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| DETAILS OF ASSIGNMENT | | | | | |  | | | |
| **STUDENT NAME** | | Minh Tho Duong | **ID NUMBER** | | | | | | 100859545 |
| **EMAIL ADDRESS** | | 100859545@student.swin.edu.au | **PHONE CONTACT** | | | | | | 0414 401 874 |
| **UNIT CODE \* NAME** | | ICT30005 Professional Issues in IT | | | | | | | |
| **ASSESSMENT TITLE** | | Assignment 1 – Briefing Paper (Diversity in the IT workplace) | | | | | | | |
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# Introduction

Besides the rapid development of the world, there are many innovations in the way of working and managing jobs. Specifically, we are aiming to work with more interaction with people. The isolated work environment is no longer suitable and is easily excluded. As an African Proverb once said: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." Therefore, diversity in the workplace becomes a common topic that people are interested in.

Moreover, Information technology is an outstanding industry with several improvements in a short time. So, it is necessary that people in the IT industry can quickly adapt the diversity. The purpose of this briefing paper is achieving a better understanding about essential aspects of this issue by giving a clear definition of diversity in the IT workplace; the benefits and challenges of this issue and how to manage diversity to achieve the best results. It uses the information referenced from a variety of sources, such as research papers, books, online articles, etc.

# Definition of Diversity in the IT Workplace

According to Esty et al. 1995: “Diversity in the workplace can define as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, and valuing differences among people concerning age, class, race, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, etc”. It exists when the company’s workforce contains people from different backgrounds and experiences (Rose Johnson, 2018). In general, a study of Priscilla Dike from Arcada University of Applied Sciences in 2013 pointed out that there are two kinds of diversity in the workplace:

- The first one is the differences between various individuals, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. This kind of diversity can be easily noticed by the first impression and by the way people view the world. For example, in the Annual diversity report 2019, the number of women at Google increased to 33.2% (+1.9 ppts) globally, with 25.7% women in technical positions.

- The second type of diversity is the differences between religion, education, geographical location, income, etc. This kind of diversity has a stronger impact on the way people interact with others. Moreover, these differences are important and are not easy to be changed. For example, IBM mentioned in the Workforce diversity report 2019 that it has a large network of company branches over 170 countries, where more than 70 languages are spoken.

The diversity in the industry can give advantages and disadvantages to the organizations. First of all, it is an essential working management trend in modern life. Ginni Rometty, Chairman, President, and CEO of IBM, said: “IBM has embraced diversity, and it gives opportunities for IBMers and our clients to achieve their full potential.” However, there are also significant problems for every organization to manage diversity in the workplace.

# Benefits of Diversity in the IT Workplace

Diversity in the workplace is considered an essential nature of a modern and efficient working environment. In particular, it will be useful for colleagues and organizations. By respect and trust with others, diversity creates a healthy and unified work environment. This is a crucial factor that organizations and managers are aiming to consolidate and develop their work. The following statistics aim to explain this more clearly:

- Research by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and Deloitte demonstrates that diversity workplace can improve business performance. In specific, their ability to innovate (83% uplift), responsiveness to changing customer needs (31% uplift), and team collaboration (42% uplift). (VicHealth, 2019)

- In 2015, a study from Diversity Matters examined 366 public companies from around the world. The result pointed out that companies which have diversity in the workforce and managing were 35% more likely to have higher financial returns. (Niki Vincent, 2018)

The statistical numbers in these cases proved that there are many advantages of being diversity in the workplace. These are some common benefits:

- Improve productivity: diversity enhances competitiveness and expansion. The combination of age, experience, knowledge, etc improve the effectiveness of work done.

- Achieve effective teamwork: the work is divided into many parts and contains knowledge from many fields. So, an employee working multi-task still cannot finish jobs perfectly without double-check from others. Diversity in the workplace takes advantage of the differences to complement each other and improve the work better.

- Exchange knowledge and skills: diversity in the workplace creates opportunities for individuals to interact with new cultures, ideas, and perspectives. Thereby contributing to the development of positive thinking and insights on the problem.

- Diversity experience: diversity in the workplace is a useful experience. It creates opportunities for individuals to gain new knowledge and get rid of isolated thinking. Diversity is not only beneficial in the current working environment but also valuable in life.

# Challenges of Diversity in the IT Workplace

Diversity in the workplace brings many benefits to individuals and organizations. However, diversity also brings many disadvantages base on its characteristics. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to adopt and adapt suitable strategies to solve challenges currently posed by diversity in the workplace (Helen Eboh CLETUS et al. 2018). These are some challenges of diversity:

- Communication issues: Communication is the most essential criteria in the workplace. It allows people to express their ideas and contribute to the work. However, in the diverse working environment, there are many challenges in communication, typically misunderstanding. Misunderstanding can occur in many cases, such as between people with different languages; between technical people and non-technical people, etc. Moreover, the difference in language and communication style can cause uncomfortable communication. Also, ineffectively communication can negatively impact the workplace.

- Cultural Differences: The differences of culture in the company's workforce may bring many serious issues. Cultural differences lead to differences in ideas and ways of thinking. It is not easy to reconcile and absorb those differences. Racism and discrimination are typical problems. In addition, each culture has typical characteristics. For example, some Muslim employees use Friday time for praying, so they are not available to work on this time. That requires appropriate management solutions. Also, diversity in cultural may have difficulties on religions and political characteristics.

- Gender and Lifestyle Choices: Diversity in the workplace also affects the interaction between individuals. Everyone will have their characteristics and interests, such as gender, age, appearance, etc. Some people argue that it is necessary to consider about gender and lifestyle choices of employees. Because those characteristics are often related to social prejudices. Although many studies have shown that gender and lifestyle choices do not affect working performance, this is still a matter of concern and appropriate strategies for an effective working environment.

- High Cost of Diversity Management: Finally, to achieve a useful and productive working environment, it is indispensable to have management measures. As a result, companies need to spend much money on training and hiring appropriate employees who can manager diversity in the workplace. Besides, it is also necessary to always pay attention and solve problems that arise.

# How to manage Diversity in the IT Workplace

Diversity in the workplace brings many development prospects and many risks and difficulties for companies and organizations. Therefore, it is essential to devise appropriate development directions. Shaveta Dhuppar (2015) once said, "Successful strategies link diversity progress directly to business results." Here are some specific strategies:

- The hiring process: this is the first step to find the appropriate staffs. The company should include diversity characteristics in the hiring process with specific job descriptions and demonstrate the diversity of requirements to select potential candidates. Moreover, it is also useful to combine recruitment with universities to disseminate the recruitment process and create opportunities for fresh workers with high enthusiasm.

- Diversity training programs: Organize training events for staffs and managers to approach diversity naturally and comfortably. Every employee needs to understand the benefits of diversity in the workplace and form a mindset to avoid discrimination. This is also an opportunity for employees of the company to interact and learn from each other. For managers, it is necessary to build resolving conflict skills.

- Communication: encourage employees to exchange their thoughts and problems. Managers should create a friendly impression and a comfortable atmosphere so that employees feel confident about sharing their interests at work or the difficulties that arise in personal life. So, manager can quickly identify and solve the problems.

- Provide equal opportunities: managers need to focus on an equal and efficient working environment. It is very important to avoid bias or repression in any case. Because this can easily lead to employee's dissatisfaction and cause unnecessary conflicts. Every employee should have equal rights to develop at work. Besides, there should be regular group meetings so that managers can easily observe and evaluate performance.

- Periodical feedback: Finally, the company should set periodic feedback to monitor the satisfaction of employees. Then, adjust the diversity management policy accordingly.

# Conclusion

Diversity in the workplace has become a method of organization for most companies. People need to understand, respect, and adapt to the difference. For employees, diversity creates many opportunities for learning and career development. For managers, capturing and promoting the features of diversity will enhance the benefits for the company. Therefore, diversity in the workplace also poses many obstacles and challenges. Depending on the organizational structure of each company, various training programs and management policies will bring corresponding results.

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