**Workplace Culture**

**The need to accept diversity in the workplace**

**Workplace diversity** refers to the variety of differences between people in an organization. That sounds simple, but **diversity** encompasses race, gender, ethnic group, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, background and more.

*www.multiculturaladvantage.com*

**Globalisation** – increasing mixing of cultures – need to work productively together. Requires acceptance, understanding and accommodation of diversity (differences)

**Ethnic & cultural links**

* Everyone has a cultural identity – dynamic (changing rather than constant)
* People may identify with multiple cultures
* Cultural stereotyping can lead to
  + Discrimination
  + Short sightedness – not getting the most out of workers – limiting productivity
  + Not seeing the person, only their culture thereby making untrue assumptions about them
* Successful work relationships see people as individuals rather than identify them by their culture/background/age etc – this will lead to more harmonious & productive workplaces

Benefits of cultural diversity

* Gain new insights into different cultures – beneficial from a management & marketing view
* Brings differing knowledge, skills, abilities to the workplace
* Visible parts of a cultures are only part of cultural identity

**Generational differences**

* Most workplaces have multiple generations
* More baby boomers are working longer (past retirements), tech-savvy Generation Z are graduating & entering the workforce – highlighting differences in values, communication styles, work habits
* A period of adaptation is required as each generation adjusts to working alongside each other
  + New talent needs to respect the older workers’ experience
  + Established talent needs to adjust & be flexible

Benefits of generational differences

* Improved talent attraction, retention engagement – promotes creativity, innovation, teamwork
* Variety of experiences, perspectives, backgrounds – improved insights through variety
* Competitive advantage keeps customers loyal
  + Relationships built overtime with older workers paves the way from new relationships to be fostered quicker between younger employees & existing customers.
  + Workers who ‘speak the same language’ as their customers
* Enhanced workplace productivity – mentoring (low cost training from older workers to new ones – show them the ropes), interaction between generations spur creativity through sharing of different perspectives
* Better succession planning & leadership strength – work you way up the company ladder – strong knowledge of the company’s direction, established positive working relationships with fellow employees (respect)

Cross Generation Collaboration – communication, connection, conflict engagement, career development

**Strategies for working in a diverse workplace**

Productive & accepting workplaces don’t just happen

**Attending cultural awareness training**

* Cultural awareness is about becoming aware of your own cultural values, beliefs, perceptions & recognising the affect these have on how we see, interpret & evaluate things.
* Improved awareness leads to improved workplace culture, productivity as people feel accepted & valued through shared understanding of each others’ cultures

Cultural awareness training

* Aims to improve people’s understanding of different cultures – encourage culturally safe conversations
* Enables people to translate cultural knowledge & understanding in a practical context
* Increases all staffs’ knowledge & understanding of cultural similarities & differences
* Provides an opportunity for engagement with people from different cultures
* Provides an easier transition for staff from different backgrounds
* Assist in retaining staff from diverse backgrounds long term
* Reduce risk of behaviour contrary to equal opportunity legislation
* Wont always result in respectful or tolerant behaviours – in these cases explicit communication of anti-discrimination legislation is needed

Training includes

* Maintaining a positive attitude to different cultures
* Learning about other cultures
* Working at improving communication skills
* Treating all co-workers with respect
* Sharing information about cultural practices

**Using appropriate communication techniques**

* Show respect, consideration, genuine interest, be polite, respect privacy

Communicating with different cultures requires consideration of

* Different ways of speaking or titles that may be preferred
* Male and female roles clearly defined along cultural boundaries
* Different speech patterns / language
* Codes of behaviour
* Clothing
* Dietary and alcohol restrictions due to cultural observance
* Gender-specific tasks to complete
* Non-verbal communication and body language, e.g. eye contact, use of touching etc
* Use of physical space.

Communicating between generations requires consideration of

* Formal & informal language – signs of respect
* Slang, abbreviations
* Use of technology – eg email
* Overcome differences – face to face team building activities & icebreakers – results in sharing of stories, building of relationships, better understanding of each other

**Awareness of equal opportunity legislation**

Federal – Australian Human Rights Commission (organisation)

**Statutory responsibilities include:**

* Education and public awareness
* Discrimination and human rights complaints
* Human rights compliance
* Policy and legislative development.

These are achieved via

* Resolving complaints
* Holding public inquiries
* Developing human rights education programs & resources for schools
* Providing independent legal advice
* Researching into human rights & discrimination issues

State – Equal Opportunity Commission Western Australia (organisation)

* **Eliminate discrimination** - eliminate, so far as is possible, discrimination against persons on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, family responsibility or family status, race, religious or political conviction, impairment, age or, in certain cases, gender history in the areas of work, accommodation, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services, and the activities of clubs
* **Eliminate harassment** -sexual harassment and racial harassment in the workplace, and in educational institutions and sexual harassment and racial harassment related to accommodation:
* **Promote recognition & acceptance** of equality of men, women, persons of all races regardless of their religious or political convictions, their impairments or ages.
* Commissioner investigates, researches & inquires into all matters relating to discrimination

The [*Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (EO Act)](http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main_mrtitle_305_homepage.html) is the main piece of legislation underpinning the principles of equal opportunity in Western Australia. The EO Act addresses discrimination in the areas of employment, accommodation, education and the provision of goods, facilities, services and activities on the following grounds:

* sex
* sexual orientation
* gender history
* family responsibility or family status
* marital status
* race
* religious or political conviction
* age
* impairment
* pregnancy
* Essentially both cover the same grounds/areas of discrimination, however there are some gaps.

**The challenges and opportunities created by globalisation for individuals & organisations**

**Globalisation** isthe freer movement of goods, services, capital, people, ideas across borders.

Individuals

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Challenges | Opportunities |
| * Competing against more people (global labour market) * Potential for exploitation – particularly in developing economic nations – forced labour, trafficking, sweatshops | * Global job opportunities – travel for work, promotion, training * Exposure to cultures – widen perspectives * Work for MNC * Increase economic opportunities * Consumer choice * Work virtually |

Organisations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Challenges | Opportunities |
| * Global competition – MNC benefit at expense of local business * Need culture of continuous improvement to remain competitive * Global watch dogs – exposure of unethical practices | * Global talent pool to employ from * Economies of scale * Operate in nations with better financial incentives * Corporate social responsibility opportunities – improve business’s reputation * Online market – good for start ups, low costs yet global market |

**The concept of a culture of continuous improvement**

**Definition** –deeply rooted & unrelenting drive to constantly enhance business processes & eliminate waste. **What is good enough for today may not be good enough for tomorrow.**

* Important to remain internationally competitive in today’s globalised economy
* Starts with developing a strategy for measuring work, improving work & changing work.
* Only effective when employees are committed to the organisation, understand how to be innovate & are supported in this innovation
* Ongoing cycle of feedback, reflection & growth for both the company & employees – continuously reflecting on how things can be improved
* Many small steps rather than one massive change – easier for workers & the business to adapt
* Explicit communication of expectations between employers & employees
* Employees fully aware of expectations, how they will be achieved & what the end result should look like
* Employees feel valued and part of the process – may further define their career path, develop an ‘encouraging culture’
* Adequate training & access to resources is provided to employees
* Data driven decision making – ensure change/achievement is measurable – skilled people to interpret data in an ongoing manner
* Consistency
* Implement necessary new technology, ideas to improve efficiency & productivity – train/upskill workers
* Stay aware of current trends & developments – ties in with customer confidence
* Committed leadership
* Constant communication to employees so they understand/aware of what’s happening, feel part of the change and valued – improve their commitment & motivation
* Increases productivity, efficiency, profit

**The contribution of a culture of continuous improvement to competitiveness of a business in the global market place**

* Efficiency & productivity
* Renewal & relevancy
* Maximise profit
* Sustainability

**The impact of organisational restructuring on the human, physical & financial resources of a business**

**Restructuring** act or reorganising legal, ownership, operational or other structures of a business for the purpose of increasing its profitability or improving its organisation to suit its present needs.

**Examples** of restructuring – relocation, offshoring, outsourcing, bankruptcy, merger/acquisition, expansion, downsizing

Human resources – the people involved in running & operating an organisation

Positive impacts

* Increase efficiency & productivity of workforce
* Improved job security for those who remain as company more sustainable
* New job roles – more opportunity for training, innovation, career development
* Improved worker wellbeing, work engagement
* Higher job satisfaction if new role

Negative impacts

* Survivor syndrome
* Loss organisational knowledge

Physical resources – anything needed to carry out daily operational activities – includes facilities, plant & equipment, consumables

Should assess regularly to ensure in top functioning condition to maintain efficiency & meeting current demand. Ties in with the culture of continuous improvement.

Staying up to date with current trends, standards & practices links with culture continuous improvement & global competitiveness.

Regular maintenance & improved physical resources result in efficiency and directly tie to sustainable performance of the business. A business can be more resilient over time –withstand global shocks provided they have healthy economic, social & environmental systems that are flexible & adaptable.

Positive impacts

* Increase or upgraded equipment – more efficient/productive, change from labour intensive to capital intensive manufacturing.
* Better location
* Less physical resources to manage
* Legal compliance – regarding physical access, environmental standards & regulations, energy efficiency, safety, security, aesthetics (fines, imprisonment for not meeting)
* Improved efficiency & productivity
* Room for expansion

Negative impacts

* Change of consumables
* Costs
* Lost time
* Compatibility issues
* Poor location
* Quality & productivity issues

Financial resources – money available to an organisation (managed via a budget that records all expected revenue & expenditure for a financial year, including contingency funds)

Positive impacts

* Potential savings in staff, running costs
* Lease rather than purchase expensive equipment
* Outsourcing
* Economies of scale
* Smaller, cheaper premises

Negative impacts

* Initial high costs in purchasing, installing new equipment
* Redundancy payments
* Retraining costs
* Relocation costs

Review

Advantages of ethnic & cultural diversity in the workplace

Ethnic & cultural diversity includes

Key differences between generations exist in the areas of…

The advantages of generational diversity include

Generational diversity is

Ways of accommodating ethnic & cultural diversity in the workplace include

Definition of diversity

Awareness of equal opportunity legislation is advantageous for employers

Awareness of equal opportunity legislation is advantageous for employees

The role/s of the Australian Human Rights Commission is

The role/s of the Equal Opportunity Commission of WA is

Globalisation is

Opportunities for organisations & why they are opportunities

Challenges for individuals & why they are challenges

Opportunities for individuals & why they are opportunities

The advantages of a culture of continuous improvement

A culture of continuous improvement is

What is involved in a culture of continuous improvement

Challenges for organisations & why they are challenges

Using appropriate communication techniques is best suited for addressing issues or concerns relating to

The benefits of appropriate communication techniques include

Appropriate communication techniques involve

Cultural awareness training is best suited for addressing the issues of

Benefits of cultural awareness training

Potential issues relating to cultural awareness training

Cultural awareness training involves

Strategies for working in a diverse workplace include:

* Cultural awareness training
* Appropriate communication techniques
* Awareness of Equal Opportunity legislation