

True Focus Consulting



Where Customer Service is Our Focus

Cultural Diversity Includes Me Too!



Promoting Career Development And Personal Growth!

2535 Arlington Ct.
Lithia Springs, GA 30122
Telephone: 678-371-1840 or 678-266-0908
Fax: 770-949-8550
Email: truefocusconsulting@gmail.com
Website: truefocusconsulting.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Learning Objectives.....

What is Culture
Diversity.....

Definitions.....

Stereotypes.....

Characteristics of Diversity.....

Stages of Diversity.....

Dynamics of Communication/Body Language.....

Keys to Valuing Diversity in the Workplace.....

Conclusion.....

OBJECTIVES

This seminar is designed to equip you with the knowledge, skills and abilities that will enable you to value and utilize the diversity that exists in the workplace and our communities.

1. Educate the Georgia Community Action Association on the importance of working in a diverse community by:
 - Professionalism in making ethical decisions
 - Interpersonal Skills are developed from a conscious decision that is personal before it is professional
 - Verbal communication may have different meanings that are insensitive to a person or group
 - Respect is important learned personal and professional behavior

2. Build the awareness of the importance and necessity of recruiting and retaining productive employees:
 - Develop a culture that supports and welcomes a diverse staff and community

3. Incorporate the concepts of diversity in all programs and policies, as well as the management practices of all managers and staff members, and hence, the culture of the Association:
 - As part of an on-going education program, the Georgia Community Action Association should focus on programs that address all aspects of your service and employee population.
 - To have a successful plan in place, Senior Management must accept and support the initiative. By setting and operating by example, the entire employee population will embrace diversity and the value that it brings to your Association.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

Diversity deals with bias, prejudice and stereotypes; appreciating and valuing the differences and similarities of others.

Diversity Is.....How We Work

Management
Non-Management
Union
Part-time/Full-time
Different Shifts/Work Schedules
Work Experience

Diversity Is.....How We Live

Marital Status
Sexual Preference
Geographical Location
Social Class/Income
Religious Beliefs/Spirituality

Diversity Is.....Who We Are

Gender
Ethnicity
Age
Physically/Mentally Challenged
Race

Diversity Is.....Our Ideology

Language
Politics/Political Views
Education Level
Values/Morals

DEFINITIONS

Culture is defined in a variety of ways.

Culture is the way of life of multiple groups in a society and consists of prescribed ways of behaving or norms of conducts, beliefs, values, and skills.

Simply put, culture defines who we are as an individual or member of a group. We are all influenced by multiple cultures: that of our family, community, or even our workplace. Our family of origin, family by partnership and our friends, influence our values, attitudes and understanding of the world. Developing an understanding of this diversity is the first step toward cultural competence.

Acculturation: Cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting to, or borrowing traits from, another culture; a merging of cultures as a result of prolonged contact. It should be noted that individuals from culturally diverse groups might desire varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant culture.

Assimilation: Assuming the cultural traditions of a given people or group.

Belief: A fact thought to be true, without any knowledge or proof- we just believe that something is true.

Bias: An inclination toward or against someone or something

Cultural Awareness: Being cognizant, observant, and conscious of similarities and differences among culture groups.

Cultural Sensitivity: Understanding the needs and emotions of your own culture and other cultures.

Discrimination: When bias, prejudices, and stereotypes conspire to create attitudes that prompt negative behavior toward individuals based on negative assumption about the person's group or affiliation.

Diversity: Refers to the range of human experience within the culture.

Ethnic: Of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin and background.

Prejudice: (from prejudging) An attitude whereby one prejudges the other, usually negatively.

Race: There is an array of perspectives on what defines race. These include:

- Race is a tribe, people, or nation belonging to the same stock; a division of humankind possessing traits that are transmissible by descent and sufficient to characterize it as a distinctive human type.
- Race is a social construct used to separate the world's peoples. There is only one race, the human race, comprising individuals with characteristics that are more or less similar to others.

STEREOTYPES

Stereotyping is an exaggerated belief or fixed idea about a person or group which is held by people and sustained by selective perception and selective forgetting. It comes incomplete, distorted information and limited personal experience. Stereotypes are natural, but often destructive because they are unfair, do not allow for individually and interferes with communication. Stereotypes can be negative or positive, for example, positive stereotyping (all Asian are smart, Hispanics and Blacks are emotional), negative stereotypes (all blacks are lazy, all whites are racist, all Columbian are drug dealers, all middle easterners are terrorist).

The tendency is that people who reject one group will also reject other groups. Investigation has shown that people who are aware of, and concerned about their prejudices are on the way to eliminating them.

Throughout our lives, we take in information through our five senses. We look for cues in our surroundings that help us make sense of the information or raw data that we have received. Our beliefs, biases and attitudes are filters that we bring to our experiences. After we process the raw data and cues through our filters, we make assumptions about reality. These assumptions can be generalized and hardened into stereotypes overtime.

Selective perception is if we make the assumption that old people make lousy drivers, we will tend to filter out examples of older people who are good drivers, but we will remember clearly those cases that fit our assumption.

Unless we do something to address our underlying assumptions, our behavior will reflect those beliefs. Even if we sense that there is something wrong with the picture we have formed in our head, unless we do something to reconstruct that picture, we are likely to behave as if it is true when we are stressed or confronted with someone who we believe to be acting out the picture we have formed.

Do you see stereotyping as a problem?

THE STAGES OF DIVERSITY

Primary- unchangeable

Ethnicity- growing up in a different environment may cause you to adopt certain habits

Race

Gender

Disability

Secondary- changeable

Age

Educational background

Geographic location

Income

Marital status

Parental status

Religious beliefs

Work experience

CHARACTERISTICS OF DIVERSITY

Beliefs and Attitudes- Possibly the most difficult classification is ascertaining the major belief themes of a people and how this and other factors influence their attitudes toward themselves, others and what happens in their world.

Communication and Language- The communication system verbal or nonverbal distinguishes one group from another. Apart from the multitude of “foreign” languages, some nations have multiple spoken languages (within one language group or there are dialects, accents, slang, jargon, and other such variations). So while body language may be universal its manifestation differs by locality. Subcultures, such as the military, have terminology and signals that cut across national boundaries (such as a salute or the rank system). Studies show that approximately 50 percent of a message impact comes from nonverbal communication. For example, shifting eyes downward when answering a question indicates that the answer may not be truthful.

What types of body language do you see around you?

Trust- Trust plays an important role in intercultural, interracial, and inter-gender communication. A lack of trust can result in miscommunications and at times no communication at all.

Accents- Some people react negatively to accents. People have accents either because of ethnicity or region of country from which they come or because English is their second language. Leaders need to judge if accent interferes with the ability to communicate or perform. If accents do not interfere, then our focus needs to be on listening to what is being said as opposed to how it is said.

Physical Differences- Emotional responses to physical difference may hinder effective communications between or among groups. Beliefs about superiority or inferiority associated with physical differences interfere with the communication process. They may be related to racism or sexism, but in organization such as the military, where outward appearance and bearing are so important, physical differences may also affect communications in such areas as weight, grooming, or posture.

Dress and Appearance- This includes the outward garments and adornments, or lack thereof, as well as body decorations that tend to be distinctive by culture. We have been aware of the Japanese kimono, the African headdress, the Englishman's bowler and umbrella, the Polynesian sarong and the American Indian headband. In some cultures, clothing is a sign of social class or of necessity. In other words, it is viewed as an opportunity to express personality.

Food and Eating Habits- The manner in which food is selected, prepared, presented, and eaten often differs by culture. For example, many religions have requirements and prohibitions concerning various foods, ranging from Kosher practices to the Muslim prohibition against eating meat.

Mental Processing and Learning- Some cultures emphasize one aspect of brain development over another, so that one may observe striking differences in the way people think and learn. Some cultures favor abstract thinking and conceptualization, while others prefer rote memory and learning. What seems to be universal is that each culture has a reasoning process, but then each manifests the process in its own distinctive way.

Relationships- Cultures fix human and organizational relationships by age, sex, status as well as by wealth, power and wisdom. The family unit is the most common expression of this characteristic and the arrangement may go from small to large.

Religion- As we become more of a multicultural society, we must be increasingly aware of religious differences, even including remembering that religious holidays and celebrations occur at different times.

Sense of Self and Space- The comfort one has with self can be expressed differently by culture. Self-identity and appreciation can be manifested by humble bearing in one place, while another calls for macho behavior. A sense of independence and creativity is countered in other cultures by group cooperation and conformity. Americans have a sense of space that requires more distance between the individual and others while Latinos and Vietnamese want to get closer, almost familiar. Some cultures are closed and determine one's place very precisely, while others are more open and changing. Each culture validates self in a unique way.

Time and Time Consciousness- Sense of time differs by culture, so that some are exact and others are relative. In some cultures, promptness is determined by age or status- thus, in some countries, subordinates are expected on time at staff meetings, but the boss is the last to arrive. Generally, Germans are precise about the clock while many Latinos are more casual. Some subcultures, like the military, have their own time system of twenty-four hours. In some cultures, promptness is rewarded, and in battles the watches are synchronized. Yet, there are natives in some other cultures who do not bother with hours or minutes, but manage their days by sunrise and sunset.

Tips:

- Avoid being judgmental. Recognize different attitudes about time for what they are and not always a sign of laziness.
- Allow extra time in your schedule for developing friendships and spending time on pleasantries.

Values and Norms- The need systems of cultures vary, as do the priorities they attach to certain behavior in the group. Those operating on a survival level value the gathering of food, adequate covering and shelter; while those with high security needs value material things, money, job titles, as well as law and order. America is a Country in the midst of a values revolution as the children of the depression days give way to the children of affluence who are concerned for higher values, like the quality of life, self fulfillment, and meaning in experience. It is interesting to note that in some Pacific Island cultures, that as your status grows, you are expected to give away or share more of your personal belongings.

In any event, from its value system, a culture sets norms of behavior for that society. These acceptable standards for membership may range from the work ethic or pleasure to absolute obedience or permissiveness for children; from rigid submission of the wife to her husband to women's total liberation.

Moral Beliefs Which Regulate Our Behavior- Our value often reflects a larger social value system. How we interact with others is quite often based on our value systems and beliefs. When people hold different values or have different, communication can be very difficult. For example, some people value extended families and have close kinship ties. A leader who does not have the same values on extended family members might not be willing to grant leave to an employee wanting to extend leave to a distant relative's

funeral. This can have a negative impact on the relationship between the leader and the employee and may create anger among other employees.

- **Freedom vs. Conformity-** The United States puts a premium on individual freedom and liberty, while other cultures, such as Asia, and puts a much higher value on loyalty and conformity to the group-family, society or both.
- **Competition vs. Cooperation-** Another difference among cultures concerns whether they are organized around competition or cooperation.
- **Openness vs. Privacy-** While the U.S. residents are considered more open than other cultures, remember that other cultures may tolerate more physical closeness.
- **Respect-** Everyone wants to be treated with dignity and respect; we define and demonstrate respect differently. Asia, Middle Eastern some Latin America, you must preserve “face” at all cost, and any embarrassment can lead to loss of face. In traditional Japan, even death is considered preferable to loss of face. Be alert of subtle signs of slights.

These classifications described in this section are a simple model for assessing particular cultures. It is a paradigm, or mental set for evaluating the major characteristics of cultures. It does not include every aspect of culture, nor is it the only way to analyze cultures. This approach and others enable managers to examine people systematically. Our breakdown of these key characteristics is a convenient beginning for cultural understanding that can be used as one travels around the world and visits different cultures, or the model can be used to study cultures within a majority or minority culture in the workplace or community. Just remember that all aspects of culture are interrelated and to change one part is to change the whole. There is a danger in trying to compartmentalize a complex concept like culture.

We should look at people’s culture the way we view a beautiful jewel—we hold up different facets to the light of our consciousness, to better appreciate beauty of human diversity and capability.

Dynamics of Communication/Body Language

Every nation needs a common language as a unifying element. Newcomers should make a concerted effort to learn English. In the workplace, speakers of other languages need to hear the reactions of co-workers who may feel left out or talked about, while English-only speakers need to understand the comfort that others find in speaking their native languages. These discussions can lessen tension by helping staff members and others understand each other's difficulties. Insights usually improve relationships and can lead to creative problem solving.

We can improve communication by effective feedback which reduces the misunderstanding between people. Sometimes we have to elicit feedback and we do that by asking questions such as; do I understand you correctly or I'm not sure I understand you? Repeating and summarizing is the key to ensuring that you are being understood and that you understand others.

Body language is how you approach someone—the statements you make with your facial expressions and gestures can sometimes mean major “PISSOSITY”. In the U.S., it is considered rude not to look someone in the eye. In Asia and Latin cultures, averting the eyes is a sign of respect.

It is important to clarify the language policy, if there is one at work. Let people know the rules about language-what's permitted. Some legal precedents have been set recently regarding this issue, so be careful about respecting the rights of others when they are on breaks and lunch. There is one language that supersedes all tongues: the language of attitudes. As we approach one another in our multicultural world, our attitudes speak volumes.

Culture is more than manners. It directs the most subtle aspects of behavior, such as how long to wait between sentences, when it's OK to interrupt someone, and how to interpret facial expressions. Though most cultural rules are never written, they are all the most powerful because they absorbed the unconscious as we watch others and their reactions to us.

Tips:

Americans and Northern Europeans see communication as means of getting something done while other cultures may see it as building relationships.

Asians and Arabs regard feelings as too private to share--- they find it to be intrusive. Latinos generally appreciate inquiries about family members

Devout Muslims and Orthodox Jewish men never touch a woman outside their families, even to shake hands.

Assumptions That Get US in Trouble

There talking about me- when you hear employees or members of our community speaking in a different language other than English, we sometimes jump to the conclusion that we just have to be topic of conversation.

They don't want to speak English- this is not necessarily true, because usually there are large centers for English classes. Just suppose you have to use your high school or college French or Spanish in a work environment. Just imagine the pressure of having to think, speak and perform in a second language that you are not confident in using.

They know English, they just do not want to use it- often times when someone is learning a new language, they may be hesitant to use it until they feel more proficient. Another factor is that people may be very fluent speaking English, but must think in their native tongue.

Gestures are an easy way to get in trouble. The OK sign (for Americans) is an obscene gesture in Greece and some parts of South America. Using your forefinger to call some forward could be misconstrued by an Ethiopian, since they reserve the gesture for children and dogs. Nodding your head can also be misinterpreted. In some cultures, a nod only means that the person has heard you, not that they agree with you. Saying "no" with a shake of the head is considered rude in some cultures.

Keys to Valuing Diversity in the Workplace

Valuing diversity is important. When managing diversity it requires either vision or pain. Organizations (and people) have to be ready and willing to make cultural and process changes that are necessary for it to become a reality. **It is vital that management buys into it completely.**

Make an effort to find out the place that work plays in people's lives.

Leadership has to recognize that some people will want direction and that a failure to show individual initiatives is not laziness.

Be sensitive to issues concerning whether certain kinds of work are appropriate within a cultural context.

Remember to think about the difference in cultural norms.

Cultural Diversity promotes productivity and impacts the bottom line.

Being a minority does not, in itself, make a person culturally competent.

Become culturally competent about other cultures not just one's own.

Cultural competence is necessary in all client/community encounters because "everyone has a cultural identity. Cultural competence must apply to everyone."

There is diversity within groups. Being culturally competent does not mean treating all members of a cultural group the same.

Cultural competence is the skill of utilizing knowledge of a group and integrating it with an understanding of the individual client.

Values, experience, and family practices all influence individuals. Culture does not explain everything.

Culture is not just about ethnicity or race. Groups such as the urban and rural populations, the poor and other groups develop cultural characteristics that can be as distinct as those of race/ethnicity and should be recognized.

Keys to Valuing Diversity in the Workplace

Learn.....

Listen

Observe

Be empathic

Understand and respect differences

Learn more about other cultures including your own

Ask questions and look for answers

Assess your own cultural competence regularly

Respect cultural diversity and view it as strength. Remember there is diversity even in groups. Be ready to negotiate, change, and alter your typical course of treatment to accommodate cultural needs and recognize the unique challenges of cultural groups. (Professional Excellence- Tammy Rice-Rodriguez and David Boyle)

In order to successfully work with clients and your community, you must first understand how they self-identify. It is important to avoid labeling individuals or making generalizations about characteristics and traits on cultural stereotypes.

Conclusion

Stereotyping can have intense negative effect, especially when leaders/managers make fewer attempts to involve those other cultures because have been taught not to expect participation. Often we do not realize there may be something wrong when an individual of a different ethnicity makes little eye contact or speak up.

As we interact with others of different cultures, there is no good substitute for receptiveness to interpersonal feedback, good observation skills, effective questions, and some horse sense. There is much to be gained by observing how people of the same culture interact with each other. Do not be afraid to ask questions as most people respond very positively to inquires about their culture. Ask a variety of people so you can get a balanced view.

Making a genuine effort to find the positive historical, literary, and cultural contributions of a society; learning a few polite expressions in another person's language; and showing appreciation for the food and music of another culture can have especially positive effects.

My contention, then, is not that there are no cultural differences. These differences between cultures and people are real and can add richness (and humor) to the fabric of life. My assertion is that people everywhere have much in common, such as a need for affiliation and love, participation, and contribution. When the exterior is peeled off, there are not so many differences after all. (Regents of the University of California- Gregorio Billikopf)

Diversity is not about how we differ it is about embracing another's uniqueness.

