An Examination of Methods Utilized by Small Businesses In Western Wisconsin to Incorporate Diversity Into the Workplace

by

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Abstract

Diversity is a term that holds many different meanings too many different people. It can include anything that sets people apart from one another. Cultural diversity is becoming more and more of an issue when describing the American workforce as a whole, but what effect does it have on a smaller scale like western Wisconsin?

Small businesses in western Wisconsin will were examined to determine how they integrate diversity into the workplace. The objective is to understand what methods are currently utilized in order to provide recommendations to other small businesses in western Wisconsin as to how to increase their efforts to incorporate diversity in the workplace.

Recommendations were generated based upon a literature review and interviews conducted with five small businesses in the targeted area. Businesses were chosen from

different industries; all five interviews consisted of the same ten questions. Interviews were intended to reveal general information about the organizations, where they currently stand in regards to diversity, resources, and what have been the biggest successes and challenges faced thus far.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Through the fast paced changes in demographics within the American population; leaders in organizations have recognized the importance of valuing diversity in organizations as well as in their customers. These individuals are realizing that diversity within the workforce is a direct key to the success of their organization and that these new ideas and ways of thinking are the reasons for this. The increased array of ideas that come from a diverse workforce can stimulate creativity and innovation.

Many organizations are beginning to encourage diversity initiatives because managing people's differences in various ways contribute to more productive workers and allow for a more compatible team (Casado, 2007). Today businesses who have already implemented successful diversity training programs are already one step ahead of the game. The actions cannot stop there it is one thing to provide the training but the organization must follow through and incorporate the policies throughout all areas of the organization (Wentling, 1997).

According to the SBA, or United States Small Business Administration; a small business is determined by the size; standard number of employees or the standards in millions of dollars earned. The exact industry the business is in then establishes if that the organization is then considered to be a small business. The number of employees that made up a small business peaked between 500 and 1,000 employees (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2008).

In a perfect world, all companies both large and small would have the resources available that are needed to develop diversity into their workforce. In the small business sector, a diversity training program may not be an option. The results may not guarantee a return on investment for the time and money invested into the training of so few employees. There are many other

diversity initiatives that may better suit these businesses in regards to fulfilling their needs and better utilizing their resources (Hartenian, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Diversity programs are growing to be more critical due to the ever-changing demographics that are making up the Western Wisconsin workforce. Five small businesses in Western Wisconsin were sought out to evaluate; their various techniques in which they used in the implementation process and to offer continuous diversity awareness.

Purpose of the Study

The current practices of five companies' diversity programs were examined to determine what if any diversity methods were being utilized. An understanding of all five businesses diversity initiatives may offer recommendations for improving other companies in Western Wisconsin efforts to incorporate the value of diversity into the workplace.

Assumptions of the Study

Cultural diversity training programs are applicable to organizations in many different sectors and locations. It is presumed that the small business may not have the resources to carry out big diversity endeavors. Upon completion of the study, the organizations would assume that some methods have been successful and some efforts that have failed.

Definition of Terms

Culture. A way of life of a group of people; the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next (Li &Karakowsky 2001).

Discrimination. The unfair treatment toward or against a group or individual on the basis of prejudice (WordNet, 2010).

Diversity. A difference between people, for example, in race, age, gender, disability, geographic origin, family status, education, or personality, that can affect workplace relationships and achievement (Diversity, n.d.).

Ethnicity. A particular affiliation or group resulting from racial or cultural ties (WordNet, 2010).

Minorities. A group or person smaller in number than a different group (WordNet, 2010).

Race. The categorization of people who are believed to belong to the same genetic stock (Word.Net, 2010)**.**

Limitations of the Study

The researcher was introduced to a great deal of information in reference to diversity. Personal contact made with the organizations was also a constraint due to the time and location of the organizations and the researcher. The literature resources are limited due to time restrictions and the mass quantity of material currently available on this topic.

Methodology

A collection of resources obtained from the University of Wisconsin-Stout's library data base as well as various internet sources were used to assist in the completion of a comprehensive literature review. Both the methodology and the results of the study will be addressed in great detail. Any recommendations or conclusions made from findings determined from the study will also be presented.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The literature covers the importance of incorporating diversity in the workplace. Included in this chapter is literature about: diversity, workforce diversity, successful tools for developing a diversity program, and diversity initiatives. The section on successful tools for developing a diversity program offers and in-depth view of the elements needed to cultivate an effective diversity.

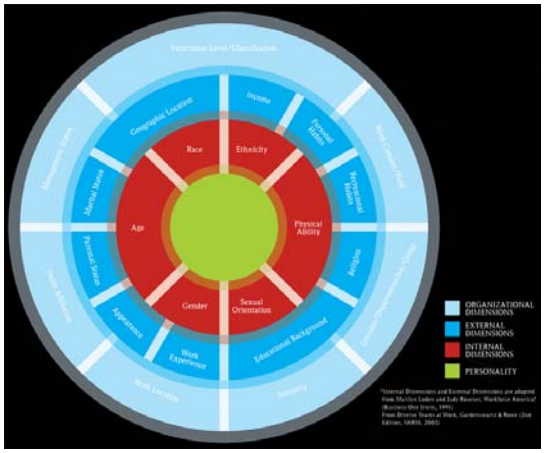
Diversity

Diversity is a term which means many things to many people (Wentling, 1997). Some fundamental elements of diversity include but are not limited to gender, race, culture, age, religion, and disabilities (Mavin &Girling, 2000). The term diversity is meant to include everyone and welcome all the differences among us (Sills, 2005). Diversity promotes both the visible and invisible differences which may also include sexual orientation, political ideologies, size, geographic location, and other attributes and experiences that can differentiate individuals (Mavin &Girling, 2000).

Gardenswartz & Rowe (1994) described diversity as being like an onion, possessing layers that once peeled away reveals the core. The concept led Gardenswartz and Rowe to develop the “Four Layers of Diversity” model which presents a commonly used method for attributing diversity factors (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1994). The “Four Layers of Diversity” model also provides the opportunity for individuals to assess the impact of diversity in their lives. The four layers consist of personality, internal dimensions, external dimensions, and organizational dimensions (Amelio, 2010). The model below was created by Gardenswartz and Rowe to depict the four layers of diversity (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1994).

Table 1

The Four Layers of Diversity



The core of the model centers on personality or personal style (Diversity Management, 2010). This layer contains the individual's preferences, values, and beliefs. Personality is believed to be something that is formed early in life. The other layers of the model can influence personality as well as be influenced by the individual's personality (Amelio, 2010).

The second circle considers the aspects that humans have little to no control in changing. These internal dimensions consist of age, race, ethnicity, mental and physical abilities, sexual orientation and gender (Amelio, 2010). Many of these core dimensions are present upon first meeting someone and also used to make assumptions. These internal dimensions often cause many divisions between people in the workplace (Diversity Management, 2010).

The next layer depicts the aspects of our lives that individuals have some control over and are able to change. External dimensions are just that, outside factors such as friendships and experiences that have the ability to alter these key elements. The layer includes geographic location, income, personal habits, religion, educational background, work experience, appearance, parental and marital status (Amelio, 2010).

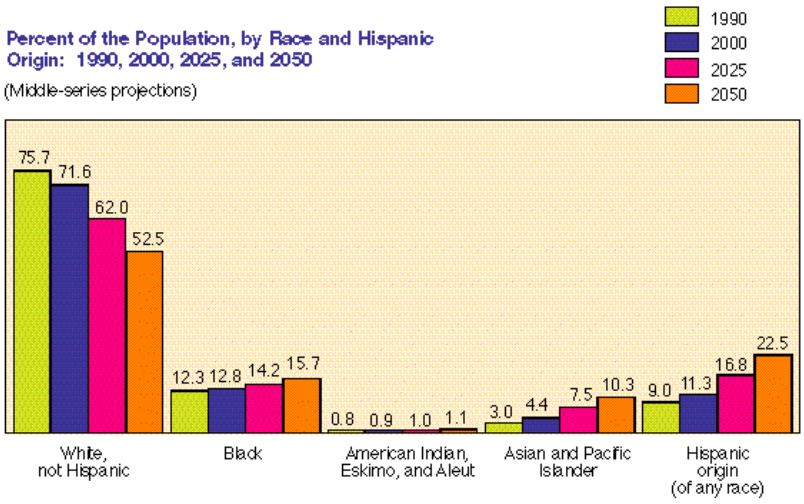
The outside layer of the diversity model focuses on the dimensions that make up culture in the workplace (Diversity Management, 2010). Organizational dimensions taken into consideration are work location, seniority, division/department/unit/group, work content/field, function level/classification, management status, and union affiliation. The organizational diversity matters directly affect issues such as preferential treatment and opportunities for advancement (Amelio, 2010).

Diversity in the United States

Cultural diversity is becoming more and more of a concern when describing the American workforce. There currently is, and will continue to be, an increasing number of non Caucasian Americans in the United States labor force. The ever-changing cultures bring new values, beliefs, and religion that may be new to some of the American people (Karp & Sammour, 2000). The table below portrays the U.S. census predictions for future (U.S Census Bureau, 2008).

Table 2

Percent of the Population, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1999, 2000, 2025, and 2050



Another massive issue triggering a need for incorporating diversity plans happens to be the age bias brought on by the baby boomer population. Concerns raised by the baby boomer population have elevated considerably in the last ten years (Hyter, 2004). Currently four generations make up the United States workforce and the needs of all four generations should be taken into consideration. Turnover is increasing party due to the fact that the older and younger workers have different priorities (Nancherla, 2008).

Diversity in Wisconsin

Perhaps one of the most drastic differences in the demographics between the United States and that of Wisconsin is that of the ethnicities. Data from the 2000 U.S. Census illustrates that 88.9 percent of Wisconsin's population is made up of white, non Hispanic people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to another census report completed in 2008 the number of white non Hispanic decreased to 85.1 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Both studies indicated that the African American population stayed fairly consistent while the Hispanic population grew from 3.6 percent in 2000 to 5.1 percent in 2008 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Other than ethnicity most of the demographics reflected that of the United States. A notable variation occurred with an increase of six percent of the population of 25 years or older with a high school diploma. An associate's degree also increased 1.2 percent while a bachelor's degree decreased .2 percent and a graduate degree and above decreased 1.7 percent. There was a subtle increase in that of married persons in Wisconsin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Workforce Diversity

It is apparent that there are numerous ways in which individuals are both similar and different; however all dissimilarities are not created equal (Amelio, 2010). Some distinct

diversity variations have overwhelming effects on human's opportunities and experiences, while others have little to no impact at all. By understanding the "Four Levels Diversity Model" employees are able to recognize how the layers are represented within the organization. Individuals can then select the appropriate behaviors and reactions in regards to organizations practices and procedures (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1994).

Various levels of diversity in the workforce is a familiar occurrence in American organizations due to the expansion of businesses into the global arena. Promoting diversity in the workplace has emerged as a need or survival to compete (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). Recognition that all employees bring in their personal differences and beliefs into the workplace and accepting them for it is important. A diversity initiative is set to help those same employees embrace and see strengths in each other's differences whether visible or not (Wentling, 1997).

Barriers can be created without a plan in place to address issues such a stereotyping. Internal and external barriers could prove to be quite detrimental to the retention and advancement of minority groups. External barriers are often more obvious than the internal barriers, but the internal may hit closer to home and have a larger effect (Wentling, 1997).

Successful Tools for Developing a Diversity Program

For a diversity program to flourish there are certain elements that need to be taken into consideration throughout the entire process (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). This is a plan that must be developed and delivered in a manner as to which the least amount of resistance will occur. If the diversity programs relates back to the organization's mission and goals there is better chance for acceptance. Simply providing training is never enough; initiatives are needed to support the information regarding diversity (Wentling, 1997).

Commitment from top management. Many of the ideas around diversity plan may differ, however research agrees that having support from top management was one of the major necessities for a diversity plan to even be considered by employees (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1999). If made aware that productivity and profits directly relate to the full utilization of the workforce, top management feels more obligated to take part (Sills, 2005).

Leadership holds great deal of responsibility of communicating the significance of diversity and why the project is being presented (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). Top management can promote initiatives by stressing the importance initiatives are on the welfare of the company and how crucial the participation of all employees is on the organization (Sills, 2005). One valuable step for top management is to demonstrate to employees how essential diversity is to them by setting an example. The whole process is one that should be supported and recommended by the leadership (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999).

Included as part of the organizational strategic plan. Linking the diversity program to the organizational needs and the business objectives is essential for the project to be successful. If the process is not done correctly with consideration to the business strategy or determining how the organization manages change and improving productivity the whole diversity plan will fail. An unsuccessful program will cost the company both time and money but could also cause some employees to become discouraged (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999).

Programs meet specific needs of the organization. When looking to develop a successful diversity program a needs assessment is necessary to identify the particular needs within the organization. By completing a needs assessment the company can take a closer look at their current system and biases that may occur. In many cases it is assumed that only the employees must change however the assessment may prove otherwise (Nancherla, 2008).

Employees should be involved in the needs assessment process because they often provide a different view of organizational concerns and barriers through firsthand experience (Wentling, 1997).

The distinctive needs and cultural climate of the organization are critical steps that must take place before developing and implementing change (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). Organizational change must be at the heart of any diversity program in order for it to flourish (Sills, 2005). To increase the probability that the initiative will be well received knowing the organization and the people who make it up should be taken into consideration along with the development and delivery of the training (Karp & Sammour, 2000).

Establishing a diversity team. An outstanding diversity initiative must be a team effort. In all actuality the "A" team should be brought together to help develop a plan. The group must have both the power and resources needed to lead this change effort (Sills, 2005).

Members from all levels of the organization should be included to provide input on how diversity affects them within the company. Top management may not see what is happening at a management level or even events taking place on the line (Nancherla, 2008). An added amount of pressure may be placed on the managers and who are often caught in the middle if not included in the development process. Mangers are able to provide valuable information while also passing along feedback from lower level employees whose needs are also necessary to take into consideration (Sills, 2005).

Creating and implementing the vision. Develop and implement strategies for achieving the vision that can help retain diverse employees and customers. Diversity initiatives vary greatly from organization to organization due to the fact that the program is heavily influenced by the organizations definition of diversity (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). If there

is a proper connection between the company's strategy and the development; there is a better chance the program will be accepted throughout the organization. Many times human resources can be utilized to help provide information when developing the vision (Mavin &Girling, 2000).

When presenting plan to individuals throughout the organization be sure to use every vehicle possible to communicate. Reducing obstacles to the change will help encourage employees to move away from their traditional ways. Encourage staff to lead by example and make changes to structure if needed for those who refuse to accept the program (Sills, 2005).

The process as a whole is not going to be accepted and implemented overnight. It's something that is going to take a great deal of time. Employees are going to be focused on their traditional ways and be reluctant to carry out these new ideas. Shortly after being introduced, the program should be set in place to ensure the process is only moving forward (Sills, 2005). The implantation will occur much the same as Lewin's Change Model (London Management Centre, 2008).

Table 3

Lewin's Three Change Model

Phase	Action
1 Unfreeze	Create initial motivation to change by convincing people that current state is undesirable.
2 Change	Identify new behaviours and norms. Communicate. Adopt new attitudes and Culture.
3 Refreeze	Reinforce new behaviour through reward systems, communications, structures etc.

Combine diversity initiatives. Executing diversity training may be the initial step to introducing employees to diversity and its value on the company. Training should not stand

alone as the only diversity strategy (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). An overall diversity program should also be developed to increase both the organizational and personal effectiveness. Many other initiatives can be set up to provide career guidance and personal growth. Additional projects may include internship programs, scholarships, tuition reimbursement, targeting recruitment within the community, developing new appraisal systems, and so on (Wentling, 1997).

It is vital for a diversity plan to be supported by systems, strategies, policies, practices, and behaviors (Sills, 2005). Changing policies may be essential to incorporate this diversity plan into the workplace once training has been completed. The organizational policies can help mandate fairness and equality for all employees. A change in policies can help the trainees implement what they have learned in all areas of the workplace as well as translating the practices to their personal lives (Wentling, 1997).

Short-term goals provide an avenue for viable performance improvements. The implementation of short-term goals presents an opportunity for employees to be recognized and rewarded for embracing diversity. Careful consideration in selecting practical and realistic goals must be taken or individuals will begin to lose interest in the whole diversity initiative (Sills, 2005).

Mentor programs are another plan that has been proven successful. Essence magazine listed their top companies who were known for employing African-American women and almost every company on the list offered training and or mentorship programs (Parker, 2005). The idea behind the mentorship programs is that a manager who is helping their subordinate develop will increase how the employee feels about their job and themselves. All-State, a successful company on the list, explained the benefits that women who had mentors were more likely than those who

didn't to get promoted and those women who had more than one were even more likely to advance (Parker, 2005). Mentorship programs are often offered to minority employees but it is important not to separate different groups so a mentor programs should be developed to benefit all individuals (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999).

Mandatory participation. All employees should be exposed to diversity to gain knowledge of the impact they may have on the issue both to individuals and the organization (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). The program is a tool for the development of all employees and gives everyone access to skills training and other career opportunities. If made mandatory for all employees to embrace it may reduce the risk that any one group is targeted (Hyter, 2004). The involvement of all employees including top management show a higher level of support and commitment and increases all employees, including those in top management, to model ways to effective manage diversity (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999).

Create inclusive programs. The more diverse the employees the better because all individuals no matter their differences need to feel included (Karp & Sammour, 2000). The initiatives are proven most effective when all individuals and groups are included which eliminates the "us vs. them" idea of favoring or targeting groups (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). Isolating any group can delay the commitment to support the program. Providing common ground for the employees can help them relate while allowing emphasis to be taken off the "villain" (Karp & Sammour, 2000).

Provide trust and confidentiality. Trust between all individuals should be established immediately at the beginning of any program and should be carried out throughout the entire diversity initiative. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure this is instilled and implemented (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). All participants are expected to treat each other with the

respect that they would like to be treated with. If at any time, any individual is made uncomfortable or offended they are encouraged to speak up (Karp & Sammour, 2000).

Handling resistance. Essentially this can be one of the largest issues when any changes are being implemented because individuals want to know why they should change and how it will affect them. One of the first steps for reducing this resistance to change is showing the participants the legal, moral, and strategic reasons for the change and that it is the right thing to do. The individual has to recognize why this system that has worked for them for so long is in need of change (Sills, 2005). The changes will create a long-term positive impact on cultural climate, which will in return create a safer and more productive working environment for all members of the organization (Karp & Sammour, 2000).

It is natural for resistance to occur when a person is being told what they should think and feel. By forcing the change it's essentially forcing the trainee to change their attitudes, beliefs, or goals. The individual's resistance stems from protecting their integrity and who they are and which may have no bearing on the content that is being delivered (Karp & Sammour, 2000).

Instead of trying to force resistance it may be easier and more productive to work with the resistance. Individuals don't like to be told their wrong especially when it comes to their attitudes and beliefs. The more defensive the individuals become will create greater resistance. Simply explaining the points clearly to the employees of what these actions and behavior entails creates a new awareness. If anyone disagrees with a point that is being made it's important to find out why and try to understand where the individual is coming from. Open statements from all members of the organization should be encouraged and addressed in a respectful manner (Karp & Sammour, 2000).

Require accountability. The company as a whole must maintain and execute the program to aggressively promote diversity. In order to hold individuals accountable for the diversity initiatives the programs must be implemented throughout the organization from the mission statement and company objectives. Since all the employees have are presented with the same information they have had exposure to the materials and must be held accountable for their actions through a reward system and performance objectives that are linked directly to diversity (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999).

Conduct evaluation of initiatives. As Ben Sweetland summed it up "Diversity is a journey not a destination." The process often takes as long as ten years to make the necessary transformations (Sills, 2005). An evaluation can provided crucial information about the effectiveness of the program by determining strengths and weaknesses. Not only will a proper evaluation show the short and long-term effects of the diversity initiatives but also whether to change or improve the program. Another added benefit of an evaluation is when it presents a return on investment establishing whether or not the project is worthwhile (Nancherla, 2008). Constant evaluation is key to the success of any program (Wentling, 1997).

To establish a properly executed diversity evaluation it's essential to find out if and how the initiative is changing the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and how that shaping the organizational culture (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). Another important avenue for assessment is taking a deeper look at how the curriculum is being developed and delivered and how resistance is dealt with (Karp & Sammour, 2000). The following model details the proper steps to evaluate any training program according to Kirkpatrick's four levels of training evaluation (Chapman, 2009).

Table 4

Kirkpatrick's Four Level of Training Evaluation

Level	Evaluation Type (what is measured)	Evaluation Description and Characteristics	Examples of Evaluation Tools and Methods	Relevance and Practicability
1	**Reaction**	**Reaction evaluation** is **how the delegates felt** about **the training or learning experience.**	'Happy sheets', feedback forms. Verbal reaction, post-training surveys or questionnaires.	Quick and very easy to obtain. Not expensive to gather or to analyze.
2	**Learning**	**Learning evaluation** is the measurement of the **increase in knowledge** - before and after.	Typically assessments or tests before and after the training. Interview or observation can also be used.	Relatively simple to set up; clear-cut for quantifiable skills. Less easy for complex learning.
3	**Behavior**	**Behavior evaluation** is the extent of **applied learning** back on the job - implementation.	Observation and interview over time are required to assess change, relevance of change, and sustainability of change.	Measurement of behavior change typically requires cooperation and skill of line-managers.
4	**Results**	**Results evaluation** is the **effect on the business or environment** by the trainee.	Measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting - the challenge is to relate to the trainee.	Individually not difficult; unlike whole organization. Process must attribute clear accountability.

Diversity Initiatives

The purpose of a diversity program is to create a sense of tolerance and understanding though education; raising awareness about individual differences (Nancherla, 2008). The newfound knowledge drives the employee's behavioral changes that are required to achieve the organizations diversity goals. Often times the workplace is the first exposure many employees have to diversity issues, which makes the subject all the more critical (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). Properly executed program provides the tools for employees to form better relationships both in their personal and professional lives (Mavin &Girling, 2000).

Implementing a successful diversity program allows the company to remain competitive regardless of their geographical location (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). The newfound awareness creates a greater capacity for problem solving, enhances staff relations, job satisfaction, and employee morale (Mavin &Girling, 2000). The potential benefits for the organization also prove to be worthwhile due to a wider talent pool to select from, the capability to attract and retain employees, enhanced service and customer satisfaction, and a positive community image. As far as the benefits go it may be far more costly for organizations who choose not to implement diversity programs (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999).

Chapter III: Methodology

A summary of the data collection procedures utilized, along with the structure of the interviews conducted in the study are presented. The research focused on the five small businesses in completely different fields of industry within western Wisconsin. The study was designed to reveal how diversity is currently being addressed and what practices are being utilized at this time. The investigation sought to identify what the various companies are doing based on the needs of their business, the employees, and the community.

By completing the study, these organizations along with others may have a means to determine what steps can be taken to properly carry out effective diversity initiatives into their workplace. The information gathered established what approaches have been proven to be successful and which still needed to be improved to increase organizational and individual development.

Subject Selection and Description

In order to determine how small business throughout Western Wisconsin are dealing with diversity issues, their current practices, and how well their methods are working. Five very different companies were selected to participate. Interviews were conducted with each organization to establish if there are formal diversity initiatives currently in place. If a program existed further clarification of those actions was discussed.

Instrumentation

Interview questions were developed and utilized as the main method for data collection. The interviews consisted of ten questions. All participants were asked the same group of questions in a sequential order to ensure consistency. For that same reason all interviews were scheduled for a 30 minute timeframe.

Data Collection Procedures

Key individuals within various small businesses in Western Wisconsin were asked to take part in a diversity study. Potential participants were then asked to participate in an interview that would address their current diversity practices and procedures within the company. All contributors were presented with an implied consent form stating the purpose of the study, risks, benefits, right to withdraw, as well as important contact information prior to the interview.

Those organizations contributing to the study were assured that business names and locations would remain confidential. All interviews were scheduled for a 30 minute timeframe. All participants were thanked at the time of scheduling, upon completion of the interview, and a thank you letter was also mailed out.

Data Analysis

The intention of this study was to examination the methods utilized by small businesses in western Wisconsin incorporate diversity into the workplace. The interviews along with the literature review allowed for a qualitative approach be taken to conclude what approaches are best suited for these and other small businesses in this geographic location to consider implementing based on their specific needs. All responses were welcomed and encouraged.

Limitations

Due to time and resource restrictions the sample size only consisted of five interviews. A larger study may better reflect the opinions of relative size of Western Wisconsin. The organizations that participated provided a great deal of information however; their valuable time was also limited.

An opportunity to go back and gain further information after initial interview was conducted may have been extremely helpful as interviews became more focused and clear as the

process progressed. Only the opinions of those interviewed were reflected and a much different view may have been more helpful to determine truthfulness and the impact of the diversity initiatives.

Chapter IV: Results

The objective of this chapter is to introduce each of the five organizations that participated in the ten question interviews and present the findings. Interviews were intended to examine how small businesses in western Wisconsin incorporate diversity into the workplace. Questions were targeted to find out about the organizations, where they currently lie in regards to diversity, resources, and what have been the biggest successes and challenges faced thus far. Each interview will be addressed as a color to allow for confidentiality yet differentiate in chapter five.

Blue

The voice communication services industry is the main focus of the company. They provide the best communication services such as internet and telephone to its members. In order to deliver quality service to their many customers, the enterprise counts on their 75 plus employees to carry out their assigned tasks. The corporation has been in existence since 1954.

When assessing the organization through the lens of diversity the representative, the operations manager, felt it was pretty one-sided. There were nearly one-third more males than females and almost all of which were Caucasian. According to the interviewee he sees the career field as being male dominated. The area in which the most diversity occurred was age which ranged from 20 to 66.

The industry is evolving, during his fifteen years with the organization; the contact had personally observed these changes in the audiences of meeting and conferences. According to the contact this is typically a male dominated field, although, changes have been occurring over the last ten years to incorporate women and different ethnicities. As an industry, he feels this is very encouraging.

The enterprise does have set programs in place in the employee handbook for dealing with any issues of harassment but does not have any preventative measures in place. It is an accepting environment that utilized open employment and employee selection. They are looking to hire the person that is best suited for the job.

When asked what they had learned about developing a more diversified workforce the representative made it clear that diversity takes a great deal of effort. Changes have been made for listing the jobs to include some of the larger cities in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Another lesson learned was that the organization as a whole may need to better accommodate the needs of various individuals.

When listing jobs the company looks to many of the surrounding areas especially those with higher education. Since they are directly involved with some of the schools the company is certain the graduates have been taught the skills needed to get the job done. The younger generation may bring new ideas to the table. According to the advocate, “currently most of the employees in the company are over the age of 40 and have experience but they are also complacent, the new generation tends to bring in a new perspective.”

The establishment has had little to no experience when actually handling diversity in the workforce due to the lack there of. They strive to follow various state and federal regulations; however, they rarely get the chance due to the applicants applying. For the most part, their participation in regulations extends to the point of reporting their numbers to the state of Wisconsin.

Green

The organization has been in existence for nearly 72 years during which the main focus has changed several times. For a great majority of those years, the company has been and still

continues to be in the industry of foodservice distribution. There are over 300 employees who rely on each other to get the job done.

According to the vice president, the establishment is not very diverse at this time. Moving on to explain that there are many ethnicities throughout the workplace; however, it is Caucasian male dominant. The establishment had reached its most diverse period about three years ago but has since declined.

The interviewee explained what they had learned about developing a more diverse workforce as it being extremely hard. Stereotypes hold firm and training is not going to change people's beliefs. Diversity issues work both ways meaning it can affect anyone and everyone. The representative specified "Diversity is not something you can force upon people. You can warn people and they still do not learn they can be let go".

In order to attract a more diversified workforce the organization has utilized various resources such as human resource firms, temporary agencies, and the internet. When asked, the vice president shared that temporary agencies have been their best source to meet their diversity needs though this has been tough due to the state of the economy. Government reports and those from the Department of Labor are utilized to reflect the population. The resources help but there is only so much that can be done it all depends on who applies and who is qualified to do the job.

In order to aid in assuring that the best candidate is hired a scoring system has been implemented. Points are awarded based on the skills, abilities, and background of each applicant. Considerations are based on points to determine which individuals will best fit within the company.

The organization has gone out of their way in the past to break some barriers in regards to diversity. They hired a female in a position that had always been known as a male dominated.

They experienced many problems due to physical limitations of that individual but take pride in knowing that they were willing to take the risk.

Several initiatives have been taken thus far to help aid in regards to diversity. Supervisors attend training during which; one topic teaches supervisors the warning signs of harassment and how to properly handle it. A mentorship program has also been implemented and seems to be helping.

Diversity is and will continue to be a challenge. Diversity is a tough line to walk due to the fact that there are no specifics. Organizations have to determine what diversity means to them. According to the contact "Federal and state regulations can help, but in some cases they can also hinder minorities." In theory, the ideas are great but in some cases the regulations can take away from hiring the most qualified.

Yellow

This enterprise teams up with schools and organizations to raise money through fundraising. They do so by providing quality products. This establishment maintains nearly 150 employees year round while hiring an additional 250 workers during their seasonal period. The organization has been in existence just over 25 years.

The human resource manager for company believed that they were much more diverse than most places. There is a good mixture when it comes to ethnicities, ages, gender, and the disabled population. Nearly forty percent of the employees were female. Ethnicities and ages ranged the highest during the seasonal period. Currently there are no set policies in place in regards to diversity.

When asked about the resources used to meet diversity issues it was found that the company relies heavily on a career development center, several minority associations, and

networking. The organization provides on the job training to attract those applicants that may not have the prior work experience. Career development and a mentorship program have also worked to decrease employee turnover. In some cases, employees may begin with one job but the company will move them to another position if there is a better fit.

Sensitivity to diversity has been the biggest challenge and what has been learned most when diversity is in question. The advocate specified that "getting employees to realize that this is not the good old boys club anymore and getting all employees to recognize their differences has proven to be quite difficult."

State and federal regulations have created more paperwork but a change in day to day work has not been noticeable. The company has to file Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reports. But all in all they hire the best person for the job.

Orange

This engineering company delivers solutions to telecommunication systems to clients. The operation has been expanding since its existence in 1953. Companywide the enterprise employs 300 people while about 45 are located at their office in western Wisconsin.

When asked about the organization in regards to how diversified the workplace the office manager believed that the position was always offered to the best candidate. Typically applicants have been white males. Only about one-fourth of the employees are women while all of the employees are Caucasian. Finding diverse employees has been this businesses biggest challenge thus far in handling diversity.

There are no set policies on the hiring practices. All positions are posted in the corporate office and will be distributed to all employees. The actual hiring takes place at individual

offices. To attract potential applicants trade magazines are utilized along with a post in the paper. The organization relies heavily on word of mouth to get position out to the public.

Upon being hired employees receive an employee handbook that included a section on harassment, what it is, and how it is to be dealt with. Accusations are taken very seriously and actions will be taken. There is no actual training provided on diversity or harassment.

In the past, the organization has made accommodations like modifying equipment to make a disabled employee's job a little easier. The enterprise has learned a great deal from that particular situation. Everyone has specific needs and learning about them can make them all the more productive. Currently the organization employs two disabled workers. Part-time positions have also opened up and tend to attract employees who have already retired and are looking for something less time strenuous. So far five of these part-time employees are those who have already retired. It is all about the right person to fit the job.

Red

Providing healthcare services to the general public is the main focus of this organization. Due to the wide array of the services there are just under 300 personnel employed. The business has been under the same ownership for 45 years now.

The establishment takes pride in the fact that they have identified areas of the community population both in regards to their employment practices as well as patients. They work under affirmative action although they are not required to do so. The director of human resources considers the population to be fairly diverse; ages of employees range from 16-83 years old, majority of employees are female, and about five percent of workers are disabled.

An annual needs assessment is done to determine the needs of the community population in the surrounding areas. Not only does this allow the organization to learn how well the

diversity of their employees reflects the community; but, also allows them to better handle their patients. Due to the many aspects of the organization simply knowing the customs, beliefs, and lifestyles of the many populations utilizing the facility can make a huge difference in the way care is given and throughout the entire process.

The education coordinator utilizes the needs assessment along with other external resources to develop the annual staff training and competency. Direct ties are made with specific populations and key personnel that will help fulfill any needs that customers may have. Employees receive training both classroom and hands on depending on their position. All employees are required to report to training.

Flexibility is the most important aspect that the director expressed in meeting the challenges of diversity. There can never be too much training when diversity is concerned. Offering new and exciting training can be difficult. At this point, the contact believes the most effective training was given when one of the various minority groups came in to talk about their needs firsthand. They expressed that there is always room to improve in regards to training and diversity in general.

The biggest challenge faced thus far when handling diversity is how to make it work. It is important to re look at current practices and determine where there is room for growth and new ideas. One example that came about through the needs assessment was the use of interpreters. At the time, a home help line allowed patients to select a language for information but the company has since utilized interpreters for patients throughout the entire process.

Regulations have not had a large impact on this enterprise according to the advocate. Many of which have and are already part of their everyday practice. They are now required to

record and report which has added much more paperwork but they have not changed any practices.

Chapter V: Discussion

Interviews were completed to determine how small businesses in western Wisconsin are incorporating diversity into the workplace. The examination was intended to study current practices and what, if any changes could be made to enhance the outcome of these methods to provide the most productive work environment. The limitations, conclusions and recommendations were based on a combination of the findings from the interviews and the research examined throughout the process.

Limitations

The researcher was introduced to a great deal of information in reference to diversity. Personal contact made with the organizations was also a constraint due to the time and location of the organizations and the researcher. The literature resources are limited due to time restrictions and the mass quantity of material currently available on this topic.

Conclusions

There were several significant revelations that brought out by the interviews while some points seemed consistent across the board. All five of the organization seemed to have some sort of diversity initiatives in place. The differences lie in the details. Red and Green business appeared to have formal set policies in place while, Blue and Orange were far more informal, and Yellow believed that none existed.

Several companies expressed that there are a lack of diversity among applicants interested in these jobs. Although the Green enterprise is utilizing temporary agencies to help generate a more diverse workforce and Blue corporation is advertising in cities with bigger minority populations efforts only go so far. The literature review reflects much of the same

information that was brought forth through these interviews. According to the U.S. census report completed in 2008 the number of white non-Hispanic lies at 85.1 percent in Wisconsin which decreased from 88.9 in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Nearly all interviewees came to a similar conclusion that frequently the newly hired individual was a white male because the vast majority of the applicant pool consisted of white males.

Several successful approaches to increase or-foster diversity were suggested by one or more of the organizations. Mentorship programs were something both Green and Yellow companies communicated as a strategy that has been effective in enhancing diversity. Yellow also shared that job training and career development which attracted unskilled workers who would usually not apply was a contributing factor to their diverse workforce. The Orange enterprise stressed the importance of learning and adapting to each employees specific needs. These approaches to diversity have been developed to increase both the organizational and personal effectiveness of employees (Wentling, 1997).

Red organization utilizes several of the recommendations included in literature review. The company is focused on diversity within the workplace but also extends its initiatives to meet the needs of their customers. A needs assessment is completed annually which translates into the yearly training that all employees are required to attend. A needs assessment is necessary to determine the particular needs of the organization and establish any bias that may be occurring in the current system (Nancherla, 2008) Since this is mandatory for all employees, they are all exposed to diversity to gain knowledge of the impact they may have on the issue both to individuals and the organization (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999).

Recommendations

An understanding of all five businesses diversity initiatives may offer recommendations for improving other companies in western Wisconsin efforts to incorporate the value of diversity into the workplace.

An important aspect of organizations diversity program is linking it to involve the program and initiatives to their organizational strategic plan (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). This strategy ensures that the program meets the specific needs of the organization which will guide in the implementation of the vision (Nancherla, 2008). By aligning the needs with the organization the initiatives that will best serve the organization can be utilized and it also allows employees to understand why changes are being made which in return will reduce resistance (Karp & Sammour, 2000).

The above steps are reiterated to ensure that all organizations determine what diversity means to them and what steps should be taken to continue in the right direction. Although diversity initiatives appeared in all five enterprises not one organization stated anything about a specific diversity plan, but rather a variety of disjointed initiatives. It is vital for a diversity plan to be supported by systems, strategies, policies, practices, and behaviors (Skills, 2005).

Once an overall plan has been developed organizations can then determine what if any of the initiative currently in place should remain and are no longer needed to meet the specific needs of the organization. Once a plan has been properly implemented all employees should be held accountable (Wentling &Palma-Rivas, 1999). Diversity is a never ending process to determine strengths and weaknesses and to improve upon the programs evaluations must occur (Nancherla, 2008).

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Appendix A: IRB Exemption

STOUT
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

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P.O. Box 790
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715/232-1126
715/232-1749 (fax)
http://www.uwstout.edu/rs/

Date: August 24, 2010

To: Keri Bauer

CC: Dr. Donna Stewart

Susan Foxwell

From: Sue Foxwell, Research Administrator and Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB)

Subject: **Protection of Human Subjects**

Your project, "*An Examination of Methods As to How Small Businesses In Western Wisconsin Incorporate Diversity Into the Workplace*" has been approved by the IRB through the expedited review process. The measures you have taken to protect human subjects are adequate to protect everyone involved, including subjects and researchers. This project is approved through **August 22, 2011**.

Please copy and paste the following message to the top of your survey/interview form before dissemination:

> **This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.**

If you are conducting an **online** survey/interview, please copy and paste the following message to the top of the form:

> **"This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal regulations Title 45 Part 46."**

Modifications to this approved protocol need to be approved by the IRB. Research not completed by this date must be submitted again outlining changes, expansions, etc. Federal guidelines require annual review and approval by the IRB.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and best wishes with your project.

***NOTE: This is the only notice you will receive – no paper copy will be sent.**

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

An Examination of Methods as to How Small Businesses in Western Wisconsin Incorporate Diversity into the Workplace

UW Stout: Graduate Study

My name is Keri Bauer and I am currently completing my graduate studies in Training and Development at UW- Stout. My final requirement for the degree is to complete a thesis study. My thesis is an examination of methods as to how small businesses in Western Wisconsin incorporate diversity into the workplace.

I am contacting you to ask for your participation in a study by allowing me to interview someone within your organization. The purpose of this study is to examine the current practices of five companies' diversity programs to determine what, if any, diversity methods are currently being utilized. An understanding of all five businesses diversity initiatives may offer recommendations for improving other Western Wisconsin companies' efforts to incorporate the value of diversity into the workplace.

While this information will provide valuable feedback, I want to assure you that all companies' names, locations, and contact information will be completely confidential. The anticipated time commitment is 30 minutes for completion of the interview. I would like to thank you for your assistance in this matter.

If there are any questions or additional comments, feel free to contact me at:

Phone: (715)379-5584

E-mail: Bauerke@my.uwstout.edu

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Keri Bauer

Appendix C: Implied Consent

UW- Stout Implied Consent Statement
For Research Involving Human Subjects

Consent to Participate IN UW-Stout Approved Research

This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.

Title: An Examination of Methods As to How Small Businesses in Western Wisconsin Incorporate Diversity Into the Workplace

Investigator:
Keri Bauer
Phone: (715) 379-5584
E-mail: Bauerke@my.uwstout.edu

Research Sponsor:
Dr. Donna Stewart
Phone: (715)232-1234
E-mail: Stewartd@uwstout.edu
Office: 820 Tech Wing
UW- Stout
Menomonie, WI 54720

Description:
Diversity programs are growing to be more critical due to the ever-changing demographics that are making up the Western Wisconsin workforce. The current practices of five companies' diversity programs are being examined to determine what if any diversity methods are currently being utilized An understanding of all five businesses diversity initiatives may offer recommendations for improving those companies as well as other companies in Western Wisconsin efforts to incorporate the value of diversity into the workplace.

Risk and Benefits:
Risk is minimal for all participants involved in the study. Confidentiality of the individual as well as the organization will be guaranteed. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and all participants have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime.

Participation in the study will help provide valuable information to allow for an examination of methods as to how small businesses in Western Wisconsin incorporate diversity into the workplace. The results will offer a better understanding of the current practices that are taking place and allow future recommendations to be made for these businesses as well as others throughout Western Wisconsin. Upon completion each organization will have the opportunity to view a completed copy of the study.

Time Commitment and Payment:
All interviews conducted will utilize the same ten questions. The interviews should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. There will be no payments made for participation however all organizations that took part will have access to the completed study.

Confidentiality:
All businesses names and locations will remain confidential. All businesses will be given a color as a way to identify the different organizations. Businesses will be addressed by the industry they are in as well as the size. The locations of all organizations will be referred to as in Western Wisconsin with no reference to the specific city

Right to withdraw:
Participation in the study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate at this or any time during the study no adverse consequences will take place. You have the opportunity to stop the interview at anytime and can withdraw information until the study has been completed.

IRB Approval:
This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the investigator or advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

Investigator:
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Research Sponsor:
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IRB Administrator:
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UW-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751
Phone: (715)232-2477
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Statement of Consent:
By taking part in the following interview you understand that you agree to participate in the project entitled, *An Examination of Methods As to How Small Businesses in Western Wisconsin Incorporate Diversity Into the Workplace.*