Assignment 1 Effective Tech Organization

Where you stand and influential reference group

We all have some reference groups that influence our decisions or the way we act. As Marshall Goldsmith states it in this paper “The size of our referent group may range from “the world” to “me”” this shows us that there is multitude of possibilities when it comes to referent group. The environment that we live in mostly determines the different referent groups we decide to attach ourselves too. Being from Africa, I was exposed to this reality at a very young age. Africa is a very diverse continent with more than 3000 ethnic groups as well as 53 countries, this leads to having multiple cultures and referent groups. Sometimes people who are from the same countries can have different cultures as well as different views for a same matter.

Growing the two reference groups that influenced me the most was my country of origin and my religion. While living in my country of origin, I was never aware that I was influenced by those factors. When you are surrounded by people who share the same values that are influenced by the common environment, you can’t see the influence that those factors have on you. As Ghosn said “surrounding yourself with people who look like you, from the same culture and background, will not help you learn”. It wasn’t until I traveled aboard for the first time to the republic of Congo that I realized how different I was from my peers in school.

For example, I realized that in that country most people were identifying themselves by the ethnic group they belong too. Ethnicity was tied to everything, the part of the country your originally from, the part of town you live in even your political opinion. While where am from ethnicity didn’t play any role in all those factors, we all identified ourselves are Senegalese and no one cared about your ethnicity. Even though there was some cultural differences driven by ethnicity it was never to that extend. In Senegal different ethnic groups have ways of celebrating different events or the language we speak. In this country Congo it was different and after living there for a few years I realized that part of it was due to the different political conflict that happened in that country in the nineteen nineties. Due to the history of their country people from different ethnic groups couldn’t even get along to be able to live in the same neighborhood let along working together in a same company.

If one was to bring people from different ethnic groups in the same workspace, they might face difficulties due to the antagonism that exist between those people.

After a few years, I moved to the US to pursue my studies and that’s where I realized how my I country influenced me in any aspect. In Senegal we are not that outgoing, we are usually quite it takes time before we start interacting with strangers. This affected me often in the workplace, as I was finding it difficult to interact with others. Another issue I was having was that sometimes some of my co-workers would ask me questions that I would find offensive. After a few months I started not paying attention to those comments and my co-workers started doing it less and less. I realized that after a few months with me, they started understanding how those comments were making me feel and that it wasn’t probably appropriate. I also started caring less about it, because I understood that maybe they were making those comments without knowing that it could heart me. After reading Marshall Godsmith’s paper I started rethink about it. I told myself that maybe it was just due to the fact of both of us not being prepared for that. If the company had tried making them learn about other people’s cultures or just even try to understand others it could have made a difference. After that job I moved to another company, that had a diversity program where they were gathering all the workers once a month and try to do a presentation about a certain culture. The people at that workplace were more open minded and treated me better and I think it’s due to that little exposure they were having from foreign cultures.

As for my religion, it governs more my interaction with other people and what I believe being wrong or right. But I think if there is one thing that living in different countries have taught me is that we can’t always be right or think that our culture is the one and only good one.

Reference groups can have huge negative impacts in the workplace. But if the people sharing a common environment are trained or put in a situation that will help them understand each other it can be an asset for a company. Because diversity can help each person learn something positive and new from the other one.