

Why Diversity Matters in the Workplace

Here are four reasons why having a diverse workforce can make a positive difference—even in small businesses.

By Dan Schawbel

Workplace diversity is a major concern for employers these days. These days, more and more companies have Chief Diversity Officers, who are managing entire groups responsible for diversity initiatives. The workplace is becoming more diverse as it's become more global, with new cultures that have the right talent for organizational growth. A recent study by executive search firm Egon Zehnder International shows that the main driver behind diversity and inclusion programs is access to talent. Sixty-three percent of senior executives from around the world believe that these programs will help them become more competitive by being able to access top talent. Only 21 percent said that public pressure was the reason for the investment.

Companies are starting to use diversity programs to create an open work culture but are having trouble measuring success. The aspects of diversity that are most important to employers are gender (73 percent), nationality (44 percent), ethnicity (29 percent), and age (28 percent). Here are some of the top advantages of workplace diversity:

1 It builds your employer brand.

Having a diverse workforce makes your company more interesting, people can expect to learn more from your employees and you can attract better talent from around the world. With a diversified workforce, you stand a better chance of attracting different types of people that wouldn't normally apply for positions at your company. A company that has a strong diversity program will have a good reputation because it will be seen as having fair employment practices.



2 It increases creativity.

When you bring a variety of different people from various backgrounds together, you'll end up getting better solutions to business problems. If you don't have a diverse workplace, you might not be able to tackle problems the best way. For instance, if you have no Asian employees and you're trying to sell to the Asian market, it will be much more difficult for you. You can search on Wikipedia all day long, but having someone who is actually part of that culture is a great advantage.

3 It encourages personal growth.

Employees, especially younger ones, are striving to use their corporate experience to learn and grow their careers. This is a major advantage to workplace diversity because it can help employees learn new ideas and perspectives, and connect

intellectually and personally to different people. This encourages employees to become more well-rounded and have a better sense of the working world.

4 It makes employees think more independently.

If you have similar people at a company, it will be harder to solve complex problems. One study by Katherine Phillips, a professor at Kellogg, shows that by even adding one employee from a different background can get people out of their comfort zones and thinking different about a situation.

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