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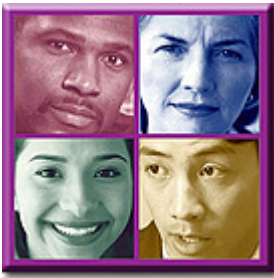
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Diversity Initiative



Many employers retain consultants or establish in-house diversity staffs (which often operate separately from HR departments) to institute such programs in their organizations. A diversity program is usually intended to help organizations perform the following tasks: (1) identify diversity problems within the organization; (2) set general or concrete diversity goals; (3) formulate specific diversity programs and procedures designed to meet those goals; and (4) train management personnel to successfully manage diversity in the workplace.

**Diversity Audit.** A common first step is to conduct a "diversity scan" or "diversity audit" of the organization. A diversity scan primarily is designed to help the employer create a "diversity profile" of the workplace. This might include analysis of data, surveys, or interviews to obtain demographic and other information relative to race, sex, ethnicity and other profile information of the work force. It might also include survey information or anecdotes about perceptions of employees regarding diversity issues (perceived attitudes of management, perceived obstacles to advancement, perceived bias, etc.), the perspective of managers on diversity issues, and the current practices and procedures in place that may create unintended barriers to the progress of women and minorities within the company.

The audit might first involve a statistical review of the work force in order to determine the number of women and minorities and the positions they hold. This statistical analysis also can serve as a "baseline" against which an organization can measure its future progress in promoting diversity. It is common for many employers to already possess some of this information as part of their reporting requirements under federal EEO statutes (e.g., the EEO-1 Form) or as part of an affirmative action plan (AAP) under Executive Order 11246.

A second step may include employee interviews and surveys. Staff will interview or survey employees, individually or in groups, about such topics as the company's "corporate culture"; the ways employees are selected, assigned jobs and promoted; whether extroversion is valued over introversion; whether employees' ideas are routinely sought; and the perceived institutional obstacles to the success and advancement of women and minorities within the organization. The employees interviewed sometimes may be broken down into same-gender or same-race "focus groups" (e.g., black female supervisors, Asian non-management personnel, female managers, etc.).

A third step in the internal diversity audit may consist of an analysis of the organization's systems, policies and practices, and identifying those that may have an adverse impact on establishing and managing a diverse work force. For example, it may be determined that certain positions have educational degree requirements that are not actually necessary to successfully perform the job, but that work to the disadvantage of otherwise capable women and minorities. Or, it may be determined that office politics and personal favoritism play too great a role in deciding which employees receive promotions, and that this may hinder employees who are of a cultural background different from that of the relevant decision-makers.

Another diversity activity may involve training employees with the goal of "valuing diversity." The methods used to "train" employees in diversity may vary greatly. The primary goal of diversity training is to eliminate conscious or unconscious prejudices by: (1) making employees aware of their own biases; (2) sensitizing employees to cultural differences; and (3) teaching employees to value cultural differences.

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