

Diversified Work Environment – A Challenge for Workplace Manager

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ABSTRACT

Uniqueness is the law of nature. Two individuals are not alike. This law has a great impact on business organization's work environment. It's a big challenge to deal with number of individual & group differences at workplace. In this process number of challenges arise such as; staying humble, giving individual recognition, overcoming anger, dealing with anxiety, developing the attitude of acceptance, gender gap, generation gap, inspiring others and accommodating various beliefs. It requires knowledge of psychological aspects of human nature, a good understanding with the individuals, sense of humanity, involvement of informal groups for promoting friendly environment at workplace. The focus of this study is to find out the various challenges arising due to individual differences of number of person from different economic, social, cultural background come together for a common purpose, there are chances of mutual disagreement. It creates disturbance at workplace. If individual differences are not dealt with in a proper manner, it can cause heavy burden to a business organization. So, right action should be taken at right time. So the manager's role becomes more challenging while dealing with individual and group behavior. Despite this diversity in race, age, gender, native language, political beliefs, religion, sexual orientation and communication style at the workplace, there should be acceptance, respect for each other and team spirit.

Keywords: psychology, individual differences, challenges, workplace, manager

I. INTRODUCTION

It's very strange but true, the first and probably the most persistent source of management challenges is the management itself. There are countless external forces that can throw obstacles in smooth functioning of an organization. But most often, it's one's own thought process, feelings and way of responding to a situation that can create some of the biggest hurdles in efficient running of an organization. So the members of management committee or managers of various departments in a business organization are required to look into their own inner strengths and capabilities to cope with the situations at workplace arising due to individual and group differences. The study of individual differences helps us to understand not only what makes human similar to one another, but also what makes them different. By considering these variations, we can better understand the full concept of human behavior. As far as an organizational work environment is concerned, study and understanding of individual behavior is must, so that a manager can easily take appropriate steps to eradicate the bad effects on efficiency and effectiveness of the organization arising due to individual and group differences. To deal with the individual differences is not an easy task for a manager. Various challenges arising due to individual and group differences have been highlighted in this research article. There is need to develop some extra-ordinary traits to meet out these challenges.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To highlight the various individual and group differences at workplace.
- 2) To provide a list of various challenges arising due to individual and group differences.
- 3) To throw light on some extra-ordinary personal traits required to meet out the said challenges.
- 4) Learn to consider the differences as opportunities for future growth and development.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although it's difficult to face the challenges of diversified work environment, individual nature and behaviour and it's also difficult to channelize the energy of all the individuals towards common objectives of the business organisation. But at the same time, when people with different mind set come forward with unique ideas, it results in innovation and emergence of many creative and unique tasks to be performed for the growth and development of a business organisation.

Researcher has studied the work culture and environment of organizations doing business with the people of mixed culture, belonging to different religions and ages and saw amazing results.

The researcher also observed that for innovation, creativity, uniqueness, avoiding shortage of variety skills, reducing employees' turnover, building team spirit and availability of pool of wider talent, diversification in all respect must be embraced.

While working on this paper, inspirational sources for the researcher are various positioning and mission statements and objects of business organisations who are presently working successfully in diversified work environment. Such as;

Johnson & Johnson - a global medical devices, pharmaceutical and consumer goods company – has a detailed diversity-and-inclusion vision that aims “to maximize the global power of diversity and inclusion, to drive superior business results and sustainable competitive advantage.”

Johnson & Johnson is accomplishing this through employee resource groups, mentoring programs and the incorporation of diversity into the company's everyday work.

L'Oreal - is notable for its long-standing commitment to multicultural diversity, with a presence in over 130 countries on five continents.

Lenovo - a global PC provider, has built its company on the concept that “different is better,” championing and weaving diversity into the fabric of its business.

Kaiser Permanente - Kaiser Permanente, a healthcare provider, is unique among many corporations in that 60% of its staff is people of color. What's more, 75% of employees, and half of the executive team, are female.

IV. SCOPE OF STUDY

As every individual is different from other in number of aspects. It may be physical appearance, skills, experience etc. The present study will be helpful for every individual engaged in family life, social life, professional life and specially for those individuals who are responsible for managing the activities in a varied work environment. Present study is an inspiration for those who have lack of courage to work in a diversified environment. The findings of the article is of great help for business owners who want to work in strong diversity-and-inclusion practices.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Analytical approach has been used to find out various challenges faced by the manager at work place, while working in diversified work environment and interaction with few organizational heads working in varied business environment.

VI. SOURCE OF DATA

The study is based on secondary source of information that has been collected from books, internet, e-books, magazine, journals, websites and other published information.

Individual Differences

All the individuals are different from each other in many respects. Children born of the same parents and even the twins are not alike. These differences are seen in physical forms like; in heights, weight, color, complexion, age, strength etc. and differences in intelligence, achievement, interest, attitude, aptitude, learning habits, motor abilities, skills etc. These are called individual differences. Individual differences are studied under a separate branch of psychology called, “Differential Psychology”. It deals with individual and group differences in behavior.

Individual differences may be inter individual differences and intra individual differences. Differences between two or more individuals are called inter individual differences. For example; A is different from B. when individual is different from one ability to another, it is called intra individual differences.

VII. CHALLENGES

Following are the various challenges at workplace:

(1). Staying Humble

In a varied environment where individuals of different temperament are working together every day from morning to evening, there are chances of mutual disagreements. The role of manager becomes very crucial in such a situation. The best managers are humble managers. They know the art of getting the things done. It's not an easy task to channelize the energy of all the individuals having different temperament in one direction for common goals. It requires the quality of humility.

(2). Giving Individual Recognition

While developing and mentoring employees, it's very important to give recognition to each and every individual separately. Everyone needs special attention and appreciation. In a business organization it's a time consuming process and requires lots of humanity traits. It's a big challenge for a manager to have such extra-ordinary personal traits. It's a great job to make sure that all the employees are appreciated and not in a generic sort of way like, "thanks for everything you do", but in a specific sort of way like, "I see that you did in this moment and I sincerely appreciate your great work".

(3). Overcoming Anger

When people don't work according to scheduled instructions and within prescribed time due to indifferent personal attitude towards each other, it can cause irritation and anger to the manager. It seems to be obvious. But it can spoil the whole work place environment. So it's a great challenge to overcome irritation and anger in adverse environment. It's difficult to deal with individuals having different behavior.

(4) Dealing with Anxiety

To manage the things in a varied environment becomes an anxious matter. For example; 1).how the team members will react towards any change in the system, technology or work schedule etc. 2). how to implement the necessary changes among various individuals at workplace. It can create stress and anxiety to the manager. Sometimes it becomes a difficult task to overcome stress & anxiety.

(5) Acceptance

It's a very big challenge for a person to accept the other person without being judgmental. In other words, accepting the others as they are require a great courage. When there is a lack of acceptance of the diverse culture and beliefs among employees, conflicts may arise.

(6) Respect

In this world, everyone is trying to find out the similarities in others, creating such type of comfort zone, so that differences in opinion, preferences, attitudes and belief system can be minimized so as to eliminate the mutual future conflicts. But at the same time uniqueness, the law of nature can't be ignored. So it's easy to finding out the similarities but difficult to respect the differences.

(7) Accommodating Various Beliefs

Diversity in cultural, religious, spiritual and political beliefs can pose a challenge at workplace. Sometimes an employee's religious beliefs or practices can be in conflict with job retention.

(8) Ethnic and Cultural Differences

Unfortunately, issues from ethnic and cultural differences are still present at the workplace. There are still some persons who hold prejudice against those who have different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. It becomes difficult for the manager to lighten the issue and make the work environment effective.

9) Gender Gap

There are a lot of gender differences at present also. These variations create disturbance at workplace and sometimes it emerges in the form of big issues. It becomes difficult for the manager to make the work environment calm and peaceful.

According to recent survey, 40% of people believe that both men and women will hire men over women. This is supported by another study that men are 30% more likely to be promoted to a managerial position than women. Additionally, men earn an approximately 24.1% higher base pay than women.

(10) Physical Disabilities

As a disabled employee has a difficult time at workplace, because proper accommodation as simple as wheel-chair ramp is not available. Some employees also have service dogs, but they are not allowed inside. There is no arrangement of “quiet room” so as to ease their anxiety. All these issues will make it difficult to use full potential of employees. So productivity is adversely affected.

(11) Generation Gap

In large scale organizations, there are more diversified age groups from teenagers to senior citizens. Variations may arise due to generation gap. Employees from one generation may have difficulties in adapting to changes at the workplace and the work culture that the other younger generation is bringing about. As a result, social circle may be formed and some employees may be isolated from the team.

(12) Language and Communication Skill

When the individuals from different regions work together, language and communication is a common problem among employees. There may be the problem of distortion of facts due to language and communication skills.

(13) Inspiring

All the individuals are different from each other in many respects. It becomes difficult to inspire or motivate all at the same time. A wise manager has to apply various motivational techniques for each and every individual.

(14) Developing Employees

When the employees are from different social, religious and cultural background and they are having different temperament, it's a big challenge to make overall development of employees.

(15) Guiding Change

Today's environment is changing very fast due to change in science and technology. So there is need of managing, mobilizing, understanding and leading the change. It requires knowing how to mitigate consequences, overcome resistance to change and deal with the team members' reaction to change. So in an environment where there are group differences, to become a successful change manager is not so easy task.

(16) Honing Effectiveness

In the changing environment, developing relevant skills such as; time management, prioritization, strategic thinking, decision making and getting up to speed with the job is essentially required. But due to varied behavior it becomes difficult to develop such relevant skills.

(17) Delegation

Delegation is easy but “delegation well” is not so easy. To deal with the complexities of the interpersonal relationships and handling team dynamics is not so easy task. Delegation of a particular task requires deep study and analysis of individual nature & various psychological factors so that work can be assigned accordingly i.e. what kind of work should be given and to whom the work should be given.

(18) Avoiding Burnout

While dealing with varied nature of individuals and group behavior, the person managing the task becomes so frustrated, he push himself too hard, never rest and wear insane hours as a red-eyed badge of courage. But if one burns out himself, he is not leading anyone. It's tempting to try to be the superhero, but if he is not taking care of himself, he is not stepping back to fill his own well in terms of emotional rest and self care, then how can he lead and inspire others.

So it's real challenge to avoid burnout and finding the solutions.

(19) Being Authentic

It's a big challenge to be authentic and true towards individuals. Being real about expressing what a manager is feeling about someone, engaging in honest conversation with group members without any discrimination show humanity. It means having an accurate picture of the self in front of others. It's hard to in such an environment where variety individuals are involved.

Great personalities take the challenge to be authentic.

(20) Tackling Rumors

Sometimes during the process of communication, so much can get skipped, jumbled or misinterpreted and when there is faulty communication people start filling the gaps with their own assumptions as per their different thought process and behavior. It's critical for the success of an organization to have alignment with a common vision, purpose and understanding. It takes continuous attention and communication to make it happen.

(21) Constructive Conflicts

Conflicts are a part of today's life and it's most definitely part of business also. Due to complexities of interpersonal relationship and differences of opinion, number of conflicts arises. Effective manager embraces the fact that conflicts has to happen and at the same time, conflicts should be constructive and not destructive. Conflicts can be incredibly healthy for that organization which is willing to grow out of it. So it's a big challenge to steer conflicts towards most positive and constructive resolution.

VIII. FINDINGS

Uniqueness is the beauty of this world. One should enjoy this beauty of uniqueness that exists within each and every individual. But every individual wants to find out the similarities with other in order to maintain his comfort zone and always criticizes the differences, because differences result in disagreement and arguments.

As we can't eradicate the differences, can't go against the natural law, so we have to accommodate varied beliefs, behavior and attitudes. So, the best way to deal with the differences is that one should give positive acceptance and should start giving respect to the various individual differences. A manager can easily do so by inculcating some personal qualities in his life for example; being authentic, avoiding burnout, staying humble, giving individual recognition, overcoming anger, dealing with anxiety, reducing gender and generation gap at workplace, guiding for implementing change, well delegation, tackling spreading of rumors etc. so every manager should pay attention towards development of these personal traits within. Moreover, a manager should learn to consider the differences as opportunities for future growth and development, because for innovations differentiation of minds is an essential requirement.

IX. CONCLUSION

There are number of challenges at workplace, which may arise due to individual and group differences. Extraordinary personal traits are required to meet out the said challenges. So, a good level of understanding and adjustment with the individuals is required by the manager.

In spite of various challenges faced by the manager, one should not forget that when different minds come together to achieve common goals, the result can be monumental. It has been reported that companies that practice diversity and inclusion, outperform other non-diverse companies by 15%. So, embracing a diverse workforce should be a top priority for management.

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