

I M P A C T

Your Performance Improvement Resource from BEI

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PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVES

Moving Diversity Beyond the Classroom

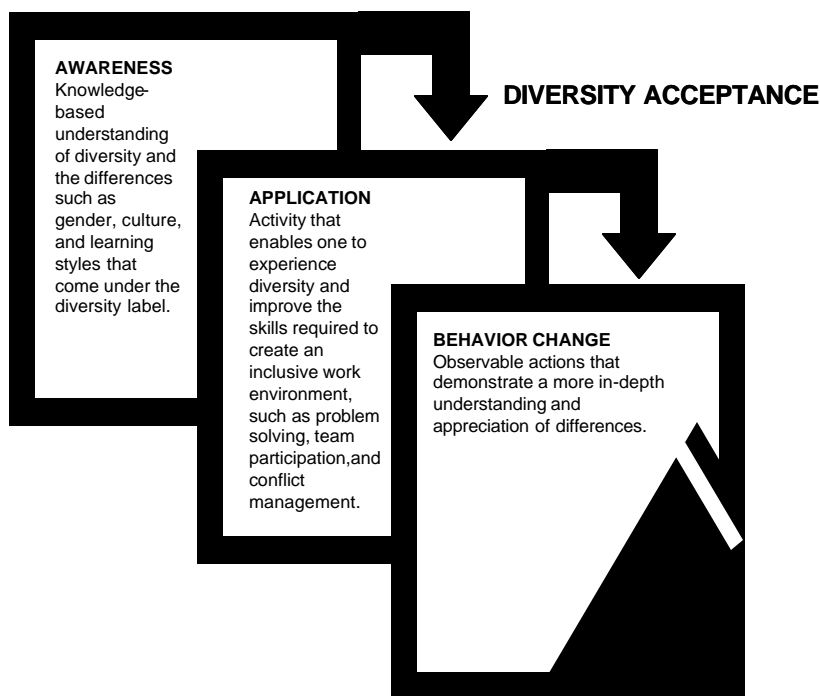
The demographics of organizations are changing at a rapid pace as a result of globalization. With this change, comes a need to interact with employees and customers from diverse backgrounds and cultures in order to achieve business goals. Organizations look to diversity programs to help them respond effectively to this need. Better connectivity with customers and increased workforce efficiency are among the many benefits of acceptance of diversity as a business strategy. However, acceptance of diversity doesn't happen overnight. Increased diversity often leads to increased frustration and conflict among employees primarily due to misunderstanding and reluctance to change.

To meet this problem head on, more and more organizations are choosing to implement diversity initiatives to bring about desired behavior change. On an individual basis, behavior change is demonstrated by an increased acceptance of differences at all levels. On an organizational level, increased acceptance of diversity can translate to improved performance and customer service.

Many factors feed into a successful diversity initiative. Among these is the understanding that in addition to the differences posed by race, gender, age, and culture, a successful initiative must also address the differences in skills, learning styles, language, and experiences that make each of us unique. How does an organization begin to address these differences?

Diversity training is typically a first step in any diversity program. The training provides an opportunity for employees at all levels of an organization to raise their awareness and increase their

knowledge about diversity. The primary objective of diversity training is to provide information on what diversity is, how it benefits an organization, and why employees need to accept and value differences. Most often, the training is presented in a structured classroom setting and may



explore the issues related to diversity dimensions such as race, gender, age, and sexual orientation. Little, if any, skill practice is included.

Although training plays a vital role, it is only a first step toward achieving the desired behavior change leading to diversity acceptance. To achieve a positive change in behavior, employees need to move to the next level and experience diversity first hand by interacting with others from diverse backgrounds to achieve a common goal. Applying the basic knowledge and skills learned in the classroom with the reactions and feedback of others is key to changing one's behavior. How can an organization provide the opportunity for employees to apply their knowledge about differences in order to move to this next level of diversity acceptance?

Some organizations are choosing a corporate volunteer program or community service project to serve as an action-learning medium to support their diversity initiative. Community service activities provide the opportunity for employees to work with people from different races, cultures, and backgrounds. Therefore, by linking these activities to diversity companies can effectively turn their initiatives into action.

Community service events allow employees to experience differences firsthand and gain an understanding and acceptance of these differences. In addition, employees discover interpersonal skills for reducing conflict, enhancing teamwork, and developing comfort levels with people who are different from them. These skills are then transferable to the workplace, and can trigger improvements across the organization. In turn, these improvements contribute to the behavior change process and benefit the organization in:

- Improved receptivity among employees to work toward common goals with diverse groups of people instead of alone
- Enhanced skills to manage the conflict that may arise from cultural or ethnic differences
- Increased sales of products and services in diverse markets based on a better understanding of different cultures

If you are looking for an innovative way to encourage acceptance of diversity beyond classroom training, consider a corporate volunteer program or community service project. This initiative would involve the following activities:

1. **Build the business case.** Determine how your organization defines diversity, your diversity goals, and how a corporate volunteer program will serve as a strategy to help achieve these goals.
2. **Define the structure.** Determine how the program will be a function of the organization's diversity initiatives, establish the operational guidelines, and explain how the program will be administered.
3. **Explain the benefits.** Identify how a corporate volunteer program will support your diversity and business goals, e.g., minimize the length of time between diversity awareness and behavior change, develop skills that will enhance productivity and communication among all employees, etc.
4. **Determine the success factors.** Describe the success factors associated with the implementation of your corporate volunteer program and how the factors will be measured.
5. **Obtain senior management buy-in.** Get a commitment from senior management to support, promote, and allocate the resources required for the program.
6. **Assess employee interest.** Determine employee support and willingness to participate in the program on a volunteer basis.

BEI can help you link community service to your diversity initiative. To learn more, visit:

<http://www.beinc-online.com/coreservices/corporatecommunity.asp>.



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From Strategy to Action

By sharing client projects and **BEI** solutions, our goal is to offer you insight and information to increase your success at moving from strategy to action on your performance improvement projects. The elements of this section include a brief description of a client challenge, critical success factors or the expectations for the project, solutions for meeting the critical success factors, and the lessons learned or what we would do differently if we did the project again.

Challenge

Design and develop a Learning System for a reengineered global financial system and processes for an automotive OEM.

Critical Success Factors

- Flexible--Curriculum and course designs needed to start even though the applications were still in development.
- Blended Learning--the Learning System needed to utilize a variety of learning strategies (i.e., intrinsic [i.e., built into the application], extrinsic [e.g., online help] and external [e.g., classroom, web-based]).
- Early Access--the Learning System Team needed to be part of the reengineering team from the onset (design) in order to build in the appropriate intrinsic and extrinsic learning strategies into the application and its support systems.
- Just-In-Time--courses needed to be ready just as applications were ready to be deployed.
- Complete--the Learning System needed to address the holistic view of the change – the reengineering impacted the organization's structure, process, culture and computer applications.

Solutions

- A Learning System Touchpoints (contact point) document was created to identify where and when the Learning System team needed to meet with the reengineering team to gather requirements, data, information, etc. The document detailed each touchpoint including purpose, time requirements, why it was important, required inputs, associated tasks, expected outputs, proposed agendas, and job aids.
- Knowledge/Skills Matrices were developed for each current Area of Performance (finance functions). The matrices included outputs/measures, key tasks, knowledge/skill (K/S) requirements, K/S characteristics (could it be obtained through selection or training, its criticality, its difficulty, its volatility, its required depth), typical gaps, causes of the gaps and whether the deficiencies were based on knowledge, the environment or the individual.
- A Blended Learning Strategies Model was developed to help in selecting appropriate methods and media for each release of the new finance system.
- Curriculum design that focused on four target audiences: reengineering team, expert users, end users (typically finance analysts), and special users (typically finance and operations managers).
- Development of 55 learning interventions (classroom, web-based, single point lessons, paper-based and online user guides).

Lessons Learned

- Tenacity is important – Learning Systems take a back seat to application development and testing when deadlines are drawing near or moving.



- Stand by the fundamentals of training design and development even if the customer believes “heck, anyone can develop training” – they’ll end up with a better, more solid product that can be transferred into the organization once the reengineering team is disbanded.
- Get agreement up front on the application freeze date from someone with the authority to hold the date.
- Develop contingency plans to accommodate the late availability of application specific content (collapse timeline) and to handle scheduled training delivery when only a partial system is available (e.g., utilize mockups or screen shots of the development system when you can’t access the live system during training).

Marketplace

Discovering Diversity

Embracing Diversity as a Source of Organizational Strength

Workforce diversity can enrich your organization, making it more innovative and globally competitive. Leveraging diversity takes the commitment and understanding of every individual in your organization. The **Discovering Diversity Workshop** from **BEI** helps your employees understand how they currently respond to workforce diversity issues and where they need to develop increased understanding, acceptance, and commitment to these issues.

During this one-day workshop, employees explore diversity issues in four key areas: Knowledge, Understanding, Acceptance, and Behavior. Participants receive a Discovering Diversity Profile (self-assessment) that helps them:

- Discover their comfort level with people who are different from them
- Understand the impact of their behavior on others
- Assess the accuracy of their knowledge about differences
- Limit the influence of stereotypes
- Transform knowledge into acceptance and empathy
- Appreciate the benefits of changing attitudes and resistance

This workshop can be customized to help foster acceptance and support of your organization’s specific diversity initiatives and programs. To learn more about this workshop contact **BEI** at 248.625.8100 or visit:

<http://www.beinc-online.com/pdf/Discovering%20Diversity.pdf>

BEI is an authorized distributor of the Discovering Diversity Profile published by Inscape Publishing.

Worthy Web Sites

<http://www.thiagi.com/> *Play for Performance*. Thiagi (Tee-ag-gee), the international guru of “active training”, has a mission to help people improve their performance effectively and enjoyably.



<http://www.ceoexpress.com/default.asp> *Designed by a busy executive for busy executives.*
Efficient and effective, this site is visually teeming with text, but once you learn to navigate, you'll find just about every kind of link a busy executive would need.

<http://cometcursor.cometsystems.com/funcursors/> *What has your cursor done for you lately?*
Express yourself! Fun Cursors lets you change your mundane black and white arrow into over 2,500 images. For those of you who need a rationale for transforming your cursor, use it as a visual aid to help you remember to pick up dinner by changing it into a hamburger, pizza, or sushi.

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