Multiculturalism - Essential Cross-Cultural Skills for the Workplace

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Abstract:

Multiculturalism is a situation in which all the different cultural or racial groups in a society have equal rights and opportunities, and none is ignored or regarded as unimportant. A multicultural workforce is one in which a wide range of cultural differences exist among the employees in the organization. To achieve benefits of the Multiculturalism, each employee of an organization should have essential cross-cultural skills like, patience, respect, sensitivity, willingness to learn, team building etc.

Diversity in the workplace is going to increase day by days. So it is a necessity of the today's global age, to learn essential cross-cultural skills required for the betterment of an employee as well as an organization.

Key words: Multiculturalism, Cross-Cultural Skills and Workplace

Introduction

Multiculturalism is a situation in which all the different cultural or racial groups in a society have equal rights and opportunities, and none is ignored or regarded as unimportant. A multicultural workforce is one in which a wide range of cultural differences exist among the employees in the organization. To achieve benefits of the Multiculturalism, each employee of an organization should have cross cultural skills.

Diversity in the workplace and essential cross-cultural skills for the workplace

Diversity in the workplace is not going to decrease. In fact, it's going to increase as diversity in India continues to increase. So learning of these skills is the necessity of today's age. There are endless cultural variations that will determine people's beliefs, values, work ethic, and even their work schedule. It's impossible for us to learn every culture in the world and gain the skills and knowledge to understand each and every culture.

Nobody expects from us to do that. Instead, developing cultural competence means gaining an awareness and basic knowledge of cultural differences and how those differences affect people's beliefs, values, work ethic, and work schedule, so we can be more understanding and sensitive to them.

Each and every employee should be learning following skills to be culturally competent for the workplace.

Patience

Working with colleagues in a multicultural environment requires a certain level of patience. People from different backgrounds often have different ways of approaching tasks and human interactions. These are neither right nor wrong, only different. Having the patience to take the time to fully understand where colleagues are coming from different workplace scenarios can help us all work together more efficiently and effectively.

Respect

Cultural differences range is vast and wide, from religious beliefs to cultural norms. People from diverse backgrounds bring a number of different socially-acceptable professional and personal practices into the workplace. Whether or not we agree with our colleagues, it is important to respect their differences.

Sensitivity

People who don't speak native language might inadvertently use words or phrases that we might find inappropriate for the workplace. Give colleagues with new

language skills freedom in how they use their words. If we feel our colleague inadvertently offends customers due to ignorance of certain accepted customs and practices, discuss the issue privately with him or her and later on with the human resources representative. This person is trained to deal with these types of situations in a professional and effective manner.

Willingness to Learn

Working with people from other backgrounds exposes us to customs, cultures and practices us might never have otherwise come in contact with. A willingness to get to know our colleagues on a personal level will create a sense of goodwill in the workplace that can translate to better professional collaboration. Most people, when asked in an appropriate way, are more than happy to talk about differences between cultures. This can give us greater insight into why people think, behave and act the way they do. Be open to discussing our own background and cultural beliefs, provided these conversations don't tread into inappropriate workplace conversation.

Culture of Listening

We have to throw stereotypes and perceptions to the curb. Forget what we think, we know about how others should define themselves. Instead, adapt an ear for listening and promote this culture in the workplace. The best way to learn about others is to adapt good active listening skills, where others feel invited to share information about their race, culture, and otherwise.

Team building

The U.S. has an individualistic culture where individual achievement is preferred. People want to do things on their own. However, there are other cultures that value teams and cooperation. When we want to go it alone at work, this can be problematic if you have someone always wanting to work together to achieve success. It can also be a great asset when building teams within the workplace.

Communication

We can expand our horizons by learning different communication skills and approaches while interacting with the other employees. Different communication styles will affect how people interact and handle problems. Someone from an Asian culture may be hesitant to give bad news, but someone else from different culture may exaggerate it. Here we have to learn to recognize different communication styles.

Views on time

Different cultures have different views on time, such as the balance between work and family, and work and socializing. They can also differ, on the meaning of "late."

Use of Cultural Calendar

It's helpful, especially if anyone is in a position where he has to schedule meetings, events, work days, etc. Because of cultural calendar he will be aware of the different holidays for different cultures and he plan everything accordingly at his workplace.

Conclusion

Diversity in the workplace is going to increase day by days. So it is a necessity of the today's global age, to learn essential cross-cultural skills required for the betterment of an employee as well as an organization.

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