common goals. Organizations that reiterate cultural diversity strive to create a work environment that provides all people equal access to information, and opportunities for growth and development.

Strong Organizational Framework Needed

The importance of having organizational frameworks that enhance cultural diversity cannot be overemphasized in today's global business and corporate order. Because by building an inclusive workplace environment, organizations can aptly leverage their global team of associates, which is rich in diverse people, talent and ideas. There are many advantages of diversity in the workplace. Firstly, creativity increases when people with different ways of solving difficult problems work together towards a common solution. There is no one best answer to any question—the more ideas you can obtain from different people, the more likely you are to develop a workable answer. Also people from different cultures can offer insightful alternatives to standard organizational challenges.

Also productivity increases exponentially when people of all cultures work together towards a single inspiring goal. For instance, foreign executives are extremely successful in the American corporate world because of globalization and internationalization. More specifically people from China and India benefit US firms with their stellar quantitative skills. All these instances allude to the fact that increased productivity is an obvious advantage of

diversity in the workplace. Further new attitudes are brought to the business table by people from diverse cultures.

Other Forms of Diversity

From cultural diversity also emanates language diversity that is a clear overriding need in today's increasingly global economy. Because in order to truly build relationships with other people of the world, one must speak their language. Today hi-tech firms in particular are expanding into countries abroad. It is a tremendous advantage for these firms if they possess a workforce (at least at the operational and ground level) who can help the management understand and comprehend the end consumers, stakeholders and beneficiaries better.

And this is possible only when the workforce is proficient with the local language and can interpret beyond words. In other words they should be in a position to enable the organization to understand the meaning, essence, and contexts that lies behind the words and actions of the people that it caters to. Cultural diversity can also augment business processes like innovation etc. Because when people with different ideas come together and collaborate it can give rise to new processes and thought paradigms.

At a parallel vein exists the mandate of gender diversity that fundamentally means having a balanced ratio of women in the workplace on one hand and building an ecosystem (within the organization) that is conducive to the growth and development of women managers on the other.

The emphasis of including a balanced ratio of women in the workforce is essentially pronounced through a multitude of HR policies. Though individual organizations have their signature approach in terms of creating gender neutral

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work environments there are certain broad hallmarks that characterize these organizations.

Gender Neutral Organizations

Firstly gender neutral organizations are conscientious about providing equal opportunities to men and women. There is psychological evidence that women are predisposed with a set of qualities that place them in a winning stead as far as certain organizational roles are concerned. For instance, women have an inherent sense of empathy that augurs well in positions pertaining to corporate social responsibility and human resource development and management.

At one important level gender neutral organizations are essentially those organizations that on one hand support more avenues that can translate to fulfilling careers for women. They also score high in terms of offering training and mentoring programs that are tailored to meet specific needs.

In recent years there has been a series of studies that prove that hav-

ing a gender balance in an organization's boardroom improves financial performance. According to Catalyst companies with more women on the board of directors generally outperform those companies that have fewer women directors. Further there are enough studies to suggest that women have a set of leadership styles that in turn translate to a beneficial equation for the progressive minded organizations of today which thrive on innovation and are constantly seeking newer and more effective management styles.

For instance, women score higher than men in areas such as participative decision-making, mentoring and coaching, defining expectations and offering rewards, inspiring peers and taking the mantle of role models. These facts clearly portend to the fact that women are endowed with certain unique leadership traits. Consequently organizations that want to truly qualify as gender neutral organizations need to recognise this fact and have structured leadership succession programs for the benefit of aspiring women leaders.

Further organizations that are genuinely inspired by gender balance imperatives are the ones that champion transparency in the decision making process so that all employees irrespective of their gender feel valued in the organization. Moreover such organizations are sensitive to the unique challenges faced by a woman and hence provision flexible timings and virtual work environments that in turn considerably help in easing the pressures of work life. ■



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