

20 Advantages and Disadvantages of Diversity in the Workplace

People like to stay in their comfort zones. That is why routines develop over time. When we feel safe, then the idea is that we can be more creative in every element of our life. This process envelopes our personal and professional lives.

There are ways that we try to become comfortable at work on our own, like bringing a potted plant to the office or taping a favorite comic strip to the computer. About 2 out of every 5 employees also say that they love their job because of the presence of their co-workers. When there is a supportive team and supervisor in place, it is easier to pursue what we are passionate about as a career.

The issue with diversity is that it takes some people out of their comfort zone. Some professionals define the composition of the perfect team as people who come from the same culture, ethnicity, educational experience, or social status. If someone on the team has a different set of life experiences, then the unknowns that come about because of it can feel scary.

When people are afraid, then their focus is on survival instead of productivity.

Even though the pros and cons of diversity in the workplace show that teams can be over 30% more productive when they focus on uniqueness, some people are not ready to step outside of their comfort zone. They would rather trade short-term comfort for long-term profit losses.

How do you feel about having diverse teams present in the modern workplace?

List of the Advantages of Diversity in the Workplace

1. This design allows each team member to focus on their strengths.

If an employer can create diversity in the workplace, then each worker will have their strengths complement those of everyone else on the team. That means assignments can be handed out with greater specificity so that the quality of the work improves. Supervisors aren't forced to guess at who might be the best option for an assignment because each person has a unique skill that they bring to the table.

Diversity in the workplace allows for strengths and weaknesses to be spread out so that their effects are maximized and minimized respectively. No matter what the requirements of a project might be, there is someone who can step up to lead the team toward a successful result.

2. It increases the number of job opportunities for minority workers.

Diversity in the workplace looks at all population demographics when hiring for an open position. That means employers have an opportunity to find the best possible person for a job because they are not limited to a specific group of individuals. This advantage makes it possible to have more women working in society and promotes the hiring of minority groups. It applies at all levels of employment, from the local small business to multinational firms.

When everyone has a chance to work if that's what they want to do, then a secondary benefit of this advantage is that it diversifies the wages and productivity of the economy. This process reduces the amount of risk communities face if an unexpected recession were to occur.

3. Employers have more chances to cross-train workers and teams.

Diversity in the workplace creates teams where each person brings a unique strength to work every day. Individuals can specialize in their career, which means their skills and wisdom can be passed along to other team members. Everyone gets to learn and grow each day because there are

higher levels of information exposure thanks to the varying backgrounds and educational opportunities each person accomplished.

This advantage also has a secondary benefit that involves cultural awareness. When we can understand the complexities of other ethnicities and perspectives, then it becomes easier to find common ground. This process eventually leads to a higher level of innovation and fewer silos and echo chambers.

4. Companies have access to more talent.

When diversity in the workplace is a top priority for an organization, then supervisors and hiring managers can expand their applicant screening processes to include more people. There are fewer restrictions on geographic location, educational accomplishments, or previous work histories. The top priority in the hiring process focuses on the talent and skills of the individual, and then how that person could fit into the team.

Instead of trying to hire the best possible candidate from a group of applicants, diversity in the workplace encourages managers to find the best person for the job.

5. This perspective can help companies to start growing bigger and faster.

Almost 70% of hiring managers in the United States say that the implementation of a diversity initiative was a contributing factor to the growth of their organization. This advantage helps the organization to create new opportunities for existing team members, install new positions, and raise wages as productivity and creativity levels rise to encourage a stronger sales atmosphere.

Hiring managers need the tools that can help them to find the best candidates for each person to take advantage of this opportunity. About 90% of supervisors think that the use of cross-border communication allows their company to grow bigger and faster. Nearly half focus on recruiting as a way to improve diversity.

6. Diversity in the workplace creates more revenue-earning opportunities.

The companies which focus on diversification are the businesses which tend to see more sales and revenues because of their efforts. Emphasizing multiple language fluency for a team can boost their profits by 10% for every fluent language that is spoken. Gender diversity can help revenues grow by 40% in the first year of this effort. This advantage can open new markets for the organization that can help profits to start climbing as well without a significant increase in the work of the team.

Diversity in the workplace goes beyond skin color or gender. These benefits occur when lifestyle differences, spiritual perspectives, and other unique life factors are taken into account during the hiring process. You cannot exclude employees from a job because of their differences, but you can look for people who can fit into a specific role for you.

7. It is a way to increase the creativity of an entire team.

Almost 80% of employees working in the United States say that they are not using their creativity to its full potential. Diversity is one of the best environments to encourage this approach to a career because it offers numerous perspectives that can enhance the brainstorming sessions. The biggest complainers about a lack of creative energy in the modern workplace are those who limit the diversity of their teams.

Having different perspectives can create conflict at times, but the unique interpretation of life that each person brings is invaluable to the employer and their team. The need to create change or embrace differences is what leads to an environment that encourages innovation.

8. Diversity in the workplace exposes societal bias.

Bias is what destroys diversity in the workplace before it can establish itself. Hiring managers tend to bring men on more than women, even if the qualifications of each candidate are equal. During a study funded by Harvard and Princeton, managers were given a set of applications and qualifications, but they did not reveal the gender of each identity. During this blind process, women were preferred over their male counterparts when gender was not part of the hiring process.

Because of this issue, women could be under-represented in the labor force by over 50%. People with an alternative gender identity (outside of male or female) can see even more struggles in this area. It is a problem for racial minorities around the world as well.

9. Customers are attracted to diversity in the workplace.

Over 40% of employees say that their company has the right amount of diversity or that their teams should try to become more unique. Although it can be challenging to share a workplace environment with someone who is uniquely different, the advantages typically outweigh the problems which can develop over time. When everyone comes from the same perspective, then the daily routine becomes dull. Going to work becomes a boring experience. People can even lose their passion for what they do because there is a lack of diversity present on their team.

There are immediate benefits to consider when hiring managers make diversity a top priority. It can lower the levels of burnout which are present in the workplace, improve the quality of each project, and boost the levels of community exposure that are present.

10. Productivity levels improve because of diversity in the workplace.

Even when a team doesn't like the idea of being diverse, their productivity levels can rise by more than 30%. When people have co-workers who are different from them, then there is an increase in the sensitivity levels that are present in the workplace. People start to look for ways to find common ground. There is more time given to each team member to share ideas, and a higher emphasis on hiring women occurs.

The fastest way for an employer to encourage a higher level of productivity is to add diversity throughout their organization. Even when there are moments where the work levels decline, the overall benefit never disappears.

List of the Disadvantages of Diversity in the Workplace

1. Hiring managers focus on leadership qualities too often.

Diversity in the workplace seeks out experts who excel in their chosen

career, job function, and team environment. The goal is to create a series of strengths that allows everyone to grow over time. These are all advantages, but it can become a problem if hiring managers are bringing in people who all want to be in charge. Competition can be healthy, but it can also be dangerous when it spirals out of control.

When the goal is to promote the individual instead of the team, then a diversity initiative fails. You must go beyond what you see to create a team that complements one another. That means there must be leaders, people who are content with their current position, and individuals who come to work because of their passion. There must be emotional diversity too.

2. Diversity can create workers who are over-qualified for some jobs.

Communities grow and decline naturally as the economy settles into a comfortable pattern. Diversity in the workplace can create stable circumstances and more job security, but it can also create a series of problems where workers become over-qualified for what they are doing. If that individual were to lose their job for some reason, then it could become a struggle for them to find new employment elsewhere.

We saw this problem throughout the United States during the Great Recession years. Employers were hiring people who were willing to work for almost any wage. You had people who had earned a Ph.D. trying to fill cashier positions at fast-food establishments because there were no job opportunities in their area.

3. Diversity in the workplace can create too many opinions.

When hiring managers focus on diversity, then they are creating a series of differing opinions that can make it easier to find the right journey to take for forward progress. There are also times when the sheer number of available opinions can create a problem for the organization. When everyone gets a chance to be heard, then the speed of a project can slow down just as quickly as it can increase.

If you cannot come to a consensus with the team, then the task of making a decision lies with the supervisor. That means someone will be “right,”

others will be “wrong,” and this process can create dissension in the ranks over time. People who feel like their perspectives are ignored might stop sharing their ideas because of this issue, which reduces the benefits of approaching diversity in the first place.

4. Offshoring can become a point of emphasis with diversity in the workplace.

Domestic diversity can become an expensive proposition. It costs a lot, between salary and benefits, to hire the best people for your open positions. Because of this issue, it is not unusual for companies to look for offshoring opportunities that can help them to add unique perspectives to their corporate identity without a significant labor expense. This issue can create a lack of job security for existing workers, which can limit their focus and productivity.

Platforms like Upwork and Fiverr bring freelancers into this mix as well. If a company can hire independent contractors at a lower rate to receive equal or superior work, then they will do so. The reason why the middle class is growing around the world is because of diversity initiatives, which means fewer local jobs might be available.

5. Diversity in the workplace can lessen the amount of trust that exists.

When an organization decides to make a diversity initiative a top priority, then there is an immediate decrease in the amount of trust that is present in the workplace. This disadvantage impacts every population demographic – including people who come from the same culture, educational background, and career experience.

Although this disadvantage doesn't create silos or team isolation, it can create roadblocks to collaboration. Some people will interact less often with others, experience fear if they are forced to do so, and this issue eventually can limit productivity.

6. Some teams become hostile during an increase in diversity.

Different perspectives create unique opinions and approaches to life that can create severe disagreements in the workplace. It is not unusual for

every person to believe that their individual perspectives are the correct one, so they will share that information with others. If someone should happen to disagree, then some people will take that as a personal attack against their character, integrity, or even their spirituality.

When South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg criticized the political actions of Vice President Mike Pence in the early days of the 2020 election season, Pence said it was an attack on his Christian faith. Some people do not separate the different elements of their personal, professional, or spiritual life. A focus on diversity can create hostility when there are polarized differences on a team.

7. Diversity in the workplace can create communication problems.

People from different cultures may not speak the same language as their primary communication option. Hiring people from different areas can provide unique perspectives, but it can also cause issues with how co-workers speak with one another. Even when the same language is spoken, there can be differences in the meaning of certain words or jargon understanding problems that can create confusion in the workplace.

There are several tools that can help to work around this problem, including translation tools from Google. Unless there are direct translators present on a team; however, there can be a misunderstanding that could eventually lead to conflict.

8. Diversity initiatives are usually left to a single person to implement.

About 2 out of every 5 companies leave their diversity initiatives in the hands of a single individual or sponsor. That person is usually the Chief Executive Officer or another member of the leadership team. This assignment is fine if the CEO or another member of the C-suite doesn't have a lot on their plate, but this process is usually put on the back burner of priorities. It is easier to talk about making this issue a priority than to create new policies and procedures that can make it a reality.

For the remaining companies that use multiple people to create diversity in the workplace, there can be silos created that individualize this process so

that a similar result occurs. There must be complete leadership buy-in for this process to be effective.

9. Complaint levels often rise with a diversity initiative.

There tends to be more conflict between individual team members in a diverse environment when compared to one where most people come from the same perspective. Different habits and working styles can create bothersome results. Imagine sitting next to a co-worker who needs to click a pen constantly to think, and that's how some people see this process. Without proactive management, an increase in complaints and grievances typically occurs, which means there is more time and money spent on investigations.

This disadvantage can become so severe that some companies will see a surge in resignations because they don't like being placed into an "uncomfortable" situation. That means an organization must cope with the necessary costs to replace the lost workers, so it may take months (or years) to recoup the investments made.

10. It is easier to pay lip service to diversity by pointing out individual stories.

Less than 5% of today's Fortune 500 companies have a female CEO. There are more men with the same first name than women in this leadership position. Many companies look to the individual stories that they can find to declare that they are diverse, fooling themselves into the idea that they are progressive when the reality is quite the opposite.

Having one woman on a Board of Directors does not make a leadership team diverse. Hiring one African-American woman to work on a team of Caucasian men is not diversity either. Companies must be honest with themselves and the work they do for this process to work.

Verdict on the Pros and Cons of Diversity in the Workplace

Diversity in the workplace requires a commitment from every level of the chain of command for it to be a successful experience. If the CEO doesn't

buy into the process, then neither will the entry-level worker. Then there must be a monetary commitment given to the process to ensure its successful completion.

We live in a society that expects instant results. Diversity can provide unique perspectives, but it may take time for revenue and productivity increases to arrive. Many initiatives stop before they can be successful because there is a lack of patience with this process.

The advantages and disadvantages of diversity in the workplace must be carefully managed for the results to be successful. It may be an evolutionary process that challenges everyone, but it is also an initiative that can help a company and its teams thrive today, tomorrow, and well into the future.

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