

BACKGROUND

A Business Case for Diversity – Key Points

Source

A Business Case for Diversity (Dr. Jeffrey Gandz, Professor, Richard Ivey School of Business, The University of Western Ontario, updated Fall 2001)

Key Quotes

“Increasingly, the leadership literature is beginning to focus on the critical requirement for leaders to, ‘bring people of diverse backgrounds and interests together in ways that provide fair and equitable opportunities to contribute their best, achieve personal goals and realize their full potential.’ This requires sensitivity to ethnic, cultural, gender, sexual orientation, religious and other differences... and a commitment to develop organizational cultures, systems, processes, practices, procedures and policies which reflect this sensitivity and remove the obstacles to achieving diversity.”
(*Business Case for Diversity*, p. 17)

“Diversity in the future will be driven by the imperatives of competitiveness, demography, immigration and globalization, and these will supercede the social activism and legislative interventions of the past.” (*Business Case for Diversity*, p. 5)

Managing Diversity is as Important as Achieving Diversity

- Research indicates that diverse teams are capable of developing high quality solutions to tasks that are “unstructured” (no single, deterministic solution).
- Under such circumstances, the variety of inputs and perspectives that diverse members of a team can bring are extremely valuable.
- Maximizing this potential means:
 - Recognizing differences based on any characteristic that helps to shape a person’s attitudes, behaviours or perspective (such as age, ethno cultural background, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, religion, education, marital status, etc.)
 - Making management decisions to ensure that the value of these differences exceeds the difficulties that differences can create.

Potential Benefits of Managed Diversity

- Greater satisfaction with government services
- Identification of and capitalization on opportunities to improve products and services
- Effective attraction, retention, motivation and utilization of human resources
- Improved decision-making quality at all organizational levels

Responding to the Needs of Diverse Customers

- Increasing diversity demands that public sector organizations effectively identify and serve this diverse community.
- Effective responsiveness occurs on three levels:
 - Service – Diversity is required at the frontline to facilitate relationships and contacts with a diverse population.
 - Design – Diversity extended into management positions, engineering groups, marketing departments and other operational groups can help design and deliver products in ways that appeal to diverse customer segments.
 - Strategic – Organizations attuned to diversity make fundamental strategic decisions based on how different customer groups perceive their organizations and how they feel about working with those who may not understand or empathize with their needs.

- 30 -

FOR A COPY OF THIS REPORT OR MORE INFORMATION

Sangeeta Subramanian
Manager, abcGTA
The Maytree Foundation
416 944 2627 ext. 235
Email: ssubramanian@maytree.com